

Black Flag

Anarchist Review



**Alexander
Berkman
(1870-1936)**

**Jack White
(1879-1946)**



**John
Most
(1846-1906)**

And much more...

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Editorial

Welcome to the first issue of *Black Flag* in 2026!

We start with John Most. Originally a Social-Democrat elected to the German parliament, Most became increasingly radical and became a social revolutionary after being expelled from the party in 1880. His radicalism saw him become closer to anarchism, although as we discuss he did not become fully an anarchist until 1887. Arriving in America in December 1882, he played an important role in the emerging anarchist movement and the International Working People's Association (IWPA). However, his advocacy of individual terrorism and a transitional terrorist power during a social revolution reflected his former politics rather than the one he was moving towards. Unfortunately, his politics between 1883 and 1886 helped portray anarchism as little more than violence, a stereotype he later lamented in spite of doing so much to foster it. Still, after 1887 he became consistently an anarchist communist and helped spread its ideas until his death in 1906.

Emma Goldman famously horsewhipped Most when he refused to support Alexander Berkman's assassination attempt on Henry Clay Frick after his private goons attacked strikers at Homestead in June 1892. We mark the 90th anniversary of Berkman's death, a stalwart of the movement for decades, first in America then in Europe after leaving Bolshevik Russia. Best known for his classic introduction to Anarchism, *Now and After: The ABC of Communist Anarchism*, first published in 1929 and reprinted many times since (often under differing titles), he wrote for many anarchist journals as well as editing *Mother Earth* and *The Blast*. Yet the collection *Life of an Anarchist: The Alexander Berkman Reader* (1992/2005) does not contain anything from *Mother Earth* nor from *Freedom*, something we amend here. Like his close companion Goldman, he played a pioneering role in exposing the failure of the Russian Revolution in works like *The Bolshevik Myth* and in numerous articles and pamphlets.

Then we turn to Irish Republican turned Anarchist, Jack White. Originally a Unionist, he moved towards Irish Republicanism and helped organise the Irish Citizen Army. He became an anarchist after seeing the Spanish Revolution at first hand, returning to Britain to help raise funds and support for the CNT-FAI. We reprint his few articles in the anarchist press from this period along with his 1937 pamphlet, *The Meaning of Anarchism*.

March 1906 saw the first issue of *Mother Earth*. We mark this with a short account of its politics, debunking a claim that it ignored the class struggle. We also provide extracts from its "Observations and Comments" column on the labour and socialist movements from 1906 to 1917, when it ended its monthly run due to state repression. These short pieces are rarely included in anthologies of the paper in spite of their expressing its politics by commenting upon current events and making recommendations on what to do next. As such, they present an essential insight into the ideas of America's leading anarchists and the movement during the first two decades of the last century.

This year also marks the 100th anniversary of the British General Strike and we reprint two articles on it. The first is by syndicalist activist Tom Brown (1900-1974) which summarises events and draws lessons from it. The second is by Albert Meltzer (1920-1996) and was written for its 50th anniversary, appearing in an earlier incarnation of *Black Flag*. We end with our usual reviews and news of the movement, *Parish Notices*.

If you want to contribute rather than moan at those who do, whether its writing new material or letting us know of on-line articles, reviews or translations, then contact us: blackflagmag@yahoo.co.uk



John Most and Anarchism

Iain McKay

While adherents of nearly every political and social movement have committed acts of violence, it seems to be anarchism which is always linked to terrorism. Indeed, anarchism is so associated with it that when Al-Qaeda committed the atrocity of 9/11 a spat of articles appeared in both the popular press and academia seeking to link it with late nineteenth century anarchists. That the arguments utilised in these articles were spurious goes without saying but the link is repeated. Needless to say, Leninists also seek to portray individual acts of violence as the anarchist tactic, even reprinting Trotsky's 1909 article "The Bankruptcy of Individual Terrorism" to lecture anarchists in spite of most anarchists having never supported the tactic, or had rejected it, decades before.¹

We will not discuss the class biases of such perspectives beyond noting that the loud and continued outrage generated by, say, Gaetano Bresci's assassination of King Umberto is in contrast to the silence and forgetfulness about the Bava Beccaris massacre which provoked it. That hundreds of protesting workers were killed and wounded by the Italian Army is apparently of no consequence and says nothing about the nature of the State but the act of revenge against the King who praised their General and awarded him a medal exposes the true nature of anarchism.²



John Most (1846-1906)

Likewise with Leninists, who seek to make terrorism *the* anarchist strategy while happily supporting the *State* terrorism of the Bolshevik regime against the Russian workers and peasants.³

Yet this attempt to link anarchism with violence is no recent development. John Most (1846-1906) – the leading German anarchist who was once a Social-Democratic (Marxist) politician – wrote as follows:

A dagger in one hand, a torch in the other, and all his pockets brimful with dynamite-bombs – that is the

picture of the anarchist, such as it has been drawn by his enemies. They look at him simply as a mixture of a fool and a knave, and whose sole purpose is universal topsyturvy, and whose only means to that purpose is to slay anyone and everyone who differs from him.

The picture is an ugly caricature, but its general acceptance is not to be wondered at, since, for years all non-anarchistic papers have been busy in circulating it. Even in certain labor-organs one may find the anarchist represented as merely a man of violence, destitute of all noble aspirations, and the most absurd views of

¹ Yes, a few anarchists – particularly in Russia – still advocated or used the tactic when Trotsky wrote but it hardly makes sense to demonise the majority for the views of a minority, although it is useful for a polemic.

² According to government sources, at least 80 demonstrators were killed and 450 wounded in Milan between the 6th and 10th of May 1898 when General

Fiorenzo Bava Beccaris ordered his troops to open fire on people protesting the price of food.

³ Hence the irony of Leninists noting Proudhon's opposition to strikes while also happy to support a regime which regularly used troops to break strikes – often going so far as to shoot strikers either *en masse* or on an individual basis as regards "ringleaders".

the principles of anarchism occur in those very papers.¹

Ironically, it was Most himself who most contributed to this picture by his writings and speeches in the years before the Haymarket police riot of 4th of May 1886. That he later changed his mind on the issue of individual violence does not change the fact that from his arrival in America in December 1882 to May 1886, Most advocated terrorism as *the* anarchist means. Yet, as we will discuss, the awkward facts are that “propaganda by the deed” is *not* an anarchist means nor was Most, at this time, an anarchist even if he advocated certain anarchist ideas and helped build the anarchist movement in America. It is only after the Haymarket events of 1886 that Most became an anarchist.

Most before Haymarket: Social Revolution

The first major American anarchist organisation was the International Working People’s Association (IWPA).² The arrival of Most in the country and his subsequent involvement in the emerging anarchist movement there undoubtedly helped its growth: “While in August 1883, thirty groups existed, by the spring of 1885, eighty IWPA groups operated in the United States with an estimated total membership of three thousand and an additional four thousand sympathizers... according to a Chicago anarchist paper.”³

That Most, like others in the IWPA, called himself, and was called by others, both a socialist and an anarchist does not make Marxists seek to appropriate him – unlike the likes of Albert and Lucy Parsons who are claimed for Marxism by some (usually Marxists but not always), Most is invariably proclaimed an anarchist and lurid quotes on individual terrorism provided. Yet, a close analysis of his ideological development suggests that during the critical years between 1883 and 1886, Most was not quite an anarchist

and instead expressed a mixture of anarchist and non-anarchist notions both in terms of strategy and revolution combined with an anarchist critique of current day society and vision of the future. He only became a consistent anarchist-communist towards the end of the 1880s.

As such one historian’s assertion that Most was “the world’s leading anarchist in 1885”⁴ is questionable given Kropotkin’s fame and his newspaper-friendly story of a Russian Prince renouncing his title to become an anarchist. His leading role in the Lyon show trial was well-known, the paper he edited, *Le Révolté*, was well-known internationally and 1885 saw the publication of his first anarchist book, *Words of a Rebel*, edited by his Élisée Reclus another internationally well-known anarchist. Significantly, Parsons included articles by Kropotkin and Reclus in his book *Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Scientific Basis* and none by Most.

Yet this is somewhat irrelevant given that Most’s politics were not completely anarchist at this time although he was certainly moving in that direction as others in the IWPA had. It may be objected that he called himself an anarchist and others in the IWPA did so as well. Indeed, but he also called himself a communist while advocating distribution according to deed (labour) and mocking those who favoured distribution by need (communism):

Most used the term ‘communist’... for the reason that the term ‘collectivist’ was unfamiliar to his German readers. He was sharply criticised by the German anarchist communists in London, who knew the difference between the two expressions. However, since they were his personal enemies, he did not admit his error and propagated true anarchist communist ideas (which were in harmony with Kropotkin’s views) only from 1888 onwards.⁵

¹ John Most, *The Social Monster: A Paper on Communism and Anarchism* (New York: Bernhard & Schenck, 1890), 1.

² Iain McKay, “Anarchy in the USA: The International Working People’s Association”, *Black Flag Anarchist Review* Volume 3 Number 2 (Summer 2023)

³ Tom Goyens, *Beer and Revolution: The German Anarchist Movement in New York City, 1880-1914* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2007), 108.

⁴ James Green, *Death in the Haymarket: A Story of Chicago, the First Labor Movement and the Bombing That Divided Gilded Age America* (Anchor Books, 2007), 129.

⁵ Max Nettlau, *A Short History of Anarchism* (London: Freedom Press, 1996), 214. *Le Révolté* (14 September 1884) included a letter defending communist ideas against the collectivism advocated in *Freiheit*.

This can also be seen from a hysterical anti-anarchist pamphlet issued by the Socialist Labor Party at the time which suggested a similar confusion between communism and collectivism within Marxist ranks:

if we are sometimes designated as *Communists*, we wish it to be understood that our Communism is different from all other Communism in that we demand nothing in common but capital — the great means of labor (land, buildings, machines, money) because all capital has been and is partly a gratuitous gift of Nature to all, partly being created by the labor of all mankind, and nothing can reasonably be private property but the full proceeds of one's own labor, as agreed upon by common compromise... The most correct term for our Communism would, perhaps, be *Collectivism*, as it is now called in France.¹

So the labels used often do not tell the whole story (if they did then we would consider the Nazis to be "socialists" and North Korea to be a "democratic people's republic"). This is not to say that there were no anarchist elements to his ideas during these years. They were, such as his vision of a free society which is anarchistic as it postulates a federative world based on workers' associations and communes:

The immediate organization of the workers according to the different branches of trade, and of placing at their disposal the factories, machines, raw materials, etc.,

etc., for co-operative production, will form the basis of the new society. The Commune... enters into contracts with individual workers associations, makes periodical advances to them, which may consist in drafts upon the communal wares collected and stored...

Most did play a significant part in producing the IWPA's Pittsburgh Manifesto but this work is primarily an account of the evils of the capitalist system with a few words on the future socialist system -- discussion of tactics and the nature of the hoped for revolution are lacking

Free society consists of autonomous, i.e., independent Communes. A network of federations, the result of freely made social contracts, and not of authoritative government or guardianship, surrounds them all. Common affairs are attended to in accordance with free deliberation and judgement by the interested Communes or associations.²

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system with a few words on the future socialist system -- discussion of tactics and the nature of the hoped for revolution are lacking, presumably to ensure general acceptance. Yet, it is precisely this lack which is key as it is the nature of the social revolution which fundamentally divides Anarchism from Marxism. After all, the analysis of what is wrong with capitalist society is shared by anarchists and Marxists (as both are socialists) while both express a desire to see a *stateless* socialist society emerge (although the federalist vision of the Pittsburgh Manifesto is rarely found in Marxism beyond Marx's *Civil War in France* and its reporting on the federalist Paris Commune).

The issue is how to achieve this socialist society. It is here that Most falls short and expresses his Marxist-Blanquist past.³ Thus, in 1883, he still

¹ Socialist Labor Party, "Socialism and Anarchism", *Socialism in America*, 232.

² John Most, "The Beast of Property", Albert Fried (Ed.), *Socialism in America: From the Shakers to the Third International* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 218-9.

³ Louis-Auguste Blanqui (1805-1881) was a French socialist revolutionary. An important figure in the 19th century radical left, he argued that a socialist revolution should be carried out by a small, secret group of highly organised conspirators who, having seized power in a putsch, would then use a dictatorial State to introduce socialism. Small groups of

viewed the social revolution's initial step as the creation of a new power:

In every local community where the people have gained a victory, revolutionary committees will be constituted. These execute the decrees of the revolutionary army, which, reinforced by the armed workingmen, now rule like a new conqueror of the world.¹

Anarchists reject the idea of a revolution by "decrees" from "revolutionary committees" which "rule" by means of a "revolutionary army" as being doomed to failure – they will hinder the masses, stop the progress of the revolution and become the embryo of a new ruling class. Instead, revolutions are best organised from below, by federations of workplace and community assemblies with the people armed to ensure the defence of the new system (from the deposed ruling class and any who seek to take its place). There may, indeed, be committees but these would be administrative and seek to coordinate rather than "rule" and "execute" decrees, an important difference.

Worse, a key role of these new bodies would be slaughter, for capitalism "will be abolished in the most rapid and thorough manner, if its supports — the 'beasts of property' and horde of adherents — are annihilated... massacres of the people's enemies must be instituted".² Such a perspective is hardly anarchist and rejected by every revolutionary anarchist thinker, including Bakunin, Kropotkin and Malatesta. Its roots lie elsewhere.

Most's position in 1883 when he was calling himself an anarchist is, significantly, similar to that articulated whilst still in Europe and eschewed the name. He declared in October 1880 that "[w]e have not become Anarchists. But it is true that we regard them as honest social revolutionaries who stand closest to us and with whom we... can go *hand in hand*".³ His differences with anarchism can

professional, dedicated revolutionaries were his agents of change rather than the proletariat or peasantry and so he did not believe in popular movements.

¹ Most, 217.

² Most, 217.

³ Quoted by Heiner Becker, "Johann Most in Europe", *The Raven Anarchist Quarterly*, Volume 1 No. 4 (March 1988), 299.

be seen in "Durch Terrorismus zur Freiheit" ("Through Terrorism to Freedom") published on 11 December 1880:

The masses want the present building of society to be smashed, but it will certainly be reserved to a comparatively small group of courageous men to take the initiative at an appropriate moment...

The revolutionary army, therefore, will have to be complemented by men from the most reliable circles of the people; it will have to build a firmly constructed organisation – it has to seize political power entirely and simply to proclaim a *reign of terror*... Let them be called tyrants, when they use violence; we do not fear the tyranny of the revolutionary proletariat. We know in advance that it will put at its head only an executive power which, chosen from its midst, not only consists of tried and trustworthy people but also cannot do anything that has not the complete approval of the soldiers of the revolution.⁴

His "adoption of anarchism by 1883 had no discernible effect on the content or popularity of *Freiheit* (which still bore the subtitle 'Organ of the Revolutionary Socialists' on its masthead)" while his political ideology "was not only poorly defined but also changed significantly over time".⁵

"Political terrorism, and not anarchism," wrote Max Nettlau, "had come to replace social democracy, anarchism having been relegated to a goal in the far distance."⁶ Kropotkin noted the likes of Marxists and Blanquists "dream of revolution as the legal massacre of their enemies" but the "people do not reign by terror. Invented to forge chains, terror covered by legality forges chains for the people." Genuine revolutionaries had to reject this "Jacobin programme" as "a senseless dream" for "[v]ery sad would be the future of the

⁴ Quoted by Becker, 301-2.

⁵ Elun Gabriel, "Anarchism's Appeal to German Workers, 1878-1914", *Journal for the Study of Radicalism* (Spring 2011), 43.

⁶ Quoted by Goyens, 77.

revolution if it could only triumph by terror.”¹ Bakunin, likewise, stressed that the social revolution “will wage an inexorable war on ‘social positions’, not on men” and, while acknowledging the likelihood of popular vengeance initially, stressed the need for revolutionaries to “oppose with all their energy hypocritical, political and legal butchery, organised in cold blood.”²

Most’s position was alien to revolutionary anarchism and undoubtedly reflected Blanquist influences. Yet he was right – and echoed the likes of Bakunin, Kropotkin and Malatesta – when he argued that “[a]ll free communities [must] enter into an offensive and defensive alliance during the continuance of the combat. The revolutionary communes must incite rebellion in the adjacent districts”.³ However, this essential federated self-defence of a revolution, of freedom, by the people armed cannot and should not be confused with mass murder any more than with a State.

Context matters. Most was writing after the Paris Commune when the Parisian workers were slaughtered in their tens of thousands but that is why the ruling class needs to be overthrown, not imitated.

Most before Haymarket: Tactics

The question of violence is a peculiar one. Many denounce anarchism as “violent” while wholeheartedly supporting the State and its violence, whether internal (repressing protest) or external (war). Sometimes it becomes farcical, as when then Labour Party leader Ed Miliband lectured an anti-austerity march against using

“violence” (in this case, property damage) and urging them to follow the example of... the suffragettes! Presumably because they were right and won, their actual tactics can be forgiven and forgotten. So rather than “violence”, the issue for many is whether violence is officially approved or not – if so, they happily support it while denouncing the “violence” of those seeking to end the official violence needed to protect exploitation and oppression.

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We should not forget – as many writers on anarchism do – that “[v]iolence by police, soldiers, and detectives against working Americans was a daily occurrence, and much of it was excessive and remained unpunished. Advocacy of the use of grenades and bullets against striking workers had been common in the popular press since the 1870s.” It cannot be denied that “German anarchists used inflammatory language laced with threats to peace, order, and property, but their utterances pale in comparison to the ubiquitous violences against marching or

striking workers, or the belligerent tone of popular newspapers”.⁴ Unsurprisingly, even moderate trade unions armed themselves for self-defence.

Most arrived in America an advocate of “propaganda of the deed” in the sense of individual acts of terror. This he seemed to associate with anarchism, for as he told the *Tribune* on 25 December 1882: “I entertain the views of the Carl Marx school of agitators, but advocate the practice of the Anarchist.”⁵

Why did he think terrorism was “the practice of the Anarchist”? Needless to say, its enemies seek to portray terrorism as an expression of anarchism. Thus, for example, a Stalinist account

¹ *Revolutionary Studies* (Office of “The Commonweal”): London, 1892), 12-3, 16.

² “Circulaire. À mes amis d’italie”, *Œuvres* (Paris: Stock, 1913) Tome VI: 400.

³ Most, “The Beast of Property”, 218.

⁴ Goyens, 99, 4.

⁵ Quoted by Bruce C. Nelson, *Beyond the martyrs: a social history of Chicago's anarchists, 1870-1900* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1988), 155.

of Albert Parsons' life wrote of how the American "Social Revolutionary movement" moved towards "anarchist advocacy of individual terror" under Most's influence.¹ Yet such a tactic is not to be found in the writings of Bakunin and Kropotkin. Rather, they advocated activism within the labour and other popular movements. This awkward fact does not stop even academics proclaiming otherwise:

"[Propaganda by the deed was originally coined by Sergei Nechaev and Mikhail Bakunin in 1869... [they] dismissed what the two Russian revolutionaries called 'pointless propaganda that keeps neither to time nor to space' in favour of concrete insurrectionary activity... [in] their pamphlet 'Principles of Revolution'... printed in Russian in Geneva"²

Yet while what "propaganda by the deed" became (i.e., individual acts of terror) is certainly within this anonymously published work, the phrase itself does not appear (so hardly "coined") nor is there any evidence that Bakunin wrote or even contributed to it.³ This lack of evidence has not stopped this suggestion being repeated for a long time – for example, by a Belgian economist in 1880⁴ – and with the same lack of evidence.

This notion is primarily drawn from a text entitled *The Principles of the Revolution* which was circulated anonymously among Russian émigré

¹ Alan Calmer, *Labor Agitator: The story of Albert R. Parsons* (New York: International Publishers, 1937), 68.

² Alexander Sedlmaier, "The Consuming Visions of Late Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth century Anarchists: Actualising Political Violence Transnationally", *European Review of History – Revue européenne d'Histoire*, Vol. 14, No. 3 (September 2007), 284.

³ The CD-ROM *Oeuvres complètes Bakounine* (2000) includes "The Principles of Revolution" in spite of adding the note

circles in Geneva as a broadsheet while both Bakunin and Nechaev were there. Marx and Engels, in their campaign against Bakunin, seem to be the first to link it to Bakunin – just as they sought to link every activity of Nechaev to him. Thus we find them admit that this work was one of



Most acting in Gerhard Hauptmann's play 'Die Weber' (The Weavers) in the United States

a series of "anonymous Russian publications" before asserting that their authors were clear as they contained the "same phrases, the same expressions as those used by Bakunin and Nechaev". They undermine their claim by suggesting that "[n]o one will venture to doubt that these Russian pamphlets, the secret statutes, and all the works published by Bakunin since 1869 in French, come from one and the same source"⁵ for anyone familiar with those French writings will see very little in common between the two, with these anonymous works containing ideas which do not appear in any other of Bakunin's writings, private, published or unpublished.

Their case rests on a perceived similarity of phrases and expressions, yet Engels later saw "a stifling heap of eternally repeated Bakuninist phrases"⁶ a text by Petr Tkachev. This Russian émigré was no friend or associate of Bakunin and his politics were Jacobin and Blanquist in nature. He protested the assertion:

You insult me in all manner of ways because you see "Bakuninistic phrases" in my brochure, which were unknown to me until now, from which you deduce that our

that it is "uncertain whether Bakunin contributed to this article"!

⁴ Émile de Laveleye, "L'Apôtre de la destruction universelle – Bakounine", *Revue des Deux Mondes*, Tome 39: mai-juin 1880.

⁵ K. Marx and F. Engels. "The Alliance of Socialist Democracy and the International Working Men's Association. Report and Documents Published by Decision of the Hague Congress", *Marx-Engels Collected Works*: 23: 519, 525.

⁶ "Refugee Literature", *Marx-Engels Collected Works* 24: 24.

sympathies and at the same time the sympathies of the large part of our resolute revolutionary party are not on your side, but on the side of a man who dared to raise the flag of rebellion against you and your friends and who since that time became your most fierce enemy, your nightmare, your *bête noire*, your apocalypse.¹

Significantly, before leaving Russia Nechaev had collaborated with Tkachev within the “Committee of the Russian Revolutionary Party” and whose works have numerous common ideas and expressions with both an earlier writing by Tkachev and the *Catechism*.²

Moreover, why anonymity, given that Marx and Engels note one of these works was “signed Mikhail Bakunin”?³ Bakunin, then, was clearly not shy in letting the public know of his authorship. Likewise, they do not ponder their suggestion that while Bakunin kept his real views hidden from “the rank and file of the Alliance” to the Russian-speaking public in Geneva he “dare[d] to speak out openly” by means of anonymous broadsheets.⁴ They want their readers to conclude that these anonymous writings, which they admit are at odds with his earlier public and private writings, express his true ideas, ideas he refused to privately share with even his closest comrades (bar one, Nechayev) but thought wise to proclaim publicly to anyone in Geneva who could read Russian. Lesser minds, such as those who know of confirmation bias, would have drawn a different conclusion, namely that these publications were *not* written by Bakunin.

In terms of the strategy of assassinations proclaimed by this publication, Bakunin had earlier argued against it after Karakozov’s failed attempt on the Tsar in 1866: “Like you, I expect no benefit whatsoever from the assassination of the Tsar of

Russia; I am even prepared to admit that such regicide would be positively harmful by provoking a momentary reaction favourable to the Tsar”.⁵ While a broadsheet praised Karakozov’s act as an example to follow, nothing Bakunin subsequently wrote suggests that he changed his mind on this. Indeed, he privately and publicly argued that “we wish not to kill persons, but to abolish status and its perquisites” and revolution “does not mean the death of the individuals who make up the bourgeoisie, but the death of the bourgeoisie as a political and social entity economically distinct from the working class.”⁶

Marx and Engels are not alone in attributing to Bakunin all of Nechayev’s actions and writings, including the notorious *Catechism of a Revolutionary*. Sadly, the “only problem with this argument is that Bakunin did not write either the ‘Catechism’ or ‘Principles of Revolution’” for the “unique amoral cast [expressed] have no antecedents in Bakunin’s thoughts and the reference to violence and destruction are very different from those made by Bakunin before and after... he insisted that revolutionary violence was to be directed against institutions, not people, and nowhere did he advocate terrorism or assassination”.⁷ *The Principles of Revolution* “seems to be the work of Nechev” while the *Catechism of the Revolutionary* must “be attributed to Nechaev”.⁸

As Bakunin wrote in a bourgeois newspaper, rather than “attribute to me writings the publication of which I have no connection... when you deign to grant me the honour of your attacks, accuse me only for writings that bear my name.”⁹

The inventions of Marx and Engels undoubtedly ensured that Most considered terrorism as anarchism. For example, in 1880 as well as publishing Nechayev’s *Catechism* and mistakenly attributing it to Bakunin¹⁰, *Freiheit* “published

¹ Quoted by Wolfgang Eckhardt, *The First Socialist Schism: Bakunin vs. Marx in the International Working Men’s Association* (Oakland: PM Press, 2016), 414.

² Michael Confino, *Daughter of a Revolutionary: Natalie Herzen and the Bakunin-Nechaev Circle* (LaSalle Illinois: Library Press, 1973), 33-4.

³ Marx and Engels, 549.

⁴ Marx and Engels, 525

⁵ Letter to Herzen and Ogarev, 19 July 1866.

⁶ “The Hypnotizers”, *The Basic Bakunin: Writings 1869-1871* (Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1994), 71, 70.

⁷ Mark Leier, *Bakunin: The Creative Passion* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2006), 208.

⁸ Paul Avrich, *Bakunin & Nechaev* (London: Freedom Press, 1987), 10, 14.

⁹ *Journal de Genève*, 25 September 1873.

¹⁰ Tom Goyens, *Johann Most: Life of a Radical* (Urbana, Chicago and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2025), 84.

Bakunin's 'Revolutionary Principles'.¹ The latter soon appeared in English when it was published in the second issue of Edward Nathan-Ganz's *An-Anarchist: Socialistic-Revolutionary Review* while the *Catechism* was published in an IWPA paper, *The Alarm*² both under Bakunin's name.

As Nettlau noted, at this time "the Socialists in Germany... knew nothing whatever about Anarchism, and had only heard or read the Marxist calumnies against Bakunin and the like."³ Most undoubtedly thought these texts were by Bakunin thanks to Marx and Engels. It is unsurprisingly then that "Nettlau has argued that *Freiheit* did not express a coherent anarchist outlook at this time, but unfortunately many of its German readers and the public believed that revolutionary terrorism equaled anarchism."⁴ Unsurprisingly, the actions of a host of non-anarchist activists – primarily the Russian populists who assassinated the Tsar (who were, and often still are, confused with anarchists) but also Irish nationalists – were championed in *Freiheit*. Most, however, failed to see that the weakness of this tactic was all too obvious – while a Tsar was killed, Tsarism continued.

It was with these erroneous ideas on anarchist tactics that the Social-Revolutionaries attended the London Congress of 1881 alongside anarchists like Kropotkin who were seeking a rebirth of the Federalist International based upon its revolutionary unionism.⁵ Sadly, this Congress saw the mutation of "propaganda of the deed" into

terrorism and dynamite-bluster. Before then, it referred to any collective action which could encourage wider revolt such as the failed Benevento insurrection led by Malatesta and Cafiero in Southern Italy in April 1877 or, a month earlier, the illegal demonstration in Berne on the anniversary of the Commune on 18 March carrying the banned red flag. Somewhat ironically given its

later meaning, *L'Avante-Garde* – Paul Brousse's paper which did so much to advocate the notion – viewed an attempted assassination of the German Emperor as follows:

the Hoedel attempt was *not* an act of propaganda by the deed. The theme of the need for *collective* action which, contrary to a widespread impression, characterized the formulation of 'propaganda by the deed', was repeated on the occasion of Nobiling's attempt... Brousse went on to insist that anarchists should choose the *best* means, and pointed out that the actions of Hoedel and Nobiling were of

extremely limited value, reflected a 'Republican' rather than a socialist outlook and in addition risked misrepresentation which could destroy any value they may carry... such acts were not regarded as suitable means of action and did not come in the category of propaganda by the deed.⁶

Of course, not all anarchists subscribed or supported either version of "propaganda by the deed", Kropotkin being a notable example.⁷ What is striking is the paucity of evidence for this allegedly predominant strategy. Often it is little more than a single quote from Carlo Cafiero's

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Federalist International
based upon its
revolutionary unionism**

¹ Becker, 299. Becker, it must be noted, mistakenly asserts it was "written in 1869 for Nechaev".

² "Nihilism! Extracts from the text book of the Russian Anarchist", *The Alarm*, 23 January 1886.

³ N. M., "John Most", *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Communism*, April 1906.

⁴ Goyens, *Johann Most*, 84.

⁵ Iain McKay, "The London Congress of 1881", *Anarcho-Syndicalist Review* No. 87 (Summer 2023).

⁶ David Stafford, *From anarchism to reformism; a study of the political activities of Paul Brousse within the First International and the French socialist movement 1870-90* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), 123-4.

⁷ Caroline Cahm, *Kropotkin and the Rise of Revolutionary Anarchism 1872-1886* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

article “Action” (and when not mis-attributed to Kropotkin even after its real author was indicated in 1883¹, its appearance in the paper he edited is usually noted even though this fails to understand the role of, and pressures upon, the editor of an anarchist journal). The fact that the era of *attentats* occurred over a decade later and were driven by revenge rather than propaganda is ignored.²

This is not to say that anarchists never advocated “deeds” – for organising a union, a strike, a protest, a march, a workplace occupation or squatting is a “deed” (likewise, what counts as “illegal” varies considerably -- carrying a red flag was often illegal as were strikes and unions). So a common technique to associate anarchism with terrorism is to search for use of the word “deed” in Bakunin’s works. For example, we find him in 1873 writing that this “is the time not for ideas but for action, for deeds” but he immediately indicated what these were: “now is the time for the organisation of the forces of the proletariat... Organize every more strongly the practical militant solidarity of the workers of all trades in all countries”³ These were the tactics Bakunin advocated, not terrorism.⁴

If, as one Stalinist put it, “Parsons and Spies were through with the ballot. But they still believed firmly in trade union work... Most’s attitude on the trade union question cost him the full support of

the Chicago group”⁵ then it was the former who actually advocated anarchist tactics rather than the latter.

Most and Anarchism

This suggests that Most *cannot* be considered as a consistent anarchist thinker between 1882 and 1886 as he was too influenced by his previous politics:

Most knew little about communist-anarchism, and when its influence grew within the London exile community, he did not think much of it. For much of his life, Most’s radicalism was influenced by an amalgam of thinkers, including Marx, Lasselle, Blanqui, and Bakunin... [he and others] became social revolutionaries without completely abandoning certain Blanquist or Lassallean traits. Perhaps for that reason, Most’s anarchism would always remain eclectic. As late as 1887, Kropotkin commented that the anarchism espoused in *Freiheit* was full of Blanquism. Nettlau, in fact, believed that for years Most’s affinity with anarchism was tenuous and that it matured slowly.⁶

Historian Henry David, drawing upon Rudolf Rocker’s biography of Most, likewise notes that “[d]uring the years 1883-1886, there was a greater stress upon anarchistic elements in the principles advocated by the *Freiheit*, but a more clearly defined theory of Anarchist-communism did not become apparent until after 1886.” Most “called himself an anarchist... [b]ut his views on

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¹ Nicolas Walter, “Anarchist Books”, *Freedom: Anarchist Weekly*, 11 December 1971.

² The Haymarket bomb is no exception. Assuming it was not the act of an agent provocateur, it was thrown in response to a police attack on a peaceful meeting – called to protest the shooting of six unarmed strikers by the Chicago police – and so was self-defence rather than propaganda or in expectation of producing a revolution.

³ “Letter to the Comrades of the Jura Federation”, *Bakunin on Anarchism* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1980), 352-3.

⁴ Bakunin also argued for public and secret groups of revolutionaries but these were to work within popular movements spreading anarchist ideas and did not aim to seize power but rather to encourage the masses’ self-activity and self-organisation before and during a social revolution. This is in stark contrast to Blanqui and Russian Nihilist-Populist groups even if they also organised secretly.

⁵ Calmer, 62.

⁶ Goyens, *Beer and Revolution*, 126.

Anarchism were exceedingly cloudy.” It was only later, “as a result of Kropotkin’s teachings, that Most’s views crystallized and became unmistakably anarchist-communist.”¹

A recent biography of Most notes that anarchist historian “Max Nettlau has suggested that during the early 1880s, Most did not fully grasp the tenets of anarchism, though his readers believed that *Freiheit* was presenting the latest version of anarchist thought... It was not until after 1887, when Most’s ideological stance began to shift more toward communist anarchism, that he demonstrated a deeper understanding of anarchist philosophy”.² Nettlau himself, in his obituary of Most, wrote that “Most’s Anarchism, as expressed in the *first* edition of his ‘Free Society’ [in 1884], was entirely home-made; it was Federalist Socialism, hardly anything else. He had had hardly any access at that time, I believe to real Anarchist literature, which was not so readily accessible then as it is to-day [in 1906].” He pointed to “the uncouth authoritarian Communism of Most in 1882-83” before noting that he “by-and-by modified his views, and accepted Communist Anarchism fully the moment he really knew it from its proper sources.”³

Most “arrived at anarchism with substantial Marxist baggage” and when he set-foot on America soil in 1882 his “radical philosophy consisted of a mixture of Marxist-Blanquist and Bakuninist ideas.” As he later admitted: “The anarchism that was then in my mind was, theoretically speaking, of an extremely mediocre vintage.” In this, he was not alone and German radicals in the early 1880s were “an amalgam of discontented, displaced, and largely antistate

socialists. They included antiparliamentarians, nihilists, social revolutionaries, Blanquists, and anarchists.” As such, the “German social-revolutionary movement that sprang up after 1879... cannot accurately be called anarchist until several years later.”⁴

Combine Most’s views on the nature of a social revolution with his advocacy of individual terror, a tactic not found in Bakunin and Kropotkin, and a lack of interest in working within the labour movement, a tactic which is found in Bakunin and Kropotkin, it is hard not to conclude that he was not an anarchist in the early years of his exile in America. This was hidden by a lack of understanding of anarchism then (and now!) and that Most’s vision of socialism was federalist in nature and so, like his critique of capitalism, it contained many aspects of genuine anarchism.

Yet, in spite of his politics, Most played an important role in the development of anarchism in America during the years 1882 to 1886. He was an entertaining speaker and writer, he helped raise certain libertarian ideas and the profile of the IWPA alongside the violent and terrorist rhetoric which was so at odds with the anarchist tradition but which, sadly, did so much to link them. However, others in the IWPA – particularly the English-language sections – had a firmer grasp of anarchism during this period, as can be seen by its involvement in the labour and eight-hour movements.

Most after Haymarket

Ironically, Most’s advocacy of individual action (terror) -- what seems to be *the* definitive “anarchist” tactic for so many – is very much at odds with the revolutionary anarchist tradition

the label after 1882. This is a common failure in academics looked at the IWPA.

² Goyens, *Johann Most*, 8-9.

³ N. M., “John Most”, *Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Communism*, May 1906.

⁴ Goyens, *Beer and Revolution*, 86, 94, 111, 75.

¹ Henry David, *The history of the Haymarket affair: a study in the American social-revolutionary and labor movements* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1958), 109, 103. David, it should be noted, did not appreciate that anarchism is a school of socialism and so seems confused by Most’s use of

which placed its focus on the labour movement. This also applied to his dismissal of the struggle for reforms, a position not found in Bakunin or Kropotkin and one which Emma Goldman quickly saw through after she joined the movement.¹

It is significant that after the Haymarket events, Most started to embrace positions more in line with the anarchist tradition, not least support for labour unions and struggles.² Thus, In December 1889, he suggested that unions “pave the way for a new social system, in which economic and all other human relations would be governed not by the state or any privileged class or any dominant power but by free associations of the able-bodied each according to different spheres of activity.”³ As his biographer summarises:

it would be inaccurate to portray him as an opponent of organized labor... His opposition was directed at the centralizing and reformist tendencies rather than the movement itself. Most believed that fighting solely for shorter hours would not fundamentally challenge the exploitative capitalist system. Instead, he argued that labor unions must have a revolutionary basis and work toward the abolition of capitalist exploitation. Most emphasized that unions should be part of a larger struggle for social and international revolution... Most saw the potential for trade unions to be established on a revolutionary basis, which could then play a crucial role in organizing a new society. He encouraged anarchists to work within the economic organizations of the workers to spread their ideas and advance the cause of revolutionary change. During the emergence of revolutionary syndicalism in France during the 1890s, Most supported the movement and actively promoted the writings of key figures such as Fernand Pelloutier and Émile Pouget. He viewed revolutionary syndicalism as the organisational form through which

communist anarchism could be realized. To him, the general strike by the industrial proletariat held the same historical significance as peasant revolts in premodern Europe. In 1899, Most reaffirmed his belief that trade unions were the natural organization of the proletariat, which would eventually transition from a defensive posture – focused on preserving members’ living standards – to an offensive stance aimed at fulfilling their emancipatory role. However, he cautioned that anarchists should not hesitate to criticize trade unions or point out their deficiencies despite supporting them.⁴

Along with this embrace of the labour movement, Most also rejected the use of individual violence. As such, Emma Goldman’s surprise and horror at Most’s position on Alexander Berkman’s assassination attempt on Henry Clay Frick in revenge for his use of Pinkertons against locked out workers at Homestead seems somewhat disingenuous.⁵ Most explained his revised position in April 1892 (a few months before Berkman’s *attentat*):

There is no greater error than believing that anarchists must only commit *any* deed, *any* act of violence, no matter *when*, *where*, and against *whom*, to make propaganda. Such an act must be popular and applauded by a sizable portion of the proletariat to have any effect. If this is not the case, or if an act causes general *disapproval* of those sections of the population on which it is supposed to have a stimulating effect, then the result is reversed: anarchism makes itself hated. First and foremost, disseminating anarchist-communist principles and revolutionary sentiments requires lively verbal and written, private and public

¹ *Living My Life* (New York: Dover Publications, 1970) I: 52-3.

² Goyens, 100, 163.

³ Quoted by Goyens, 163.

⁴ Goyens, *Johann Most*, 168-9.

⁵ Needless to say, Berkman’s act is usually portrayed as showing anarchism’s violent nature but the use of private troops to defend capitalist power draws no such conclusion as regards capitalism in spite of them killing nine union members.

agitation. In this area, I believe we have plenty to do in America.¹

That Berkman's attempt generated public support for Frick confirms these comments. Yes, there is a need for "deeds" for anarchism to grow – deeds in the sense that Bakunin suggested, namely building the organisation of the working masses strength on the social and economic terrain. Encouraging and participating within the self-organisation and self-activity of the working classes is an essential complement to verbal and written propaganda, as every significant anarchist movement proves.

Conclusions

When Most arrived in America, his politics were in transition. He embraced the label anarchist while holding to certain aspects of his Marxist-Blanquist past. In his critique of the current system and vision of a socialist society, he expressed a great many anarchist ideas but in terms of how to go from here to there, there was a continuation of the ideas he had advocated while in Europe.

As such, claims that Most advocated collectivist (or Bakuninist) anarchism in the early 1880s must be questioned, given he rejected its key tactic (revolutionary unionism) in favour of one which was not advocated (terrorism). Likewise, his advocacy of what is clearly a revolutionary

government is at odds with Bakunin's arguments. Sharing a belief that goods would be distributed by deed rather than need after a social revolution cannot negate the more significant differences.

Most's legacy, then, is a mixed one. For while he eventually became a genuine communist-anarchist by the late 1880s until his death in 1906, he advocated ideas influenced by a whole range of thinkers in the early 1880s. Some of these ideas – such as his critique of capitalism and vision of a free society – reflected anarchism, others –

Some of these ideas – such as his critique of capitalism and vision of a free society – reflected anarchism, others – like his strategy and vision of revolution – reflected his pre-anarchist embrace of Blanquist politics and an erroneous understanding of anarchist tactics produced by his Marxist past

like his strategy and vision of revolution – reflected his pre-anarchist embrace of Blanquist politics and an erroneous understanding of anarchist tactics produced by his Marxist past. Unfortunately, it took the repression after the Haymarket police riot and the judicial murder of his comrades to clarify them.

And yet the rich and mighty foster and nourish divine idiocy and religious stupidity. It is, in fact, part of their business; It is, in fact, part of their business; it is really a question of life or death to the domineering and exploiting classes, whether the people at large are dumbfounded religiously or not. With religious lunacy stands and falls their power. The more man clings to religion, the more he believes – the more he believes the less he knows – the less he knows, the more stupid he is – the more stupid, the easier he is governed – the easier to govern, the better he may be exploited – the more exploited, the poorer he gets – the poorer he, the richer and mightier the domineering classes get – the more riches and power they amass, the heavier their yoke upon the neck of the people.

– John Most, *The God Pestilence* (1883)

¹ Quoted by Goyens, 144-5.

The Beast of Property

John Most

1883

“Among the beasts of prey man is certainly the worst.” This expression, very commonly made nowadays, is only relatively true. Not man as such, but man in connection with wealth is a beast of prey. The richer a man, the greater his greed for more. We may call such a monster the “beast of property.” It now rules the world, making mankind miserable. and gains in cruelty and voracity with the progress of our so called “civilisation”. This monster we will in the following characterise and recommend to extermination.

Look about ye! In every so-called “civilised” country there are among every 100 men about 95 more or less destitute and about 5 money-bags.

It is unnecessary to trace all the sneaking ways by which they have gained their possessions. The fact that they own ALL, while the others exist, or rather vegetate merely, admits of no doubt, that these few have grown rich at the expense of the many.

Either by direct brute force, by cunning, or by fraud, this horde has from time to time seized the soil with all its wealth. The laws of inheritance and entail, and the changing of hands, have lent a “venerable colour to this robbery, and consequently mystified and erased the character of such actions. For this reason the “beast of property” is not fully recognised, but is, on the contrary, worshipped with a holy awe.

And yet, all who do not belong to this class are its victims. Every off-spring of a non-possessor (poor man) finds every nook and corner the earth occupied at his entrance into the world. There is nothing which is “lordless.” Without labour nothing is produced; and in order to labour, there are required not only ability and will, but also room to work, tools, raw materials and means of sustenance. The poor man must, therefore,

by force of necessity, apply to those who possess these things in plenty. And, behold! the rich give him permission to continue his existence. But in return for this he must divest himself of his skill and power. These qualities henceforth his pretended “saviours” use for themselves. They place him under the yoke of labour – they force him to the utmost of his mental and physical abilities to produce new treasures, which however he is not entitled to own. Should he desire to deliberate for long before making so unequal a contract, his growling stomach will soon convince him that the poor man has no time that, for there are millions in the same position as himself and he will risk that, while deliberating, hundreds of others will apply – his chance is gone and he again will be at the mercy of the winds.

It is the lash of hunger which compels the poor man to submit. In order to live he MUST SELL – “VOLUNTARILY” SELL – HIMSELF every day and hour to the “beast of property.”

The bygone times, when the “ruling” classes, on their slave-hunting raids, threw their victims in chains and forced them to work, of which the rulers had all the benefit – the times when christian-germanic

robbers stole entire countries, deprived the inhabitants of the soil, and pressed them to feudal service, were indeed terrible enough, but the climax of infamy has been reached by our present “law and order” system, for it defrauded more than nine-tenths of mankind of their means of existence, reduced them to dependence upon an insignificant minority, and condemned them to self-sacrifice. At the same time it has disguised this relation with all sorts of jugglery so that the thralls of today – the wage slaves – but partially recognise their serfdom and outlawed position, they rather incline to ascribe it to the caprices of fortune.

Every off-spring of a non-possessor (poor man) finds every nook and corner the earth occupied at his entrance into the world. There is nothing which is “lordless.” ... The poor man must, therefore, by force of necessity, apply to those who possess these things in plenty. And, behold! the rich give him permission to continue his existence. But in return for this he must divest himself of his skill and power.

To perpetuate this state of affairs is the only aim of the “prominent” classes. Though not always united among themselves – one seeking to gain advantage over the other by tricks of trade, cunning in speculation and divers machinations of competition – yet in opposition to the proletariat they stand in one united hostile phalanx. Their political ideal is, therefore – in spite of all liberal phrases – a most powerful, centralised and brutal beadle government

If the poor man, who is momentarily unable to sell himself to an exploiter of labour, or is already flayed to complete helplessness by the “beast of property,” has recourse to begging – then the gluttoned bourgeois terms it “vagrancy,” and calls for police; he demands pillory and prison for the poor devil who refuses to starve between mountains of food.

Should the unemployed apply a little of the much vaunted self-help, that is, should he do in a small way, what the rich do daily with impunity on a grand scale, should he, in fact, steal, in order to live – the bourgeoisie will heap burning coals of “moral indignation” upon his head, and, with an austere visage, hand him over relentlessly in charge of the state, that in its prisons he may be fleeced the more effectively, i.e., cheaper.

When the workers combine in order to obtain better wage, shorter hours of labour, or similar advantages, the money-bags immediately decry it as “conspiracy,” which must be prevented.

When the workers organise politically, it is denounced as resistance to the “divine” order of things, which must be nullified by laws of exception or discrimination.

Should the people finally contemplate rebellion, an unceasing howl of rage raised by the “gold tigers” will be heard throughout the world – they pant for massacres and their thirst for blood is insatiable.

The life of the poor is valued as nothing by the rich. As the owner of vessels he places the lives of entire crews in jeopardy, when he is to fraudulently obtain high insurance for half decayed hulks. Bad ventilation, deep excavation, defective supports, etc., etc., annually bring death to thousands of miners, but this system of operation saves expenses, therefore augments the gains, and gives the mine owners no occasion to be sorry. Neither does the factory-pasha care how many of “his” labourers are torn and rent apart by machinery, poisoned by chemicals, or slowly suffocated by dirt and dust. Profit is the main thing.

Women are cheaper than men: for this reason the capitalistic vampires with insatiate rapacity seek their

blood. Besides, female labour procures them cheap mistresses.

Child flesh is the cheapest: what wonder then that the cannibals of modern society continually feast upon juvenile victims? What care they that the poor little ones are thereby bodily crippled and mentally ruined for life – that thousands of them, miserable and worn out at a tender age, sink into their graves? Stocks rise; that suffices.

As the bourgeoisie, by means of its capital, completely monopolise all new inventions, every new machine, instead of shortening the hours of labour and enhancing the prosperity and happiness of ALL, causes on the contrary, dismissal from employment for some, reduction of wages for others, and an increased and intensified state of misery for the entire proletariat.

When increase of production is accompanied by an augmented pauperisation of the masses, consumption must simultaneously decrease and stagnation and crises must ensue. A superabundance of actual wealth in the hands of the few must create hunger, typhus, and other epidemics among the many. The injustice – yea the idiocy – of this state of affairs is evident. The money-bags of course merely shrug their shoulders. This they will continue to do until a rope well tied over their shoulders will end all further shrugging.

The worker is not only fleeced in manifold ways as producer, but also as consumer. Numberless parasites seek to despoil him of his paltry income.

After products have passed through various exchanges and storage stages, and their prices have been raised by jobbers and brokers’ profits, by taxes and custom house duties, they finally reach the retailers, whose customers are almost exclusively the proletarians. The wholesalers “make” (that is, fraudulently obtain) perhaps 10 to 20 per cent profit by their transactions; the retailer is dissatisfied with less than 100 per cent. He makes use of all sorts of tricks for securing this result, especially the most shameless adulteration of food. In close relationship to these swindlers are the numberless poisoners and adulterators of beer, liquors, wine, etc., who render the streets in all our great cities, and industrial centres unsafe with their nefarious traffic. Then there are the tenement-lords, who ceaselessly seek means to embitter the existence of the poor. The condition of the rooms become steadily worse, the rents higher, and the contracts more galling. The workers are crowded together more and more into rear houses, attics and cellar-holes, full of vermin, and musty. Prison cells are frequently far healthier than these pest-holes.

When the worker is out of employment. he is again at the mercy of hordes of speculators in hunger, who are ready to pounce upon him order to complete his ruin. Pawnbrokers and others of similar ilk advance small sums at high interest on the last possessions of the poor. Their contracts are usually so arranged that they can hardly be kept; the pawned objects [are] forfeited and the poor wretch takes another downward step. The cut-throats, however, amass fortunes in a short time. The beggar is looked upon as quite a well-paying figure by certain sharks. Every copper which he has gathered in is unenviable way arouses the covetousness of the keeper of dirty holes and vile dens.

Even thieves are subject to this capitalistic spoliation. They are the slaves of crafty concealers and “fences,” who receive their stolen goods for a song. Yes even those unfortunate women, whom the present accursed system has driven to prostitution, are shamelessly plundered by keepers of brothels and houses of ill-fame.

This is the lot of the poor from the cradle to the grave. Whether he produces or consumes, whether he exists or merely vegetates, he is always surrounded [by] ravenous vampires who thirst for his last drop of blood. On the other hand, the rich man never stops his work of exploiting, though he may be utterly unable to assign a reason for his greed, He that has \$1,000,000 would have \$10,000,000; he that has \$100,000,000 would have \$1,000,000,000.

The greed for wealth is closely associated with the greed for power. Wealth is not only a generator of more wealth, it is also a political power. Under the present capitalistic system venality is an all-pervading vice. It is as a rule a mere matter of price which will buy over who may be of service either by speech or silence, by the pen or by the press, by acts of violence or any other means, to the “beast of property,” which by its golden dictates is the absolute, almighty divinity.

In Europe and America there are several hundred thousand priests and ministers, specially provided for to poison the common sense of the masses. Numberless missionaries wander from house to house spreading senseless tracts, or commit other “spiritual” mischief. In the schools strenuous attempts are made to nullify what little good the training in reading, writing, and ciphering may bring with it. Idiomatic

maltreatment of “history” excites that blatant prejudice which divides people, prevents them from recognising the fact, that their oppressors have so leagued together against them, and that all politics, past and present, has the only object in view, that of firmly establishing the power of the rulers, and thereby ensuing (sic) the exploitation of the poor by the rich.

The hawking trade in “loyalty and other intoxicants” is attended to by the inkslingers of the daily press, numerous literary perverters of history, by political heelers of the various predominating cliques, rings, combinations and organisations, by parliamentary windbags with seductive smiles, pledges on their lips and treason in their hearts, and hundreds of other politicians of all degrees and shades of villainy.

Whole squads of bushwhackers are specially employed in mystifying the social question. The professors of political economy for instance, play the part of lackeys to the bourgeoisie, extolling the golden calf as the true sun of life, and using falsehood and knavery so “scientifically,” that they make the tanning of workingmen’s hides appear as a benefaction to mankind. Some of those charlatans recommend social reform, or in other words,

processes, based on the maxim of washing without wetting; not to mention their celebrated recipes for economising and educating.

While thus bamboozling the masses the capitalistic knights of plunder continue to perfect their mechanism of power. New offices are created. High positions in these are filled in Europe by the progeny of the former highwaymen (now a “nobleman”) in America by the most crafty office hunters and the most wily thieves, who combine with their original purpose of authoritatively gagging the proletariat, the very pleasant business of till-tapping and forgery on a grand scale. They command armies of soldiers, gendarmes, policemen, spies, judges, prison-keepers, tax collectors, executors, etc., etc. The lower class of the beadleom are almost wholly recruited from the ranks of the non-possessors, and are only exceptionally [rarely] better paid. For all that, they display great zeal as spies, eavesdroppers, and poke-noses, as claws, and suckers of the state, which institution is evidently no more nor less than the political organisation of a horde of swindlers spoliators, who without the tyrannising machinery

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could not exist for one day before the just wrath and condemnation of the oppressed people.

In most of the old countries this system has naturally reached its point of culmination in the outer form. The entire disciplinary apparatus of the state concentrates in a monarchic power. Its representatives "by the grace of God" are, in accordance, the very quintessence of villainy. In them all vice and crime common to the ruling classes is developed to a monstrous degree. Their most agreeable occupation is a wholly murder (war); when they rob, and they do it often, they always rob entire countries and hundreds, even, thousands of millions. Incendiarism on a colossal scale serves to illuminate their atrocities. They adhere to the notion, that mankind exists for them to kick, cuff, and spit upon. At the best, they make it worth their while to select the most attractive women and girls from among their "subjects" to satiate their beastly lusts. The others have the right to "most obediently" die like dogs.

By direct blackmail these crowned murderers of Europe annually pocket \$50,000,000. Militarism, their pet progeny, annually costs \$1,000,000, not taking in consideration the loss of life and labour. An equal sum is paid as interest on \$20,000,000,000 of state-debts, which scoundrels have incurred in a comparatively short time. Monarchism in Europe then cost annually \$2,050,000 000 that is to say, more than 10,000,000 of workers, the supporters of 50,000,000 of people, earn as wages in the same time. In America the place of the monarchs is filled by the monopolists. Should monopolism in the alleged "free" United States of America develop at the rate it has in the last quarter of a century, there will remain free from monopolisation only daylight and air, Five hundred million acres of land in the United States, about six times the area of great Britain and Ireland, have been divided within a generation by the railroad companies and the great landlords of Europeo-aristocratic origin. Within a few decades Vanderbilt alone amassed \$200,000,000; several dozen of his competitors in robbery bid fair to outdo him.

San Francisco was settled hardly thirty years ago, to-day it harbours eighty-five millionaires! All the wealth of this great republic, although established but a century, its mines, its coalfields, its oil wells, etc., etc. has been "taken" from the people and are the property of a handful of daring adventurers and cunning schemers.

The "sovereignty of the people" falls prostrate into the dust before the influence of these money kings, railroad magnates, coal barons and factory lords. These fellows carry the whole United States in their pockets,

and that which is vaunted as untrammelled legislation and free legislation is a farce, a delusion and a snare.

If this be the condition of the green wood, what may we not expect of the decayed timber? If this young American republic, with its nearly boundless territory and its almost inexhaustible [sic] natural resources has been so fatally corrupted and ruined in such a short time by the capitalistic system – why be surprised at the results of long continued abuses of similar nature in servile, rotten Europe? Indeed it seems as though this young American republic had for the present but one historical mission, of demonstrating beyond controversy to the people on this side of the Atlantic as to those on the other by the presentation of bare, tangible facts what an outrageous monster the "beast of property" really is, and that neither the condition of the soil, the vastness of domain, nor the political forms of society can ever alter the viciousness of this beast of prey; but to the contrary, it proves, that the less a necessity naturally exists for individual greed and rapacity, the more dangerous to, and obtrusive upon society it becomes. It is not voracious to satisfy its wants – it devours for the sake of devouring only!

Let those who labour to live understand, that this monster cannot tamed, nor be made harmless or useful to man; let them learn to know, that there is but one means of safety: unrelenting, pitiless, thorough, war of extermination! Gentle overtures are for naught; scorn and derision will be the result, if by petitions, elections, and like silly attempts the proletariat hopes to command the respect of its sworn enemies.

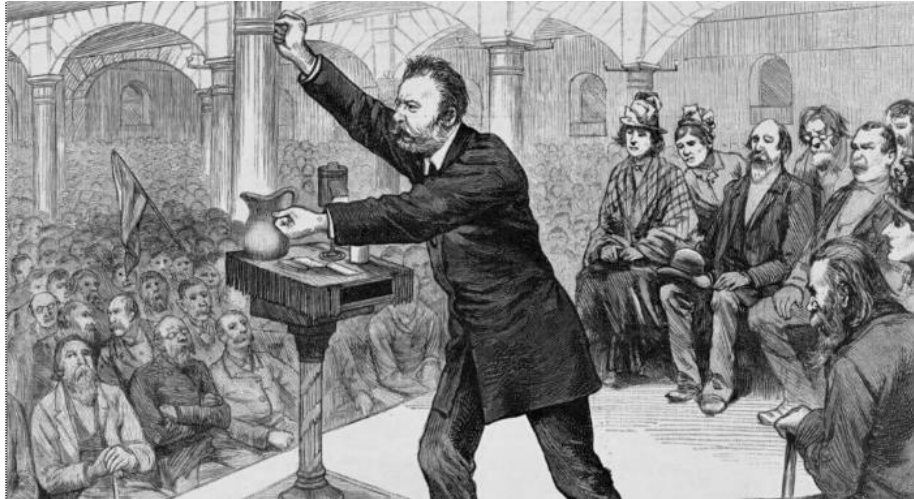
Some say, general education will bring about a change; but this advice is as a rule an idle phrase. Education of the people will only then be possible, when the obstructions thereto have been removed. And that will not take place until the entire present system has been destroyed.

But let it not be understood that nothing could or should be done by education. Far from it. Whoever has recognised the villainy of the present conditions, is in duty bound to raise his voice, in order to expose them, and thereby open the eyes of the people. Only avoid to reach this result by super-scientific reflections. Let us leave this to those well meaning scientists, who in this manner tear the mask of humanity from the "better class" and disclose the hideous countenance of the beast of prey. The language of and to the proletariat must be clear and forcible.

Whoever thus uses speech will be accused of inciting disturbance by the governing rabble; he will be bitterly hated and persecuted. This shows that the only possible and practical enlightenment must be of an inciting nature. Then let us incite!

Let us show the people how it is swindled out of its labour force by country and city capitalists, how it is euchred out of its meagre wages by the store, house, and other lords; how priests of pulpit, press, and party seek to destroy its intellect; how a brutal police is ever ready to maltreat and tyrannise it, and with a soldiery to spill its blood. Patience at last must forsake it! The people will rebel and crush its foes! The revolution of the proletariat – the war of the poor against the rich, is the only way from oppression to deliverance!

But, some interpose, revolutions can not be made! Certainly not, but they can be prepared for by directing the people's attention to the fact that such events are imminent, and calling upon them to be ready for all emergencies.



Capitalistic development, of which many theorists assert that it must proceed to the total extinction of the middle class, (small bourgeoisie), before the conditions favourable to a social revolution are at hand, has reached such a point of perfection, that its farther progress is almost impossible. Universal production (in civilised countries) can only be carried on, industrially as well as agriculturally, on a grand scale, when society is organised on a Communistic basis, and when (which will then be a truism) the reduction of the hours of labour keeps pace with the development of technical facilities, and augmented consumption with production.

This is easily comprehended. By wholesale production from 100 times more may be produced than the producers need in goods of equivalent value, and there lies the rub. Until lately, this surplus value has been but little noticed, because by far the greater portion of this so-called profit has been in turn capitalised, that is, used for new capitalistic enterprises, and because the industrially most advanced countries (the "beast of property" in those countries) export enormous quantities of merchandise. Now, however, the thing is beginning to weaken mightily. Industrialism has made great progress the world over, balancing exports and imports more and more, and for that reason new investments of capital becomes less profitable, and must, under such circumstances, soon prove entirely

unremunerative. Universal crises must ensue and will expose these glaring incongruities.

Everything therefore is ripe for Communism; it is only necessary to remove its interested inveterate enemies, the capitalists and their abettors. During these crises the people will become sufficiently prepared for the struggle. Everything will then depend on the presence of a well trained revolutionary nucleus at all points, which is fit and able to crystalise around itself the masses of the people, driven to rebellion by misery and

want of work, and which can then apply the mighty forces so formed to the destruction of all existing hostile institutions.

Therefore organise and enlarge everywhere the Socialistic revolutionary

party before it be too late! The victory of the people over its tyrants and vampires will then be certain. Instead of here developing a "programme" it is, under present conditions, of far greater importance to sketch what the proletariat must probably do immediately after the victorious battle to maintain supremacy.

Most likely the following must be done: In every local community where the people have gained a victory, revolutionary committees will be constituted. These execute the decrees of the revolutionary army, which, reinforced by the armed workingmen, now rule like a new conqueror of the world.

The former (present) system will be abolished in the most rapid and thorough manner, if its supports – the "beasts of property" and horde of adherents – are annihilated. The case standing thus: If the people do not crush them, they will crush the people, drown the revolution in the blood of the best, and rivet the chains of slavery more firmly than ever. Kill or be killed is the alternative. Therefore massacres of the people's enemies must be instituted. All free communities enter into an offensive and defensive alliance during the continuance of the combat. The revolutionary communes must incite rebellion in the adjacent districts. The war can not terminate until the enemy (the "beast of property") has been pursued to its last lurking place and totally destroyed.

In order to proceed thoroughly in the economic sense, all lands and so-called real estate, with everything upon

it, as well as all movable capital will be declared the property of the respective communes. Until the thorough harmonious reorganisation of society can be effected, the proclamation of the following principles and measures might render satisfaction.

Every pending debt is liquidated. Objects of personal uses which were pawned or mortgaged will be returned free. No rents will be paid. District committees on habitation, which will sit in permanence, allot shelter to those who are homeless or who have inadequate or unhealthy quarters; after the great purification there will be no want for desirable homes.

Until everyone can obtain suitable employment, the Commune will guarantee to all the necessities of life.

Committees on supplies will regulate the distribution of confiscated goods. Should there be a lack of anything, which might be the case in respect to articles of food, these must be obtained by proper agents.

Taking such things from neighbouring great estates by armed columns of foragers would be a most expeditious way of furnishing them.

The preparation of provisions will be done effectively by communal associations of workmen, organised for that purpose.

The immediate organisation of the workers according to the different branches of trade, and of placing at their disposal the factories, machines, raw materials, etc., etc., for co-operative production, will form the basis of the new society. The Commune will – at least for the present – be supposed to mediate and regulate consumption. It, therefore, enters into contracts with individual workers associations, makes periodical advances to them, which may consist in drafts upon the communal wares collected and stored, and thereby give the death stroke to the old monetary system.

Good schools, kindergartens, and other institutions for education must be founded without delay. The education of adults, which then will then be possible, must not be neglected or postponed. Truth and knowledge will be taught in all churches, where no priestly cant will be tolerated. All printing presses must be put in operation to produce books, papers and

pamphlets of educational value by the million, to be distributed everywhere, particularly in regions not yet liberated from thralldom. All law books, court and police records, registers of mortgages, deeds, bonds, and all so-called “valuable documents” must be burned. These indications only serve to show that the period of transition, which generally dismays those

who otherwise energetically espouse a reorganisation of society, because it appears difficult and arduous to them, need not be of such enervating nature. And now let us take a look at the ideal of our aspirations.

Free society consists of autonomous, i.e., independent Communes. A network of federations, the result of freely made social contracts, and not of authoritative government or guardianship, surrounds them all. Common affairs are attended to in accordance with free deliberation and judgement by the interested Communes or associations. The people, without distinction of sex, meet frequently in parks or suitable halls, not indeed, to make laws or to bind their own hands, but in order to decide from case to case in all matters touching Public affairs, or for appointing

individuals to execute their resolves, and hear their reports.

The exterior appearance of these Communes will be entirely different from that of the present cities and villages. Narrow streets have vanished, tenement prisons are torn down, and spacious, well-fitted palaces surrounded by gardens and parks, erected in their places, giving accommodation to larger or smaller associations brought together by identical interests, increasing comforts to a degree which no individual or family arrangement could reach.

In the country the people will be more concentrated. One agricultural commune with city conveniences will take the place of several villages. The uniting farms hitherto separated, the general application and constant improvement of agricultural implements and chemical fertilisers, the growing perfection of the means of communication and transportation, etc., have simplified this process of concentration. The former contrast between city and country disappears,

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and the principle of equality gains one of its most important triumphs.

Private property exists no more. All wealth belongs to the people or the communal leagues. Everybody, whether able to work or not can obtain from them such articles of necessity as he may desire. The sum total of necessities and comforts demanded, regulates the quantity of production.

The time of labour for the individual is limited to a few hours a day, because all those able to work, regardless of sex, take part in production, because useless, injurious, or similar work will not be done, and because technical, chemical, and other auxiliary means of production are highly developed and universally applied. By far the greater part of the day can be spent in the enjoyment of life.

The highest gratification will be found in freely chosen intellectual employment. Some spend their leisure time in the service of their fellow-men, and are busy for the common weal. Others can be found in the libraries, where they apply themselves to literary pursuits, or to gathering the material for educational lectures, or simply for private studies. Others again hasten to the lyceums, open to all, and there hear science.

Academies of painting, sculpture, music, etc., offer chances of education for such as follow the fine arts.

Friends of childhood, especially those of the female sex, centre about the places of education, where, under the direction of the real mentors of youth, they aid in the rearing and culture of the growing generation.

Teaching will be done only in well ventilated, light rooms, and during fair weather in the open air. And in order to secure the equal development of mind and body, merry play, gymnastics, and work will alternate with the close application of the mind.

Theatres and concert halls will offer free seats to all.

Forced or procured marriages are unknown; mankind has returned to the natural state and love rules unconstrained.

Vice and crime have disappeared with their original causes, private property and general misery.

Diseases to a great extent cease to appear because bad lodging, murderous workshops, impure food and drink, over-exertion, have become things unknown.

Man at last can enjoy life. The "BEAST OF PROPERTY" is no more!!!

Revolutionary Echoes

The Alarm, 11 October 1884

John Most, the revolutionary Socialist addressed large audience in Baltimore, Md., September 20: His speech is reported in the Baltimore Sun as follows:

"There exists a necessity for overturning society and reorganizing it. This capitalism cannot endure. The longer it continues the more it grasps and the more misery and hunger it causes on the other hand; It must be finally succeeded by Communism when the strain grows too great. It is for us to consider how such a communism should and must be organised. The State, whether its government-be Monarchical or republican, be regarded as a brutal organisation to assist the rich and oppress the poor. Capitalists have shown the best methods of production: that was their role in life. Having done so, their duty is over; and they have-no longer a right-to debar the workingman from his own. We are Anarchists because we want no centralised form of tyranny -dubbed state. The State, even when a republic, does nothing but play the tyrant and keep down the people for the benefit of the rich. It answers the people's cry for bread with lead or steel. The so-called crimes are only the result of the present infamous social conditions. We need no police; remove

the cause. and the effect goes of itself. The poor man wants no government; it does nothing for him but to steal his few hard earned pennies.

He attacked congresses and parliaments. saying they were collections of men legislating about things of which they knew nothing. "in our future society," he said, "we will have shoemakers meet to arrange matters about shoes, railroad men to arrange for railroads and so on, and as soon as they have done they will go home." They had formed an international union of revolutionists "to resist the international union of tyrants. Our union has already a terrible significance. The attack will be made all along the lines. There will be one great lever to throw the world out of its old ruts. We are revolutionists. not from love of gore, of bloodshed, or of the frightful scenes that must accompany a revolution, but because there is no other way to free and redeem mankind. History has taught that. No use of trying reform. The Gordian knot can be cut only by the sword; and within a few years the masses will write the history of the world."

"We see that: throughout the whole world society is progressing along the same grooves. We see monarchs

plotting to devise common means of keeping their people in subjection. We see that they feel that there is something in the wind; and are holding conferences to provide for mutual safety. Against them we oppose the international revolutionists. The league will take care that the revolution shall not begin one single place, but take place throughout the world at once. He approved of trades unions, but thought they hadn't learned their duty. They are the drilling ground of the revolution. They should not ask certain things of their employers, but demand their capital. He ridiculed the idea of voting. He bitterly satirised, to the amusement of the

audience, the recent Chicago conventions, and characterised the candidates as terribly wicked depraved men. Butler came in for a lion's share of his denunciations, and was held forth as a horrible monstrosity. The military organisation existed for the purpose of holding their bayonets at the breasts of the people and give them lead when they asked for bread. The divine doctrines have been placed in the world to deceive mankind and to reconcile them to oppression in this world by promising their glorious reward in the next."

From "Anarchy"

John Most

Die Anarchie (1888)⁶²

Anarchy is said to be general confusion, wild turmoil, which every civilisation scorns. Since this condition renders both government and law unthinkable, anarchy means the atomisation of society into isolated individuals, who with impunity attack others, until the strong subject the weak in a slavery more terrible than the world has ever seen. Abominable and absurd, the goal of the anarchist! Foul the means by which it is to be attained, namely theft, murder, arson, and all kinds of destruction! Anarchy is therefore a mixture of idiocy and crime. Against it society must defend with all power – legally so far as possible, violently when necessary. At all events, every lover of order is obliged to nip anarchy in the bud as well as eradicate anarchists root and branch from the face of the earth...

Now if people would only think... they would see: anarchy (autonomy or freedom) really means, not the criminal chaos just referred to, but the absence of the criminal chaos that archy (subjugation or government) has brought to mankind. Archy springs from the desire of the strong to oppress the weak; and up to the present day, whatever its form, oppression has been its goal.

Archy, always the tool of the propertied, has forever put the screws to the unpropertied. The more barbaric the society, the harsher and more flagrant the archy. The higher the civilisation, the more refined the cleverness of the archists in hiding the usurpation of power – without weakening the exercise of power...

If archy in all forms has brought mankind grief, it follows that the remedy is repudiation. The repudiation of archy is anarchy. Anarchy is therefore the goal of freedom-seeking mankind. Whoever seeks freedom, advances anarchy. If, among freedom-seekers, a multitude want no part of anarchy (having a false notion of it), that fact does not demean anarchy. The multitude simply do not know that, regardless of the route taken in the search for the rights of man, every route leads to anarchy. It cannot be otherwise; for either one accepts archy or one fights it and advances its opposite, anarchy. Something in between is

unthinkable...

The truth that government (archy) is instituted to exploit the poor is a truth the opponents of anarchy blink at; and, counting on the ignorance they have created in the masses, they adduce a hundred



⁶² *Black Flag Quarterly*, Summer 1984. (*Black Flag*)

bagatelles in archy's favour. They emphasise crime. Were government and law abolished, they say, unpunished crime would peril life and property until chaos rendered existence disagreeable at best.

These sorcerers! In broad daylight they ascribe to anarchy aberrations of their society, when the basis of anarchy is the absence of such aberrations. All crimes – except misbehaviour of madmen, which, by definition, is the symptom of illness – all crimes are notoriously the offspring of the system of private property, archy's reason for being. This system mandates a struggle for existence, by all, against all. Greed and the lust for power flourish in the propertied and goad the propertied to crimes that as a rule go unpunished because archy enforces its laws against another kind of "crime": those deeds done out of necessity and in response to brutality. Turn the pages of the so-called civil law: the topic is "yours and mine"; the civil law is the natural result of a society of individuals who want to cheat as much as possible because cheating is the only way to power and wealth. Today's society considers such behaviour normal.

Freedom and equality, the conditions of anarchy, would end this ruinous struggle for existence.... Law, purposeless, would no longer be needed, nor government... and they would disappear.

More important than the arguments of the archists are the arguments from a side that should have the least reason to oppose anarchy. Unconscious anarchists, particularly those called socialists, expend untold time and effort attacking anarchy, even though their goals are freedom and equality (anarchy).... These people maintain: anarchy is opposite to socialism. In truth, anarchy is socialism perfected. Because anarchists seek freedom for the individual – the greatest human happiness – other socialists say the anarchists contradict the brotherhood of man. As if the brotherhood of man did not presuppose the freedom of the individual!...

This wrongheadedness goes so far as to claim that the anarchists ignore technology and favour cottage industry.... But... no anarchist wants to reverse technological advances; every anarchist wants more

such advances. Accordingly, anarchists recognise, labour and production must be organised, their powers united. And since the lack of freedom today results from private property's control of the factors of production... those who want freedom (anarchy) want these things owned in common – that is they want communism...

Contrary to the old-style communists, however the anarchists declare for the organisation with the greatest validity, federalism... From it, "over and under" structure – that is, authority concentrated in economic and political hierarchies, and power centralised. in the state – would be excluded. Instead, voluntary association would give rise to thousands of special organisations, interconnected horizontally according to purpose or necessity...

Organisation is paramount. Indeed, the enemies of the proletariat are so well organised, so unified, that the proletariat commit crime by not gathering all forces and directing them at once at the destruction of the status quo by all possible means. For whether the propertied and ruling classes call themselves conservative or liberal, clerical or free-thinking, protectionist or free-trade, aristocrat or democrat, imperialist or republican – their differences hinder them not from seeing themselves as the propertied against the unpropertied.... Nor should be overlooked the monstrous police, military, and

legal apparatus that stands at the disposal of the bourgeoisie. Nor should be forgotten the machinations of the black constabulary of priests and the reactionary press; the bourgeoisie can turn them to its purpose, too...

If the rich stick together, why can't the poor stick together? Unfortunately, the cause of discord among those who should be of one heart and a single mind, and who need the profoundest of unity to achieve victory, is nothing but fear of the word anarchy. Yet all that a socialist has to get rid of, to be an anarchist, is the idea of the political state, to which socialists who are terrified hold fast, even though Marx and Engels taught that in a truly free society, the state would wither away.

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What is the supreme joy of mankind? It is the greatest freedom possible, i.e., the opportunity to realise intellectual and physical potential. Of course, such freedom must not go beyond the point at which it hurts someone, for then a domination of some by others occurs. At the same time, in a civilised society, many goals are not attainable by individuals; they can be reached only by associations with a common purpose. But is that to say: a system must exist in which an individual has by dictate to exist tucked away in the bureau of a centralised state, put there by a higher power and told what to do from birth to death?...

What is needed to produce a system in which the freedom of one and all is guaranteed is simply an agreement for a free society! No need for a Providence directing from above; it is only necessary that things are handled correctly from below...

What is the issue? Is it not whether besides society a state is needed? The answer, you see, is simpler than many think. We need only imagine what the state has been hitherto. Is it natural, an eternal verity? It is a creature of circumstance, used by a clique to dominate the masses. Let us therefore smash the state to bits.... Nothing less must be the climax of the Revolution...

We do not stand alone. The really great minds have long been sure that, without freedom, no perfect society is possible, and that no government, not even a representative government, insures freedom.

John Stuart Mill [the British philosopher and economist, 1806-1873] has said that the only part of behaviour for which anyone is accountable to society is that which concerns others; over himself, his own mind and spirit, the individual is supreme...

[Ludwig] Borne [the German journalist and outspoken liberal, 1786-1837] writes that as soon as a child is born, its mother, wet nurse, father, and governess surround it, and later its teachers, and then the policeman and the state. The mother brings sugar, the wet nurse a fairy tale, the governess a rod, the father a reproach, the teacher a cane, and the state chains and the axe. And if the child shows any resistance, it will be coaxed, harangued, or forced. Thus in childhood we

become like... a goose fattened for its liver. Everything is sacrificed to the liver. We are locked in a stall, not able to move, so we grow fat; we are force-fed moral corn, and we wheeze and nearly choke on morality, erudition, and obedience; and then an old cook of a government paws us, praises us, slaughters us, and uses our liver.... What does death find to take in us! But death is a poor dog, nothing but bones its life through- seldom does a whole person fall to him.

Asked what kind of government he preferred, [Pierre Joseph] Proudhon [the French political reformer, 1809-1865] denied monarchy, republicanism, democracy, constitutionalism, aristocracy, and a mixed form. Asked, in desperation, "What are you then?" he said: "I am an anarchist."

Victor Drury [American anarchist, Most's contemporary] rightly argues that freedom is the self-government (sovereignty) of the individual; freedom is order and security, without which no freedom. Freedom means the denial of all government, since it stands to reason that where authority exists, oppression must also exist – and with it all kinds of danger and disorder. It is not the

word anarchy but the word government that means the absence of order and security. The admirer of authority would call that a paradox, but it is simply logical.

Otto Hotzen [German poet, 1830-1899] gets to the heart of things: A temple piled high with corpses Slain to build the state- Who asks if brick and mortar have feelings? The welfare of people is not a goal of founding fathers or of slave drivers. The state, that Moloch, devours the people that "God" has made for this purpose.

Even Frederick Engels [Karl Marx's associate, 1820-1895] could not avoid breaking a lance for anarchism: "The state is not an eternal verity. There have been societies, finished in every way, but having no suspicion of state and state-power. With us, at a certain level of economic development, which was of necessity connected with the splitting of society into classes, the state became a necessity because of this splitting. We are rapidly nearing a stage of development of

What is the supreme joy of mankind? It is the greatest freedom possible, i.e., the opportunity to realise intellectual and physical potential. Of course, such freedom must not go beyond the point at which it hurts someone, for then a domination of some by others occurs.

production at which these classes are no longer not merely unnecessary but are a hindrance to production. They will fall as inevitably as they rose. With them falls the state. The society that organises production on the basis of free and equal associations of producers, displaces thereby the machinery of the state to where it belongs: the museum of antiquity, beside the spinning wheel and the bronze axe."...

Pythagoras [the Greek philosopher and mathematician, fl. 540- 510 B.C.] said: a people that needs laws does not deserve freedom.

Thomas Paine [the British crusader for democratic rights and American patriot, 1737-1809] established the truth that a large part of what we call government is nothing more than arrogance and effrontery. The higher the civilisation, the less reason for government, because civilised people govern themselves. The laws society should follow are the laws of nature, which require no human government. Whatever may seem the cause of insurrections, the true cause is dissatisfaction. The business of government, since the beginning, has been monopolised by the ignoramus and the rogue.

In the papers of Richard Wagner [the German composer, conductor, and author, 1813-1883] the following sentences occur: "Freedom means not to suffer authority that is against our purpose and desire.... Only were we to consider ourselves ignorant and without will could we believe useful an authority that showed us the right thought and true purpose. To tolerate an authority that we realise does not know and do right is slavery."

Wagner also says: only blockheads and people without will – those in despair of character – can suffer domination (archy), while people of sound mind and of strong will resist it.

[Percy Bysshe] Shelley [the British poet, 1792-1822] says: the true man does not command or obey.

Authority is a pestilence that devours everything it touches. Obedience is the death of genius, virtue, truth, freedom – obedience enslaves people – obedience is the true enemy of noble deeds and makes automatons of body and soul.

Karl Hemzen [the German publicist, 1809-1880] maintains: "Yes, man alone commits the crime called law, which in its perfection appears as penal law. What is this law? Simply a stipulation of conditions under which a person is to be imprisoned, exiled, or executed. Were an assembly of the best people to consider these punishments as ways of securing society against its worst enemies, these punishments would be exposed as tyrannical arbitrariness or bloodthirsty barbarity; but they are necessary and legal, under any conditions, when done in the name of the "law," which the worst people have made. Within the law, no crime; outside the law, no virtue. Be a monster and you can become a saint, if the law does not affect you. The law alone labels

behaviour. Again, who makes law? He who has the power to imprison and murder without danger of reprisal, who orders and forbids, and rewards and punishes as he pleases, which behaviour he calls legal... he makes law. Law did not create power, which law uses: power created law, and abuses it. At the side of power stands religion, which crowns power, blesses law, and curses crime. Unless basic changes are made, what if the doors of prisons be opened, the blood of officials flow, the flames crackle? The law will be carried out, crime atoned for, and divine order maintained until a new prison be built, a new scaffold raised, and a new pyre erected."

We could fill a book with such citations, and prove that from time immemorial every great mind has proclaimed anarchy. Is anyone, therefore, narrowminded enough to be afraid of the ideal we call anarchy?"



Freiheit, 10 March 1888

Anarchist Communism

John Most

1889⁶³

Anarchism is a world view, a philosophy of society; indeed the philosophy of society, for whoever considers the world and human life in their profoundest senses and their complete development, and then decides on the societal form of greatest desirability, cannot but decide for anarchism. Every other form is a half-measure and a patchwork.

Is anarchism desirable? Well, who does not seek freedom? What man, unless willing to declare himself in bondage, would care to call any control agreeable? Think about it!

Is anarchism possible? The failure of attempts to attain freedom does not mean the cause is lost. The facts that the struggle for freedom is clearer and stronger than ever before, that today there are different preconditions to achieving the goal, and that we therefore stand nearer anarchy than had been hoped — prove a development of the desire to wash from the face of the earth what is authoritarian.

Anarchists are socialists because they want the improvement of society, and they are communists because they are convinced that such a transformation of society can only result from the establishment of a commonwealth of property.

The aims of anarchists and true communists are identical. Why, then, are anarchists not satisfied to call themselves socialists or communists? Because they do not want to be confused with people who misappropriate these words, as many people do nowadays, and because they believe communism would be an incomplete, less-than-desirable system if not infused with the spirit of anarchism.

Communists and anarchists also agree on tactics. He who negates present society, and seeks social conditions based on the sharing of property, is a revolutionary whether he calls himself an anarchist or a communist. But anarchists are not bloodhounds who speak with levity of revolution by murder and arson. They make revolutionary propaganda because they know the privileged class can never be overturned peacefully.

The anarchists, on behalf of the proletariat, therefore consider it necessary to show the proletariat that it will have to win a gigantic battle before it realises its goals. The anarchists prepare for social revolution and use every means — speech, writing, or deed, whichever is more to the point — to accelerate revolutionary development.

Can anyone, who honestly supports the proletariat, blame them for that? The fact that, as a consequence, capitalists, police, press, clergy, and other hypocrites and philistines hate us with all their hearts, all their minds, all their souls, and all their strength all the time — we can readily understand.

But it seems unnatural that at every step we meet fanatical hostility inside the labour movement, accompanied by bull-headed stupidity. The

greatest stumbling block to anarchism among the non-anarchist socialists, which causes much of the discord, is the “free contract.” Yet one need not put oneself into a different world — neither Mars nor in Utopia — to see how the free contract would work. Take, for example, the International Postal Union. The national postal organisations join of their own free will and can withdraw in the same way. These contracting parties agree to what they will provide one another, in order

In a society of the free and equal there can be nothing but the free contract; cooperation by force violates freedom and equality... We are for federalism as necessary and right, because experience has taught us that centralisation must end in monstrous total-power accumulation in a few hands

⁶³ <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/johann-most-anarchist-communism>

to achieve service of the highest practicality and greatest efficiency. International law lacks precedent for compelling a violator be taken to court.

Nevertheless, “free contract” works — because, since every breach of promise carries with it damage to the breacher, it behoves every contracting party not to violate the contract. If irregularities arise, conferences agree on adjustments. This institution, a model for free association, is not an isolated example. People who have little else in common form groups, trusts, and pools — organisations musical, gymnastic, commercial, protective, educational, and political; and associations for the advancement of arts and science — in all countries, despite contradictory natures of the parties, and despite the fact that the parties cannot be forced to fulfil the agreements. Everything done in these agreements is done because of advantage to each member.

Absurd the claim that these organisations could not work without control by a higher power! Indeed, whenever and wherever government has interfered, it has disturbed and obstructed the organisations. Moreover, where this kind of intervention is happening, the organisations agitate with supreme energy for its abolition.

In a society of the free and equal there can be nothing but the free contract; cooperation by force violates freedom and equality. The gist of the matter is whether, in a society of the future, the various organisations (created and operating according to free contracts) are to be centralised or of a federal nature. We are for federalism as necessary and right, because experience has taught us that centralisation must end in monstrous total-power accumulation in a few hands; centralisation causes abuse of power, dominating by a few, and loss of freedom by many. In addition, we see nothing useful or necessary in centralisation. If we hope and even assume that the social question will be answered through communism, and not in this or that country but in the world, any thought of centralisation must be a monstrosity. Think of a bakers’ central commission, meeting in Washington, prescribing the bakers of Peking and Melbourne the size and amount of the rolls they are to bake.

Since the people of the future will not be old-fashioned fools, they will not fall into such nonsense. They will regulate their affairs as practice and experience teach. The shortsighted object. Freedom is now enjoyed in economic affairs, they say, and since government does not interfere, freedom has caused abuses. We accept this argument of our enemies and with it teach them something better. That is, economic freedom abused by private property has created the social question.

Private property, guarded by the state, increasingly exploits the poor; and the poor less and less use what they produce. If the government did not wholeheartedly maintain this swindle, the masses would not suffer it.

Yes, the state is the organised power of property. Therefore the unpropertied must destroy the state, eliminate private property, and establish ownership in common.

Communism, contrary to the liberal-bourgeois tradition, needs no state to achieve its freedom and equality. Communism finds the force of the state disturbing and restrictive.

Now we come to the main objection to communism, that in it the individual gives himself up to the whole and leads no existence of his own — a thought fit to frighten away the original characters and throw a scare even into common philistines with no individuality to lose. We need do no more than repeat: only under communism does the individual become himself and lead his own life. Conversely, does anarchism isolate people and dissolve society? No. Our discussions show: the individual develops fullest in the system of ownership-in-common. Anarchism also does not prohibit the cooperation of some, many, or all — whichever is desirable — for the achievement of common goals.

Above all, what socialist, without flushing with shame, maintains he is not a revolutionary? We say: none!.

And the revolutionary favours constant propagation of principles. While we have entertained the contention that a deed may make more propaganda than hundreds of speeches, thousands of articles, and tens of thousands of pamphlets, we have held that an arbitrary act of violence will not necessarily have such an effect.

In short, propaganda-by-the-deed has not become our hobbyhorse, which we ride to the neglect of other propaganda. If on the one side we do not harbour the illusion that the entire proletariat must be enlightened before it can be called into battle, so on the other we do not doubt that as much enlightenment as possible must be produced with oral and printed agitation.

Fortunately, no country was ever more suited for anarchist agitation than present-day America. Here nobody wants to experiment further with the people’s state. It has been more than a century; it has experienced the profoundest fiasco [the civil war]; and future state-makers had better learn the lesson. Whoever looks at America will see: the ship is powered by stupidity, corruption, or prejudice. Long has the government disgusted noble and intelligent natures;

they avoid voting; and they are, even if they don't know it, anarchists.

The sharp-minded observer, the upright character, and the independent thinker see in the people's state a crude superstition and are ready to listen to the anarchists. Finally, whatever else may be said, this much is for sure: the welfare of humanity, which the

future can and will bring, lies in communism. It excludes in logical ways all authority and servitude, and therefore equals anarchy. The way to the goal is the social revolution. By energetic, relentless, international action, it will destroy class rule and establish a free society based on cooperative organisation of production. Long Live the Social Revolution!

Why I am a Communist

John Most

Twentieth Century, 22 May 1890⁶⁴

One of the principal features of the development of modern industrial production is the ever-increasing organisation of the labouring force and of the means of production. The result is that with less "hands" a continually growing amount of commodities is being produced. From this last it might be concluded that man should be thus enabled to satisfy all his intellectual and physical wants with a decreasing exertion of his physical powers. Yet, no such result is apparent. On the contrary, all progress in the direction of facilitating the process of production has the effect of reducing the number of labourers employed, and of challenging those who are out of employment to increase the intensity with which they compete among themselves; and, consequently, the amount of compensation of which the producer is being deprived by the machinery of capitalism is growing continuously, with a tendency of being reduced to a minimal rate, representing that standard which is unavoidably necessary to procure those scanty commodities without which human being would be actually starved. Thus a state of affairs is characterised in which gigantic wealth is amassed in the hands of a continually centralising and decreasing number of capitalists, while, in the opposite proportion the masses of the people are being pauperised. Such a condition is unbearable for any length of time, much more so as it is becoming more aggravating with its growth, and in this way it creates a formidable opposition.

This disproportion has not been caused by any accident, but it is the natural consequence of the institution of private property.

It has, from its inception, made the poor dependent upon the rich. But, dependence means the opposite of freedom, known as slavery, serfdom, and wage-system, of which the latter is the most unbearable, because it is an outgrowth not of a lack of commodities, but of an

ever-increasing superabundance of wealth, making our present civilisation a questionable institution in itself.

The absurdity of such a course of events will soon be apparent when we are confronted by a situation under which there are a small number of gigantic owners whose commodities cannot be purchased to any great extent, because the purchasing power of the masses has been impaired, and those engaged in the process of production, who live from hand to mouth, and finally a mass of people willing and able to work, but unable to sell their labour, and existing as the mere dregs of society. In other words, we are approaching a time when society will, not from want, but in consequence of superabundance, be so very miserable as to become bankrupt intellectually, morally and in every other way. At that moment the question, "What's to be done?" will not only be asked, but those asking it will demand that it be properly answered. Mankind must, as the race will not tolerate its own destruction, look out for a new system to be carried into effect at once. And that new system cannot consist in giving up the substantial achievements already accomplished, but simply in their application for the general welfare. There will be no retrogression nor falling back upon the unorganised individual mode of production; on the other hand, the means of production now used by organised labour, but held by private owners who wield them for the purpose of despoiling the labouring masses, will be transferred into the possession of the community. And such a transfer means nothing short of abolishing private property, and of establishing the collectivism of wealth, of Communism.

Because I see the necessity of such an economic development, deduced from present and past event I am a Communist.

There are some misconceptions attached to the real meaning of Communism. There are some who, more or

⁶⁴ Reprinted in *Commonweal* (London), 20 February 1892. (*Black Flag*)

less, believe it to be some kind of Utopia, while others see in it, at least, an all-fixing machinery of State. And yet, neither the one nor the other is necessarily to be connected with the idea of Communism.

Modern Communists do not think of such Utopias as imagined by all those idealists from Thomas More down to Edward Bellamy; and they do not propose to shape, in advance, the mode of action by the people of future ages. Modern Communism is satisfied with proclaiming its principle of common possession of all wealth, and of the economic philosophical evidence that mankind, if developed in another direction, could not possibly make any progress.

And, as to the State, the scientifically educated Communist does not see what that institution could have to do with Communism.

All scientific research upon the field of history has shown that the State, in all its different forms, as known heretofore, has resulted from the institution of private property, as a means of protecting the same under given conditions. How, then, should anything having for its object the preservation of private property be expected to take under its wings the directly opposite institution of private property? An instrument needed by those whose comfort and luxury are possible only when the masses of the people are oppressed, and despoiled of what they need, cannot be subservient, or even indispensable, to those having emblazoned upon their banner the principle of equality and liberty, a fact that cannot be denied in regard to the contemporaneous Communists.

A society which had been developed intellectually to such a degree as to break the shackles of slavery imposed by the rules of private property and its adhering extremes of wealth and pauperism, and enabled to achieve such an emancipation only by simultaneously breaking the yoke of economic and political oppression, cannot come to the conclusion of enslaving itself by the erection of another building of State.

All conceivable objects of mankind can be accomplished by voluntary agreement, not the compulsory mandates of the State, but need, not laws, but the virtues of a complete liberty, born by reason and solidarity, and grown upon the soil of equality, will be the incentives directing all action. And, such a condition also means the absence of all personal rulers, to wit: Anarchism.

Communism, far from being antagonistic to Anarchism, thus forms the necessary foundation of the latter, its everlasting basis.

Without the abolition of private property there is no equality possible and without equality no real independence, while independence is the first condition of liberty, of Anarchism.

The question how to organise the society in the future, therefore, cannot involve whether it shall be Communism or Anarchism; but it is rather evident that these two will have to exist together, in order to prevent the new world from again suffering under the evils degrading the present world.

To avoid such misapprehensions I do not call myself simply a Communist, but an Anarchistic Communist, or better, I adhere to Communistic Anarchism. If you ask me how such an object may be achieved, I freely and openly declare by the Social

Revolution. Thereby I do not make an arbitrary proposition, but I only draw my conclusions from the course of history up to the present day, when I declare that such a great social transformation cannot take place without the appearance of violent actions.

I know something of history, and I know that no ruling-class ever gave up peaceably the privilege it had held. I know something of the monopolists and capitalists of this and other countries, and I know the fight that will bring about better conditions will be terrible. Some say those idea will do for the Old World, where kind and emperors oppress the people, but not for America.

However, I take the official statements, and I find some 2,000 millionaires and 10,000 other capitalists

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possessing two parts out of three of the wealth of the United States, i.e., sixty thousand million dollars, the production of all the rest of the people, and I ask: are these millionaires simply lucky? No, they are the representatives of modern tyranny, and the politicians are their tools, and all the rest of the people are slaves, and will remain so until they are ready to free themselves.

The history of America is short. There have been but two principal events. One was when American wiped out English domination, the other was the abolition of black slavery. These two things were done, not by voting, not by petition, but by drawing the sword. We now have white wage-slavery, and I hope the third great even of American history will be the abolition of that.

The Social Monster

A Paper on Communism and Anarchism

John Most

New York, Bernhard & Bohenor, 167 William Street, 1890

A dagger in one hand, a torch in the other, and all his pockets brim-full with dynamite-bombs – that is the picture of the anarchist, such as it has been drawn by his enemies. They look at him simply as a mixture of a fool and a knave, whose able, purpose is universal topsy-turvy, and whose only means to that purpose is to slay anyone and everyone who differs from him.

The picture is an ugly caricature, but its general acceptance is not: to be wondered at, since, for years all non-anarchistic papers have been busy in circulating it. Even in certain labour-organs one may find the anarchist represented as merely a man of violence, destitute of all noble aspirations, and the most absurd: views of the principles of anarchism occur in those very papers.

As for the violence, which people take as the characteristic mark of the anarchist, it cannot and it shall not be denied, that most anarchists feel convinced that the development of the present social order cannot be brought upon its right track by peaceable proceedings only. But that is a question of tactics which has nothing to do with principles.

Anarchism means itself a new social order, and anyone who knows human life from its depths to its heights, and has the courage to fling aside all patching up and smoothing down, all bargaining and compromising, and

draw the necessary conclusions from past evolution, must arrive at the very principle on which this new order shall be built up. Our principle is: to prevent all command over man by his fellowmen, to make state, government, laws, or whatsoever form of compulsion existing, a thing of the past, to establish full freedom

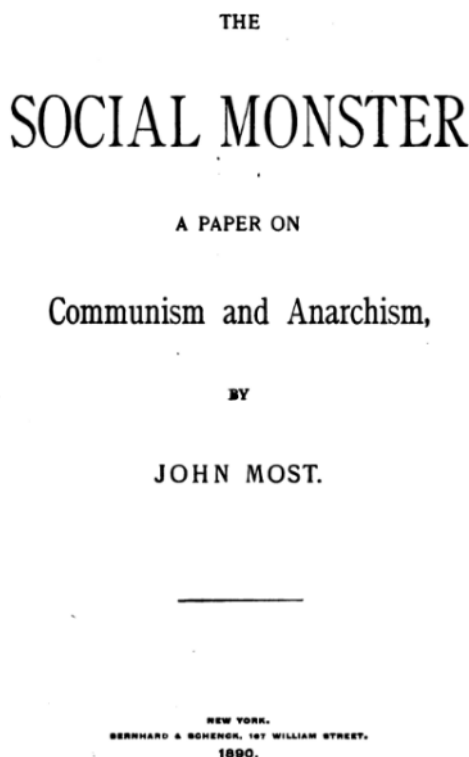
for all. Anarchism means first and foremost freedom from all government.

But – is really such a state of affairs desirable? Of course, those in command will answer: no. But those under compulsion? Nearly fifty years ago Marx demonstrated, how all political contests which have taken place during the, whole course of history, were class-contests. The class which reigned strove to maintain their government (archy), because they grew fat. on it, and the class which thrallled strove to break up the government (anarchy), because it impelled them towards starvation.

The name was different in each case, but the principle was always

the same: anarchy against archy. And then again – if this be so, why is anarchism still an idea grossly misunderstood instead of having become, long ago, an idea completely realised? There can and some day there shall be given full answer to this question.

At present it will be sufficient to remind the reader of the fact, that an idea may miscarry without getting lost.



Look down this long series of contests. The results are palpable. The popular demand for freedom is stronger and clearer than it has ever been before, and the conditions far reaching the goal are more favourable, We are apparently nearer to anarchism at this moment than any one could have dreamt of a century ago. It is evident, that through the whole course of history runs an evolution before which slavery of any kind, compulsion under any form, government of any description (archy) must break down, and from which freedom, full and unlimited, freedom for all and from all (anarchy) must come. For anarchism is not a fanciful idea, some kind of Utopia:

Not, by any means. It is a natural and necessary issue of the progress of civilisation itself. The goal towards which all human aspirations logically bend. And, of course, when a certain stage of social development thus at once defines itself not only as desirable but also as the logically necessary result of that evolution the question of its possibility, often raised by political philosophers who were weak rather than cautious, becomes of very slight consequence.

From this also follows, that anarchism cannot be a retrograde movement, as has been maliciously insinuated that the anarchists march in the front and not in the rear of the army of freedom and that the supposed opposition between socialists and anarchists, asserted over and over again, is an open absurdity.

Socialism, in the broadest sense of the word, encompasses every doctrine or tendency, which applies to human society. In its narrower sense the word means some special, more or less clearly defined system of social order.

But even of the latter description there are many kinds of socialists, for in our days nearly everyone deals or dabbles in social reforms. There are royal, aristocratic, christian, etc., socialists. William I. preached social reforms at every occasion, such as he understood them. Bismarck sometimes calls himself a socialist. Stoecker, the pastor, has propounded numerous conundrums of the kind. The company is certainly somewhat mixed. For this very reason many serious socialists have long ago felt it necessary to point out some mark which allowed of no doubt with respect to the fundamental character of their intentions. They called themselves communists, thereby indicating that they intended to make the soil and all, that is in and on it, common property. They were not led on by pious wishes or fanciful speculations, but by sober observation of the present state of society, which necessarily provokes and absolutely demands a transformation in that direction.

The class, that now reigns, the bourgeoisie, has completely reconstructed the whole mechanism of production and exchange.

First the capitalist drove away the independent master-mechanic. Then, in their turn, the capitalists were driven away by stock-companies. But even the stock-companies could not hold stand against monopolies, trusts, pools, etc., and at this moment there is seriously spoken of, how to give not only certain branches of industry, but whole groups of enterprises a still more general form.

The avowed purpose of this movement was to produce the greatest possible quantity of goods by the least possible exertion of human labour; and to a certain extent the purpose was reached.

But another experience followed in the wake. The mass of the people fell from insufficiency into poverty, and from poverty into misery, and now it comes upon us, that if this movement is allowed to go on for any length of time, the human race, morally degraded, will die out from physical want in the midst of a world of plenty.

But such a state is downright insanity, and demands peremptorily a thorough reorganisation of the social order. The establishment of an entirely new social system.

To go back to the small industry of former days is not possible, however. The advantages of the mass-production and the organisation of labour are too apparent ever to be given up.

Consequently, nothing else is left but to make common property out of all that, which forms the fundamental conditions of production and exchange: to introduce communism.

In this point all agree who are dissatisfied with the existing order, and want another which can make all men free; and equal and happy. It is therefore simply a bad piece of malice or a big piece of stupidity, when some people say of the anarchists, that in this very point they have taken up an adverse position.

No! The anarchists are socialists, because they too want a radical social reform; and they are communists, because they too feel convinced that community of property must form the only basis of such a reform. But there are something more. They have also a characteristic mark of their own, and neither socialism nor communism will ever fully satisfy them until thoroughly pervaded by the spirit of anarchism and stamped with its mark.

Meanwhile it is so much the more necessary for the anarchists to keep the character-mark of their stand point indicated by their very name, as there is quite a

number of communists who – singularly enough – designate the future social order as a “State,” the “State of the Future,” the “State of the People,” etc., and provide this state with the most, monstrous governmental machinery and laws by the bushel, as if the communistic society should be nothing but a mass of idiots taken care of by a number of mandarins.

Of course, no consistent socialist or communist will have anything to do with such an idea. They know too well that the state is and always was a mere instrument of suppression and that the reigning class always has used and still uses this instrument to protect their privileges and force the mass of the people to submit. But what meaning could such an instrument of suppression have in a free country? There are no privileges to protect and no unprivileged to keep in awe.

The establishment of communism is unthinkable until the present slavery has been abolished. Or is there some other kind of slavery to be established? If not, then any kind of government is useless, for a government which governs nobody is only a knife without a blade, and such a thing is not worth much. But if communism, in order to establish true liberty and equality, must free itself from any kind of government, then we have anarchism.

When state and government have gone, laws must go. People who speak of “laws” in a communistic society, think perhaps only of those general rules of sensible and noble conduct which every good man finds it easy to observe. But in that case they use a wrong word. A law is a rule connected with an apparatus to compel obedience. Behind the law stand the court, the sheriff, the police, the hangman, etc., and who wants them? None, we guess.

Morally, the state, the government and the laws are the principal causes of vice and crime. But with the cause the effect will disappear.

Industrially, they are the principal hindrances to success and plenty, for, experience, with respect to what is necessary and useful, teaches better what to do and how to do it, than any bureaucracy hovering above in the blind.

If, indeed, anyone should think that, in the communistic society, man must still remain under some form of compulsion in order to, do what is right, and leave off what is wrong, he had better give up communism at once and abandon all hope for the human race.

But fortunately the idea is a mistake. Mankind of to-day is not what mankind of tomorrow will be. Then is no necessity to seek refuge in dreams and speak to later generations.

the state is and always was a mere instrument of suppression and that the reigning class always has used and still uses this instrument to protect their privileges and force the mass of the people to submit. But what meaning could such an instrument of suppression have in a free country?

Sober experience has something to say in this case. Whenever some grand and magnificent event takes place, all who are connected with it, closely or distantly, undergo some change, from a slight modification to a complete transformation. With irresistible power it loosens something in them all and binds other things.

Now, take the yoke of slavery from off the shoulders of man and place him in a sphere of full liberty and you shall see how naturally it comes to him to act towards his fellow-men as a brother towards brethren. For man is not bad by nature. Only as member of a society in which each looks to himself only and no one cares for the rest, has he become what to-day he is.

From the institution of private property arose envy, avarice, graspingness, insolent haughtiness,

courage to defraud, lust in crushing, in short, the whole gang of the most common and the most dastardly vices, and with that institution they will also fall, giving room for brotherly love, a strong feeling of common responsibility and eagerness for everything conducive of general good.

But life of such a character will never fit into the framework of a state, and when the communists shrink back from anarchism – it is the name, not the principle they fear. It is only a ghost that has frightened them.

Nor is there any good reason why the other communists should stand aloof from the anarchists on account of their tactics.

Anyone who is radically opposed to the present social order and works for a reform on the basis of

community of property, must in the heart be a revolutionist.

The difference between the anarchists and those among their co-workers who feel a little shy, is simply that the latter practice a kind of opportunist policy.

But what is the use of it? The anarchists are no blood-hounds. They have no lust for murder and incendiarism. But they carry on a revolutionary agitation, because they know that the power of a privileged class has never yet been broken by peaceable means, and because they feel convinced that the bourgeoisie will also be removed by force only.

Therefore they consider it absolutely necessary that the mass of the people never for a moment forgets the gigantic contest which must come before their ideas can be realised, and therefore they use every means at their disposal – the speech, the press, the deed – to hasten the revolutionary development.

But who can take the matter seriously and blame them for that?

Settled, once for all, it is, that the weal of mankind, as the future will and must bring it, depends upon communism; that the system of communism; logically, excludes any and ever relation between master and servant, and means really anarchism; and that the way to the goal leads through a social revolution.

* * *

We understand very well, why capitalists, wire-politicians, press- and pulpit-babblers, philestines and old-foggies hate us from the bottom of their heart and we have more than once had an opportunity to show these social, political and heavenly priests, how well we comprehend their feelings.

But we do not understand at all why attacks should be directed against us from the very labour-agitators, attacks, sometimes of incredible malice, often of petrified fanaticism, and generally of piteous lack of appreciation. – As often as we have tried to set forth our views of modern, that is, communistic anarchism, we have been contradicted at the same time from two opposite directions.

From one side we have been told, that we went too far, that we overlooked the necessary transition-forms of the social evolution, that the subreptitiously substituted anarchism for socialism, and when we tried to explain that anarchism is simply a social order without government, such as it must present itself to the eyes of every consistent socialist, who fights for true liberty and equality, our explanation, was suppressed and the old assertion re-iterated, that socialism and anarchism are direct contradictions.

From the other side we have quite recently been told that our tendencies are of completely reactionary character, that we run after the *fala morgana* of a by-gone individualism of mall-industry, etc.

But how could we or anybody else perform the ledgerdmain: at the same time to pursue the ideal, of an ante-deluvian small-industry and yet make propaganda for some altogether too distant ideas of the future? Verily, we want some “scientific” Count Oerindur to tell us which is which!

In reality the case stands thus: when our adversaries tell their followers that we deal in the ideas of an antiquated small-industry, they simply tell a lie, and when for the sake of argument they point to Benjamin Tucker, the black of their lie does not become whiter.

Mr. Tucker is a pupil of the Manchester school, who has come too late into the market. He stands outside of the modern class-movement of the great mass knows not the laws according to which social development nowadays proceeds.

He is ignorant both of the tendencies and the technical achievements of our industrial life, and when he speaks of anarchism, he represents no known social order at all, but simply paints out an illusion fostered by his own brain.

In Europe he is nobody, and in America he is somebody only in certain literary circles which, without any real understanding of the matter, follow a loose, sentimental longing to reform the world.

To use that man as an argument against us, is simply a trick, but tricks are not legitimate weapons in a serious discussion.

Sometimes also Kropotkin is quoted against us as a “true” anarchist and, of course, always on the supposition that he, like Tucker, rejects communism.

But that is a grievous mistake. Kropotkin is namely the most decided communist who ever existed. It is due to him that in certain countries: France, Italy, Spain and Belgium, the anarchists emphasise their communistic Standpoint at every opportunity and in a some-what ostentatious manner.

To him, as to us, communism is the main point, and anarchism merely the finishing touch. About tell years ago, at the anarchist congress of the Jura-Federation at St. Imier, he moved that a sacrifice should be made to the ruling prejudice by cancelling the name “anarchist” and adopting that of “free communist.” The proposition was not carried but it showed, nevertheless, that Kropotkin first and foremost is a communist. Indeed, he is so far from being in

opposition to communistic anarchism that, on the contrary, he may be considered its father.

In all this there is nothing but malice or ignorance. But the attacks of our adversaries often present a new hue, no less detrimental to the cause, it is personal Squabbles, which have no other reason than personal rivalry and party-manoeuving, may, find, if not a true justification, at least a natural excuse, as long as they are confined to the native soil from which they sprang, to Europe.

But to carry them over to a foreign country and continue them here in America is utterly absurd. What interest could the Americans take in such futilities?

One should think that the emigrant socialist would like to leave nil that stuff behind when crossing the ocean rind that, after arriving here, he at least would try to fit himself for the exigencies of the American propaganda.

But no! he seems to in duty bound to haul along his fatherland by his boot-soles. Conscientiously he takes up here every thread he left off there.

With the most minute exactness he imitates on American ground ail the movements of the social-democracy in Germany, undisturbed by the fact that the ground is another. But that is waste, if nothing worse.

Overlooking the fact, that in principles there is hardly any difference at nil between the various groups of the movement, and' flint even the difference of opinion with respect to tactics seems not to be altogether irremediable, he floes to work and creates splits in the ranches, which have no natural excuse and still less any true justification.

Much has been lost in that way and, curious to say, then he turns round upon us and reproaches us, that our method is "un-American."

It has occurred to us, that no country in the world is today so well prepared for anarchist agitation as America.

In the monarchical countries of Europe people, are still very enthusiastic for what they call the state of the people – the republic – and dream of the establishment

of such an institution as a means to solve the social difficulties which press upon them.

That enthusiasm must be spent, that illusion must burst before time comes for a really effective anarchist agitation, and such an opportunity will hardly present itself until a practical experiment with the dream has been made.

In France the labouring man had a taste of what the state of the people can and will do for him, already in 1848, but the taste was not sweet. In 1871 he proved to have made some progress. He tried to establish the independent commune in opposition to the state. But the attempt failed and the plan is insufficient.

After that time the "republican" government has taken good care to extinguish every spark of faith in the idea of a state of the people from his breast. Still, France is not through with the experiment.

In America, on the contrary, the state in which everything is done "by the people and for the people," has existed since more than a century; and who does not see that the true historical significance of this huge experiment is the terrible warning, it gives all future statesmen?

To the government-cars are harnessed corruption, egotism, intrigue, that mean submissiveness which is the piteous inheritance of suppression through generations, and nothing else. All noble hearts, all intellectual heads have long ago turned away from the whole government-machinery with [unreadable] disgust, and the poll they hate as the plague.

Now, does anybody suppose that such men are not, somehow or other, perhaps unconsciously, tolerably well prepared for the ideas of anarchism?

They are! Their faith in the goodness and power and wisdom and justice of the state they have given up long ago as a frivolous superstition, and now they have only left a choice between that pessimism which gives up humanity in despair and – anarchism.

That is the true reason for the terrible hatred which the conservative or reactionary party here bears to the

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anarchists, and which, in Chicago, led them to commit one of the meanest political crimes on record.

It is observations of this kind, which: have dictated us our method of agitation, and our adversaries among our brethren had better examine the former before they condemn the latter – as un-American.

Probably the result would be, that they immediately join us in our battle against the church, the state and the bourse, that “holy trinity,” which must be dethroned if room shall be made for liberty, equality and brotherly love.

* * *

The principal objection which non-anarchistic socialists prefer against anarchism is its doctrine of “free contracts.”

While the anarchists push on and proclaim, that, in a free society, all its members must form all their relations on a basis of free agreements, the non-anarchistic socialists look on with a smile of doubt and remain in the field of social compulsion.

But it is of no use to them to argue that a system of compulsion, which presses equally on all in general, is not felt by any single individual in particular. The argument is nonsense.

All people are not alike, nor do they feel the same thing in the same manner: And even if it were true, it would only argue in behalf of a milder form of the existing system of compulsion and not in behalf of a social order in which freedom itself is the only regulator. Nor is there any escape to be found in their reference to an almost everlasting voting by the whole people. Either the whole people is shrewd enough, to find what is right at every point, and then any kind of political government or social guardianship is entirely superfluous; or the whole people is not shrewd enough to prevent the formation of a well-drilled aristocracy of demagogues, and then we have the old story over again.

It is, however, by no means necessary to launch out into an unknown world [unreadable] to form a well defined idea of how free contracts work.

There is for instance the world’s postal-union. Each individual postal organisation enters the general

combination on a simple agreement, concerning the services to be rendered and to be received.

There is no international court with power to summon and compel him who breaks the agreement; there are only conferences to mediate when irregularities or misunderstandings occur.

Nevertheless, the agreement is never broken, for the simple reason that the party which did so, would hurt itself.

And this institution, which can serve as a model for a multitude of similar free combinations in the most different spheres of human life, is by no means unique. There are the trusts, the pools, etc., formed by people who, as a rule, are not very sharp-sighted, so far as the general good is concerned.

In most countries combinations of this character are illegal, and there is no law which can compel the parties to keep the contract. Nevertheless, it is seldom broken – for the very same reason as above: self-interest.

Then there are hundreds and hundreds of combinations, which now work with great success and perfectly harmoniously without any other kind of compulsion than the individual moral feeling, singing-societies, turner-associations, sporting-clubs, societies for political, literary,

scientific, or artistic purposes, etc; and here it should not be overlooked that, whenever the government has interfered with the working of such associations, its interference has always proved a hindrance, never an aid.

But when so much has been achieved by the free contract in a society like the present, in a world full of egotists, where are the limits for what it can do in a social order such as the one we intend to establish, in a social order founded upon communism, in which the institution of private property is left out and thereby heat and water taken from every germ of egotism? At all events, in a society, all of whose members are free, and equal in the true sense of the words, there is no other means than free contracts, by which to form combinations or build up relations of any kind. Compulsion by laws of any kind or in any form is

absolutely excluded by the very orders of liberty and equality.

We have sometimes heard the argument preferred that in the economical sphere in which freedom rules, at least to a certain extent, as the government never directly interferes with the business of production and exchange, this very freedom has led to the direct results.

The argument is, however, of a somewhat peculiar description; it has a wooden leg which we propose to cut off.

When namely, in the present society, the free movements of the economical world have brought us face to face with social questions of the greatest magnitude and most pressing urgency; the true cause "of this perilous situation" is not the application of the principle of freedom, but, the institution of property, behind which the government itself stands guard.

It is this institution, which has made the poor slaves of the rich, and it is the power of the state which keeps them in bondage.

Nowhere in the problem is the economical freedom involved, but everywhere the institution of private property, which must be abolished, and the power of the state, which must be broken.

* * *

Of the part which laws and law-making will have to act in the coming social order, no sharp disagreement is necessary or even possible. The one fact, that each generation invariably considers the laws of its predecessor as gross mistakes, not to use any harder expression, throws a peculiar light on the subject. Indeed, the history of legislation must be defined as the history of the queerest errors possible.

Or do not laws against magic, heresy, and innumerable other things, which at one time were punished with barbarous cruelty while now they pass by entirely unnoticed, impress us as a sort of mental aberrations? Was it not downright insanity to use the stake, the

sack, or other instruments of cruelty as means by which to find out the guilt or innocence of a man?

But can we be sure that a later generation will look with milder eyes upon our laws with their gallows and hangmen, their cells and chains? No! Buckle was right when he declared those laws the best which simply abolish former laws.

There is, however, one more point in the dispute between us and our adversaries which needs a little further elucidation, the question namely whether

those organisations which in the communistic society will be formed by free contracts, are likely to assume the character of centralisation and federation.

We think, in accordance with what experiences has proved, that earlier or later, but under whatsoever circumstances, centralisation always must lay a large amount of power in a very few hands, which circumstance again must create a kind of domination on the one side and cause a lack of liberty on the other. And we believe that once, when the social problem has been solved on the plan of communism all the world over, the idea of centralisation shall present itself to the eyes of mankind as a monstrosity. Imagine a central-committee of a baker-generals sitting in Washington and prescribing to the baker-boys of Pekin and Melbourne they form and the taste of their rolls. That would be a slavery so complete as no mandarin ever dreamt of. No, all relations will regulate

themselves according to practice and experience such as the no-government principle of anarchism demands it.

And here we may stop having gone over the whole ground of our dispute with those other groups of the labour-party which incline more to the right and cling more closely to tradition. One by one we have taken up the various questions of principle and tactics which form the subject of the debate, also touching upon the unfortunate character of personality which the discussion incidentally has assumed.

One by one we have demonstrated the true relation between anarchism and communism, between state

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and free contract, between centralisation and federation, setting aright what a wilful and inconsistent criticism has done wrong. Of course, our purpose in doing this has not been to make a split between us and our adversaries still wider; on the contrary, we have hoped to bridge it over. An immediate and complete unison we shall not expect, but it seems to us that with sufficient good will on both sides it should be possible to gather all the diverging groups into closed ranks and the immense importance of such a manoeuvre with respect to the final issue of the contest must be evident to all.

Unfortunate in this respect is the subscription to some sharply defined platform which generally is demanded by all parties for admission. Doctrine is not life. There is something above the dogma and it is a pity, that the world has not seen it before. Words, even good words, have caused more discord in human life than perhaps anything else. Nevertheless, referring to the distinction we have made above between centralisation and federation, it does not seem impossible to us to find some short formulas which covered the whole in a

general way and yet left the details to the decision of each party-organisation.

There is, for instance, the Pittsburgh Proclamation, the declaration of the principles of the communistic anarchists of America. A recapitulation of its whole contents is found at the end. The two first paragraphs contain, approximately at least, all that is common to all communists. They read thus:

FIRST: Destruction of existing class rule, by all means, i.e. by energetic, relentless, revolutionary and international action.

SECOND: Establishment of a free society based upon co-operative organisation of production.

This, or something similar, could be used as the general watchword, under which the socialists and the anarchists formed in line for battle. The rest could be left for those to settle who, having triumphed, must devote their energies to the development of a free community – a *community* in which each and every form of slavery is definitely abolished.

Gifts

John Most

“Präsente”, *Freiheit* (New York), 24 December 1892⁶⁵

A reflection on Christmas is expected at this time from every journalist, especially if he is German. It doesn't matter whether one is a Christian or a “pagan”; everyone is free to chat about it in their own way, but *total* abstention is not allowed and, at the very least, is very poorly regarded. Indeed, almost all the ink-slingers who populate the pond of the press have managed to meet the demand. If they don't engage in hypocritical musings in the style of Christian Matins⁶⁶, they instead indulge in “liberal” chatter about the customs of the ancient Germans during the winter solstice. If they want to appear especially witty and radical, they lament that the phrase about “peace on earth” and “goodwill toward men” (out of propriety, they refrained from mentioning the “glory to God in the highest”), which is intoned from the pulpits on so-called Christmas Eve and more or less primitively commented upon, stand in stark and dreadful contrast to reality. They console their readers with the notion

that, in a nebulously distant future, a time might, could, or should dawn when such things might come to pass.

For our part, we avoid any reflection on these matters. Instead, we take up another aspect of the Christmas frenzy: the mania of mutual gift-giving.

There is no doubt that everyone is pleased when someone gives them a present. But the joy is greatly diminished when one is simultaneously aware that the giver expects something in return and puts on a very sour expression if the reciprocation falls short of expectations.

The whole affair is a rather silly sport. Wealthy people – what should they give each other? They already have everything their hearts desire. Poor devils, on the other hand, bleed themselves dry with this gift-giving and still can't lure a dog to the stove.⁶⁷ For our part, we forgo all and any gifts, but we would be very glad if anyone

⁶⁵ <https://tomgoyens.substack.com/p/voices-from-the-past-john-mosts-revolutionary>

⁶⁶ The early morning prayers or services in Christian liturgy, especially associated with the Christmas midnight service. Most uses this phrase to ascribe a tone of sanctimoniousness or moralising rhetoric. (*Translator*)

⁶⁷ German idiom meaning to try to entice someone or something in vain. (*Translator*)

who owes us something took the holiday season as an occasion to settle their account. On the other hand, we won't be giving out anything either – not even one of those so-called illustrated New Year's greetings, which are little more than a veiled solicitation of newspaper vendors.

If we could, of course, as we might wish, we would send everyone something appropriate to their homes.

We would delight emperors and kings, whether clad in ermine or tailcoats, with elegant *fancy boxes* that, when opened, produced delightful explosive effects, leaving the recipients feeling highly elevated.

Aristocrats of ancient lineage or of recent cattle dealing, boodle, or speculator ilk would receive champagne from us, the kind that induces a stupor culminating in a sleep from which there is no awakening.

For corpulent clerics in robes and cassocks, we would prepare gifts of love whose enjoyment would secure them entrance into the well-deserved "kingdom of heaven."

For bureaucrats of the old caste or of demagogic origin, we would have Havanas ready – cigars of such a nature that just one would suffice to extinguish any desire for a second, thereby ending all worldly woes for the individuals concerned.

Police officers, gendarmes, and all their ilk would be regaled with schnapps that would make each of them "blessed."

As for *human beings* who must toil endlessly and yet can enjoy only sparingly, we would gift them good books and, so that strong hands might accompany bright minds, fine breech-loading rifles with ample accessories.

However, our wishes in this regard are purely fanciful; yet they come straight from the heart.

⁶⁸ Most refers here to Alexander Berkman's failed assassination attempt on Frick, an action Most disapproved of. (*Translator*)

As things stand, we must content ourselves with paying our readers the customary weekly visit at Christmas and sharing what occupies our minds.

In this country in particular, the situation was compounded by the fact that the labour movement as a whole – despite some brilliant episodes, such as the battle scenes at Homestead, Tennessee, Idaho, and Buffalo – was in retreat across the board. Most advances made by workers through strikes, boycotts, and the like were repelled by the capitalists

So be it! We stand at year's end. Is this not a fitting moment to examine our so-called conscience? Do we not have reason to ask ourselves seriously whether we have fulfilled our duty over the past twelve months? Does everyone wish to answer this question affirmatively? We doubt it.

It is true that the situation in which anarchists found themselves during the year 1892 was anything but rosy – especially in America. Numerous comrades in various countries were torn from our ranks, buried alive in the dungeons of prison, or even murdered. Reaction raged against us more fiercely than ever, seeking to extinguish our movement by every possible means – a course of action that was further facilitated, unfortunately, *by all manner of reckless exploits from those who*

*supposedly sympathised with us.*⁶⁸ In this country in particular, the situation was compounded by the fact that the labour movement as a whole – despite some brilliant episodes, such as the battle scenes at Homestead, Tennessee, Idaho, and Buffalo – was in retreat across the board.⁶⁹ Most advances made by workers through strikes, boycotts, and the like were repelled by the capitalists. One defeat followed another, formerly magnificent organisations collapsed entirely or were so weakened that they will not recover from their setbacks for a long time to come. This misery, which afflicted the majority of the organised working class, did not fail to exert a negative influence on the vanguard as well.

Worshippers of success, as people (our comrades included for the most part) tend to be, could not help but be affected in a depressing way by the many failures. And as is always the case in such situations, the aforementioned moral downturn was accompanied by bickering and discord. This happens because those

⁶⁹ Homestead steel strike in Homestead, PA; the Coal Creek armed labour uprising in Anderson County, Tennessee in 1891; the miners' strike at Coeur d'Alene, Idaho, and the Buffalo switchmen's strike in August 1892. (*Translator*)

who lack richer experience or fail to dig precisely to the roots of all things are inclined to seek the causes of such setbacks everywhere except where they actually lie. They accuse every person they imagine capable of magic of all possible sins of doing and not doing while failing to notice the real culprits.

The result is invariably a more or less pronounced pessimism, sulking, and other nonsense. This was also the case in the year now coming to an end.

Despite all this, we can now state that, throughout the entire tragedy, we have lost neither our heads nor our courage – not even our humour. This is because we have always *closely* followed the course of events and could therefore foresee how things *must* unfold. As a result, we have not succumbed to pessimism; we have steered the little ship of the party, *Freiheit*, through every reef, every swamp, and every obstacle, and we can now proudly say that we have carried out our not insignificant task during this difficult year as well as could possibly be done. We are no cowards and therefore do not take modesty too far, though no one could accuse us of putting on airs. Anyone who thinks they could have navigated such difficult situations better is welcome to try for a time. Enough said: despite all the adversities of the year, we are content with what we have achieved or carried over into the new year. Comrades, near and far, should take this to heart and think similarly.

Anarchists are not the fathers of their time; on the contrary, it is the other way around. They do not create the conditions under which they live; rather, they cannot escape the framework imposed upon them by the circumstances of the moment. No matter how lofty their plans may be, no matter how inclined they are to think of storming the heavens, they must, whether they like it or not, stretch as far as the given ceiling allows.

Whoever keeps such natural principles in mind, who never lets their individual thinking stray from present reality and always bases their observations on the solid ground they stand on; whoever aligns their actions with the means at their disposal; whoever does not try

to step with one foot into this “vale of earthly sorrows” and with the other into a fantasy paradise – in short, whoever does not act like a fool despite whatever intellectual capacities they may possess – can neither experience crushing disappointments nor set their expectations of success higher than the circumstances allow.

This little sermon is our gift to those who might need it.

Anarchists – whether newcomers or veterans – must always show up when the call to assemble is made if they wish to be taken seriously. They must understand that the stronger their presence, the more impactful they can be outwardly

It is unbecoming for anyone wanting to be a thoughtful anarchist to surrender today to the delusion that half an ounce of powder, even when harmlessly exploded, constitutes colossal propaganda, and then tomorrow, upon being confronted with the childishness of such fantasies, to throw in the towel or lash out furiously at those who, while filled with revolutionary passion, kept cool, fanaticism-free heads and offered equally necessary and well-intentioned advice.

We hope that every comrade who has studied their principles thoroughly and who is seriously committed to advocating the teachings of communism and anarchy by all means available will take to heart the admonitions we have given here

– if they need them. Anyone who found the pace of agitation too slow this past year should – far from grumbling in the shadows of their own four walls – throw themselves into the work with double the vigour in the new year in the spirit of our movement. Anyone who finds party life insufficiently lively has no excuse to stay away. If they want to improve what they care about in this regard, they must above all seek to engage actively themselves and ensure that the agitation is invigorated.

Regarding the readership of *Freiheit* this year, we neither lost much nor gained much. That is more than many other papers of our stripe can say (vain boasts aside). Some are not entirely satisfied with this. To any malcontents, we say: prove to us first that you made an effort to bring in new subscribers. Many, when they reflect on their record, might feel “regret and remorse.” And how many, year after year, endeavour to peddle books and pamphlets? “That’s the job of colporteurs!” they might say – what sheer laziness! The indifference displayed in this regard often stinks to high heaven. Whoever this may concern: those who failed in

1892 to distribute anarchist writings among the people decisively failed in their duty as party members. To them, we wish improvement in 1893.

Everything we've stated so far applies mainly to America, as across the Atlantic, there is movement everywhere, despite all the hardships our comrades there must endure – truly invigorating. This fact alone should suffice to keep American comrades consistently diligent and ready to make sacrifices.

This already-know-it-all attitude, this consequent lack of need to attend meetings; this assurance of being "ready when the time comes"; these countless excuses for indulging in private comfort – all of this sometimes drives us "wild," especially since it has a cursedly contagious effect.

Anarchists – whether newcomers or veterans – must always show up when the call to assemble is made if

they wish to be taken seriously. They must understand that the stronger their presence, the more impactful they can be outwardly. And that, after all, is the primary goal of agitation. May these "pills" we offer as gifts not just be swallowed but also produce the desired invigorating effect. We must ensure that, in the coming year, the culture of meetings regains new and vigorous life, and this can be achieved with ease if everyone is willing. We must succeed in expanding the reach of our press beyond its current scope. Our other literature must be delivered hand-to-hand.

Enough now. These are serious times. Major events, already underway, are sending new signals daily. Anarchists have a tremendous role to play in these developments. Let us always be mindful of this. Forward to new efforts in the coming year! Comrades, be active, be persistent!

Anarchy Defended by Anarchists

John Most and Emma Goldman

Metropolitan Magazine, October 1896

To most Americans Anarchy is an evil-sounding word – another name for wickedness, perversity, and chaos. Anarchists are looked upon as a herd of uncombed, unwashed, and vile ruffians, bent on killing the rich and dividing their capital. Anarchy, however, to its followers actually signifies a social theory which regards the union of order with the absence of all government of man by man; in short, it means perfect individual liberty.

If the meaning of Anarchy has so far been interpreted as a state of the greatest disorder, it is because people have been taught that their affairs are regulated, that they are ruled wisely, and that authority is a necessity.

In by-gone centuries any person who asserted that mankind could get along without the aid of worldly and spiritual authority was considered a madman, and was either placed in a lunatic asylum or burned at the stake; whereas today hundreds of thousands of men and women are infidels who scorn the idea of a supernatural Being.

The freethinkers of today, for instance, still believe in the necessity of the State, which protects society; they do not desire to know the history of our barbarian institutions. They do not understand that government did not and cannot exist without oppression; that every government has committed dark deeds and great

crimes against society. The development of government has been in the order, despotism, monarchy, oligarchy, plutocracy; but it has always been a tyranny.

It cannot be denied that there are a large number of wise and well-meaning people who are anxious to better the present conditions, but they have not sufficiently emancipated themselves from the prejudices and superstitions of the dark

ages to understand the true inwardness of the institution called government.

"How can we get along without government?" ask these people. "If our government is bad let us try to have a good one, but we must have government by all means!"



The trouble is that there is no such thing as good government, because its very existence is based upon the submission of one class to the dictatorship of another. "But men must be governed," some remark; "they must be guided by laws." Well, if men are children who must be led, who then is so perfect, so wise, so faultless as to be able to govern and guide his fellows.

We assert that men can and should govern themselves individually. If men are still immature, rulers are the same. Should one man, or a small number of men, lead all the blind millions who compose a nation?

"But we must have some authority, at least," said an American friend to us. Certainly we must, and we have it, too; it is the inevitable power of natural laws, which manifests itself in the physical and social world. We may or may not understand these laws, but we must obey them as they are a part of our existence; we are the absolute slaves of these laws, but in such slavery there is no humiliation. Slavery as it exists today means an external master, a lawmaker outside of those he controls; while the natural laws are not outside of us – they are in us; we live, we breathe, we think, we move only through these laws; they are therefore not our enemies but our benefactors.

Are the laws made by man, the laws on our statute books, in conformity with the laws of Nature? No one, we think, can have the temerity to assert that they are.

It is because the laws prescribed to us by men are not in conformity with the laws of Nature that mankind suffers from so much ill. It is absurd to talk of human happiness so long as men are not free.

We do not wonder that some people are so bitterly opposed to Anarchy and its exponents, because it demands changes so radical of existing notions, while the latter offend rather than conciliate by the zealotry of their propaganda.

Patience and resignation are preached to the poor, promising them a reward in the hereafter. What matters it to the wretched outcast who has no place to call his own, who is craving for a piece of bread, that

the doors of Heaven are wider open for him than for the rich? In the face of the great misery of the masses such promises seem bitter irony.

I have met very few intelligent women and men who honestly and conscientiously could defend existing governments; they even agreed with me on many points, but they were lacking in moral courage, when it

came to the point, to step to the front and declare themselves openly in sympathy with anarchistic principles.

We who have chosen the path laid down for us by our convictions oppose the organisation called the State, on principle, claiming the equal right of all to work and enjoy life.

When once free from the restrictions of extraneous authority, men will enter into free relations; spontaneous organisations will spring up in all parts of the world, and everyone will contribute to his and the common welfare as much labour as he or she is capable of, and consume according to their needs. All modern technical inventions and discoveries will

be employed to make work easy and pleasant, and science, culture, and art will be freely used to perfect and elevate the human race, while woman will be coequal with man.

"This is all well said," replies someone, "but people are not angels, men are selfish."

What about? Selfishness is not a crime; it only becomes a crime when conditions are such as to give an individual the opportunity to satisfy his selfishness to the detriment of others. In an anarchistic society everyone will seek to satisfy his ego; but as Mother Nature has so arranged things that only those survive who have the aid of their neighbours, man, in order to satisfy his ego, will extend his aid to those who will aid him, and then selfishness will no more be a curse but a blessing.

A dagger in one hand, a torch in the other, and all his pockets brim-full with dynamite bombs – that is the picture of the Anarchist such as it has been drawn by his enemies. They look at him simply as a mixture of a fool and a knave, whose sole purpose is a universal topsy-turvy, and whose only means to that purpose is

Selfishness is not a crime; it only becomes a crime when conditions are such as to give an individual the opportunity to satisfy his selfishness to the detriment of others. In an anarchistic society everyone will seek to satisfy his ego

to slay any one and everyone who differs from him. The picture is an ugly caricature, but its general acceptance is not to be wondered at, considering how persistently the idea has been drummed into the mind of the public. However, we believe Anarchy – which is freedom of each individual from harmful constraint by others, whether these others be individuals or an organised government – cannot be brought about without violence, and this violence is the same which won at Thermopylae and Marathon.

The popular demand for freedom is stronger and clearer than it has ever been before, and the conditions for reaching the goal are more favourable. It is evident that through the whole course of history runs an evolution before which slavery of any kind, compulsion under any form, must break down, and from which freedom, full and unlimited freedom, for all and from all must come.

From this it follows that Anarchism cannot be a retrograde movement, as has been insinuated, for the Anarchists march in the van and not in the rear of the army of freedom.

We consider it absolutely necessary that the mass of the people should never for a moment forget the gigantic contest that must come before their ideas can be realised, and therefore they use every means at their disposal – the speech, the press, the deed – to hasten the revolutionary development.

The system of communism logically excludes any and every relation between master and servant, and means really Anarchism, and the way to this goal leads through a social revolution.

The weal of mankind, as the future will and must make plain, depends upon communism. The system of communism logically excludes any and every relation between master and servant, and means really Anarchism, and the way to this goal leads through a social revolution.

As for the violence which people take as the characteristic mark of the Anarchist, it cannot and it shall not be denied that most Anarchists feel convinced that “violence” is not any more reprehensible toward carrying out their designs than it is when used by an oppressed people to obtain

freedom. The uprising of the oppressed has always been condemned by tyrants: Persia was astounded at Greece, Rome at the Caudine Forks, and England at Bunker Hill. Can Anarchy expect less, or demand victories without striving for them?

The meeting-place was a small hall behind a saloon, through which one had to pass. It was crowded with Germans, drinking, smoking, and talking. Before long, Jonathan Most entered. My first impression of him was one of revulsion. He was of medium height, with a large head crowned with greyish bushy hair; but his face was twisted out of form by an apparent dislocation of the left jaw. Only his eyes were soothing; they were blue and sympathetic.

His speech was a scorching denunciation of American conditions, a biting satire on the injustice and brutality of the dominant powers, a passionate tirade against those responsible for the Haymarket tragedy and the execution of the Chicago anarchists in November 1887. He spoke eloquently and picturesquely. As if by magic, his disfigurement disappeared, his lack of physical distinction was forgotten. He seemed transformed into some primitive power, radiating hatred and love, strength and inspiration. The rapid current of his speech, the music of his voice, and his sparkling wit, all combined to produce an effect almost overwhelming. He stirred me to my depths.

– Emma Goldman, *Living My Life* (1931)

In Memoriam Alexander Berkman

Vanguard: a libertarian communist journal, August-September 1936

(Ed. note: this brief but vivid account of the life and work of Alexander Berkman was written for the *Vanguard* by one of Berkman's intimate friends who prefers to remain anonymous.)

When Alexander Berkman's tragic end was announced, many of the older comrades, who knew him personally, felt that his death had left a space which would never be filled. This was the logical fate of a man who, when a mere youth of twenty-two, was ready to take the life of another whose brutal egotism brought misery and suffering to thousands of people. At sixty-six, he brought his life to an end when he felt he could serve life no longer.

When Berkman started to avenge the Homestead strikers forty-four years ago he knew a deed like that could only be paid for by his death and he was ready to sacrifice his young life without hesitation for his outraged sense of justice.

No matter how one evaluates his deed, none would doubt his sincerity if one only had the patience to delve into the complicated soul of humanity and guess its secrets. When a person, particularly a young man whose life still has everything to offer, is ready to risk his all without hope of return, he must not be evaluated by ordinary standards. This is a deed which can only be explained when its motives are appreciated. He who does not understand how one could give everything for a cause which bore for him the whole meaning of life, will never understand a person like Berkman. The average philistine who calculates his life by profit and loss, and whose hardened soul cannot understand any action which is not motivated by the desire for profit, will never see in people like Berkman other than brutal



**Alexander Berkman
(1870-1936)**

force who menace the existence of society. They will never comprehend that it was not crudeness of sentiment that made Berkman commit his deed, but that it was his love for humanity, his respect for human life, that impelled him to take a life. This rare trait was characteristic of Berkman to his very end and was the key to his personality.

It is not one's political beliefs but the inner feelings which shape character. Berkman was everything but a man of force: he was a man of great kindness, a sincere friend and a splendid

comrade, one who lived through the happiness and sorrows of his fellow humans. His clear thinking, coloured by a somewhat naive sentimentality, made everybody love him. In this lies the elementary greatness of his personality, the root of his moral influence. He was no sectarian and could tolerate any sincerely presented opinion, but he always knew how best to express his own ideas when the occasion arose.

Berkman came to America as a very young man in a period in which the young workers' movement had one of its tragic moments. Like Emma Goldman, Voltairine de Cleyre, and so many others, he was drawn into the revolutionary movement as a result of the Haymarket tragedy in Chicago. It was the fiery agitative powers of Johann Most which attracted him to the printing shop of Most's *Freedom* where he learned typesetting. At that time he carried with him the thought of returning to Russia to fight in the

underground movement, but the bloody happenings in Homestead brought a sudden end to his plans. Berkman was sentenced to twenty-two years, a tremendous sentence which had been applied only by a merciless stretching of the law.

The failure of the attentat saved a precious life which in the terrible years of imprisonment matured to greatness. Berkman's *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist* is one of those rare books which once read is never forgotten. In this book all the suffering and pain of a courageous spirit struggling against great odds is told in a background of drab prison life. Most of those upon whom fate has placed such trials break down under the pressure of personal sorrow. But a man who can survive the long years of hopeless imprisonment without swaying from his opinions, or being morally extinguished is a character of unconquerable integrity and inner strength. Berkman was such a man. In the grey, evil-foreboding days there was nothing to console him. He experienced things which the average man would hardly believe possible. Only very few realise how sadistically man can behave towards man.

For fourteen years he remained in that hell. Fourteen years! Very few can imagine what an accumulation of pain and sorrow are hidden beneath this dry number. On returning to life, he found everything changed. It was not easy to find a pathway in this new world. Notwithstanding, he found it and again distinguished himself in the fight for freedom.

Together with Emma Goldman he published *Mother Earth*. He worked principally in the ranks of organised labour and among the unemployed of the metropolis. Berkman had no illusions about the moral qualities of the worker. He knew that the majority of them shared the social prejudices of other classes. But he also recognised that the

social position of the worker was the creative power in life, that it made him the most important factor in any social change and that this was the lever to be used to pry up the decaying social system.

Then came the period when he edited the *Blast* on the Pacific coast. In connection with this, it should be remembered that Berkman was the first to come to the aid of Mooney and Billings. He travelled all over the country, spoke at

innumerable meetings and moved heaven and earth to arouse the workers to protest. At this time none dreamed of using the case for party propaganda. In their dedication articles Berkman's name is not mentioned. Perhaps someone felt that this man who had suffered fourteen years imprisonment for his principles was too exalted to be turned to the uses of narrow political interests which stood to profit by the misfortune of others.

Then came the years of the World War when Berkman and his friends tried their best to stir up public opinion against the prevailing hysteria. But the untiring efforts of this small minority

could not conquer the overwhelming tide of misdirected human passion, and it was not long before Emma Goldman, Berkman and so many others were sent to prison for their anti-conscription campaign. Followed two terrible years at Atlanta penitentiary. Berkman mentioned many times later that his two years in that prison were worse than those he had spent in the gaol at Pittsburgh. It was because our brave comrade could not tolerate the injustices done to others that he suffered so much during this incarceration. It was his temerity in championing the cause of oppressed Negro prisoners in a lynch state like Georgia that led to his disfavour with the prison authorities. But he took every slap of fate with stoic resignation.

They all wanted to cooperate in the building of a new world, of socialism and freedom. But the experiences of our comrade in Russia were the greatest disappointment of his unselfish life. He saw the dictatorship of the proletariat grow into the dictatorship of a party over the proletariat and all Russian peoples.

Under the blows of the enraged masses Czarism broke its terrible hold on Russia. The heart of Berkman beat with hope when he with Emma Goldman and the rest of his comrades were deported from America and started the trip to his native home on that renowned death ship. They all wanted to cooperate in the building of a new world, of socialism and freedom. But the experiences of our comrade in Russia were the greatest disappointment of his unselfish life. He saw the dictatorship of the proletariat grow into the dictatorship of a party over the proletariat and all Russian peoples. Long he fought against the suspicions which stirred within him. He sought to understand, to rationalise, to comprehend and explain these happenings which were in conflict with his free spirit. Finally the cold-blooded slaughter of the sailors of Kronstadt put an end to all his doubts. His place could not be on the side which ruthlessly killed the pioneers of the Russian Revolution, as did the French bourgeoisie the 35,000 men, women and children of the Paris Commune. His book *The Bolshevik Myth* renders his inner conflicts in an expressive and striking portrayal. It was a terrible shock to Berkman.

When Emma Goldman and Berkman came to Europe from Russia, they found themselves in a new world fundamentally different from that which they had known in America. The terrible ravages of the war were everywhere manifest and all of the countries were shaken with revolutionary convulsions. It is not easy to live in strange surroundings but here again Berkman did the best he could. After a short stay in Sweden, he went to Germany and contacted the young Anarcho-Syndicalist movement there. His works, *The Russian Tragedy*, *The Kronstadt Rebellion*, *The*

Russian Revolution and the Communist Party, and his Prison memoirs were all translated into German. Together with Emma Goldman he participated in the Congress of Anarcho-Syndicalists in Erfurt and established close relations with his comrades. Most of his work at this time was for the imprisoned comrades in Russia. He organised the International Aid Fund and edited the *Bulletin* in behalf of the Anarcho-Syndicalists in the prisons of the Soviet Union.

Finally he went to France but the revolutionary situation in that country precluded his doing open work forcing him to resign his position as secretary of the Russian Aid Fund. He was deported from France and only the help of influential friends made possible his return. It was a tortured existence. Even the most beautiful surroundings of the French Riviera lost all their glamour for him, living as he was, like a prisoner at the mercy of the slothful bureaucracy which might at any moment chase him across the border. Yet, he wrote *ABC of Anarchist-Communism* and conducted a prodigious correspondence with his friends in Europe and America. Then came illness and the constant fight for material existence. A few months ago he was recuperating from a painful and dangerous operation, he had a sudden relapse and felt that the best thing he could do was to make his adieu to the world. We must emphasise here his unwavering friendship with Emma Goldman who lost in him her best and oldest friend. What that means can only be understood by those who know that wounds exist that never can be healed.

A rare person has left us, a great and noble character, a real man. We bow quietly before his grave and swear to work for the ideal which he served faithfully for so many years.

There is considerable literature on Anarchism, but most of its larger works were written before the World War. The experience of the recent past has been vital and has made certain revisions necessary in the Anarchist attitude and argumentation. Though the basic propositions remain the same, some modifications of practical application are dictated by the facts of current history. The lessons of the Russian Revolution in particular call for a new approach to various important problems, chief among them the character and activities of the social revolution.

— Alexander Berkman, *Now and After: The ABC of Communist Anarchism*

Violence And Anarchism

Alexander Berkman

Mother Earth, April 1908⁷⁰

It is growing rather monotonous to hear the cry of "Anarchist conspiracy" raised whenever and wherever there happens an "unlawful" shot or bomb explosion.

Let us consider the matter dispassionately. Is violence specifically Anarchistic? Is the taking of human life such a very unusual occurrence among "civilised" peoples? Is our whole social existence anything but an

uninterrupted Series of murder, assassination, eradication? All our honoured institutions are rooted in the very spirit of murder. Do we build warships for educational purposes? Is the army a Sunday school? Our police, jails, and penitentiaries—what purpose do they serve but to suppress, kill, and maim? Is the gallows the symbol of our brotherhood, the electric chair the proof of our humanitarianism?

"All these things are necessary evils," we are told by the self-satisfied. True, they are necessary; necessary to Preserve society as it is. But has it ever occurred to the good citizen" whether it is really necessary to preserve things as they are? Is it indeed worth while?

Organised society can have but one *raison d'être*, namely, the greatest good of its members. Let us examine, then, whether society, as at present constituted, can be justly said to fulfil its mission.

No life, individual or collective, is possible without the means of subsistence. The social members supplying these means are, consequently, the life-givers of the community. And who are they? The question answers itself automatically, so to speak: the producers of the country's wealth are the conservators of its life. All members and classes of society should equally benefit by the fact of our combined effort as a society. But if, for any reason, distinctions are to be made, the

producing class, the real backbone of the social body, should have the preference.

In other words, the workers are the ones who should enjoy the greatest benefits arising from social organisation. That is the true mission of human society. Does the latter accomplish it? Does it come anywhere near accomplishment?

"But you can't regenerate society by violence, by a Union Square bomb," the well-meaning people argue.

Indeed, full well we know we cannot. Be fair; give ear. Do not confound the philosophy of a better, freer, and happier life with an *act resulting from the very evils which that philosophy seeks to abolish.*

By no means. The producers are the very ones on whose shoulders rests the whole burden of our social evils. They are the disinherited, the submerged. Their products are the property of someone else; the land and machinery, without which no production is possible, are not owned by them; as a result, they are forced to sell their labour for whatever pittance the employers condescend to give. Hence poverty, starvation, and widespread misery among the very class which, as the sole producer, has the best claim to enjoy the blessings of organised social life.

To support, defend, and perpetuate these unjust and terrible conditions, it is necessary to have police, prisons, laws, and government. For the disinherited are not content to forever starve in the midst of plenty, and the exploited are beginning to cry out against their cruel bondage.

These cries, these signs of rebellious dissatisfaction must be stifled. That is the mission of law and government: to preserve things as they are; to secure to the rich their stolen wealth; to strangle the voice of popular discontent.

Such is the social life of "civilised" countries. A life of misery and degradation, economic exploitation, governmental suppression, lawful brutality, judicial murder. Sham, injustice, and tyranny are the

⁷⁰ An edited version later appeared in *The Blast*, 15 August 1916 (*Black Flag*)

synonyms of organised society. Shall we preserve it as it is? Is it necessary and desirable? Is it even possible?

“But you can’t regenerate society by violence, by a Union Square bomb,” the well-meaning people argue.

Indeed, full well we know we cannot. Be fair; give ear. Do not confound the philosophy of a better, freer, and happier life with an *act resulting from the very evils which that philosophy seeks to abolish*.

Anarchism is the science of social order, as opposed to existing disorder; of brotherhood, as against present Ishmaelitism; of individual liberty and well-being, as opposed to legal oppression, robbery, and universal misery.

This condition of social regeneration cannot be achieved by the will or act of any man or party. The enlightenment of the masses as to the evils of government, the awakening of the public conscience to a clear understanding of justice and equity—these are the forces which will abolish all forms of bondage, political, economical, and social, replacing present institutions by free co-operation and the solidarity of communal effort.

“But the bomb?” cry the judges in and out of court. The bomb is the echo of your cannon, trained upon our starving brothers; it is the cry of the wounded striker; tis the voice of hungry women and children; the shriek of those maimed and torn in your industrial slaughter houses; it is the dull thud of the policeman’s club upon a defenceless head; ’tis the shadow of the crisis, the rumbling of suppressed earthquake—it is manhood’s lightning out of an atmosphere of degradation and misery that king, president, and plutocrat have heaped upon humanity. The bomb is the ghost of your past crimes.

You may foam and legislate, arrest, imprison, and deport. You may still further tighten the thumb-screws of Persecution, erect more gallows, and build electric chairs. Pitiful fools! Thus was Christ crucified as a disturber of “Caesar’s peace.” Did Golgotha suppress his teaching? Have the unspeakable tortures of the Inquisition eradicated free thought? Did Louis XVI. save his crown – or his head – by *lettre de cachet*? Has the cause of the Abolitionists been exterminated by the judicial murder of John Brown?

“Our graves will speak louder than the voices you strangle.” In spite of all the strenuous governmental,

capitalistic, and journalistic efforts to misrepresent and suppress Anarchists and Anarchism – because of those efforts – the people will yet learn the truth.

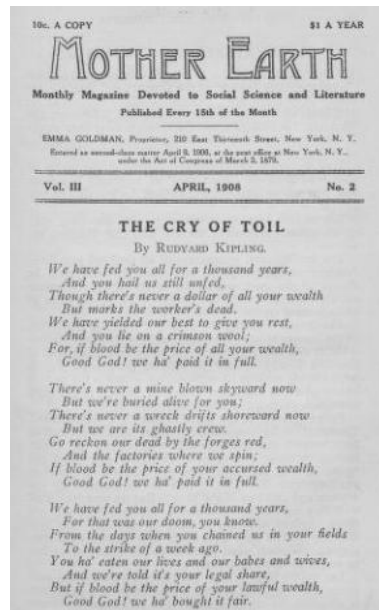
Though well aware that the Union Square bomb – whoever its thrower – was no result of any conspiracy, the police insisted on my arrest. As usual, they were the first to break their sacred law: my protest notwithstanding, I was photographed and Bertillioned, in contempt of a recent decision of the Supreme Court of the State, declaring such police

methods illegal before the conviction of an arrested person. Having absolutely no evidence against me, the police resorted to the ever-ready charge of “inciting to riot.” Naturally, when my hearing took place, the case collapsed like an empty flour sack; however, the authorities grasped the opportunity to air their wisdom. The detectives triumphantly announced that they had made the “important discovery” that I am an Anarchist, and the presiding magistrate assured me that Tolstoi could not possibly be an Anarchist, since “all Anarchism is criminal Anarchism.” The learned Cadi suggested that I “change the name of the party.” “As long as you persist in calling yourself an

Anarchist, and evidently take pride in it, it is the duty of the police to keep you under surveillance.” I assured the honourable man that the name suited me perfectly; if it did not sound pleasant in the long ears of authority, so much the worse for the latter.

The brutal stupidity of the police is equalled only by the lack of decency on the part of some Socialists and other kid-glove heroes. These, our step-brothers, try to curry favour with popular prejudice by classifying – against their better knowledge – Anarchists with the police. The Socialists, once themselves the victims of calumny and persecution, have now in their turn become calumniators and persecutors. They have learned and are practicing capitalistic tactics while yet an insignificant socio-political factor. What, then, would be the effect of the “materialistic conception of history” upon the Socialists, if they should ever grasp the reins of government and achieve real power? Will there be found sufficient jailers in the world to supply the needs of triumphant Socialism?

But neither plutocratic nor Socialistic misrepresentation and persecution will halt the march of humanity towards light, liberty, and Anarchy.



The Pennsylvania Constabulary and the McKees Rocks Strike

Alexander Berkman

Mother Earth, September 1909

Even before the memorable days of the Homestead strike, of 1892, there was a law on the statute books of Pennsylvania forbidding the importation of armed men from other States. Heavy penalties were attached to the offence.

However, when the Carnegie Steel Company was preparing to destroy the Association of Amalgamated Iron, Steel and Tin Workers, the then Chairman of the Company, H. C. Frick, imported armed Pinkertons from Chicago and New York to intimidate and shoot down the locked-out men. The history of that great struggle is well known. But when the strike was finally settled, public sentiment forced the District Attorney of Allegheny County to bring charges of murder against Frick and other officials of the Carnegie Company, they being legally responsible for the atrocious deeds of their imported myrmidons.

Naturally, the authorities felt too much respect for the Carnegie-Frick millions to press the charge of murder. It was feared that a jury of citizens might possibly send the Carnegie officials to prison. The cases were therefore never permitted to come to trial. But the popular outcry against the importation of armed ruffians became so strong that the Pennsylvania legislature was forced to action. The already existing statute was amended, making the importation of armed men treason against the State, punishable with death.

The industrial Tsars of Pennsylvania were not at all pleased with the situation. The new law expressly forbade the employment of Pinkertons, foreign or local. The people execrated their very name. It would be risky to face a charge of treason. The local Iron & Coal Police were not sufficient to "deal effectively" with great strikes; nor was it financially advisable to keep a large private standing army who would have to be paid even when there were no strikers to be shot.

The coke, coal, and steel interests of Pennsylvania (practically the same concern) faced a difficult problem. They were preparing to wage a bitter war against organised labour, fully determined to annihilate the last vestiges of unionism among their employees. It was to be done effectively, yet economically. A very difficult problem. At last the solution was found. A

high-priced steel lawyer struck the right key. It was quite simple. Why risk popular wrath, possible prosecution for treason and murder, by employing Pinkertons? Why even go to the expense of hiring an army of private guards? It would be far cheaper and safer to have the great State of Pennsylvania act as their Pinkerton. What is the State for if not to protect the lords of money and subdue grumbling labour? The good taxpayers will do the paying.

A bill was introduced in the legislature. Just a little bill; On its face it looked quite harmless. Some burglaries had been committed in the outlying western counties; the local police, it was said, could not cover the extensive territory; the smaller towns and villages were too poor to increase their police forces. The State should protect the weak. Let it therefore organise a special force to take care of the more obscure districts. Only that. Their sole duty would be to patrol the unprotected places.

The astute steel and coal lawyer knew how to make the proposed law look inoffensive. It passed without opposition.

No time was lost in the organisation of the newly created State police, called constabulary. But the hasty passage of the law, the unusually large appropriation made for the purpose of organising a "small patrolling body," the almost dictatorial powers vested in its commander, and the latter's militant attitude from the very beginning, soon began to arouse misgivings on the part of organised labour. But their fears were quickly allayed with the assurance "from authoritative sources" that "honest workingmen had nothing to fear" from the constabulary. These were merely to patrol the outlying, unprotected districts; they would not mix in local affairs; they had nothing to do with strikes; they'd be good.

The average man has great trust in the word of authority. The workingman especially is trained – at home, in school, shop, and union – to respect the powers that be. Therefore, when the Governor of the great State of Pennsylvania personally assured some protesting labour men that "honest workingmen had nothing to fear from the constabulary," it was considered complete proof that all was well.

Then the constabulary got into action. It was recruited from the most brutal and savage social elements. Proven recklessness of human life was an indispensable qualification. The reputation of having “killed his man” was the standard of admission. It was the widely-heralded ambition of the constabulary’s commander to make his force a “terror to evildoers.” He openly boasted the motto, “Shoot to kill.” The pay of his men was generous.

It was not long before the real mission of the State troopers became evident. They made no attempt to do mere patrol duty. Instead, the least sign of dissatisfaction among men employed on the highways, track-layers, miners, and coke workers would immediately result in a descent of troopers. They terrorised the foreign workingmen, clubbing and shooting indiscriminately, and even invading peaceful homes in the dead of night to search for alleged weapons and to drag their unfortunate victims to prison, forcing them to run over miles of rough country chained to the saddles of the galloping horses.

The name “trooper” soon grew to be a terror, indeed. They quickly earned the reputation they aspired to, proving themselves more inhumane and cruel than Russian Cossacks.

It gradually became the established custom to employ the constabulary in strikes. Clothed with full power over life and death, absolutely arbitrary and irresponsible, they have terrorised the whole of Western Pennsylvania, participating in every strike since their organisation. The brutality with which they have helped the traction company of New Castle to break the street car strike of two years ago is still fresh in the memory of the people. They have acted in similar manner in every recent struggle between capital and labour in the great Keystone State, planting hatred and vengeance in the heart of the populace, and leaving devastation, ruined homes, and orphaned children in their wake. These modern Janisaries superseded by force of arms local administrations, usurped their jurisdiction, and established a veritable red reign of terror. The sovereign authority of Pennsylvania indeed became the Pinkerton of the industrial despots. But the wind that plutocracy and

the State sowed is already beginning to bear fruit. The whirlwind is approaching.

Properly speaking, there can be no such thing as an unjust strike. The exploited are always justified in resisting their despoilers, by every means at hand. But if never a strike was justified, that at McKees Rocks was imperative. It would be impossible to exaggerate the terrible conditions prevalent in the Pressed Steel Car Company’s mills. The oppression of the workingmen became so great that a strike proved the sole alternative. When it is considered that the strikers were not organised and that they were nearly all recent immigrants – Poles, Hungarians, and Greeks – it will be realised that the resort to a strike must have indeed been the only hope left.

The working conditions in the mills are incredible. The employees were practically the slaves of the company. Peonage was the established system. It is euphoniously called the Baldwin contract or “pooling” method. It consists in parcelling out of lots of work to a foreman, who contracts to do it for a certain sum, the amount to be divided

pro rata among the men under him. This system is as fatal to the interests of the employees as it is beneficial to the company. The latter determines arbitrarily the price it will pay for a car, and then apportions the same among the gang-foremen of the different departments. All spoiled material is charged up to the pool; that is, to the workmen who are lumped together in the group making a given car. All blunders of foremen, all the avoidable and unavoidable accidents of construction, are charged up against the pool. No workman knows, till he gets his pay check, how much he is going to receive; and then it is usually so little as to be hardly worth wondering about. Here is a sworn statement of a series of pay checks received by these men who are being “protected against pauper labour”:

June 15, 1909.

Check No. 5,023—Received for 5 days’ work, \$3.95
 Check No. 4,621—Received for 2 days’ work, 40c
 Check No. 4,495—Received for 7 days’ work, \$3.80

June 30, 1909.

Check No. 4,753—Received for 3 days’ work, \$3.85

Per Hour

8c.
 2c.
 5 ½c.

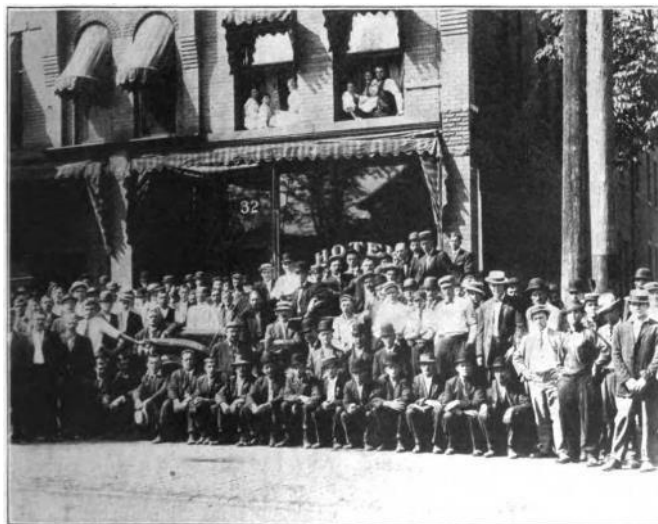
13c.

It was not long before the real mission of the State troopers became evident. They made no attempt to do mere patrol duty. Instead, the least sign of dissatisfaction among men employed on the highways, track-layers, miners, and coke workers would immediately result in a descent of troopers.

Check No. 8,014—Received for 4 days' work, 90c.	2 ½ c.
Check No. 8,134—Received for 13 days' work, \$18.85	14 ½ c.
Check No. 7,213—Received for 4 days' work, \$5.10	12 ¾ c.
Check No. 6,588—Received for 14 days' work, \$16.80	12c.
Check No. 5,016—Received for 4 days' work, \$4.15	10 ¾ c.
Check No. 4,050—Received for 9 days' work, \$10.35.	11 ½ c.
Check No. 4,950—Received for 5 days' work, \$3.45	7c.
Check No. 4,912—Received for 4 days' work, \$4.00	10c.

The lowest wages, the worst working conditions, the most brutal treatment designed to deaden every human impulse and instinct, graft, robbery and even worse, the swapping of human souls, the souls of women, for the lives of their babies, have for years marked the Pressed Steel Car Works as the most outrageous of all the outrageous plants in the United States. The "slaughter house" is the most expressive name that could be given to the plant, although it has other claims to rank as a strong side show of Inferno. Workingmen are slaughtered every day; not killed, but slaughtered. Their very deaths are unknown to all save the workers who see their bodies hacked and butchered by the relentless machinery and death traps which fill the big works. Their families, of course, know that the bread stops coming. But the public, and even the coroner, are ignorant of the hundreds of deaths by slaughter which form the unwritten records of the Pressed Steel Car Plant. These deaths are never reported. The men are unknown by name except to their families and their intimates. To others they are known as "No. 999" or some other, furnished on a check by the "slaughter house" company for the convenience of its paymasters. A human life is worth less than a rivet. Rivets cost money.

It is against these conditions that the workers of McKees Rocks rebelled. Endurance had reached its utmost limit, and yet the company refused to abolish the pool system and turned a deaf ear to the prayer for arbitration. But starving in idleness could be no worse than starving at work. Thus the men were forced to strike. And here let it be noted that the five thousand strikers entirely lacked any organisation, while the only men who remained at work were those employed in the "crane and tool department," a machinist local and member of the American Federation of Labor. These "union" men continued to serve their masters till the tying up of the other departments forced them to join the strikers.



The ever-ready capitalist tool, the State, hastened to the aid of the atrocious Steel Car Company. The rebellious spirit of the workers had to be broken, the men forced back into their slavery, and an object lesson taught to dissatisfied labour at large. The constabulary proceeded to do their bloody work, rivalling the methods of Russian Cossacks. They clubbed to death and shot to kill; they broke up the strikers' homes, evicting sick women and suckling babes into the cold of the night. The bloodhounds of greed and power left nothing undone to break the strike, perpetrating unspeakable outrages and ruthlessly sacrificing workmen's lives.

Against these terrible odds the strikers have now withstood almost two months. Perhaps there is not another instance in the whole history of this country's labour movement of such a wonderful struggle of labour against capital. Unorganised, without friends or money, these despised "foreigners" have single-handed fought the rich and powerful Steel Car Company, with its private police, State constabulary, strike-breakers, and – last, but not least – its subsidised press. Nor did these brave strikers have to battle against their enemies alone. Alleged friends, organised workers, made stupid by their antiquated union tactics, directly aided the cause of the masters. Indeed, good "union" engineers, firemen, brakemen, and telegraph operators brought the murderous Cossacks and the scabs to McKees Rocks, and the National Executive of the American Federation of

Labor turned a deaf ear to the cries of their bleeding comrades. Great indeed were the odds against these victims of modern slavery. But yet greater was their courage, their determination and loyalty, and faithful and staunch were their women folk, battling side by side with their husbands, sweethearts, and brothers, encouraging and inspiring.

The world loves a good fighter. The heroism of the striking McKees Rocks slaves has conquered the respect and admiration of the world. They have won a greater victory than the mere recognition of their demands by the Pressed Steel Car Company. They have destroyed the myth of their undesirability as members of a labour union. Their self-sacrifice and endurance, determination and courage, above all the supreme spirit of solidarity, prove them far better, truer union

men, unorganised though they are, than the A. F. L. scabs. Nay, more: the spirit of resistance on the part of these "foreigners" will burn with letters of fire the lesson of rebellious manhood into the dull brain of reactionary wage slaves, forever prating of harmony and peace.

Labor pays dearly for every experience. But the precious blood shed by the heroic victims at McKees Rocks will fertilise the soil whence will spring a new, intelligent, revolutionary labour movement in this country. For such events as are now happening in Pennsylvania will tend to awaken American unionism from its capital-and-labour-harmony nightmare. It will learn that capitalism means abject slavery and slaughter for the workingman; that there can be neither harmony nor peace between master and slave;

that the struggle is one of life and death, and that *any and all means are justified in such a struggle*. The masters have long since recognised and applied this self-evident truth. Only stupid labour still stammers, "Peace, peace," where none is possible.

It has taken untold suffering, tears, and blood to teach the men of toil their first union lesson of organisation. McKees Rocks will further teach them that the pillar of our boasted "liberty" is labour's slavery, supported by bull-pen and rifle diet. McKees Rocks is the nation in miniature. It will require repeated McKees Rocks to drill the wage slave in the *second* lesson of his emancipation: industrial organisation, cooperation, and revolution through Direct Action and the General Strike.

The Failure of Compromise

Alexander Berkman

Mother Earth, November 1909

The crushing slump in the Socialist vote in the New York elections accomplished at least one beneficial result: it has awakened the Socialist party to the realisation of the utter ineffectiveness of its propaganda in this country.

In a thoughtful editorial the *Call* of November 4, analysing the causes of the slump, reaches the justified conclusion that the *methods* of Socialist propaganda are at fault. Pursuing the subject further, the editor inquires what particular methods were responsible, and what changes are most needed. He confesses himself unable to find a satisfactory reply: "These are truly difficult questions. No individual can answer them. It will take the united ability and wisdom of the whole party in this city to discover our errors and to rectify them."

Without claiming to possess the "united ability and wisdom of the whole party," we make bold to attempt to answer this very vital, yet – in our opinion – by no means difficult question. The problem is very serious, indeed. Upon its proper solution rests, to a large extent, the future welfare of mankind.

There was a time when Socialism represented the highest aspirations of humanity, man's eternal thirst for liberty, for self-ownership. Then the banner of Socialism was the rallying point for the oppressed and disinherited of the world, who saw in Socialism the modern Messiah.

Socialist adherents grew and multiplied. The ideal of a regenerated society was a great educational force,

attracting the best intellectual and social elements, who had found in Socialism complete satisfaction for their inmost soul hunger.

But with the growth of numbers came the sense of power and the desire for its increase. Forgetting that a world-revolutionising ideal must necessarily make slow progress, the Socialist party became impatient and cast about for ways and means to hasten its growth. It understood that an uncompromising attitude towards all popular superstition, prejudices, and shams is not calculated to invite the speedy realisation of Socialism. Impatience at slow but thorough results led the party into committing the fatal error of sacrificing principles for numbers.

Gradually it began to trim its sails. Step by step original Socialism was stripped of its elemental features. First came religion. It was not deemed "practical" to tread on the religious toes of the people. Religion was officially declared a "private affair." As was to be expected, this renegacy was rewarded by the addition of converts whose religious prejudices would have otherwise kept them away from the Socialist party. Increased numbers, and consequent greater power, developed a thirst for more. Still more trimming of sails followed, more compromises, with the inevitable result that, to-day, Socialism has almost entirely been shorn of its educational effect, the chief object being the gathering of voting material.

And while the party was dealing in compromises and "growing" in proportion, there developed within itself the spirit of rankest authority, suppression, and

despotism. Internally and externally, Socialism had lost its original features: it could no longer satisfy the aspirations of true liberty-lovers. Nay, more; it became the hunting-ground of elements thoroughly conservative and Christian, who in turn impressed their intellectual and psychic stamp upon the principles and tactics of the party. The latter thus ceased to be an inspirational force and became a mere liberal-bourgeois political party, the great majority of whose membership have neither ideals nor principles beyond the Socialist usurpation of the government reins. Such a party, unable to hold out to its constituency the hope of immediate success, can be nothing more than the

shuttlecock in the political game. Its members will vote for any candidate or party promising social reforms, however vain their pretensions. To such a contingent the Socialist party itself means nothing more,

The solution of the problem is therefore simple: Back to original principles and ideals. Let the motto be enlightenment rather than political training. Real educational progress is slow, but sincere and permanent. The world is not to be regenerated by Socialist votes, Enlightened, liberty-loving men and women alone can accomplish it.

The Need of Translating Ideals into Life

Alexander Berkman

Mother Earth, November 1910

One year has passed since the death of Francisco Ferrer. His martyrdom has called forth almost universal indignation against the cabal of priest and ruler that doomed a noble man to death. The thinking, progressive elements throughout the world have voiced their protest in no ambiguous manner. Everywhere sympathy has been manifested for Ferrer, the modern victim of the Spanish Inquisition, and deep appreciation expressed for his work and aims. In short, the death of Ferrer has succeeded – as probably no other martyrdom of recent history – in rousing the social conscience of man. It has clarified the eternally unchanging attitude of the church as the enemy of progress; it has convincingly exposed the State as the crafty foe of popular advancement; it has, finally, roused deep interest in the destiny of the child and the necessity of rational education.

It would indeed be a pity if the intellectual and emotional energies thus awakened should exhaust themselves in mere indignation and unprofitable speculation concerning the unimportant details of Ferrer's personality and life. Protest meetings and anniversary commemorations are quite necessary and useful, in proper time and place. They have already accomplished, so far as the world at large is concerned, a great educational work. By means of these the social consciousness has been led to realise the enormity of the crime committed by the Church and State of Spain. But "the world at large" is not easily moved to action; it requires many terrible martyrdoms to disturb its equilibrium of dullness; and even when disturbed, it tends quickly to resume its wonted immobility. It is the thinking, radical elements which are, literally, the movers of the world, the intellectual and emotional disturbers of its stupid equanimity. They must never be suffered to become dormant, for they, too, are in

danger of growing absorbed in mere adulation of the martyr and rhetorical admiration of his great work. As Ferrer himself has wisely cautioned us; "Idols are created when men are praised, and this is very bad for the future of the human race. The time devoted to the dead would be better employed in improving the condition of the living, most of whom stand in great need of this."

These words of Francisco Ferrer should be italicised in our minds. The radicals, especially – of whatever creed – have much to atone for in this respect. We have given too much time to the dead, and not enough to the living. We have idealised our martyrs to the extent of neglecting the practical needs of the cause they died for. We have idealised our ideals to the exclusion of their application in actual life. The cause of it was an immature appreciation of our ideals. They were too sacred for everyday use. The result is evident, and rather discouraging. After a quarter of a century – and more – of radical propaganda, we can point to no very particular achievement. *Some* progress, no doubt, has been made; but by no means commensurate with the really tremendous efforts exerted. This comparative failure, in its turn, produces a further disillusioning effect: old-time radicals drop from the ranks, disheartened; the most active workers become indifferent, discouraged with lack of results.

It is this the history of every world-revolutionising idea of our times. But especially is it true of the Anarchist movement. Necessarily so, since by its very nature it is not a movement that can conquer immediate tangible results, such as a political movement, for instance, can accomplish. It may be said that the difference between even the most advanced political movement, such as Socialism, and Anarchism is this: the one seeks the

transformation of political and economic conditions, while the goal of the other includes a complete transvaluation of individual and social conceptions. Such a gigantic task is necessarily of slow progress; nor can its advancement be counted by noses or ballots. It is the failure to realise fully the enormity of the task that is partly responsible for the pessimism that so often overtakes the active spirits of the movement. To that is added the lack of clarity regarding the manner of social accoutrements.

The Old is to give birth to the New. How do such things happen? as little Wendla asks her mother in Wedekind's *Frühlings Erwachen*. We have outgrown the stork of Social Revolution that will deliver us the newborn child of ready-made equality, fraternity, and liberty. We now conceive of the coming social life as a condition rather than a system. A condition of mind, primarily; one based on solidarity of interests arising from social understanding and enlightened self-interest. A system can be organised, made. A condition must be developed. This development is determined by existing environment and the intellectual tendencies of the times. The causation of both is no doubt mutual and interdependent, but the factor of individual and propagandistic effort is not to be under-estimated.

The social life of man is a centre, as it were, whence radiate numerous intellectual tendencies, crossing and zigzagging, receding and approaching each other in interminable succession. The points of convergence create new centres, exerting varying influences upon the larger centre, the general life of humanity. Thus new intellectual and ethical atmospheres are established, the degree of their influence depending, primarily, on the active enthusiasm of the adherents; ultimately, on the kinship between the new ideal and the requirements of human nature. Striking this true chord, the new ideal will affect ever more intellectual centres which gradually begin interpreting themselves into life and transvaluing the values of the great general centre, the social life of man.

Anarchism is such an intellectual and ethical atmosphere. With sure hand it has touched the heart of humanity, influencing the world's foremost minds in literature, art, and philosophy. It has resurrected the individual from the ruins of the social debacle. In the

forefront of human advance, its progress is necessarily painfully slow: the leaden weight of ages of ignorance and superstition hangs heavily at its heels. But its slow progress should by no means prove discouraging. On the contrary: it evidences the necessity of greater effort, of solidifying existing libertarian centres, and of ceaseless activity to create new ones.

The immaturity of the past had blinded our vision to the true requirements of the situation. Anarchism was regarded, even by its adherents, as an ideal for the future. Its practical application to current life was

entirely ignored. The propaganda was circumscribed by the hope of ushering in the Social Revolution. *Preparation* for the new social life was not considered necessary. The gradual development and growth of the coming day did not enter into revolutionary concepts. The dawn had been overlooked. A fatal error, for there is no day without dawn.

The martyrdom of Francisco Ferrer will not have been in vain if, through it, the Anarchists – as well as other radical elements – will realise that, in social as well as in individual life, conception precedes birth. The social

conception which we need, and must have, is the creation of libertarian centres which shall radiate the atmosphere of the dawn into the life of humanity.

Many such centres are possible. But the most important of all is the young life, the growing generation. After all, it is they upon whom will devolve the task of carrying the work forward. Just in the proportion that the young generation grows more enlightened and libertarian, will we approach a freer society. Yet in this regard we have been, and still are, unpardonably negligent; we Anarchists, Socialists, and other radicals. Protesting against the superstition-breeding educational system, we nevertheless continue to subject our children to its baneful influence. We condemn the madness of war, yet we permit our offspring to be inculcated with the poison of patriotism. Ourselves more or less emancipated from false bourgeois standards, we still suffer our children to be corrupted by the hypocrisy of the established. Every such parent directly aids in the perpetuation of dominant ignorance and slavery. Can we indeed expect a generation reared in the atmosphere of the suppressive, authoritarian educational régime, to form the cornerstone of a free, self-reliant humanity? Such

Preparation for the new social life was not considered necessary. The gradual development and growth of the coming day did not enter into revolutionary concepts. The dawn had been overlooked. A fatal error, for there is no day without dawn.

parents are criminally guilty toward themselves and their children: they rear the ghost that will divide their house against itself, and strengthen the bulwarks of darkness.

No intelligent radical can fail to realise the need of the rational education of the young. The rearing of the child must become a process of liberation by methods which shall not impose ready-made ideas, but which should aid the child's natural self-unfoldment. The purpose of such an education is not to force the child's adaptation to accepted concepts. but to give free play to his [and her] originality, initiative, and individuality. Only by freeing education from compulsion and restraint can we create the environment for the manifestation of the spontaneous interest and inner incentives on the part of the child. Only thus can we supply rational conditions favourable to the development of the child's natural tendencies and his latent emotional and mental faculties. Such methods of education, essentially aiding the child's imitative quality and ardour for knowledge, will develop a generation of healthy intellectual independence. It will produce men and women capable, in the words of Francisco Ferrer, "of evolving without stopping, of

destroying and renewing their environment without cessation; of renewing themselves also; always ready to accept what is best, happy in the triumph of new ideas, aspiring to live multiple lives in one life."

Upon such men and women rests the hope of human progress. To them belongs the future. And it is, to a very considerable extent, in our own power to pave the way. The death of Francisco Ferrer were in vain, our indignation, sympathy, and admiration worthless, unless we translate the ideals of the martyred educator into practice and life, and thus advance the human struggle for enlightenment and liberty.

A beginning has already been made. Several schools, along Ferrer lines, are being conducted in New York and Brooklyn; Philadelphia and Chicago are also about to open classes. At present the efforts are limited, for lack of aid and teachers, to Sunday schools. But they are the nucleus of grand, far-reaching potentiality. The radical elements of America, and chiefly the Francisco Ferrer Association, could rear no worthier nor more lasting monument to the memory of the martyred educator, Francisco Ferrer, than by a generous response to this appeal for the establishment of the first Francisco Ferrer Day School in America.

The I.W.W. Convention

Alexander Berkman

Mother Earth, October 1913

THE eighth annual convention of the I.W.W. was justly looked forward to as a great, significant event. Society is in the throes of deep unrest; the times are pregnant with revolutionary thoughts and deeds, The avant guard of awakening labour, the I.W.W., is a body of militant workers, who have succeeded in their comparatively short existence to draw the eyes of the world to the determined conscious struggle of labour to break the chains of wage slavery and to fight for its emancipation with all the devotion and energy that a great cause can inspire.

But the particular element attracted to the I.W.W. ranks requires broad enlightenment and a clear visualisation of purposes and means to achieve ultimate victory. in the course of the I.W.W. career, there have arisen serious problems, and none more pressing than the two questions of local autonomy and effective methods of warfare.

It is therefore with a sense of great disappointment that we notice that the Convention at Chicago did not rise to the occasion. The question of local autonomy, in

itself such an axiomatic necessity of a truly revolutionary movement, has been so obscured in the debates of the Convention, that apparently sight was lost of the fact that no organisation of independent and self-reliant workers is thinkable without complete local autonomy. It does not speak well either for the intelligence or spirit of the Convention delegates that the efforts of the Decentralists were defeated. The Convention has given a very serious blow to the I.W.W. movement, to the very spirit of the social revolution, by paralysing initiative and independent action through the resolution that the publications of the I.W.W. should come under the supervision of the General Executive Board. That is centralisation with a vengeance, and it opens up avenues of censorship, suppression and dictatorship, which it is to be hoped the rank and file of the I.W.W. will be quick to eliminate by refusing to indorse the action of the Convention.

Still more serious is the apparently wilful ignoring of the supremely important questions of aims and methods. We had hoped that all the intelligence and

solidarity of the Convention would be centred upon the question nearest to Labor's interests: "Why did the I.W.W. lose the Paterson strike?" For that is really the most vital I.W.W. problem of the day, the more vital as it concerns not only the welfare of the I.W.W. itself, but the labour movement at large. The Paterson strike was a tremendous demonstration of solidarity, determination and willing self sacrifice, and on the whole the methods and tactics advised by the I.W.W. leaders of the strike were followed by the great body of workers. Why, then, was the strike lost? Not that merely to win a strike is important. It is important chiefly in the degree in which it inspires the workers with renewed hope and energy and greater confidence in the modern industrial revolutionary tactics. But even a lost strike is educational, provided it teaches labour a useful lesson. But the lesson of the Paterson strike consists in elucidating the *causes why the strike* was lost, especially in view of the fact that to all intents and purposes it was conducted in conformity with I.W.W. methods.

Is it perchance possible that the whole I.W.W. philosophy of the "hands in the pockets" strike is amiss? Or is the theory that a strike can be won if the workers succeed in paralysing the particular industry

involved, at fault? Paterson seems to demonstrate that the practical paralysis of the whole silk industry was *not* sufficient to gain a victory for labour. Perhaps it is even advisable that the locality involved in a strike should be paralysed, its social pulse suspended for the time being, and the place isolated from the rest of the world, rather than the stoppage of the industry in other places.

These are the great questions which press for solution; they alone could justify the expense and effort of the Chicago Convention.

We consider the Convention, in its wider significance, a sad failure. The stenographic report of the proceedings is shortly to be published in book form, and we sincerely hope that the real militants and revolutionists of the I.W.W. will take the lesson to heart and exert all their energies to stem the tide of conservatism and faint-heartedness in the I.W.W. organisation.

The I.W.W. in America has a great future. But it needs a larger vision, more clarified purposes and greater consciousness of the spirit of true autonomy and liberty, which revolutionises the heart, while at the same time it educates and broadens the mind.

Political Hucksters

Alexander Berkman

Mother Earth, November 1913

The political hucksters are tremendously busy these days. True, they have nothing to offer to the people save a few rotten planks, as breakable as the proverbial ante-election promises. But what's the odds! The art of the huckster is to make one buy the things he doesn't want, and the business of the politician is to persuade the people that they won't be happy till he gets his office.

And so it goes merrily on. One gang of grafters supersedes another in an endless round of elections, and no one's the wiser except the politicians. The good citizen piously casts his little paper in the box and goes his way, and whatever party wins he plods on as before, and all remains as it was. Only taxes grow higher, the cost of necessaries goes up, and ends are harder to meet. And the worker, the actual producer who pays the bill, he keeps on wondering how the change of masters is going to help fill his market basket and—continues to toil for his masters.

Nor does the Socialist politician help extricate the workers from the dilemma. On the contrary, he still further complicates and confounds the real issues by promising the people a land flowing with honey and milk, if they would only worship that mysterious thing called Socialism as their sole divinity. Its high priests will already see to it that the capitalist is legislated out of existence, and new, Socialist laws will decree well-being and joy for all. For the Socialist politicians have no quarrel with the law, provided it is made by honest Socialists, and administered and executed by good party members, in order that 'the will of the people may triumph.'

But "the will of the people" is beginning to show unmistakable signs of law diarrhoea. They have had too much of that diet. The workers especially are manifesting a tendency to rebel against the masters even of their own choosing. They are awakening to the possibilities of being their own masters. They are gaining confidence in their own initiative and

developing their intelligence and power, as producers, to make their will operative directly, by virtue of labour being the sole creator of all wealth.

That is the significance of direct action methods that are now applied with ever greater frequency and determination in every struggle of labour – and labour will teach the rest of the world that the affairs of the people are the people's affairs, to be regulated individually and collectively by themselves, without the interference of even Socialist law and Socialist politicians.

While this consciousness is growing throughout the world in the industrial life, it seems to take also a political turn in Mexico. In the recent presidential elections there the people seem to have deliberately abstained from exercising their privilege of choosing a new set of rulers Consternation in the camp of

politicians. The governments of Europe and America even are growing anxious. If the ballot sheep refuse to be corralled in the shearing booths, how in the name of Moloch are you going to get their wool? Why, government could not exist a day if the people were to refuse recognition and support! And the industrial barons – how are they to skin the cattle if the brutes refuse to abide by the rules laid down for skinning them?

You can't sit on a fellow's back if he persists in standing up straight, and if the workers will no longer bend in supplication to earthly divinities and straighten their backs in the very holy of holies – the temple of authority – the whole laborious framework of exploitation and robbery will fall to the ground.

Sad days are in store for the high priests of law and life.

The Menace of the Unemployed

Alexander Berkman

Mother Earth, March 1914

For the first time in the history of this country the unemployed are making an attempt *themselves* to solve the great problem of unemployment. The significance of the attempt cannot be overestimated, nor its results foreseen.

Hitherto the jobless man, during periods of countrywide unemployment, has been relying on the various reform and charitable agencies to find some solution, and relying, of course, in vain. For, generally speaking, there is neither we sincere and intelligent plan among the reformers, of whatever hue, to solve this great problem, nor any possibility of a thorough and final solution of unemployment within the legal and industrial boundaries of present-day capitalist society.

Unemployment is no sporadic phenomenon of modern life. It is inherent in the character and mode of functioning of our industrial system. The jobless man is always with us, and industrial crises or stagnation, eliminating hundreds of thousands of workers, for a longer or shorter period, from the field of labour, are events of regular and inevitable recurrence.

The causes of unemployment are ridiculously simple, and therefore so little understood. Sociologists, political economists, and reformists have succeeded in so confusing the issue that the real facts of the problem have been all but buried beneath a mass of fictitious issues concerning the tariff, money problems, stringency of the market, and similar aberrations. Yet the fundamental causes underlying all these so-called

problems and, above all, the paramount problem of constant unemployment on a comparatively small scale and periodic unemployment for great masses of workers, are only too evident. They are these: the producer, deprived of the full equivalent of his product, cannot buy the latter back. As a result, products accumulate in the hands of the nonproducers, till a point is reached when a halt is called to production. Hence closed mills and factories, and men out of work.

In other words: when much food, clothing and shelter has been produced, the producer is thrown out of work and is thus doomed to do without the very things of which we have the greatest abundance. That is to say, the more wealth the worker

The solution – the only possible one – consists in the producer receiving the full value of his product, or its equivalent. This involves the termination of capitalist production for profit, and the organisation of co-operative social production for use.

creates, the poorer he is; the more food on hand, the greater the starvation; the more products are being accumulated, the greater the army of the unemployed.

Surely 'tis no more simple a problem than its existence is a travesty upon all sanity or humanity.

The solution – the only possible one – consists in the producer receiving the full value of his product, or its equivalent. This involves the termination of capitalist production for *profit*, and the organisation of co-operative social production for *use*.

Such a change in the very fundamentals of capitalist society is inevitable, both for reasons of social necessity as well as because of the growing class consciousness and solidarity of labour. But though inevitable, its accomplishment will require considerable time.

Meanwhile the unemployed by the hundred thousand are tramping the streets of our industrial centres, many of them homeless and hungry. What is being done in this matter by the lords of life, or by the municipal, State and national governments? Why, practically nothing. Even the labour unions, nay, even the Socialist party organs know no better solution to offer than the need of new legislation. And while new laws are being discussed, proposed, voted on and passed, then vetoed or declared unconstitutional, only to be discussed again, amended and passed, and finally found inapplicable or impossible of execution; then labour departments created and commissioners appointed to “investigate thoroughly” the whole situation and catalogue the unemployed by trade, number, nationality, sex, age and colour – while months, aye, years, pass in this graft game of high-paid politicians and reformers, what are the unemployed, hungry and homeless, to do? How are they to exist?

Something of these considerations must have pierced the hearts and minds of the unemployed of New York. At least of a number of them. They have taken the problem into their own hands. To them this question is

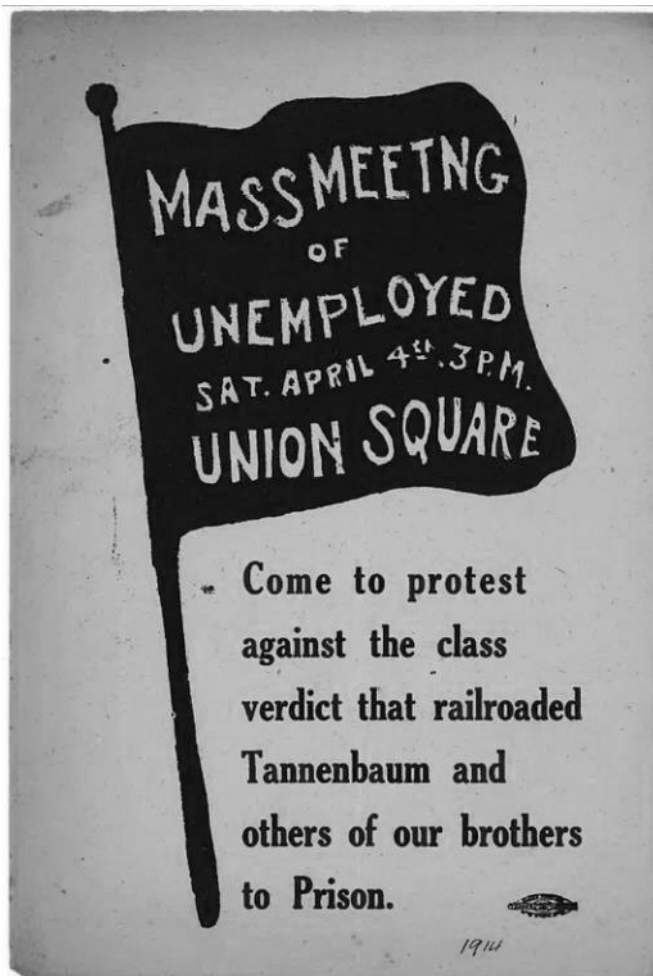
not a matter of politics, not a party issue, nor a peg to hang some propagandistic clothes on. To them it is the most vital question of their existence – existence itself.

Inspired and advised by the more rebellious and intelligent in their midst, the unemployed “army,” as the press refers to them, has invaded various churches to demand food and shelter. Surely, every hungry man has a right to bread; has a right to demand it, for he is entitled to it by laws more sacred than any man-made statutes—the laws of human need, of self-preservation. And whoever dare refuse a starving man bread, let him take heed. It was Marie Antoinette, if we remember right, who scorned the demand of the Paris mob when it cried for bread. She probably regretted her hauteur when that same “mob” took her head in exchange,

“Give us bread!” cry the starving of New York. The cry re-echoes throughout the country – the ominous cry that has menaced the masters ever since King

Hunger was born, the King whose gaunt spectre makes pope and potentate tremble, shakes thrones, breaks sceptres, and demolishes civilisations, root and branch.

“Give us bread!” resounds the cry in New York. Not in the spirit of meek pleading for charity, as of yore. Nay, this time, thanks to the revolutionary consciousness of the more intelligent element among the unemployed – the first time in the history of this land – the cry is not a plea but a demand, a demand backed by the determination of self-respecting manhood. For these modern crusaders realise that they are part and parcel of the great body of the world’s producers, to whom belongs the earth and the fruit thereof – these brave crusaders who are but the advance guard of enslaved and exploited labour, the symbol of the awakening of the international proletariat that will tear up the last stone of the last church and palace, drive out the pharisees and money changers, and sweep from the temple of humanity the “generation of vampires” and all their decayed and rotten institutions.



The War at Home

Alexander Berkman

Mother Earth, October 1915

I am sick of the sentimental gush that is being peddled I everywhere about the war in Europe and the terrible shedding of blood there.

What is the matter with the war in our own country, right here at home, and the blood dearly shed in our "peaceful" United States?

No one seems to care about that. Every soft-hearted shemale bemoans the brave soldiers killed in the trenches, and copious tears are shed over the homeless and starving Belgians. But what about the 35,000 killed and the 2,000,000 wounded in this country? And the thousands left without home or support?

It happened right here, in America. It's dreadful to think of. Yet these are the very conservative figures of the United States Bureau of Labor.

That's the losses suffered by the Army of Labor annually in this country.

Say it again:

Killed: 35,000

Wounded: 2,000,000.

I haven't heard of any relief fund organised by charitable and Christian America to aid *her own* war sufferers. Nor have I heard of any Ford donating ten millions to bring about peace in the United States.

Indeed, not! His own factories contribute their respectable quota to the total of killed and wounded soldiers in the labour war of his own country.

This war the Fords and the Bryans and the rest of the peace lovers *have* no desire to stop. For it would mean the shutting off of their blood-begotten profits.

In this war also there are prisoners. But the treatment accorded prisoners of the European war is the height of generosity and courtesy as compared with the fate of the prisoners in labour's war.

There they are looked upon as defenders of their country; fallen into the hands of the enemy; here they are considered *criminals* fit only for the gallows or the penitentiary.

But most peculiar of all: the prisoners of labour's war are always, without exception, from *the ranks of labour*. Never a one from the ranks of the enemy.

Why? Why?

Who will answer?

At this very moment scores upon scores of labour's prisoners are in the hands of the enemy. Every day almost I receive letters from prisoners in various parts of the country, voices of labour martyrs mute and unknown. The Rangels and Clines, the Joe Hills, the Fords and Suhrs, the John Ryans, the McNamaras – their name is legion: from East to West their maimed corpses and tortured bodies strew the battlefields of Labor that mark the pilgrimage and martyrdom of Man.

Aye, from East to West. At this very moment the enemy in the East clutches with murderous intent seven prisoners of labour, of the very labour that clothes and feeds the enemy even while the war goes on. Seven prisoners – seven cloakmakers – whose great crime is that they served their brothers faithfully and well.

And in the West two others, David Caplan and Mathew Schmidt, for whose warm life-blood the enemy is thirsting even because of their devotion and courage on labour's battlefield.

Have you ever seen a fat, sleepy cat suddenly galvanised into dynamic life by the smell of a near-by mouse? Look at her back curve with primitive blood passion, her every fibre tense with the lust of the tiger, her whole body palpitating with the ferocity of the jungle, the wild beast ready to spring upon her victim.

Thus crouches the Beast of Capital, entrenched within the black meshes of the Law of its own making, quivering with suspended eagerness to encircle within its legal house of bondage its intended victims.

And they?

Oh, Labour, for a great, passionate awakening that shall boldly tear into a thousand pieces the Law's spider web, and joyfully cry out into the wide world: To hell with you and your laws! We will fight you with the weapons of our own choosing till there shall be no more prisoners in Labour's war.

This war the Fords and the Bryans and the rest of the peace lovers have no desire to stop. For it would mean the shutting off of their blood-begotten profits.

An Intimate Word to the Social Rebels of America

Alexander Berkman

Mother Earth, December 1915

It is almost ten years since my resurrection from the living death of Pennsylvania.

I came out into a strange world, a world pregnant with new impressions and experiences.

But, my strongest impression, I remember, was sharp disappointment with the condition of the revolutionary movement.

Too little progress had been made, I felt, in the long years of my absence. Too few were the workers.

That was my strongest impression, and the most lasting.

The years since have been busy with many activities, often crowded with intense experiences.

But the woof and warp of the whole fabric has been tinged with the strong blue of ever-present dissatisfaction with results.

For the thinking man it is necessary to pause now and 'then in his activities, to re-examine himself and his work, and gain the perspective of true values.

At such times it has seemed to me that there must be something wrong with – or, at least, something lacking in – our social philosophies and revolutionary ideals, or ourselves.

If not, then why does their force and truth fail to sweep the world into a quickened march toward a freer and happier Day?

Thus, in leisure moments, I have been pondering and seeking the solution.

The last twelvemonth proved a searchlight.

Not that it discovered to me the stone of the wise which will transmute difficult human problems into simple axioms.

But it has shed light into some dark corners and helped to clarify and coordinate vague feelings and impressions.

Lecturing from coast to coast, and then recrossing the continent in behalf of the Caplan-Schmidt defence, presented exceptional opportunities for observation and thought.

Addressing many audiences from all walks of life, and for several months speaking three or four times daily before labour organisations, I came into more intimate contact with the great body of workers, with the rank and file, and also with the bulk of the revolutionary element of the country.

I have come out of the experience with two distinct impressions.

Among the social rebels I have found intense, almost bitter dissatisfaction with narrow party lines.

They are tired of the endless, fruitless discussion of theories and philosophies.

They hunger for application, for action. Among the rank and file of the workers I have found a strong rebellious spirit that chafes at old custom and antiquated methods. I found a wealth of emotion and hope that is crying for expression.

To get together these elements of dissatisfaction and rebellion, to voice the spirit of militancy, and crystallise it into action—that is the great need of the hour.

It can be done. It is up to the revolutionists to do it.

Too long we have talked and discussed the future. Meanwhile

the powers of darkness have been gaining strength. They have undermined the spirit of resistance on the part of the people and riveted the fetters more securely.

Capital has grown more aggressive and dominant: Labor weaker and more submissive.

Militarism is sweeping the country. The young generation is to be moulded into obedient slaves. The spirit of rebellion is to be crushed by military discipline and standing armies.

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Moloch is in the saddle, and the people lie bleeding at his feet.

It is time, high time, for the rebels of America to wake up.

Let us turn our eyes to the present. The future will take care of itself.

To rouse the sleeping and inspire the waking, that is the mission of the social rebels. They are to uproot the old, to blast tradition and prejudice, revolutionise thought and feeling, and fire the hearts of the people with resistance to oppression and the yearning for liberty and life.

The best medium to accomplish this is a strong *revolutionary labour weekly*, that shall preach no ism but the breaking of chains, and that shall gather together the forces of rebellion throughout the country, give the militant spirit clear expression, and help it form itself into action.

Let the voice of rebellion be heard!

THE BLAST is to be such a voice.

It will propagate no isms.

It will speak frankly and unafraid the language of revolutionary labour.

It will deal with all the vital problems facing labour and the people at large.

It will be published by conscious rebels in San Francisco, with ALEXANDER BERKMAN as editor.

The first issue of THE BLAST will appear January 15th, 1916. It will be published weekly.

With the active assistance of those who realise the need of such a paper, THE BLAST hopes to become a powerful factor in the life of the country. By the aid of our friends it will find its way to the hearts of the people, especially among the rank and file of the workers, and: may it thus blaze the path for the coming greater blast, the Social Revolution.

Address communications, subscription and contributions to THE BLAST, P. O. Box 661, San Francisco, Cal.

Price of subscription, \$1.00 a year. For Canada and foreign countries, \$1.25.

The Only Hope of Ireland

Alexander Berkman

The Blast, 15 May 1916

Most Irishmen, in and out of Ireland, seem unanimous in condemning the brutality of the British government toward the leaders of the unsuccessful revolt.

There is no need to recite here the atrocious measures of repression practiced by England toward her subject races. The arrogant and irresponsible tyranny of the British government in this relation is a matter of history. The point of interest just now is, what did the Irish people, or at least the Sinn Feiners, expect England to do in the given circumstances?

I am not interested in the weak-kneed editors of Irish-American papers who bemoan, with all due decorum, Great Britain's "lack of generosity" in dealing with the captured Sinn Feiners, or who hide their cowardice by arguments about the "mistake" the British government has committed by its harsh methods.

It is disgusting to hear such rot. As a matter of fact, it is entirely in keeping with the character and traditions of the British government to show no quarter to rebels. Those familiar with the colonial history of Great Britain know that the English government and its representatives have systematically practised the most

heinous brutality and repression to stifle the least sign of discontent, in Ireland, in India, Egypt, South Africa - wherever British rapacity found a source of aggrandisement. Burning villages, destroying whole districts, shooting rebels by the wholesale, aye, even resorting to the most inhuman torture of suspects, as in the Southwestern Punjab and other parts of India - these have always been the methods of the British government.

"The measures taken by us", said Sir Michael O'Dwyer, Governor of the province of Punjab, in his Budget speech in the Punjab Legislative Council, April 22, 1915, "have proven that the arm of the Sirkar (British government) is long enough to reach and strong enough to strike those who defy the law." The nature of this "long and strong arm" is clearly characterised by Lord James Bryce: "The English govern India on absolute principles. There is in British India no room for popular initiative or popular interference with the acts of the rulers, from the Viceroy down to the district official. Society in India is not an ordinary civil society. It is a military society, military first and foremost. The traveller feels himself, except perhaps in Bombay,

surrounded by an atmosphere of gunpowder all the time he stays in India."

The Irish rebels and their sympathisers know all this. But what they don't know, or refuse to admit, is that these methods of suppressing discontent are not merely colonial policy. They have also been practiced by the English government at home, against its native sons, the English workers. Just now the iron hand of conscription is driving thousands of Great Britain's toilers into involuntary military servitude. Long terms of imprisonment are meted out to everyone having conscientious scruples against murder, to every anti-militarist protestant, and many have been driven to suicide rather than turn murderers of their fellowmen. The Irish people, like everyone else, ought to know that the claim of the English government of "protecting weaker nations and fighting for democracy" is the most disgusting hypocrisy ever dished up to a muttonhead public. Nor is the British government in this respect any better or worse than the governments of Kaiser, Czar or President. Government is but the shadow the ruling class of a country casts upon the political life of a given nation. And the priests of Mammon are always the ruling class, whatever the temporary label of the exploiters of the people.

We don't fool anyone by parroting that it was "a mistake" on the part of the British government to use the sternest methods against the Sinn Fein leaders. It was *not* a mistake. To the English government, to *any* government, the only safe rebel is a dead rebel. The ruthless shooting down of the insurrection leaders, the barbarous execution of James Connolly, who was severely wounded in the Dublin fighting and had to be propped with pillows that the soldiers could take good aim at him - all this may serve to embitter the Irish people. But unless that bitterness express itself in action, in reprisals - individual or collective - against the British government, the latter will have no cause to regret its severity. It is dangerous to let rebels live, if the Irish at home have no more spirit than the Irish in America, the English government has nothing to fear. The Irish-Americans are easily the most powerful influence in American political life. What have these Irish-Americans done to stop the atrocities of Great Britain? They have held mass meetings here and there to "protest" against the continuing executions of Sinn

Feiners. They have sufficient political power in the country to cause President Wilson to call a halt to British atrocities, to force the English government to treat the Sinn Feiners as prisoners of war, which they are. But the Irish-American priests of Church and State would not dream of such drastic measures: politicians don't do that.

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More effective yet it would have been if some member or members of the numerous Irish societies had captured a few representatives of the British government in this country as hostages for the Irish rebels awaiting execution. A British Consul ornamenting a lamppost in San Francisco or New York would quickly secure the respectful attention of the British lion. The British Ambassador, in the hands of Washington Irishmen, would more effectively petition his Majesty, King Edward, for the lives of the Irish rebel leaders than all the resolutions passed at mass meetings.

After all, it is the Redmonds and the Carsons who are chiefly responsible for the failure of the rebellion in Ireland. They were the first to condemn the "rash step" of a people for centuries enslaved and oppressed to the verge of utter poverty and degradation. Thus they in the very beginning alienated the support that the uprising might have received in and out of Ireland. It was this treacherous and cowardly attitude of the Irish home rule politicians that encouraged the English government to use the most drastic measures in suppressing the revolt.

May outraged Ireland soon learn that its official leaders are like unto all labour politicians: the lackeys of the rulers, and the very first to cry Crucify!

The hope of Ireland lies not in home rule, nor its leaders. It is not circumscribed by the boundaries of the Emerald Isle. The precious blood shed in the unsuccessful revolution will not have been in vain if the tears of their great tragedy will clarify the vision of the sons and daughters of Erin and make them see beyond the empty shell of national aspirations toward the rising sun of the international brotherhood of the exploited in all countries and climes combined in a solidaric struggle for emancipation from every form of slavery, political *and* economic

Anent the Cloakmakers' Strike

Alexander Berkman

The Blast, 1 July 1916

For over two months the Cloakmakers' Union of New York has been involved in a life-and-death struggle with the Manufacturers' Protective Association. The Union is virtually fighting for its very existence: the right of the workers to maintain the closed shop principle and to collectively bargain for the terms of their employment.

In strikes of this character the employers make a strong bid for public sympathy on the ground that the closed shop principle is anti-libertarian; that it curtails the freedom of the "independent" worker to choose his own master and conditions. Sad to say, the public is often duped by this argument.

It is misleading to speak in the indefinable terms of "right" and "wrong," especially in matters of a socio-economic character. It cannot be denied that the scab has as much "right" to work and live as the union striker. Similarly has the snake the "sacred right" to life and liberty. But we crush the snake, on the ground of *our* equally sacred right to live.

Life, the struggle for existence, is not a matter of right or wrong. It is time to emancipate ourselves from these metaphysical, meaningless concepts. Much fruitless discussion of "the rights of Labor," equal justice," violent methods and similar problems would be obviated, once we realise the actual character of the struggle. Nature knows neither right nor wrong. It knows only forces – harmonious or antagonistic, as the case may be. Was the storm "right" in devastating the forest? Was the lightning "wrong" in destroying that beautiful young tree? Or the sunshine and rain "right and moral" in coaxing forth new life from the debris of the dead?

No less meaningless are ethical concepts applied to the hungry stomach. That is why our ideas of "right" and "justice," with their bastard brood of "legality," "crime," and punishment are a most vicious perversion of the very essence of life and struggle for existence.

Progress consists in the inter-play of man's destructive and constructive tendencies; the elemental tendencies developed by – and in their turn furthering – the struggle for existence. In order to survive, man had to eliminate or destroy every factor inimical to his wellbeing. The beasts of the forest are no more where man's foot has trod. He also had to protect himself against inimical or dangerous forces of nature –

lightning, storm, cold and the like. The need of such protection against a *common* danger developed co-operation and solidarity among men. It called into action his *constructive* tendencies and enabled him to protect himself against forces he could not eliminate or destroy.

The constructive and destructive tendencies of man were *not* antagonistic. In fact, both were expressions of the identical instinct of self-preservation; both served a common purpose.

With the growing security of man, as against inimical environment or natural forces, the demands upon his destructive activity are decreasing, with the corresponding increase of opportunity to apply himself constructively.

The social, struggle is characterised by the same tendencies: the destructive and constructive activities of man. *Destructive* toward forces and conditions inimical to our growth and life; *constructive* toward circumstances and elements that further our purposes.

The class struggle – the fight of Labor against Capital – is founded on the very same conditions. It is inherent in the individual struggle for existence and in the *modus operandi* of our social and economic arrangements. A sane society, by eliminating individual and class antagonisms, would further and strengthen the constructive instinct of man and thus develop ever increasing co-operation and solidarity. Society as at present constituted, with its artificially created and

A sane society, by eliminating individual and class antagonisms, would further and strengthen the constructive instinct of man and thus develop ever increasing co-operation and solidarity. Society as at present constituted, with its artificially created and multiplied antagonisms, cultivates the destructive tendencies of man.

multiplied antagonisms, cultivates the destructive tendencies of man.

Conditions of wage slavery have forced upon the workers destructive activity toward everything inimical to their wellbeing and improvement. On the other hand, the same conditions are calling into being greater constructive effort on the basis of a common interest. Hence the growing solidarity of Labor, in the degree that the toilers realise their community of interest. Thus in the Labor struggle are reflected and manifest the very tendencies that have characterised the whole march of man's development:

1. Destruction activity toward inimical environment and antagonistic forces.
2. Constructive, solidaric co-operation with elements and factors of harmonious, common interest.

Capitalism has forced upon the workers the necessity of combined action among themselves, as against those inimical to their interests. The individual worker is absolutely helpless in the face of the strongly organised employers. As the latter are constructive within the sphere of their own interest and destructive toward Labor, so also the workers must practice similar activities within the area of *their* interests. Hence Labor's growing solidarity on the basis of common

interest. Hence also the necessity of eliminating every obstacle in Labor's path, the destruction of every factor inimical to the maintenance and improvement of Labor. Therefore the bitter struggle between striker and scab. Therefore also the vital need of the closed shop. It is made imperative, hence justified, by the character of the Labor struggle.

The cloakmakers of New York are fighting one of the battles of humanity, of progress. At the cost of much suffering and privation they are heroically maintaining the principle of wonderful solidarity among the thousands directly involved in the struggle, and firmly presenting a determined front against the forces that threaten to destroy them.

Upon the victory of the cloakmakers depends to a considerable degree the resultant economic and social wellbeing of great masses in the East. It is one of the important battles in the universal war of the masses against the classes that will ultimately result in the destruction of social class divisions and thus abolish the great economic strife. Then – then only – will the human energy now forced to be destructive be released for constructive purposes and a tremendous impetus added to man's constructive, harmonious efforts toward Life and Progress.

Come, Workers, Let Us Take Counsel Together

Alexander Berkman

The Blast, 15 July 1916

There is not the least doubt that the Powers That Be fully realise that there is a strong anti-militarist sentiment among the people of the country. The Lords of finance and industry, of commerce and government know that something must be done to cure that evil. And they are doing it. Are you watching the methods used by the Masters of Life to gain their ends – ends that can be gained only by strangling the last vestige of liberty and compelling abject obedience to the supreme will of the plutocracy? You ought to watch them, for they are fraught with direct consequences to you, to every man, woman and child; aye, even to the coming generations.

The ruling banditti know that primarily it is the revolutionary elements that oppose their schemes of Preparedness and War. Therefore their first step is the summary and wholesale suppression of the opposition papers. Within a few weeks the Postal arm of Preparedness seized the following publications, depriving them of the second-class mail or declaring them entirely unmailable: THE BLAST; the *Revolt* of New York; the *Alarm* of Chicago; *Re-generacion* of Los

Angeles; *Voluntad* (Spanish) of New York; *L'Allarme* (Italian) of Chicago, and *Volne Listy* (Bohemian) of New York.

The revolutionary press being the most potent disseminator of solidarity and intelligent resistance to oppression, its elimination is the first step to capitalist Preparedness.

Closely following it comes a bill submitted to Congress, authorising the Post office to virtually suppress every publication unfavourable to the rulers, and vesting the Postmaster General with arbitrary power more unlimited than that possessed by the military censor of Russia.

The next step is to silence the advocates of undesirable ideas. Ricardo and Enrique Flores Magon, Emma Goldman and Ben Reitman, Margaret and William Sanger, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn and Joe Ettor, Bolton Hall, Ida Rauh, Jessie Ashley and numerous others are arrested, some of them railroaded to prison, others awaiting trial.

With most of the revolutionary papers silenced, and some of the most active protestants out of the way, the field is clear for further activity on a bigger scale. It is now the turn of the larger bodies of social discontent.

Who is handicapping the triumphant march of Preparedness for Profit? Who dare doubt the benevolence of militarism and retard the chariot of capitalism?

The Labour Unions. Away with them!

Throughout the country organised capital is now grappling in a life and death struggle with organised labour. The unorganised do not count. They are no menace to the plutocracy. On the contrary. The disorganisation of Labour is the strongest bulwark of the employers. Lacking unity and solidarity, the unorganised toilers are powerless to present a solid front against their exploiters. True, now and then even the unorganised, goaded by misery and starvation, may rebel and in a passionate moment avenge a ten-millionth part of their wrongs. But these sudden spurts of rebellion are sporadic and momentary, their flames quickly subdued and held in control by the iron fist of the Masters' Law.

But the organised forces of Labour – they are a constant and ever increasing menace to the employing class. To be sure, there is much division and internal strife among the unions, and the bosses take the best possible advantage of it to pit industry against industry, craft against craft, creeds and nationalities against each other. Yet, after all, large bodies of workers ARE organised. They are gradually learning the lesson of solidarity that promises to weld all workers in tremendous national and international units of Labour on the common foundation of ONE cause and ONE enemy.

Here is the great menace. The organisations of the toilers must be disrupted, by fair means or foul, discord must be sown and encouraged among them, antagonisms of religion, race and colour must be cultivated to- keep strife alive, and all must be imbued with a common ideal alien to their own interests and welfare but "dear to our hearts." Aye, Patriotism, Preparedness!

And if all this fail, or any obstacles are placed in our way by disgruntled Labour, then down with the unions. We proclaim the great American gospel of the Open Shop.

The Open Shop has now become the slogan of the plutocracy. The unions must be destroyed at all cost. It will then be an easy matter to deal with the individual toiler, the "independent American worker" absolutely powerless to face or fight the giant of organised capital. The strength of organised workers destroyed, objectionable Labour bodies wiped off the map, Preparedness, Militarism, capitalist Law-and-Order can march to ultimate triumph over a people patriotically submissive and efficiently obedient for the greater glory of Mammon.

Throughout the country a bitter struggle is being waged by the workers to maintain the right of organisation. Practically every industry is now involved in a fight for the life of their unions. Everywhere the bosses claim the inalienable right to accumulate millions by paying starvation wages in the open shop.

In New York, 50,000

cloakmakers are battling for

their very existence. The coal miners in several states are fighting the same fight. More than 400,000 members of the four great railroad brotherhoods are now taking a referendum vote for the right to assert their manhood. In the Tennessee copper fields, in the dangerous Fluorspar mines of Southern Illinois, on the iron ranges of Minnesota, on the harvest acres, on the water fronts of the Atlantic and the Pacific – from coast to coast the great industrial war is raging.

Bread and Life! cry the hosts of Labour.

Preparedness, more Guns! replies the Beast of Capital. Police, armed thugs, the militia and the army rush to the rescue of threatened Profits.

In vain this struggle of the workers, in vain the great sacrifices, the bloodshed, the misery heroically suffered. These spasmodic upheavals, these rebellious uprisings of isolated Labour units may stimulate the spirit of resistance and train the toilers for further greater combat. As such they are good, splendid. But they are powerless to achieve any real improvement for Labour. All these strikes, drawn out for weeks and

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often months, become tests of endurance in which capital is always the winner. The workers are finally starved and beaten into submission.

The time has come for a GENERAL STRIKE. This, this alone holds out victory for Labour. A general, nationwide strike, at one stroke paralysing every wheel of industry, demonstrating the power and fundamentality of Labour.

Come, workers of every craft and industry, producers of all the wealth of the world, organised or unorganised, let us take counsel together. The

revolutionists of every shade stand ready to help you. Come, let us talk it over.

Let us invite our fellow workers of Mexico and of South America (Europe is busy) and let us talk matters over in a Pan-American Labour Conference. Let us talk over the fundamental demand of ALL Labour and of all fair-minded men and women throughout the world: LAND and LIBERTY.

Never fear, we shall find ways and means of accomplishing our aim, once we get together on the common basis of THE EARTH AND ITS PRODUCTS TO THE PRODUCERS.

The Russian Revolution

Alexander Berkman

The Blast, 1 May 1917

The Russian Revolution is unquestionably the greatest event of modern times. Only Russians, or those familiar with Russia, its people and their character, can realise the full significance of the revolution. To non-Russians it may seem similar to the revolution in China or to the change of monarchical Portugal to a republic. The revolution in Russia means all that, but it means a great deal more. The spirit of the Social Revolution has long been gestating in that country. The present change may be the first step toward a fundamental reorganisation, not only of political but of social and economic conditions as well.

I do not believe that the war or any of its developments, was a determining factor in bringing about the revolution. In fact, the war perhaps delayed the popular uprising. On the eve of the declaration of hostilities Russia was agitated by numerous local and several general strikes. The revolution was imminent then. But the declaration of war and the cry of "external enemy" served to check it. The general dissatisfaction with the government remained, however, though the first flush of patriotism suppressed its manifestation during the two years of the war. But the incompetency of Russian arms, the gigantic graft and the corruption becoming more and more apparent, added fuel to the fires of popular dissatisfaction. The masses, taxed to poverty even before the war, were now on the verge of starvation. They rioted for bread. Hunger created the revolution.

The liberal bourgeoisie, itself a victim of tyranny and oppression by the autocracy, took advantage of the opportunity. It was the psychologic moment. Previous revolutions failed because of the opposition of the army. Now the latter joined hands with the

revolutionists, and the revolution was an accomplished fact almost over night.

In other countries, as in China and Portugal, the abolition of autocracy terminated the revolt. Not so in Russia. There the removal of the Czar is only the first step toward great revolutionary changes in the life and conditions of the people. The revolutionary propaganda of the last fifty years has kindled in the Russian toilers ideals and aspirations that will not be gratified with a mere political change. The people of China, unfamiliar with European conditions, believed that the overthrow of the old regime meant liberation, but today the great masses of the Chinese suffer the same exploitation, poverty and evils under the republic as under the monarchy. The Russian people, on the contrary, are familiar with Western conditions. They will not be duped into contentment by the mere change of governmental and political forms. Indeed, they are already demanding the fruit of their revolutionary effort. The peasant wants the land. He knows that he cannot live on Constitutions. The factory workers demand greater well-being. They know that altered political forms do not lessen the greed of the exploiters.

Herein lie the great hope and future of the Russian Revolution. The peasant, used to communal ownership of the land, will have no faith in his newly-won liberties unless the landlord is expropriated and the soil returned to those who till it. The proletariat in mill and factory has already made demands for a four-hour day. Russia is having a revolution.

I have no fear of the Russian Revolution failing. Its success is assured. It is making substantial progress

daily. The return of thousands of political exiles and revolutionists will accelerate its progress until it will finally find a fitting echo in the neighbouring countries. Nor will it be the provisional government or any other authority that will benevolently "give the Russian people their rights." These rights will have to be fought for. Indeed, they are being fought for at this very moment by the constantly increasing revolutionary demands and by the actual expropriation of the land of the muzhik. In the very granting of the political amnesty, the hand of the provisional government was forced by the revolutionary element. The appointment of Kerensky, a Socialist, was itself a concession by the governmental bourgeoisie to the revolutionists whom it fears. The government is now seeking to delay the demands for fundamental changes in the social and economic life of the people by the weak excuse of "danger from the external enemy." The Rodziankos and the Miliukovs consider the revolution complete with their own elevation to power. Nothing is more sacred to them than the holy capitalist system and the exploitation of the toiler. But they will have to reckon with the Russian people and especially with the ultra revolutionary hosts. In these is the hope of the future of the revolution. These, the extreme social

revolutionists and Anarchists, know that to continue the war means to strengthen the hands of the government and postpone fundamental changes, weaken the revolutionary element and assure the triumph of the bourgeoisie upon the backs of the people. A speedy peace, on the other hand, would concentrate all the energies of the populace upon their revolutionary demands; it would quickly reorganise the whole social and economic life in Russia and start the march of the people toward political liberty based on the motto: "The land to the peasant; the fruits of labour to the worker."

The dawn of this great Russian Day will soon illuminate the whole of Europe and possibly also America. The German proletariat, even now fermenting with revolt, would draw courage from the example of their neighbours. German autocracy and militarism will then receive their death blow instead of being supported – as now – because of foreign attacks. The revolution in Russia would thus cross the boundaries and march over the continent, bringing with it the downfall of war and tyranny everywhere and ushering in the birth of a really free and beautiful New World. May the revolutionists everywhere help speed that day.

Mechanical centralisation, run mad, is paralysing the industrial and economic activities of the country. Initiative is frowned upon, free effort systematically discouraged. The great masses are deprived of the opportunity to shape the policies of the Revolution, or take part in the administration of the affairs of the country. The government is monopolising every avenue of life: the Revolution is divorced from the people. A bureaucratic machine is created that is appalling in its parasitism, inefficiency and corruption. In Moscow alone this new class of *sovburs* (Soviet bureaucrats) exceeds, in 1920, the total of office holders throughout the whole of Russia under the Tsar in 1914... The Bolshevik economic policies, effectively aided by this bureaucracy, completely disorganise the already crippled industrial life of the country. Lenin, Zinoviev, and other Communist leaders thunder philippics against the new Soviet bourgeoisie – and issue ever new decrees that strengthen and augment its numbers and influence.

– Alexander Berkman, *The Russian Tragedy* (1922)

Bukharin on Anarchism at the Red Labor Congress

Alexander Berkman¹

Transcription, annotation and editing by Jonnie Schlichting²

(Archiv Karl Roche, Hamburg)

It was the Summer of 1921. The First Red Labor International Congress⁷³ was seen to meet in Moscow, and many delegates from foreign countries were expected. The Anarchists at liberty in Moscow at the time were a mere handful. Most of our comrades were in the various prisons of R.S.F.S.R.⁷⁴, and – to tell the truth – I was getting ashamed of still being free. Every Anarchist in Moscow was anxious, indeed, felt it his duty, to bring to the attention of the foreign delegates, individually and collectively, the situation with regard to our persecuted comrades, as well as the general conditions of the country and of the Revolution.

A couple of months before, on April 25, 1921, the Anarchists confined in the Butirka prison, in Moscow, had been attacked at night, without the least provocation, by the Tcheka. It was a scene of ruthless brutality. The prisoners, helpless and exhausted by long confinement and undernourishment, were beaten up in the regular American police style. The men were clubbed with the butts of guns, by Tchekists and soldiers; the women were dragged down the stone steps by their hair; they were terrorised and threatened to be shot. Some of them believed they were being taken to execution, for the latter is almost always done at night, without warning, and in the manner described above.

For days following we did not know what had become of our comrades in the Butirka. All information was

refused us, and we knew only that something terrible had happened, and that our comrades had disappeared from the prison. Then, about a week later, there began to arrive little sub rosa notes from our kidnapped comrades. One come from Ryazan, another from Orel, a third from Vladimir. We then learned that our comrades had been forcibly removed from the Butirka, separated and taken to different prisons. Thus A[ron] Baron found himself in Orel prison, while his wife, Fanny Baron, was sent to Ryazan, and so on. Later some of the men were transferred to the Taganka prison, in Moscow, among them Wolin {Voline}, [Efim] Yartchuk, [Grigorii Petrovich] Maximoff, [Mark] Mratchny, and several others. Most of the Anarchists in the various prisons were confined since December, 1920, when they were arrested in Kharkov just before the *legally permitted* Anarchist Conference was to begin in that city.

In the months of May and June, 1921, delegates began to arrive in Moscow for the Third Congress of the Communist International and for the Red Labor Congress. The Moscow Anarchists had several conferences with a number of the delegates, even some Communists participating. Besides that, we have had talks with almost every delegate to the Red Labor Congress, supplying them with the necessary information and asking them to investigate for themselves the truth of our statements. The foreign delegates, Anarchists, anarcho-syndicalists, and even

¹ <https://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/ncjw4b>

² IISG Amsterdam, *ALEXANDER BERKMAN Papers No. 184*.

<http://search.socialhistory.org/Record/ARCH00040/ArchiveContentList> Typescript, 6 pages, with very few manual corrections. Underlining in the script is *italicized*, CAPITAL LETTERS are **bold**; obvious type errors are silently corrected; the few (unimportant) manual corrections are not noted; footnotes and [square brackets] are by the editor.

A German translation is published in "*Kampfgeister*". Mitteilungen aus dem *Institut für Syndikalismusforschung* (Bremen), No. 4/September 2025, p. 52 – 67: <https://syndikalismusforschung.wordpress.com/2025/09/27/neuerschienen-die-vierte-ausgabe-der-kampfgeister/#more-4335>

More related material can be found at the *Kate Sharpley Library*: <https://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/jwswk7>

⁷³ Founding Congress of the *Red International of Labour Unions* (RILU) in Moscow, July 3rd – 19th 1921. For the proceedings of the congress cf. MIKE TABER (ed.), *The Founding of the Red Trade Union International*. Proceedings and Resolutions of the First Congress, 1921, Leiden – Boston 2024 (Brill); cf. also GEORGE WILLIAMS, *The First Congress of the Red Trade Union International in Moscow, 1921*. A Report of the Proceedings by GEO. WILLIAMS, Delegate from the I.W.W. (Second Revised Edition), Chicago 1922 (IWW) – the most accurate contemporary account; for the history of the RILU cf. REINER TOSSTORFF, *The Red International of Labour Unions (RILU), 1920-1937*, Leiden – Boston 2016 (Brill); for the relations of the international syndicalist movement and the RILU cf. also WAYNE THORPE, "*The Workers Themselves*". Revolutionary Syndicalism and International Labour, 1913-1923, Dordrecht – Boston – London and IISG Amsterdam 1989 (Kluver); REINER TOSSTORFF, *The syndicalist encounter with Bolshevism*; in: *Anarchist Studies*, Vol. 17.2/2009, p. 12 – 28.

⁷⁴ Russian Socialist Federative Soviet Republic.

some Communists seemed to be outraged and indignant over such happenings as the brutalities in the Butirka prison, and at first could hardly credit that such things could happen in a revolutionary Republic. They were also inclined to doubt that Anarchists or other revolutionary elements are really persecuted and suppressed in Russia. Thus Souvarine⁷⁵, one of the intellectual leaders of the Communists of France, told us that as a French Communist and an adherent of Moscow, he yet could not believe such a situation possible. Before long, however, the delegates convinced themselves that our statements were in no way exaggerated, and most of them agreed that something must be undertaken to bring about friendlier relations between the Bolshevik government and the left revolutionary elements, especially the Anarchists and Anarcho-syndicalists.

Meanwhile the Red Labor Congress had opened⁷⁶, time was passing, and our comrades still remained in the prisons. Conditions in the latter were constantly growing worse: the regime was becoming more severe, the food ever more insufficient, the treatment more brutal. The imprisoned men and women felt that they could not live in such conditions much longer: many of them fell sick, and all of them were in exhausted physical condition. The Taganka prisoners were especially driven to desperation by the hopeless outlook: no charges were being brought against any of our comrades, and the attitude of the Tcheka convinced them that their imprisonment was to be permanent. At last they decided to send a declaration to the Bolshevik government. They called attention to the fact that all of them had been arrested arbitrarily and were kept in prison without cause; that no charges were made against them, contrary to the provisions of the constitution of Russia which directs that no person be held without a charge longer than 48 hours. The declaration demanded the liberation of the imprisoned comrades and stated that the men would declare a hunger strike to the death if they received no

satisfaction within five days. This declaration, signed by the 13 Anarchist prisoners in the Taganka, was sent to the following official bodies⁷⁷: 1) the All-Russian Extraordinary Commission, the Ve-Tcheka; 2) the All-Russian Central Executive Committee of the Soviets, de jure the highest State authority of Russia; 3) the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party, de facto the highest government body of Russia; 4) the Executive Committee of the Communist International, and 5) the Executive Committee of the Red Labor International.

At last they decided to send a declaration to the Bolshevik government. They called attention to the fact that all of them had been arrested arbitrarily and were kept in prison without cause; that no charges were made against them, contrary to the provisions of the constitution of Russia which directs that no person be held without a charge longer than 48 hours.

Five days passed, and no reply came from any of the organizations addressed. In consequence, the Taganka hunger strike was declared on the night of 3-4 of July, 1921.

It was a desperate step by people driven to desperation by the callous and brutal attitude of the Bolsheviks. Considering the already exhausted condition of the prisoners, a long-protracted hunger strike practically meant certain death.

Some of the Moscow Anarchists, that were at liberty,

insisted that the anarcho-syndicalist delegates bring the matter of the persecution of our comrades up on the floor of the Red Labor Congress. We considered it something more than a question involving the 13 hunger strikers, or even all the comrades in prison. It was a situation that concerned the whole Anarchist movement in Russia; nay, more: it involved fundamental principles of the Revolution itself. Our efforts at last resulted in a Committee of delegates being formed. It was decided to try first semi-officially to reach some agreement with the leaders of the Bolsheviks, in order to avoid bringing the matter up publicly before the Congress. Thereupon the Delegate Committee, consisting of French and Spanish representatives⁷⁸, called upon Dzierżyński⁷⁹, chief of the Ve-Tcheka. Dzierżyński proved very affable and friendly, remarking that it could no doubt be arranged for all the Anarchist in Russian prisons to be released. He requested the Committee to submit a list of the

⁷⁵ BORIS SOUVARINE (1895 – 1984).

⁷⁶ July 3rd, 1921.

⁷⁷ June 28th, 1921.

⁷⁸ Of the five delegation members, only JOAQUÍN MAURIN (Spain, *Confederación Nacional del Trabajo* – CNT) is known by name (cf. TOSSTORFF, RILU, p. 399, fn. 134); following

BERKMAN the others could be HILARI ARLANDIS (CNT), and MOISEI KNELER [MICHEL], HENRI SIROLLE and JEAN GAUDEAUX (France – *Comités Syndicalistes Révolutionnaires* – CSR).

⁷⁹ FELIKS EDMUNDOWICZ DZIERŻYŃSKI (1877 – 1926); *in the script*: 'Djerzhinsky'.

persons they wished released. The Committee were jubilant.

We prepared a partial list of our prisoners. There was no means of making a complete list, since only the Tcheka itself possessed such information. Our list contained only the names of our comrades in the prisons of Petrograd and Moscow, with a few others known to us as being in several other prisons. Who was imprisoned in the South of Russia, in the East and in Siberia we had no means of learning. The Committee submitted our *partial* list to Dzierżyński. This time he was not so affable as at first interview. He began to make excuses: “some” could not be released, but he would see what can be done. He would return the list to the Committee in a day or two and would then indicate who could be released.

A week passed in fruitless efforts to secure the next interview with Dzierżyński. The Committee men were getting restive; some of them began feel it everything was not quite as it ought to be. At last the Tcheka chief was gracious enough to see them again. This time he was brusque. He informed the Committee that the imprisoned Anarchists were “too dangerous to be released{”}; besides, he told them confidentially, some of them were “bandits” and the delegates need not concern themselves about them. But “the government was anxious to show every possible consideration to the foreign delegates”, and honour their request “so far as possible”; therefore some of the men on the list presented by the delegates would be released. And thereupon Dzierżyński handed to the Committee a list of Anarchists in the Taganka that “could be released”. The list contained just **four** names – boy students who were arrested for reading the works of Kropotkin in their home circle. The list did not contain a single name of our tried old comrades in the various prisons of the Bolsheviks.

The members of the Committee began to realize that their conferences with Dzierżyński would lead to nothing. Some of them even understood that Dzierżyński was merely playing for time, and that his offer to release four of the prisoners was calculated merely to break the hunger strike in the Taganka. It

was already the eighth day of the strike⁸⁰. The condition of the prisoners was very critical: none of them could walk any more; several had suffered fainting spells, one man lost his hearing, another was unconscious. Three of the comrades seemed already at the point of death.

A committee of ten delegates, representing various countries and including anarcho-syndicalists as well as communists, (Tom Mann, Sirolle, Gaudeaux⁸¹, Michel, Leval, Arlandis⁸², Cascaden and others⁸³) went to see Lenin about the matter⁸⁴. Lenin at first sent out word that he was busy, and declined to see them. But the Committee insisted on an interview, considering the seriousness of the situation, and Lenin finally consented. He assured the delegates that the imprisoned Anarchists were really not worth troubling about, but added that he would be willing to release them and deport them out of Russia. “If they should return they would be shot”, he told the delegates. The delegates left with the promise of Lenin that the matter would be decided that evening by the Central Committee of the Party, and that the decision would be communicated to the Committee the next days.

At 1 P.M. the next day (I believe it was the 12th or 13th of July⁸⁵) I was called by one of the delegates to his room in the Hotel Luxe. Several other members of the Committee were also there. We telephoned to Lenin to learn the decision. We were told that Lenin was not well and could not be spoken to. Half an hour later we telephoned again. We succeeded in getting Lenin on the telephone. The Central Committee had considered the matter, he told us; it has appointed Trotsky as its representative to deal with the delegates’ Committee, and we should therefore apply to him. Lenin refused to inform us of the decision of the Central Committee.

We telephoned to Trotsky. He replied that he would send us the decision in written form by a personal messenger, within two hours. It was then 2 o’clock. Exactly at 4 [o’clock] Trotsky’s messenger arrived, bringing us the written decision, signed by Trotsky in the name of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Russia⁸⁶. The document referred to the imprisoned Anarchists as Makhnovtsi and bandits and

⁸⁰ July 10th, 1921.

⁸¹ *in the script*: Godeau.

⁸² *in the script*: ‘Orlandis’; further down correctly ‘Arlandis’.

⁸³ Known members of the Committee visiting LENIN are GORDON CASCADEN (Canada – *Edmonton District of the Lumber Workers’ Industrial Union of Canada*); MANUEL DÍAZ (Mexico – *Confederación General de Trabajadores México* – CGTM – and *Partido Comunista de México* – PCM); MAURICE DISCH (Germany – *Allgemeine Arbeiter-Union Deutschlands* – AAUD); MOISEI KNELER [MICHEL] and JEAN GAUDEAUX (France – CSR); GASTON LEVAL (Spain – CNT); TOM MANN

(Great Britain – *Shop Stewards and Communist Party of Great Britain* – CPGB); BERNHARD REICHENBACH (Germany – *Kommunistische Arbeiter-Partei Deutschlands* – KAPD), who probably arranged the meeting; as well as two of the three Swedish syndicalist delegates – FRANS SEVERIN, JOHN ANDERSSON and EDWARD MATTSON – from the *Sveriges Arbetares Centralorganisation* (SAC).

⁸⁴ The night from July 10th to 11th, 1921.

⁸⁵ *in fact*: July 12th, 1921.

⁸⁶ The letter was published in: INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR POLITICAL PRISONERS (ed.), *Letters from Russian*

stated that it “was dangerous to release them”. It further informed us that “the Anarchists in the prisons” would be released and deported abroad. It also demanded of the Delegates' Committee that they should have the Taganka hunger strike terminated at once.

To arrange the conditions of release and deportation, in co-operation with the Delegates' Committee, the Central Committee of the Party appointed Trotsky and Dzierżyński as the representatives of the government. The foreign delegates that were most active on the Committee requested the Moscow Anarchists to add two of their own members to their Committee, to aid them in the arrangements and in the conferences with the representatives of the Communist Party. The various Anarchist groups of Moscow elected A[lexander] Shapiro and Alexander Berkman as their representatives on the Delegates' Committee⁸⁷.

The decision of the Communist Party, together with the recommendation of the foreign delegates to terminate the hunger strike, was communicated to Taganka. It was on the 11th day of the hunger strike. That night the prisoners also received an official visit from Yagoda⁸⁸, of the Ve-Tcheka, who informed them of the decision of the government. The Anarchist prisoners decided to accept release and deportation and the hunger strike came to an end.

Then began our Committee's conferences with the government. But neither Trotsky nor Dzerzhinsky put in an appearance. Instead, Lunacharsky⁸⁹ took Trotsky's place, while Dzierżyński was represented by his first assistant, Unschlicht⁹⁰, then the actual head of the Ve-Tcheka. From the very first conference, in Lunacharsky's office in the Kremlin, it became evident that the Ve-Tcheka had been given complete charge of the matter at issues, and that it was determined to carry out the decision of the Central Committee of the Party in its own way and by its usual methods. At the first session Unschlicht declared that the decision to release and deport the imprisoned Anarchists referred **only** to the 13 hunger strikers in the Taganka. We pointed out to him that the document of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, signed by Trotsky, distinctly concerned **all** Anarchists in the prisons of the

Bolsheviki, and that we considered it a solemn promise that could not be broken. It was in vain. Unschlicht insisted that *his* interpretation of the matter was different, and he refused to discuss the matter. He spoke in the name of the all-powerful Ve-Tcheka, in a tone that plainly indicated that he came to command, not to discuss. He spoke in monosyllables, sharply, even disdainfully. Before the close of the conference he rose and left the room, without feigning to glance at the delegates. “That was rather discourteous to the foreign delegates”, I remarked; “he did not even bid them good bye”. “He just left for a moment”, the Spanish delegate⁹¹ at my side replied; “he will be back presently, for he would not insult us like that”. But Unschlicht did not return.

In that spirit the conferences dragged on, in a very irregular and haphazard manner. The foreign delegates had almost to beg for a conference, continuously making appointments with Unschlicht which the latter seldom kept. Lunacharsky had said very definitely that he understood Trotsky's document to promise the release of **all** the imprisoned Anarchists, but in the presence of Unschlicht he always referred the matter to him. Unschlicht paid no attention to Lunacharsky, though the latter was supposed to represent Trotsky at our conferences. Unschlicht was the symbol of the Ve-Tcheka, and there is no greater power in Russia. By degrees the foreign delegates on our Committee were realizing it. Thus, at our first conference a letter was prepared for the Taganka prisoners, setting forth the conditions made by the Ve-Tcheka for their release and deportation. The letter was signed by Lunacharsky and all the delegates with the single exception of myself. (I objected to those conditions as being unjust and even brutal: one condition, for instance, being that the Taganka comrades be deported 2, or maximum 3, days after their release from prison. Knowing the condition of the men after their hunger strike of eleven days, and the fearful means of railroad travel in Russia, I considered that condition unacceptable as well as entirely uncalled-for.) Unschlicht expressed himself satisfied with the letter to Taganka, and requested that it be sent to him at night to the Ve-Tcheka headquarters. He would then immediately send it by personal messenger to the prisoners. The letter, signed

Prisons, London 1925 (ALBERT & CHARLES BONI), p. 255-257 [*de facto* editor was ALEXANDER BERKMAN], and again in: G. P. MAXIMOFF, *The Guillotine at Work*. Twenty Years of Terror in Russia (Data and Documents), Chicago 1940 (The Chicago Section of the ALEXANDER BERKMAN Fund), p. 499-501; cf. also *Kate Sharpley Library*: <https://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/jwswk7>.

⁸⁷ The delegation that negotiated with LUNACHARSKY and UNSZLICHT (see below) consisted of MOISEI KNELER

[MICHEL] and HENRI SIROLLE (CSR), GASTON LEVAL and HILARI ARLANDIS (CNT), ALEXANDER SHAPIRO (Russia – *Golos Truda*) and ALEXANDER BERKMAN.

⁸⁸ GENRIKH GRIGORYEVICH YAGODA (1891-1938).

⁸⁹ ANATOLY LUNACHARSKY (1873-1933).

⁹⁰ JÓZEF UNSZLICHT (1879-1938).

⁹¹ probably HILARI ARLANDIS.

and sealed, was delivered to Unschlicht, as agreed. Two days later we learned that Unschlicht refused to forward the letter to the men in Taganka who were waiting for it with feverish hope.

The government was systematically creating difficulties and delaying matters. The purpose of its policy was apparent; it did not want the Anarchists to be at liberty while the Red Labor Congress was in session. Besides that, it had been promised by Trotsky that the delegates would participate in the arrangements for the safe departure of the prisoners from Russia and providing them with proper passports for unmolested entry abroad. But the government had other plans: it did not intend any delegates to be present in Moscow when the Taganka men were released.

Meanwhile our comrades remained in prison, in daily expectation of liberty. Representatives of the Tcheka visited them frequently, always with the promise that they would be freed "in a few days". But days came and went, and our comrades remained in the Taganka, living in uncertainty, their nerves over-strained with vain waiting, their health breaking down.

Then came the Bolshevik bombshell at the Red Labor Congress. Some of the delegates, as mentioned above, intended to bring the question of the persecution of revolutionists and of the Anarchist hunger strike to public attention at the Congress. But when the government promised to release the Anarchists from *all* prisons, it was understood that it would be done immediately, and therefore the delegates thought it best to avoid a scandal at the Labor Congress. They felt certain that the "revolutionary government" would keep its promise. It was the tacit general agreement that the matter should not be brought up at the Congress.

⁹² July 19th, 1921.

⁹³ NIKOLAI BUKHARIN (1888 – 1938).

⁹⁴ BUKHARIN's intervention and SIROLLE's answer (cf. below) are documented in TABER, l.c.p. 518 – 525. In the official proceedings the turmoil caused by BUKHARIN's speech and by LOSOVKY trying to close the floor and go on with the

But the Bolsheviks were secretly preparing a surprise. The Congress was drawing to its close, it was the eve of the last session⁹². Suddenly Bukharin⁹³ – *not* a delegate – appeared on the rostrum. He announced that he had been delegated by the Communist Party, through its Central Committee, to address the delegates on a certain subject. And immediately he launched into a venomous denunciation of the Anarchist movement in Russia⁹⁴. The Anarchist movement in Europe is one

thing, he said; the Anarchist movement in Russia is nothing but banditism and Makhnovstchina. The Russian Anarchists are murderers and counter-revolutionists, and the proof of it is that Makhno has only recently blown up several bridges on Soviet territory and killed some peasants whom he suspected of being Communists. Then he quoted statistics from the official paper to show that Makhno really was fighting the Bolshevik regime and that the Anarchist movement of Russia is nothing but banditism.

The Convention hall was in an uproar as Bukharin finished his talk. From all sides of the hall delegates demanded the floor. But the Chairmen of the Red Labor Congress, Losovsky⁹⁵, declared that the matter need not be discussed and that therefore the incident is closed.

The tumult increased. The delegates seemed to be of a different opinion. Some loudly resented Losovsky's arbitrary method of deciding by his own authority questions concerning the Congress. An uncomplimentary epithet was thrown by a German delegate at the Chairman. The French delegates were on their feet, shaking their fists at Losovsky: they demanded recognition. The whole house wanted the question opened for discussion, or that at least an opportunity be given to reply to the attack of Bukharin against the whole Anarchist movement of Russia. Cries of Shame! Outrage! rang in the hall. Till this incident Losovsky had run the Congress to suit his own fancy.

agenda – which nearly crashed the congress – is simply noted as: "Noise and shouts from the seats of the French and Spanish delegations." (ibid., p. 522).

⁹⁵ ALEXANDER LOSOVSKY [SOLOMON ABRAMOVICH DRIDZO] (1878 – 1952).

The majority of the delegates were Communists representing various countries, though the delegates were mostly men of the City of Moscow⁹⁶: they agreed unquestioningly with all the propositions of the Communist Chairman. But the attack of Bukharin was so outrageous and unwarranted, so sinister in its motives, that it awakened the sense of fair play even in some Communist delegates. These joined the demand of the French and German anarcho-syndicalists that one of the French delegates be given the floor. Still Losovsky refused to accede to the general demand. He attempted to go over to the next point on the day's agenda, but now the audience was aroused to a high pitch, and Losovsky was not permitted to proceed. Above the terrible noise and din Arlandis, the Spanish delegate, made himself heard. A staunch supporter of the Bolsheviki and close friend of Losovsky, he yet could not remain silent at the autocratic behaviour of the Chairman. He jumped on the rostrum and in a voice trembling with indignation demanded that the French delegates, who had arranged matters with the Bolshevik government concerning the release and deportation of the Anarchist prisoners, be heard in reply to Bukharin's attack. Still Losovsky remained obdurate, and then pandemonium broke loose. The whole audience was on its feet; some of the delegates rushed up to the front of the platform, all shouting, demanding the floor, some even threatening the Chairman. Losovsky was at last forced to put the question of giving the French delegates the floor to a vote. All through the previous sessions of the Congress the Communist delegates had voted as one man, on all questions. Losovsky no doubt hoped for similar action on the present occasion. But the result astounded him: the majority of the Communist delegates voted against Losovsky. It was most significant that the Ukrainian delegation, all Communists, voted in favor of challenging Bukharin's attack on the Anarchists. The motion to give the French delegates the floor, in reply to Bukharin, carried with such a tremendous majority that Losovsky – contrary to the established practice of the Congress – refused to announce the number for and against.

Sirolle spoke for the French delegation. Notwithstanding the flaming excitement of the situation and the deep indignation against the vilification of the Anarchist movement by Bukharin, Sirolle spoke in a most self-contained, dignified manner. The atmosphere was with high tension, and one could feel the admiration of the whole delegate body flowing out to the speaker. He began saying that, as an anarcho-syndicalist, he knew but **one** Anarchist

philosophy and **one** Anarchist movement the world over. It was the same in France, in England, in Germany as in Russia. To deliberately confound that movement with Makhnovstchina, as Bukharin had done, was a wilful misrepresentation for the sole purpose of misleading the foreign delegates not familiar with the Russian situation. Sirolle called attention to the fact, well known to Bukharin and to the Central Committee of the Communist Party in whose name Bukharin had spoken, that **no** Anarchist group in Russia considered Makhnovstchina as an Anarchist movement. Even the Federation of Anarchist groups of the Ukraina, the Nabat, who stands nearest to the Makhno movement and whom the Bolsheviki regard as out-and-out Makhnovtsi, does not recognise the Makhno *povstantsi*⁹⁷ as an

Anarchist movement. The proof of it is the resolution of the Nabat Federation Conference, held in September, 1920, which reads: "In reference to the revolutionary army under Makhno, it should be emphasised that it is a **mistake** to consider it Anarchistic". To quote statistics to the delegates about Makhno's destructive work against the Bolsheviki, as Bukharin had done, is a cheap demagogue trick calculating to confuse, not to enlighten. Those statistics prove only that Makhno is at war with the Bolshevik regime, but it has no bearing whatever on the question of the Anarchist movement in Russia. To speak of Makhno's activities as synonymous with the work of the Russian Anarchists is an infamous misrepresentation.

The delegates listened spellbound. Sirolle was demolishing Bukharin's "argument" with a clearness and precision most convincing. His evident sincerity, impersonal attitude, combined with his pleasant, melodious voice and manly bearing, powerfully impressed the whole audience. In conclusion Sirolle pointed out the sinister diplomacy of the Central Committee of the Communist Party in its bringing up the subject of Anarchism in Russia at the eleventh hour of the Congress, in the hope of justifying Anarchist persecution by unchallenged misrepresentation. He reminded the delegates that the French anarcho-syndicalists at the Congress had foregone their original intention of broaching the subject in public, on the promise of the Bolshevik government to make a satisfactory settlement regarding the imprisoned Anarchists. And now, at the last moment, when the Delegates' Committee had already come to a definite agreement with the government, and when it was understood that the matter was not to be discussed at

⁹⁶ *in the script*: "... men of the City or Moscow ..." – which makes no sense.

⁹⁷ rebel peasantry.

the Congress, the Communist Party has attempted to exploit the situation for its propaganda against the Anarchist movement of Russia. Its petty vindictive policy is a disgrace to a "revolutionary" government and detrimental to the Revolution.

Sirolle closed amid thunderous applause of the audience. Bukharin's lies were exposed: he stood on the platform pale, speechless, conscious guilt written on his face. The mask had been torn off the Bolshevik government in its dealings with Anarchists, and all could see. For once throughout the whole Congress had the truth triumphed.

* * * * *

It was not till two months later (on September 17, 1921) that the Taganka hunger strikers were released from prison. Tortured in body and mind, they came out physical wrecks. The miserable treatment accorded them by the Bolshevik government, after their release, the deception practiced upon them, their final deportation without good passports, and the consequent arrest of the majority of them in Stettin⁹⁸ – present an eloquent page of Bolshevik treachery and brutality. It has been adequately described by Comrade Maximoff⁹⁹, one of the victims of the Communist State, the Judas of the Russian Revolution.

Stockholm, March, 1922.

The Communists... refused the just demands of their own people – demands that voiced the October slogans of the Bolsheviks themselves....

Kronstadt is of great historic significance. It sounded the death knell Bolshevism with its Party dictatorship, mad centralisation, Tcheka terrorism and bureaucratic castes... It exploded the Bolshevik myth of the Communist State being the "Workers' and Peasants' Government". It proved that the Communist Party dictatorship and the Russian Revolution are opposites, contradictory and mutually exclusive. It demonstrated that the Bolshevik regime is unmitigated tyranny and reaction, and that the Communist State is itself the most potent and dangerous counter-revolution...

Kronstadt was the *first* popular and entirely independent attempt at liberation from the yoke of State Socialism – an attempt made directly by the people, by the workers, soldiers and sailors themselves. It was the first step toward the third Revolution which is inevitable and which, let us hope, may bring to long-suffering Russia lasting freedom and peace.

– Alexander Berkman, *The Kronstadt Rebellion* (1922)

⁹⁸ FRITZ KATER, chairman of the German syndicalist *Freie Arbeiter-Union Deutschlands* (FAUD), vouched on behalf of the union for the deportees, who were finally able to continue their journey from Stettin to Berlin.

⁹⁹ this could be G. P. MAXIMOFF, *The Hunger Strike and the Deportation of Anarchists from Soviet Russia* [dated 7.

February 1922]; reprinted in: MAXIMOFF, l. c. p. 475 – 499; cf. also *Kate Sharpley Library*: <https://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/8kpsck>. As far as I know, this text wasn't published until March 1922; MAXIMOFF also gives no hint where – or if ever – it appeared; it's possible it was published in the Scandinavian, esp. Swedish, syndicalist and anarchist press, but I don't know about it.

The “Anti-Climax”

Alexander Berkman

The Concluding Chapter of My Russian Diary *The Bolshevik Myth*

IN EXPLANATION

My work on Russia, “THE BOLSHEVIK MYTH,” which has just been issued by the publishing house of Boni & Liveright, New York, is an impersonal story of the Russian Revolution, a day by day record kept during my two years’ stay in that country (January, 1920 – December, 1921). It is a recital of actual events and experiences, without generalisations or theoretical deductions.

My subjective reactions and the lessons taught me by the Revolution I summarised in the Concluding Chapter. But Mr. Liveright rejected that chapter as an “anti-climax” from a literary standpoint and insisted on leaving it out.

Anxious to place my book before the public, I consented, But much as I am interested in literature, I consider the Russian Revolution and its lessons far more important than the finest writing. In a certain sense present-day Russia is indeed an anti-climax to the revolutionary aspirations of 1917. The more vital is the elucidation of the causes that led to the debacle of the Revolution. Those causes are discussed in the missing chapter. I have therefore published the latter in the present brochure, for the reader’s better understanding of the “BOLSHEVIK MYTH” and – in justice to myself.

Berlin, January, 1925

Alexander Berkman

PREFACE

Various circumstances have delayed the appearance of my work on Russia. But though it deals with conditions of two years ago, the book is as descriptive of Russia today as it was then.

“THE BOLSHEVIK MYTH” covers the period of military communism and the succeeding “nep” – the new economic policy introduced by Lenin in 1921. The “nep” has remained in force ever since, whatever the variations of its application, now hesitating, now energetically intensive. The so-called “nep” is nothing else than the introduction of capitalism in Russia, both State and private, involving concessions to foreign

capitalists, the leasing of factories and even of entire industries to private individuals or corporations. In short, a new-fledged capitalism, a mixture of State monopoly and private business.

Excepting some minor changes, more apparent than real – much enthused over by certain Labour delegations and other naive visitors to Russia unfamiliar with the situation in that country – conditions there today are essentially as described in my work.

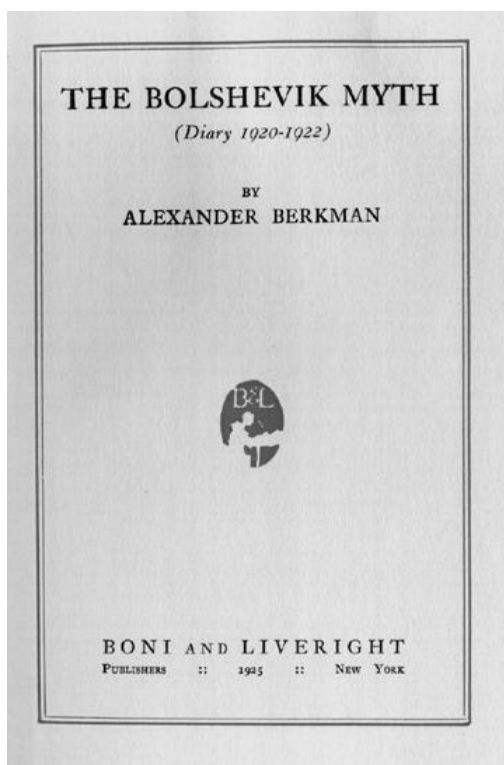
In outside appearance some of the larger cities, such as Petrograd and Moscow, are improved. The main thoroughfares have a cleaner look, some buildings have been repaired, the street car and electric

service is more satisfactory and dependable. Life is better regulated and has assumed more normal form in comparison with the entirely disorganised and chaotic conditions of 1920-1921,

But the actual, everyday existence of the people is not conditioned by these superficial changes, nor are the latter in any sense symbolic of the real essence and quality of the Bolshevik regime.

To understand the true being of a country one must look into its heart, into the unadorned channels of existence as fashioned by and mirrored in the political, economic, and cultural conditions.

In the realm of political life, the Communist dictatorship remains in *statu quo* of former years. As a matter of fact, the spirit of governmental despotism



has become more intensive, more habitual, as it were, with the powers that be in Russia. It is more systematic and organised, though far less justified, than in 1919-1921. Then was the time of foreign invasion, of the blockade, and civil war. Solemnly did the Bolsheviki keep on promising in those days that the policy of terror and persecution would cease as soon as Russia would be safe from intervention and military attack. It was on the strength of those promises and hopes that the great Russian masses, as well as most of the revolutionary elements, continued to cooperate with the Soviet Government, hoping by united effort to save the Revolution from its external and internal enemies.

The time came when the foreign powers gave up their attempts of interference, the blockade was lifted, and the fronts were terminated with the final defeat of the Wrangel armies. Civil war came to an end, but the Bolshevik policy of terror and suppression continued; aye, became even worse. Deceived in their expectations, the masses grew ever more embittered against the Communist Government. By degrees dissatisfaction became active in various parts of the country – in the East, the South, in Siberia – finally culminating in the Kronstadt uprising of the sailors, soldiers, and workers. Lenin saw himself forced to make concessions. He had the choice of giving the people either liberty or – capitalism. He chose the latter, and the “nep” was born.

The dictatorship of a small handful of Communist rulers – the inner circle of the Executive Committee of the Communist Party – remained. For the Bolsheviki feared to trust the people with liberty, because it might endanger their exclusive monopoly of the State. Lenin’s motto and that of his Party was, “We’ll concede anything except the least particle of our power.” The dictatorship now in the hands of the triumvirate (Stalin, Zinoviev, Kamenev) is as absolute as it was in the days of Lenin.

Indeed, it has become more comprehensive and systematic, due to the more normal and settled conditions of the country. The all-powerful hand of the dictatorship has now reached even to the heights of the Party, extinguishing Trotsky, stifling the Labor Group, and outlawing the entire left wing of the Communist Party of the Ukraine. Every sign of independent political opinion, every attempt at criticism is suppressed ruthlessly. The dreaded “inner” (special) Tcheka jails, the old prisons of the Tsar and the new “houses of deprivation of liberty” are crowded. The frozen North of Siberia, the wilds of Turkestan, the Archangel and Solovetsky dungeons and concentration camps are holding thousands of politicals, of the *intelligentsia*, of workers arrested for daring to strike, of peasants protesting against the

unbearable burdens, of non-partisans suspected of “political unreliability.” In the collection of Russian documents in my possession there are some issued by the Tcheka to prisoners, stating that they were arrested for “*belonging* to the Zionist Socialist Party.” The significance of such a “charge” is the more eloquent when it is considered that the Zionist Socialist Party demands nothing more “revolutionary” or “counter-revolutionary” than that the Soviet Constitution be respected in actual practice.

Still the Bolsheviki dare to pretend that only those are persecuted in Russia who take up arms against the Soviet Government or who are actively engaged in counter-revolutionary plots.

It is sufficient further to characterise the present situation in Russia by pointing out the fact that *not a single political publication is permitted to exist there*, excepting orthodox Communist papers and magazines. Even the *possession* of a revolutionary non-Communist publication, issued abroad, is punishable with imprisonment and exile.

It is a profound misconception of the situation to call Russia a dictatorship of the proletariat, for the workers are more enslaved politically and exploited in Russia than in any other country. Nor is the dictatorship that of the Communist Party, for the rank and file of the latter are held in entire subservience to Kremlin as are the rest of the people. Russia is today, as in Lenin’s time, a dictatorship of a small clique, known as the “political bureau” of the Executive Committee of the Party, with Stalin, Zinoviev, and Kamenev the actual and exclusive masters of the fate of the whole of Russia with her one hundred millions of population.

The policy of terror has completely suppressed every avenue of free expression. It has stifled the Soviets as the voice of the people’s needs and aspirations. It has turned the labour organisations into Communist executive bureaus, submissively carrying out the orders of the Government.

In the social and cultural life of the country, as well as in the industrial and economic fields, the effect of the dictatorship is inevitable depression and stagnation. Modern industrial development cannot go hand in hand with absolute despotism. A certain modicum of liberty, of personal safety, and the right of exerting one’s initiative and creative energies are the prerequisites of economic improvement. Only a most radical change in the character of the Communist dictatorship – the abolition of the latter, in fact – can bring Russia out of the quagmire of tyranny and misery.

It is the height of tragedy that Bolshevik Socialism, enmeshed in logical antitheses, can give to the world

today – seven years after the Revolution – nothing better than the intensification of the evils of the very system whose antagonisms produced Socialism.

THE LESSONS OF THE “BOLSHEVIK MYTH”

I. MY PERSONAL ATTITUDE AND REACTIONS

Since my early youth, revolution – social revolution – was the great hope and aim of my life. It signified to me the Messiah who was to deliver the world from brutality, injustice, and evil, and pave the way for a regenerated humanity of brotherhood, living in peace, liberty, and beauty.

Without exaggeration I may say that the happiest day of my existence was passed in a prison cell – the day when the first news of the October Revolution and the victory of the Bolsheviki reached me in the Atlanta Federal Penitentiary. The night of my dungeon was illumined by the glory of the great dream coming true. The bars of steel melted away, the stone walls receded, and I trod on the golden fleece of the Ideal about to be realised. Then followed weeks and months of trepidation, and I lived in a ferment of hope and fear – fear lest reaction overwhelm the Revolution, hope of reaching the land of promise.

At last arrived the longed-for day, and I was in Soviet Russia. I came exultant with the Revolution, full of admiration for the Bolsheviki, and flushed with the joy of useful work awaiting me in the midst of the heroic Russian people.

I knew that the Bolsheviki were Marxists, believers in a centralised State which I, an Anarchist, deny in principle. But I placed the Revolution above theories, and it seemed to me that the Bolsheviki did the same. Though Marxists, they had been instrumental in bringing about a revolution that was entirely un-Marxian; that was indeed in defiance of Marxian dogma and prophecy. Ardent advocates of parliamentarism, they repudiated it in their acts. Having persistently demanded the convocation of the Constituent Assembly, they unceremoniously dissolved

it when life proved its inadequacy. They abandoned their agrarian policy to adopt that of the Social Revolutionists, in response to the needs of the peasantry. They resolutely applied Anarchist methods and tactics when the exigency of the situation demanded them. In short, the Bolsheviki appeared *in practice* a thoroughly revolutionary party whose sole aim was the success of the Revolution; a party possessing the moral courage and integrity to subordinate its theories to the common welfare,

Had not Lenin himself frequently asserted that he and his followers were ultimately Anarchists – that political power was to them but a temporary means of accomplishing the Revolution? The State was gradually to die off, to disappear, as Engels had taught, because its functions would become unnecessary and obsolete.

I therefore accepted the Bolsheviki as the sincere and intrepid vanguard of man's social emancipation. To work with them, to help in the fight against the enemies of the Revolution, to aid in securing its fruits to the people was my fervent aspiration.

In that state of mind I came to Soviet Russia. As I had so passionately avowed at our first meeting of welcome on the

Russian frontier, I came prepared to ignore all theoretic differences of opinion. I came to work, not to discuss. To learn, not to teach. To learn and to help.

I did learn, and I tried to help, I learned day by day, through the long weeks and months, in various parts of the country. But what I saw and learned was in such crying contrast with my hopes and expectations as to shake the very foundation of my faith in the Bolsheviki. Not that I expected to find Russia a proletarian Eldorado. By no means. I knew how great the travail of a revolutionary period, how stupendous the difficulties to be overcome. Russia was besieged on numerous fronts; there was counter-revolution within and without; the blockade was starving the country and denying even medical aid to sick women and children. The people were exhausted by long war and civil strife; industry was disorganised, the railroads broken down. I fully realised the dire situation, with Russia shedding

her last blood on the altar of the Revolution, while the world at large stood by a supine witness and the Allied Powers aided death and destruction,

I saw the desperate heroism of the people and the almost superhuman efforts of the Bolsheviks. Closely associated with them, on terms of personal friendship with the leading Communists, I shared their interests and hopes, helped in their work, and was inspired by their selfless devotion and entire absorption in the service of the Revolution. Lack of sympathy on the part of other revolutionary elements filled me with grief, even anger, I was impatient of criticism of the Bolsheviks at a time when they were beset by powerful enemies. Refusal of support I resented, condemned as criminal, and I exerted my utmost efforts to bring about better understanding and cooperation between the opposing revolutionary factions.

My closeness to the Bolsheviks, my frank partiality in their favour aggravated my friends and alienated my nearest comrades. But my faith in the Communists and their integrity would not be influenced. It was proof even against the evidence of my own senses and judgment, of my impressions and experience.

Life, reality continuously challenged my faith. I saw inequality and injustice on every hand, humanity trampled in the dust, alleged exigency made the cloak of treachery, deceit, and oppression. I saw the ruling Party suppress the vital impulses of the Revolution, discourage popular initiative and self-reliance so essential to its growth. Yet I clung to my faith. Tenaciously I nursed the hope that back of the wrong principles and false tactics, back of the Government bureaucracy and Party autocracy there smouldered the will to idealism that would sweep away the black clouds of despotism as soon as the Soviet Government would be safe from Allied interference and counter-revolution. That spark of idealism would excuse to me all the mistakes and errors, the monstrous incompetency, the incredible corruption, even the crimes committed in the name of the Revolution,

For eighteen months, months of anguish and heartrending experience, I clung to that hope. And day by day the conviction kept growing that Bolshevism was proving fatal to the best interests of the Revolution; that political power had become the sole aim of the dominant Party; that the State with its barrack Communism was enslaving and destructive. I saw the Bolsheviks steadily gain momentum on the inclined plane of tyranny; the Party dictatorship become the irresponsible absolutism of a few overlords; the apostles of liberty turn executioners of the people.

Every day the damning evidence was accumulating. I saw the Bolsheviks reflect the Revolution as a monstrous grotesque; I saw tragic revolutionary necessity institutionalised into irresponsible terror, the blood of thousands shed without reason or measure, I saw the class struggle, long terminated, become a war of vengeance and extermination. I saw the ideals of yesterday betrayed, the meaning of the Revolution perverted, its essence caricatured into reaction. I saw the workers subdued, the whole country silenced by the Party dictatorship and its organised brutality. I saw entire villages laid waste by Bolshevik artillery. I saw the prisons filled – not with counter-revolutionists, but with workers and peasants, with proletarian intellectuals, with starving women and children. I saw the revolutionary elements persecuted, the spirit of October crucified on the Golgotha of the omnipotent Communist State.

Still I would not concede the appalling truth. Still the hope persisted that the Bolsheviks, though absolutely wrong in principle and practice, yet grimly held on to *some* shreds of the revolutionary banner. "Allied interference," "the blockade and civil war," "the necessity of the transitory stage" – thus I sought to placate my outraged conscience. When the critical period will be past, the hand of despotism and terror would be lifted, and my sorely tried faith justified.

At last the fronts were liquidated, civil war ended, and the country at peace. But Communist policies did not change. On the contrary: more fanatical became repression, red terror grew to orgy, more ruthlessly the Juggernaut of the State spread death and devastation. The country groaned under the unbearable yoke of the Party dictatorship. But no relief would be given. Then came Kronstadt and its simultaneous echoes throughout the land. For years the people had suffered untold misery, privation, and hunger. For the sake of the Revolution they were still willing to bear and to suffer. Not for bread did they cry. Only for a breath of life, of liberty.

Kronstadt could have easily turned its guns against Petrograd and driven out the Bolshevik masters who were frightened and on the verge of flight. One decisive blow by the sailors, and Petrograd would have been theirs and with it Moscow. The entire country was ready to welcome the step. Never before were the Bolsheviks nearer to destruction. But Kronstadt, like the rest of Russia, did not intend war on the Soviet Republic. It wanted no bloodshed, it would not fire the first shot Kronstadt demanded only honest elections, Soviets free from Communist domination. It proclaimed the slogans of October and revived the true spirit of the Revolution.

Kronstadt was crushed as ruthlessly as Thiers and Gallifet slaughtered the Paris Communards. And with Kronstadt the entire country and its last hope. With it also my faith in the Bolsheviki. That day I broke finally, irrevocably, with the Communists. It became clear to me that never, under any circumstances, could I accept that degradation of human personality and liberty, that Party chauvinism and State absolutism which had become the essence of the Communist dictatorship. I realised at last that Bolshevik idealism was a MYTH, a dangerous delusion fatal to liberty and progress.

II. THE COMMUNIST DICTATORSHIP AND THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

The October Revolution was not the legitimate offspring of traditional Marxism. Russia but little resembled a country in which, according to Marx, "the concentration of the means of production and the socialisation of the tools of labour reached the point where they can no longer be contained within their capitalistic shell. The shell bursts"

In Russia "the shell" burst unexpectedly. It burst at a stage of low technical and industrial development, when centralisation of production had made little progress, Russia was a country with a badly organised system of transportation, with an insignificant bourgeoisie and weak proletariat, but with a numerically strong and socially important peasant population. It was a country in which, apparently, there could be no talk of "irreconcilable antagonism between the grown industrial labour forces and a fully ripened capitalist system."

But the combination of circumstances in 1917 involved, particularly for Russia, an exceptional state of affairs which resulted in the catastrophic breakdown of her whole industrial system. "It was easy," Lenin justly wrote at the time, "to begin the revolution in the peculiarly unique situation of 1917."

The specially favourable conditions were:

1) the possibility of blending the slogans of the Social Revolution with the popular demand for the termination of the imperialistic world war, which had

produced great exhaustion and dissatisfaction among the masses;

2) the chance of remaining, at least for a certain period, outside the sphere of influence of the capitalistic European groups which continued the war;

3) the opportunity to begin, even during the short time of this respite, the work of internal organisation and to prepare the foundation for revolutionary reconstruction;

4) the unusually favourable position of Russia, in case of new aggression on the part of West European imperialism, due to her vast territory and insufficient means of communication;

5) the advantages of such a condition in the event of civil war; and

6) the possibility of almost immediately satisfying the demands of the peasantry for land, notwithstanding the fact that the essentially democratic viewpoint of the agricultural population was entirely different from the Socialist program of the "Party of the proletariat" which seized the reins of government.

Moreover, revolutionary Russia already had the benefit of a great experience – that of 1905, when the Tsarist autocracy succeeded in crushing the revolution for the very reason that the latter strove

to be exclusively political and therefore could neither arouse the peasants nor inspire even a considerable part of the proletariat.

The world war, by exposing the complete bankruptcy of constitutional government, served to prepare and quicken the greatest movement of the people – a movement which, by virtue of its very essence, could develop only into a social revolution.

Anticipating the measures of the government, often even in defiance of the latter, the revolutionary masses by their own initiative began, long before the October days, to put in practice their social ideals. They took possession of the land, the factories, mines, mills, and the tools of production. They got rid of the more hated and dangerous representatives of government and authority. In their grand revolutionary outburst they destroyed every form of political and economic oppression. In the deeps of Russia the processes of the Social Revolution were intensively at work even before

the October change took place in Petrograd and Moscow.

The Communist Party, aiming at the dictatorship, from the very beginning correctly judged the situation. Throwing overboard the democratic planks of its platform, it proclaimed the slogans of the Social Revolution in order to gain control of the movement of the masses. In the course of the development of the Revolution, the Bolsheviks gave concrete form to certain fundamental principles and methods of Anarchist Communism, as for instance: the negation of parliamentarism, expropriation of the bourgeoisie, tactics of direct action, seizure of the means of production, establishment of the system of Workers' and Peasants' Councils (Soviets),

Furthermore, the Communist Party exploited all the popular demands of the hour: termination of the war, all power to the revolutionary proletariat, the land for the peasants. This attitude of the Bolsheviks was of tremendous psychologic effect in hastening and stimulating the Revolution.

The latter was an organic process that sprang with elemental force from the very needs of the people, from the complex combination of circumstances which determined their existence. The Revolution instinctively followed the path marked out by the great popular outburst, naturally reflecting Anarchist tendencies. It destroyed the old State mechanism and proclaimed in political life the principle of the federation of Soviets. It employed the method of direct expropriation to abolish private capitalistic ownership. In the field of economic reconstruction the Revolution established shop and factory committees for the management of production. House committees looked after the proper assignment of living quarters.

It was evident that the only right and wholesome development – which could save Russia from her external enemies, free her from inner strife, broaden and deepen the Revolution itself – lay in the direct creative initiative of the toiling masses. Only they who had for centuries borne the heaviest burdens could through conscious systematic effort find the road to a new, regenerated society.

But this conception was in irreconcilable conflict with the spirit of Marxism in its Bolshevik interpretation and particularly with Lenin's authoritative view of it.

For years trained in their peculiar "underground" doctrine, in which fervent faith in the Social Revolution was in some strange manner united with their no less fanatical faith in State centralisation, the Bolsheviks devised an entirely new system of tactics. It was to the effect that the preparation and consummation of the

Social Revolution necessitates the organisation of a special conspirative staff, consisting exclusively of the theoreticians of the movement, vested with dictatorial powers for the purpose of clarifying and perfecting beforehand, by their own conspirative means, the class-consciousness of the proletariat.

The fundamental characteristic of Bolshevik psychology is distrust of the masses. Left to themselves, the people – according to the Bolsheviks – can rise only to the consciousness of the petty reformer. The masses must be made free by force. To educate them to liberty one must not hesitate to use compulsion and violence. The road that leads to liberty was therefore forsaken.

"Proletarian compulsion in all its forms," as Bukharin, one of the foremost Communist theoreticians wrote, "beginning with summary execution and ending with compulsory labour is, however paradoxical it may sound, a method of reworking the human material of the capitalistic epoch into Communist humanity."

Already in the first days of the Revolution, early in 1918, when Lenin first announced to the world his socio-economic program in its minutest details, the roles of the people and of the Party in the revolutionary reconstruction were strictly separated and definitely assigned. On the one hand, an absolutely submissive Socialist herd, a dumb people; on the other, the omniscient, all-controlling Political Party. What is inscrutable to everyone is an open book to it. There is only *one* indisputable source of truth – the State. But the Communist State is, in essence and practice, the dictatorship of its Central Committee. Every citizen must be, first and foremost, the servant of the State, its obedient functionary, unquestioningly executing the will of his master. All free initiative, of the individual as well as of the collectivity, is eliminated from the vision of the State. The people's Soviets are transformed into sections of the ruling Party; the Soviet institutions become soulless offices, mere transmitters of the will of the centre to the periphery. All expressions of State activity must be stamped with the approving seal of Communism as interpreted by the faction in power. Everything else is considered superfluous, useless, and dangerous.

By its declaration *L'état c'est moi*, the Bolshevik dictatorship assumed entire responsibility for the Revolution in all its historic and ethical implications.

Having paralyzed the constructive efforts of the people, the Communist Party could henceforth count only on its own initiative. By what means, then, did the Bolshevik dictatorship expect to use to best advantage the resources of the Social Revolution? What road did it choose, not merely to subject the masses mechanically to its authority, but also to educate them,

to inspire them with advanced Socialist ideas, and to stimulate them – exhausted as they were by long war, economic ruin, and police rule – with new faith in Socialist reconstruction? What did it substitute in place of the revolutionary enthusiasm which burned so intensely before?

Two things comprised the beginning and the end of the constructive activities of the Bolshevik dictatorship: 1) the theory of the Communist State, and 2) terrorism.

In his speeches about the Communist program, in discussions at conferences and congresses, and in his celebrated pamphlet on the “Infantile Sickness of ‘Leftism’ in Communism” Lenin gradually shaped that peculiar doctrine of the Communist State which was fated to play the dominant role in the attitude of the Party and to determine all the subsequent steps of the Bolsheviki in the sphere of practical politics. It is the doctrine of a zigzag political road: of “respites” and “tributes”, agreements and compromises, profitable retreats, advantageous withdrawals and surrenders – a truly classical theory of compromise.

Compromise and bargaining, for which the Bolsheviki so unmercifully and justly denounced and stigmatised all the other factions of State Socialism, became the Bethlehem Star pointing the way to revolutionary reconstruction. Naturally, such methods could not fail to lead into the swamp of conformation, hypocrisy, and unprincipledness.

The Brest Litovsk peace; the agrarian policy with its spasmodic changes from the poorest class of the peasantry to the peasant exploiter; the perplexed attitude toward the labour unions; the fitful policy in regard to technical experts, with its theoretical and practical swaying from collegiate management of industries to “one-man power;” nervous appeals to West European capitalism over the heads of the home and foreign proletariat; finally, the latest inconsistent and zigzaggy, but incontrovertible and assured restoration of the abolished bourgeoisie – such is the system of Bolshevism. A system of unprecedented shamelessness practiced on a monster scale, a policy of outrageous double-dealing in which the left hand of the Communist Party consciously ignores and even denies, on principle, what its right hand is doing; when,

for instance, it is proclaimed that the most important problem of the moment is the struggle against the small bourgeoisie (and, incidentally, in stereotyped Bolshevik phraseology, against Anarchist elements), while on the other hand are issued new decrees creating the techno-economic and psychological conditions necessary for the restoration and strengthening of that same bourgeoisie – that is the Bolshevik policy which will forever stand as a monument of the thoroughly false, thoroughly contradictory, concerned only in self-preservation opportunistic policy of the Communist Party dictatorship.

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However loudly that dictatorship may boast about the great success of its political methods, it remains the most tragic fact that the worst and most incurable wounds of the Revolution were received at the hands of the Communist dictatorship itself.

Long ago Engels said that the proletariat does not need the State to protect liberty, but needs it for the purpose of *crushing its opponents*; and that when it will be possible to speak of liberty, there will be no government. The Bolsheviki

adopted this maxim not only as their socio-political axiom during the “transition period” but gave it universal application.

Terrorism has always been the *ultima ratio* of government alarmed for its existence. Terrorism is tempting with its tremendous possibilities. It offers a mechanical solution, as it were, in hopeless situations. Psychologically it is explained as a matter of self-defence, as the necessity of throwing off responsibility the better to strike the enemy.

But the principles of terrorism unavoidably rebound to the fatal injury of liberty and revolution. Absolute power corrupts and defeats its partisans no less than its opponents, A people that knows not liberty becomes accustomed to dictatorship. Fighting despotism and counter-revolution, terrorism itself becomes their efficient school.

Once on the road of terrorism, the State necessarily becomes estranged from the people. It must reduce to the minimum the circle of persons vested with extraordinary powers, in the name of the safety of the

State. And then is born what may be called the panic of authority. The dictator, the despot is always cowardly. He suspects treason everywhere. And the more terrified he becomes, the wilder rages his frightened imagination, incapable of distinguishing real danger from fancied. He sows broadcast discontent, antagonism, hatred. Having chosen this course, the State is doomed to follow it to the very end.

The Russian people remained silent, and in their name – in the guise of mortal combat with counter-revolution – the Government initiated the most merciless war against all opponents of the Communist Party. Every vestige of liberty was torn out by the roots. Freedom of thought, of the press, of public assembly, self-determination of the worker and of his unions, the freedom of labour – all were declared old rubbish, doctrinaire nonsense, “bourgeois prejudices,” or intrigues of reviving counter-revolution.

That was the Bolshevik reply to the revolutionary enthusiasm and deep faith which inspired the masses in the beginning of their great struggle for liberty and justice – a reply that expressed itself in the policy of compromise abroad and terrorism at home.

Thrust back from direct participation in the constructive work of the Revolution, harassed at every step, the victim of constant supervision and control by the Party, the proletariat became accustomed to consider the Revolution and its further fortunes as the personal affair of the Communists. In vain did the Bolsheviks point to the world war as the cause of Russia's economic breakdown; in vain did they ascribe it to the blockade and the attacks of armed counter-revolution. Not in them was the real source of the collapse and debacle.

No blockade, no wars with foreign reaction could dismay or conquer the revolutionary people whose unexampled heroism, self-sacrifice, and perseverance defeated all its external enemies. On the contrary, civil war really helped the Bolsheviks. It served to keep alive popular enthusiasm and nurtured the hope that, with the end of war, the ruling Party will make effective the new revolutionary principles and secure the people in

the enjoyment of the fruits of the Revolution. The masses looked forward to the yearned for opportunity for social and economic liberty. Paradoxical as it may sound, the Communist dictatorship had no better ally, in the sense of strengthening and prolonging its life, than the reactionary forces which fought against it,

It was only the termination of the wars which permitted a full view of the economic and psychologic demoralisation to which the blindly despotic policy of the dictatorship brought Russia. Then it became evident that the most formidable danger to the Revolution was not outside, but *within* the country: a danger resulting from the very nature of the social and economic arrangements which characterise the system of Bolshevism.

The historic struggle of the labouring masses for liberty necessarily and unavoidably proceeds outside the sphere of governmental influence. The struggle against oppression – political, economic, and social – against the exploitation of man by man, or of the individual by the government, is always simultaneously also a struggle against government as such.

Its distinctive features – inherent social antagonisms – are abolished only formally in the Soviet Republic, In reality those antagonisms exist and are very deep-seated. The exploitation of labour, the enslavement of the worker and peasant, the cancellation of the citizen as a human being, as a personality, and his transformation into a microscopic part of the universal economic mechanism owned by the government; the creation of privileged groups favoured by the State; the system of labour service and its punitive organs – these are the characteristics of Bolshevism.

Bolshevism, with its Party dictatorship and State Communism, is not and can never become the threshold of a free, non-authoritarian

Communist society, because the

very essence and nature of governmental, compulsory Communism excludes such an evolution. Its economic and political centralisation, its governmentalisation and bureaucratisation of every sphere of activity and effort, its inevitable militarisation and degradation of the human spirit mechanically destroy every germ of new life and extinguish the stimuli of creative, constructive work.

The historic struggle of the labouring masses for liberty necessarily and unavoidably proceeds outside the sphere of governmental influence. The struggle against oppression – political, economic, and social – against the exploitation of man by man, or of the individual by

the government, is always simultaneously also a struggle against government as such. The political State, whatever its form, and constructive revolutionary effort are irreconcilable. They are mutually exclusive. Every revolution in the course of its development faces this alternative: to build freely, independently and despite of the government, or to choose government with all the limitation and stagnation it involves. The path of the Social Revolution, of the constructive self-reliance of the organised, conscious masses, is in the direction of non-government; that is, of Anarchy. Not the State, not government, but systematic and coordinated social reconstruction by the toilers is necessary for the upbuilding of the new society. Not the State and its police methods, but the solidaric cooperation of all working elements – the proletariat, the peasantry, the revolutionary intelligentsia – mutually helping each other in their voluntary associations, will emancipate us from the State superstition and bridge the passage between the abolished old civilisation and Free Communism. Not by order of some central authority, but organically, from life itself, must grow up the closely knit federation of the united industrial, agrarian, and other associations; by the workers themselves must they be organised and managed, and then – and only then – will the great aspiration of labour for social regeneration have a sound, firm foundation. Only such an organisation of the commonwealth will make room for the really free,

creative, new humanity, and will be the actual threshold of nongovernmental, Anarchist Communism.

We live on the eve of tremendous social changes. The old forms of life are breaking and falling apart. New elements are coming into being, seeking adequate expression. The pillars of present-day civilisation are being shattered. The principles of private ownership, the conception of human personality, of social life and liberty are being transvalued. Bolshevism came to the world as the revolutionary symbol, the promise of the better day. To millions of the disinherited and enslaved it became the new religion, the beacon of social salvation. But Bolshevism has failed, utterly and absolutely. As Christianity, once the hope of the submerged, has driven Christ and his spirit from the Church, so has Bolshevism crucified the Russian Revolution, betrayed the people, and is now seeking to dupe other millions with its Judas kiss.

It is imperative to unmask the great delusion, which otherwise might lead the Western workers to the same abyss as their brothers in Russia. It is incumbent upon those who have seen through the myth to expose its true nature, to unveil the social menace that hides behind it – the red Jesuitism that would throw the world back to the dark ages and the Inquisition.

Bolshevism is of the past. The future belongs to man and his liberty.

And if you have followed me so far, you will agree that the matter of taking over the industries is not something that can be left to chance, nor can it be carried out in a haphazard manner. It can be accomplished only in a well-planned, systematic, and organised way... There is no man nor any body of men that can manage it except the *workers themselves*, for it takes the workers to operate the industries...

Any one who tells you that Anarchists don't believe in organisation is talking nonsense... But there is organisation and organisation. Capitalist society is so badly organised that its various members suffer... The libertarian organisation, formed voluntarily and in which every member is free and equal, is a sound body and can work well. Such an organisation is a free union of equal parts. It is the kind of organisation the Anarchists believe in.

– Alexander Berkman, *Now and After: The ABC of Communist Anarchism* (1929)

To the International Proletariat

Alexander Berkman

Freedom, March 1927

Fellow workers,

Again we are compelled to appeal to you on behalf of the revolutionists imprisoned and exiled in Russia. Over nine years have passed since the great October Revolution, but political persecution does not cease. In truth, it is growing more systematic and ruthless as the years go by. The safer the Bolsheviki feel themselves in the Government saddle, the more drastic is their suppression of the workers and of those that voice the protest of the proletariat against subjection and exploitation. The one-time revolutionary party has become the most autocratic Government of the world. Forgotten are the revolutionary ideals, forgotten the sacred promises to advance the cause of the downtrodden. Nothing is left of the sublime purpose and spirit of the Revolution except the tyranny of a few politicians who brazenly call themselves the "dictatorship of the proletariat," and in the name of that proletariat enslave and suppress the workers.

The Bolshevik Government is now pursuing one sole object, to secure itself as the exclusive absolute power of the great country of Russia. It is for this purpose that it dances attendance upon kings and capitalists abroad, while at home it crushes every liberty of the people and stifles every protest with inexorable hand. The workers of Russia are being hopelessly enslaved to the resurrected bourgeoisie at home and to the international capitalists whom the Bolsheviki invite to exploit Russia and her people.

It is in pursuance of this policy that the revolutionary elements are being exterminated, most mercilessly of all the Anarchists and Anarcho-Syndicalists. For these are the most uncompromising revolutionists and loyal defenders of the proletariat, and the Government knows them to be the most dangerous enemies of tyranny and the greatest handicap to its reactionary policies.

The prisons of Russia are filled with these victims of the Bolshevik regime. Persecution is growing and no means are too barbarous to stifle every protest. Do not believe the Communist lie that only counter-revolutionists are imprisoned in Russia. It is the most shameless and cowardly hypocrisy that any tyrant ever practised upon the people. On the contrary, it is the best labour and revolutionary elements that are shut up in dungeons or exiled to the northernmost parts of the country to fall victims to slow death from cold,

starvation, and disease. The unprincipled and the career-seeker, the former executioners of the Tsar and the resurrected exploiter, have in Russia the most favourable chance to grow rich and fat. It is the stool pigeon and the climber that thrive under the protecting wing of the Communist regime. But the workers who have spirit and ideas and the courage to stand up for them – the men and women who dare express the aspirations of labour for a better and freer day – it is they who feel the crushing hand of the Government gone mad with power and impatient of any criticism.

The best and most devoted of our comrades are in prison or exile. Most of them had suffered persecution under the Tsars and the greater part of them have now been in continuous imprisonment for years – some for five, six, and even seven years. Not for anything they had done, nor for any offence committed against the people, but merely because of the fact that they are Anarchists, idealists too loyal to be bribed into silence or terrorised into compromise. Take such men and women, for instance, as Aron Baron, Tatyana Polosova, Meyer-Rubintchik, Maria Weger, Ivan Tarasiuk, and scores of others who have now for years been buried alive in prison or exile. No charges have ever been made against them, no trial ever given them. They rot in prison because they remain true to the spirit of the October Revolution so shamelessly betrayed by the Bolsheviki.

The Government is resorting to the most inhuman and savage methods of treating the politicals. They are thrown about from prison to prison, then sent to exile, often suddenly transferred from a hot climate to the frozen Arctic regions, only again to be imprisoned, and thus hopelessly continuing the vicious circle. Frequently they are cruelly beaten, brutal violence is practised upon the women, and every means used to make their lives miserable and drive the politicals to death or self-destruction.

Now the Bolsheviki have even revived the terrible Solovetsky Islands (known as Solovki) as a place for the imprisonment of politicals. Situated in the Arctic zone, in the White Sea, those islands are a convenient place to bury alive the political opponents of the Government. The great moral indignation aroused abroad in revolutionary and labour circles by the outrages and murders committed against the politicals in the Solovki had compelled the Bolsheviki to abolish

that hell-hole in the latter part of 1925. Common offenders remained there to be slowly tortured to death, and politicals from conquered Georgia have lately been sent by the hundreds to those Polar islands. But now the Bolsheviks are again sending politicals of every party to the Solovetsky, in spite of their solemn promise to cease that practice.

The treatment the politicals receive, the tortures they suffer, can be easily understood from the fact that they are driven to such desperation as to seek relief in suicide. Long-continued hunger strikes, individual and collective, do not move the Bolshevik heart. Men are actually compelled to resort to self-destruction. The information that comes to us from the prisons of Tobolsk, Upper Ural, Yaroslavl, and other bastilles, certified to by all the politicals imprisoned there, is hair-raising in its description of the brutality and fiendishness practised there. Thus the peasant Anarchist Grigoryev, desperate with unbearable torture, has resorted to suicide by attempting to burn himself alive.

Such cases were comparatively rare, even in the worst prisons of the Romanov regime. When they happened and became known abroad, the whole world was shocked and effective protests were raised in every land. And now? Where is the conscience of the world? Where is, at least, the protesting voice of Liberals and Radicals, of progressive Labour bodies and similar organisations? Are they so awed by the new capitalistic achievements of the Bolsheviks that they dare not "hurt Russia" by protesting even against the most heaven-crying atrocities?

Fellow-workers, do not be duped by the empty revolutionary phrases of the Bolsheviks and their apologists. Do not confuse the Russian Revolution with the Bolshevik Government. They are opposites, contradictory and mutually exclusive. The Bolshevik Government is the betrayal of the Revolution. It is reactionary in principle, methods, and tactics. The purpose of the Revolution is the emancipation of labour, greater liberty and aspiration. The aim of the Government is to secure and perpetuate the Communist politicians in their power. Judge the Bolshevik Government by its deeds, not by its mere words. Judge it by its friends. The Journal of the New York Chamber of Commerce appeals to the big bankers and manufacturers of America in behalf of the Bolshevik Government. It praises it in the highest terms and points out the unlimited financial opportunities to exploit Russia and her people. Read Tchicherin's statement in the Chamber of Commerce Journal, over his own signature, to the effect that the interests of

Russia are *identical* with those of American capital. Read Kamenev's appeal, in the same journal, begging American manufacturers to invest in Russia "for the mutual benefit of both countries." Watch Tchicherin, silk hat in hand, bowing before the King of Italy – to the greater glory of the Revolution! See him present gifts of gold and silver cigarette cases to the chiefs of the Italian police and secret service. Listen to Mussolini declare his great admiration of the Russian Government and see him read the telegraphic congratulations of the same on escaping the avenging hand of the Italian revolutionists martyred by the Mussolini bravos. Judge the "revolutionary" Government of Russia, by its friends, its deeds. And bethink yourselves whether you can shake hands with the very political party that is shooting down and imprisoning your comrades in Russia.

Workers of the World! We call upon you to raise your voice against the systematic crushing of every labour and revolutionary aspiration in Russia. It is the clear purpose of the Bolshevik Government to exterminate the last vestiges of revolutionary thought and effort, and it is up to you, fellow-workers, to put a stop to these heinous proceedings.

International Labour has the power to do it. Raise the question in your organisations, take action immediately. Thousands of our martyred brothers in Russia are looking toward you for help. Do not become a party to their torture and murder by inactivity and acquiescence! It is most urgent that you act at once. Let your motto be: *Immediate and unconditional liberty for all revolutionary political prisoners!*

Meanwhile think also of the great need of the men and women in prison and exile. Their existence depends upon your aid. They call to you not only for moral but also for material help. The miserable food or money allowance they receive from the Government is not sufficient to hold body and soul together. Your support is necessary to keep them alive, to supply them with warm clothing in the frozen North of Siberia, to sustain with food the women and children exiled to the furthest parts of the country, and to inspire them with new courage and hope in the active solidarity of their brothers abroad.

Do your duty! Come to their rescue! And do it quickly!

For the *Secretariat*, I.W.M.A. Relief Fund.

Alexander Berkman.

Communications and funds address to: I.W.M.A. Relief Fund, Fritz Kater, Warschauer Str., 62, Berlin O 34, Germany.

Abolishing War

Alexander Berkman

Freedom, November-December 1927

There is nothing more hypocritical than the talk of the Great Powers about disarmament or limitation of armaments. While they are talking about it and calling “conferences” to discuss the subject, they are proceeding to increase their military and naval strength. The “discussions” serve to make the people believe in the “good intentions and peaceful aims” of the various Governments and give the latter time and opportunity for war preparations.

Liberals who fall for this obvious game must be very naive indeed. As to the masses, they are unfortunately too patriotic or inane – which is the same thing, essentially – to stop to ponder over the significance of the situation. The fact is that all the Powers are actually and intensively preparing for a new war in the near future. Here and there are already heard thinly-veiled hints about the “inevitableness” of another international slaughter.

The policeman who has nothing to do all day but to wield his bludgeon comes to itch for a chance to use it upon someone’s head. The fellow who is in the habit of sticking a loaded revolver into his pocket will sooner or later find an opportunity to use it – generally sooner than later. That is the psychology of such a condition, and indeed it contains a certain “inevitableness” in itself.

The same holds true of nations and Governments – the same psychology brings about the same results. The men that compose the armies and navies, men constantly, for years, trained in the art of killing, must necessarily develop the desire and tendency to practise what they have learned. This applies still more forcibly to those in authority – to the higher officers and generals – who may expect not only to apply their

knowledge and skill in war but also to profit by such application, by gaining emoluments and honours at less personal risk than the common soldier. Add to this the mental attitude created by “patriotic” education and the jingoistic spirit of every military establishment, and you have a national powder cask that needs only the least spark of opportunity or excuse to set the world afire.

More important than the methods I have mentioned is the effort to abolish the very system of subjection and exploitation – the system of authority and slavery – upon which our whole civilisation is founded. Not only capitalism. For we had wars long before there was any capitalism. It is the subjection of man by man, of class by class, of nation by nation, that makes for war.

This is the situation in Europe today; in the whole world in fact. And the political atmosphere is charged with potential opportunities.

What can be done about it?

The advocacy of anti-militarism is a good and necessary thing. It is vital to educate the masses to the danger of war, to the stupidity and criminality of it. But important as this work is, I do not believe that we can prevent the coming war by such propaganda alone. In the first place, this propaganda reaches comparatively but a very small minority of the people. Secondly, its effect is almost nullified by the Church, which always favours war; by dominant education, which cultivates national and racial hatreds; by the press, which does similar work, and – most

important of all – by the actual conditions of dominant capitalism. Concerning the latter; just as an illustration. Millions of workers are employed throughout the world in manufacturing materials and munitions of war. Can any moral preachment induce them to leave their employment? We might succeed in persuading a few to do so, but the hundreds of thousands who earn their daily bread by doing actual war preparations cannot afford to give up their jobs, even if our propaganda were to reach them. To hope for that is utopian.

Yet as long as the implements of war will be manufactured they will also be used. For that reason—and it is merely one of the many – moral preachment alone can never abolish war.

There have always been movements in the history of man's progress that tried to make man happier and better by improving him instead of improving the conditions under which he suffered. Take Christianity, for instance. For two thousand years it admonishes man to be "better," but it has never lifted a finger to give him the opportunity to be better. If anything, he has become worse. True, he has learned to write and read, has obtained a smattering of so-called education, he has learned even to fly. But that has been accomplished without the Church and without religion. Indeed, in spite of the Church, which has always fought the efforts of science and popular education. But though man can fly now, is he "better" than before, in any sense whatever? Surely he is no more rational or human, unless the slaughtering of millions by modern artillery is more rational and human than the killing of a few hundreds with bow and arrow.

Anti-militarist preaching alone can hope to have no more real effect upon human life and conduct than Christianity has had. Moral preachments which are not coupled with the immediate material interests of the masses, and which do not offer the opportunity of actual application^ cannot become a vital influence in the behaviour of mankind.

By this I mean to say that anti-militarist propaganda alone cannot prevent or stop war as long as existing conditions compel men to exist by means of war and war preparations, and as long as there is opportunity and capitalistic necessity for war.

To be effective, anti-militarist agitation must begin with the parents, continue in the school, reach the workers in the munition factories, spread further to the masses at large and prepare them for international solidarity and general refusal to do war preparation and war service.

Yet even that would not be sufficient to bring about a cessation of war – as long as capitalism and government exist. More important than the methods I

have mentioned is the effort to abolish the very system of subjection and exploitation – the system of authority and slavery – upon which our whole civilisation is founded. Not only capitalism. For we had wars long before there was any capitalism. It is the subjection of man by man, of class by class, of nation by nation, that makes for war. In short, the spirit of dominance and authority of compulsion in whatever form. Unless we eradicate this spirit-together with the institutions which permit its exercise, unless we entirely abolish both 'capitalism' and government, we cannot hope to have fought the last war.

I am convinced it is more possible and more practical to abolish the twin gods of Mammon and Mars than to try to abolish one while leaving the other intact: to do away with war while capitalism remains.

I am convinced of it because the propaganda to abolish government and capitalism touches the immediate, vital everyday interests of the workers throughout the World. - Exclusive anti-war propaganda does not so deeply and generally appeal to those interests. For that reason you can, for example, induce a thousand workers to stop their work and strike for better pay. You can even organise a general strike in a given industry, on the basis of immediate improvement of conditions. But could we organise a general strike against war preparations? A general strike against war would mean revolution, and it is for that that we should work.

Social reforms, limitation of armaments, Leagues of Nations, and similar efforts are dangerous makeshifts that only confuse the real issue. Nor can the unseating of one Government and the replacing of it by some other accomplish any real, fundamental change in social life. Not even if such a Government calls itself "proletarian" and rules in the name of the "dictatorship of the working class." That is all mere shifting of political actors, while the scene remains the same. It is the scene that must be changed, the scene on which national and class struggles are taking place, the scene of Authority and Exploitation. And should that change require another war, a social revolution, let it come and be the last.

Only liberty can make the social revolution effective and wholesome. It alone can pave the way to greater heights and prepare a society where well-being and joy shall be the heritage of all. The day will dawn when man shall for the first time have full opportunity to grow and expand in the free and generous sunshine of Anarchy.

– Alexander Berkman, *Now and After: The ABC of Communist Anarchism* (1929)

Now and After: The ABC of Communist Anarchism

Alexander Berkman

1929

Chapter 12: Whose is the Power?

People talk about the greatness of their country, about the strength of the government and the power of the capitalist class. Let us see what that power really consists of, wherein it lies, and who actually has it.

What is the government of a country? It is the King with his ministers, or the President with his cabinet, the Parliament or the Congress, and the officials of the various State and Federal departments. Altogether a small number of persons as compared with the entire population.

Now, when is that handful of men, called government, strong and in what does its strength consist?

It is strong when the people are with it. Then they supply the government with money, with an army and navy, obey it, and enable it to function. In other words, the strength of a government depends entirely on the support it receives.

But can any government exist if the people are actively opposed to it? Could even the strongest government carry out any undertaking without the aid of the populace, without the help of the masses, the workers of the country?

It is clear, of course, that no government can accomplish anything alone. It can do only what the people approve of or at least permit to be done.

Take the great World War, for instance. The American financiers wanted the United States to get into it, because they knew that they would rake in tremendous profits, as they actually did. But labour had nothing to gain from the war, for how can the toilers benefit by the slaughter of their fellows in some other land? The masses of America were not in favour of mixing in the European imbroglio. As previously

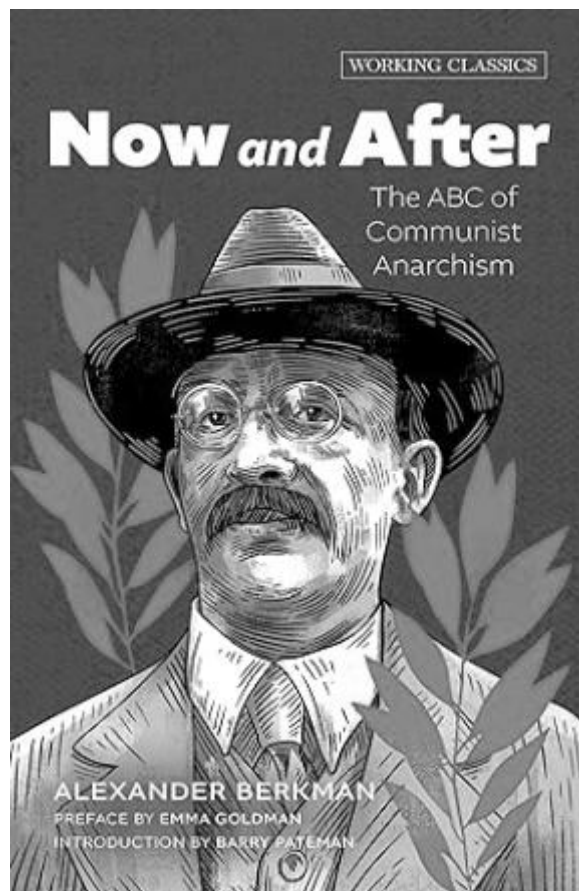
mentioned, they had elected Woodrow Wilson President on a 'keep us out of war' platform. Had the American people persisted in this determination, could the government have gotten us into the carnage?

How was it managed, then, that the people of the United States were induced to go to war when they

had voted against it by electing Wilson? I have already explained in a previous chapter. Those interested in entering the war started a great propaganda in favour of it. It was carried on in the press, in the schools and pulpit; by preparedness parades, patriotic spellbinders, and shouting for 'democracy' and 'war to end war.' It was a heinous way of fooling the people into believing that the war was for some 'ideal' instead of being just a capitalist war for profits, as all modern wars are. Millions of dollars were spent on that propaganda, the money of the people, of course, for in the end the people pay for everything. An artificial enthusiasm was worked up, with all kinds of promises to the workers of the wonderful things that would result for

them from the war. It was the greatest fraud and humbug, but the people of the United States fell for it, and they went to war, though not voluntarily, but by conscription.

And the spokesmen of the workers, the labour leaders? As usual, they proved the best 'patriots', calling upon their union members to go and get themselves killed, for the greater glory of Mammon. What did the late Samuel Gompers, then President of the American Federation of Labor, do? He became the right-hand man of President Wilson, his chief recruiting lieutenant. He and his union officials turned sergeants of capital in



rounding up labour for the slaughter. The labour leaders of the other countries did the same.

Every one knows that the 'war to end war' really ended nothing. On the contrary, it has caused more political complications than there have ever been before in Europe, and has prepared the field for a new and more terrible war than the last one. But that question does not belong here. I have referred to the matter merely to show you that without Gompers and the other labour leaders, without the consent and support of the toiling masses, the government of the United States would have been entirely unable to carry out the wishes of the lords of finance, industry, and commerce.

Or consider the case of Sacco and Vanzetti. Could Massachusetts have executed them if the organised workers of America had been against it, if they had taken action to prevent it?

Suppose that Massachusetts labour had refused to support the State Government in its murderous intention: suppose the workers had boycotted the Governor and his agents, stopped supplying them with food, cut off their means of communication, and shut off the electric current in Boston and Charleston prison. The government would have been powerless to function.

If you look at this matter with clear, unprejudiced eyes, you will realise that it is not the people who are dependent on the government, as is generally believed, but just the other way about.

When the people withhold their aid from the government, when they refuse obedience and pay no taxes, what happens? The government cannot support its officials, cannot pay its police, cannot feed its army and navy. It remains without funds, without means to carry out its orders. It is paralyzed. The handful of persons calling themselves the government become helpless — they lose their power and authority. If they can gather enough men to aid them, they may try to fight the people. If they cannot, or lose the fight, they have to give it up. Their "governing" is at an end.

That is to say, the power of even the strongest government rests entirely in the people, in their willing support and obedience. It follows that government *in itself* has no power at all. The moment the people

refuse to bow to its authority, the government ceases to exist.

Now, what strength has capitalism? Does the power of the capitalists rest in themselves, or where does it come from?

It is evident that their strength lies in their capital, in their wealth. They own the industries, the shops, factories, and land. But those possessions would do them no good but for the willingness of the people to work for them and pay tribute to them. Suppose the workers should say to the capitalists: 'We are tired of making profits for you. We won't slave for you any more. You didn't create the land, you didn't build the factories, nor the mills or shops. We built them and from now on we will use them to work in, and what we produce will not be yours but will belong to the people.

You will get nothing, and we won't even give you any food for your money. You'll be just like ourselves, and you will work like the rest of us.'

What would happen? Why, the capitalists would appeal to the government for aid. They would demand protection for their interests and possessions. But if the people refuse to recognise the authority of the government, the latter itself would be helpless.

You might say that is revolution. Maybe it is. But whatever you call it, it would amount to this: the government and the capitalists — the political and

financial rulers — would find out that all their boasted power and strength disappear when the people refuse to acknowledge them as masters, refuse to let them lord it over them.

Can this happen, you wonder. Well, it has happened many times before, and not so very long ago again in Russia, in Germany, in Austria. In Germany that mighty war lord, the Kaiser, had to flee for his life, because the masses had decided they did not want him any more. In Austria the monarchy was driven out because the people got tired of its tyranny and corruption. In Russia the most powerful Tsar was glad to give up his throne to save his head, and failed even in that. In his own capital he could not find a single regiment to protect him, and all his great authority went up in smoke when the populace refused to bow to it. Just so the capitalists of Russia were made helpless when the people stopped working for them and took the land,

It proves that so-called political, industrial, and financial power, all the authority of government and capitalism is *really* in the hands of the people. It proves that *only* the people, the masses, have power.

the factories, the mines and mills for themselves. All the money and 'power' of the bourgeoisie in Russia could not get them a pound of bread when the masses declined to supply it unless they did honest work.

What does it all prove?

It proves that so-called political, industrial, and financial power, all the authority of government and capitalism is *really* in the hands of the people. It proves that *only* the people, the masses, have power.

This power, the people's power, is *actual*: it cannot be taken away, as the power of the ruler, of the politician, or of the capitalist can be. It cannot be taken away because it does not consist in possessions but in ability. It is the ability to create, to produce; the power that feeds and clothes the world, that gives us life, health and comfort, joy and pleasure.

How great this power is you will realise when you ask yourself:

Would life be possible at all if the workers did not toil? Would the cities not starve if the farmers failed to supply them food?

Could the railroads run if the railroad men suspended work? Could any factory, shop, or mill continue operations but for the coal miners?

Could trade or commerce go on if the transport workers went on strike?

Would the theaters and movies, your office and house have light if the electricians would not supply the current?

Truly has the poet spoken:

'All the wheels stand still

When your strong arms so will.'

That is the productive, industrial power of labour.

It does not depend on any politics, nor on king, president, parliament, or congress. It depends neither on the police, nor on the army and navy — for these only consume and destroy, they create nothing. Nor does it depend on laws and rules, on legislators or courts, on politician or plutocrat. It resides entirely and exclusively in the ability of the workers in factory and

field, in the brain and brawn of the industrial and agricultural proletariat to labour, to create, to produce.

It is the *productive* power of the workers — of the man with the plough and with the hammer, of the man of mind and muscle, of the masses, of the entire *working class*.

It follows, therefore, that the working class, in every country, is the most important part of the population. In fact, it is the only vital part. The rest of the people help in the social life, but if need be we could do without them, while we could not live even a single day without the man of labour. His is the all-important *economic power*.

The strength of government and capital is external, *outside* of themselves.

The strength of labour is *not* external. It lies *in* itself, in its ability to work and create. It is the only *real* power.

Yet labour is held lowest in the social scale.

Is it not a topsy-turvy world, this world of capitalism and government? The workers, who as a class are the most essential part of society, who alone have real power, are powerless under present conditions. They are the poorest class, the least influential and least respected. They are looked down upon, the victims of every kind of oppression and exploitation, the least appreciated and least honoured. They live wretchedly in ugly and unhealthy tenements, the death rate is greatest among them, the prisons are filled with them, the gallows and electric chair are for them.

This is the reward of labour in our society of government and capitalism; that is what you get from the 'law and order' system.

Does such law and order deserve to live? Should such a social system be permitted to continue? Should it not be changed for something else, something better, and is not the worker interested more than any one else in seeing to it? Should not his own organisation, built especially for his interests — *the union* — help him do it?

How?



Of course, the obstacles in the path of the social reconstruction have to be removed. That is to say the means of that reconstruction must be secured by the masses. Those means are at present in the hands of government and capitalism, and these will resist every effort to deprive them of their power and possessions. That resistance will involve a fight. But remember that the fight is not the main thing, is not the object, not the revolution. It is only the preface, the preliminary to it.

— Alexander Berkman, *Now and After: The ABC of Communist Anarchism* (1929)

To Emma Goldman

Alexander Berkman

February 9, 1932, Nice

Dear,

Just received yours of the 8th. Your mail reaches sooner here than mine reaches you.

Four [typewriter] ribbons also just arrived, this morning. Thanks. Two I shall keep for you.

Well, I am glad you liked the second synopsis better than the first. No, I don't think the first was strained. At least it did not seem so to me.

And as a matter of fact I like making synopses. Only, of course, the house was in chaos and I did not even have a desk. The large desk takes up so much space I had to put it into the cellar. It took three big men an hour to do it. So I am now using my old St. Cloud writing desk. The rooms are a bit bigger here and quite nice and cost less.

By this time you must have received also my typed script of your suggested synopsis. I think it is OK. I suggest you send my second synopsis and the last to Saxe. "Woman without a Country" is also all right to send there.

I made the synopses, the first two, personal for the very reason that I think that a magazine is the more likely to take it the more personal it is. My idea was that you begin with the reason why the radical is disenchanted and end by showing that history still proves the revolutionary correct and that his disenchantment is, after all, only temporary, for there is still hope for the world; in fact, the only hope and that the very one that the radical has always preached: liberty.

I do not at all agree with you; that is, I could not say, as you do, "my state of black pessimism and despair." I don't feel that way at all. And if you really feel that way

(unless only at certain moments), I don't think you'd have the energy or will to go on a lecture tour. You could not lecture, if you really were in such pessimism.

Of course we are disappointed in Russia. But, then, revolutions have never in history gone the way the revolutionists had expected them to go. The French Revolution brought Napoleon and dictatorship and wars. Still, in the course of time the main principles of

the French Revolution – equality before the law, popular political democracy – have fought their way through and become established. Of course they have given nothing to the people, but that is another matter.

The Russian Revolution was fought for economic democracy and that has not been achieved, but the germs of it ARE to be found in the Russian mind today, and though it may take a hundred years, that economic democracy will be achieved. It may be poor consolation to us individually, but a revolution must be judged, in the last analysis, from a non-personal view. At any rate, the views of anarchists in re breaking down capitalism and the inevitable failure of all state machinery including socialism have been PROVEN by events since the war. Bolshevism and fascism also PROVE that there is NO OTHER salvation except a society based on economic equality without any political invasion or control. THAT MUCH our ideas have been justified by recent history, and it is for THIS reason that I see no justification in black despair.

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As to the realisation of our ideals, well, if ONE revolution has failed to materialise them, that is nothing against them. It took several revolutions to realise the ideals of former epochs.

At any rate, the views of anarchists in re breaking down capitalism and the inevitable failure of all state machinery including socialism have been PROVEN by events since the war. Bolshevism and fascism also PROVE that there is NO OTHER salvation except a society based on economic equality without any political invasion or control. THAT MUCH our ideas have been justified by recent history, and it is for THIS reason that I see no justification in black despair.

It is true that the present world tendency is not encouraging. But after all these things change; after war and revolution there usually comes reaction. But that reaction is always followed by further progress along lines of common sense and greater liberty.

It is THIS thought that I had in mind for developing in an article on the "Disenchanted Radical." He is not really disenchanted, and that is why I said that I prefer the term disilluminated. That refers, of course, to the radical IN GENERAL, especially those who believed that a POLITICAL party revolution can really change things fundamentally. Disilluminated in the methods etc. used by political revolutionists. We are not disenchanted in our ideals, but only disilluminated in the achievements of the Russian Revolution.

Etc. on these lines.

That about Copenhagen [i.e., the mix-up over lectures there] is just terrible. I think you ought to give the whole thing up and go direct to Hamburg. It's hell to be kept in such uncertainty as you have been all this time. But if you have to speak to the conservative bunch on dictatorship, you could speak on OTHER dictatorships, together also with Russia, showing that the PRINCIPLE of dictatorship must work out alike everywhere, no matter what the phrases, and no matter even what the possible intentions....I embrace you, dear, and wish you a little cheer,

S

To Group "Amshol"

Alexander Berkman

October 18, 1932, Nice

Dear Comrades:

I welcome your plan to issue the Speeches of the Chicago Martyrs in Yiddish for the 45th anniversary of the Black 11th of November. And I am also glad to note that Comrade Frumkin is to do the translation, for I know his splendid work.

I regret, however, that you did not communicate with me in this matter before. Comrade Axler's letter of Sept. 25th, asking me to write an Introduction to the book reached me only today, October 18th. As the Yiddish translation is to appear for the 11th of November, you have hardly given me enough time to write the Introduction and to reach you with it before the book goes to press. I have not been quite well of late, so that I cannot do much work; and I have also a few other things on hand that are requiring my labour. But I hasten to send you a little contribution.

It is 45 years since those great events in America that culminated in the Haymarket tragedy of the 11th of November, 1887. The people have a proverbially short memory, and most of the American workers today have not the least idea of what happened in the Labor movement then. And yet the workers are today enjoying the benefits of the efforts of those men who were martyred in Chicago in 1887. Those social pioneers, known as the Chicago Anarchists Martyrs, have paid with their lives in order to advance the cause of Labor. Their death was a fearful tragedy for labour and humanity, greater is yet the tragedy of the

ignorance and indifference of the masses to the martyred pioneers of their cause.

The 8-hour day has long ago become an accomplished fact, not only in America but also in most other parts of the world. But those who initiated the movement in America have paid with their lives for their efforts. The average American working men today would be very much surprised to learn that it was ANARCHISTS who were the first to proclaim that demand, the first to work for it and the first to be martyred for it. But it is most necessary that the workers should know it. Not merely because it is a historic and important fact; not only because of any sentimental reasons, nor even injustice and respect of the men who sacrificed their lives for the cause of labour. It is necessary that the masses should know what happened in 1886-1887 so that they may learn who it is that is fearlessly and devotedly championing the cause of Labour. The workers are duped and misled by every political party and every so-called "liberal" and would-be revolutionary group that there can be no hope of any social clarification until the masses realise who their friends are and who are their enemies, whatever their colours. When the masses learn that politicians have always betrayed them, that Socialism has become the strongest support of despotic government and capitalism all over the world, that Bolshevism means a return to feudal dictatorship and abject slavery -- when the workers learn that, and when they are shown that ONLY Anarchists have never sought to dominate and

exploit the masses -- that on the contrary, the Anarchists have always been the martyrs for the cause of Labour, as our Chicago comrades and many others all over the world have been -- then the masses will lend a more willing ear to the ideas and ideals of Anarchism.

EXAMPLE is the powerful lever that moves the world. The example contained in the lives and deaths of the Haymarket Martyrs is powerful enough to enlighten the masses, could we but bring that example home to them. That should be one of our main endeavours.

But 45 years is a very long time ago. Let us therefore briefly recapitulate the events of those days.

The American workers in those days were compelled to slave 12, 14 and sometimes even 16 hours, incredible as such long hours may seem to day. In very rare exceptions, in but a few industries, the work day was 10 hours. It was the most advanced elements of those days -- the Revolutionary Socialists, particularly those of them who called themselves Anarchists -- who initiated the labour demand of the 8-hour work day. It was in those days a more "extreme" demand than a 2-hour work day would be today. To the parliamentary Socialist of those days the new demand was only a matter for theoretical discussion and Congress resolutions. But the revolutionary Socialists that had emancipated themselves from parliamentarianism, and particularly the Anarchists, proclaimed the motto of an 8-hour day in an energetic and decisive manner. They began to organise the workers to make the demand practical, to carry it out and life.

Thus originated the beginning of the 8-hour movement in America. As a matter of historic truth I must point out here that even some Anarchists of those days lacked sufficient vision to understand the organisational, propagandistic and revolutionary value of the movement. Some of them, as Johann Most, for instance, naively believed that it would be just as easy to inspire the workers to strike against the whole capitalist system as to induce them to strike for the 8-hour day. Events proved them wrong, of course. The labouring masses, particularly in America, were far too unenlightened socially to even dream of abolishing capitalism -- and as a matter of fact they do not seem

much more enlightened today. But a strike for a shorter work day they could well understand. More, they felt that it concerned their immediate daily interests, and such a struggle therefore quickly appealed to the working masses.

The movement for of the 8-hour day started in Chicago on May 1, 1886, and soon spread throughout the country. Its beginning was marked by strikes in most of the large industrial centres. 25,000 workers laid down their tools in Chicago on the first day of the strike, and within two days the number was doubled. The Chicago Anarchists, particularly the good speakers among them

-- Albert Parsons, August Spies, Adolph Fischer, Michael Schwab and Samuel Fielden -- were the heart and soul of the movement. Their year-long activity among the labouring masses of Illinois had secured for them the respect and attention of the workers. They were looked upon as true friends and teachers, and their words were listened to. Our comrades encouraged and inspired the strikers by their own untiring and devoted efforts; the immediate practical demand for a shorter workday also gave them the opportunity to enlighten the masses on the evils of the entire governmental

and capitalist system.

By the 4th of May almost all unionised labour of Chicago was on strike. The bourgeoisie of Illinois realised that the eight-hour movement, which at first they treated as utopian, was growing into a real danger for the bosses. Indeed, the capitalistic interests felt that the labour rebellion, spreading all over the country and led by intelligent and incorruptible men like our Chicago Comrades, was threatening the very foundations of exploitation and slavery. It was therefore not long before the armed fist of the law hastened to the aid of the bosses. The capitalist press, always the servile tool of the powers that be, raved against the strikers and called for the use of lead against them.

The police got into action. Meetings of strikers were assaulted, workers arrested and maltreated. The most vicious attack upon the strikers took place at the McCormick Harvester Works in Chicago. The police and Pinkertons deliberately shot a volley into the assembled strikers, killing four and wounding a score of others. Though the audience was justly indignant at the wilful murders committed against workers by the police, the meeting was quiet and orderly. The Mayor

EXAMPLE is the powerful lever that moves the world. The example contained in the lives and deaths of the Haymarket Martyrs is powerful enough to enlighten the masses, could we but bring that example home to them. That should be one of our main endeavours.

of the City, Carter Harrison, was present. He listened to several speeches and then -- according to his own sworn testimony later on in court -- he returned to police headquarters and informed the Chief of Police that the meeting was peaceful. It was growing dark -- heavy clouds overcast the sky and it looked like rain. The audience began to disperse, and only about three hundred persons remained at the gathering. Then suddenly a detachment of 170 police appeared at the meeting. Police Captain Ward raised his club and ordered the meeting to disperse. Samuel Fielden, who was addressing the gathering at the moment, replied: "This is a peaceful gathering". Captain Ward turned to his men and gave some order. Without further warning the police threw themselves upon the people, viciously clubbing men and women. At that moment something came whizzing through the air. It fell between the first and second rows of the police with a powerful explosion. Seven policemen were killed and sixty wounded; of the workers four were killed and about fifty wounded.

No one knew who threw the bomb; even to this day it has not been ascertained who did it. There had been so much brutality by police and Pinkertons against the workers that it was not surprising that some one should express an active protest by such an act. At one time it was claimed that the Anarchist Rudolf Schnaubelt, a brother-in-law of Michael Schwab, had thrown the explosive. But the rumour was never proven. Most likely the rumour was due to the fact that Schnaubelt disappeared from Chicago soon afterwards. But Schnaubelt himself most decisively denied in the European Anarchist press that he had thrown the bomb.

But whoever's hand actually threw the bomb, the person really responsible for the entire tragedy was Police Inspector Bonfield. Just before the catastrophe he received orders from Mayor Harrison to return with his police reserves to the station as there was no need for them, the meeting being peaceful and about to terminate. Instead of that, Inspector Bonfield gave Captain Ward orders to attack the gathering the moment Mayor Harrison left the meeting.

It was no secret in those days in Chicago that Inspector Bonfield was the paid tool of the "Citizens' Association", the organisation of the big capitalists of Chicago, who were determined to stifle rebellious labour in the blood of the workers. They had openly declared that they would down the eight hour movement and that they would "teach the rebels a lesson". The money interests of Chicago and of the State of Illinois had long boasted that they would "get" the "anarchist leaders". They meant to terrorise labour by murdering their most intelligent and devoted

spokesmen, and these were Albert Parsons, a man of old American stock whose forebears had fought in the American Revolution; August Spies, editor of the Chicago "Arbeiterzeitung"; Adolf Fischer, George Engle, Louis Lingg, Michael Schwab and Samuel Fielden.

The trail of those seven men was the most hellish conspiracy of capital against labour in the entire history of America. From Judge Joseph E. Gary, District Attorney Grinnell, down to the hand-picked jurymen and bribed or terrorised witnesses, the entire bunch represented the acme of judicial racketeering and legal murder. Perjured evidence, bribed testimony, police vengeance, aided by the raving capitalist press combined to bring about the cold-blooded assassination of our Chicago Comrades.

Parsons, Spies, Fischer, Engel and Lingg were condemned to death on the gallows. Lingg, young and irreconcilable rebel that he was, preferred suicide. Fielden and Schwab were sentenced to prison for life, while Oscar Neebe received 15 years.

No greater travesty of justice was ever staged than the mock trial of these men who have justly gone down into history as the Chicago Anarchist Martyrs. What an outrage the trial and sentence were, even from a legal viewpoint, can be judged from the action of John P. Altgeld, Governor of Illinois in later years. After carefully reviewing the proceedings at the trial of the Chicago Anarchists he declared that the executed and imprisoned men had been the victims of a plot of the manufacturers, the courts and the police. He could not undo the judicial murders -- he could not bring the foully murdered back to life. But he courageously liberated the still imprisoned Anarchists, publicly stating that it was not an act of clemency on his part and that he was not "pardoning" them; on the contrary, he was merely making good, he said, so far as was in his power, the terrible crime committed against the condemned men.

The vengeance of the exploiters went so far as to mark Governor Altgeld for their victim: they punished him for his brave stand by quickly eliminating him from the political life of America. Indeed, the first and most criminal racketeers of America are the political and industrial bosses of the land.

The Haymarket Case, as the martyrdom of our Chicago Comrades is known, is the most powerful example of the kind of justice the masses get from their masters. The history of American labour is replete with such examples. On a smaller scale the Chicago judicial murders of 1887 are repeated in every labour struggle. Remember the murders of unarmed strikers in the hopfields of Wheatland, California, in 1913; the Ludlow chapter in the State of Colorado, when the militia set

the strikers' tents on fire and burned men, women and children alive, in 1914; think of the similar treatment of striking workers in Everett, Wash., in 1916; in Tulsa, Oklahoma; in Virginia and Kansas and Arizona; in the copper mines of Montana and in the numerous other places throughout the country.

Think also of the Mooney-Billings case and the Sacco-Vanzetti case. They are too recent to need detailing here. The lesson of these two cases, as of all the others, is the same as that of the Haymarket Martyrdom: nothing so arouses the hatred and vengeance of the masters as the effort to enlighten their victims. This is as true today as it was in the time of the Inquisition. Capital and Government fall upon and tear to pieces any one who dares shake the

foundations of their tyranny and despotism. Teach the workers to stop hoping for "justice". There is not and cannot be any justice in a social system of exploitation and robbery. Emancipate the masses from their political superstitions and infantile social notions. Between capital and government on one side, and the labouring masses on the other, there is a fight to the death. Only the organised economic power of the working masses inspired by conscious social purposes can free the masses from their bondage. Hold up to them the example and ideals of our Chicago Martyrs to inspire them in the great struggle for a new world.

Nice

October 1932

To Pauline Turkel

Alexander Berkman

March 21, 1935, Nice

My dear Pauline,

I am sorry I could not reply to your last (of February 11th) before this. Life is one damned thing after another, and there is little time for correspondence. However, I really meant to write you before, for there are some things in your letter that need attention....

You say that you have "a sneaky suspicion" that I "have doubted anarchism once in a while." I don't know, my dear Pauline, what has given you such an impression. No, I have never doubted it. I mean, I have never doubted that there is no way out for mankind except anarchism. I am as sure today as I ever was that neither war nor capitalism will ever be abolished, nor any of the evils that those things represent, until society will become sensible enough to introduce international cooperation and individual liberty on the basis of a free communism.

That, in my estimation, is the ONLY solution to our troubles. The human mind has so far not thought out a better way. And I am just as convinced today as I ever was that neither socialism nor bolshevism will bring relief to man.

But maybe you referred to the TIME when anarchism will become a reality. Well, in that regard the present trend of events is certainly not encouraging. There was a time, in the youth of the revolutionary movement in the U.S., when we all thought that the social revolution was not very far off, and revolution then meant to us practically anarchism. Now we know that the social

revolution is not in the offing yet, and even when it comes it will only be the first step on the road toward anarchist communism. Yes, that may take a long time, and maybe mankind will destroy itself before then. But when I say that I have no doubts about anarchism as an ideal, I mean that IF mankind continues to live – as I think it will in spite of everything – then the progress of mechanics and science on the one hand, the growing unbearable conditions on the other, plus the idealism that I consider inherent in human nature – will necessarily lead to anarchism, or to some social system resembling it in its essential features.

Maybe you are surprised that I say idealism is inherent in human nature. It may sound rather strange in the face of present tendencies. And yet what I say is true. The people are indeed deluded by all kinds of fakes, and yet beneath it all is the hunger of the people for an ideal. Look at Russia, or even at Germany. The LEADERS seek power and glory and personal emoluments. But the great MASSES actually believe they are working for an ideal. They have been MADE to believe it, and their ideal is counterfeit, but that does not alter the fact that they BELIEVE they are struggling for an ideal.

It is in THIS that I find hope for mankind. And it has been the same all through human history. Did not the American MASSES believe during the last war that they were fighting to abolish war and to make "the world safe for democracy?" And if you go back to older days, it was the same. Do you think that those millions that gave their lives in the Crusades did so for any other

reason than that they were moved by a great FAITH? They wanted to save the Holy Sepulchre from the barbarians. You probably remember from your history that there were even entire armies consisting exclusively of children of tender age. Millions of them were slaughtered in the Crusades. Did those youngsters fight for anything but the faith that was in them?

The communists in Russia – not the leaders but the rank and file – have been going hungry and suffering and working hard in the enthusiasm of their great ideal. And the millions of nazis in Germany who believe in Hitler – by what are they motivated? By the ideal of a regenerated Germany!

The tragedy is that those ideals are false, but yet it all proves that men DO long and fight for ideals. And in THAT is the great hope of humanity. Some day people will find the REAL ideal – and they will fight for it and realise it.

In closing – for I must get back to my work – one must not limit his view of such BIG questions to the momentary situation. That is why I never turn pessimist. You say “we cannot stop fascism.” Well, suppose we cannot; what of it? The world has often gone through mass aberrations. History is replete with such examples—there have been the Crusades, you know, which were similar aberrations that lasted several centuries. And the Hundred Years’ War, and the Thirty Years’ War, etc., etc. But out of all that mankind came out ALIVE, and progress continued for all that and all that. And though mankind is still very much

deluded by false ideas and still very stupid, yet the average man today is FAR above the type of the Middle Ages and even of the man of fifty years ago. Whoever believed that war should be abolished fifty years ago? Today every government talks of it. Pretence, you say. All right, but they are FORCED to MAKE that pretence and why? Because the POPULAR SENTIMENT has changed.

So, in spite of all pessimists, there HAS BEEN a change in the attitude of men. And that change goes on all the time, even if it is so slow that some people do not see it. And so it will go on, and neither fascism, Hitler, Mussolini, nor the Popes and other gods can change that inherent fact of human nature. Fascism and nationalism are nothing new. Under different names they existed in old Rome and Greece and in the feudal times. They PASSED and so will the modern fascism pass—and that is why I do not doubt my anarchism.

Well, enough of it. So, cheer up, dear girl. The skies are black just now, but the sun always breaks out again. I may not see much of it in my time, but idealism to me does not mean the hope of realizing one’s dream in one’s own lifetime. Idealism means, at least to me, FAITH in one’s ideal. And that I have.

Things here pretty low. We see only Nellie [Harris] occasionally. No one else we know in the city. By the way, we are giving up our apartment the end of this month. Write me to St. Tropez. EG expects to be back the first week of May. Love to you, dear girl, from Emmy and

[AB]

The revolution abolishes private ownership of the means of production and distribution, and with it goes capitalistic business. Personal possession remains only in the things you use. Thus, your watch is your own, but the watch factory belongs to the people. Land, machinery, and all other public utilities will be collective property, neither to be bought nor sold. Actual use will be considered the only title—not to ownership but to possession. The organisation of the coal miners, for example, will be in charge of the coal mines, not as owners but as the operating agency. Similarly will the railroad brotherhoods run the railroads, and so on. Collective possession, cooperatively managed in the interests of the community, will take the place of personal ownership privately conducted for profit.

– Alexander Berkman, *Now and After: The ABC of Communist Anarchism* (1929)

Jack White

Alan MacSimoin

Workers Solidarity No 50 (Spring 1997)

Captain Jack White is known as the man who drilled the Irish Citizen Army during the 1913 lock-out. His later anarchism has been hidden from history by the writers of history books.

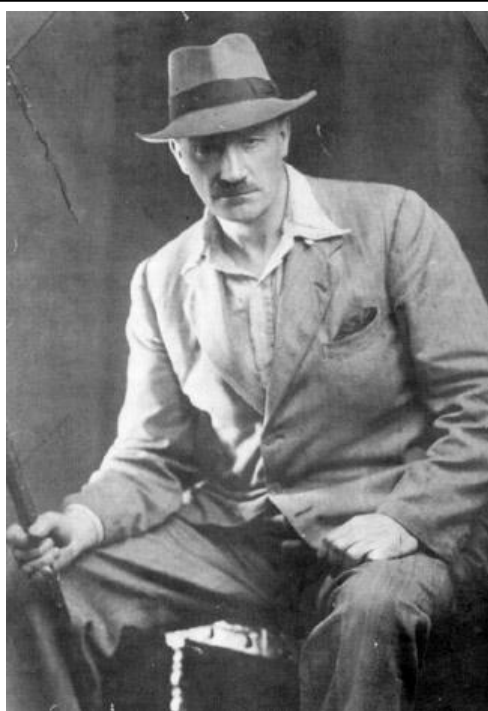
White belonged to the Anglo-Irish landowning class. James Robert - always known as Jack, was born in Co Antrim, at Whitehall, Broughshane, just outside Ballymena. As a young man he followed his father into the British army, where he saw action against the Boers in South Africa.

It is said that at the battle of Doorknop he was one of the first to go over the top. Looking back he saw one 17 year old youth shivering with fright in the trench. An officer cried "shoot him". White is said to have covered the officer with his pistol and replied "Do so and I'll shoot you". Not exactly the attitude wanted among the officer classes of the army!

Soon after this he dropped out of the army. Arriving back in Ireland he found Sir Edward Carson's bigoted crusade against Home Rule was in full swing. This was the time when the original UVF was created to threaten war against the British government if Ireland was granted any measure of self-rule.

Jack organised one of the first Protestant meetings, in Ballymoney, to rally Protestant opinion against the Unionist Party and against what he described as its "bigotry and stagnation", that associated Northern Protestants with conservatism. Another speaker at that meeting, and coming from the same sort of social background, was Sir Roger Casement.

As a result of the Ballymoney meeting Jack was invited to Dublin. Here he met James Connolly and was converted to socialism. Very impressed by the great struggle to win union recognition and resist the attacks



**James Robert "Jack" White
(1879-1946)**

of William Martin Murphy and his confederates, he offered his services to the ITGWU at Liberty Hall. He spoke on union platforms with such famous names as Francis Sheehy Skeffington, Big Bill Haywood of the Industrial Workers of the World, and James Connolly.

He put forward the idea of a workers militia to protect picket lines from assaults by both scabs and the blackguards of the Dublin Metropolitan Police. This proposal to create a Citizen Army, drilled by him, was enthusiastically accepted. Its very appearance, as White recollected, "put manners on the police".

He later put his services at the disposal of the Volunteers, believing that a stand had to be

taken against British rule by a large body of armed people. He went to Derry where there was a brigade of Volunteers who were largely ex-British Army like himself. But he was shaken by the sectarian attitudes he found. When he tried to reason with them and make the case for workers' unity they dismissed his case as merely sticking up for his own, i.e. Protestants.

When Connolly was sentenced to death after the 1916 rising White rushed to South Wales and tried to bring the miners out on strike to save his life. For his attempts he was given three months imprisonment.

He came home to find himself in a political wilderness. The unionists regarded him as a Shinner. The nationalists regarded him as an Orangeman! He moved towards the newly founded Communist Party which, with the first reports from Russia, seemed offer hope to humanity. But he had his doubts about them and never joined. Indeed for a time in London he worked with Sylvia Pankhurst's anti-parliamentary communist group, the Workers Socialist Federation.

In 1934 a special convention was held in Athlone which was attended by 200 former IRA volunteers together with a number of prominent socialists, Communists and trade unionists. It resolved that a Republican Congress be formed. This was a movement, based on workers and small farmers, that was well to the left of the IRA. White joined immediately and organised a Dublin branch composed solely of ex-British servicemen. One notable result of this was a contingent of British ex-servicemen marching behind the Congress banner through cheering crowds of Dubliners on a demonstration against war and poverty.

The Congress is best known for bringing 200 Belfast Protestant workers to the republican Wolfe Tone Commemoration that year and for the scandalous attack on them by Sean McBride's IRA men who were determined that no 'red' banners would be seen at their Catholic day out in Bodenstown.

One of the men carrying the second banner - on which was embroidered James Connolly Club, Belfast - The United Irishmen of 1934 - was John Straney, a milk roundsman from loyalist Ballymacarret who was later killed while fighting Franco's army at the Battle of the Ebro in 1939.

Congress later split between those who stood for class independence, those who fought only for the Workers Republic, and those - led by the Communists - who firstly wanted an alliance with Fianna Fail to reunite the country. After the bulk of the first group walked out (many of them demoralised and ending up in the Labour Party) White remained in the depleted organisation. But their reduced size did not reduce the hatred the rich had for them. In April 1936 the Congress contingent taking part in the annual Easter Commemoration was subjected to attack by blueshirt gangs all along the route.

The main target of the mob was White. Patrick Byrne, the joint secretary with Frank Ryan of the Congress, describes him as a "tall, well built man with a clipped army moustache" who "used his blackthorn stick to advantage in close encounters with his attackers". Inside the cemetery he was badly injured by a blow of an iron cross ripped from a grave. Byrne and a young poet, Tom O'Brien, who also fought in Spain managed to get White away.

The outbreak of the Spanish Civil War saw General O'Duffy's blueshirts sending a contingent to help

Franco. The Communist Party and leading republicans organised the Connolly Column to fight the Spanish fascists. Incidentally the Irish International Brigade was yet one more example of how Catholics and Protestants fought together in a common class cause. White was thrilled with the collectivisation in Spain, and also with the volunteer militias. He learned with amazement that this was the work of the anarchists.

White relinquished his International Brigade command and offered his services to the anarchist CNT union. White was asked to work, with the legendary Emma Goldman, for the CNT in London. In the course of a few months in Spain he had become a convinced anarchist.

In addition to his work with the Connolly Column at the front, he trained militia members in the use of firearms. He also trained women in the villages on the way to Saragossa in the use of pistol for defence. What he could not stomach was that the Irish, like all the International Brigadeers, were being increasingly manipulated by the Communist Party. He had never accepted the CP, he had just not seen an alternative. Now he saw that alternative and it was anarchism.

There was a clash between White and Frank Ryan, who accused White of being a 'Trotskyite' and a traitor. White relinquished his International Brigade command and offered his services to the anarchist CNT union. White was asked to work, with the legendary Emma Goldman, for the CNT in London. In the course of a few months in Spain he had become a convinced anarchist.

It was at this time that he wrote the pamphlet 'The Meaning of Anarchism'. He joined the group producing Freedom (the anarchist paper - still published in London - whose founders included Peter Kropotkin), and was one of the organisers of the regular meetings at the National Trade Union Club against Italian fascism and in support of the Spanish anarchists.

At this time White worked with a Liverpool-Irish anarchist, Matt Kavanagh, on a survey of Irish labour history in relation to anarchism. In 1940 White died. His body was hardly cold when the family, ashamed of Jack's revolutionary politics, destroyed all his papers, including a study of the Cork Harbour 'soviet' of 1921.

His importance lies not in what he wrote, for all that survives is one short pamphlet, nor in any particular position he took. His importance lies in the link he provides between Irish working class history of the past and our anarchist vision today. All through his life he tried to organise ordinary people to defend their own interests and to realise the power they had if only they would use it. That is the job we have to continue and complete.

Impression of an Irish Republican in Spain

J. R. White

The Fighting Call, December 1936¹⁰⁰

I came out to Barcelona as administrator of the second British Red Cross Unit. Two nurses and myself came on in advance to find a site for the hospital of the Unit somewhere on the Teruel front.

Unfortunately the Unit had been cancelled all except four ambulances which are now en route somewhere between Paris and Barcelona. Some of these ambulances are to go, I believe to the first Unit at Grañen. Till they arrive in any case, I am left with no one to administrate and nothing to do, so a friend in the CNT-FAI has asked me to write my impressions for broadcast or the press.

My first and deepest impression is that of the natural nobility of the Catalan people. I got that impression as early as Port Bou, where we had to spend six hours waiting for the Barcelona train. A bright sun was shining which tempted me to bathe in the bay. After undressing I left my coat, with some 80 English pounds in the pocket, on the rocks close to a frequented path with a sense of its perfect safety. Half an hour in Cataluña and a few conversations in my faulty Spanish had made me feel I was among friends, who appreciated the effort of the British workers and intelligentsia to help their cause. I would not have dared to risk such a large sum of money unguarded at any English watering place. Here I felt it was guarded by the revolutionary solidarity of Cataluña and even of the international solidarity of the working class of which Cataluña is now the bulwark.

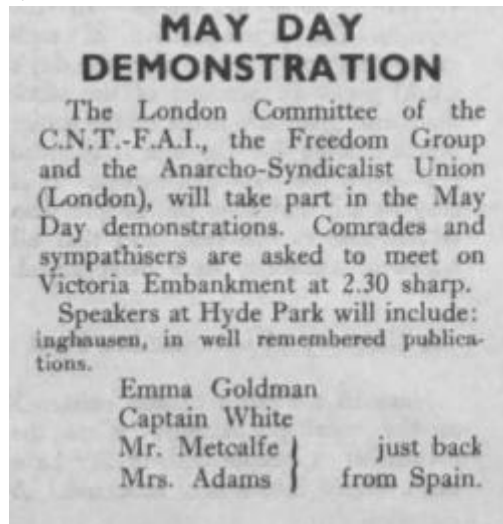
This impression of revolutionary honour and revolutionary order has been maintained by all I have seen and experienced during the week I have been in Barcelona. On one occasion after a trying morning rushing round after the necessary passes to go on to Valencia - that was before the cancellation of the unit and I wanted to go on to the front to find a place for our hospital as soon as possible - I inadvertently paid my taxi driver four pesetas more than his fare. He brought it back to me remarking "eso sobra". This happened as I was entering the door of the Regional Committee of the CNT-FAI, the headquarters of those

terrible Anarchists of whose misdeeds we read so much in the Capitalist Press now. I am not going to enter into controversy, philosophic or political, I simply record my experiences, without fear or favour. It is a fact, that the Barcelona churches were burnt, and many of them, where roof and walls are still standing, are used to house medical or commissariat stores instead of, as previously, being used by the fascists as fortresses. I suspect their present function is nearer the purpose of a religion based by its founder on the love of God and the Neighbour.

However that may be, the destruction of the churches has not destroyed love and honesty in Spain. If they are not based on the love of God, they are based on brotherliness, selflessness and self respect, which have to be experienced to be believed. Never, till I came to revolutionary Barcelona, had I seen waiters and even shoeblacks refuse a tip. Here the refusal of anything in excess of the exact bill or fee is as invariable as the courtesy with which it is done. This very courtesy makes

one feel mean for having offered it, a benighted bourgeois, automatically continuing bourgeois habits and unable to grasp the self-respect of the workers now they are so largely in control. My first day taught me my lesson. I never offend now.

You will have heard no doubt about the Dublin Rising of 1916. That rising is now thought of as purely a national one, of which the aims went no further than the national independence of Ireland. It is conveniently forgotten that not only was the manifesto published by the "bourgeois" leaders conceived in a spirit of extreme liberal democracy, but, associated with the bourgeois leaders, was James Connolly, the international socialist, who some regarded as the greatest revolutionary fighter and organiser of his day. In command of the Irish Citizen Army, which I had drilled, he made common cause with the Republican separatists against the common Imperial enemy. It is said that he threatened to come out with the Citizen Army alone, if the bourgeois Republicans shirked the issue.



¹⁰⁰ First appeared in CNT-AIT Boletín de Información, No. 15, 11th November 1936. (*Black Flag*)

It was then the middle of the great war. the rising was ruthlessly suppressed by England and sixteen of the leaders were executed. Connolly himself, badly wounded in the Dublin Post Office which was shelled to ruins by a British gun-boat, was strapped in a chair and shot by a firing-squad before he recovered.

Here in Cataluña, the union of the working class and nation starts off under better auspices than were possible in Ireland. In Cataluña the internal socialist reconstruction goes hand in hand with the armed fight against Spanish and international fascism. You are in advance of us in Syndico-Anarchist and Socialist construction. You are advance of us in dealing with the clerico-fascist menace. Again and again in Ireland the revolutionary Republican movement comes a bit of the way towards Socialism, and scurries back in terror when the Roman catholic Church looses its artificial thunder of condemnation and excommunication.

I come of an Ulster Protestant family. There is a saying in Ulster (the north-east province of Ireland) "Rome is a lamb in adversity, a snake in equality and a lion in

prosperity". I am glad that in Cataluña you have made Rome into a lamb. In Ireland Rome is still a lion, or rather a wolf in sheep's clothing. The priests inflame the mob and then pretend to deplore the mob-violence which they have instigated. Last Easter Sunday, I had myself to fight for three kilometres against the Catholic actionists, who attacked us on the streets as we were marching to honour the memory of the Republican dead who fell in Easter week 1916. The pious hooligans actually came inside the cemetery and tore up the grave rails to attack us.

In Ireland, as in Spain, it was the priests who started methods of fire and sword against the people. yet they complain bitterly when their own weapons are turned against themselves.

Comrades of Cataluña! In your hour of trial when you hold the barricades not only for yourselves but for us all, I greet you with the voice of revolutionary Ireland, smothered awhile but destined to regain its strength. I hold myself honoured to be among you, to serve if I can in whatever capacity I can be most useful.

Anarchism – A Philosophy of Action

J. R. White

Spain And The World, 5 February 1937¹

Our comrade, Emma Goldman, is an anarchist and I should like to give a word of explanation why I stand beside her on this platform. I want to sketch in what, as I understand it — and my knowledge of theoretic anarchism is as yet very small — is a fundamental of anarchist philosophy. I believe, then, I am right in saying anarchism is a philosophy of action, because it is pre-eminently the philosophy of individual spontaneity. Every free and spontaneous individual knows that it would be highly desirable and convenient if knowledge could always precede action, and we could advance rationally step by step to a foreseen goal; life, and especially the deeper aspects of life, will not permit this; in the deepest crises and conflict of life, whether individual or social, action has to precede knowledge, and if we wait too long to calculate results and fail to obey our emotional impulses to stand for what is right, or resist intolerable wrong, regardless of consequences, we miss the psychological moment; somehow we are devitalised by our own prudence, and we are left to face wrong, more deeply entrenched by our inaction, with less "elan vital" in our ourselves to give us assurance of future victory. Reason, or rather the passive attempt to calculate consequences without

creatively contributing to them by the magic of the deed, has betrayed us. The highest reason is incarnate in action and often cannot explain itself till after the actions. Reason is latent in the pent-up emotion that drives to action. It is emotional reason, creative reason; the other kind of reason is dead.

At moments of revolution, the higher emotional reason is especially necessary, because it breaks through the old forms which are the premises of the dead reason; it creates new forms, which have their seed primarily not in the mind but in the heart of man. He may not be able to foresee or define the new forms; but he knows the old forms are dead and will destroy his heart and spirit unless he bursts through them.

Non-Intervention A Verbal Screen

Nothing has been sadder to watch for the past five or six years than the way in which fascism has gained victory after victory by acting from its evil heart, while socialists and democrats reasoned and talked; in Germany and Austria. Fascism waited its moment and struck, quite regardless of the pathetic faith of its opponents in the compelling rightness of democratic

¹ A speech given at the Meeting held at Conway Hall, 18 January 1937 under the auspices of the London Committee of the CNT-FAI. (*Black Flag*)

theories. In the international parleys about Spain, talk of non-intervention has been nothing but a verbal screen for armed fascist intervention on an even larger scale.

We have to look to the internal struggle in Spain for the first real meeting of fascist action by revolutionary action, first in the magnificent struggle of the Asturian miners, so ruthlessly suppressed, and later on the July 19th of last year in the historic defeat of the fascist coup by the workers of Barcelona. *At last the philosophy of action of the fascists had met a*

revolutionary philosophy of action strong and direct enough to master it. In one day fascism was conquered in Barcelona. Machine guns and batteries of artillery were taken by the invincible rush of the people dependent for the most part on nothing but their bare hands with about one rifle per 40 men. The guns were turned against the barracks, their walls were breached and their stores of arms captured while the rank and file of the troops joined the people. In three days fascism was liquidated in Catalonia.

In addressing an audience like this to make known the work of the CNT-FAI, it is a little difficult to put one's finger on points whether of theory or practice, which differentiate the Anarcho-Syndicalism or Libertarian Communism of Spain from, say, the more highly centralised system of Russian Communism. I have not the knowledge to descant on the points of theoretic difference, and, if I had it might be inadvisable to do so.

It might, however, be interesting to trace the historical foundations of anarchism in Spain and to indicate the roots of anarchist divergence from the brand of communism with which we are more familiar in this country. Mr John Stachey writing in the Left Book Club News of the working class movement of 1860 says, "*it is a pity that into the new born movement of that date had strayed the brilliant, erratic, disastrous Russian aristocrat, Michael Bakunin. He became far more influential in Spain than the Marxists. He split the International and set a great section of the Spanish working class movement in the rigid anarchist mould.*" Whether Mr. Stachey is right is speaking of the anarchist movement as "Rigid," we will investigate later. I can only say that if I agreed with him I should be on this platform now.

Out To Organise A New Spain

I want, if I can, to give you some notion of the respective characteristics of the authoritarian and libertarian groups in Spain, not in any spirit of invidious comparison, but to illustrate as far as possible the difference of outlook and temperament. Sir Peter Chalmers-Mitchell, writing in the *Times* of his experience in Malaga in the early days of Franco's rebellion, mentions two points in comparing the UGT and the CNT-FAI which are, I think, characteristic. Both,

he says, organised Militias, but the former tried to attract recruits by promising them permanent service in the Standing Army afterwards, while the latter were bitterly opposed to all Standing Armies, and even their leaders refused to accept Commissions.

In their attitude to economics, he adds the former tended to concentrate on raising wages at the expense of capital, while the latter were out to organise a new Spain based on creative work.

Many impartial observers have spoken of the self-imposed discipline in the factories taken over and controlled by the workers, and realised that underlying this voluntarily

discipline was great enthusiasm and revolutionary faith; hence the impression of dignity emanating from the workers.

While no doubt the voluntary discipline and the enthusiasm that begets it is not confined to the CNT-FAI, it is unquestionable that the policy of the Industrial Revolution simultaneous with the anti-fascist fight is the anarchist policy carried into practice in spite of the opposition of the P.S.U.C.

As to the dignity emanating from the workers, I saw enough with my own eyes while in Spain to verify the proof of the reports I have quoted. I found Barcelona, a clean, well run, orderly city, with trams and trains running to the minute, restaurants and cinemas open, and all run as collectivised institutions by their courteous and efficient staffs. Never before had I met waiters and even shoe-blacks consistently refusing tips, so great is the self respect engendered in the workers by their new status of the collectivised owners of the industries they control.

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We are then bound in justice to give to Anarcho-Syndicalism and the CNT-FAI the credit which is their due for the magnificent creative work which results from their philosophy, individual and social.

Of all the Spanish workers, well may we say, with Langdon Davies, "We turn in humility to the humble

fold of Spain, Republican, Socialists, Communists, Syndicalists, Anarchists, who are groping in horror with their bare hands to save the Light from flickering out. We turn in anger to those in England who want the Light to die and we cry in words to which Spain is giving a new meaning: 'No Pasaran.' They shall not pass."

The Church: Fascism's Ally

An Interpretation of Christianity

Capt. J.R. White

Spain And The World, 5 March 1937

I should like to discuss this subject from the standpoint of a Christian Anarchist, which, if I am to have a label at all – and I hate all labels – is the nearest label to fit me. From that standpoint I define my conception of Christianity as perfect Freedom, which coincides with my conception of Anarchy.

In my opinion there are two conceptions of spirituality: the one that only in the fullest attainment and expression of his freedom can man attain to the spiritual life, individual and social.

And the other that he must seek the high goal of his spirit not by self-expression and freedom, but by self-repression and obedience to external authority.

I believe the first conception to be that of Christ, and the Gospels read with any intelligence, and the second to be so foreign to the whole spirit of Christ that it is not only un-Christian, but positively anti-Christian. It follows that any Church which bases itself on the second, that of obedience to the external authority and denial of the individual's right to experiment and judge for himself, above all in those realms of faith and morals where his own soul must find its own unique path, is not, in my opinion, a Christian Church, even though it arrogantly claims the monopoly of Christian inspiration.

Subordinating Individual Freedom

From this standpoint I could have foretold the association of the Roman Catholic Church with Fascism, not only in Spain, but everywhere else, on philosophical grounds, because that Church and Fascism have the same fundamental philosophy of subordinating individual freedom to the totality of Church and State.

For the present, however, I must stick to the subject and cannot do better than by examining a controversy between a Cardinal Archbishop of the Spanish Church, Cardinal Goma, and Senor Aguirre, leader of the

Basque Catholic Nationalists, who support the people's cause in Spain. This controversy brings out clearly the conflict between the Pope and almost the entire Hierarchy and controlled Press of the Catholic Church and the small but honourable number of Catholic priests and laymen, who have dared to follow their conscience against the overwhelming weight of their Church's authority. It is a conflict not only of ideas, but also of facts, and I hope to show that the Cardinal cannot defend his perversion of ideas without a direct and complete falsification of the facts.

Senor Aguirre writes to the Cardinal:

"The war has arisen between an egoistic Capitalism, which has abused its powers, and a deep feeling for social justice. It is not a war of religion."

Now you will see at once that in an argument whether, the Spanish struggle is or is not a war of religion, some definition of what is meant by religion is necessary, and my preamble about two different and irreconcilable conceptions of religion, namely, of, freedom and authority, were not out of place.

"I do not believe that there are a dozen men who have taken up arms; to defend their property or to defend themselves from the persecution of those who hold or administer property.

"I admit social injustice is one of the remote causes of the struggle, but I categorically deny that this is a class war. A pretext is not a real cause, and the championship of the working classes has been only a pretext for this war."

The full insolence of the Cardinal's inversion of the facts lies in the last sentence, for it implies that on the sham pretext of labour demands for social justice, the Spanish people took up arms and started a war.

Now let us have the truth, which the Cardinal inverts, in the words of Father Lopo, one of the few priests who have been faithful to their people.

Roused To Demand Their Rights

"When the people were roused to demand their rights, when they asked for the universally claimed transformation of the land-owning System; when they asked for access to the great heartless machine of industry to humanise labour there - when we stopped our ears; we gave them a few crumbs in the name of charity and refused to envisage the solutions which reason and justice forced on every Christian conscience. And there appeared immediately in the midst of the conflict a word lacking all meaning and reason for those who were to use it as a terrible weapon of attack. There appeared the word 'Order'; they talked of the established order and fortifying themselves against the workers, they called them with infinite scorn, 'enemies of order.' 'Let everything go on as it was', was the supreme aspiration of those who were comfortably placed in life, who: were little if at all perturbed by the Existence of the disinherited; yes, disinherited, a term and a conception which fill the

mind with horror, so clearly do they speak of fratricidal and anti-Christian cruelty."

I am reminded of Francis Adam's lines:

*Sometimes the heart and brain
Would be still and forget
Man, woman and children
Dragged down the pit*

*But when I hear them declaiming
Of Liberty, Order and Law,
The husk-hearted gentleman
And the mud-souled bourgeois*

*A sombre, hateful desire
Creeps up slow in the breasts
To wreck the great guilty temple,
And give us rest.*

"The great guilty temple," there is the position in a nutshell.

The Meaning of Anarchism

J. R. White

(London: Freedom Press, 1937)

Theory illustrated by recent practice in Spain

[Part I]

There has been bloodshed between Anarchists and Stalinist Communists in Catalonia. Many are asking: (1) Is there so deep-rooted a difference of principle as to provide a philosophical basis for a physical clash? (2) What is the fundamental principle of Anarchism? (3) If the Anarchists have a definite and different philosophy, will it work in this wicked world? I propose to contrast Anarchism with Socialism and Communism, confining my use of the word Socialism to include points where Socialists and Communists agree.

The socialists say: The State has been formed on a class basis to preserve the domination of one class by the domination of the others. To achieve liberation, therefore, we must get possession of the State. When we become masters by election or by insurrection we will abolish its *raison d'être*, which is the division of society into a possessing and an exploited class. Then the State will wither away and will give place to an economic administration of things, which will no longer have to safeguard the privileges of a minority but to minister to the needs of all. But to abolish the State one must first capture it and use it to destroy the cause which has given it birth - the inequality between the majority which produces everything and the minority which consumes a disproportionate amount of the

product of the majority's labour. That is why it is all important to secure the election of as many MP's and Municipal Councillors as possible. Their installation will mean so much less to accomplish on the day of the revolution, when we shall have in the persons of our elected representatives guards within the citadel to throw open the gates to us.

To this the Anarchists reply:

"The State contains a corrupting influence in itself. The people have always been deceived (when they are not machine-gunned) by the revolutionaries who in their ignorance it has hoisted to power. Consequently, to destroy the State, one must not begin by *becoming*, the State; for in doing so one becomes automatically its preserver. One becomes so by force of circumstance, without conscious dishonesty, inevitably, because things appear under a different aspect and so many difficulties and duties crop up that no revolutionary turned politician can remain a single minded revolutionary. The State corrupts the purest and the best. So to keep our revolutionary virtue, we must not expose ourselves to its pernicious infection. It is not

from above with the machinery of the oppressive State, that one can abolish class society. It is from below that we must wage the war against the privileged class and undermine the foundation of their privileges."

"We will expropriate them by law," say the Socialists.

"We can do it without you and your laws," reply the Anarchists. "We know how to strip the bourgeoisie by direct action. Our direct action is a series of attacks incessantly renewed, delivered at one point today and another tomorrow; an endless sequence of major and minor crises, schooling the exploited in practical war against the exploiter and preparing them for the final crisis of the general strike. We feel no need of voting to impose masters on ourselves. We are anti-parliamentarians, abstentionists. In one thing we are faithful Marxists: Did not Marx say, "The emancipation of the workers must be the work of the workers themselves"? Well, we are workers and we will emancipate ourselves. As for you Socialists who offer to liberate us, if we listened to you we should only prepare one more disillusionment for the proletariat. For once become a Government, you would do to us who are the people just what every Government has always done."

It would seem that the Anarchists have justification for their mistrust, not only in the lessons of history but in the nature of things. Anarcho-syndicalism applies energy at the point of production; its human solidarity is cemented by the association of men in common production undiluted by mere groupings of opinion. Affinity of interests is more stable and more powerful than affinity of opinions. Disunity begins where differences of abstract opinion can no longer be harmonised and resolved in collective work. We cannot surrender the cause of human freedom to any combination of incongruities, to any "popular front" whose incompatible elements can guarantee nothing but the obligation to compromise. In any popular front, groups and elements are accepted whose economic interests run counter to those of the proletariat. In the men who compose it there are intellectual and moral affinities, which may disappear under pressure. It is

dangerous to place men between the appeal of the conscience and reason and the appeal of these interests. These fragile affinities cannot exist in the groupings of anarcho-syndicalism; stronger than any bond of sentiment or of reason there is a bond of interest which unites them, the only stable and solid bond of unity.

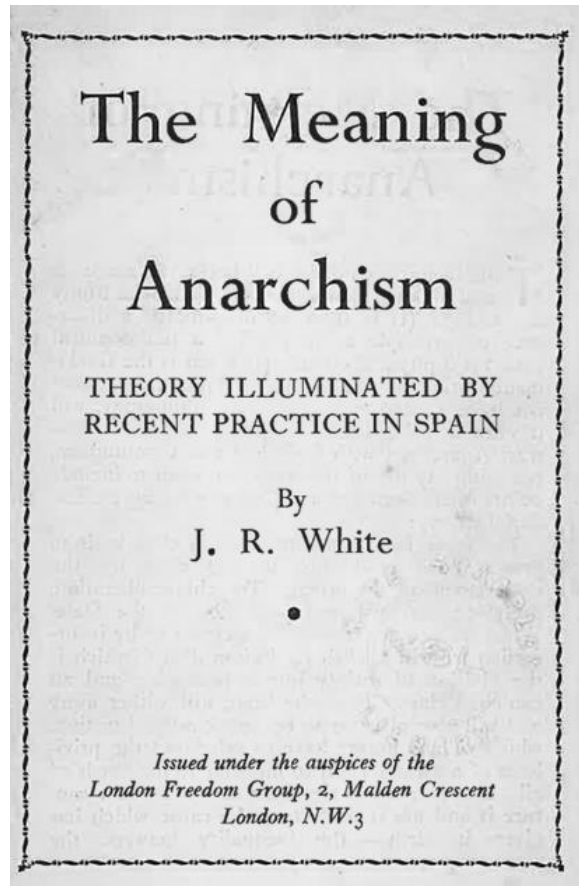
The Socialists reply that Anarcho-syndicalist

propaganda, just because it makes flank attacks and raids on Capitalism, because its primary object is the defence of local and regional interests, is inadequate to make conscious revolutionaries. Anarcho-syndicalism is good for guerrilla but unsuited to serious organised warfare. Its efforts must automatically be lacking in concentration. Co-ordination and centralisation of effort can be the work only of a Party whose horizon is not limited to a town or an industry but embraces all the complex factors of a national or international situation. In our common interest of the revolution, Socialist and Anarcho-syndicalist action must combine.

The Anarchists answer the Socialists:

"Where is your logic? You assert that in the society which you intend to build, economic groupings will be the only ones and public authority will be limited to the necessary administration to ensure the production and distribution of objects necessary to man's existence. Why then wait for the revolution to give to economic groupings their vital creative function? Let them take the importance today they will have tomorrow. You admit the State is the effect of class exploitation and its function is to maintain it. We prefer to attack the cause. Leave the workers to fight their own battle on their own ground. Don't ask them to idle themselves with political masters, who the day after they conquer state power will want, like all conquerors, to remain the masters.

"Between employer and worker there is a brutal vis-à-vis.



“Against the tremendous power of the State one must stoop to tactics; sometimes one has to combine these tactics with those of other Parties. The proletariat finds it hard to follow these long range operations, or it gets concerned with their detail, missing their whole scope: thus it risks contradicting a political habit of mind, which slowly atrophies the revolutionary spirit.

“The working class, economically organised, is sufficient unto itself, it needs only to be conscious of its power; electoral and parliamentary combinations can only delay the day of self-realisation.”

Steklov, in his history of the First international, speaks of the split in it as caused by the past of the international proletariat rising in revolt against its future. He means by this that Bakunin and the Anarchists thought it was possible to jump straight from the decay of feudal aristocracy, which from 1848 began definitely to collapse in favour of bourgeois industrialism, to the proletarian revolution.

“The broad masses of the workers,” says Steklov, “for the time led astray by Bakunin, returned to the broad river of International Socialism.” Dare we reply that the broad river of revolutionary destiny, for a time mapped correctly by Marx over a stage of its course, shows signs of reverting to a deeper bed charted by the genius of Bakunin.

Marx was, “par excellence,” the prophet of the industrial proletariat; any developments depending solely on that proletariat had to await its growth and class conscious solidarity; and that growth and solidarity had to await in turn the maturity, not to say the overripe bursting, of the bourgeois order. This patient dependence on ripening external conditions gives to Marxism an element of fatalism in sharp contrast with the unconditioned spontaneity of Anarchism. “Anarchism does not wait. It acts in the individual and in small groups to build up social forms, which shall be, as near as possible, embryos of the fully developed Anarchist society.”¹

“Hope deferred maketh the heart sick,” and any philosophy of action preaching present revolt as the best preparation for future revolution on a wide scale starts with an appeal to the fighter and man of action rather than the theoretician, which is psychologically sound. To the seer the Kingdom of Heaven is always at hand, and its proximity calls for immediate

preparation. And though the seers are generally wrong in their time forecast, they are often more right than the scientist about the fundamentals of cataclysmic change.

Bakunin was a seer, Marx was a scientist. Bakunin was greatly influenced by the just and elemental protests of the peasants ruined by dawning Capitalism, and he believed he could enlist the revolting bourgeois intellectuals in the service of complete social liquidation. He was wrong as to the time. But Marx was wrong in his scientific belief that revolution would spread automatically out of the most highly industrialised countries. The revolt not of Germany or France but of Ireland and Russia during the Great War is one up for Bakunin’s *rapport* with elemental human and one down for Marx’s analysis of the scientifically conditioned mass.

“What!” I hear someone exclaim. “You place the Irish National Rebellion on a par with the Russian proletarian revolution and use both to discredit the accuracy of Marxian analysis! What heresy run to insanity is this?”

Just a minute, friend; I am pleading for two things: spontaneous voluntarism versus scientific social conditioning, and the elemental vitality retained by a peasantry, as indispensable features in revolution. I am suggesting that though the industrial proletariat has the strongest incentive to make the revolution, they are too mechanised and lack the vital force ever to do so unaided, and that therefore a social science based on industrial economics alone as the determining factor is inevitably misleading. Do the facts support me or do they not? Has successful revolution ever been achieved in a highly industrialised country? It has not. If we analyse the factors in the most recent revolutions we are familiar with, those of Ireland, Russia and Spain, in conjunction with the frustration of revolution in highly industrialised countries, we may have to conclude it is something deeper than bad tactics and treacherous leadership which has thrown out our calculations. Perhaps the Marxians and even Marx have omitted elemental and human factors, which can express and manifest themselves better through the vehicle of Anarchism. I am not saying Marx was wrong. Obviously he was very largely right. I am suggesting that he did not say the last word about the individual and collective “unconscious” when he interpreted so scientifically the consciousness of the industrial worker.

If we compare the Irish and Russian revolutions, the former has two advantages over the more exclusively

¹ Quoted from *Spain and Anarchism*, pamphlet (recently) issued by Anarcho-Syndicalist Union, 4, Goldhawk Mews, W.

proletarian nature of the latter. It preceded it in time, the Dublin rising of 1916 antedating even the Kerensky Revolution by about a year, and it is surpassed in its voluntarism. It was essentially an insurrection of a conscious and voluntary minority forestalling and creating mass conditions rather than await their ripening. If Nationalism has any function in paving the way for International Revolution, Ireland showed that function at its best. In Ireland, Republican Nationalism combined with Irish International Socialism (Connolly and the Citizen Army) against the common Imperial enemy, and in so doing made the only repudiation of the Great War in Western Europe long before the chaos and social military breakdown caused by the war *compelled* that repudiation, as in Russia, and later to some extent in Germany.

This voluntarism, scorning to calculate consequences and creative of new mass conditions, is the essence of Anarchism with its distrust of majorities and *"l'illusion*

Having brought the Anarchism v. Socialism argument, with which this article opened, to its psychological and philosophical head, let us apply it to recent history in Spain, recent history still pregnant with problems of world-shaking importance.

If man's inner spontaneity is a factor of importance in revolution, increasing in direct ratio with the mechanical perfection and international consolidation of the forces of Fascist repression, are we not apt to overlook the surprises in the unknown destiny of man in our scientific forecasts of the mechanical destination of society? May not our oversight damage our insight into unexpected factors in revolutionary development? We must not divorce the spiritual qualities of a people from our scientific assessment of their place in economic evolution. Almost we might say that if human spontaneity has to become more dynamic and intense to triumph over intensified and universalised reaction, each succeeding revolution must be more Anarchist in its principle and practice than the last. Socialistic centralisation would thus become counter-revolutionary in effect and have latent affinity with counter-revolutionary forces, no matter how revolutionary its slogans or even its intentions.

Man's only road to real freedom lies in the voluntary co-ordination of their maximum individual spontaneity. All social panaceas that seek to supersede that co-ordinated spontaneity, even as a means to the alleged end of restoring it, must lead not to freedom but to the loss of such freedom as man has achieved and to increasing depths of tyranny.

majoritaire" and its respect of spiritual quality rather than numerical quantity. The Anarchist recognises, implicitly if not explicitly, that there are two reasons, one emotional and creative, arising from inner spontaneity, the other "rational" and dead because its premises are in the past or present status quo and it is therefore reduced to calculate consequences in terms of the past or present status quo rather than create new forms.

The State worship of Communist and Socialism has its source in the failure to lay enough stress on the inner spontaneity of man, and a consequent enslavement to outer externalised forms, such as the State as the source and key to power. Man's only road to real freedom lies in the voluntary co-ordination of their maximum individual spontaneity. All social panaceas that seek to supersede that co-ordinated spontaneity,

even as a means to the alleged end of restoring it, must lead not to freedom but to the loss of such freedom as man has achieved and to increasing depths of tyranny.

PART II

Now Spain is deeply impregnated with the psychology, the principle and the practice of Anarchism. It would, I think, be false to insulate this principle and practice of Anarchism from the Spanish racial characteristic of human dignity. The sense of human dignity seems to be consubstantial with every Spaniard and undoubtedly it inspires the Anarchist goal of general freedom and solidarity and the educational voluntary associative methods leading towards it. The situation in Spain today compels us to ask the question: What is the surest guarantee against the triumph of Fascism? Is it the Anarchist psychology and tradition of the Spanish people expressing itself in its own Anarcho-Syndicalist forms or is it centralised State Socialism imposed, or alleged to be imposed, in the interests of maximum military efficiency and the maximum efficiency of production to feed the fighting fronts? May not this efficiency be too dearly bought, if it is bought at the price of damping the revolutionary enthusiasm of the Spanish people and splitting their revolutionary unity even in the interests of a unified command? One might even add with trepidation a further question: Whither is this State centralisation in the interests of Spanish "democracy" leading? We are assured it is aimed at and will lead to the speedy defeat of Franco. Have not

the Second and Third Internationals agreed to meet to further that most desirable object? So, I note, have the Ambassadors of the capitalist Powers already met and conferred with the Valencia Government. Let us hope they have agreed to co-operate in the speedy defeat of Franco. That, however, is uncertain. One thing is certain. Anarchist leaders have been displaced, imprisoned, murdered, groups of Anarchists have been massacred by Socialist-Communists and the Anarchist idea of revolution, collectivisation of industry and as far as possible the agricultural village-communities, is being stopped and undone. The Anarchists had defeated not only Franco in Catalonia but had superseded the economic order, which Franco is fighting to save and restore. Now the Socialist-Communists are saving and restoring it instead, not for him, of course, but to speed up his defeat. Meanwhile large sections of the Spanish people have misunderstood; things were too puzzling.

When they saw their workers' military and economic committees dissolved, their workers' police abolished, themselves disarmed and finally the telephone building which they had won by repeated attack from the Fascists in July, forcibly seized from their syndicate by the Govt assault guards, they came out on the streets and erected barricades. They thought their revolution was being destroyed instead of saved. Their misunderstanding was increased by the arrival of French and British warships in Barcelona and the landing of French marines, while the open allies of Franco, the Germans and Italians, continued to blockade them outside the three-mile limit. The strange coincidence of the arrival of the French and British warships just at the moment when the workers came out on the streets to save a revolution they believed to be threatened, has been mixed up in their simple proletarian minds with the previous fact that the French and British had been blockading them all along under cover of a non-intervention pact and that the Valencia Government sent troops and threatened to send more to suppress what they thought was the defence of their revolution.

These simple people have been called "uncontrollables." In point of fact they were very easily controlled and went back to their work after six days of

almost entirely defensive fighting. One can only hope they will not regret their docility.

I note that the epithet "uncontrollable" is reserved for my Anarchist comrades. Their fellow criminals in the joint misunderstanding are mostly "Trotskyites." A "Trotskyite", so far as I understand the term is someone who thinks Marx meant what he said when he spoke of the necessity of the dictatorship of the proletariat in the transition period from Capitalism to Communism. Mr. Emile Burns, in his book *Communism, Capitalism, and the Transition*, has put the matter in a nutshell, not only as regards what should happen in theory but what did actually happen in the Russian Revolution. He might have been writing of the revolution that the simple Spanish "Trotskyites" thought they were defending. "All executive positions," writes Mr. Burns, "which had formerly been filled by appointment from above had to be made elective and the elected persons had to be subject to recall at any moment by the bodies that elected them; therefore from the first day of the revolution the command of armed forces was taken over by

elected deputies; the factory workers were armed and fought all the most vital battles; the officials in State Departments were replaced by workers; the managers in the factories were replaced or controlled by councils of workers; the existing Law Courts were abolished and Workers' Courts with elected judges took their place; wherever Soviet order was established, elected workers' Committees took the place of appointed officials."

Now that is precisely the kind of order that the Spanish "Trotskyites", in common with other Spanish "uncontrollables", thought they were fighting to preserve and maintain from May 2nd to 7th in Barcelona.

But I would hate to be thought a "Trotskyite", for I remember it was Trotsky who helped to smash all that sort of thing at Kronstadt. So I must perforce be an "uncontrollable."

What is the difference between a "Trotskyite" and an "uncontrollable"? I expect I am simple, too, but I will give the only definition my simplicity can rise to. A

Now that is precisely the kind of order that the Spanish "Trotskyites", in common with other Spanish "uncontrollables", thought they were fighting to preserve and maintain... But I would hate to be thought a "Trotskyite", for I remember it was Trotsky who helped to smash all that sort of thing at Kronstadt.

Trotskyite is a Marxist who has stuck to Marx, who believes for instance, that it is their converging or conflicting economic interests which will determine sooner or later – perhaps sooner, alas! – whether the Capitalist “democracies” will or will not help the Spanish people, led by the present Valencia Government, to defeat Franco and the relics of the clerical aristocratic order, which he seeks to preserve.

Not being a Marxist, I offer no opinion.

And an “uncontrollable” is an Anarchist who has stuck to Anarchy and who is not, therefore, primarily concerned with the shades or strata of Capitalism, but with revolution by direct action; who believes with Marx indeed that emancipation of the workers must be the work of the workers themselves, but with Bakunin,

Kropotkin and Malatesta, that free humanity must be substituted for the State, and that when Anarchists take part in a Government, they allow themselves to be deflected from their proper task and become corrupted by association with an instrument of tyranny. The first false step in Spain was the association of Anarchist leaders with the Government and the State. Had they given all their energies to co-ordination and unified command of CNT Collectives and Anarchist military units, instead of sacrificing Anarchist principles and control to compromises with a Government, the uncontrollables would have remained in control of themselves and ready for co-ordinated action with other sections instead of being sacrificed to a State dictatorship through a political party.

A Review by J. R. WHITE

“The Churches and Their Policy”

J. R. White

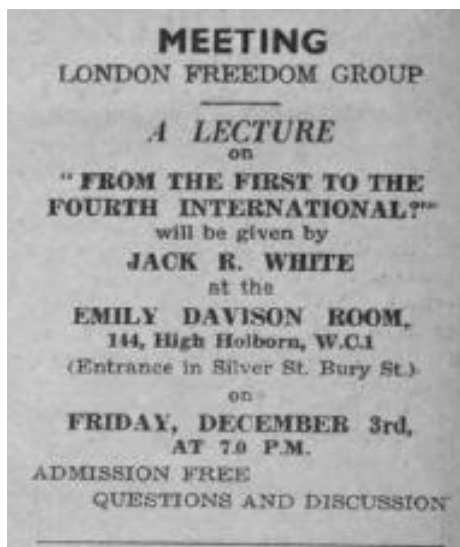
Spain and the World, 29 April 1938

“The Churches and their Politics” by Alan Flanders (International Publishing Co.).

Alan Flanders’ pamphlet “The Churches and their politics” should be read by every anarchist. Opening with a recognition of the change of emphasis in the Protestant and Free Churches from dogma to sentiment, he sums up the influence of the Churches as dangerous to militancy of the workers. A sentimental objection to certain aspects of Capitalist Society offers no guide to the roots of the evil and certainly no clear policy to overcome them. The net practical expression of this mental attitude is the policy of class-collaboration, political reformism (relying on the power of conversion) and peace in industry. Perhaps Alan Flanders is hardly fair in excluding from mention the school of Revolutionary Christians like Conrad Noel and the Catholic Crusaders. Their tenets and influence are not on the side of reformism or were not, though the identification of most of their personnel with the C.P. may by now have led to a conflict between their revolutionary theory and their practice. For Libertarians, Comrade Flanders analysis of

Roman doctrine and policy is the best part of an excellent pamphlet.

Starting with a quotation from Benedict XV’s famous encyclical on the outbreak of the European War, where that Pope recommends his spiritual maker to harassed Governments in the famous passage “Force can repress the body but it cannot repress the souls of men.” Flanders goes in detail into Rome’s alliance with Fascism to suppress both body and soul. The open and universal support of Franco is shown as one uniform policy with the spiritual exploitation of Abyssinia, as soon as the physical arm of Mussolini’s conquest suppressed the Abyssinian Coptic Christian Schools. The Rivalry and Unity of Rome and Nazism in Germany are examined. Finally the dangerous permeation of the Labour Movement by Catholic Guilds, which are characterised as Fascist cells inside the Trades Unions is set out with close inside knowledge of the menace to which Labour has been too long blind.



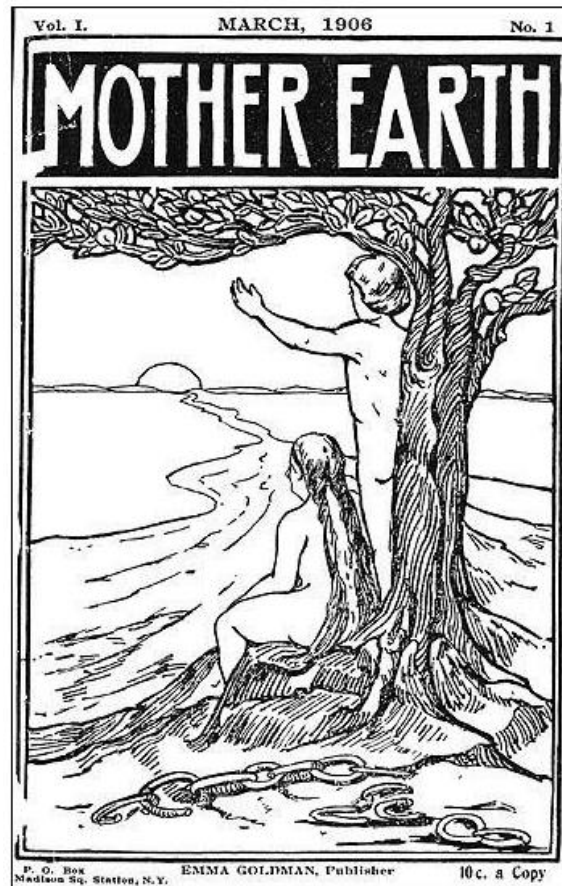
Remembering *Mother Earth*

Iain McKay

Forever linked to Emma Goldman, *Mother Earth* was America's leading anarchist magazine from its launch in March 1906 to August 1917 when state repression saw its monthly run end. It published articles by American and European writers and activists on a variety of anarchist topics, including the labour movement, anti-militarism, women's emancipation, sexual freedom, birth control, Marxism, education, the arts, free speech as well as state and government control. Its contributors included many internationally famous anarchists, including Peter Kropotkin, Errico Malatesta, Élisée Reclus, Ricardo Flores Magón and Max Nettlau.

Originally to be called *The Open Road* (after the Walt Whitman poem "Song of the Open Road"), the existence of a journal with that name in Colorado (which threatened to sue over infringement of copyright) meant the new journal became *Mother Earth*. Goldman later recalled the inspiration for this title:

While visiting the little farm one Sunday, Max and I went for a buggy ride. It was early in February, but already the air was perfumed by the balm of spring. The soil was beginning to break free from the grip of winter, a few specks of green already showing and indicating life germinating in the womb of Mother Earth. "Mother Earth," I thought; "why, that's the name of our child! The nourisher of man, man freed and unhindered in his access to the free earth!" The title rang in my ears like an old forgotten strain. The next day we returned



to New York and prepared the copy for the initial number of the magazine. It appeared on the first of March 1906, in sixty-four pages. Its name was *Mother Earth*.¹

June 1908 saw it reduce to thirty-two pages and Goldman started to lecture again due to its financial situation. The journal continued and grew in influence and readership along with the anarchist movement:

Interest in our ideas was growing throughout the country. New anarchist publications began to appear: *Revolt* in New York, with Hippolyte Havel as its editor; the *Alarm* in Chicago,

issued by a local group of comrades, and the *Blast* in San Francisco, with Sasha and Fitz at its head. Directly or indirectly I was connected with all of them. It was, however, the *Blast* that was closest to my heart. Sasha had always wanted a forum from which to speak to the masses, an anarchist weekly labour paper to arouse the workers to conscious revolutionary activity. His fighting spirit and able pen were enough to assure the *Blast* vitality and courage.²

The journal effectively ended after Berkman and Goldman were found guilty of violating the Espionage Act for encouraging resistance to the draft, although the *Mother Earth Bulletin* continued until April 1918. The following year saw Goldman and Berkman deported to Bolshevik Russia.

¹ *Living My Life* (New York: Dover Publications, 1970) I: 378-9.

² *Living My Life* II: 567.

As noted, the journal covered a wide range of subjects – as did Goldman. This has allowed bad-faith writers to present a radically false impression of the journal and its politics (and Goldman, amongst others).

An example would be Carolyn Ashbaugh and her deeply flawed biography of Lucy Parsons and works influenced that it. Ashbaugh's underlying assumption seems to be – she never clearly states it nor defines the anarchism she is so sure that Lucy Parsons did not advocate – that anarchism is individualistic, lifestylist and not interested in class struggle. This produces “anarchism” (personified by Goldman) which is individualistic and lifestylist while syndicalism (personified by Parsons) is collectivist and class struggle. This was shown in Ashbaugh's account of different anarchist papers:

“The *Liberator's* message was of strikes and industrial conflict, oriented to the class struggle. The other papers [like *Mother Earth*] dealt with all facets of life and social revolution – sex, women's emancipation, literature, art, theater – and found their readership in the avant garde of the literary and artistic world.”¹

Precisely how Ashbaugh determined the readership of *Mother Earth* is impossible to say but her summation of its contents leaves much to be desired given that it regularly reported on strikes, the labour movement and the class struggle. It also regularly ran articles advocating Syndicalism and its pages saw Goldman's famous two-part article on the subject which was later issued as a pamphlet. Indeed, its first issue ran the following short article which clearly indicated its politics:

A painting from the “good old times” represents two peasants wrangling about a cow. One holds on to the horns of the animal, the other tightly clutches its tail, a third figure is in a crouched position underneath. It is the lawyer milking the cow, while the other two are quarrelling. Here we have the beauty of the representative system. While groups are bargaining about their rights, their official

advisers and lawmakers are skimming the cream off the milk. Not justice, but social injustice is the incentive of these worthy gentlemen.

Human justice, and legal representation thereof, are two different things. One who seeks for a representation places his rights in the hands of another. He does not struggle for them himself, he must wait for a decision thereupon from such quarters as are never inspired by love for justice, but by personal gain and profit.

The working people are beginning to recognise this. It is also beginning to dawn upon them that they will have to be their own liberators. They have the power to refuse their material support to a society that degrades them into a state of slavery. This power was already recognised in 1789, when, at the French National Convention, Mirabeau thundered: “Look out! Do not enrage the common people, who produce everything, who only need to fold their arms to terrify you!”

The General Strike is still at the beginning of its activity. It has gone through the fire in Russia. In Spain and Italy it has helped to demolish the belief in the sovereignty of Property and the State.

Altogether the General Strike idea, though relatively young, has made a deeper impression on friend and foe than several million votes of the working people could have achieved. Indeed, it is no joke for the pillars of society. What, if the workers, conscious of their economic power, cease to store up great wealth in the warehouses of the privileged? It was not difficult to get along with the would-be labour leaders in the legislative bodies, these worthy ones, experienced through the practice of manufacturing laws to maintain law and disorder, rapidly develop into good supporters of the existing conditions.

Now, however, the workingmen have entered upon the battlefield themselves,

¹ Carolyn Ashbaugh, *Lucy Parsons: American Revolutionary* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Publishing: 1976), 221.

refusing their labour, which has always been the foundation of the golden existence of the haute volée. They demand the possibility to so organise production and distribution as to make it impossible for the minority to accumulate outrageous wealth, and to guarantee to each economic well-being.

The expropriateurs are in danger of expropriation. Capitalism has expropriated the human race, the General Strike aims to expropriate capitalism.

A new and invigorating breath of life is also felt in this country, through the formation of the “Industrial Workers of the World.” It awakens the hope of a transformation of the present trade-union methods. In their present form they serve the money powers more than the working class.¹

Yet it is true that *Mother Earth* did not restrict itself to just discussing strikes and class struggle. However, this does not mean that it ignored these subjects nor considered them as anything else than essential means to achieve anarchy. This can be seen when Ashbaugh, in passing, admits that the likes of Goldman “emphasized cultural revolution as well as class revolution” and that Goldman lectured on “Syndicalism, the Strongest Weapon of the Working Class, a Discussion of Sabotage, Direct Action and the General Strike” Yet these admissions are combined with the claim that *Mother Earth* “reflected the dissociation of

anarchism from strictly class struggle movements” even if such a claim is *not* supported by the little evidence given.²

It would appear that Ashbaugh hoped her readers would turn “as well as” into *instead of* and “from strictly” to *completely from* – a hope also premised upon her readers *not* reading *Mother Earth* (or Goldman’s writings, for that matter). For

if that journal was consulted, the reader would quickly see how far Ashbaugh was from reality – as she herself is forced to do at times with her passing admissions.

Still, such admissions do little to counteract the dichotomy she invents. A less biased (or better informed?) author would conclude that Parsons sold the “pamphlets by Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, the majority of Kropotkin’s works” and “announced her lecture tours in *Mother Earth*” due to the similarity in ideas between the communist-anarchists.³

Ashbaugh’s biases are easy enough to see. She mentions

Parsons’ support for the general strike as blossoming from “the syndicalist germ of thought which she had had in the 1880s”⁴ but seems unaware of – or unwilling to admit – it being advocated by anarchists in the First International over a decade before.⁵ This reflects a wider issue, namely that Ashbaugh goes out her way to avoid mentioning anarchists when it undermines her case. She writes that “the Anarchist Exclusion Act, passed in 1903” saw “John Turner, the English radical unionist, [being] the law’s first victim.” Turner was, indeed, a leading radical trade unionist but he was also an anarchist of long standing involved with *Freedom*, which was why he was deported.⁶ Likewise, she notes that a

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¹ “International Review”, *Mother Earth*, March 1906.

² Ashbaugh, 221, 233, 225.

³ Ashbaugh, 227.

⁴ Ashbaugh, 218.

⁵ Iain McKay, “Anarchism and the General Strike”, *Black Flag Anarchist Review* Vol. 3 No. 1 (Spring 2023).

⁶ Barry Pateman, “John Turner, anarchist union leader”, *Black Flag Anarchist Review* Volume 4 Number 2 (Summer 2024)

“contributor to the French paper *Les Temps Nouveau* in Paris wrote to Lucy Parsons” and fails to inform the reader this was a leading anarchist paper closely associated with Kropotkin (whom she laughingly proclaims as “the gentle anarchist theoretician of non-violence”).¹

Ashbaugh’s false dichotomy that “Goldman became interested in the freedom of the individual” while “Parsons remained committed to the freedom of the working class from capitalism” and “believed that women would be emancipated when wage slavery in the factories, fields, and mines of capitalism had ended”² cannot be believed if *Mother Earth* or the writings of Goldman are actually read. Unsurprisingly, Ashbaugh makes no attempt to point her readers to texts which could substantiate her claims for there are none – and ignores the many which refute it.

Of course, distortions are harder to refute when the evidence is hard to gather. Until *Anarchy! An Anthology of Emma Goldman’s Mother Earth* (2001/2012), edited by Peter Glassgold, next to nothing from the journal was easily available. except for a few articles by Goldman in her own *Anarchism and Other Essays* and Alix Kates Shulman’s collection *Red Emma Speaks*. This anthology had a comprehensive selection of texts grouped into six parts: “Anarchism”, “The Woman

Question”, “Literature”, “Civil Liberties”, “The Social War” and “War and Peace.” Its contents show the flaw in Ashbaugh’s assertions.

More could be written on Ashbaugh’s distortions³ but enough has been provided to indicate that *Mother Earth* deserves better. Sadly, such claims have been eagerly repeated by Leninists seeking to discredit anarchism⁴ and do need to be debunked. Luckily, that is easy to do if *Mother Earth* is read for it quickly becomes clear that it was a journal based on the class struggle and its importance in anarchist activism as well as achieving an anarchist society. Yes, it covered other aspects of life alongside this but it is a distortion of immense proportions to claim that these somehow undermined or replaced the class struggle element of the

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journal.

Anarchists cannot rely upon non-anarchists on anarchism or anarchist history is remembered. Whether it is a product of incomprehension or bad-faith, accounts – even if they appear to influential – can be simply wrong, as Ashbaugh’s claims about *Mother Earth* show. Remembering *Mother Earth*, then, is far more than just accurately recounting an important anarchist journal and its contents. It is about remembering and reclaiming anarchism itself from those seeking to distort it and its history.

¹ Ashbaugh, 215, 221, 160.

² Ashbaugh, 200, 202.

³ Iain McKay, “Lucy Parsons: American Anarchist”, *Black Flag Anarchist Review* Volume 2 Number 1 (Spring 2022).

⁴ Iain McKay, “Emma Goldman, class warrior”, *Black Flag Anarchist Review* Volume 4 Number 2 (Summer 2024).

***Mother Earth*: “Observations and Comments”**

As well as articles on a wide range of subjects, not least on labour struggles, *Mother Earth* also published a “Observations and Comments” column. While not appearing in every issue, it provided a forum to raise anarchist views on current affairs and developments, including those related to the labour and radical movements such as strikes, the I.W.W. and the deradicalisation of the Marxist movement produced by its embrace of “political action”. Needless to say, the extracts provided here are not all the writings on these subjects published and, of course, the column commented on other subjects as well.

As these writings were not attributed to an individual and a product of contemporary events, they have rarely appeared in anthologies and only sometimes referenced in articles on *Mother Earth* or its main members (primarily Emma Goldman). However, these writings provide a valuable insight into the politics of those active in *Mother Earth* as well as its aims and methods. As such, we provide a selection from the journal’s “Observations and Comments” column over *Mother Earth*’s lifetime to give a flavour of the focus of America’s then leading anarchist monthly journal and its advocacy of syndicalist tactics in the struggle for libertarian communism.

Iain McKay

***Mother Earth*, April 1906**

Government and authority are responsible for the conditions in the western mining districts.

Is not the existence of government considered as a necessity on the grounds that it is here to maintain peace, law and order? ‘This is an oft-repeated song.

Let us see how the government of Colorado has lived up to its calling within the last few years. It has permitted that the labour protective laws that have passed the legislature should be broken and trampled upon by the mine owners.

The money powers care little for the eight-hour law, and when the mine workers insisted upon keeping that law, the authorities of Colorado immediately went to the rescue of the exploiters. Not only were police and soldiers let loose upon the Western Federation of Miners; but the government of Colorado permitted the mine owners to recruit an army to fight the labour organisations. Hirelings were formed into a so-called citizens’ committee, that inaugurated a reign of terror. These legal lawbreakers invaded peaceful homes during the day and night, and those that were in the least suspected of belonging to or sympathising with the Western Federation of Miners were torn out of

bed, arrested and dragged off to the bull pen, or transported into the desert, without food or shelter, many miles from other living beings. Some of these victims were crippled for life and died as a result thereof.

When it became known that the W. F. M. continued to stand erect, regardless of brutal attacks, it was decided to strike the last violent blow against it.

Orchard, the man of honour, confessed, and the lawbreakers appealed to the law against Haywood, Moyer and Pettibone.

This time the government did not hesitate. The eight-hour and protective labour law was too insignificant to enforce, but to bring the officers of the W. F. M. to account, that, of course, is the duty and the function of the State.

There is not the slightest hope that the authorities who, for a number of years, have permitted the violation of the law, will be put on trial, but the crime they have perpetrated is a weighty argument in favour of those who maintain that the State is not an independent institution, but a tool of the possessing class.

***Mother Earth*, May 1906**

The dangers of the first of May, when France was to be ruined by the “mob” of socialists and anarchists, was very fantastically described by the Paris correspondents of the American newspapers. These gentlemen seem to have known everything. They discovered that the cause of the threatened revolution was to be found in the irresponsible good nature and kindness of the French government.

Just show “Satan” Anarchy a finger, and straightway he will seize the entire arm. Especially M. Clemenceau was

severely censured as being altogether too good a fellow to make a reliable minister. There he is with France near the abyss of a social revolution! That is the manner in which history is being manufactured for boarding-school young ladies.

The social revolution may come, but surely not because of the kindness or good nature of the government. France needed a newspaper boom for her elections: “The republic is in danger; for goodness’ sake give us your vote on election day!”

In order that the citizens might feel the proper horror, trade-union leaders, anarchists and even a few royalistic scarecrows were arrested; at the same time the sympathy and devotion of the government for its people manifested itself in the reign of the military terror in the strike regions.

The real seriousness of the situation, the correspondents failed to grasp. How could they? since they got their wisdom in the ante-chamber of the ministry.

Mother Earth, August 1906

The attempt on the part of the Russian Government to appear modern by checking the Revolution through parliamentary methods has proved a dismal failure.

Edged in on all sides, her industrial and business life crippled, her financial heart deeply wounded, she deemed it diplomatic to throw a bone to the Revolution. This sumptuous meal might so elate the people, that they would cease to rebel.

There are the Liberals and the Constitutional Democrats, for instance, who really desire nothing more for Russia than a government according to the political pattern of Western Europe. A few concessions might enlist their co-operation, which would tend to isolate the Revolution and stamp it as a crime against the Government, so eager and ready to consider all modern political demands.

The intention, however, was to continue her despotic regime – the Duma could prate to its heart's content, so long as it gave the monster on the Russian throne a chance to recuperate from the horrors of the barricades.

If the Duma could be used as a shield, to check the anger and hatred of the people, it will have served its purpose.

This speculation of the Russian autocracy was based upon the experience of other Governments with revolutions. The West-European revolutionary movement of 1848 failed miserably: then, too, the people were promised political rights; popular representation was the arena for acrobatic exercises; while the constituents searched for worthy men to represent the nation, the reactionaries prepared a counter revolution, which culminated in the forcible expulsion of the representatives of the people from the halls of Parliament. The autocracy hoped for a similar development of events. It failed to realise that economic and social motives of revolutions have grown

The revolutionary labour organisations care little for the good will or the Jesuit kindness of the authorities. They continue with their work, propagate the idea of direct action, and strengthen the anti-military movement, the result of which is already being felt among the soldiers and officers.

The officer who jumped upon the platform at the Bourse du Travail, expressing his solidarity with the workers and declaring that he would not fire on them, was immediately arrested; but this will only influence others to follow the good example.

more powerful within the last decades than the political.

The Russian revolution, unlike the revolution of '48, is not to be checked with a constitution on paper. It is much more concerned with the economic and _ social, rather than the political reconstruction of Russia. It is because of this that the Duma failed to enthuse the great majority of the revolutionists. The latter have grasped the truth that the Parliament is a hindrance, rather than an incentive, to the organisation of society.

The battle between the old and the new social powers can not be fought in the Chamber of Deputies. The question is no longer, "Will the Conservatives or the Democrats triumph?" but rather, "Is the possessing class to continue to exploit society for its own benefit?" It would seem that the people have reached that stage of development which must end in the overthrow of the system of tyranny and robbery.

It is this spirit which carried the Duma far beyond the boundary line of their original intentions.

Had the Government to deal with the representatives only, a compromise might have been brought about. But beyond the Duma-by-the Grace-of-the-Tsar rose the revolutionary waves, the peasant, and the workingman. These care little for political theories: the one demands the land, the other the product of his labour – Socialism or Anarchist communism. They have no desire to patch up the sores on the social body with petty political court plaster, as was the ambition of Witte and his colleagues. Their aim is the expropriation of the wealth stolen from them.

The Duma was compelled to flirt with the revolution. As the latter's child it could not very well aid Tsarism in its barbaric overthrow of the insurrection. Its popular leanings aroused the ire of the decaying autocracy and thus the Duma was abolished.

It was not a very clever move. It will only hasten the downfall of Tsarism with all its horrors.

Mother Earth, February 1907

Our two Presidents have taken their final stand in the case of Moyer and Haywood. The one actively, in favour of the accusers, the perjurers and mine owners, the other negatively, cravenly ignoring the demands of justice and right – Roosevelt and Gompers.

According to the last message of Governor Gooding to the Legislature of Idaho, President Roosevelt is heart and soul with the Standard Oil agents who have inaugurated a murderous campaign against the leaders of the Western Miners' Union.

Roosevelt understands his mission. As Chief of a Government controlled by the moneyed oligarchy, he wages war against all demands of the so-called lower strata antagonistic to this oligarchy. Those understanding the true mission of government will expect nothing different from Teddy. It is astonishing however, with what brazen effrontery he takes his stand on the side of Labor's enemy.

The cowardly manner in which the President of the American Federation of Labor has evaded this important issue is truly despicable. Asked by the Central Federated Union of New York to call a national conference in the Moyer and Haywood matter, Gompers declined on the ground that the moment was not opportune for any public action in their behalf.

The most important labour organisation in the United States is making no decisive effort to save labour

leaders from the cannibals of Mammon. The millionaires, reverends and prominent citizens of the Civic Federation have good reason to be satisfied. Their coquetting with the labour organisations, their dining and wining of Gompers, Mitchell, *et al.*, has unnerved organised labour and made it unfit for an earnest fight with the enemy.

Powderly, during the infamous Haymarket Trial, had at least this excuse for his shameful attitude – the defendants were Anarchists. Gompers lacks even this refuge.

The case of Moyer and Haywood is very simple. The Western Miners' Union was a thorn in the side of the operators; its leaders were never banqueted, nor were they conferred with as to the pacification of Labor and Capital. The Western Miners' Union, led by these revolutionary spirits, could neither be bribed nor subdued. The kidnapping and trial of their leaders is the result. The authorities have once more proved themselves the faithful lackeys of the exploiters. |

All that is self-evident. It is terrible, however, to realise that an organisation like the American Federation of Labor should so shamefully forsake its brothers in distress. Or perchance 'tis not the organisation, but the leaders?! If so, the outraged rank and file should, storm-like, sweep away the débris of their rotten officialdom.

Mother Earth, March 1907

Karl Marx taught his disciples that economics are the foundation of politics. His modern apostles have, however, reversed his teaching; their motto is, "Let us win political power; then we shall revolutionise the economic conditions." They have endeavoured to transplant the centre of revolution from the factory to Parliament, from the street to the counting room. Hence the transformation of economic revolutionary Socialism into a political reform-movement. The strength of the latter depends on votes, not on revolutionaries. A parliamentary party must limit its activities to the constitution and laws of the country, thus aiding in upholding existing institutions. It cannot put itself outside of the law, since such a position would stamp all political activity on its part illogical and absurd.

Every government represents the legislative and administrative power of the bourgeoisie; the revolutionary proletariat must oppose it, rather than try to reform it. Existing institutions can only be strengthened by the use of political power; to believe in their overthrow by such means is utopian. The social

revolution begins where the belief in government and the present "order" ceases.

Herein lies the folly of parliamentary Socialists: attempting to smuggle the social revolution under cover of reform, they merely succeeded in turning reformers and politicians.

By such means the German Social-Democracy had achieved great political "success." During many years it was the beacon of all parliamentary Socialists; soon it will serve as a sad example of what a true Labor Party should *not* be.

The January elections in Germany prove that the Socialistic power of political enlistment is exhausted. They have profited little by compromising with the Philistines, the lower middle class and the Clerical Party. They took good care to keep clear from the revolutionary and Anarchist element; indeed, their leaders were ever busy in keeping the party "pure." The energetic and progressive elements of the proletariat found the atmosphere of the party too stifling – they either left or were expelled. It was that

very fear of offending popular prejudices that resulted in the Socialistic failure during the last elections.

The Socialists of Germany are between two fires – the revolutionary proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Gradually they must lose the confidence of the former, since their tactics condemn the working man to continue passively to suffer exploitation and oppression. Neither can they gain the confidence of the

bourgeoisie, since the latter naturally prefers the safe representation of the tried parties – the Conservative and the Liberal.

Revolutionary Socialists welcome the *débauche* of the parliamentary card-house. They have long since realised the fatality of political success; the mass, however, must first experience the *reductum ad absurdum*, ere it can find the proper solution.

Mother Earth, July 1907

A word about recent strikes and how they should *not* be conducted.

It seems like the veriest irony upon modern, all-too passive strike methods that the seamen declared a strike *after* the longshoremen, defeated, had returned to work. Are there any workingmen foolish enough to believe that their strike funds will ever suffice to successfully fight multi-millionaires along lines of passive resistance? What folly! The labour unions have but *one* successful weapon: economic pressure combined with the General Strike.

Lack of active sympathy and solidarity was responsible for the loss of the car men's strike at San Francisco. Union teamsters, for instance, hauled strike breakers from the railroad station to the company's barns and transported for the company the necessaries of life, thus helping to break the strike. Mr. Cornelius, one of the organisers of the car men's union and now its

President, personally assisted in taking a street car to the barns when the unskilled scabs proved incompetent to do so. Such leaders are traitors and the worst enemies of labour, and strikes thus conducted are doomed to failure.

The New York authorities are very much concerned about the city's health, but not to the extent of giving the city cart drivers a chance to make a decent living. Refuse lies rotting in the streets – but even at the risk of an epidemic the powers that be will not grant the drivers' demands for humane conditions.

If the strikers, however, had shown more perseverance and had received the solidaric support of their fellow-workmen, they would have won the strike: the comfortable classes would speedily realise that their whole civilisation would perish from filth, were it not for the work of their slaves.

Mother Earth, August 1907

The confidence of the people in governmental justice is not very strong in these United States. The whole country, from Maine to California, is evidencing its surprise at the acquittal of William Haywood on the charge of killing Governor Steunenberg.

This general surprise can be explained only: by the fact that the people at large are convinced that the will of the money powers is the highest law of the land, and that truth and right are the mere handmaids of that will. That is the sentiment of a great portion of the people – a sentiment perfectly justified and not very far from the Anarchistic conception of the State and its mission.

The acquittal of Haywood is by no means a rehabilitation of governmental justice; it can only be explained in the following manner:

The conduct of the trial by the prosecution was a dismal failure from the beginning. The methods employed to manufacture evidence were worthy of the worst possible police and juristic ruffianism – the Pinkertons, the Borahs and Hawleys did not seem to credit the jury with much common sense; they

evidently thought that the most barefaced inventions were good enough testimony for a jury of farmers. The State and the Pinkertons had the audacity of employing as their chief witness a man – Orchard – whose total depravity was apparent to everyone familiar with the circumstances of the case. The prosecution built its hopes of victory upon that very depravity. The impossible was expected from the jury.

The progress of the trial served to make this one thing clear: the Western miners and their organisation knew exactly where they stood and what they wanted. For years they had battled against the conspiracy of law and capital; they had fought as men conscious of their purposes and aims, even to the extent of realising that explosives had not been invented for the special benefit of arrogant mine owners. They fully understood that they could not rely upon the law and the machinery of politics – these were the tools of exploiters employed to stifle the rights of labour as, for instance, in the case of the eight-hour law. The oppressed workers could not find relief anywhere, whether in the Capitols of Colorado and Idaho, nor at Washington.

The Western miners soon realised that they enjoyed such rights only as their own power could guarantee them. They learned the value of solidarity and direct action; their battles were the school that cured them of their respect for law and government.

Those who have carefully followed the trial could not but realise that they beheld the vigorous birth of a new world – a world with a healthy new social philosophy, freed from the fetters of plutocratic traditions. Whether considered right or wrong, lawful or lawless – the proletariat stood there, in the full consciousness of its strength and purpose, determined to assert its right

of existence and to defend it, if need be, by force of arms.

Neither friend nor foe could fail to appreciate the situation. The acquittal of Haywood was probably the result of the mixed feeling of respect and fear: it was not deemed advisable to drive those determined men to desperation by the conviction of their innocent fellow-workman.

The Idaho trial teaches the American proletariat a powerful lesson; namely, that it must depend only on its own initiative and strength, rather than on the State and its representatives.

Mother Earth, September 1907

Samuel Gompers, writing in the *American Federationist*, regrets the growing custom among workingmen of spending Labor Day at picnics and in general jollification. He calls upon the unions to devote the day to demonstrations, reminding them of the “serious meaning of the holiday.” Gompers should know, however, that Labor Day lost its serious meaning when it became legalised. The day chosen by workingmen to express their hopes and aspirations was emasculated by receiving plutocratic sanction. And it is Gompers and _ consorts, preaching the lie of “identical interests of employer and employee,” that are responsible for this.

Workingmen of revolutionary spirit know that the first of May – not the capitalistically legalised holiday – is the true Labor Day. They know that labour demonstrations can have but one rational object: to unify labour and to remind the exploiters of the power of labour. But when the spirit of solidarity and co-operation and, above all, of conscious class interests is lacking, such demonstrations are a hollow mockery.

The mollycoddle attitude of Gompers’s organisation, the Central Federated Union, in regard to the recent ukase of Commissioner Bingham, is disgraceful and disgusting. “Red flags prohibited,” read the police order. Upon inquiry from the C. F. U., the Commissioner kindly explained that the new order was due to the display of red flags at the first of May demonstration – a spectacle which, the police say, aroused the indignation and fears of “good, respectable” citizens. Bingham condescended, however, to permit the unions to carry in the parade flags they had used for many years at similar occasions.

It is characteristic of the spirit of the Central Federated Union – supposedly representing the “dignity of labour” – that not a single delegate had the manhood

to protest against the unwarranted interference of the Chief Policeman in the affairs of labour.

Has labour – the giant that feeds and supports the world – so little spirit, so little appreciation of its importance, as to be cowed by a policeman or to be influenced by the exploiters’ fear of the red flag?

And what will capital, so easily terrorised by the mere sight of a red rag, feel when the black flag of hunger is unfurled in the streets?!

[..]

The labour misleaders now state that the strike of the commercial telegraphers has entered “the phase of endurance.” In plain English it means that the telegraphers will win their strike when the telegraph companies will have been – starved into submission!

It is enough to state the proposition to expose its ridiculousness. As long as labour permits capital to grow fat on its toil, the employers are in no immediate danger of starvation. But the striking workingman *is*. The employers have learned the lesson of co-operation. The workingmen *have not*.

Were labour really in earnest about starving its exploiters into submission, there would be no more exploiters. And if the strikers were as sensible as they are hungry, they would not sit supinely at home “awaiting developments.” The inevitable “developments” of such an imbecile attitude spell defeat. But if, instead of relying on the miraculous power of their “leaders” and on conferences with the enemy, the commercial telegraphers had tried to help themselves; if they had made their strike a real strike; if they had organised a complete, general tie-up by calling to aid *all* union operators, then the telegraphic companies and the public at large would have speedily realised that the strikers are earnest and determined men. And such men always win.

But that means direct action and general strike! What would the mis-leaders say – the traitors who had doomed the strike in its inception by their cowardly opposition.

[...]

Two international gatherings have recently taken place: the Social Democratic Congress at Stuttgart, Germany, and the Conference of revolutionary Socialists and Anarchists at Amsterdam, Holland.

Characteristic of the spirit of the Social Democrats was the exclusion of English delegates representing

organisations which do not believe in the political swindle.

The anti-militaristic proposal to the effect that, in case of war – as between Germany and France, for instance – the workingmen of both countries should make common cause and voice their protest by a general strike, was voted down as “inopportune.” The Stuttgart Congress marks the final evolution of the Social Democrats into a bourgeois political party, pure and simple. The workingman can expect nothing from that quarter.

[...]

Mother Earth, October 1907

Two shining Marxian lights, W. J. Ghent and M. Oppenheimer, have recently issued a pamphlet, entitled “The Red Flag.” Speaking of the emblem of universal brotherhood, the authors relieve their feelings in this manner:

“The Red Flag is not the emblem of Anarchy. No doubt, Anarchists sometimes use this flag. But it is not the only thing which Anarchists appropriate in use to themselves, and their occasional appropriation of this emblem is something for which the Socialists cannot rightly be blamed. There is, as all sensible men know, not the slightest similarity between Socialism and Anarchism. Between capitalism in its unmitigated form and Anarchism, there is a close and easily observable relationship. But Socialism is equally the enemy of both. Anarchism and capitalism stand equally for social chaos. But Socialism stands eternally for social order,”

Is *Socialism* the enemy of Anarchism, or are our enemies merely *Socialists*? If the former is the case, so much the worse for Socialism. There was a time when Socialism, the ideal of brotherhood and liberty, was *not* the enemy of Anarchism. But since Socialism has come to mean concentrated authority and parliamentarism of the lowest order, it is the enemy of Anarchism and the foe of *all* liberty.

“Anarchism stands for social chaos.” This declaration sounds familiarly capitalistic. Of course, our Socialistic brothers would not stoop to wilful misrepresentation a

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The third annual convention of the Industrial Workers of the World has recently taken place at Chicago.

Among the various questions discussed, the main point at issue was: Should the I.W.W., as an organisation, participate in politics? The Anarchists present strenuously opposed all suggestions of a politico-parliamentary character, insisting that the battle of labour must be fought exclusively on the economic field. Our comrade Caminita, speaking for the

Anarchists, made an eloquent plea for direct action, demonstrating in the most lucid manner the dangers lurking in the ballot box, as well as in all authoritarian policies. He ably championed revolutionary economic battle methods.

Unfortunately, the majority of the delegates were opposed to Caminita’s suggestions. It was decided to make no changes in the second paragraph of the I.W.W. preamble, to the effect that the liberation of the proletariat must be accomplished by both political and economic means.

Our comrades, who have aided so actively in the organisation and efforts of the I.W.W., will soon have to decide whether they shall remain, as members of the organisation, a mere appendage of the Socialist Labor Party, or whether they should act independently, on their own initiative.

A word about the practical lessons taught by the propaganda of direct action.

The strike of the longshoremen at Antwerp, Holland, is being broken by scabs shipped from German and English ports. It is a highly instructive fact that not a single Frenchman is to be found among the strike-breakers.

The trade unions of England and the Social Democratic organisations of Germany are rich, strong and well disciplined. How does it happen that they would not, or could not, prevent the shipping of scabs from the ports of their respective countries into Antwerp?

The answer is very simple: they lack the spirit of solidarity.

The propaganda of direct action and the General Strike, which our French comrades have been earnestly carrying on during the last decade, has produced beneficent practical results. It has developed a strong feeling of solidarity among the workers of France and has made them conscious of the identity of interests of international labour. They have learned to realise this basic fact – not as a mere theoretical proposition – but as a living, practical factor.

Hence the intelligent, praiseworthy attitude of the French longshoremen during this important strike at Antwerp. It is time the German and English workingmen should realise the educational value of the direct action and General Strike propaganda, in its application to the practical solution of the labour problem.

***Mother Earth*, November 1907**

It is reported from Cleveland that the temporary injunction restraining the national and local officers of the International Printing Pressmen's and Assistants' Union and its members from engaging in strikes or boycotts against the members of the Typothete has been made permanent by Justice Thompson of the United States Circuit Court.

This injunction is unusually sweeping. It not only restrains the union and its local and national officers from engaging in strikes or boycotts against the members of the Typotheta, but it also restrains the union from taking a referendum vote, which had been started, on the question of ordering a General Strike, prohibits the union from levying assessments for strike purposes and restrains the organisers from organising for the purpose of extending the strike.

In other words, the action of the Federal court practically deprives the Pressmen's Union of all the fundamental rights inherent in the very fact of its

existence, and annihilates with one sweep the very purpose of its being,

This injunction is a valuable document. We advise all workingmen to study it. Even the simplest intelligence could not fail to comprehend the true purport as summed up in the finding of the court. It is but too evident that the capitalist class is determined to use all the forces at their command – the government and courts which they own – to destroy the power of organised labour by paralysing the activities of the unions.

Will the workingmen of America supinely see their last hope, the united effort, suppressed? Or will they, like men of spirit and independence, *demand* their rights – plutocratic court decisions notwithstanding – by virtue of their being the sole creators of the nation's wealth.

Rally around the flag of the General Strike and force your exploiters to beg quarter.

***Mother Earth*, December 1907**

This year's convention of the American Federation of Labor had a golden opportunity. It could have gone down in history as an epoch-making factor in the movement of organised labour. For many are the problems, many and serious indeed, that face the workingman and are awaiting intelligent and courageous solution. Unfortunately, however, it cannot be truthfully said that the convention will prove a milestone in the economic emancipation of labour.

We note with satisfaction, however, that the convention defeated the resolution in favour of government ownership of railways. It is to be hoped that the objection to the resolution was based on a

thorough understanding of the true mission of government, as the servant of the capitalist class.

The arguments against the resolution were to the effect that if the railways were owned and operated by the government, all the railway workers would be government employees; then any organised attempt on their part to improve the conditions of labour by the strike or similar action would be construed as a seditious movement against the government and would be suppressed, as has been done in various European countries.

These are sound arguments. We trust that back of them is the realisation that government and its ally,

capitalism, are the eternal enemies of labour. Once this is thoroughly understood by the rank and file, and fearlessly acted upon, an important step will have been taken on the road to complete industrial emancipation.

We sincerely regret that the convention failed to officially honour the solemnity of the day on which it assembled. Had the delegates forgotten that it was the twentieth anniversary of the judicial murder of the martyrs of Chicago? Or perchance did they lack the courage of publicly bearing witness to their solidarity with those victims of capitalism?

In what cause did the Chicago Anarchists die? Were they not the foremost champions of labour? Had they not offered up their precious lives on the altar of the

oppressed? Had they not suffered death in the very attempt to better the conditions of American labour?

The martyrs of 1887 forfeited their lives because of their courageous and intelligent devotion to the cause of the workingman. *It was they who inaugurated the eight-hour movement in this country.* They demanded, and taught the workingman to demand, more human conditions for the producers of all wealth. For this they died. Shall labour, then, which now enjoys the fruits of those noble men's lives and deaths, fail to appreciate their devotion and sacrifice? Shall the great central body of organised labour of America play the role of a Judas?

Reverently may we honour the memory of our noble dead.

Mother Earth, January 1908

Even at its best, the fate of the workingman is a miserable eking out of a mere existence. The "iron law of wages" – a euphonious term for the conspiracy of employer, storekeeper and landlord – has ordained that the producer shall receive just enough pay to – keep on producing. And if by some happy chance – usually by systematic stomach-robbery – the workingman has succeeded in laying aside a few dollars for a rainy day, when that rainy day comes, the poor man finds that his banker has "lived beyond his income," and that the "bank has closed its doors" for that or some other equally good reason.

Even in time of so-called prosperity the lot of the workingman is not to be envied. But during an industrial crisis, such as the present, for instance, the condition of the masses becomes unbearable. The number of unemployed is growing appallingly. In New York alone there are now a hundred thousand men out of work – and that means dire poverty, lack of the necessaries of life, cold firesides, starving women and children.

What shall be done? It is not a "mere Anarchist theory" that confronts us. We are facing hard, cruel facts. Where are our sage political economists? What solution can our learned professors suggest to relieve the terrible distress? What explanation can the apologists and defenders of our insane economic system offer? The crops have been unusually good. Why, then, do human beings starve in the midst of

plenty? The warehouses and stores are chocked with clothing. Is it *therefore* that people must go about half-naked? There are plenty of houses and many vacant lots where homes could be built. Why, then, are thousands shelterless?

The fool sayeth in his heart, "There is no work." But life is sustained by the *products* of work, not by work in itself. And if those products and the opportunity to create them were not monopolised by the social idlers, we would have neither crises nor hard times.

Let hypocrites and their dupes talk about "inevitable dull times," "stringency of money," "lack of work" and similar rot. Their object is to befog the minds of the people and to stifle the cries of the hungry with lying phrases.

But you, workingmen of America, do not allow yourselves to be deceived. You do not want charity; nor will any makeshifts do. "Bad times" will recur again and again; delay will but intensify your agonies. Do not depend upon others for a solution of these problems. *You* are the greatest sufferer, the eternal victim. *You are to be your own saviour.* The remedy lies in your own hands. You are the true owners of the wealth you yourselves have produced. It is yours by right of creation. You need but demand back what has been stolen from you. Let your motto be: The land and the fulness thereof to the producer!

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[...]

The capitalists of Nevada – aided by the ever servile State and Federal authorities – have tried all means at hand to provoke a condition of affairs at the Goldfield mines which might serve as a pretext for the wholesale slaughter of the strikers. Having failed in their purpose, in spite of the regulars which the White House Tsar so obligingly sent to aid the exploiters, the cabal of law and capital is now planning to obtain a Federal injunction, ostensibly to prevent picketing, but in reality to bring about the dissolution of the Goldfield Miners' Union. C. E. Mahoney, vice-president of the Western Federation of Miners, is reported to have expressed himself as follows:

“An injunction of this kind, if issued, will mean that there is nothing left for the miners to do

Mother Earth, May 1908

The First of May was celebrated in this country by but a small minority of the working people.

“What's the use of stopping work on this day and demonstrating?” the professional politicians ask in a tone of superior wisdom. They neither can nor wish to understand that the First of May is the revolutionary expression of the highest aspirations of the international proletariat: labour's complete emancipation from wage slavery.

When this day was celebrated for the first time, the world was filled with anxious surprise. The ruling powers were quick to perceive that something lay hidden in the depths that “was not dreamed of in their philosophy”: the revolutionary deed. Truly, it was a revolutionising, unheard-of act: labour dared to choose its own holiday and to declare the First of May as the

Mother Earth, July 1908

The “dignity” of American labour is fitly personified in Samuel Gompers, president of the greatest body of organised producers.

The country held its breath as the great leader thundered his revolutionary threat into the very presence of the masters. “You shall reap a terrible revolution,” he cried, and a shudder of fearful expectation filled his world-wide audience. There was an ominous silence. Every ear strained to catch the significant words, as Gompers solemnly added, “if you will not embody my typewritten paper in the Republican platform.”

The Parrys, at first frightened, now burst into uproarious laughter. They felt there was no real danger as long as the workingmen had faith in platforms. Then, angered by their momentary betrayal of fear, they

but to go and jump in the sea. Any judge and set of men who fancy that the Goldfield miners will tamely submit to this procedure are greatly mistaken. I would favour ignoring any such order from any court in existence. Injunctions have come to be a mere joke to the American people, and this one would be the biggest joke of all. We shall fight it with every weapon at our disposal. There would be nothing else for us to do.”

Quite right. There is nothing for labour to do, but to *fight for its emancipation from the thralldom of State and capital*. Only those who are willing to fight for liberty deserve it. Only those have it who conquer it.

great Proletarian Day, destined to imbue the toilers with the spirit of a new Spring – to live and act through the consciousness of their own supreme power.

But the misleaders of labour, fearing a potential Banquo's ghost, hastened to stunt the new growth. They proved faithful allies of the bourgeoisie and succeeded in emasculating the Proletarian Day of all that which gave it significance, stamping upon it a Philistine character. The practice of suspending work on this day has been abandoned, and now only occasional meetings are held on the eve of the day or on – the next Sunday. Some even revolutionise the world's calendar to guard against the revolutionising of the proletariat: they celebrate the First of May on the last Sunday of April.

Tis “safe and sane.”

contemptuously kicked the gauntlet which Gompers had thrown at their feet: the enemy was not worthy the honour of a combat.

Then Sammy tightened his armour and prepared to repeat the performance on the Democratic stage.

* * *

But the situation is really very serious, pathetic beyond words. What a spectacle! The greatest labour body of the world, representing a majority of the organised producers of the country's wealth, crawling in abject humiliation before a handful of parasites! More terrible than the vain threat of a possible revolution is this degradation, this slavish helplessness of millions of men,

The degeneracy of labour's spirit is due directly to the misleaders systematically fostering faith in representation, legislation, and reliance in reforms from above. Thus has the workingman been reduced to a beggar of charity at the door of his exploiters. How long is this to continue? The history of American labour within the last two decades abundantly proves the absolute hopelessness of improving the conditions of labour through legislation. Such attempts merely paralyse the workingman's self-reliance and still deeper drag him into the mire of corruption. When the producer once awakens to the full realisation of his degradation and learns to understand that politics are the most effective weapon of his own enslavement, he will cease to beg favours of the masters. Nor will he make himself ridiculous by a fool's ineffectual threat. He will rise from the ground, look the enemy boldly in the face, and say to all plutocratic and labour "representatives," "Get off my back, ye parasites!"

* * *

There was a time when Socialism was both an ideal and a philosophy. As an ideal its motto was individual liberty, universal brotherhood, the equality of all. As a philosophy it sought to emancipate through enlightenment: to strike off man's moral and intellectual shackles on the anvil of Liberty; to drive out the ghosts of ignorance and superstition by throwing open the portals of knowledge; to build the City Beautiful of peace and harmony on the ruins of darkness, misery, and corruption.

Then Socialism was also revolutionary. Inevitably so: all history teaches that the way to liberty leads through struggle.

But that was the era of an unscientific, impractical age, the pre-Socialist-politics age, the day of the idle dreamers. How different Socialism is to-day! With what conscious pride the partisan may now point to modern Socialism, grown to maturity in the light of the materialistic conception of its great destiny.

Modern Socialism has become "scientific, class-conscious, and practical." From a grand social philosophy it has deteriorated into a mere political party, its leading journalistic and propagandistic mouthpieces vying with the corrupt bourgeois politicians in the trade of vote-catching. The former philosophy is now "scientifically popularised" into easy platform planks, calculated to offend no one. Modern Socialism, made up-to-date by "experienced, practical" men, has turned the ideal into a "primarily economic

and political movement." In the lexicon of the new Socialism enlightenment is equivalent to vote-gathering; intelligence and comprehension are synonymous with Marxism; scientific means State-Socialistic; liberty, obedience to party rule; equality, uniform faith in Socialist dogmas. The motto of the unpractical idealists, "Workingmen of all countries, unite!" is interpreted by the light of modern Socialism into strict immigration laws; heresy is punished by excommunication; individual initiative, enlightenment, and independence of thought and action – all are suppressed for the "good of the party." Shades of Lassalle! The ballot-box has become the life-essence of "scientific" Socialism.

* * *

Considering the bourgeois development of modern Socialism, one will easily understand the logic of its recent national convention in voting religion a private matter. Not that this latest declaration of American Socialism can boast at least the virtue of originality. Our "scientific" stepbrothers are too busy with

"practical affairs" to bother about ideas – the latter can be had ready-made in Germany. Why lose time in thinking on your own account, when it's so much cheaper to import your planks – and time is money in this country.

The Socialists of Germany have declared religion a private matter

almost two decades ago. Though somewhat belated, the national convention of American Socialists is quite right in resolving that "Socialism is not concerned with religious beliefs." The unscientific might argue that religion has been the curse of humanity; that the church was ever the bitterest foe of progress and enlightenment; that it has paralysed man's mind, degraded and humiliated him, and steeped the people in ignorance, prejudice, and superstition. The impractical idealists might say that the church was ever on the side of the master as against the slave, and that religion inculcates, especially in the youthful mind, obedience to tyrants, an humble, self-effacing spirit, and supine contentment with things as they are. But such objections are unscientific as regards Socialism. The latter is a respectable political party; it must not fly in the face of public opinion; it were impractical to antagonise possible voters. What, after all, has Socialism to do with a man's beliefs, as long as he casts his ballot for our candidate?

With such tactics the Socialists will ere long win their fight. Unfortunately, we shall then be further from liberty and beauty than we are now.

all history teaches that the way to liberty leads through struggle.

Mother Earth, August 1908

Civilisation and progress are words much conjured with. We boast of our industrial development and speak with pride of our commercial growth and even our intellectual achievements. We point the finger of scorn at the “backward” nations and enlarge upon our own steady progress.

But *what is progress?* Giants of stone and steel, reared on human bones; mills and factories, slaughterhouses of body and mind; successful corners in the necessities of life; multiplied volumes of statute books; the perfection of man-killing weapons; increased navies and armies – are these the meaning of civilisation, the acme of progress?

We seem to have lost all sense of criterion. Civilisation has become synonymous with suppression of the weaker. The tower of Babel represents our ideal of progress. Scarlet piles of stone or gold upon the ruins of human souls are the measure of our success,

We have been stricken with blindness by the glare of Mammon. We have lost our path on the Broadway of Success. Yet Life is more, far more than mere success. And Life is individual. The one purpose of being is development; in free expression alone is satisfaction. Expression is growth; growth in freedom, progress.

In man alone is progress. The external and the social must but indicate the inner. Woe to them when they hinder instead of reflecting the soul. That is barbarism, slavery.

[...]

Mother Earth, September 1908

Negro lynching by white barbarians is no rare occurrence in this civilised country. After every fresh outbreak of race antagonism the reactionary press, shedding copious crocodile tears, intones the old refrain, “Punish the law-breakers!” Even such a liberal publication as the *Chicago Public*, referring to the recent Springfield affair, calls for the “strict application of the law.”

It might prove enlightening, however, to pause to consider whether the sacred divinity – called LAW – possesses deterrent power. It might also not be amiss to investigate the brutalising effects of social revenge, euphoniously known as the ‘application of the law.’

Collective murder crystalised in a statute is no less inhuman and far more atrocious than “unlawful” killing. The former is more cowardly and less pardonable than acts resulting from inflamed passions.

The bloody baptism of the solidaric General Strike movement in France, terrible as the governmental atrocities are, is not without an encouraging note. The more brutal the powers that be, the more thoroughly will the workingman learn to know his enemies. The deliberate killing of a number of strikers at Vigneux was the capitalistic prelude to the expressed determination to crush the General Federation of Labor – that powerful organisation of French workmen, whose aims and methods are consciously revolutionary.

The solidarity of capitalism and government is international. The French bourgeoisie have evidently learned from their American confrères that a labour organisation, self-reliant, intelligent, and practicing direct action, is a grave danger to continued exploitation. Hence the determination to crush the French Federation and imprison its most radical leaders, similarly to the recent attempt of our own plutocrats to destroy the Western Federation of Miners and hang Moyer, Haywood, and Pettibone. In each case the respective governments proved faithful and eager lackeys of the exploiters.

But the terrible fear with which the solidarity of labour and the General Strike movement inspire the masters will teach the disinherited the world over to make common cause and to appreciate to the fullest extent the powerful weapon in their hands. The blood of workingmen so wantonly shed at Vigneux will – as in all previous great liberating movements – consecrate the solidaric General Strike as labour’s great emancipator.

Mob brutality is not to be suppressed by governmental brutality. Nor can the law prevent sporadic expressions of race hatred.

The negro question is a social question. It will be solved like other social problems: through a clearer conception of underlying causes, better understanding of necessary racial difference, mutual appreciation, and solidaric feeling.

The law must as inevitably fail in suppressing lynchings as it has failed in freeing the negro. Lincoln’s gift proved no blessing to the black man. Gifts are always harmful. Liberty cannot be given. It must be conquered.

When the white worker learns to see in the black man his fellow-slave in the economic market; when the negro cause against a mutual exploiter, then only will the first step have been taken toward solving the negro question.

* * *

John Mitchell, former president of the United Mine Workers of America, has been promoted by the Civic Federation to a highly salaried position as an official of that organisation.

A very profitable transaction – for Mitchell and the Federation. The former, as the exploiters' most loyal servant among influential labour leaders, fully deserves his promotion. The Federation now feels itself better equipped to achieve its objects: to hypnotise the workingman into a Nirvana-like contentment, leaving his interests to the loving care of the honourable gentlemen of the Civic Federation. Mitchell is the very

Mother Earth, October 1908

The recent National Convention of the Industrial Workers of the World, held at Chicago, may be justly characterised – without the least exaggeration – as a truly inspiring phenomenon, to be rejoiced over by all friends of Labor.

Not because of momentous questions satisfactorily decided, or difficult problems solved for the benefit of the industrial proletariat. Nor because of wonderful eloquence of the delegates or some winged words thundering through the breadth of the land. All this were but of secondary importance as compared with *the spirit* of the revolutionary element among the delegates – the spirit of mute heroism and silent sacrifice; of international brotherhood and solidarity ; of intelligent rebellion against all forms of oppression and slavery.

That is the spirit that actuated to an unusual degree those delegates who, lacking the means of

Mother Earth, November 1908

Sincerity of purpose always expresses itself in action. Such sincerity never fails to compel attention.

So long as you merely *talk* about your ideals, they will remain mere ideals. But if your talk is no mere lip-service, if you *feel* your convictions, if they have permeated your being, they will inevitably express themselves in your daily life, in your attitude toward things, in your every action. They will then shape your life; they will make you different from other people, in proportion as your ideal is different from theirs.

Then your ideal will cease to be merely an ideal. It will have become a part of yourself, and to that extent materialised. Thus, and thus only, are ideals propagated and transmuted into life.

Anarchy is such an ideal. It expresses the highest conception of individual liberty and social solidarity. It is not a mere philosophy to be discussed at five o'clock

man to assist in the “pacification” process. He declares that he will do his utmost to help “harmonise the mutual interests of labour and capital.”

The tribe of Powderly, Sargent, and Mitchell will gradually help to open the eyes of labour. The workers are beginning to realise that slave and master can have no “mutual” interests. They will soon awaken to the treachery of their leaders who exploit labour as a stepping-stone to personal advancement. When the producers shall have fully awakened to the situation, they will have done with leaders. They will cease waiting for a Messiah to lead them out of the Egypt of wage slavery. They will do their own liberating.

transportation, had to cover hundreds of miles on foot, travel by freight and in box cars in order to participate in the Convention. Suffering is the true test. Many are willing to orate, but only those who can cheerfully *suffer* for it are worthy of a noble cause. With such men in their ranks, the I.W.W. may confidently hope that success will crown their persistent efforts towards industrial emancipation.

But what a contrast between such an earnest idealistic element and those parlour knights whose erstwhile revolutionary principles have become a “private affair,” the main efforts of the party being now directed towards vote gathering. How pitifully small the pygmies of political Socialism look alongside of those rebels at the Chicago Convention, the living symbols of Labor awakened.

teas; not a mere theory to be realised in some distant future, it is a mode of living, to be practiced right here and *now*.

[...]

The individual labour union is just as powerless to fight the battle for existence as the solitary workman. That is the lesson of all recent strikes. But no struggle of labour against organised capital proves it so conclusively as the “present New York taxicab strike.

The chauffeurs are making a noble stand. It is evident that they are inspired by a strong feeling of solidarity and courageous effort. But even with right, intelligence, and determination on their side, they cannot hope to be successful against the combined power of State and capital.

It were a comparatively easy task to bring the taxicab combine to its knees, by shutting off its supplies and thus instantly paralysing the trade. Solidarity and cooperation of *all* unions would quickly bring about this end.

Experience will teach American labour the absolute necessity of industrial organisation, based on the motto: "An injury to one is the concern of all."

Mother Earth, February 1909

Reaction spreads like wildfire, and tyranny grows on what it feeds. Not only Anarchists, but even good, loyal unionists are made to feel the iron heel of oppression. Organised labour is slowly awakening to the realisation that it must fight for its very existence. The political and judicial machinery, ever at the service of monopoly, is doing its utmost to enlighten the workingman as to his true position. If he would but take the lesson to heart and learn from bitter experience. How quickly he would become conscious of his degradation and the hopelessness of his present methods.

Tortuous is the path, but Labor must traverse it to find at last his true saviour in himself; to boldly divorce himself from all the powers of darkness that are forever blinding his sight; to declare open war to the system of exploitation that has appropriated his inheritance. To step finally into the arena, inspired by the revolutionary ideal of effort unshackled, and proclaim its emancipation from all masters and grafters.

Shoulder to shoulder, a united and conscious proletariat means free labour. Stop feeding the

Shoulder to shoulder, a united and conscious proletariat means free labour. Stop feeding the parasites. Withhold your support from the vampires of politics. The very life of the nation is in your hands. Your economic power is your liberator.

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* * *

In the midst of centennial celebrations of heroes whose successful lives are profitably canvassed as "examples for the youth of the land," it were fitting to remember, at least in these pages, one of the still unsuccessful great, whose giant stature towers far above all popular celebrities – Pierre Joseph Proudhon.¹¹⁶

Some achieve glory by carnage; some grow famous by massacre. Cannon makes heroes. Proudhon's only ammunition were ideas. Ideas grand, inspiring, liberating. He shot arrows of fire into the world of darkness, dispelling,

illuminating, revolutionising. His spirit lights, beacon-like, the road to liberty, pointing the pioneer finger to the shores of a regenerated mankind, its chains of authority broken, freed and rejuvenated by the genius of Anarchy.

Mother Earth, April 1909

It is probably the first time in the history of modern labour that the tremendous power of solidaric effort has been so conclusively demonstrated. Never before have we witnessed such a convincing object lesson as to the efficacy of direct action and the invincible strength of co-operation. The General Strike of the workmen of but one department of industry was sufficient to put a great country absolutely at the mercy of the strikers. What, then, would happen if the producers of several or of *all* industrial departments were to assert their rights to life, backing such assertion by a general national and international strike?

Mighty Labor, the world is yours, if you but will it.

* * *

It is to be hoped that the organised labour of this country will soon grow out of its diapers and attain manhood.

If the United Mine Workers intend to follow the usual ridiculous tactics of "preparing" for a strike by protracted dilly-dallying with the operators, it were the part of wisdom to capitulate at once. Much time, energy, and suffering would thus be obviated. But if the miners really want to make their demands heard and respected, they cannot afford to waste time in

¹¹⁶ Born January 15th, 1809

baby-acting, conferring and carrying on long palavers with the mine owners. The latter merely want to *prepare themselves* – with scabs and millions of tons of mined coal.

The Achilles of capitalism has but one vulnerable spot: the pocket. To force the exploiters to make concessions, the producers must use drastic methods, acting quickly, energetically, effectively. Instead of

preparing the enemy by interminable and profitless discussions and parleys, he should be treated as an enemy. Nor should the interests of labour be entrusted to weak, incompetent, or treacherous leaders. Direct action is the motto. Solidaric co-operation of rank and file, the means. If you strike, strike hard. The method of sudden and complete cessation of work, a determined stand, and no compromise, will alone ensure speedy victory.

Mother Earth, May 1909

In these days of spineless unionism, water-soaked radicalism, and ultra-respectable Socialism, it is refreshing to hear the clear, clarion notes of uncompromising manhood wafted to us from across the continent.

We joyfully welcome the entrance of the new fighter in the revolutionary arena, the *Industrial Worker*, published weekly at Spokane, Washington. We greet the noble band of conscious workers, who have courageously swept aside the barriers of representative superstition, and ably strive to shed into the labour ranks the light of revolutionary aims and tactics.

Mother Earth, September 1909

Some people are apt to grow hysterical over the “violence of labour,” in time of strikes. Thus we hear a great deal these days about the bloodshed committed by the McKees Rocks workingmen. But as a matter of fact, fewer persons have been killed and crippled since the strike than during any equal length of time when the mills were running.

The talk about strikers’ violence is as insincere as it is baseless. Much human blood, indeed, is being spilled in this free land of ours. But it is the blood of workingmen. Strikers, as a rule, are entirely too continent in this regard. To preach “peaceful methods” to slaves driven to the last extremity of endurance, is treason to humanity. It serves to break man’s spirit of resistance, reduces labour to abject servility, and encourages tyranny and oppression.

The most important American strikes during the last twenty years have been lost to labour. Defeat was due to lack of industrial organisation, and the passivity and reliance on the “peaceful methods” advised by misleaders. “Don’t alienate public sentiment by law-breaking,” is the pious advice to starving strikers. Yet “public sentiment” does not seem to be alienated by the violence of the masters. In the mad rush for the Almighty Dollar the good public’s main “sentiment” is

not to have “business” interfered with. Strikes are apt to obstruct the chariot of commerce.

But such direct, decisive action, to be effective, must be based on the intelligent co-operation of *all* the workers of any given industry. Craft unionism has been tried and found wanting... Emancipation lies on the road of industrial organisation, solidaric co-operation, and revolutionary application.

Labor must learn that it is not bound to respect the laws of the enemy, and that public sentiment is too indifferent to justice to fight the toilers’ battle. They must fight it themselves, realising that a determined, aggressive attitude alone can compel respect and victory. Strike quickly and promptly, in the most vulnerable spot of the exploiter: his pocket.

But such direct, decisive action, to be effective, must be based on the intelligent co-operation of *all* the workers of any given industry. Craft unionism has been tried and found wanting. To persist in the old near-sighted policy of weakening labour by vicious division would be suicide.

Emancipation lies on the road of industrial organisation, solidaric co-operation, and revolutionary application.

[...]

The identity of interests between capital and labour is daily receiving more drastic confirmation, When the present tariff on steel and iron was being considered, the manufacturers set up the plea that protection for their product would accrue to the benefit of their employees. Congress passed the desired tariff, and the

Steel Trust at once proceeded to demonstrate its good faith and the celebrated "identity of interests" by reducing the wages of its workingmen.

We should be grateful for such salutary lessons. Their repetition will help to awaken the Atlas of Toil from his Rip Van Winkle sleep.

Mother Earth, November 1909

The industrial Workers of the World of Spokane, Wash., are setting a splendid example of fighting the enemies of speech. The local authorities had suddenly decided to stop the I. W. W. open-air meetings. Our Spokane comrades have been carrying on an energetic propaganda, striking at the very vitals of Mammon by their fearless denunciation of the employment sharks – the modern eunuchs of capitalism. Hence the attempt to throttle free speech.

But our friends were not to be so easily daunted. They insisted on their rights. They were not naive enough to believe that anything would be "granted" them. They had the courage to *demand* and take their tights, by continuing to hold open-air meetings, police orders to the contrary notwithstanding. The energy and determination of the brave fighters resulted in numerous arrests: Comrade Elisabeth Gurley Flynn and two other I.W.W. organisers, as well as the editors of the *Industrial Worker* and the secretary of the Central

Committee of the I.W.W. unions, were thrown into jail. But prison and threats of bodily injury could not discourage these devoted men and women. No sooner was one speaker dragged off the platform than another took his place. Scores of fighters stood ready to assert their right of free speech, so that the Spokane prison is now overfilled, and plenty of comrades are on hand to continue the fight.

That these methods of establishing our rights are the proper ones has already been proved by Comrade Flynn and others at Missoula, Mont. There the number of I.W.W. people willing and ready to go to prison for free speech so overtaxed the town jail's capacity that the authorities were forced to cry for mercy. They feared the town would go into bankruptcy if our comrades persisted in becoming the city's free boarders. Thus freedom of speech was established in Missoula. Thus also – and thus alone – will it have to be established everywhere.

Mother Earth, December 1909

It is a bitter war that is now being waged in New York by the striking ladies' waist-makers. Exploited to the very verge of starvation, forced to work under the most unbearable conditions, several thousand girls were literally driven to strike for more decent treatment and a living wage.

Capitalism knows no sex. Man or woman, both are equally the victims of an age where Mammon is the omnipotent god. His Juggernaut as mercilessly crushes the bodies of young girls as of old men, grinding their flesh and blood into the pyramid of "social order."

And the eternally vigilant law stands ever ready to support and protect this "order," built on the bleeding corpses of women and children. In no recent struggle of labour has this been more clearly manifested than in the present strike of the ladies' waist-makers. The whole police force of the city has been at the command of the rich manufacturers, aiding them to break up the strike

by harassing the helpless girls, beating and arresting their pickets, and using the whole judicial machinery to intimidate the strikers and force them to return to work by exhausting the treasury of their union through the imposition of excessive fines.

Full well they realise the power of labour united on the industrial field, and the absolute helplessness of the solitary employee.... the waist-makers' fight is one of principle: the right of workers to demand concessions with the powerful voice of economic organisation.

The main issue of the strike is the right of the employees to belong to a union. The larger manufacturers, themselves thoroughly organised, absolutely refuse to concede this right to their workers. They generously promise to deal "fairly" with each individual girl, but strenuously oppose the recognition of the union. Full well they realise the power of labour united on the industrial field, and the absolute helplessness of the solitary employee.

As in Galsworthy's "Strife," the waist-makers' fight is one of principle: the right of workers to demand concessions with the powerful voice of economic organisation. This very essential circumstance seems to have entirely escaped the

understanding of the wealthy ladies who have benevolently come to the aid of the strikers. They have been “shocked” to learn that the “poor things had such a hard time of it” making the beautiful things worn by milady. Full of the Christmas spirit they rushed to help the strikers, thus unselfishly demonstrating the “solidarity” between the rich and poor.

The guilty conscience of a Mrs. Belmont may find relief in espousing the cause of the starving girls. The latter,

Mother Earth, January 1910

There is, even among radicals, a certain bourgeois attitude of mind which scoffs at every suggestion of the people’s power for solidaric effort, mutual help, and free cooperation. All such could profitably employ a leisure hour by studying the wonderful spirit of the striking shirt-waist makers.

In the face of tremendous odds, practically without organisation, more than fifteen thousand workers have dared to defy their masters and have struck for better conditions. The loyalty, self-sacrifice, and perseverance manifested by the strikers – most of them in actual want – are nothing short of heroic. Exposed to the brutal persecution of the police and the “mercy” of prejudiced judges – not to speak of the rigors of a severe winter, involving untold misery and suffering – the strikers have remained steadfast and loyal to a degree seldom paralleled in labour troubles. Practically no desertions have taken place from their ranks. Rarely have working men and women given such a convincing demonstration of conscious solidarity and singleness of purpose.

This strike but gives one a glimpse into the grand possibilities of a people inspired by a common cause and the will to achieve.

The devotion and energy of the strikers seemed, at the beginning of the strike, to promise a speedy victory. If their efforts have so far not proved as successful as expected, the cause is probably to be found in the manner the struggle has been conducted.

however, know that the eternal struggle of right against might cannot be brushed aside by a kid-gloved hand. The strikers should preserve their self-respect by refusing the crumbs off the castle floor. With Tolstoy, the shirt-waist girls may confute the fine ladies:

“You are willing to do everything for us, except get off our backs.”

Various factors have no doubt contributed to the prolongation of the waist-makers’ strike. But it must not be forgotten that the longer such a fight is drawn out, the less chance for the workingmen to win, since both their treasury and power of resistance are thus severely sapped. In the struggle between master and

slave, the latter – to be successful – must strike quickly and, above all, as hard as possible. Those who are conducting the present strike have apparently ignored this most vital consideration.

Further, it is questionable whether the practice of settling with individual manufacturers (the employees of the latter resuming work) is really beneficial to the strike. Whatever benefit small groups of strikers may thus gain is more than offset by the opportunity afforded to the larger manufacturers to have their work done secretly in the “settled” shops. Again, the depletion of the ranks is a source of suspicion and distrust, and tends to minimise the importance of the strike. On the

whole, the practice of gradual settling weakens rather than strengthens the cause at stake.

But still more serious is the failure of the strike leaders to demand the active cooperation of other labour bodies. That, apparently, was not considered as important as dilly-dallying with arbitration and wasting time currying favour with rich ladies whose leisure hangs heavy on their hands.

No attempt has been made to interest even the directly allied trades of the Garment Workers in a sympathetic General Strike. And yet such a step should have been suggested by all the experience of the past.

But whatever the outcome of the present strike, the waist-makers, as well as the workers at large, are learning the urgent and valuable lesson of industrial organisation and the General Strike.

In modern days of centralised industry and the thorough organisation of capital, no strike of ordinary proportions, of a single branch of a great industry, has much chance of success. The standing army of Hunger, eager for the least crumb, and the uniformed army of police and military are both at the instant service of capital. In a test of mere financial endurance labour is necessarily the loser. Its sole hope lies in hitting quick

Mother Earth, February 1910

A brand new panacea for all labour troubles has been discovered by Dr. Charles W. Eliot, former president of Harvard University, whose memory is venerated by all scabs. He is the sponsor of a bill introduced in the Massachusetts legislature, which proposes to abolish strikes and lockouts by forcing employees to refer their disputes to a board of investigation, before causing a stoppage of work.

It is to be hoped that labour will not be caught in this trap. Compulsory arbitration is one of the gravest perils to the workingman. Its dire results can be seen in Australia and other countries, where it has practically

Mother Earth, March 1910

The Philadelphia general strike is without doubt the most important event in the history of American labour. It is no exaggeration to say that it marks a new epoch in the industrial life of the country.

There have been great strikes before, sympathetic strikes, and even general strikes of a *particular* industry. But never before has the country witnessed the workingmen of *an entire city* – a great industrial centre – make common cause and rise as one man in aid of striking fellow-workers.

This splendid manifestation of solidarity indicates the final passing away of the small, isolated strike. It begins a new era of the practical application – on a large scale – of the motto, “An injury to one is the concern of all.”

It is a dangerous innovation. It sounds the death knell of wage slavery. The masters realise the peril. Hence their frantic efforts to break the general strike, no matter at what cost of suffering and blood.

In a struggle of this character – given equal determination – the winner will be he who best understands the final aim and most effective methods. So far it is still the masters who have this advantage. Their aim is the subjugation of labour; their tactics, trickery and brutal force. In both, aim and methods, they have the whole machinery of government – municipal, State, and Federal – at their command. For governments exist just for that purpose: to uphold Things as They Are and to secure to the robber barons the fruit of others’ labour.

and hard, but no single branch of any industry can deliver such a blow. It requires the combined strength of all the departments of any given industry.

But whatever the outcome of the present strike, the waist-makers, as well as the workers at large, are learning the urgent and valuable lesson of *industrial* organisation and the General Strike.

deprived labour of the liberty to strike. American workingmen, especially, ought to know by this time what investigation and arbitration boards accomplish for their benefit.

The proposed bill is but another attempt to lull labour into the belief that the State has its interests at heart. Incidentally it will create more sinecures for parasites with a “pull.”

Eliot’s scheme is a direct blow at organised labour, designed to destroy the proletariat’s only efficient weapon, the strike.

The workingmen, on the other hand, have but *one* weapon – their numerical strength and producing power. If they fail to make energetic use of that, they are doomed to defeat. If they are too cowardly to resist, actively, police brutality, they will be clubbed into submission. If they foolishly rely on the Messiah of arbitration, they will be cheated out of victory.

All this American labour is gradually being taught by bitter experience, by the example of their more advanced fellow-workers of Europe, and by the propaganda of the general strike idea, which – by the way – was first suggested and advocated by the much-hated Anarchists.

The general strike of Philadelphia is but the first articulate cry of the awakening giant. Whatever its outcome, it is a tremendous moral victory, a long step on the road towards emancipation. Before long other cities will follow the example of Philadelphia; strikes will assume national and international proportions, finally culminating in *the* strike of enslaved labour for the possession of the earth and the fulness thereof.

The month of March has no special significance for the American proletariat. Perhaps a coming, enlarged, national repetition of the Philadelphia struggle will make March as memorable in this country as it is in the history of Europe.

There March is the *red month*. The month of revolutions, when the storms of popular uprisings swept the Totten foundations of society. It is the red month in the annals of Prussia, of Austria and France, which were lit up by the fires of liberty in the March days of 1848.

Twenty-three years later the proletariat of Paris again Tose in arms against the dictatorship of the abominable Thiers, who had attempted to force a new monarchy upon exhausted France, still bleeding from the wounds made by the German bayonets. The

Mother Earth, April 1910

The election of the Social Democratic candidates in Milwaukee seems to have confused the minds of even some usually clear-headed radicals. They think it a Socialist victory.

The truth of the matter is that the citizens of Milwaukee got tired of corrupt Republican and Democratic rule. The aroused civic consciousness demanded cleaner politics and an honest administration. This the Social Democrats promised them. The people evidently had faith in their promises. The cumulative popular disgust with the old parties and broken pledges swept the Social Democrats into power.

But it is childish to pretend that the election of the Social Democrats is a victory for revolutionary Socialism. On the contrary, it is its debacle. The original purpose of Socialist political activity was to propagare revolutionary Socialism, i. e., the abolition of capitalism and wage slavery. Political Socialism has perverted the *means* into an *end*. The Milwaukee brand, especially, has transformed Socialism into a demand for clean street cars, three-cent fare, cheaper gas, and public lavatories. On equally revolutionary planks such men as Potato-patch Pingree, Golden Rule Jones, Tom Johnson, Brand Whitlock, Judge Gaynor, and others have been carried into power with tremendous pluralities. The Populists had been even more radical.

The Social Democratic success in Milwaukee is a victory for petty bourgeois reform. It is fraught with great danger to real Socialism, the ideal of liberty, equal opportunity, and justice. The present "victory" will prove the final debacle of American Socialism if the

Mother Earth, May 1910

The First of May is the holiday of the revolutionary proletariat. It represents the protest of awakened labour against industrial slavery and social injustice. It crystallises the expression of intelligent dissatisfaction, the demand for better and higher things.

Commune was proclaimed, and the cry of liberty was re-echoed beyond the confines of France.

The political and economic aspirations of the people were stifled in blood. But not in vain were those Struggles. The red month of March has taught us a Valuable lesson. A revolution, to be successful, must first of all destroy the very basis of all tyranny: its material existence. It was the stupid reverence for stolen property that caused the fall of the Paris Commune and the defeat of other uprisings. The lessons of the past will guide the people in the coming storms of March.

Socialists at large don't take timely warning against the siren promise of political success at the cost of forswearing their real aims and ideals.

"Mother" Jones the well-known Socialist agitator, having investigated the conditions existing in the large bottling shops of the Milwaukee breweries, gives a heart-rending picture of the terrible exploitation of the girls employed in that industry. Underpaid and underfed, mostly consumptives, these helpless victims of insatiable greed are sentenced to slave daily at hard labour under the worst imaginable conditions. Sentenced, because of the crime of involuntary poverty. Even the right to organise is denied them.

The editor of the *Call* observes that "even the powerful Milwaukee brewery barons may be made to bend before the storm of indignation that is sure to be aroused by a nation-wide knowledge of the grewsome conditions in their establishments." Perhaps. But a much simpler and more immediately effective method would be for the powerful union of the Milwaukee brewery workers – mostly Socialists, by the way – to demand, under threat of a strike, better conditions and the right to organise for the girl slaves in their own industry. Why do they keep silent in the face of such terrible conditions? Is it because the three-dollar-a-week girls are not worthy the attention of the aristocrats of labour? Is it possible that the spirit of the Milwaukee brewery workers is on a par with that of the highly paid brewery workers of Philadelphia, *who refused to join the general strike?*

As such, the day is of tremendous significance. The voluntary stoppage of labour on that day is in itself a declaration of war, the bugle call to the exploited to form their ranks for the coming combat. The street demonstrations signify the springtime of awakened

hope and life, the overflow of energies gathered in the long winter night.

Thus the First of May is labour's Declaration of Independence from all the forces of oppression, tyranny, and exploitation – a declaration whose efficacy and ultimate success depend on labour's determined, uncompromising stand against the powers of darkness.

Unfortunately, the workers – especially those of America – have failed fully to grasp the revolutionary purpose of labour's great day. They have permitted themselves to be led – and, consequently, misled – by false and blind counsellors. Gradually the First of May

has been shorn of its elemental meaning and force, and emasculated into an inane Sunday-best parade, by the grace of the very powers against whom the protest is directed.

The First of May, 1910, falling on a Sunday, the calendar was revolutionised to guard against the revolutionising of the proletariat: the demonstrations, by order of the authorities, took place on the preceding Saturday, April 30th. This stupid pusillanimity of labour robbed the day of all its revolutionary significance, and merely served to demonstrate the *weakness* of the giant whose mission is the overthrow of the capitalist régime.

Mother Earth, August 1910

The puerility and blindness of the American Federation of Labor pass all comprehension. That "powerful" organisation calmly continues claiming victories for labour in the face of constantly growing oppression, sweeping injunctions, and almost uniform defeat in strikes.

For almost two decades the Federation has practiced the principles of craft unionism, with its resultant internal divisions and external policy of vacillation, compromise, and servility. The net result of twenty years of such "struggle" is evidenced by the Draconian injunction of Judge Richardson, of the Superior Court of Boston, Mass. The injunction is the most vicious assault that organised labour has had to sustain from the courts. Not only does it prohibit the Photo Engravers' Union from conducting a strike against a certain Boston firm, but it also formulates general rules as to when the workers may or may not strike. It further paves the way for an almost total prohibition of union support to striking members, even when the latter are engaged in a "lawful" strike.

Thus the chains of slavery are continually tightening around American labour. Are the fetters not yet sufficiently galling to open the workmen's eyes to the futility of conservative methods and craft disorganisation? to convince them that the old methods of fighting exploitation have resulted in failure and defeat, and that only a united industrial army, determined and revolutionary, can hope to wage a successful war for economic independence?

[...]

Whether e West or East, North or South, the history of modern strikes is always the same: local and State authorities rush to the aid of the employers, strikers are clubbed and shot down, and "law and order" vindicated.

The proverbial peace of Warsaw reigns in the strike regions. In Columbus, Ohio, the troops help to run the street cars; in Brooklyn, N. Y., the police protect the interests of the Sugar Trust. At both places the good fathers of the Church advise the strikers to return to work, to be quiet and patient, though their wives and children starve to death.

It is remarkable what an amount of gratuitous advice labour receives. But still more remarkable is the fact that the generous advice, from whatever source, always sounds the same

note: Be patient, keep quiet. Even our step-brothers, the Socialists, join the chorus, in no uncertain voice.

Unfortunately, the wage slave generally follows this advice – with evident results. Exploitation grows more intense, poverty constantly increases, the spirit of manly resistance is paralysed. Some day the toilers may awaken to this all-too-evident fact. They will then realise that salvation from the terrible economic hell lies not in servile submission to robbery and extortion, but in organised, determined resistance with every weapon at hand.

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Mother Earth. September 1910

In the face of the constantly growing humiliation and oppression of the wage slave, it is the cruellest irony to speak of "Labor Day."

Yet supposedly well meaning persons still prate of "the dignity" of labour, and the tremendous advances being made by the "powerful" unions. The *American Federationist*, the official organ of Samuel Gompers, goes even further and urges the workingmen "to bring about an understanding in their respective districts with representatives of the church so that ministers will make addresses that may attract trade unionists to the churches in large numbers for the day (Labor Sunday)."

The Gompers type realises that the co-operation of the churches is necessary to continue labour in its present law-abiding slavery. In that every exploiter is in hearty

agreement with the great American labour leader. The effect of such dire influences has been to stupefy and emasculate the workingmen. What wonder, then, that the Central Labor Union of Toledo, Ohio, is calling upon the Governor of that State to *declare martial law* to settle the Columbus street car strike.

Could confusion be worse confounded? Respect for law and adoration of authority have so persistently been instilled into the American workingman that he has almost lost all spirit of independence, all ability to think and act for himself.

There will be no real Labor Day till the wage slave unsaddles his professional leaders and straightens his back to face his enemies and to fight them; without cringing, with revolutionary spirit and with weapons of his own choosing.

Mother Earth, October 1910

It is encouraging to note that the persistent Anarchist propaganda against parliamentarism is bearing good fruit. Thoughtful workingmen are beginning to realise how destructive political "action" is to the best interests of labour. They are learning that their futile wanderings in the dark labyrinths of politics have paralysed their efforts in the economic arena and resulted in deplorable failure.

But especially is it gratifying that those most inveterate governmentals – our step-brothers, the Socialists – are being gradually forced to acknowledge the utter uselessness of politics and the paramount importance of the struggle on the industrial field.

Many symptoms indicate the beneficial change that is coming over the parliamentary hearts of Socialists, in England as well as in America. Thus the *International Socialist Review* indorses the attitude of Victor Grayson, who severely criticises parliamentarism and pleads for "the immediate and serious consideration of industrial unionism." Still more instructive words, highly illuminative of the situation, come from one of the most intelligent and outspoken Socialist sources. In a recent issue, the London *New Age* says, editorially:

"...There is not the slightest doubt about one thing, namely, that the immediate futility of political action is dawning on the members of the trade unions. We do not attribute to them any profound political acumen when we affirm that the question now simmering in their minds is whether they have anything whatever to gain by being in politics at all... The governing classes are infinitely less afraid of

the workingman's vote than of his strike. All these late years we have been assuring the wretched wage slaves that their votes were worth their weight in progress. It has been pretended that it mattered vitally and enormously to them, their children, their country, their king, and their God, that they should vote for the right man. Well, they now begin to learn that it doesn't matter to any one of these things. During the last ten years the so-called political power of the working classes has gone up by leaps and bounds, while at the same time their wages have, proportionately to profits made by their masters, gone down by leaps and bounds. Has it altered the actual conditions of factory and workshop life that two and a half million unionists should have dabbled for ten years in politics? Are the hours of labour fewer or the rates of wages more? Is a sovereign more easily earned now than ten years ago? Will it buy more? Not one of these questions can be answered satisfactorily. Then what is the good of politics to the workingman? Suppose the workingman withdraws from politics, discovering that his vote is of no importance to himself; nothing particular would happen in the political world in consequence. But suppose him active in another sphere, and in the sphere from which, by singular adroitness, he was ten years ago diverted! We refer to the sphere of labour. It is plain that the governing classes can manage to grub along without workingmen's votes, but they cannot get along at all without

workingmen's labour... . Nor need we imagine that the old clumsy and inefficient use of the local or trade strike as a weapon of social betterment will be employed when the time comes to boycott the ballot box. In this sort of warfare inventions also have been made. Like a modern European war, a modern strike will be all over in a fortnight at the outside; but there

will have been engaged in it millions of men involving millions more."

These are very encouraging signs. Bitter experience in the school of life is teaching the trades unions, as well as the Socialists, the deep truth of Anarchist propaganda. Away with the worship of the governmental fetich. In direct action along economic lines lies the emancipation of labour.

Mother Earth, November 1910

Barely twenty-three years have passed since the capitalist conspiracy of 1887, which resulted in the legal murder of our comrades, Parsons, Spies, Lingg, Fischer, and Engel. Yet a new crime, more dastardly than ever, is now on foot to throttle labour. The moneyed powers have again entered into a conspiracy.

This time on the Pacific Coast, where they have been carrying on a ferocious war upon organised labour. With usual brazenness they are laying every crime at the doors of the workers in order to discredit the attempt for economic betterment. As on previous occasions, the entire police force and the courts of San Francisco and Los Angeles are on the side of capitalism, ready to do their masters' bidding, to hound and run down the workers. It is therefore of the utmost importance that labour everywhere come to the rescue of their fellow workers in California.

Theirs is not a battle of the moment. It is an economic war of the gravest significance to the cause of all the workingmen of America.

Our brothers in Los Angeles have already realised the seriousness of the situation. They know that nothing short of strong, energetic organised activity on their part will check the villainy of the enemy. With that in view a gigantic demonstration has been arranged; 30,000 workers will manifest their solidarity and devotion to the cause of industrial emancipation. We have sent them the following message:

Naturally. It would not do to acquaint the American workers with the victory of their brothers in France.

They might learn by example. They might realise that revolutionary tactics are much in place in our economic struggle.

That would indeed be disastrous for the American exploiters.

We follow with great interest your brave struggle. It is not only for our brothers in California, but all workers in America for their right, their liberty, and their economic wellbeing. We extend to you our moral, and if need be, our financial support. The courage and solidarity of labour must conquer not only in Los Angeles, but everywhere.

[...]

The American press, ever ready to bring columns of lickspittle news about the doings of European nobility, had almost nothing to report of the General Strike of the French railway employees.

Naturally. It would not do to acquaint the American workers with the victory of their brothers in France. They might learn by example. They might realise that revolutionary tactics are much in place in our economic struggle.

That would indeed be disastrous for the American exploiters. How

much the workers in France have learned to appreciate revolutionary economic methods is best proved by the result of the conference of the *Confederation du Travail* at Toulouse. The reform element with its legal proposition of economic warfare was completely voted down by 1,087, as against 97 votes. Direct Action and the General Strike are the slogans of the workers. Thus Anarchist agitation in the ranks of the Federation has scored a tremendous victory.

Mother Earth, December 1910

How much the authorities fear the awakening of the working class is evident not only from the events in Los Angeles, but also from the attempts to suppress free speech in various Western cities. In San Diego the police prevented, by force, the holding of meetings in commemoration of the Chicago Anarchists. But the spirit of our martyred comrades is alive in the ranks of the proletariat. How prophetic were the words of August Spies: *There will come a time when our silence will be more powerful than the voices you strangle to-day,*

Mother Earth, May 1911

The cover of this issue shows a game rooster mounted on a broken-down gallows and crowing into the world his triumphant battle-cry. The drawing, sketched by a French-Bohemian artist, symbolises the chantecler call for the Coming Day.

On every hand there is evidence of the approach of dawn. Superstition and prejudice is disappearing ; institutions grown evil with age are weakening, slowly dying. The existing is falling into decay. May it not be suffered to be patched up again, to mask it with the appearance of solidity and strength.

“Give the thing about to fall
The last and final blow.”

The First of May – that is the chantecler cry of the oppressed. Its significance lay in being *the* day of the proletariat of the world. Indeed, it could have been a bold challenge to the powers of darkness. By an international general strike on that day the workers of the world could demonstrate how powerful is the army consciously and determinedly battling for its emancipation.

This spirit is still woefully lacking in the First of May demonstrations in America. More akin to it are the toilers of France. To them May Day represents the real purpose of the day as the harbinger of social reconstruction, the forerunner of the Social Revolution.

In Germany the First of May has become quite respectable. The Social Democracy – a State within a State – regulates and levels everything in the most thorough manner. One cannot help thinking of the machine-like German military drill when reading in the press reports that seventy-three May Day meetings took place in Berlin, each meeting passing the identical resolutions – unanimously, no doubt.

Very little significance has the First of May in England. It was in this land that Karl Marx drew his inspiration for the theory of the revolutionary class struggle. But O irony! in no country of Europe is there so little class consciousness as in England.

Only those that have an interest in misrepresentation can picture the First of May celebrations in America as great proletarian demonstrations. On the whole, May

Day bears the same character here as the legally established Labor Day. There is no sign of a general cessation of work. The toilers have not the courage to lay down their tools and risk their daily wage. Especially do the “genuine American” workingmen lack the spirit to do so.

In New York City it was mostly Jewish and some Italian unions that participated in the First of May daytime parade. The other organisations held their demonstrations in the evening, after a “fair day’s” work. They should really feel ashamed of their pusillanimity, for their unions are of long standing, while the Jewish organisations are quite young, having arisen within comparatively recent years.

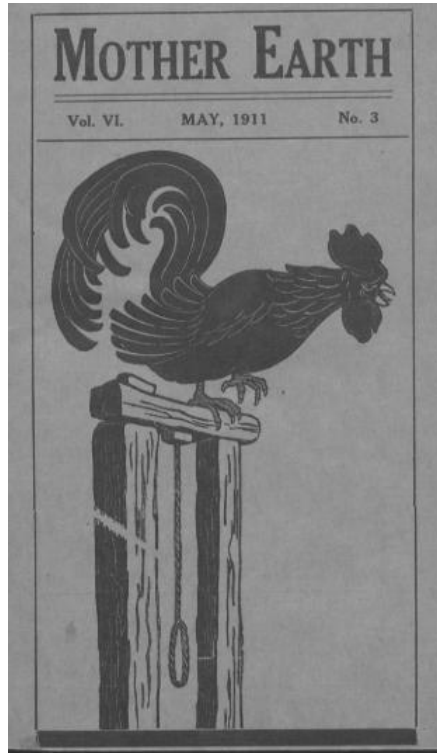
A May demonstration without suspension of work is no more significant than an ordinary mid-summer picnic.

One of the most disagreeable features of the parade was the sight of the police-lines and the prominence of the national flag. The latter especially disgraces the meaning of the day. If, as claimed, it is absolutely necessary to carry the banner of the Republic, it would be best to hire a few detectives for the purpose – they fit in well with the national honour. Honest workingmen should refuse to touch the rag.

* * *

It is reported that John Mitchell, the notorious misleader of labour, having resigned his position with the Civic Federation, intends to go on a lecture tour. He is to carry to the toiling masses the gospel of “the identity of interests” between master and slave, and to impress them with the sanctity of contracts and the excellence of arbitration courts. Could any one but a dunce or a conscious heeler of capitalism expound this “Philosophy of Trade Unionism”?

Mitchell and his gospel must sound like mockery in the ears of labour. Harmony and arbitration, wherever officially established, have proved a snare and delusion for the toilers. In Australia, in Canada, in various parts of this country, and especially in the recent strikes in New York, all great labour struggles have suffered defeat because the workers, following the advice of the Mitchells, have permitted themselves to be ensnared in the trap of arbitration courts.



Mother Earth, June 1911

The movement for a general strike, to be declared on the day McNamara et al. are put on trial, is by no means as impractical as some alleged radicals seem to believe.

True, the great body of American labour cannot be said to be imbued either with class solidarity or revolutionary consciousness. But the spirit of rebellious discontent is abroad and bitter experience is dispelling the delusion of the identity of interests between capital and labour. Slowly the realisation of necessary united effort is dawning upon the workers ; the hands of toil are joined in brotherly clasp, and the first lessons of effective resistance against oppression are being learned.

But a few years ago the general strike was an impossible proposition in this country. Since then general strikes have taken place in the larger industrial centres with splendid results. The soil is ripening for a general strike of national, aye, of international proportions, and – no power in heaven or hell can withstand the mighty arm of the feeders of the world.

Mother Earth, July 1911

Direct action and the General Strike, so much tabooed by Socialist politicians, have been proven through practical experience the most effective weapons of the workers.

The seamen's strike in England again demonstrates the utter helplessness of capitalism in the face of the General Strike. It is to be regretted that many trade-unions are still subject to the authority of their timid leaders who lack the courage to carry the General Strike to its logical conclusion. But one has only to follow the activities of the seamen to realise that the hold of the leaders is very markedly weakening. Through direct action these sturdy workers have wrenched from the enemy more within a few days than their leaders have accomplished in many years of weak-kneed negotiation.

American seamen might profit much by this great moral lesson of their European comrades. The Latin members of the Seamen's Union of New York have evidently grasped the situation. Unfortunately, their proposition of a sympathetic strike was voted down by the wire-pulling of the leaders. The Latin Seamen of America have, indeed, a difficult task. Not only must they labour diligently to organise their own people, but they also have to carry on their active agitation among

the American fellow-workers, if the spirit of solidarity and the knowledge of revolutionary warfare are ever to become part of the American labour struggle.

* * *

The French proletariat is again demonstrating the spirit of solidarity, thereby proving that it is still at the helm of the international social movement. The very moment the war clouds became threatening on account of Morocco, the Confederation du Travail issued a call for a General Strike, in case war should be declared.

The French workers contemplate a monster protest for which they hope to enlist the support of their Spanish and German comrades, a demonstration against the contemplated wholesale murder of war. Already a peace demonstration has been set for July 23rd, in Berlin.

The Confederation strongly favoured that the English trade-unions be asked to participate. Stupidly this was declined by the German labour leaders, for "political reasons." Let us hope these gentlemen will not lose courage at the last moment and thus prevent the demonstration.

Mother Earth, November 1911

While the shopmen of the Western railroads are out on strike, the trainmen on the same lines tranquilly continue at work. They carry wagonloads of scabs to points where the companies are particularly anxious to break the strike.

So long as the railroad magnates are enabled to employ with such ease one labour organisation as a club against another, successful strikes are impossible. The workman badly needs a lesson in solidarity, the general strike, and direct action.

Mother Earth, January 1912

Legal justice is a Janus head with two faces, the one smiling fawningly upon the rich and influential, the other turned with cruel sneer toward the poor and

friendless. This is the true character of justice, and therefore those familiar with it were not surprised at the verdict rendered in the case of Harris & Blank, of

the Triangle Shirtwaist Company. The two men were charged with having caused the death of 147 persons, among them 131 young girls and women, who helplessly perished in the fire-trap of the Triangle factory. It was demonstrated during the trial that all safety requirements were entirely ignored by the bosses. The owners of the factory were concerned solely with the question of profits. They had no time to consider the safety of their employees. And the city authorities and factory inspectors drew their comfortable salaries and let the fire-traps remain undisturbed.

Had the laws and regulations of the safety department been taken seriously, the factory inspectors and heads of the city government would have been placed in the prisoners' dock together with Harris and Blank, all equally responsible for the terrible holocaust that cost 147 human lives. But regulations for the safety of workers are not meant seriously. Worse yet, they are a positive menace for the trustful toilers, who believe that their lives are protected, while in reality industrial murder knows no limits, the alleged protection a miserable sham on paper.

The acquittal of Harris and Blank signifies the legalisation, the justification of industrial murder as an established economic fact. Notwithstanding the locked factory exits and the strong suspicion that they had bribed the witnesses, the bosses were freed from all

responsibility for the wholesale slaughter, because the judge and jury evidently believed in their own hearts that such happenings, such bloody catastrophes are inevitable, and are conditioned in the very system. Thus they thought. Yet they dared not utter the thought, for it would have disclosed the criminal character of the system – aye, more, it would have torn the mask off the miserable comedy of their “justice.”

It has further developed during the trial that in the industrial field the workers are commonly considered as thieves, and treated accordingly. Like convicts, they are searched and locked in, that they may not steal a little piece of cloth or a spool of cotton. The only difference between these workers and the convict is that the latter is imprisoned for a crime already committed, while the “free” worker is kept under lock and key on suspicion that he *might* commit a crime. Suspicion alone suffices.

If the toilers are not content to continue to risk life and limb every day and every hour of their existence, they must themselves seek security in thorough organisation and in solidaric activity. They will have to discard their naive faith in and reliance upon city or State providence, and seek to protect their lives by direct action on the spot, in shop and factory, introducing regulations and measures necessary to protect themselves against the consequences of capitalist greed.

Mother Earth, February 1912

From the industrial battlefield at Lawrence comes the news of military terror, murder, and violence. The struggle has already claimed two victims: Anna Lapizzo, who was fatally shot during a skirmish with the militia, and John Rami, who was bayoneted to death by a soldier.

Those responsible – directly and indirectly – for the twofold murder are the civil and military authorities, who serve the cause of the manufacturers by spilling the blood of the workers and attacking every peaceful passerby like highway robbers.

These authorities planned a great *coup* by arresting the strike leaders Joseph Ettor and Arturo Giovannetti, editor of the New York Italian labour paper, *Il Proletario*. They were taken in custody on the charge of complicity in the killing of Anna Lapizzo. The accusation is baseless, but it serves the purpose of the textile magnates to get Ettor out of the way. It is but another case where “justice” openly and shamelessly plays the bloodhound for the money power.

State and capital work hand in glove at Lawrence; perfect harmony prevails between them. Governor

Foss, who ordered two thousand soldiers to protect the interests of the exploiters, is himself a mill owner. The President of Harvard University is interested, as one of the stockholders, in the dividends from the Lawrence factories. How fortunate that the baseball and football imbeciles of his university are eager to play the executioners at Lawrence. It will surely have a salutary effect upon their education to be permitted to defend the interests of their President with bayonet and bullet.

In Europe the student bodies have often marched at the head of popular uprisings, enthusiastically battling on the side of the people. Here the students are miserable ruffians and scabs in the service of the plutocracy.

Indeed, it is because of high dividends that Lawrence has been converted into a shambles. Consider these figures:

The American Woolen Company, owning the biggest mills, has a capital of \$69,500,000, and a surplus of \$11,271,454. It pays 7 per cent.

The Pacific Mills have \$3,000,000 capital, a surplus of \$6,127, 000. They pay more than 12 per cent. The market price in 1912 of the Pacific stock has advanced to \$3,775 a share, a gain of \$445 per share for the year. in 7 the Pacific Mills paid an extra dividend of 20 per cent. in cash.

The Arlington Mills have \$8,000,000 capital and a surplus of \$2,824,309. In 1905 these mills paid an extra dividend of 33 per cent. in cash.

The above fully clarifies the situation.

The hordes of police, soldiers, detectives, and university ruffians have been turned loose upon the helpless textile workers to force them by hunger and violence to continue to fill the coffers of the masters and to perpetuate their corrupt political and industrial despotism.

Workers of America! The American Federation of Labor is neither willing nor able to help the starving strikers in

Lawrence – the leaders of that “powerful” body are too busy mending their moral record. It is for you, workingmen, to hasten to the aid of your striking brothers. It is your struggle, the struggle of all labour now being fought in Lawrence. Come to their aid!

Contributions are to be sent to Joseph Bedard, Secretary Strike Committee, 9 Mason St., Lawrence, Mass.

* * *

Foss, the reform Governor of Massachusetts, has expressed his determination to check the least indication of Anarchist tendencies with the whole power at his command, In the language of capitalist statesmanship it is equivalent to a threat of military violence.

A little more diplomacy, Mr. Governor. If every timid attempt of labour to improve economic conditions is called Anarchy, the workers will presently perceive that the Anarchists are their best friends.

Mother Earth, April 1912

Terrified by the General Strike, the government of Great Britain hastened to pass the Minimum Wage Bill – a gross miscarriage of governmental impotence and demagoguery in economic matters.

In the first place, the new law entirely fails to provide for a minimum wage. It is recognised only theoretically, on paper. In practical application the manufacturers of England – like those of Lawrence – will do their utmost to force upon their employees starvation wages as a minimum wage.

This law masks an element of treachery that labour should beware of. It will necessarily result in governmental compulsion: when the minimum wage is fixed by the arbitration boards, or similar bodies, the workers will be legally forced to submit to the decision, however detrimental to their interests. In other words, this bill is designed as a guillotine for the decapitation of strikes, especially of the General Strike.

If the workers will give their consent to this bill, they will thus themselves help to bind their hands with the chains of legality, that will make more difficult, if not entirely preclude, independent action in the future.

[...]

An editorial in the N. Y. *Call* (March 19th) unwittingly illumines the stupefaction of Socialist politicians over the fact that the General Strike is becoming a universal factor in the labour struggle. Think of it! Socialist congresses and theoreticians have persistently denounced and opposed the general strike idea; they have condemned it as “general nonsense,” the

miscarriage of an overheated Anarchist imagination, and fought it by all means, fair and foul. And here – *horrible dictu!* – the General Strike is even winning great victories! Listen to the *Call*:

Some idea of the rapidity with which events are moving throughout the world of labour may be obtained by a glance backward at the status of the general strike as it appeared but a short time ago to Socialist congresses and party theorists. But a year or so ago the German Socialist convention, in discussing the question, came to the general conclusion that it was a most Uncertain weapon, doubtful as to practicability, and only seemingly possible of use under peculiar circumstances, which could not very well be defined. And but a few months ago J. Ramsay MacDonald, looked upon by many as the most practical British Socialist, in a lengthy essay, reached much more unfavourable conclusions regarding it, leaving the distinct impression that it was on the whole both impossible and impractical.

But to-day, in Mr. MacDonald’s own country, we not only see a general strike in the mining industry, but one so entirely possible and practical that those taking part in it look upon their victory as practically secured already. In addition, it is now stated that there is every likelihood that the existing general strike may very shortly become still more “general” by the transport workers and practically all the other

unions in the country laying down their tools. And there is none to-day in England, whether capitalist or Socialist, to deny the possibility of this occurrence.

Very well. But why not be honest about it? The story of the General Strike is not all told, without pointing out that it was the Anarchists who since the days of the *Internationale* have steadily advocated direct fighting methods and propagated the General Strike, and that for this they were denounced by the Socialist politicians as madmen and *agents provocateurs*.

[...]

It is a source of great pleasure to observe how the Lawrence strike, carried to a successful issue without the farce of "recognition" or arbitration, has stirred the whole textile industry of New England. The workers in mill and factory have been roused in the larger as well as the smaller industrial centres. They are awakening from their apathy and beginning to realise that strikes,

if conducted as in Lawrence, with its tremendous manifestation of solidarity, need not be failures – as so many recent strikes were – and that it is not necessary to turn the labour arena into a market place for aspiring politicians like the John Goldens.

The result of the struggle is that in various places the wages of the workers have been raised "voluntarily," because the manufacturers feared that the example of Lawrence would inspire the workers everywhere with courage and solidarity, beyond the power of club and bayonet to subdue.

However, Ettore and Giovannitti, and a number of others, are still being kept in prison on charges that would never have been made, were not Justice the prostitute of the exploiters. Moreover, there is much want and suffering among the textile workers, as a result of the long heroic strike. It is imperative

that every sympathiser with the cause of labour hasten to aid the struggling toilers.

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Mother Earth, May 1912

The indictments against Ettore and Giovannitti and other prominent participants in the Lawrence strike contain the repeated charge of conspiracy. This method seems to appeal very strongly to the enemy, as affording a sure means for satisfying their thirst for revenge. In the ever more intense and savage struggle, capital is branding as conspiracy every attempt of labour to improve conditions of work. Plutocratic morality and class courts stamp as conspiracy every effort toward liberty and independence.

If conspiracy is really to be punished, then first of all should be the turn of the criminals of high finance and industry who conspire to adulterate the means of subsistence and then raise prices on their trashy stuff.

From the various "conspiracy" indictments at Lawrence, it is evident that the authorities are determined to railroad the leaders of the successful textile strike to the electric chair or to prison. They are trying to rush matters, hoping to convict the defendants before a strong protest movement is set in motion. The trial of Ettore and Giovannitti has been set for the 27th of this month, and if American labour

continues to remain passive in the matter, the fate of these two victims of the Woolen Trust will be quickly sealed.

Don't wait till it is too late. We urge upon all friends of labour to take immediate steps to organise a monster protest movement. The methods employed in the case of Haywood, Moyer and Pettibone can be used again, with equally good result. It will be to the eternal shame of American labour to permit the sacrifice of the two valiant fighters in the cause of the workers. Away with compromise that merely betrays weakness and cowardice! Only a bold and determined stand can save our comrades. Let us warn the enemy that the contemplated outrage will not be permitted.

Unfortunately, the toilers of the country are not prepared for a national general Strike, But a general strike of all the workers of the State of Massachusetts will show the plutocratic cannibals the spirit of the situation; it will enlighten the masters of the things to be expected, and may they quickly realise that henceforth the motto of labour, driven to desperation will be – an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.

Mother Earth, July 1912

When a capitalist scribbler refers to some mob outrage as “Anarchistic,” he may perhaps be excused on the ground of ignorance. But what shall we say of Socialist writers who persist in characterising the San Diego savagery as ‘a state of Anarchy’? Is it sheer idiocy or calculated misrepresentation?

For the benefit of those apt to be misled by the vicious misrepresentations of journalistic whores – be they capitalist or Socialist – it is necessary only to mention that the very essence of Anarchy is non-invasion. Anarchy means social harmony conditioned by individual liberty; it signifies freedom from rule, and absence of man-made laws, which are always invasive and oppressive.

* * *

We confess that we are somewhat at a loss to understand the agitation among Socialists over the circumstance that a certain judge refused a man his citizenship papers on the ground that he was a Socialist.

The purpose of true Socialism is to overthrow existing social, political, and economic institutions. But these have the constitution as their basic law, their fundamental justification. Can any one consistently work for the abolition of capitalism and at the same time pledge himself to uphold the constitution?

The Anarchists, enemies of every contraption for the oppression-of man – whether it be known as statutory or constitutional law – have long since been legally declared ineligible to citizenship. And we are proud of it. To paraphrase Thoreau: When honest men are branded criminals, what right has an Anarchist to be found anywhere except among the outcasts?

Once upon a time it was considered a terrible calamity to be excommunicated from the Church, To-day it is a matter of indifference to most people whether the pope bless or curse. We look hopefully forward to the time when political excommunication will have become as empty a threat as church excommunication is now.

[...]

Very interesting things are happening in the Eldorado of the Labor Party and State Socialists – Australia and New Zealand. State Socialism is fast progressing there on the road to failure. The prophecy of the State worshippers that the struggle between the ‘rich and the poor will grow less intense, and that the social chasm will be gradually bridged by the passage of labour laws, has proved a snare. The so-called labour laws have conferred a great blessing upon the masters; they have enabled them to send strike leaders to jail

for inciting discontent and causing a stoppage of work without: the consent of arbitration boards. The employers may cut wages, increase the hours, and heap indignities upon labour, but the workers must not resort to strikes without permission of the proper authority.

These “labour laws” were presumably passed in the interests of “the third party to a strike” – the good, suffering public. But in reality the law serves to paralyse every effort to improve the condition of labour “without governmental permission.” . The only party to profit are the masters.

Naturally, under these conditions the situation is becoming unbearable. Coal strikes and other labour disturbances are breaking out throughout the country in spite of the law against strikes, and the armed hand of authority is ready to stifle the discontent of the toilers with club and bayonet.

Simultaneously with the increasing number of illegal strikes is also growing the anti-militaristic spirit. It is directed especially against the statute introducing conscription. Cases of refusal of military duty are accumulating. Opposition to this despotic departure has grown so strong that the authorities fear to apply the law in its full draconic force. The imprisonment of a large number of young men for refusing military duty is creating a great deal of active discontent. Thus, fortunately, the situation points to a speedy disintegration of this Eldorado of reformers and State worshippers.

* * *

In every country syndicalist ideas are rejuvenating the labour movement with new vigour and energy. That is especially apparent in England, where the trades unions seemed to have gone to seed. ‘They mostly served some leaders as stepladders to political advancement, and, as a result of indirect political and capitalist leadership, they had become quite unfit to carry on the battle of emancipation.

More than that, they were a constant menace to international proletarian solidarity, Repeatedly within recent years English workers had lent themselves to strikebreaking on the Continent. No wonder. Organisations that fail to inspire their members with the spirit of resistance and struggle for an ideal, quickly deteriorate and lose the power of solidaric understanding and effort.

Militant syndicalism has declared war against this stagnation. The call of direct action and general strike is rousing the sleeping giant of labour. The awakening is

already bearing good fruit. The strike of the transport workers, with over 100,000 men participating in the struggle, has thrown the challenge to State and Capital, and given the enemy a hint of what may be expected in the future.

These first lessons show once more that in reality the whole social organisation rests upon the workers, and that the day of their submission to political phrases and the empty promises of misleaders will not continue much longer.

Mother Earth, August 1912

A certain magazine recently expressed the opinion that the Anarchists had but one aim, to destroy. Indeed, it is sufficient but to mention three especially evil-breeding institutions that we want to destroy; three nightmares that permit man neither to lead a healthy life nor give him a chance to breathe.

We wage war against private ownership, the State, and the Church. We strive toward a communist Anarchist society; that is, a social condition that will afford every individual free scope to develop.

Therefore, we proclaim the right of every one to the enjoyment of life, according to individual inclination and requirement, made possible by the free participation of each in the various activities of life, for the benefit of all.

The means to this end are propaganda, direct action, the general strike, and, finally, the mental and material social revolution – a general uprising of labour, of the real wealth producers of the world.

We encourage every popular movement that tends to advance the decisive struggle and bring about the final culmination.

We welcome and aid every direct struggle of labour against the ruling classes and corrupt institutions. On the other hand, we condemn all palliatives and shams, like the participation in parliamentarism, the belief in the possibility of harmony and fair play between the exploiters and their victims, the hope in protective labour legislation, and similar superstitions. Our efforts aim to awaken the proletariat to an understanding of its true interests and to inspire the masses with those purposes and ideals which will enable them to secure their own emancipation and to enjoy the fruits of their victory.

There is, no doubt, much destruction in these principles, but it is destruction that is necessary to rear a healthy, sound society in place of our Augean stables.

[...]

During a police-provoked riot in Lawrence, Mass., a woman striker, Anna La Pizza, was killed. The testimony of disinterested witnesses is to the effect that the fatal shot -was fired by a policeman. The murderer is known to the authorities, but it is not he that is to be punished for the crime. On the contrary, it is the leaders of the strike, Ettor and Giovannitti, who have been thrown into prison and held without bail on the charge of murder.

The means to this end are propaganda, direct action, the general strike, and, finally, the mental and material social revolution – a general uprising of labour, of the real wealth producers of the world.

Never before was justice and logic so brazenly trampled into the mud. Indeed, had the manufacturers of New England hired assassins, a la Becker, of New York, to shoot down Ettor and Giovannitti in the open street, it would have been more decent than this streaking, vicious plan of conspiring to do away with the hated strike leaders.

This murder, calculated in cold blood, must not be permitted. If such a fiendish conspiracy could be carried through, then every labour agitator and every worker who dares protest against exploitation and oppression, could be quickly done away

with. Such a condition would practically constitute a state of martial law against labour, and would facilitate the murder of undesirable workers.

The Ettor-Giovannitti matter is of vital concern to every workingman. Every organisation and group that demands justice for labour and protests against oppression and slavery, should take an intimate and active interest in the case. It is, therefore, sad to note that the Socialist press carries on as if it had secured a mortgage on the case. The Anarchists have exerted their utmost efforts to acquaint the people with the planned capitalist conspiracy, and they have done everything in their power to aid in the cause of Ettor and Giovannitti, which is the cause of the whole proletariat. How puny, therefore, must be those who try to “exclude” the Anarchists. To mention but one instance: every time an Anarchist speaker condemns

on the platform the proposed plutocratic murder, the columns of the *Call* carefully avoid all mention of the undesirable name. Do the diplomats of the Socialist party expect to monopolise the labour movement with such shabby tactics? They merely prove how petty their methods and how small their horizon.

* * *

It would be a praiseworthy undertaking for some labour organisation to compile a list of the murders committed by police, detectives, and the soldiery upon striking workers. The encounters with the State, municipal and the private plug-uglies of capital have become such an everyday occurrence that it would keep a man busy to note down all the attacks upon strikers and the resultant assaults, maimings, and prison sentences.

Such statistics – perhaps issued yearly in book form – would supply incontrovertible proof that the plutocratic government represents a continuous reign of terror, and that the people – if they have grown tired of being slaves and cannon fodder – will have to resort to more effective means to protect themselves than petitions and parliamentary procedure.

* * *

It is significant of the impotence of the labour organisations of the old school (like the A. F. of L.) that the most energetic and purposeful struggles against capital are at present waged by those bodies which have broken with the stale and superannuated methods of the above-mentioned brands of trades-unionism.

Thus in the East and in the West the marine and transport workers have risen in rebellion, inspired by the need of conscious, direct action. In the South the lumbermen and miners have awakened to the realisation that they have long enough relied on parliamentary vanities, and that it is time to take matters into their own hands, if they are not entirely to succumb to the iron heel of the masters.

* * *

The July issue of the *International Socialist Review* contains "Some More Don'ts," by Guy McClung. These

don'ts are addressed to the Socialists, for whom the author evidently fears that the political delirium, picturing visions of capturing the reins of government, is leading them into the swamp of State monopoly. Thus McClung warns:

Don't confuse government ownership with Socialism or call it a "step toward Socialism." It is neither. The middle class now demands government or municipal ownership of public utilities in order that there may be no interruption in service due to strikes, and would willingly see the workers kept on the job, if necessary, at the point of the bayonet. The big capitalists themselves will bring about government ownership just as soon as they find their property threatened by the working class or whenever they have milked the industries dry and want the government to safeguard their dividends. Government ownership will be the culmination of capitalism.

According to this all the municipal and governmental reform plans, as laid down in the official Socialist platforms, and urged by their mayors and candidates, are not Socialism at all. That is to say the "Socialist" party uses Socialism only as a decoy, to secure political honours and success – something we have been aware of all along, without the Don'ts,

* * *

It is a favourite policy of the masters, especially during the time of a strike, to inflame race prejudice and to incite one nationality against another. The purpose, of course, is to paralyse united, solidaric activity, by dividing the workers against

themselves.

But the intelligent toiler is beginning to realise that labour knows neither boundary nor race, for its interests are the same the world over. The international proletariat has but one enemy – the exploiting class. It is solely to advance their own interests and to handicap solidaric international action on the part of labour that the masters seek to keep alive the differences of race, nationality, and religion.

Mother Earth, September 1912

Different interests, different laws.

They would have us believe that laws are something absolute, holy. We should bow before every statute and every ukase; on every official signpost it is written that only "legal ways" are permitted and only "lawful means" may be used.

A very comfortable thing for those who make the laws and profit by them. The wealthy possessors are of course anxious that the laws protecting their property be executed with all the rigor possible. They renounce strikes and sabotage as an unlawful invasion of their sacred property rights, an attack on the very institution of property.

That is their logic. But it can hardly be the logic of the workers who possess nothing, although they create all the wealth. If they understand the situation, they think differently in this regard. Then they know that the numberless laws for the protection of capital gained by exploitation are but so many chains to fetter labour. To demand from them respect for the law means to demand that they respect and perpetuate their own slavery.

Laws are the decrees of the powers that be, and they change with the change of rulers.

The corrupt régime and tyranny of the Bourbon Kings had the sanction of law before the great French Revolution. Those who protested against the despotism quickly found themselves in the Bastille. But it was also according to law that later, when power changed hands in France, Louis XVI was made to lose his head.

In the beginning of the capitalist era there were laws which declared strikes to be a crime. To some extent it holds true even today, though in a more subtle manner. Meanwhile, however, a new spirit is developing among the workers, and it is giving birth to other "laws" for them to follow. The union of the disinherited, labour solidarity and cooperation, the

general strike and sabotage – these are some of the latest "laws" in the evolutionary process of humanity. This new perception will gradually be applied to life with greater vigour and energy, in spite of all the moss-covered law books and their dicta.

[...]

Two incidents in connection with this year's Labor Day characterise many official labour leaders not only as truly desirable citizens, but prove them to be procurers for the Church. These leaders indorsed and signed a call inviting the workers of New York to the Cathedral of St. Patrick, to attend a Jesuitical oration on capital and labour. They have by this act put themselves directly in the service of the Catholic Church, whose diplomacy in sharing the spoils with the political corruptionists and industrial exploiters of labour has been so successful in this country, that it enabled her to build a pompous cathedral on Fifth Avenue, one of the most expensive spots in America.

The second incident was the arbitrary refusal of permission to the I. W. W. members to participate in the Labor Day parade. To be sure, the Industrial Workers have become known as a labour organisation, whose aims and methods are revolutionary – sufficient reason for their exclusion by the official Federation labour leaders.

We do not regret the occurrence. In these days of shams, amid the chaotic mixture of sincere and hypocritical opinions, it is high time to draw the lines sharply. Furthermore, it was much more compromising for the I.W.W. to march side by side with the lickspittles of Jesuitry, than for these to walk with the I.W.W.

As a legally-approved day, Labor Day has long since been castrated of every demonstrative, revolutionary significance. It will lose what little is left of its external, seeming value, as soon as the workers will turn their backs on the priests of politics and church.

Mother Earth, January 1913

An army of 100,000 garment workers has risen in rebellion against starvation wages, Triangle fire traps, and limitless exploitation.

Such a strike, fought energetically and determinedly, without weak compromise or petitioning, can accomplish more within a few weeks than a generation of political juggling with alleged labour-protection laws.

[...]

A correspondent of the Social Democratic publications in America relates an interview with August Bebel, in which the latter expressed himself to the effect that the German workingmen are not ripe for a social change along Socialist lines.

Bebel was much more hopeful when his party did not yet count 4 million votes and when the Socialists in Germany had less than two dozen representatives in the Reichstag, instead of the 40 they have now. At that

time he prophesied that the social revolution would take place in the year 1898.

Great success at the ballot box has evidently proved very disheartening. Bebel is now the leader of the strongest party in the Reichstag, and if he now declares that notwithstanding the four million Socialist votes the German workers are not ready for Socialism, such a statement is tantamount to a declaration of bankruptcy on the part of political Socialism.

This bankruptcy was inevitable. If for generations the workers are taught to believe that their emancipation can be brought about in Parliaments by casting a bit of paper on election day, by compromises and legislation, the result can be but one: the masses become more and more passive, lose initiative and the power of independent action, and are soon totally paralysed.

[...]

Mother Earth, February 1913

We read in a certain Social Democratic paper that direct economic action may serve its purpose in the immediate, every-day struggle of the worker against his master, but that the final emancipation must inevitably be brought about through political action.

Peculiar logic! Direct economic action is the very reverse of political indirection. The latter begins big, with high-flown phrases and promises, and ends with empty soap bubbles and compromises. Direct action, on the contrary, began with small, insignificant local strikes and is developing into a tremendous world

Mother Earth, March 1913

When our heart is heavy and the mind sceptically whispers to us that tyranny is constantly finding new ways and more effective methods to further its purpose; that men are growing more slavish and weaker in their resistance to oppression, then a glance at the history of revolutions – those oases in the desert of man's humiliation – never fails to cheer and gladden our spirit.

We find there the assurance and certainty that the advance toward social justice and liberty can never be checked for long, and that the means and aims of realising it are gaining in clarity and strength with every new uprising and revolt.

In old Rome the slaves, led by Spartacus, rose in rebellion seventy years before the Christian era. Badly armed and provisioned, a chaotic conglomerate from the whole realm, they yet triumphed over the trained legions of the Roman State, and the safety of Rome itself was threatened by their determined onslaughts.

The Suffragettes of England continue to practice direct action and sabotage. They are not to be so easily cajoled as our own Suffragists whose "radicalism" finds complete expression in five o'clock teas, banquets, and meaningless parades.

Of course, there is no lack of moral indignation over the methods of the militant suffragettes. The editors of "respectable" journalism literally froth at their bovine mouths. Nevertheless it is a fact that the British direct actionists have filled the government with wholesome respect, so that it does not dare to keep them long in prison. The governmental machinery of organised violence works nice and smooth only so long as the people remain patient in their subjection; but the moment they awaken to the realisation of their own will and energy, the machinery goes wrong and begins to break down.

movement of the cooperation of all workers for the final General Social Strike.

The field of the General Strike is so far-reaching that it embraces every function of social life. Its effects are of such vital importance that even the biggest and most important political activities cannot for a moment be compared with it. In its results the General Strike signifies the eradication of exploitation and injustice, and the triumph of new society based on economic independence and social equality – voluntary communism.

Unfortunately friction arose among the various tribes and nationalities, the difficult situation still further aggravated by the spies of Rome, who industriously sowed discord in the army of rebellion, finally to hand it over to the power of Rome, that employed the most barbaric methods to wipe out the uprising.

The Middle Ages witnessed the revolution flame through the various countries of Europe, under the guise of religious movements. But whatever their particular form, the common purpose of them all was the conquest of bread and liberty.

Similarly was this the aim of the French peasants in the *jacquerie* movement of the 14th century. They rebelled against the theft of their lands by the robber knights of the court and of the nobility, and took up arms against the chains of serfdom. They made common cause with the poorer classes of the city population, whom greedy taxation and usury stole the last crust from their very mouths. Thousands were sacrificed in this struggle, and

it was only by means of the great French Revolution that the peasant of France finally freed himself from the yoke of feudalism.

Bread and Freedom! Again it was the cry of the 100,000 British peasants who rose on Blackheath Common, near London, under the leadership of Wat Tyler, setting the whole country round aflame with the fire of the insurrection, the rebels successfully attacking the capital of England and holding it in their possession for three weeks. But the treachery of the king and his parliament in holding out empty promises to the rebels, and the murder of Wat Tyler by a courtier, broke down the rebellion.

Tremendous were the peasant uprisings a century later in Germany, Austria, Holland, and Switzerland. The castles and estates of the nobles, without number, were sacked and burned, the red flag waving at the head of many a rebel army.

This time treachery came from the religious reformer, Martin Luther, who at first sided with the peasants, but later craftily made peace with the rulers and vehemently advocated the most cruel treatment of the rebels.

The power of the nobility was finally broken by the French Revolution at the end of the 18th century, to which the Revolution of the American Colonies against England was the prelude. But the poor people of the large cities were already beginning to realise that it was not enough to abolish feudalism; that though the bourgeoisie fought to secure *for itself* political liberty, it was at the same time determined to continue the social and economic oppression of the masses by wage slavery and usury, even with greater intensity and more effectually than was the case under feudalism. Men like Marat, Hebert, and particularly Babeuf understood to some extent the situation. Babeuf headed a conspiracy, whose aim was to proclaim Communism. But the movement was not successful, and Babeuf, with a number of his comrades, was guillotined.

The tendencies of *social* revolution from then on manifested themselves with greater clarity and consciousness, in contrast with the mere political

changes which in spite of all representation and franchise brought no radical improvement in the lot of the masses of labour. Social revolutionary tendencies came into strong relief in the June revolution of 1848, but still more definitely in the Paris Commune, proclaimed by the people of the French capital on March 18th, 1871 – in memory of which event these lines are written.

The Commune was defeated two and a half months later by the united international reaction, that slaughtered 30,000 men and women, and imprisoned and banished 10,000 more.

The Commune was an heroic attempt toward a successful Social Revolution. But the social ideas of that time were not sufficiently strong to wipe away the old political traditions. Thus, for example, instead of taking effective revolutionary measures – providing for the needs of the people by throwing open the warehouses where food and other necessaries were stored; by expropriating and getting possession of the national treasury; by organising production and distribution in cooperative leagues of the people – instead of all these absolutely vital measures, an election was ordered, which carried into power a number of

politicians and weak compromisers, who would have remained quite insignificant if the revolution had been energetically carried to its logical conclusion. Such social measures would have inspired the people with confidence and courage; the rebellious proletariat would have realised that this time they were not to sacrifice their lives and shed their blood in vain; that it was not to be a mere change of political constellations, but that it was in all truth a real Social Revolution.

These mistakes of the Paris Commune were fatal. But from them the revolution of the future, which is so fast gathering strength in Europe and America, will learn a valuable lesson.

This brief review of the revolutions of the past justifies the hope that the coming Social Revolution will not content itself with superficialities: its first aim, will be to secure bread for the people, and to deprive the

instead of taking effective revolutionary measures – providing for the needs of the people by throwing open the warehouses where food and other necessaries were stored; by expropriating and getting possession of the national treasury; by organising production and distribution in cooperative leagues of the people – instead of all these absolutely vital measures, an election was ordered

State, Capital, and Private Property of the material means of existence.

* * *

The leaders of the Garment Workers' Strike in New York seems to have taken the great military generals for their model. After the workers had heroically fought their long fight with the bosses, scabs, police, and the courts – a fight involving much privation, for the strikers, numerous arrests, brutalities, and prison sentences – their leaders arose in their might and formed a "peace" treaty with the manufacturers – over the heads of the strikers. They covered themselves with the laurels of victory, loudly mouthed about "great triumph," while their treacherous settlement secured nothing for the workers but sham concessions. The "victory" consisted chiefly in the proviso that the main demands of the strikers should be turned over to an arbitration committee, composed of outsiders, priests, rabbis, and similar ilk. Full well the workers know the role of the arbitration fakes, the industrial cemetery where the demands and grievances of labour are quickly buried.

This disgraceful retreat was especially manipulated by Abe Cahan, editor of the Jewish Socialist daily, the *Forward*, aided by the official leaders of the strike, almost all prominent Socialists. "Garment Workers," they vociferated, "you are brave and heroic. Your brother workers throughout the land look with admiration upon your determination and courage. But heroism alone is not enough. Under the circumstances it is best for you to accept the terms as the most favourable that you can secure now. 'Therefore, return to work.'"

Thus ran the hypocritical cant. Impotence was represented and glorified as strength. But the diplomats strove in vain. The workers rebelled and demonstrated against their treacherous leaders; they justly felt themselves betrayed, and were even on the point of lynching some of them. It would, perhaps, have gone hard with the *Forward* and its representatives, had they not sent in a hurried call for police protection.

A new strike movement has begun, which – it is earnestly to be hoped – will not end as disgracefully as the former. The workers will have to learn that they themselves must lead their struggles, and that the diplomats, politicians, and rabbis are not only superfluous in the labour movement, but that they are a most detrimental factor.

* * *

Of the twelve Italian coal handlers tried at Hackensack, N. J., for the alleged killing of a railroad detective, five

were condemned to brutal prison terms, two being doomed to 15-30 years, two others to 10-30, and the fifth to 8-30 years in the penitentiary,

The trial was brief, for the defendants had neither money nor influence. For this reason it was obvious from the very beginning that the accused workers had no chance whatever to present their case in a more or less favourable to them light. Only money and influence makes a good impression upon the justice of to-day.

In the Italian Chamber of Deputies a member severely attacked the railroading of the five coal workers to prison. The Secretary of Foreign Affairs declined to discuss the subject, on the ground that "Italy is on friendly terms with the United States'!

Surely, plutocracy and governmental tyranny always make common cause internationally, when it is a question of terrorising rebellious workers and keeping labour in subjection. But the time is coming when the solidarity of reaction will have to face the determined conscious solidarity of international labour.

* * *

It would require long pages even merely to mention the numerous places and cities in the United States where there are taking place at present various struggles between labour and the hirelings of organised capital. In the coal district of West Virginia the plutocracy has even proclaimed martial law to drown the strike in blood, for the civil authorities are evidently not sufficiently drastic and murderously effective to suit the will of the mine owners. The prisons are filled with workers, among them the brave old fighter Mother Jones, all of whom are facing numerous charges of murder.

Murderers charge the workers with murder, and use the law for the purpose. Since many months the lords of capital have been slaughtering the miners of West Virginia, attacking their women, driving families from their homes, and hunting whole settlements into the mountain wilderness. The situation is daily approaching nearer to the point where the workers will have to rebel, whether they want it or not.

* * *

The wise solons of Pennsylvania have taken much trouble legally to suppress the red flag, as a symbol of Anarchy.

They missed the mark. If misery and desperation will continue to grow as fast as they have in recent years, the coming storm, that may wipe the Pennsylvania and other legislatures off the earth, will flutter to the breeze the *black flag*.

Mother Earth, May 1913

It is eleven weeks now that the silk weavers of Paterson, N. J., are out on strike. Their perseverance and determination, their courage in the face of the persecution by the authorities, has been truly remarkable. There is that deep sincerity in their struggle which prefers hardship, suffering, and eviction – aye, even separation from their beloved children, rather than to return to the yoke under the old conditions.

During the whole time, since the very beginning of the strike, the workers have been treated in the most brutal manner by the local police and authorities. They fill the jails to overcrowding; their right to meet and take counsel together has been abrogated; their advisers have been repeatedly arrested, charged with fictitious crimes. “What is the use of having jails,” think the manufacturers, “unless we can throw the strike leaders and disturbers into them?”

Violence, and ever again violence, is the method by which State and capital seek to bring the starving

workers to “reason.” And while this legal violence rules the day, the kept press never ceases howling against the “lawless foreign strike mob.”

The workers are unfortunately still too patient and passive toward such treatment. If they would use one-tenth of the violence that the representatives of the law employ, we would have civil war in Paterson as well as in other strike districts. Indeed, the events point to this end. Driven from pillar to post, beaten and clubbed by the police, exploited to the verge of starvation, and betrayed by the politicians, the workers are finally realising that salvation lies in themselves. They have become tired of forever remaining dupes and slaves; they are gradually ceasing to rely upon others and learning to trust to their own power, the tremendous economic power that inheres in them, as producers. It will not be long before they will resort to such means and methods that will best serve their ends, all hypocritical peace politicians and bourgeois moralists notwithstanding.

Mother Earth, June 1913

The silk workers of Paterson continue their wonderful struggle with undiminished courage and perseverance. They are now out fifteen weeks on strike. Fifteen weeks! What heroism, solidarity, and determination is contained in those words. Daily to see the wolf at one’s door, to hear the importunities of all the little blood-suckers, from the landlord down, to suffer misery and hardship without complaint – and still retain one’s courage and remain true to the cause – this requires greater heroism than even going to prison.

These strikers surely deserve the heartiest sympathy and co-operation of every justice-loving man and woman. The workers of the whole country should hasten to their aid, for the strike of the Paterson silk workers is no mere local matter. It is one of the great battles of labour’s advance guard, signifying the approaching dawn of the Social Revolution.

This is felt by the authorities of Paterson. They have resorted to every means to stifle the voice of discontent. They have persistently subjected the strikers to every imaginable indignity, tortures and persecution. Free speech and press is entirely suppressed. Every official scoundrel may with impunity

trample upon the rights of the workers. Beneath the dust of rotting volumes the courts have unearthed an old English law of the 17th century, dealing with unlawful assemblage and promulgated centuries ago “in the name of His Majesty the King.” On the basis of that decayed document, strikers without number have

been charged with the crime of assembly, dragged to court and found guilty by subservient juries. Thirty-eight workers – men and women – have with one stroke of the judge’s pen been sacrificed to these hieroglyphics on the altar of social injustice. Yet another discovery have the Paterson courts made, by means of which papers may be suppressed at will and their editors thrown into jail if they dare criticise even a police official. It is an idiotic,

draconian law, perpetrated during the frenzy that followed upon the death of McKinley.

These are the weapons with which a free republic tears to tatters the rights of the poor, of the workers. Nothing is too despotic, no means too feudal to make the manufacturers secure in their usury and profit.

But the toiler is awakening.

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Mother Earth, August 1913

During 21 weeks the weavers of Paterson have been carrying on a most heroic struggle against hunger and exploitation. They have been defeated, if the result is to be measured by dollars and cents. But the wonderful solidarity and determination manifested by the Paterson strikers have not been in vain. They will bear fruit in the future, in the near future. alae authorities, newspapers and courts have sown much seed of discontent and hatred; on the other hand is the persistent longing for a better human existence. Under these circumstances there can be no talk of definite defeat. At best it is an armed truce.

And now the Social Democratic politicians rush on the scene to put the Paterson Strike under the microscope of class-conscious, scientific criticism, with the too obvious view of making political capital out of the situation. Thus the New York *Call* furiously emphasises that it is impractical to bring revolutionary ideas into these struggles. It is solely a question of winning present demands, and cool calculation the only method.

This is, in spirit and essence, about the same argument advanced by the capitalistic class. The latter never fails to “prove” to the workers by financial statistics how many millions of dollars they have “lost” through their strike. How impractical! the press prostitutes cry with the *Call*. But they carefully sidestep the fact that the workers would still be in a condition of utter serfdom were they not inspired all through the history of their struggles by the revolutionary spirit. The great events in the international labour movement, that continually strengthen the toilers with new energy and determination, have consisted of just such impractical revolutionary uprisings, and not, as the *Call* pretends to believe, in the election of a Socialist Alderman in Kankakee or a District Attorney of the same hue in Milwaukee.

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We are convinced that the Paterson experience will serve to imbue future strikes with an ever stronger and more conscious revolutionary spirit. A fight is not won by running away from the field of battle. To hold protest meetings, for instance, in Haledon against police brutality in Paterson, is ludicrous as well as tragic, manifesting as it does that the workers lack the courage of manly resistance. The way to gain liberty is to fight for it. And if 25,000 strikers dare not assert their right of free speech and assembly in the face of most arbitrary suppression by a handful of police, what hope is there for the Social Revolution? Many similar incidents in the Paterson strike prove the necessity of encouraging in the workers a more revolutionary attitude as well as a clearer realisation that only the complete paralysis of an industry and of all the activities in the strike region – the General Strike – can prove successful against the organised power of plutocracy.

[...]

Among the more progressive element of the Garment Industry of New York there is becoming manifest a tendency towards greater unity and solidarity. There is a movement on hand to combine the four international organisations (The Ladies’ Garment International, United Garment International, Journeymen Tailors’ Garment International and the Furrier Union International) into one body.

The step is to be welcomed, as tending towards a clearer realisation of the common interests of the different branches of the industry and of the general brotherhood of labour. It is necessary to point out, though, that a combination of this character should be in the nature of a federation of autonomous locals, constantly guarding against the ever-present danger of centralisation and bureaucracy. In union there is strength, but only when it is a union of intelligently self-conscious and independent units.

Mother Earth, September 1913

August Bebel, the most influential leader of the German Social Democracy, recently died in Switzerland. His fame and popularity have grown out of his long parliamentary career covering a period of over

forty years. As a parliamentarian and politician he has achieved a measure of success such as few men of his social sphere ever attain to.

But the situation is quite different so far as Bebel, the alleged Socialist and revolutionary, is concerned. His Socialism had long ago ceased to be a vital issue, and finally became nothing more than a means of swelling the number of his partisans and constituents. The promise of his early career, indicating a tendency along active revolutionary lines, soon degenerated into political buncombe and party intrigue. Parliament and party became the ultimate. They absorbed all his energies, indeed the man himself, so that in his later life he appeared much more the manager of a political treadmill than an independent, strong individuality. This is also clearly evident from his Memoirs, in which one seeks in vain for a single original expression of his personality.

***Mother Earth*, November 1913**

Whatever pessimists may say of the American workers, one thing is certain: they have profited by their former struggles and have learned the necessity of newer and more effective methods of warfare.

The time is past when the workers looked upon the armed hirelings of capital as their friends and “protectors of life and property.” In the great Homestead strike of 1892 the millmen made the fatal mistake of welcoming with banner and drum the militia sent to shoot down the rebellious slaves. Times have changed. To-day labour has at least learned to recognise friend from enemy. The miners of Colorado, for instance, are giving the invading Hessians of capital – the State militia – the reception befitting the occasion. As Comrade August Spies so well said, “dynamite is the diffusion of power.” The robber barons of Colorado and their murderous militia have suddenly been forced to realise that “law and order” is not all on their side. Dynamite is the disseminator of “authority,” and part of the latter is now in the hands of the workers. That somewhat equalises the opportunities. And it’s democratic, too; in consonance with the “spirit of our institutions.”

In Indianapolis also the striking car-men have learned the need of “diffusing” the power of the masters by applying some of it at their own end. They have neglected to send a petition to their State lawmakers; they have even scorned to wait for a Congressional investigation to decide how much milk their babies should be allowed to have. Instead they are putting up an actual fight, a most effective direct action fight, it seems, to gain their demands for a more decent wage.

Insurrection, like measles, is catching; and solidarity, like dynamite, has a way of “diffusing.” The rebellious spirit of the car-men of Indianapolis has carried infection to the most unexpected quarters – the police

The activities of Bebel within his party consisted of late years chiefly in harmonising reformistic and radical elements “in the interests of the party.” These efforts led him more and more into reform waters, with the consequent compromising and trimming of sails, like the most ordinary politician with an eye on a government sinecure. For the ideals and aims of Anarchism, such a practical politician could of course have not the slightest understanding.

Taken all in all, the much praised career of Bebel is a striking example of the way in which a social revolutionist should *not* follow.

of that city. A squad of thirty patrolmen and fifty more police of the force refused to ride on the cars and protect the scabs; they preferred to lose their jobs rather than fight on the side of the car company. Still more significant is the stand of the Mayor of Indianapolis in sustaining the rebellious police in their solidarity with labour.

The Indianapolis Police Department no doubt has in its midst men who realise that they too are proletarian children, and that their proper place is on the side of the toilers.

We heartily recommend their example to wider circles, and may the workers never forget that in their great struggle for emancipation faint-heartedness and weakness are the worst and only crime. Their inherent economic power can accomplish all things if the unified workers but will.

* * *

It was during the Lawrence strike that, for the first time in the history of this country, the children of the striking silk workers were sent to neighbouring cities to enjoy the hospitality and care of sympathetic hearts, thus helping their parents to continue their brave struggle against degrading conditions and starvation wages. It was a beautiful, inspiring spectacle of labour solidarity, a most practical and at the same time ideal demonstration of the motto, “An injury to one is the concern of all.”

Later on the good example was followed in the Paterson strike, and now the transport workers of Dublin, Ireland, who have been on strike since September, are giving a similar expression to the spirit of the international brotherhood of the workers, Terrible as must be the need of striking fathers and mothers to induce them to separate, even temporarily,

with their beloved children, it is yet an inspiring sign of the deepening bonds of sympathy and mutual aid in the ranks of international labour.

No wonder the exploiters regard such methods with strong disapproval. It is a "sensational bid for public sympathy" thus to call the attention of the world to the poverty-stricken condition of the strikers. Besides, their "hands" are well paid, and all the trouble is caused by some foreign agitators. Above all, it is "inhuman" towards the dear little children of the workers to be taken away from home and parental care.

Mother Earth, December 1913

At the recent meeting of the Metal Trades Department of the American Federation of Labor was passed the resolution of the Machinists' Union that strikes may be called on a vote of 75 per cent. of the international unions, or two-thirds of the members involved. The resolution provides that no union can reach an agreement and send its men back to work until all of the unions involved have obtained a settlement.

"The passing of this amendment means united action," said William H. Johnston, president of the machinists. "It will mean that one union cannot remain at work when the others go out on strike."

The resolution is a signal victory for industrial unionism. But it is even more. It demonstrates that, in spite of the antiquated spirit dominating the American

Thus speak the employers in Lawrence, Paterson, and Dublin. They even call the priest and policeman to aid them in preventing, by persuasion and force, the children from being taken care of by sympathisers of the strikers.

They fear nothing more than such demonstrations of the growing intelligence, initiative and co-operation on the part of the workers.

The solidarity of international labour is the greatest menace to the exploiters.

Federation of Labor and its reactionary leaders, a new light is dawning on the more progressive element. The rank and file is beginning to awaken to the value of solidarity; it is realising that labour is one undivided whole, and that no part of it can thrive at the expense of the others.

We rejoice in this new consciousness permeating the A. F. of L. The Metal Workers have set a good example, and may the shameful day be soon past when one set of workers can scab upon another, both members of the same union. The victory of labour will be assured when the workers realise the common interests of the international proletariat whose motto is, complete emancipation from capitalism by the solidaric economic action of the united workers of the world.

Mother Earth, January 1914

If the "protocols of agreement" between the cloak-makers and the manufacturers will be abrogated, as a result of the determined stand of Dr. Isaac A. Hourwich, chief clerk of the union, it will be a very salutary thing for the workers in the cloak and suit, as well as in the whole garment industry.

In the first place, the protocol is the machination of the employers, aided by some labour politicians, to whom "peace in the industry" is more important than the wellbeing of the cloakmakers. The protocol is a conspiracy to strangle the independence and initiative of the workers, to eliminate strikes, to continue undisturbed the profits of the bosses, and to reduce the workers to mere dues-paying sheep for the benefit of the high-salaried union officials.

Dr. Hourwich, evidently a sincere and determined man, has sought, as representative of the union, to gain what benefit he could for the workers from the provisions of the protocol. His insistent and uncompromising attitude is a thorn in the flesh of the manufacturers, who therefore demand his resignation. 'The bosses have no use for an honest, incorruptible

labour leader. Naturally. But what can be more shameful and outrageous than that the officials of the Ladies Garment Workers, together with Gompers and Mitchell, side with the manufacturers, as against the cloakmakers' union, in demanding the withdrawal of Hourwich, in spite of the fact that he has been re-elected by a referendum vote of the union.

Without going into details regarding the underhand work to oust Hourwich on the part of certain labour politicians, themselves eager for the job of chief clerk in the cloakmakers' union, and the arrogant attitude of Louis Brandeis, of the Board of Arbitration, we may say that the Hourwich controversy has proved at least two things: the utter servility of the Gomperses, the Mitchells, and the labour fakirs of the garment trade; and, on the other hand, the growing consciousness on the part of the rank and file of the cloakworkers that they are being betrayed by the union officials who are so much favoured by the masters.

If the happenings in the cloakmakers' union will serve to convince the workers that agreements with the bosses are a delusion and a snare for the proletariat,

much good will have been accomplished by the present controversy.

* * *

It may seem a long cry from the Hourwich incident in the Cloakmakers' Union of New York to the Labor Congress recently assembled in London to discuss the question of a sympathetic strike in support of the Dublin strikers. But the comparison is by no means out of place. The crafty politicians in the labour movement are the gravest menace to the workers, be they among the New York cloakmakers or in the trade unions of Great Britain.

Here as there the Gomperses and the Ben Tilletts, while professedly serving labour, in reality are its worst enemies and the heaviest handicaps on the back of the proletariat. In the cloakmaker controversy Gompers, Mitchell et al. are on the side of the bosses as against the true interests of the union. In the Labor Congress of London, the leaders of the British unions side with the

Mother Earth, May 1914

It is not in Mexico but in Colorado that the real American war is being waged. It is there that American workers have a most vital interest. It is the war of labour against capital, against the very interests that are inciting the American people to slaughter in Mexico.

The brutalities of the Rockefeller clique and its hired thugs – in and out of uniform – transcend the worst atrocities of the Tsar. Machine guns trained upon the striking miners, their women and children burned alive in their tents previously soaked by the militia with oil – such is the answer to the miners' plea for better conditions.

The capitalist banditti have gone the limit. They have declared war upon labour, ruthless and merciless, a war of extermination against their dissatisfied slaves, a war to the knife against the unions.

What are the American workingmen going to do? Are they going to palaver, petition and resolutionise? Or will they show that they still have a little manhood in them, that they will defend themselves and their organisations against murder and destruction?

This is no time for theorising, for fine-spun argument and phrases. With machine guns trained upon the strikers, the best answer is – *dynamite*.

The capitalist despotism in Colorado is a challenge to the whole working class of America. It is Colorado to-day; to-morrow it may be Pittsburgh, San Francisco,

masters as against Larkin and the rebellious Dublin strikers.

Everywhere the labour politicians join the capitalistic chorus of "Peace, peace, at any cost to labour." The peace that means the undisturbed continuation of exploitation and oppression; the peace that spells misery, degradation and untold outrage upon labour; the peace of Warsaw, so much yearned for by all vampires on the body of the proletariat.

The resolution of the London Trade Union Congress against Larkin's proposed sympathetic strike in support of the Dublin workers, is a heavy blow to the cause of labour and proletarian solidarity. Once more the leaders have betrayed the trust of the people. But this very betrayal will serve to enlighten the men in factory and mine, and teach them the most important of all lessons: that the cause of the workers cannot be delegated even to the labour leaders, but that the emancipation of the proletariat, and every step on the way toward it, must be fought for and won by the workers themselves.

Chicago or New York; *will be*, unless the workers answer the enemy's challenge in the proper spirit.

What shall that answer be? The first step is to come at once to the aid of the heroic Colorado miners by supplying them with the necessary men, arms and ammunition and funds to continue their brave struggle against the murderous hirelings of State and capital.

And the next stop is a GENERAL STRIKE of all the workers of the land, that shall show the beast of Capital the strength of labour and the might of their solidarity. A 48-hour General Strike would put the fear of labour into the craven hearts of the enemy; it would at once force them to terminate the slaughter of the miners and would prove the most effective means of uniting the workers and rousing them to the tremendous economic weapon at their command.

* * *

First of May has been designated by the revolutionary proletariat the world over as labour's Red Day. It is a significant day. By choosing their own holiday, by laying down their tools and suspending all industry, the workers demonstrate their economic power, their solidarity and growing class consciousness.

In Europe, especially in the Latin countries, the First of May has this significance. But in this land the Day is observed but by a small minority of workers. And even these are in danger of turning the day into a peaceful, legal affair, the real meaning of the occasion perverted by weak-kneed leaders with political aspirations.

But this year the Anti-Militarist League – organised to crystallise an effective protest against all capitalist wars – gave the First of May demonstration in New York its proper revolutionary keynote. A large international mass-meeting at Mulberry Bend Park initiated the day, and emphasised the attitude of conscious labour toward tyranny and oppression. Then followed a demonstration in which red banners and black flags were triumphantly carried along the busiest streets of the metropolis – in spite of previous police prohibition. The long procession terminated at Union Square, where the revolutionary elements gathered in a tremendous mass-meeting that took its course notwithstanding the attempts of labour politicians to induce the authorities to suppress us.

The workers are gradually losing faith in legality and peaceful methods, in the face of the capitalist machine guns. They are beginning to see through the hollowness of political fakism. They are learning that the struggle of labour against capital is not a kid-glove affair ; and that only a determined revolutionary attitude can aid the workers.

A First of May is coming that will complete the awakening of the proletariat to its economic might. Then we shall witness the real May Day of Labour.

[...]

No man did more effectively help to revolutionise the hearts and minds of the proletariat of Europe than

Mother Earth, June 1914

The murder of strikers, their wives and children in Colorado is so far unavenged. Protests and financial aid are important, but in a case like this a far more energetic action is to be expected. A general strike of organised labour is the only answer to the slaughter of working people. Who else if not organised labour shall pick up the gauntlet thrown into the industrial arena by the monster capitalism? The blood of the Colorado victims cries for revenge. Everybody knows that the trial of the murderers is a plain farce, and investigations only provide grafting politicians with good jobs. The capitalists feel that they are in a secure position. Paterson, West Virginia, Michigan and Colorado – these are the steps of the Calvary of the working class during the last year. Unemployment, hundreds of social rebels behind prison bars, new trials

Michael Bakunin. His name is a synonym for life-long consecration to liberty, untiring effort and great personal sacrifice in the cause of the Social Revolution.

The hundredth anniversary of the birth of Michael Bakunin (1814-1914) falls at a time when the workers in every country are learning to realise more clearly the power of labour solidarity and of united militant effort – sentiments that Bakunin sowed broadcast in every revolutionary movement of his day.

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There is a certain type of “radicals” who in the fullness of their ignorance still mouth the antiquated and oft-exploded stupidity that Anarchists “do not believe in organisation.” Bakunin was a revolutionary anti-governmentalist, an Anarchist, and in this connection it is not amiss to re-state his views on organisation, in his own words:

“First of all it is necessary to organise the power of the proletariat... Organise, constantly organise the international militant solidarity

of the workers, in every trade and country... Thus you will constitute a tremendous, invincible power by means of universal cooperation.”

An international gathering in honour of the hundredth anniversary of Michael Bakunin has been arranged for May 15th, at Webster Hall, 15th Street and Third Avenue, to which every revolutionary is cordially invited.

of labour organisers and officials – such is the situation. If labour does not awaken it will soon be drowned in the maelstrom. It does not afford great pleasure to play the role of Cassandra, but it is necessary to point out to the conscious workers that it is their duty to rise to the occasion and to answer the challenge of the master class with a powerful action; not with petitions, begging for mercy, or with compromise, but with swift retaliation – the cessation of labour. The general strike and nothing else will bring the enemy to terms.

[...]

The revolutionary movement among the Socialist lawyers and diplomats in France goes merrily on. Rene Viviani, the latest *arrivé*, is to be the next Premier of France, the next oppressor of the Syndicalists. After

Millerand, Briand; after Briand, Viviani. He is one of the famous "revolutionary" Socialists who voted at the International Congress in London in 1896 for the exclusion of Anarchists. Hyndman, Singer, Bebel, Jaurés, Ferri, Quelch, Adler, Plechanoff, Iglesias, and other uncompromising Marxians were his companions

and coworkers. And yet some good people wonder why the revolutionary workers have only contempt for these political climbers. Parliamentarism triumphs – at the expense of the workers, who help the politicians to climb on their backs.

Mother Earth, August 1914

Were the workers of Europe conscious of their power, this war could not last a day. Indeed it could not have been begun; the lords of war and wealth would not dare think of it.

You need guns and ammunition, you need food and clothing and a thousand other necessities to keep the navy and the army of a country in fighting trim. Suppose the workers, *even now*, refuse to supply food to the armies of Europe; suppose the railroad employees in Austria, Germany, France and Russia refuse to haul the soldiers on their trains, and blow up the railroad tracks – mobilisation would be paralysed at once, the military plans upset and the armies disorganised, with mutiny breaking out among the soldiers.

This could be accomplished if the workers in the respective countries had been prepared for such action by the agitation of the militant, revolutionary element. Indeed, the Anarchists of Europe and other anti-militarists have for years been carrying on such a propaganda. They have persistently advocated the General Strike as the most powerful and effective weapon of labour to check the aggression of capital and the blood-thirsty ambitions of government. But the official Social Democracy has constantly opposed and

hindered this propaganda, ridiculing the efforts of the Anarchists, and declaring the General Strike idea to be general nonsense.

It is the fault of the Social Democracy of Europe that the workers have remained unprepared to stem the

tide of human slaughter. The Social Democratic parties in their narrowness, their treachery to the ideal and their political wool-shearing are directly responsible for the gigantic crime of the present European war.

And well they know it. The moment the war broke out, they began to talk big of a General Strike. But too late. No preparation had been made by them for it; indeed, they did their utmost to paralyse the possibility of the General Strike.

May the rank and file of the international Social Democracy, so cruelly duped by their

misleaders, learn the significant lesson. We sincerely hope that they will – that they will realise the utter futility of the efforts spent in parliamentary activity, and that they will turn to the only effective weapon of labour – DIRECT ACTION and the GENERAL STRIKE.

And if they do, the present war will not be an unmitigated calamity.

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Mother Earth, December 1914

Colorado faces much the same problem as that which Mexico faces – a problem that in this case also, will never be settled until the workers themselves are strong and intelligent enough to take possession of the mines and to use them for the welfare of all. The struggle through which the slaves in Rockefeller's mines have been passing constitutes one of the most stirring and pathetic chapters in working-class history. The Ludlow massacre, last April, was its climacteric point, but the struggle in its entirety may be traced back year after year beyond that tragedy. At the present time, the withdrawal of national troops from Colorado may have the effect of precipitating a new civil war in that State. It is surely the business and the duty of the workers to defend themselves against the hired gunmen of their capitalist masters. But behind the present warfare, and behind the armed conflict of the past, lies the deeper problem of industrial initiative and efficiency. When the miners of Colorado, or of any other State, learn how to run factories and mines without the assistance of bosses and exploiters – in that moment they will be truly free, and not until then.

Mother Earth, May 1915

Unfortunately, the workers themselves are not yet aware of their power, where they had barely been aroused from their age long sleep they have again fallen into the sweet smelling hasheesh of their leaders.

In America, the Anarchists, from the time of Albert Parsons and his comrades have been like a voice in the wilderness, crying to deaf ears in behalf of a general strike, as the only check on war.

Now when the Moloch of militarism is stalking through Europe devastating, maiming, and killing, the American workers through their most conservative body, the American Federation of Labor, is making a lame effort in behalf of the very thing we Anarchists proclaimed so

long. At a public meeting in Cooper Union, April 15th, the labour lights urged that twenty million workers should strike in behalf of peace.

Better late than never. If only our labour leaders were sincere! But they are not, else they would admit that an International General Strike is as absurd as the Woman's Peace Party, as long as national restrictions, factional conflicts and petty jealousies exist among the workers within the A. F. of L.

However, the very appeal to the workers to muster up twenty millions in a general strike for peace, is already a step in the only direction where peace might be established. After all, Anarchism is marching on.

Mother Earth, July 1915

The spectacle of the British government begging and threatening Labor, turn by turn, driving the English workers into munition factories, ought to prove even to the least intelligent that the real battlefield of any war is and always will be on the field of Labour. Labour is the crux of the situation. But not only are the makers of munitions supporting the law. All the workers of the British Empire, the black miners of the Natal in South Africa who are killed off like flies, as well as even the labourers in the steel industries of the United States, the coal miners, the stokers, all are forced into the mad

work of keeping up a war in which they have no interests at stake – the war of governments!

Yet we can wonder not so much at the stupidity of Labour, which has lost its own revolutionary direction, but only at the silence – let us hope that it is an enforced and not a voluntary silence – of that “militant minority” from which we have always expected so much. We admire silence, but not inactive silence. Some eloquent significant action might definitely illuminate the decrepit weakness of governments.

Mother Earth, October 1915

Dr. Constantin Dumba, Austrian ambassador to the United States, has been accused of trying to work up strike disturbances in the big American munition factories now working for the Allies.

“Comrade” Dumba is so much in sympathy with the General Strike that not only would he back it morally, but financially as well, provided, of course, that the workers of the factories, which turn out the tools of murder for the Allies, would be in the game. If the workers in the munition factories of Austria and Germany were to proclaim a General Strike, Dumba and his co-governmentalists would not hesitate a moment to declare that such “traitors” should be shot without further ceremony.

But after all, this diplomat seems to understand more about the importance of proletarian economic warfare than American Union Labor leaders, who certainly

show not the least sign of understanding the present economic situation. They are like the fool in the fairy tale, who, when it rained porridge, found himself without a spoon. They do not even grasp the opportunity to secure for American labour a larger share of the tremendous profits American capitalism is reaping from the war, while the thought of a nation-wide General Strike, participated in by the workers of all nationalities in this country in the name of international brotherhood and solidarity, is not even dreamt of. So far only parts of the English workers have shown during this insane slaughter anything like resistance and syndicalistic spirit; while the workers of France – cradle of liberty and _ resolution – and_ the workers of Germany – so well trained by scientific and political Socialism – seem to be entirely deluded by nationalistic buncombe.



Mother Earth, June 1916

In spite of labour politicians and the American Federation of Labor, masses of American workingmen showed something like a bold fighting spirit in the recent strike movements all over the country. They have learned through many a bitter experience that it is futile to wait for the "leaders," and they get ready here and there to take matters into their own hands.

Now that every country editor shouts himself hoarse about the arrival of prosperity – red with the blood of the murdered and crippled millions in Europe, it should seem quite natural that the toilers who produce the goods, sold with such immense profits, should have a share in it. But that is not the idea of the masters. Wherever the workingmen ask for their share, they are confronted with the hired thugs and murderers of plutocracy. Deputy sheriffs and guards armed to the teeth, are ready to fire into the "mob." The papers and good citizens yell for the militia, and finally the courts declare that the first principle of sacred freedom is to uphold the "liberty" of the strike-breakers to make contemptible slaves of themselves. This is the ideal the fathers of the country fought for, according to the courts.

Such, at least, is what happened recently around Pittsburgh in the Westinghouse strike. Several strikers have been killed, many wounded, and sent to jail. Especially were those spokesmen of the workers picked out for arrest who were known as radicals.

these strikes arouse the workers from their everyday drowsiness. They may not result in immediate material gains, but they strengthen the spirit of resistance and reveal to the workers their own pitiful economic and social position.

The strikers were usually unarmed; the thugs of Mammon, on the other hand, were well armed with all the modern implements necessary to murder fellow-creatures. But the courts seem to take it for granted that riots and violence are always provoked by the workers and not by the capitalistic cut-throats.

And then after the "riotous foreigners have been beaten into submission," we are informed that law and order are restored again to the happy community.

With all that, these strikes arouse the workers from their everyday drowsiness. They may not result in immediate material gains, but they strengthen the spirit of resistance and reveal to the workers their own pitiful economic and social position. A comrade from Pittsburgh writes us about the present situation thereabout:

"While I think that most of the strikes will fail and that most of the strikers will be defeated in their present fight, it has certainly lit the fires of radicalism and revolt in a great many, and even though the Manufacturer's Association wins, it cannot crush the unrest and growing hatred for oppression which these strikes have brought out. The presence of the National Guard has certainly not proved to the interest of that organisation in the matter of future recruiting from that section. The strikers greet them with hoots and yells."

Mother Earth, August 1916

Arbitration and representation have failed in the big garment workers and cloakmakers strike. After more than three months of the severest suffering and privation, started by the lockout, the strikers have given the "representatives of both sides" to understand that they want none of these diplomatic agreements on paper by which they have been fooled time and again before.

The representatives of both sides had reached such a doubtful agreement, and the New York papers were discussing its merits. The capitalistic press maintained that the manufacturers had scored a victory, while the "labour papers" served up a mixture containing more

fiction than truth, for the purpose of showing what a fine job the spokesmen of the strikers had done by the agreement,

But finally the strikers, tired out by the everlasting futile quibbling and parleying of "the leaders," lost their patience. Two thousand men and women marched to strike headquarters under a banner that bore the inscription: "long live the General Strike!" The union officials were bitterly attacked and accused of having sold the workers to the capitalists. Many of the strikers refused to vote at all on the referendum whether the agreement should be accepted or not. They expressed utter contempt for it.

Whatever the outcome may be, these many thousands of men and women have at least proved by their own energy and criticism that they are not a herd of blind subjects unable to think and decide for themselves. May they do more of their own thinking along these lines and about the General Strike, they may reach

Mother Earth, October 1916

At the time these lines are written the sympathetic general strike, growing out of the strike on the subway, elevated and street-car lines in New York, is pronounced to be in a developing stage. It is maintained that about half a million workers, men and women, will lay down tools, after the different organisations have voted on the subject, and that in a gigantic city like New York this cannot be accomplished in a day or two.

We earnestly hope this estimate of the situation may not prove mere talk for publicity.

Events all over the country strongly indicate that the dominating money powers have given out the order: "Down with labour organisations! To hell with the demands of the workers!" From San Francisco to New York the capitalists and their organisations act accordingly. They find it quite in keeping with "social justice" that the prices of life's necessities are sent up higher and higher by the wonderfully developed methods of modern usury, but they find it outrageous if the workers, the creators of their millions and billions, demand a modest share of the huge profits. Prosperity does not mean to them decent working conditions, decent food, clothing, housing for the people, but fortunes for the chosen few, the immensity of which former generations not even approached in dreams. In order to attain this ideal all attempts of the workers to think and act for themselves must be crushed.

That is the principle the representatives of the New York subway, elevated and street-car systems – Shonts, Hedley, etc. – stand for. Of course, they have the corrupt daily press on their side. Also with them stands the mayor, who declares that the men not the companies are to blame for the strike. Police Commissioner Woods, who sends his clubbers to protect the precious strike-breakers and to run cars in the interest of the companies, is not less eager to devote his "reform work" to the best interests of mammon.

conclusions which will finally relieve them altogether of that futile and wasteful representation and arbitration nuisance. Strikes can only be won, and the results of the victory secured, by the own fighting spirit, strength and solidarity of the workers.

Strikes can only be won, and the results of the victory secured, by the own fighting spirit, strength and solidarity of the workers

With all that, a forceful general strike would prove a stronger weapon than all these activities of the enemies of labour combined. But it must not be dictated by paltry considerations and petty craft interests. The general strike will prove irresistible if the participating individuals and organisations are inspired in their action by the idea that the solidarity of all wage workers is the stronghold from which the proletariat is marching on for victory over all the sordid social economic forces which divide society into masters and slaves.

* * *

On September 14th Pennsylvania State police cossacks raided a meeting of strikers at Old Forge, near Scranton. A number of them rode right into the hall, unmindful of the limbs and lives of the people present. Two hundred and sixty-seven men were arrested, most of them members of the I.W.W. They were charged with inciting to riot, unlawful assembly and conspiracy. All of them are poor miners, and it was a cruel, nasty joke to place each of the arrested under \$5,000 bail, making – according to the reports – the total bail of the "defendants" \$1,500,000. Of course, no Morgan or Rockefeller bailed them out, they had to stay in prison. This probably was planned by the authorities beforehand, inasmuch as it was their chief aim to crush the strike in the district by sheer tyrannical force, throwing the strikers into jail and thus ending the strike in that "administrative" way, by means of which Russian czarism has sent its antagonists to Siberia, and by which it also has become infamous all over the world.

Would it not be of more advantage to the labour movement if its great leaders would pay attention to such great outrages instead of closing very doubtful political bargains with the bosses of the White House?

MOTHER EARTH will be glad to receive and forward contributions.

Mother Earth, May 1917

President Gompers, of the American Federation of Labor, and Secretary Frank Morrison have filed a formal protest with the United States Attorney General against the opinion rendered by the Supreme Court in the Adamson case,

As our readers will remember, this decision virtually deprives the railroad workers of the right to quit work or participate in a strike.

Of course, the Supreme Court decision really establishes the principle of feudalism in America; the serfdom of the railroad workers to the railroad barons in the name of "public interest." It will not be long before this principle finds broader application and successive extension into the various other industries. In the last analysis, every important industry is a public utility, and the strike in such an industry can be legally interpreted to be against public interest, The Adamson decision, therefore, establishes the principle of legally depriving the workers of their right to strike.

It is obvious why the President and Secretary of the American Federation of Labor have protested against a decision of the highest court of the land that establishes slavery. It is a most fundamental blow to the American Federation of Labor. Indeed it makes the whole labour movement of this country purposeless and useless.

Appealing to the Attorney General, however, will not help. Capital is king in America, and the Supreme Court

merely registers its will. The pertinent question is, why did President Gompers pledge the support of his organisation to the American King when the latter's profits and supremacy were endangered by the recent developments of the European War? Gompers even undertook to speak in the name of the whole organised labour movement of America, but it yet remains to be seen whether the rank and file will give their support to the Labor King in his pledge to the King of Capital.

[...]

Verily, the work of the revolutionists in this country has not been in vain, if they have made the government realise the power of Labour. "The railways are the arteries of the nation's life." And who, pray, is the nation, if not the very people who run the railways and their comrades of the working class? We are assured as much in the declaration to the miner and farmer: "The work of the world waits on him. If he slackens or fails, armies and statesmen are helpless."

What is the moral the workers will have to learn from this admission? Just this: They are the blood which pulsates through the arteries of life. They are the power upon which the work of the world waits. Why, then, statesmen and armies at all?

The government of this country must be in dire despair if it concedes to the workers so much. It is to be hoped Labour will ponder over and act upon it in its own behalf.

Mother Earth, June 1917

Apropos of the refusal of passports to the Socialist delegates to the Stockholm Conference, what a vindication for the Anarchists, what triumph of the logic of our attitude towards government. The war has pointed out the utter stupidity of expecting economic justice or human rights from the machinery of government or from centralised power. Our quarrel with the Socialists, which began in the International with Bakunin, Marx and Engels, to this day centres around the one issue: the Socialists clamour for more laws, greater political power in the hands of the State and more centralised machinery of the government; while we Anarchists, as federalists, insist upon the necessity of undermining the State through the economic solidarity and action of the workers, which alone is the greatest menace to the



capitalist regime and to the ever growing tyranny of authority. And now it has all come to pass, even though at the terrible price of war.

The various Socialists who for political ends compromise their ideals, curry favour with the government, and who waste the time and substance of the workers in political campaigns, are now made to feel the mailed fist of the newly constituted American autocracy. They have been denied passports, or better yet, they have been told to behave themselves as behoves law-abiding citizens. What else can those expect who move within the limited confines of the

State and blind the workers to the arbitrary and coercive tendency of all government, to the utter waste of time and energy spent on political action.

The British General Strike

Tom Brown

Freedom Press, 1943¹

In the spring of 1925 storm clouds gathered over the British coalfields. The coming struggle was the chief conversational topic in the grim mining villages.

Germany was re-entering the international trade war as a competitor of Britain. The German miners' wages had been slashed, the industry rationalised by the aid of Anglo-American capital investment, and German currency stabilised by the Dawes plan. Already faced by this keen competitor, the British coal export trade was embarrassed by the Government's return to the Gold Standard.

It was soon obvious that the mine-owners would meet the new international situation by cutting wages, and on June 30th, 1925 they served notice to terminate the national agreement, proposing ending the minimum wage, heavy wage cuts and district, instead of national agreements. The Miners' Federation of Great Britain replied by putting their case before the Trades Union Congress Central Council at a joint meeting on July 10th. The General Council pledged the trade unions to full support of the miners and, setting up a Special Committee, met the executives of all the railway and transport unions who agreed upon an embargo on moving coal. The unions quickly acted by issuing "Official Instructions to all Railway and Transport Workers":

"Wagons containing coal must not be attached to any train after midnight on Friday, July 31st, and after this time wagons of coal must not be supplied to any industrial or commercial concerns . . . *Coal Exports*: All tippers and trimmers will cease work at the end of the second shift on July 31st. *Coal Imports*: On no account may import coal be handled from July 31st ... All men engaged in delivering coal to commercial and industrial concerns will cease Friday night, July 31st."

A specially summoned conference of trade union executive committees gave unanimous support to the instructions.

Unprepared for such resistance, the Cabinet, which had fiercely backed the coal-owners, hastily met and the Prime Minister (Baldwin) summoned the leaders of miners and owners to Downing Street. On the morning of Friday, July 31st, the Government announced the granting of a subsidy to the coal industry amounting to

about £25,000,000 and extending over nine months. The wage cuts and other demands of the owners were postponed until April, 1926. July 31st, 1925 became known as "Red Friday."

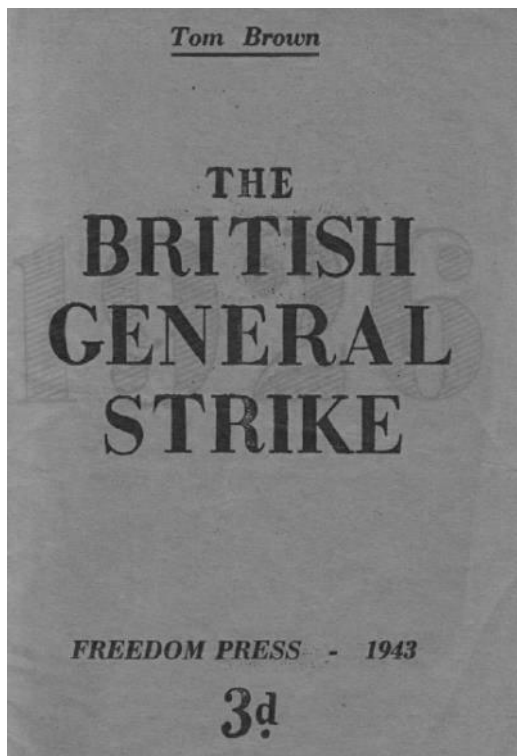
INTERLUDE IN BATTLE

It was obvious to all that the nine months' grace was merely a time of preparation for the ruling, class 'and this thought was expressed in the report of the Special Committee of the T.U.C. "It felt that its task had not been completed, and with the consent of the General Council proposed to remain in being, and to apply itself to the task of devising ways and means of consolidating the resistance of the trade union movement should the attack be

renewed."

Alas! Little, if any, preparation for the inevitable struggle was made by the T.U.C. or the affiliated unions. Not so the Government. Speaking of Red Friday, Winston Churchill, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, said, "We therefore decided to postpone the crisis in the hope of averting it, or, if not of averting it, of coping effectually with it when the time comes."

A strike breaking organisation known as O.M.S. (Organisation for the Maintenance of Supplies) was created. Blacklegs were trained to drive locomotives in the private railways of large factories at week-ends and



¹ First published as "The First British General Strike" in *War Commentary*, mid-November, December and mid-December 1942. (*Black Flag*)

potential scabs instructed in the operation of telephones and telegraphy. The country was placed on a war footing by dividing it into ten areas, each under a Civil Commissioner, and a civil service organisation was set up in each of these areas. Great numbers of special constables were enrolled and mobile squads of police organised. Every possible preparation was made and the Commissioners and their officers stood ready for the signal.

In the meantime a Royal Commission on the Coal Industry, presided over by Sir Herbert Samuel, presented its report. The report was vague and woolly on the subject of re-organisation of the industry, but very definite in demanding wage reductions and the lengthening of the working day.

As the renewal of the battle became more certain the miners rallied around the slogan "Not a penny off the pay, nor a minute on the day, no district agreements," and behind the leadership of the inexhaustible A. J. Cook attempted to arouse the labour movement.

In April the coal-owners announced that unless the miners accepted the employers' demands a lockout would take place on May 1st. On April 20th King George V proclaimed a "State of Emergency" and the special constabulary were mobilised. Hyde Park became a military camp, troops in full war kit paraded the streets and tanks and armoured cars rumbled into Newcastle, Liverpool, Birmingham and all the industrial cities. Warships were sent up the Thames, the Tyne, the Humber and the Clyde.

ON THE FIRST OF MAY

The executives of the trade unions were called to a conference of the T.U.C. on April 29th. The conference continued to sit during the following day (Friday) while the T.U.C. leaders trotted to and fro between the conference hall and Downing Street, begging Baldwin to find a way out. Said J. H. Thomas: "I suppose my usual critics will say that Thomas was almost grovelling, and it is true . . . I never begged and pleaded like I begged and pleaded all to-day."

Saturday, May 1st, 1926 – May Day – one million miners were locked out. The T.U.C. conference assembled at forenoon in the Memorial Hall, Farringdon Street, and received the General Strike Memorandum of the General Council. A tense pause and the roll call began, union by union. For once in a score of years a trade union conference expressed the mood of the workers. For the General Strike – 3,653,527; against – 49,911; unable to reply in time – 319,000. The executives rose and sang the "Red Flag" and left the gloomy old hall for the sunshine of the streets, to mingle with the greatest May Day demonstration London had ever seen. Strange

though it seems, the T.U.C. leaders immediately resumed their begging perambulations to Downing Street. While still trying to avert the strike they were suddenly horrified to learn the fight had already started. Late on Sunday night, May 2nd, the leaders of the miners and the T.U.C. were meeting the full Cabinet at Downing Street when the news of the first skirmish reached them. The *Daily Mail* was about to appear with a particularly vicious anti-strike article. The type had already been set and moulded, the machines set up and the proof copies run off. When the machinists read the bitter words of editorial hatred of the workers the machines stopped, the Natsopa chapel met and quickly decided to tell the management to delete the leader if they wanted their paper. All other departments met and decided to back the machine room. Monday, May 3rd and no *Daily Mail* appeared.

UNWILLING TO WAR

When Baldwin heard the news he jumped up from the table and ended the negotiations. The T.U.C. leaders still grovelled to avoid the fight. Said one of the most prominent of them:

"With other union leaders, I sought an interview with the Prime Minister and his colleagues in a lastminute effort to show that the compositors' strike was isolated and unofficial, without our approval, and to plead, almost on our knees, for a less cruel arbitrament than he was forcing upon us—an open fight between the workers and the Cabinet. But the Cabinet had left No. 10, and the place was deserted save by a single sleepy attendant." – *Memoirs of J. R. Clynes*.

Think of it – a general repudiating his soldiers on the eve of battle and condemning them for being ready to fight!

In the House of Commons the grovelling went on, but the Government knew the cowardice of the labour leaders and refused to allow them a way out. Baldwin knew the T.U.C. and Labour Party leaders hated and feared the General Strike.

"He (Baldwin) turned on us and quoted an article written some time before by Ramsay MacDonald in *The New Leader*:

'All my life I have been opposed to the sympathetic strike. It has no practical value; it has one certain result—a blinding reaction. Liberty is far more easily destroyed by those who abuse it than by those who oppose it.'

'I agree with every word of that', commented Baldwin to the hushed and crowded house."

So Baldwin led the employers to battle with an I.L.P. text inscribed on their banners. Midnight, Monday, May 3rd, 1926, the General Strike was on.

Lions Led by Rats

Britain awoke on the morning of Tuesday, May 3rd, to find the General Strike in being. The railways were still and silent, buses and trams had disappeared, no newspaper was on sale. Unfortunately the strike was

not really general. Indeed the T.U.C. wished it to be known as the *National Strike* instead of the old syndicalist name. The General Council, apparently on the initiative of Bevin, decided to divide the workers' forces into two sections, front line and reserves. The front line composed of the printing trades, railmen, busmen, tramwaymen and other road transport workers and dockers were called out from midnight May 3rd. The "reserve line" of engineering and shipyard workers, iron and steel and chemical workers, the textile industry and the building trade were not called out until the last day of the strike, *after the strike had been called off*.

This division of the unions' forces is a particularly stupid case of the attempted application of military rules to a social conflict.

The result of the division was to isolate the strikers in certain towns where they formed a minority. Let us consider the example of Coventry, a very compact town devoted entirely to engineering. Such a town does not depend on road transport proportionately as much as London does. Nor is Coventry a railway centre. So, in Coventry the strike was limited to the railmen, a small body of busmen and a few printers. The case of Coventry was repeated in hundreds of other towns given over to engineering, textiles and chemicals; the strikers were to be small bodies of trade-unionists separated from the mass of their fellow-workers.

Fortunately the workers thought differently. Again we shall take the case of Coventry as being typical of the whole country. The workers of the Armstrong-Whitworth Aircraft Co. trudged gloomily from Coventry to the aerodrome on Whitley Common. Arriving there they found the hangars guarded by the military. The first arrivals refused to enter while the place was under

military control and when their numbers increased a decision to join the strike was made. Returning to Coventry the strikers besieged the district offices of the A.E.U. and sent small parties to the auto factories to inform their fellow engineers. The aircraft workers successfully demanded a district aggregate meeting of A.E.U. members and the meeting decided to close the engineering shops of the city on the 6th of May. Much the same was happening in many parts of the country. The workers were making the strike general.

CLASS AGAINST CLASS

Nor were the workers content to spread the strike – they had to make it effective. Immediately they turned their attention to transport picketing. The stoppage of rail and road transport was almost complete the first day. In London only 40 of the 5,000 buses ran; in most towns no attempt was made to run tram or bus services throughout the strike. But quickly the student and middle-class blacklegs appeared on the roads, mainly to drive lorries.

The almost instinctive strategy of the masses was superior to that of their self-esteemed leaders. The workers knew that a modern state depends on centralisation and concentration

of power and that centralised power could only be effective by the use of intricate communications, electric power, telephones and telegraphy, railways and road transport. So the strikers and the unemployed formed themselves into mass road and rail pickets.

The road pickets were particularly effective in the mining areas for the miners did not need to picket their blackleg-proof pits. No student ever went down a mine to scab on a miner; they preferred sitting in the driver's seat of a car with a big policeman each side to stop the bricks. A glance at the map will remind us that the chief communication arteries of Britain run north to south and near the Border are narrowed down by the waist of Britain and the Pennine Chain, so that two slim sets of railways and roads skirt the east and west coasts. One of these, the east, runs through the Northumberland and Durham coalfields, and there took place the most effective picketing of the strike.

Throughout the country buses and lorries were overturned and often petrol bowsers were fired. In some towns huge car parks were formed of blacklegs'

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vehicles by the pickets and their drivers were often "taken prisoner". On the railways a scattered warfare was carried on and the B.B.C. and the "press" reported damage to points, blackleg platelayers running for their lives, telegraph wires cut and signal boxes successfully attacked. The *Flying Scotsman* express was derailed by miners at Cramlington, Northumberland. The B.B.C. gave a stirring account of the workers' attack on the central railway station of Middlesbrough. At 9 pm. on Thursday, May 6th, the workers stopped a train at a main line crossing in the middle of the town and then in one spirited charge captured the station and blocked the line with heavy wagons.

We must not suppose that the General Council had the slightest sympathy with such robust action. At the beginning they had urged the workers to stay at home or play games. They even suggested that the workers play football with the police. The miners had ideas how a football match with the police should be run. Such ideas are not approved by the Football Association.

REVOLUTIONARY BEGINNINGS

The mass pickets gave enormous strength to the transport permit committees. These committees had been formed when the Government refused the T.U.C. offer to carry on food transport along with health services. The purpose of the committees was to check the claims of, and grant permits, to those wishing to transport food or other essentials. In most localities employers ignored the government transport committees and humbly presented their claims to the strikers' permit committees. In Northumberland and Durham the O.M.S. broke down and the government's Regional Commissioner at Newcastle pleaded to the Joint Strike Committee to join him in dual control of the food distribution.

The attack on other forms of communication was gravely hindered by the timidity of the General Council. Post Office, telephone and telegraph workers were never called out. The position of electricity supply workers was very obscure. The G.C. talked of cutting off power but maintaining light. In most cases the electrical workers settled the problem by coming out.

While the workers struck at the communications of the enemy they at the same time organised their own. Thousands of cars and motor-cycles, tens of thousands of cycles stood ready at strike headquarters or sped along the roads, the black and yellow T.U.C. label clearing the road before them.

The strike was organised in each town by a hastily formed Council of Action. In some cases these councils were just the old trades councils or their executive committees. In other cases entirely new councils were

formed by delegates or officials from the district offices of the chief unions. In Northumberland and Durham the local Councils of Action were federated into a regional council covering the important industrial area of the northeast, controlling the two coalfields and the ports and shipyards of the Tyne, Tees and Wear, with the great engineering and chemical works and the north-south traffic routes.

The councils suffered a great deal from lack of daily contact with the masses of strikers and most of the stirring and really effective actions were unorganised and spontaneous.

THE TERROR BEGINS

The Government's chief weapons were a great display of military force, police terrorism and heavy propaganda. Attempts to run the economy of the country were secondary to these. No newspapers appeared (though most newspaper offices published a few duplicated bulletins) until the government issued the *British Gazette*. Churchill was chief editor. The paper was published at a great loss. In Durham the paper was distributed by dropping copies from aircraft, a method reminiscent of war. In most localities copies were slipped into the letterboxes of working-class houses at night. The B.B.C. however was the Cabinet's chief propaganda weapon.

The T.U.C. could have overcome any effects of the B.B.C. by holding a thousand or so meetings every day. Those were the days of open-air Labour propaganda and crowds would have quickly assembled. Instead the General Council discouraged meetings. "*In common with my principal colleagues, I avoided speechmaking and advised against mass-meetings of strikers or sympathisers.*" (Clynes).

Printed propaganda for the strike had been prohibited by the T.U.C. ban on *all* printing, even the T.U.C.'s own *Daily Herald* coming under the ban. Local strike committees got around the ban by issuing cyclostyled bulletins. After a few days: the General Council issued the *British Worker* in reply to Churchill's *British Gazette*.

In the House of Commons Sir John Simon, speaking as a lawyer, declared the General Strike to be illegal. Much has been made of this since, but at the time it did not have the slightest effect on the strikers. The Government did not limit itself to propaganda. In the Clyde, the *Hood* (then the world's largest battleship), the *Warspite* and the *Comus* threatened the working-class quarters with their guns. Destroyers lay in the harbours of Harwich, Cardiff, Portsmouth and Middlesbrough.

The London power stations were manned by naval engine-room ratings, and naval men worked in the London docks. A submarine supplied electric power to the Port of London. The London docks were besieged by striking: dockers and middle-class blacklegs were afraid to go there. The docks were heavily guarded by soldiers in full war-kit and machine guns were mounted everywhere. The Home Secretary met high army and naval officers, "Make your own plans" he said. "Use whatever force you require – I give you *carte blanche* – but my orders are that the London Docks must be opened at all costs."

Warships took loads of blacklegs down the Thames at night and one hundred food lorries were loaded. Next morning the lorries passed through the East End in convoy guarded by hundreds of police, two battalions of infantry with fixed bayonets, a number of tanks and ten armoured cars.

Every day the strike became more clearly a struggle between two classes, a fight between the workers and the State. The struggle itself created that clear picture. It was not the result of propaganda as the labour leaders wailed.

"The whole crux of the struggle Had been skilfully shifted by propaganda' from a sympathetic protest at the unfair treatment of the miners to a Constitutional struggle between Parliament and Anarchism." (Memoirs: Clynes).

"We Are Betrayed!"

As the strike developed more workers joined the strikers, the picket lines increased, the tourniquet on the high roads tightened. There was never any slackening of the strike. According to Professor W. H. Crook (*The General Strike* pp.390-6) quoting reports of the Ministry of Transport, 99 per cent. of London Underground workers struck. On the G.W.R. by May 11th only 8.4 per cent. of goods trains ran; on the L.M.S. less than 3 per cent. and on the LN.E.R. much less than 1 per cent. Railwaymen claim that these figures were exaggerated by running the trains over much shorter distances and so increasing the number of trains, but not the goods carried.

The reply of the Government was to increase the terror. The limits of their own laws were too narrow for them. Thrusting aside the constitution "and laws, the Cabinet, no doubt with memories of their Black and

Tans, promised immunity to the Armed Forces for any violence they might wish to commit. On May 7th they broadcast this announcement.

"All ranks of the Armed Forces of the Crown are hereby notified that any action which they may find it necessary to take in an honest endeavour to aid the Civil Power will receive, both now and afterwards, the full support of His Majesty's Government."

Nevertheless, the Armed Forces were little used other than as a threatening parade. The chief forces of the Government were the regular police, the Special

Constabulary and an extra special body of mounted "specials" recruited from the well-to-do to form Cossack troops. Their chief weapons were wholesale arrests, where the strikers were not too strong, and wild baton charges, often on crowds coming out of theatres and cinemas. But the strikers stood firm. The two classes confronted one another as over a barricade.

As the strike developed some members of the ruling-class, particularly those running municipalities, showed signs of worry. The Newcastle City

Council, with a heavy Conservative majority, called upon the Government to seek an armistice. The Archbishop of Canterbury, after consulting the leaders of the churches, appealed for the calling off of the strike, the withdrawal of the miners' lock-out notices and the renewal of the coal subsidy until a settlement was found. The anxiety was not limited to City Councillors and parsons:

"J. H. Thomas, representing 'the railwaymen, found, early in the Strike, that his duties took him to Buckingham Palace. King George asked him a number of questions, and expressed his sympathy for the miners. At the end of the talk, His Majesty, who was gravely disturbed, remarked, it is said: 'Well, Thomas, if the worst happens, I suppose all this –' (with a gesture indicating his surroundings) '– will vanish?'

"Fortunately for Britain and the world, it did not come to the worst. The Trades Unions saw to that."

J. R. Clynes; *Memoirs*.

THIRTY PIECES

But the Government was undisturbed; it knew its agents in the Trades Union movement. All during the Strike the General Council was seeking anything which looked like a way out. In the course of their seeking they met Sir Abe Bailey and Sir Herbert Samuel at the former's house. Samuel proposed terms of settlement which included wage cuts and some vague re-organisation of the mining industry. That was sufficient for the General Council who pretended that the proposals were, somehow, coming from the Government. Sir Herbert Samuel was quite clear about this, saying, "I have been acting entirely on my own initiative, have received no authority from the Government, and can give no assurances on their behalf."

The Government, through the Minister of Labour, Sir Arthur Steel-Maitland, declared that no terms would be considered or negotiations opened, the strikers must surrender unconditionally.

Returning to the miner's leaders the General Council presented these unofficial and private conversations as terms of settlement, speaking airily of guarantees.

"Mr. Pugh was continually pressed and questioned by Mr. Herbert Smith (the M.F.G.B. president), myself, and my colleagues as to what the guarantees mentioned were, and who had given them. We got no answer." A. J. Cook: *The Nine Days*.

The miners' leaders contemptuously rejected the shufflings of the General Council and expressed their determination to carry on the fight. The Council deputation then went to 10 Downing Street and Pugh, addressing Baldwin, said:

"We are here to-day, sir, to say that this General Strike is to be terminated forthwith in order that negotiations may proceed."

Wednesday, May 12th, 1926.

Once again workers looked at one another with bitter eyes and said "We are betrayed!"

Immediately the police terror was renewed. The number of arrests increased after the strikes, and baton charges continued. On the night of Wednesday, May 12th a meeting of dockers was being held outside Poplar Town Hall when a lorry full of police drove through the crowd scattering injured people to each side. Father Groser, the Vicar, held up a crucifix and told the police the meeting was peaceful. He too was batoned. The same night a vanload of police was driven to the headquarters of the Poplar branch of the National Union of Railwaymen. Without warning the

police charged into the building and batoned all within reach.

When the strikers returned to their places of work the following day hundreds of thousands of them were met by victimisation, demands for non-unionism, wage reductions or dismissals. The railwaymen were the chief victims and spontaneously renewed the strike. The threat of a new General Strike without the leaders curbed the viciousness of the employers' attack, yet even then thousands of men were victimised. «In sullen anger the workers returned and the miners were left to fight alone until November when, driven by hunger, they accepted defeat. Wages were cut, the working day was increased from seven to eight hours and district agreements replaced the national agreement.

POST MORTEM

It is now our task to examine the various social bodies and forces at work in the Strike and from a study of their relationship find lessons valuable to the workers in their struggle against the employing class. *The Government and the Employers* – The old revolutionary statement that "the State is but the executive committee of the ruling class" was well justified by the events of 1926. From the beginning to the end of the struggle the "Constitution" was on the side of the mine-owners. All the old socialdemocratic nonsense of the State being above classes was cruelly pushed aside by the employers and their government. Although the *Conservative Party* was in power, the *Liberal Party* was whole-heartedly behind the coal-owners. In times of strike the Popular Front sham of "progressive" Liberalism is flung away and the Liberal coal-owner is at one with his Tory brother coal-owner. The Popular Front can wait until the next General Election.

A fairly large *Fascist* movement existed in 1926 in the form of the British Fascisti. Forgotten were the "social message" and "workers" charter" of Fascism. The Fascists joined the O.M.S. and drove lorries or unloaded ships as did the other blacklegs.

The role of the leaders of the *T.U.C.* and the *Labour Party* was particularly despicable for they had always been opposed to the General Strike and never at any time had they withdrawn their opposition to it. By leading a struggle to which' they were opposed they played the part of agents-provocateur. It seems that the labour leaders believed that a struggle in defence of the miners was inevitable and that it was better to initiate the fight in order to control and hamstring it. In any case, what treachery lacked cowardice made up.

"It must not be forgotten that apart from the rights and wrongs of the calling of a General

Strike, there would in any case, with the miners' lockout, have been widespread unofficial fighting in all parts of the country, which would have produced anarchy in the movement."

Ernest Bevin in *The Record*.

"What I dreaded about this strike more than anything else was this: if by any chance it should have got out of the hands of those who would be able to exercise some control, every sane man knows what would have happened. I thank God it never did."

J. H. Thomas in the House of Commons, May 13th, 1926.

"Every day that the strike proceeded the control and the authority of that dispute was passing out of the hands of responsible Executives into the hands of men who had no authority, no control, and was wrecking the movement."

Charles Dukes (N.U.G. & M.W.): Report 1927 Conference of Executives.

"I have never disguised that in a challenge to the Constitution, God help us unless the Constitution won."

J. H. Thomas, House of Commons, May 3rd, 1926.

"I have never favoured the principle of a General Strike."

J. H. Thomas at Hammersmith. May 9th, 1926.

"No General Strike was ever planned or seriously contemplated as an act of Trade Union policy. I told my own union in April, that such a stroke would be a national disaster."

"We were against the stoppage not in favour of it."

J. R. Clynes; *Memoirs*.

The *Independent Labour Party* at that time was anything rather than independent and was still affiliated to the Labour Party, a majority of Labour

M.P.s and ex-cabinet ministers being members of the I.L.P. The attitude of the I.L.P. was essentially that of the Labour Party; its leaders Snowden and McDonald had years before opposed the General Strike in their long disputes with the Syndicalists. In 1926 McDonald was still the leader of the I.L.P. as well as the Labour Party and was still repeating his old opposition to the General Strike.

"I don't like General Strikes . . . I am terribly cold-blooded about the matter."

"With the discussion of General Strikes and Bolshevism and all that kind of thing I have nothing to do at all."

Ramsay McDonald, House of Commons, May 3rd, 1926.

WE SHALL RISE AGAIN

The *Communist Party* had never yet aspired to being anything more than the vague left-wing of the Labour Party and trade unions. The crises of 1925 and 1926 found them without any alternative policy to that of the labour leaders. On the second day of the Strike the Communist Party issued a manifesto repeating the M.F.G.B. slogan "Not a penny off the pay, not a minute on the day," and adding a self-contradictory call to "Nationalise the Mines without Compensation, under Workers' Control," and the formation of a

Labour Government. That is a Government of MacDonald, Snowden, Clynes and Thomas! The miners must wait until the next General Election for that! To all of these slogans the C.P. added the slogan it had used from the beginning of the crisis – "All power to the General Council." A stupid parody of the slogan of the October Revolution "All power to the Soviets". "All power" to Thomas, Clynes and Bevin. They already had too much power – the power to betray the miners.

There existed at this time a trade union opposition known as the *Minority Movement*, a thinly disguised Communist body. Shortly-before the strike it, in the usual Communist fashion, claimed to have an affiliated membership of 1,000,000. Being a Communist organisation it was forced to trail behind the C.P. and during the Strike, in which it played no part, it even ceased to hold meetings. A few years later it perished miserably.

the Communist Party... added the slogan it had used from the beginning of the crisis – "All power to the General Council." A stupid parody of the slogan of the October Revolution "All power to the Soviets". "All power" to Thomas, Clynes and Bevin. They already had too much power – the power to betray the miners.

No *Syndicalist* movement existed in Britain in 1926 although until the end of the Great War a small propagandist movement had lived vigorously. Unfortunately this movement had been eclipsed by the Russian Revolution or engulfed by trade union work. Nevertheless the General Strike propaganda of the old Syndicalist groups had had a much greater effect than was ever expected of it. The idea of the General Strike appealed to the imagination and conscience of the British worker.

The present *Anarchist* movement in England was as yet unborn in 1926. The betrayals of a decade, the failure of two Labour Governments, the Labour desertion of the Spanish Revolution and the Socialist-Communist support of the second world war were to later make inevitable the creation of our present Revolutionary Movement.

Without a Syndicalist minority among the miners, factory workers and transport men, on the picket lines and local strike headquarters, the strikers were easy prey to the Judas Iscariots. Without an Anarchist

Federation, a strong, compact and resolute body of conscious revolutionaries such as the Spanish F.A.I., no alternative to the treacherous leadership could be found.

Of the workers nothing but the highest praise is sufficient. They responded to the strike call magnificently. When the Government wished to publish the *British Gazette* not one linotype operator could be found to set up its paper. In thousands of cases trade unionists walked out to certain dismissal. In many cases, especially on the railways, men in supervisory jobs sacrificed jobs and pensions to join the fight. The ninth day of the strike found the workers more determined than ever to carry on the fight. There was never any drift back. What the workers lacked was revolutionary understanding and organisation. It is our task to create these. The General Strike is not dead. Weighing carefully the treachery and cowardice of labour leaders and drawing inspiration from the courage and sacrifice of the workers, we prepare our hearts and minds for the Second British General Strike.

1926: The Watershed of Class History

[Albert Meltzer]

Black Flag, May 1976

Celebrate 1926? It was a defeat arising from a betrayal. Celebrate what? Only the parting of the ways for the labour movement. Here it was above all the General Strike that was a decisive test for the workers' movement. Before then, with all its faults, there was a working class movement. Afterwards it disintegrated, and the name was taken over by class enemies... It was not the General Strike which caused this to happen, but it marked the process by which it happened here. It was a watershed of our class history. There were many currents within the working class movement. Not all went into the major sea of parliamentary reformism. But those that did were channelled off into minor streams.

We neglect at our peril the old syndicalist traditions which existed within the British working class movement before 1926. This is why, in 'Black Flag' we have always accentuated the need to discover our old traditions and history. To the extent socialism was a working-class movement, it was libertarian – just as in other countries. It was the canalisation of socialism by the middle-classes into planned [caus?]es that caused libertarian socialism to become a backwater explored only by sectarians.

During the First World War the working-class had rejected the bureaucratic top-heavy and reformist trade union leadership which had compromised itself

with the State. The shop stewards' movement had developed as a decentralising shop-floor corrective. In effect, there was one vertical movement (controlled from above downwards) and one horizontal movement cutting across it (controlled from the shop floor). This existed formally in many other countries: to ensure the 'vertical' movement was triumphant the full force of the State was used against the workers to whatever extent was necessary. Ever since the one gauge of democracy has been – not the extent to which society is managed by those who make it up – but the extent to which repression had to be used against the people to make them accept the fact of rule from above.

The difference between 'vertical' and 'horizontal' unionism was informal in this country; but it existed nevertheless. The TUC managed, after 1926, to break with the last vestiges of syndicalism and of independent action. More than ever they leaned to parliamentary participation in seeking to gain the struggles they could not gain by industrial action. The establishment had a bad fright in 1926 – it took them a long time to get over it – but the TUC General Council was even more frightened than they of the possibilities which the conflict had evoked. This is what made them lean more heavily on the Labour Party, which had been infiltrated and conquered by the middle class intellectual authoritarianism of the Fabians.

The influence of the Communist Party was from the first a treason to the whole conception of the working class movement. It made 'revolution' synonymous with State dictatorship. It tried to impose its own authority – not succeeding in Britain, it subordinated the struggle in 1926 to the leadership of the TUC General Council and thereafter to parliamentary socialism. It diverted all struggle into what were presumed to be 'Left' causes but were all concerned with the defence of the Russian dictatorship.

When the working class movement became Statist it ceased to be working class. It was pushed into defensive positions in the thirties – the fear of fascism, the struggle against sub-standard housing, the battle against unemployment. These were the battles of the 'Old Left' – succeeded by the 'New Left', still with Statist ideas, always with the fallback of supporting the Labour Party, still supporting dictatorial movement abroad, still wanting to subordinate the working class to an intellectual middle-class leadership – now a student one.

It plays on the fear of fascism when only its ghost appears; it struggles to get into sub-standard housing, by squatting rather than get out of it; and on the subject of unemployment it is divided between those who want the 'right to work' and those who want the right 'never to work again'!

One looks with amazement at all that is left of the conception of the movement fifty years after 1926. What has it to do with us?, we ask. The workers ask it too. What has it to do with the class struggle or with social liberation? It deals in State reforms, in liberal

measures, in State participation, in national liberation, in support for tyranny everywhere provided its labelled 'Left' by Moscow. But of the elements of democracy and socialism, not even to speak of syndicalism or anarchism, not a trace – but one.

It still pays lip service to workers control from time to time, and next year it is proposed that this will become 'law'... the Old and the New Left will be at one in the Labour Party scheme for 'management participation'. You want workers' control? You shall have it... we shall simply give the name to something utterly different. Just as in Russia where the name 'soviets' implying something democratic and socialist – has been taken by the State and given to something utterly and completely in contrast! Just as in Germany where the name of socialism and of 'folk' – the people – was given to something utterly different to socialism and opposed to the people!

So it will be here. The name of the cause that cannot be eradicated will be taken as a label for its opposite. That is the very stuff of State oppression.

In fifty years not only have we gained nothing, we have lost everything, so far as aspirations to freedom are concerned. The material benefits consequent upon the efforts of civilisation as a whole – lauded as being due to the State in totalitarian countries or to the Chancellor in power for the time being in parliamentary ones – mean that, inevitably, our living conditions have improved. But as for getting the whole benefits for ourselves we have taken many paces back.

We have not lost our traditions though the Statists would rewrite history. But we need beginnings too.

A General Strike can be truly effective only if a new spirit will penetrate Trade Unionism, the spirit of Syndicalism, which is after all the only basis for economic organisation to meet the needs of the modern economic struggle. Besides that, Syndicalism prepares the masses for fundamental social changes on a federative libertarian basis...

A General Strike which has its roots in Syndicalism and free initiative for activity as a vision for the workers is the only strike which is likely to compel the enemy's attention. The General Strike was not of that nature, hence it could not achieve what it set out to do, namely, to force the mineowners to meet the demands of the miners, and to pave the way for greater economic improvements for all the workers.

– Emma Goldman, "Reflections on the General Strike", *Freedom*, August-September 1926

Reviews

Flowers to the rebels failed?

Nicolas Walter

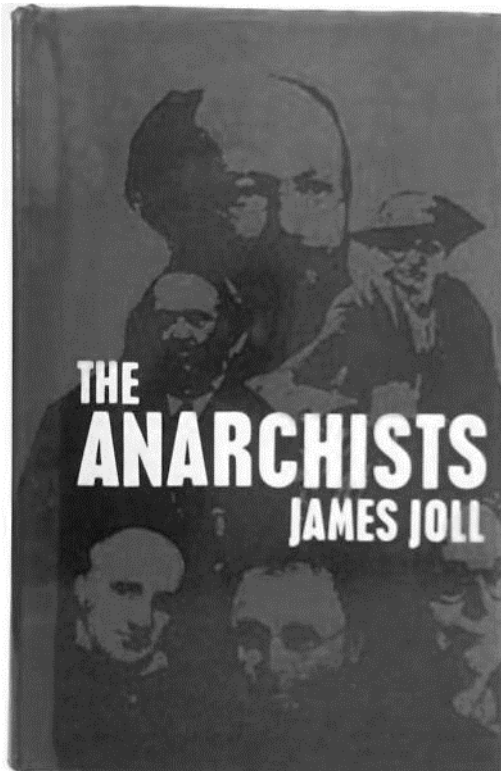
Anarchy, December 1964

THE ANARCHISTS by James Joll (Eyre & Spottiswoode 35s.)

James Joll's new history of Anarchism will inevitably be compared with George Woodcock's (which was reviewed in ANARCHY 28 last year) and will inevitably suffer from such a comparison. To put it bluntly, no one should pay 35s. for Joll as well as (or instead of) 7s. 6d. for Woodcock. Joll may be clothbound, while Woodcock is a paperback, and Joll may have ten pictures; but Joll is actually shorter than Woodcock, and, more important, worse.

In a brief Introduction, Joll justifies his own book by rejecting the "historian's cult of success" and insisting that "the study of failure can often be as instructive and rewarding as the study of success." Anarchism, we are to understand, is a "recurrent type of failure", for the anarchists have "never made a successful revolution". Nevertheless, we are glad to hear, the anarchists "have provided a continuous and fundamental criticism of the modern concept of the state, and have challenged the assumptions of nearly all schools of contemporary political thought"; and "the protests which the anarchist movement has made express a recurrent psychological need, and one which has by no means disappeared with the apparent failure of anarchism as a serious political force." There is more generalised and over-simplified discussion of this kind. The anarchist movement, we are told, is "a product of the nineteenth century", and is "in part at least the result of the impact of machines and industry on a peasant or artisan society." Joll lays great stress on the paradoxes of anarchism.

"Anarchism is both a religious faith and a rational philosophy; and many of its anomalies. are the product of the clash between the two, and of the tensions between the different kinds of temperament which they represent." The best way to judge this chapter is to compare it with Woodcock's Prologue.



The rest of Joll's book is divided into three sections. Part One deals with the prehistory of anarchism. The first chapter – "Heresy and Reason" – describes the double origin of the anarchist movement in the extreme religious sects of the late Middle Ages and the Reformation, and in the rationalists of the eighteenth century Enlightenment. Unfortunately, Joll has chosen bad examples of both. His view of the sects is based on Professor Cohn's book *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, and therefore emphasises the most violent and authoritarian groups and leaders – such as

the Cathari (or Albigenses) and the German Anabaptists, Thomas Munzer and John of Leyden – when it would have been better to discuss, for example, the Swiss Anabaptists, and the Diggers, La Boétie and Winstanley. Then Joll's account of the rationalists is for some reason dominated by Rousseau, who looks very uncomfortable in the place where Paine should have been; and if Joll insists on discussing Rousseau's ideas in a book on anarchism, he might at least have got them right – Rousseau was more interested in the corporate state and the general will than in the rights of the

individual, and to quote Rousseau's famous phrase "Man was born free and is everywhere in chains" as an anarchist motto is to distort Rousseau's intention of justifying such a state of affairs! The chapter ends with a satisfactory discussion of Godwin, though here Joll could hardly have hoped to compete with Woodcock (and it is news that Shelley was "one of Godwin's first disciples").

The second chapter – "The Myth of the Revolution" – describes the beginnings of the anarchist movement during and after the French Revolution. Unfortunately, Joll has chosen more bad examples. The *Enragés* rightly appear, but what are Marat, Babeuf and Buonarotti doing here? Fourier deserves detailed attention in a book on anarchism, but Saint-Simon? And Weitling needs more care than Joll is prepared to give. The trouble in this chapter is that Joll's view of the early nineteenth century revolutionaries is based on Professor Talmon's book *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy*, and therefore again emphasises the most violent and authoritarian figures. In general, this section of the book is highly misleading, since it deals with the prehistory of socialism rather than anarchism. One begins to wonder if Joll really knows the difference.

Part Two deals with the two great founders of the modern anarchist movement, Proudhon and Bakunin, and their quarrel with the authoritarian socialists headed by Marx. This section of the book is more satisfactory, though it is pedestrian and again cannot hope to compete with Woodcock. Joll's picture of Proudhon seems to be fair, but his picture of Bakunin is drawn for him by Professor Carr and rather overemphasises the farcical and fanatical side of Bakunin's career.

Part Three deals in a confused way with the anarchist movement from the 1870s to the 1930s. A chapter called "Terrorism and Propaganda by the Deed" concentrates on the assassinations of the 1890s, but also describes Most and the early careers of Kropotkin and Malatesta.¹ A chapter called "Saints and Rebels" describes the later career of Kropotkin, the French artists and intellectuals who were in or near the anarchist movement, and Max Stirner. A chapter called "The Revolution that Failed" describes the later career of Malatesta, and the anarchist part in the Russian Revolution, with particular reference to Makhno

and to Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman. A chapter called "Anarchists and Syndicalists" describes the rise and fall of the syndicalist movement in France and the United States. And a chapter called "Anarchists in Action" describes the Spanish anarchist movement throughout the period.

Apart from being confused, over and over again Joll has just got things wrong. Most of the assassins he mentions, for example, by his own admission weren't anarchists at all, and of course most anarchists have opposed

Apart from being confused, over and over again Joll has just got things wrong. Most of the assassins he mentions, for example, by his own admission weren't anarchists at all, and of course most anarchists have opposed terrorism – why then pay so much attention to terrorism in a book on anarchism?

terrorism – why then pay so much attention to terrorism in a book on anarchism? Sorel wasn't an important anarcho-syndicalist thinker, and actually had more influence on the fascist than on the anarchist movement—why then devote a quarter of the chapter on anarcho-syndicalism to Sorel? Why split up the careers of such consistent thinkers as Kropotkin and Malatesta? There are also too many silly little mistakes. Czolgosz, the young American of Polish descent who shot President McKinley, becomes a "young Hungarian called Czolgoz". Vinoba Bhave becomes "Vinobha Bhave", though at least he remains Indian. Kropotkin refused to drink the king's health, not

¹ For an example of Joll's superficiality, see "The London Congress of 1881", *Black Flag Anarchist Review* Vol. 3 No. 1 (Spring 2023). (*Black Flag*)

the queen's. Berkman didn't just die, he shot himself. And there are some disturbing omissions. Where are Anselme Bellegarrigue, Benjamin Tucker, Louise Michel, Voltairine de Cleyre, Emile Armand and Bart de Ligt? Is it enough to dismiss Gustav Landauer as a "bohemian intellectual"? Doesn't Thoreau deserve even a mention? Have Shelley, Wilde and Read been the only British anarchists of note since Godwin? Where indeed are the native American and British anarchist movements? This book will be read mostly in this country and the United States, but its readers will learn virtually nothing about anarchism in their countries. Readers of ANARCHY who know more about anarchism than I do will no doubt find many more distortions, mistakes and omissions. It is true that James Joll isn't as consistently inaccurate as, say, Herb Greer, but then he is meant to be a serious scholar.

In a brief Conclusion, Joll repeats the arguments of his Introduction, with the addition of several rather dubious statements about anarchism. "Anarchism is necessarily a creed of all or nothing." Is it? "The basic assumptions of anarchism are all contrary to the development of large-scale industry and of mass production and consumption." Are they? "The anarchists are all agreed that in the new society men will live in extreme simplicity and frugality." Are we? The more Joll says about anarchism, the less he seems to know. But his main point is that anarchism is essentially a failure. To clinch this, he quotes as a sort of epitaph a poem translated by Vanzetti: "Give flowers to the rebels failed." Woodcock, whose book was romantic where Joll's is academic, made much the same point. "Clearly," he concluded, "as a movement, anarchism has failed."

I think both Woodcock and Joll are wrong – not because anarchism is a success, but because the cult of failure is just as invalid as the cult of

Woodcock and Joll are wrong – not because anarchism is a success, but because the cult of failure is just as invalid as the cult of success, because anarchism should not be judged in this crude way, because ideas and movement cannot be measured on this sort of scale

success, because anarchism should not be judged in this crude way, because ideas and movement cannot be measured on this sort of scale. The point of Christianity is not whether the Christians can convert the world, but whether Jesus was Christ. The point of Communism is not whether the Communists can make successful revolutions, but whether a Communist society is a good thing. The point of pacifism is not whether war can be

abolished, but whether it should be abolished. And the point of anarchism is not whether we are a success or a failure, but whether we have something to say about present society, and something to do about future society. Joll, like Woodcock, accepts the value of anarchist criticism, but he doesn't understand this criticism, and, like Woodcock again, he seems to see it only as a permanent protest, good for anarchists because it provides self-expression, and good for other people because it

challenges their complacency. This is a completely false way of looking at anarchism. It is not just a historical or political idea, a sociological or psychological function. As long as anarchism is present in individuals, in groups, in a movement, it is present in society; and it is present in society to a greater or lesser extent whenever a gain in freedom is won or a loss of freedom is resisted. Joll sneers at Kropotkin for seeing evidence of anarchism in the British Museum Library and the British Life-Boat Association, in the International Postal Union and the Compagnie Internationale des Wagons-Lits – but Kropotkin was right. Utopia is present in the topia: the free society is contained within the unfree society. Every gain we hope to make in the future is based on a freedom we already possess, and every loss we fear to sustain in the future is based on a freedom we already lack. We are here and now, and our means are our ends. What is important is not *the* anarchist movement, but anarchist movement – not the free society, but a freer society.

Degrowth Communism?

Wayne Price

Kohei Saito's *Slow Down: The Degrowth Manifesto* – An Anarchist Review

Kohei Saito's book was originally published in Japan in 2020. In various languages, it has been widely read and well-reviewed by environmentalists, radical ecologists, eco-socialists, and others. (However, some of Saito's fellow Marxists have reviewed it negatively.) I believe it has serious flaws, even though its fundamental message is correct (if not as original as Saito thinks).

That message is the value of integrating “degrowth” (or “steady-state”) theory with socialism—he calls this “degrowth communism.” Modern industrial economies and technologies are driven to constant and unending quantitative expansion. This in turn must conflict with the ecological and geological limits existing in the natural world. The results have been, and will be, catastrophic to humanity and all life. It is necessary to halt this destructive drive, and to even decrease previous forms of industrialism – “degrowth.” However, the political economy of capitalism is hard-wired to quantitative growth and accumulation.

The only solution is to end the capitalist system—and its supporting institutions such as the state, white supremacy, male domination, and imperialism. Saito rejects centralized and statist versions of “socialism,” saying—accurately—that the system of the Soviet Union was really “nationalized capitalism.” (p.224) Saito proposes to replace all capitalism with socialist cooperative self-management by “freely associated producers,” organized in radically democratic councils, assemblies, and commons.

He summarizes, “It's not impossible to implement democratic forms of mutual aid that don't rely on a strong nation [state] to function, instead relying on individuals to voluntarily develop strategies for combating climate change on their own. This

would be a just, sustainable future society This...future has no name... while preserving ideals of freedom, equality, and democracy.” (p. 68)

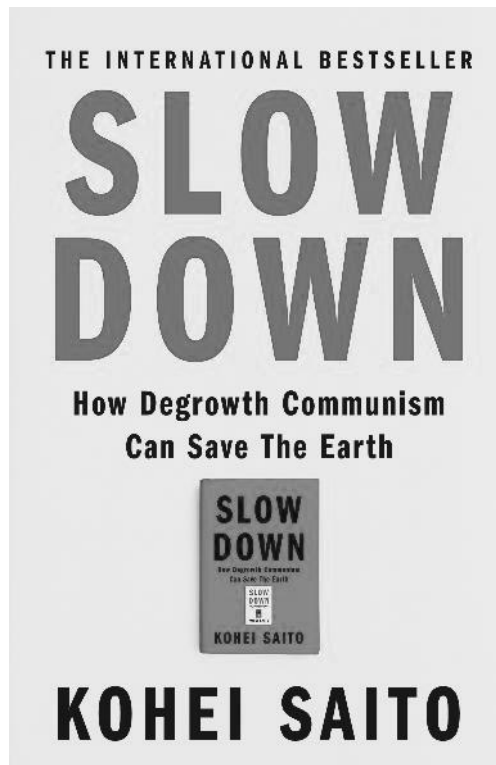
Ah, but this does have a name! What is this but anarchist-socialism (or anarchist-communism)? As a program, it has existed, and been further developed, since the 1870s.

While an authority on Marxism, Saito knows next to nothing about anarchism. Among anarchists, he does not refer to Peter Kropotkin—who, as a professional geographer, had an ecological view of what a free, (small-see) communist, society would look like. (Kropotkin

2008) Nor does he refer to the more recent writings of Murray Bookchin. His pioneering work demonstrated the roots of the ecological crisis in capitalism and the state and proposed a libertarian alternative. (Biehl 2015) (Saito cites favourably a few comments by David Graeber, but does not identify him as an anarchist.)

Finally, Saito makes a one-sentence critique of anarchism: “Anarchism, which does reject the state, cannot effectively combat climate change.” (p. 227)

This sentence is a little peculiar. He had previously made clear that he rejected a socialism or communism based on government ownership and direction (“nationalized capitalism” or state capitalism). He further rejected what he calls, “Politicalism... the belief that if we simply select



good leaders within a framework of representative democracy, we can leave it up to these politicians and experts to put optimal policies and laws in place for us.... Electoral politics always reaches its limits when faced with the power of capital.” (pp.132-3) Anarchists would fully agree.

But then, just before the one-sentence rejection of anarchism, Saito writes, “The power of the state will play an indispensable role in in any effective response to climate change....It would be foolish to reject the state as a means of getting things done.” (p. 226) He believes that it is possible to democratize the state so that it “reflects the views of its people and fosters citizens’ participation and agency.” (p. 227) Apparently a state can, after all, go beyond the limits of the power of capital!

However, it is one thing to say that the state can carry out various reforms—such as pollution controls, food safety, disease control, and even mitigation of ecological destruction. Like other reforms, these may be enforced due to popular pressure from below, or even because more far-sighted sections of the big bourgeoisie can see the need for such changes. (Although reforms may be reversed at a later date, as Trump has reversed environmental laws.)

It is quite another thing to expect the tops of the ruling class to permit any drastic changes in the social system, as Saito says (correctly) is necessary to prevent cataclysm. They will not permit their wealth, social standing, and political power to be taken away without the most bitter of conflicts. They will use all their might, all their cultural influence, all their state control over the military, police, and fascist gangs, to prevent such change from happening. (This is a ruling class, after all, which has been waging a war of genocide in Palestine.) This especially includes preventing the government from becoming more democratic and participatory.

For all his apparent radicalism, Saito deeply underestimates the resistance of the ruling class, its state, and its establishment. The capitalist classes will not willingly permit drastic change, let alone Saito’s goal of degrowth communism.

Saito concludes “the best option for a better future is for ordinary citizens to step up as individuals, to testify to their experiences, to raise their voices and take action on their own

initiative.” (p. xix) This is puerile. Not that there is anything wrong with “ordinary” individuals acting on their own initiative. But mass movements of opposition are needed. (Elsewhere he does say something like this, without discussing the apparent contradiction with his “ordinary citizens” stepping up “as individuals.”) (p. 232)

We must be able to threaten the state and capital, forcing them to at least make reforms, environmental and otherwise. Within the popular organizations and movements, associations of revolutionaries are also needed to point out the limits of even the best reforms, and to advocate replacement of capital and the state with radically democratic councils and self-managed organizations.

To imagine a revolution (however far from immediate conditions it may appear) is to posit revolutionary agents. Capitalism runs on the exploitation of the working classes, and therefore the working classes are the central (but not the only) potential agent of social transformation. Revolutionary anarchism, from Bakunin and Kropotkin onward, overlapped with Marxism on this important point. Saito presents himself as a Marxist. However, he does not posit the working classes as even one of the potential central agents of a possible revolution. He refers to unions as “subsumed” by capitalism, but later says that struggles to democratize work “must include the participation of labor unions.” (p. 232) This is a half-hearted endorsement of workers’ organizing.

Saito declares, “The most revolutionary thing, above all else, is the revolutionary transformation of labor and production.... The site of production...the first step toward real revolution must take place there.” (pp. 183-4) I fully agree, but he immediately goes into a discussion of small-scale urban farming and producer co-ops. He is explicit that “these demands” and “the ultimate goal” are “quite different” from “those of traditional Marxists.” (p. 188)

He does not make a class analysis of the capitalist world. This is clearest in his analysis of imperialism. Saito makes a clear and correct connection between modern imperialism and world-wide ecological decline. Not only do the industrialized-imperial countries at the core of the world system pump value from the poorer nations

of the periphery. But the central countries drain them of raw materials, foodstuffs, and useful minerals, while dumping industrial waste in them. The core countries may appear to be “going green,” but actually they are doing so only by outsourcing their polluting and climate-changing outputs onto the peoples of the poorer nations.

“Ecological imperialism relies on the plunder of the periphery while shifting the ill effects of the problems brought about by that plunder back onto that periphery as well.” (p. 23) This is valid and insightful.

But, similar to many Maoists, he presents the imperial conflict as between nations only – the core nations vs. the peripheral nations. He posits each nation – or bloc of nations – as relatively homogeneous, in conflict with other homogeneous nations. In the imperialist countries, Saito writes of “our rich lifestyles” and “the Imperial Mode of Living.” (p. 8) He calls on this population to take cuts in its presumably excessive living standards. But who is the “our” who share this Imperial Mode of Living? Are there no distinctions between the rich and poor, the minority of capitalists and the working class majority?

A recent study by the National Council on Aging found that, on average, the wealthiest U.S. people lived nine years longer than the poorest of the U.S. population. (*NY Times* 10/25/2025; p. B3) For the poorest workers, there is not much of an Imperial Mode of Living!

Furthermore, “in recent years, the disparities in carbon emissions on a class basis have proven ever more crucial in addressing the climate problem. Inequality in greenhouse gas emissions *within* nations now exceeds the inequality *between* nations—although the two remain intrinsically related due to imperialism....The key to the elimination of global carbon emissions by 2050 is the rapid reduction of the emissions of the wealthy, namely, the capitalist class, in the rich

imperial countries especially.” (Editors *Monthly Review* 2025; inside front cover; p. 64)

This requires that the workers and oppressed expropriate the wealth of the ruling class, socialize the means of production, and self-manage the economy—not cutting back their already overly limited living standards as such. (This is the program of Kropotkin 2008.) It also requires an end to the vast amount of waste in capitalist industrial and agricultural production and consumption, not least the enormous production of armaments.

Saito claims to be the first person who has really understood Marx in 175 years – due to Saito’s

reading Marx’s final unpublished notebooks. He claims to understand Marx better than Engels ever did! As an anarchist, I take Marxist theory seriously, but I do not intend to examine here whether or not Saito is really the last, best, Marxist—although it does seem unlikely. (See Graham-Leigh 2024; Napolitano 2024.)

For that matter, Saito makes no reference to the councilist, libertarian, “ultra-leftist,” and anarchist-adjacent trends in Marxism, as distinct from

Leninism or social-democracy. (Rachleff 1976) Most astonishingly, he does not even refer to the work of the “romantic,” ecological, and anti-statist, Marxist, William Morris, or his “utopian” novel *News from Nowhere*. (Thompson 1976) (A comrade both of Engels and Kropotkin, Morris has been claimed by both anarchists and Marxists.)

In any case, Marx and Engels and the anarchists Bakunin and Kropotkin lived in a time when only a tiny part of the globe was industrialized. Really this only included England, with countries such as France and Germany still being “developing nations.” Almost all of the planet was still pre-industrial. For anyone to call for “degrowth” would have been absurd. Now we live in a different time, when capitalist industrialism has conquered the world and is in its epoch of decay.

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The anarchist-communists and Marx pointed out that capitalism had an irrational drive toward quantitative growth. Under socialism, whether to produce or not produce would not be driven by a need for accumulation but by the democratic decisions of the freely associated working people, based on what they decided was needed.

Saito knows that Marxism did not lead to liberation but to mass-murdering, inefficient, state-capitalist, regimes. He blames this on the failure of Marxists to really understand Marx's last writings. "...Even specialized scholars and committed Marxists labour under a misunderstanding of Marx's ultimate views....This distortion of Marx's thought resulted in the birth of the monster known as Stalinism...." (p. 93) Anarchists, on the other hand, believe that Marxism led to social democracy and then Stalinism for other reasons. Marx always had a strategy of a workers' party taking state power, through elections or revolution, and using the state to create communism. While his ultimate goal was a classless and stateless society, his statism, centralism, and determinism led the Marxist movements in repressive directions. However, Saito is ambivalent at best on his own attitude toward the state. This limits his usefulness.

Conclusion

We live in a world in crisis. There are massive storms and wildfires, floods and droughts, species extinctions, famines and pandemics—the products of climate change. The world will continue to get hotter unless there is an eco-socialist revolution.

Most government rulers and establishment thinkers recognize the existential threat of global warming—verbally. This includes, in the U.S., the Democratic Party. But the policies they advocate and put in place are too little, too late, good in themselves perhaps, but inadequate to stabilize the climate. Every year gets worse.

The U.S. government is presently an outlier. Donald Trump, and his party, the Republicans, reject global warming, calling it a "hoax" and a "scam." In full denial of reality—Enemies of Humanity and the Planet!—they seem to be doing all they can to wage war on the biosphere and damn the human species. One unfortunate effect is to make the moderate environmentalists, with their inadequate programs, look good.

Whatever his limitations, Kohei Saito is right on the main question. Industrial capitalism must be replaced by a cooperative, non-profit, human-scaled, economy of commons and collectives, democratically managed, and ecologically balanced. He calls this "degrowth communism." Something like that is necessary if humans and our fellow creatures are to survive this existential crisis.

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The Dilemma of Leninists: Research or Regurgitation?

Iain McKay

Tariq Ali is a Pakistani-British political activist and writer who has been active since the 1960s, when his public profile grew due to his activism against the Vietnam War. He has long been associated with the *New Left Review* and is a leading Trotskyist, joining the International Marxist Group in 1968 and becoming a member of the International Executive Committee of the (reunified) Fourth International.

As such, the casual reader would think that he should be well placed to discuss the history of the left. The reality is different, as shown by his work on Lenin published in hardback in 2017 to mark the 100th anniversary of the Russian Revolution, *The Dilemmas of Lenin: Terrorism, War, Empire, Love, Revolution* (Verso, 2017/8). Ali seeks to discuss and draw lessons from Lenin and the various “dilemmas” he apparently faced. In the process Ali appears to discuss anarchism and, as such, the book is of interest to anarchists even if it is only as an example of what not to do.

His discussion of anarchism is found in the first “dilemma”, namely “terrorism”. Lenin’s older brother, Aleksander, joined the terrorist faction of the populist *Narodnaya Volya* (*People’s Will*) group and was executed after a failed attempt to assassinate the Russian Tsar, Alexander III, in 1887. Ali uses this to discuss anarchism and its differences with Marxism but simply shows his

ignorance. It is useful to indicate the failings of his account as they repeat all-too-common Marxist nonsense about anarchism yet all his claims are easily refuted by a little research – the kind which any reasonable reader would expect of a serious leftist writer. Sadly, rather than bother checking his claims he simply regurgitates notions which he undoubtedly *believes* to be true.

He talks of “Bakunin, Kropotkin and Nechaev” (36) but only the first two are anarchists. While Bakunin “appears to have believed that Nechayev shared the main ideas of his populist-anarchist creed” until the spring of 1870, in reality “although scattered anarchist elements do appear in the few writings he left, Nechayev, at bottom, was not an anarchist. As far as an ideological trend can be detected, he was much nearer to Blanquism, to Jacobinism, and to the authoritarian, centralistic Marxian brand of communism.”¹ Ignoring this research, we are told Nechaev

“won himself over to the anarchist cause” (40) when, in reality, he was a Jacobin-socialist. That he fooled Bakunin for a time does not make him an anarchist nor make Bakunin responsible for his activities or ideas – regardless of the attempts by Marxists (starting with Marx and Engels) to do so by talking of Russian “Bakuninists” when they are referring to the likes of Nechaev.

The Dilemmas of Lenin



Tariq Ali

¹ Michael Confino, *Daughter of a revolutionary: Natalie Herzen and the Bakunin-Nechaev circle* (LaSalle, Ill.: Library Press, 1973), 35.

Why Ali seeks to blur the distinction between Bakunin's ideas and Nechaev's is painfully clear, namely to link the former to terrorism –so allowing such nonsense as “Bakunin's and Nechaev's caste of anarchist warriors differs in several important ways from current jihadi terrorist groups” (42) to be inflicted upon the reader. Before this, Ali discusses Nechaev's *The Catechism of the Revolutionary* and in the space of two pages we are informed its “authorship is disputed because of the violence of the language, the ultra-nihilism and political amorality.” (41), of “joint authorship of the *Catechism*” by Bakunin and Nechaev (41) and, finally, it being “probably written by Bakunin”. (42) The reader is not informed why this final conclusion is drawn nor that the evidence for who really wrote the *Catechism* has been available for decades:

“The *Catechism* has often been attributed to Bakunin (alone or with Nechayev's participation). However, it is worth pointing out that there was not and still is no *direct* evidence whatsoever to support this view . . . the *Catechism* [has] numerous common ideas and expression with an earlier article by [non-anarchist] Tkachev . . . [and] set down . . . by Nechayev, possibly in collaboration with Tkachev, and certainly under his influence . . . this conclusion is strengthened by a number of additional facts . . .

“In his letter to Nechayev of June 1870 Bakunin sets forth the story of their relations and reminds him . . . [of] ‘your programme and [plan] of actions . . . You were too fanatically devoted to your plan and programme to subject them to criticism by anyone.’ Bakunin also writes in another context [of] . . . ‘. . . your *Catechism* . . .’ . . . Nechayev certainly remembers. He not only knew as well as Bakunin . . . who the author was of the *Catechism*; but he also recalled that Bakunin, far from being its author, was taken aback by its main ideas and rejected them as ‘an absurdity, an impossibility, a total negation of nature, man and society’. This is . . . fairly conclusive evidence . . . on

the controversial question of the *Catechism's* authorship.”¹

Ali prefers not to do the research required for a serious work and instead utilises an ideologically useful assertion. Before this research, it should be noted that authorship of the *Catechism* was indeed “disputed” (anarchists said Nechaev, those opposed anarchism said Bakunin) simply because Bakunin never wrote anything similar to that text before or after this period. It is also significant that Bakunin kept his activities with Nechayev completely separate from his other activities of the time, including those related to the International. It is these other activities which anarchists have embraced from Bakunin's legacy, something Ali keeps from his readers.

Still, the best that can be said of Ali's claims is that the notion that anarchism is somehow ideologically wedded to terrorism is long-standing in Marxist circles and evidence-free. As Charlotte M. Wilson pointed out in 1893:

“But is homicide the necessary antithesis of parliamentary agitation? Must the man who looks upon political action, as commonly understood, as useless and worse, necessarily endeavour to spread his views or improve society by outrages upon his fellow men?”

“The question is obviously absurd. If one particular way is barred, an infinite variety of other ways are open . . . at this moment, we find as a field for our endeavours the vast force of the organised labour movement; a force which, rightly applied, could here and now bring about the economic side of the Social Revolution. Not the parliament, not the government, but the organised workmen of England—that minority of the producers who are already organised—*could*, if they would, and if they knew how, put an end to capitalist exploitation, landlord monopoly . . . In face of such a state of things as this, has the propagandist of Socialism, who will none of parliamentary elections, no sphere of action left but homicide? Such a question, we say again, is absurd, and we only raise

¹ Confino, 33-5.

and answer it here because certain Social Democrats have now and again considered it worth asking.”¹

This need for anarchist participation in the labour movement is one of the many ideas which anarchists – including Kropotkin – take from Bakunin. Class conflict, Bakunin argued, was inherent in capitalism for there was, “between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, an irreconcilable antagonism which results inevitably from their respective stations in life.” He stressed that “war between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie is unavoidable” and for the worker to “become strong” he “must unite” with other workers and form “the union of all local and national workers’ associations into a world-wide association, *the great International Working-Men’s Association.*” Only “through practice and collective experience” and “the progressive expansion and development of the economic struggle” will the worker come “to recognise his true enemies: the privileged classes, including the clergy, the bourgeoisie, and the nobility; and the State, which exists only to safeguard all the privileges of those classes.” There was “but a single path, that of *emancipation through practical action*” which “has only one meaning. It means workers’ solidarity in their struggle against the bosses. It means *trades-unions, organisation, and the federation of resistance funds.* This policy of struggle on the economic terrain is contrasted with electioneering, with Bakunin correctly predicting that when “common workers” are sent “to Legislative Assemblies” the result is that the “worker-deputies, transplanted into a bourgeois environment, into an atmosphere of purely bourgeois ideas, will in fact cease to be workers and, becoming Statesmen, they will become

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bourgeois . . . For men do not make their situations; on the contrary, men are made by them.”²

Needless to say, Ali does not mention that few (if any) anarchists view Bakunin’s contribution to anarchism as being completely different to the one he suggests.³ Bakunin’s short infatuation with Nechaev is not considered remotely relevant (although his letter explaining his break with him is of interest). Rather, the ideas he expressed within the International is what counts – his arguments for a revolutionary labour movement (rather than party), the need for anarchists to organise to influence said movement (although few accept his propensity for secret groupings even as they understand its necessity at the time) and his critique of Marxist strategy (“political action”) and goals (the so-called “dictatorship of the proletariat”).

Ali mentions none of this. Instead, he lumps together different concepts from different periods along with individuals with nothing in common to produce an account which is misleading. In short, the Stalinist technique of the amalgam. Thus readers are subjected to claims that “Activists were far more drawn to the direct-action philosophy preached by Bakunin and Nechaev; the principles of *The Revolutionary Catechism* were viewed by many radicals as much more attractive than the message of *The Communist Manifesto.*” (36) Yet “direct action” is not the same as “propaganda by the deed” which, moreover, was not initially equated to assassinations and all arose after Bakunin’s death in 1876. Direct action, a French syndicalist-derived term for strikes and other forms of unmediated class struggle, is not to be found in Nechaev’s writings but do find an echo in Bakunin’s arguments that the International

¹ “Anarchism and Homicidal Outrage”, *Black Flag Anarchist Review* Vol. 4 No. 1 (Spring 2024), 67-8.

² “The Policy of the International”, *The Basic Bakunin* (Buffalo, N.Y: Prometheus Books, 1994), 97-8, 103, 108.

³ Look, for example, at what is included by Sam Dolgoff in *Bakunin on Anarchism* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1980).

should be focused on economic struggle and organisation and reject “political action” (i.e., electioneering).

Ali doubles-down, proclaiming in all seriousness that “assassinations” were “considered by young activists of the period to be far more glamorous and effective than building a radical political party.” (36) Does Ali *really* believe this? If so, how can a leading Trotskyist be so ignorant of history? Indeed, for Ali, it is a case that for “almost half a century prior to the Russian Revolution of 1917, the dominant tendency on the radical left in Europe and elsewhere was anarchism than Marxism or socialism.” (36) In reality, Kropotkin and other anarchists bemoaned the rise of social democracy and the replacement of “the direct struggle against capital” (to use Kropotkin’s term) with vote chasing. Their alternative, like that of Bakunin in the (First) International, was encouraging and organising class struggle on the economic terrain which the aim of producing an expropriatory general strike, *not* assassination.

Ali himself recounts the rise of social-democracy and the Second International so where could such bizarre assertions come from? Ali’s claim may simply be a badly remembered paraphrase of Stalinist Eric Hobsbawm’s comments from 1969 that “in 1905-1914 the marxist left had in most countries been on the fringes of the revolutionary movement, the main body of marxists had been identified with a *de facto* non-revolutionary social democracy, while the bulk of the revolutionary left was anarcho-syndicalist, or at least much closer to the ideas and the mood of anarcho-syndicalism than to that of classical marxism.”¹ Hobsbawm’s comments are more accurate for *The Revolutionary Catechism* was rarely reprinted or discussed in libertarian circles at this or, indeed, at any time. An exception was its appearance in Chicago’s *The Alarm* in December 1885 and January 1886 (attributed “to Bakunin alone, [when] most modern scholars regard Nechaev as

the principal and perhaps sole author”²) and that did not stop them organising unions as Bakunin had actually advocated – nor Marxists claiming them for their own ideology.³

As Kropotkin noted, syndicalism “reverts to the old principles of the International: Direct Action, direct struggle of Labour against Capital; and the workers recognising that it is *they* who have to free themselves – not the Parliaments to free them.”⁴ Unsurprisingly, syndicalists “viewed themselves as the descendants of the federalist wing of the First International, personified above else by Mikhail Bakunin.”⁵ Given the core place it takes in revolutionary anarchism (and, correspondingly, in both Bakunin’s and Kropotkin’s ideas), it shows his ignorance that syndicalism warrants a single – insulting, inaccurate and baseless – sentence, being “a blind worship of existing class consciousness and an inability to think ahead.” (84) The best that can be said is that Ali may have confused “economicism” (a tendency in early Russian Marxism) with syndicalism.

Ali mentions Bakunin’s “scathing critiques” (103) of Marx and his “ferocious debates with Marx” (37) but fails to discuss what they were. The reader is provided only with *The Catechism of the Revolutionary*, so presumably they are expected to draw the conclusion that these were to do with the use of terrorism. In reality, this was not the case as Bakunin does not mention it in his only book, *Statism and Anarchy*, which was written in Russian for he aimed to influence the Populist movement. Instead, argued he that the working classes “must enter the International *en masse*, form factory, artisan, and agrarian sections, and unite them into local federations” for “the sake of its own liberation” as this was “the ways and means of organising a popular force.” He contrasted this with the Marxist policy of forming a political party and standing in elections, correctly predicting that this was “not dangerous” but rather “highly useful to the German state as a

¹ *Revolutionaries* (London: Abacus, 1999), 72.

² Paul Avrich, *The Haymarket Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 481. Also see Paul Avrich, “Bakunin and Nechaev” “Bakunin and Nechaev”, *Anarchist Portraits* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 40.

³ “Anarchy in the USA: The International Working People’s Association”, *Black Flag Anarchist Review* Vol. 3 No. 2 (Summer 2023)

⁴ *Direct Struggle Against Capital: A Peter Kropotkin Anthology* (Edinburgh: AK Press, 2014), 407.

⁵ Wayne Thorpe, *The Workers Themselves’: Revolutionary Syndicalism and International Labour, 1913-1923* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1989), xiii-xiv.

lightning-rod, or a safety-valve.” Unlike the “political and social theory” of the anarchists, which “leads them directly and inexorably to a complete break with all governments and all forms of bourgeois politics, leaving no alternative but social revolution,” Marxism “inexorably enmeshes and entangles its adherents, under the pretext of political tactics, in endless accommodation with governments and the various bourgeois political parties – that is, it thrusts them directly into reaction.” If Marxists did seize power, they would “concentrat[e] in their own hands all . . . production . . . under the direct command of state engineers, who will form a new privileged scientific and political class.” It would be “the highly despotic government of the masses by a new and very small aristocracy of real or pretended scholars. The people are not learned, so they will be liberated from the cares of government and included in entirety in the governed herd.” The alternative was “a voluntary alliance of agricultural and factory worker associations, communes, provinces, and nations” organised “from below upward, by the people themselves” based “emancipated labour and collective property.”¹

By refusing to mention Bakunin’s critique of Marxism, Ali foregoes having to evaluate them let alone placing his readers in the position of concluding that Bakunin was proven right. Social Democracy became as reformist as he feared while the so-called “dictatorship of the proletariat” became a dictatorship *over* the proletariat (and peasantry). As such, the real dilemma is whether to acknowledge this and reevaluate Marxism and anarchism or to ignore the facts in favour of ideology. For most people,

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this would not be a dilemma at all but then most people are not Trotskyists.

Bakunin’s arguments in *Statism and Anarchy* were, it must be stressed, reflective of the ideas he raised in the International which confirms that the *Catechism* was not his work. Other examples include Bakunin not preaching “Jesuitical discipline” (103) – although seeing a supporter of democratic centralism consider that as a bad thing is ironic. Ali suggests that Bakunin, as regards

blackmail, “on this particular issue, [Nechaev] had Bakunin’s support” (46) but it is impossible to determine what is meant by this. Presumably – and this is all I can think of – this refers to Nechaev’s threatening the publisher who gave Bakunin an advance to translate Marx’s *Capital* and the “subsequent failure to do so. It was ‘too boring’, he insisted, while refusing to return the advance he had received for the translation” (this Ali describes as a “debate”!). (37) Ali fails to note that the publisher later

wrote to Marx saying that he thought Bakunin was unaware of the threatening letter, something Marx decided to not to share when Bakunin was being expelled from the International in part because of Nechaev’s letter. Given that the *Catechism* proclaims the necessity of being amoral against enemies, the irony meter must be in danger of shattering.

Inaccuracies abound. Ali’s account of the (First) International in Italy (102) fails to mention Bakunin’s crucial role in Italy in undermining the influence of Mazzini. Instead, we get “Bakunin’s supporters rapidly gained control of sections in Italy and Spain” (103) as if they had not taken a leading role in forming these sections in the first place. Likewise, he talks of Bakunin trying “a similar takeover in France and Switzerland” (103)

¹ Michael Bakunin, *Statism and Anarchy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 51, 32, 193, 179-80, 181, 178-9, 33, 22.

which is a strange way of saying that Bakunin was trying to convince others of his ideas, something which was allowed in the International. Marx and Engels, after all, also wrote letters to their supporters to influence how the International developed – they also actually conspired with them to pack the 1871 London Conference and 1872 Hague Congress.

More could be said but suffice to say, rather than bother to read Bakunin, Ali appears to have taken Zola's *Germinal* as fact rather than fiction, presumably thinking its account of the politics of the period is as accurate as its accounts of mining.

After distorting Bakunin's ideas, Ali moves onto Kropotkin whom, we are told, "became close to the Populists, was imprisoned and went into exile, where he was greatly influenced by Bakunin's ferocious debates with Marx". (37) Yet if we consult "his wonderful *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*" (36) we would find that Kropotkin became an anarchist while visiting Western Europe in 1872, returned to Russia and raised anarchist ideas within the Populists. So by the time he had escaped from prison and went into exile in 1876, he had been championing Bakunin's ideas for a number of years. It makes you wonder whether Ali bothered to actually read the book.

Kropotkin was "much less attracted to the violent side of anarchism" (37) but what that involves is left to the reader's imagination. What of "the violent side" of Marxism? The Cheka – the Bolshevik secret police – shot more people in a single day than anarchists assassinated in total but this goes unmentioned and apparently matters little in terms of determining an ideology's "violent side". This mirrors the lack of concern of the bourgeois for the victims of the State violence the anarchist violence was in response to. Kropotkin

gives a better account than Ali of the relationship between anarchism and terrorism:

"anarchists groups . . . refrained from any participation in parliamentary politics, and always kept in close contact with the labour organizations. However, in the second half of the 'eighties and the early 'nineties of the nineteenth century, when the influence of the anarchists began to be felt in strikes, in the 1st of May demonstrations, where they promoted the idea of a general strike for an eight hours' day . . . violent prosecutions were directed against them . . . Against these prosecutions the anarchists retaliated by acts of violence which in their turn were followed by more executions from above, and new acts of revenge from below. This created in the general public the impression that violence is the substance of anarchism, a view

repudiated by its supporters, who hold that in reality violence is resorted to by all parties in proportion as their open action is obstructed by repression, and exceptional laws render them outlaws."¹

The Russian Populists embraced terrorism as did some anarchists – indeed, the assassination of the Tsar in 1881 by Populists inspired the short-lived "dynamite-bluster" of the early 1880s in certain anarchist circles (helped along by the activity of police agents). That cannot be denied but that is marginal to anarchism, not its core as Ali seeks to implant in his reader's heads. Ultimately you need not be a Marxist to recognise the futility of terrorism and conspiracies – anarchists have made the points Ali makes against both and if he knew our tradition better he would have admitted that.

This is not to deny that a few anarchists have advocated terrorism and even fewer have practiced it (usually in revenge at worse violence

We can only imagine the thoughts going through Kropotkin's head when he heard that for, as anyone with even a rudimentary understanding of his ideas would know, he had been expounding this "necessity" since Lenin was in nappies.

¹ *Direct Struggle Against Capital*, 171.

by the State, something which usually goes unmentioned). The same can be said of almost every political movements – including Marxism (Ali will undoubtedly recall the Red Brigades, Red Army Faction and other “Urban Guerrillas” of the 1970s and may be aware of the bank “expropriations” – armed robberies – used to fund the Bolshevik party under the Tsar, one of which killed forty people). Suffice to say, no anarchist would be so intellectually dishonest or wilfully ignorant to write a book which contrasted the anarchist tactic of building militant unions to the Marxist one of organising Urban Guerilla groups.

Kropotkin is brought into Ali’s account presumably so he can draw upon an account by Lenin’s personal secretary, Vladimir Bonch-Bruевич, of a meeting between Lenin and Kropotkin. Some of this account appears reflective of Kropotkin’s stated views, others not. The most obvious example of the latter is this passage which sounds like the words of a Marxist devotee:

“I was told that Vladimir Ilyich wrote an excellent book about the State which I have not read, in which he puts forward a prognosis that the State would in the end wither away . . . By this single shaft of light thrown boldly on the teaching of Marx, Vladimir Ilyich has earned the deepest respect.” (56)

How Kropotkin could appreciate “this single shaft of light” in a book he had “not read” is not explained. Given how at odds these few words are from everything else Kropotkin wrote or said at this time as well as before and after, it is almost certain that these words were not uttered. That Ali repeats them shows how little he knows about Kropotkin and his ideas – and how little he is concerned about exposing that ignorance to his readers.

This exchange is used to illustrate that “the decisive factor that helped [Lenin] to solve the dilemma of choosing between anarchism and socialism . . . was the necessity of ‘a mass struggle’” (57) Lenin is quoted lecturing Kropotkin that “[w]e do not need individual terrorist attempts and the anarchists should have

understood long ago. Only with the masses, through the masses.” (57) We can only imagine the thoughts going through Kropotkin’s head when he heard that for, as anyone with even a rudimentary understanding of his ideas would know, he had been expounding this “necessity” since Lenin was in nappies.

After he returned to Russia as an anarchist in 1872, Kropotkin urged the Populists “to unite the most active individuals into one general organisation” and that they “must not stand outside the people but among them, must serve not as a champion of some alien opinions worked out in isolation, but only as a more distinct, more complete expression of the demands of the people themselves.” This was because radical activity had to be made “among the peasantry and urban workers” as “[o]nly then can [insurrection] count on success.”¹ As he recounted in his “wonderful” *Memoirs* in a passage Ali seems to have forgotten, the “necessity” of working within the masses drove his decision to remain in exile in 1876:

“when the Russian movement became a conspiracy and an armed struggle against the representative of autocracy, all thought of a popular movement was necessarily abandoned; while my own inclinations drew me more and more intensely toward casting in my lot with the laboring and toiling masses. To bring to them such conceptions as would aid them to direct their efforts to the best advantage of all the workers; to deepen and to widen the ideals and principles which will underlie the coming social revolution; to develop these ideals and principles before the workers, not as an order coming from their leaders, but as a result of their own reason; and so to awaken their own initiative, now that they were called upon to appear in the historical arena as the builders of a new, equitable mode of organization of society, — this seemed to me as necessary for the development of mankind as anything I could accomplish in Russia at that time.”²

¹ “Must We Occupy Ourselves with an Examination of the Ideal of a Future System?,” *Selected Writings on Anarchism and Revolution* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1970), 95, 85-6.

² *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* (Montreal/New York: Black Rose Books, 1989), 353-4.

In exile, Kropotkin continued to champion these ideas – which he repeatedly and correctly linked to the Bakunin and the Federalist-wing of the International – until his death. Even during the (short) period of support for “propaganda of the deed” within some anarchist circles, Kropotkin always stressed the need for anarchists to be involved in mass workers organisation and struggle.¹ As he summarised in 1891:

“Revolution, above all, is a popular movement . . . an edifice founded on centuries of history cannot be destroyed with a few kilos of explosives . . . For the revolution not to be conjured away, it is necessary that the anarchist and communist idea should penetrate the masses . . . anarchists have the right to . . . make *their* voice heard, and distribute by the thousand their papers, pamphlets, manifestos everywhere where the working masses are . . . an imposing demonstration of the unity which is being forged between workers, with partial rebellions here and there against the exploiters . . . will make them *reflect* and will help to spread the anarchist idea a hundred times more than all our spoken and written propaganda. It will force new elements to become anarchists.”²

One of Kropotkin’s biographers summarised his position as being in favour of “mass resistance to the oppression of the state, collective action against tyranny, and the spontaneous violence of the people during a revolution. Masses, not individuals, make the social revolution.”³ As such, to regurgitate Lenin’s alleged words against Kropotkin without seeking to confirm their

accuracy is shamefully poor scholarship. Likewise, Ali seems unaware that Kropotkin – like Bakunin – considered himself a socialist and argued that anarchism was genuine socialism while Marxism aimed at nothing more than state-capitalism. Soviet Russia proved this was correct.

Ironically, Ali ends this chapter with the admission that “Kropotkin had not agreed with the terrorist wing of anarchism” (87) which should make the discerning reader ponder why Ali had bothered writing about him. More, it should raise the

question of what strategy Kropotkin did agree with and this can be found in the article on Anarchism Ali quotes:

“the anarchists . . . since the foundation of the International Working Men’s Association in 1864-1866 . . . have endeavoured to promote their ideas directly amongst the labour organizations and to induce those unions to a direct

struggle against capital, without placing their faith in parliamentary legislation.”⁴

Ali, of course, fails to mention this core aspect of Kropotkin’s ideas (and of revolutionary anarchism) but we are informed that Lenin “admired” Kropotkin’s *Great French Revolution*, considering it “an indispensable classic”. (56) No indication why is given. This is unsurprising: “Lenin . . . praised his work on the French Revolution, *The Great French Revolution*. ‘He well understood and demonstrated the role of the people in that bourgeois revolution,’ he said.”⁵ Acknowledging this would have meant raising awkward questions about Lenin lecturing Kropotkin on what he had long argued as regards the importance of “the masses”.

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No attempt is made to explain Kropotkin’s radically different position on Nechaev and Bakunin if, as Ali claims, these two shared the same ideas

¹ “The London Congress of 1881”, *Anarcho-Syndicalist Review* 87 (Summer 2023); Caroline Cahm, *Kropotkin and the Rise of Revolutionary Anarchism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

² Peter Kropotkin, “Agreement”, *Black Flag Anarchist Review* Vol. 2. No. 3 (Winter 2022), 42-45.

³ Martin A. Miller, *Kropotkin* (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1976), 174-5.

⁴ *Direct Struggle Against Capital*, 165.

⁵ Alfred Rosmer, *Lenin’s Moscow* (London: Pluto Press, 1971), 100.

Bakunin if, as Ali claims, these two shared the same ideas. While Kropotkin had nothing positive to say about Nechaev (according to one of his close comrades, for Kropotkin “the word ‘Nechaevism’ was always a strong rebuke”¹), he repeatedly praised Bakunin and his ideas. In his “wonderful” *Memoirs* he mentions “the mighty voice of Bakunin” who had expressed the “theoretical aspects of anarchism” while Nechaev is dismissed for having “resorted to the ways of old conspirators, without recoiling even before deceit when he wanted to force his associates to follow his lead. Such methods could have no success in Russia . . . The circle of self-education of which I am speaking was constituted in opposition to the methods of Necháieff.” Kropotkin championed the ideas of the Bakuninist-wing of the International, “a labour movement and not as a political party” based on the “idea of an international union of all trades, and of a struggle against capital with the aid of international support”. The “workers of all nations were called upon to form their own organizations for a direct struggle against capitalism; to work out the means of socializing the production of wealth and its consumption; and, when they should be ready to do so, to take possession of the necessaries for production, and to control production”.² Ali ignores all this in both Kropotkin’s and Bakunin’s writings (although, to be fair, he only implies that he has bothered to read Kropotkin – even if it is only his “wonderful” *Memoirs* and his article on “Anarchism” for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* which, ironically, would be sufficient to raise serious concerns over his account if his reader bothered to consult them) .

Of course, by the time this meeting took place Lenin’s party was *above* the masses, ruling them and repressing them when they resisted – including breaking strikes via lockouts and shooting strikers. This confirmation of Bakunin’s critique of Marx is ignored but Lenin is quoted telling Kropotkin that he was “against bureaucratisation” and that “we must pull up bureaucracy by its roots if it still nestles in our new system”. (56) This is typical Leninist ritualism – admitting that bureaucracy existed in the

Bolshevik State, quoting Lenin’s opposition to it and completely ignoring the Bolshevik policies which created it. Saying that bureaucracy must be destroyed is all fine and well, but it was never done – another promise of Lenin’s which joined those of *The State and Revolution* in the dustbin of history.³

Ali does not limit himself to Bakunin and Kropotkin. “Militant anarchism”, we are informed, “hung on in Russia and Spain” (115) but is ignored elsewhere in the world. For example, his account of Italy (199-201) during the *Biennio Rosso* fails to mention the libertarians in spite of their significant – albeit minority – role in the events. He does find space to proclaim that the Italian Socialist Party “called a general strike” (200) which led to the factory occupations, when nothing of the kind happened. His account of Makhno is bizarre (116) and while he calls Kropotkin’s article on Anarchism in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* a “description of an anarchist utopia” which “was elegant, couched in polite language” this is simply a preamble to suggesting that it was “far from the terrorist conspiracies and violent prose of Bakunin and Nechaev as well as the actions of the anarchists on horseback, Durruti and Makhno” (37-8) It is difficult to know what is meant by this. Bakunin did not take part in any “terrorist conspiracies” (as Ali surely knows). Makhno did fight on horseback against the White and Red counter-revolution, but Durruti used motorised transport. However, the term used does have a meaning: “a military leader who presents himself as the saviour of the country during a period of crisis and either assumes or threatens to assume dictatorial powers.” The irony of someone writing a book seeking to rehabilitate someone who did create a dictatorial regime by claiming, with no evidence, that an anarchist fighting that regime in the name of free soviets and another fighting fascism were would-be dictators would be funny if it were not so misleading and ultimately shameful.

Then there is the assertion that “Anarchism never emerged in Japan”. (127) Presumably this was the product of George Woodcock’s *Anarchism* only mentioning in passing that the syndicalist

¹ Quoted by Avrich, “Bakunin and Nechaev”, 51.

² *Memoirs*, 287, 274, 284, 261, 252, 359.

³ “*The State and Revolution: Theory and Practice*”, *Bloodstained: One Hundred Years of Leninist Counterrevolution* (Oakland/Edinburgh: AK Press, 2017).

International Workers Association had a small federation in Japan during the 1920s but consulting *Wikipedia* or the more recent and (much) larger *Demanding the Impossible* by Peter Marshall would have allowed this confidently uttered error to be avoided.¹

In reality, by 1907 an anarchist faction had emerged within the Japanese socialist movement around Kōtoku Shūsui who turned from Marxism to anarchism in prison and then sought to push the labour movement towards syndicalism. The 1907 Congress showed the strength of anarchism within the fledgling Socialist Party, prompting the government to ban it. The High Treason Incident of 1910 undermined these developments, when the police said they had discovered a plot to assassinate the Japanese Emperor which was then used as an excuse for mass repression, with hundreds of radicals arrested despite having no connection to it. While evidence against the defendants was mainly circumstantial, 26 anarchists were ultimately indicted, all of whom were convicted with 12 executed in January 1911, including Kōtoku, in spite of an international protest campaign. The movement continued in spite of this, with Ishikawa Sanshirō and others spreading syndicalist ideas leading to a general revival of the movement after 1918 with the rise of labour protest and organisation. As in other countries, anarchists and Bolsheviks worked together until 1922 when differences in union strategy and the reality of the Russian regime caused a split. By 1923, Ōsugi Sakae had become a leading militant in the movement and, like Bakunin, Kropotkin and Kōtoku, advocated syndicalism. Using the Great Kantō earthquake as a pretext, he alongside his partner and fellow

anarchist, Itō Noe, were arrested and murdered. After Ōsugi's death, the dominant tendency within Japanese anarchism became 'pure' anarchism championed by Hatta Shūzō with two main organisations in the late 1920s: the *Kokuren* anarchist federation and the *Zenkoku Jiren* federation of labour unions.²

Undoubtedly the Japanese movement shows the counterproductive nature of conspiracies and terrorism, not least in giving the State an excuse to repress the wider movement. However, it also shows that such events – when they exist – are always involve small numbers within a movement. To concentrate on the High Treason Incident to the exclusion of the decades of work within the labour movement the vast majority of the movement did would be misleading in the extreme. Yet this is what Ali does with Bakunin, focusing exclusively on his short-lived infatuation with Nechaev and ignoring the ideas for which the anarchist movement remember him. Worse, Ali gets the details of the Nechaev events wrong as well, so his account is doubly misleading.

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Ultimately, by suggesting anarchism focuses on “terrorism” and ignores the masses, Ali avoids all the actual debates between anarchism and Marxism. The real question is not action of individuals or action by the masses but how best is the latter organised and conducted as well as the related questions of how do conscious revolutionaries intervene in the class struggle and whether party power should be the goal of the revolution. None of this is discussed and instead we get twisted account whose conclusion – Marxism is right – is self-evident given how it is framed.

¹ Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* (London: Harper Perennial: 2008), 524-5.

² John Crump, *Hatta Shūzō and Pure Anarchism in Interwar Japan* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1993)

Strangely, as well as being inaccurate about anarchism he is also inaccurate about Marxism. For example, we are informed that on 4 August 1914 Karl Liebknecht “alone defied party discipline and voted against the war”. (136) In reality, while Liebknecht (and 13 other deputies) spoke out privately against voting for war loans within the party’s Reichstag faction, but in the parliamentary session of 4 August the faction voted *unanimously* in favour of approving the loans that enabled the government to finance the initial war effort. Ironically, Liebknecht did so because of the party discipline (i.e., unanimity) which he had earlier urged upon representatives of the party’s right wing. He finally voted against the war on 2 December 1914, ignoring the majority (why this does not make him an individualist, elitist and autocrat is never explained by Marxists such as Hal Draper who berate anarchists thusly for rejecting “democratic authority”). That the degeneration of German Social Democracy this represented confirmed Bakunin’s and Kropotkin’s warnings goes unmentioned.

Ali is right to note that “Lenin and Trotsky saw the early Comintern as an educational school for discussing on revolutionary tactics and strategy” (212) yet he makes no mention of Zinoviev’s frank admission at its Second Congress that “the dictatorship of the proletariat is at the same time the dictatorship of the Communist Party.”¹ Trotsky felt no “dilemma” over this lesson of the Bolshevik Revolution, advocating it throughout the 1920s and 1930s.² This explains the failure “to let the left Mensheviks serve as a ‘loyal opposition’ in the soviets” (336) which Ali mentions in passing but does not present any of the context needed to

understand why this was not allowed by the ruling party.

The informed reader is again and again left to ponder if Ali really thinks this is what anarchism really is and, if so, where he got these bizarre notions from. Can you really be a leading Trotskyist for decades and apparently not read a book by an anarchist before writing on it? It would appear so – and, worse, be willing to write a book

which exposes this fact to the world. The arrogance is clear – and speaks of a flaw deep within Leninism, namely that its adherents believe it is the truth and so can forgo such trivialities as facts or becoming acquainted with the ideas and movements being discussed. Victor Serge, in his self-serving memoirs, noted the following:

“Bolshevik theory is grounded in [a belief in] the possession of the truth. The Party is the repository of truth, and any form of thinking which differs from it is a dangerous and reactionary error. Here lies

the spiritual source of its intolerance. The absolute conviction of its lofty mission assures it of a moral energy quite astonishing in its intensity – and, at the same time, a clerical mentality which is quick to become Inquisitorial.”³

This appears to explain Ali’s book. Why bother with investigating the facts when you think you have the truth? Why be concerned with exposing your ignorance of a subject when your audience either shares the same view or will be as unaware of the facts as yourself? Why research when you can regurgitate?

As such, there is no real dilemma for Leninists – regurgitating ideological “truths” is the go-to position and research into whether these reflect reality is not usually considered never mind done.

As such, there is no real dilemma for Leninists – regurgitating ideological “truths” is the go-to position and research into whether these reflect reality is not usually considered never mind done

¹ *Workers of the World and Oppressed Peoples, Unite: Proceedings and Documents of the Second Congress 1920* (New York: Pathfinder, 1991) I: 152.

² “The Bureaucracy in Exile: Trotsky’s limited Anti-Stalinism”, *Black Flag Anarchist Review* Vol. 3 No. 3 (Autumn 2023).

³ *Memoirs of a Revolutionary 1901-1941* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 134.

Case in point, I was told by an eager SWP member once that he was going to investigate anarchism and was planning to read Marx's *Poverty of Philosophy*. The look of his face when I asked him whether that was before or after reading Proudhon's *The Philosophy of Poverty* was priceless – the thought had obviously never crossed his mind.¹ As Ali's book shows, this mentality is the default one within Leninist circles.

Why bother reviewing such an inaccurate book? First, correcting inaccuracies – while time consuming – is useful for it shows that no book should be taken at face value. Second, it shows how willing Marxists are to write apparently authoritatively on subjects – like anarchism – they know next to nothing about. Third, the book generated generally positive reviews from the Leninist-left, showing that his ignorance of anarchism is widespread within it. Fourth, not knowing history



means that you cannot learn from it. So exposing the nonsense of Ali's claims on anarchism is useful for such claims are all too common in Marxist circles. It will help anarchists debunk them and, perhaps, cause Marxists to consider their ideas and what passes for "conventional wisdom" in their circles.

We can only hope that the royalties gained from Ali's book will be used to buy internet access as most of his errors would have been avoided if he had simply looked at, say, *Wikipedia* or read a book on anarchism which was published more recently than the 1960s. That he could not be bothered to do the research needed is a damning indictment of Leninism and

– as well as, more importantly, its atrocious record – indicates why revolutionaries should reject the Bolshevik Myth.

Parish Notices

Red Flare are a group of anti-fascist investigators, using open source and investigative methods to expose and oppose the far right in Britain. They work with journalists to publish stories about far-right groups, their organisers and activists. They also share information with groups threatened by the far right as well as those engaged in opposing it: redflare.info

Partisan Collective is a space for independent, community-led DIY and cultural projects. They run inclusive social events, regular meet-ups, and the occasional club night: Bridge 5 Mill, 22A Beswick St, Manchester, M4 7HR (partisancollective.net)

Reel News is a London based activist video collective, using film to help bring about social change. In a world where everyone is increasingly affected by pandemics, climate change, austerity and war, they work with the growing number of campaigns (often ignored by mainstream media) which are not only fighting back, but winning too – not just in the UK, but across the

world. Reel News is completely independent and non-aligned. They are against sectarianism in all its forms, anti-capitalist in outlook, against the anti-trade union laws and in favour of mass collective action in the workplace and on the streets to change society: reelnews.co.uk

The Network of Anarchist Internationalists is a co-ordination committed to supporting war resisters, draft dodgers, deserters, and conscientious objectors and promoting internationalist anti-militarism linking the fight against austerity and the increasing immiseration of the working class globally: international.noblogs.org

The International Workers Association (iwa-ait.org) now has Sections in Argentina (FORA-AIT: fora.acat.ait@gmail.com) and Pakistan (WSF: WSI2020@protonmail.com)

Please tell us if you are publishing a Libertarian Socialist freesheet.

¹ For a comparison of the two: "The Poverty of (Marx's) Philosophy," *Anarcho-Syndicalist Review* 70 (Summer 2017);

"Proudhon's Constituted Value and the Myth of Labour Notes," *Anarchist Studies* 25: 1 (Summer 2017).

Why the Blast?

The Blast, 15 January 1916

Do you mean to destroy?
Do you mean to build?
These are the questions
we have been asked from
many quarters, by
inquirers sympathetic and
otherwise.

Our reply is frank and
bold:

We mean both: to
destroy *and* to build.

For, socially speaking,
Destruction is the
beginning of
Construction.

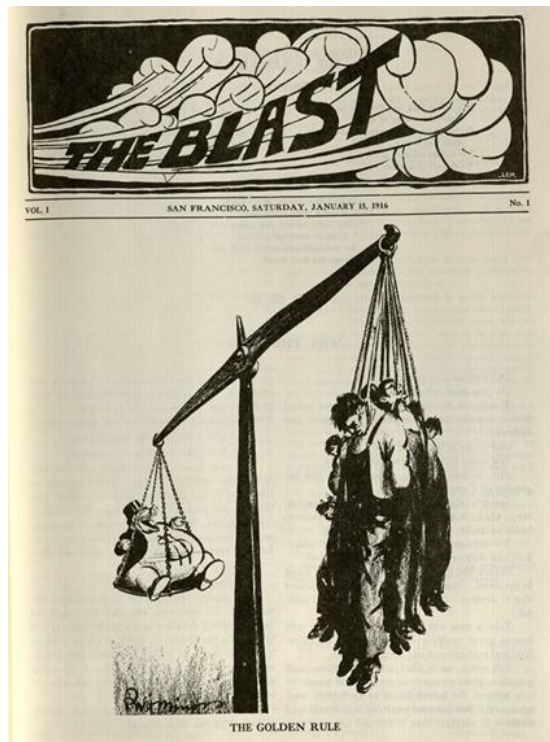
Superficial minds speak
sneeringly of destruction. O, it is easy to
destroy – they say – but to build. to build,
that's the important work.

It is nonsense. No structure, social or
otherwise, can endure if built on a
foundation of lies.

Before the garden can bloom, the weeds
must be uprooted. Nothing is therefore
more important than to destroy. Nothing
more necessary and difficult

Take a man with an open mind, and you
will have no great trouble in convincing him
of the false-hood and rottenness of our
social structure.

But when one is filled with superstition and
prejudice, your strongest arguments will
knock in vain against the barred doors of
his bigotry and ignorance. For thousand-
year-old superstition and tradition is
stronger than truth and logic.



To destroy the Old and
the False is the most vital
work. We emphasise it: to
blast the bulwarks of
slavery and oppression is
of primal necessity. It is
the beginning of really
lasting construction

Thus will THE BLAST be
destructive.

And THE BLAST will be
constructive.

Too long have we been
patient under the whip of
brutality and degradation.
Too long have we
conformed to the

Dominant, with an ineffective fist hidden in
our pocket. Too long have we vented our
depth of misery by endless discussion of
the distant future. Too long have we been
exhausting our efforts and energy by
splitting hairs with each other.

It's time to act

The time to act is NOW!

The breath of discontent is heavy upon this
wide land. It permeates mill and mine, field
and factory. Blind rebellion stalks upon
highway and byway. To fire it with the
spark of Hope, to kindle it with the light of
Vision, and turn pale discontent into
conscious social action – v that is the crying
problem of the hour. It is the great work
calling to be done.

To work, then, and blasted be every
obstacle in way of the Regeneration.