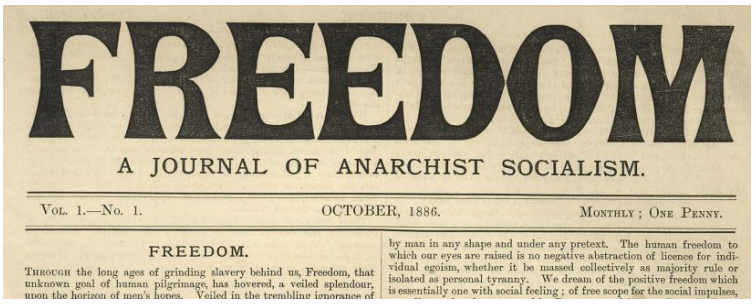
Black Flag

Anarchist Review


FREEDOM

A JOURNAL OF ANARCHIST SOCIALISM.

Vol. 1.—No. 1. OCTOBER, 1886. Monthly ; One Penny.

FREEDOM.

Through the long ages of grinding slavery behind us, Freedom, that unknown goal of human pilgrimage, has hovered, a veiled splendour, upon the horizon of men's hopes. Veiled in the trembling ignorance of

by man in any shape and under any pretext. The human freedom to which our eyes are raised is no negative abstraction of licence for individual egoism, whether it be massed collectively as majority rule or isolated as personal tyranny. We dream of the positive freedom which is essentially one with social feeling ; of free scope for the social impulses,

Freedom

1886-1927

Guy A. Aldred: The man they all dread





Factory Occupations France 1936

And much more...

Autumn 2026

Volume 6 **Number 3**

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Editorial

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

We start with *Freedom*, founded in October 1886 by, amongst others, Charlotte Wilson and Peter Kropotkin. Still going today (albeit as a twice-yearly free paper), *Freedom* was a key journal for the British anarchist movement during its early decades. Always a monthly (at best), it was limited to more in depth articles and in its pages was serialised numerous classic pamphlets by the likes of Malatesta and Kropotkin. Yet it was more than that, commenting upon current events in the class struggle and in the labour movement both at home and internationally. As becomes clear reading the articles reprinted in this issue, *Freedom* published much which remains of interest and relevance to anarchists today.

Previous issues of *Black Flag* have included articles on and by significant contributors to *Freedom* during this time – such as Charlotte M. Wilson, John Turner, Louisa Sarah Bevington, Harry Kelly, Emma Goldman, Alexander Berkman, Voltarine de Cleyre, Lucy Parsons, Rudolf Rocker, Errico Malatesta and Peter Kropotkin. Here we focus on anonymous articles which give an insight into the politics of the paper, although we do include three articles by Kropotkin which failed to be included in our Kropotkin special of Autumn 2022.

This issue covers its first 21 years – as Freedom itself did in October 1907. The second part will cover the years 1908 to 1927 and will appear in our next issue. *Freedom*'s centenary saw a series of books issued for different periods of its existence, although sadly the first volume (for 1886 to 1927) never appeared. These selections, we hope, goes some way to amend its non-publication.

This year also marks the death of Guy A. Aldred, a somewhat eccentric character within the London and then Glasgow movements. Initially a boy preacher, he moved to Marxist Social Democracy and then Anarchism and Syndicalism before advocating an ultra-leftist mixture of Marxism and Anarchism based on anti-parliamentarianism. Like many, he embraced the Russian Revolution and took part in the discussions which lead to the creation of the Communist Party of Great Britain, although he distanced himself from it when it embraced parliamentarianism at Lenin's behest (Aldred advocated a Sinn Fein position as a compromise). However, unlike many on the anti-parliamentarian left, he only recognised the state-capitalist nature of Russia in 1924. By the 1930s he had embraced standing in elections (usually coming last) and continued his prolific pamphleteering and writing until his death in 1963. For all this, he was a significant figure in the British anarchist movement for decades and worth recalling.

We then turn to France. We print the Charter of Lyon adopted by the CGR-SR in 1926 which kept alive revolutionary syndicalism against both the reformist CGT and Communist CGTU followed by an analysis of the Factory Occupations and Popular Front of 1936. Then comes Murray Bookchin's evaluation of the Spanish Anarchist movement, written to mark the 50th anniversary of the Revolution which erupted in July 1936. We also mark the death of Durruti.

Next is a pamphlet issued by the Syndicalist Workers' Federation on the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. This was a pivotal moment for many in the Stalinist Parties, with the likes of E.P. Thomson breaking with the Communist Party. For anarchists, the revolt confirmed anarchist views on Stalinism and on how a social revolution should proceed.

We then remember Bobby Lynn, a stalwart of the Glasgow Anarchist Movement, as well as the passing of Barry Pateman. This is followed by 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

Freedom: 1886 to 1927

Part I – The First Twenty-One Years (1886-1907)

A Short History of "Freedom"

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Communism, October 1907

When, in 1886, a few comrades felt the necessity of a paper advocating Anarchist Communist ideas, there was then no publication in England to voice these views, Seymour's *Anarchist* being avowedly Individualist. So in October, 1886, the first number. of *Freedom* was published.



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THE COMING REVOLUTION.

The Anarchist trial at Lyons in 1883, the articles by Mrs. Wilson in *Justice* in 1884, as well as the Fabian tract by the same writer, "Social Democracy and Anarchism," (the first publication of the kind since the Anarchist Communist teachings of Godwin in the first edition of his "Political Justice"), had awakened much interest in Anarchist Communist teachings. As a result, the appearance of the paper met then with more sympathy, even amongst the middle classes, than would be found today; while it must be said that from the very first a few comrades amongst the workers – a very few, but very sincere – accepted wholeheartedly the new ideas, and remained true to them all through.

In the Socialist League some were Anarchists from the beginning-1885 – Joseph Lane and Samuel Mainwaring before all. Lane published his "Anti-Statist Communist Manifesto" in 1887. The Avelings (Bloomsbury branch), Bax (Croydon), with Donald and others endeavoured to introduce Parliamentarism in the League, which led to a closer study of that subject by the real Socialists and Revolutionists of the League, and their theoretical evolution towards Anarchism was greatly advanced by their reading *Freedom*, which in the beginning contained a series of articles by Kropotkin[1], discussing in a certain continuity the various parts of our ideas.

In 1888 the lectures given by Mrs. Wilson, Kropotkin, and others in the League offices at Farringdon Road, and the *Freedom* lectures m a hall at Old Street, etc., later on, started most interesting discussions.

Of course, the death of the Chicago Anarchists (November 1887), their speeches, Parsons's books, also led many to study Anarchism and to see the abyss between Anarchists and Labour politicians (Socialist or Radical). The unemployed, the Trafalgar square. demonstrations (November, 1887) – all this showed the insufficiency of reforms, of legislation, of alleged political freedom, etc.

The movement had good prospects until 1889, the time of the great Dock Strike. At that moment the strikes of sympathy were ~discouraged by the politicians, and the unexpected Australia money gave them an easy victory which they never earned. The downfall of the popular movement began. The politicians saw that there was money and political advancement to be won out of the unskilled workers, and Revolutionary Socialism and Anarchism were not

[1] These articles, along with other published in *Freedom*, were later collected in the book *Act for Yourselves: articles from **Freedom** 1886-1907* (London: Freedom Press, 1988) as part of a series of collections marking *Freedom*'s 100th anniversary. (*Black Flag*)

sufficiently strong at that time to resist them efficiently. The efforts of the *Freedom* Group were at that time almost entirely spent in explaining Anarchism to Revolutionary Socialists or discussing with Social Democrats, and they were hardly known outside these circles.

Again, William Morris could not take the decisive step of really examining Anarchism, and many Revolutionary Socialists followed him and later on more or less accepted Parliamentarism again. This paralysed the efforts of the Socialist League.

Then Anarchists ·in France and Spain, goaded by endless persecutions,. accepted to a large extent the use of very violent· methods, which had been considered by many as not applicable to England, where there was full freedom of speech, etc. Some thought different, and this enabled the police to get up the Walsall persecution, the *Commonweal* persecution (both in 1892), the Cantwell persecution (1894), and many, many acts of infamous annoyance against Anarchists to whom they could do nothing worse.

All this led to a certain isolation of Anarchists from the rest of Socialists in the early "nineties." Many of these Socialists became simply Labour politicians, and attained their ends by the electoral victories of 1906. Others retired, feeling unable to accept either Anarchism – popularly identified with nothing but random violence – or Social Democracy, the road to Parliament.

Under these extremely difficult circumstances the *Commonweal* succumbed (October 6, 1894, the last number of the second series); the young people of the *Torch*, useful in this interval, also discontinued their work (1896).[1]

Freedom was also suspended in January, 1895, but resumed its work – uninterrupted since – in May of the same year, this time aided by the efforts of some of the remaining comrades of the Socialist League – Cantwell, Presburg, and others. W. Wess, corning from the League, had joined *Freedom* earlier. That was the year (1895) when modern Syndicalism was first discussed, and found a strong, though not an exclusive, advocate in *Freedom*.[2]

The Congress of 1896, the efforts to unite the anti-Parliamentarian movements of various countries, the Anarchist Conferences in St. Martin's Hall-this was a period of success when the rewards of previous efforts were reaped, and it was seen that more of the seed of ten years' work had grown than many expected.

Professor Sidgwick has compiled for the British Association a list of permissible exceptions to the principle of *laissez-faire*. There is an opening now for some gentleman to compile a list of permitted exceptions to the other principle: that of interference by armed government. It would be shorter. and much less comprehensive than Professor Sidgwick's.

*** * ***

To understand the Governmental application of *laissez-faire*, learn the two following rules of thumb. 1. When the proprietors molest the proletariat, *laissez-faire*. 2. When the proletariat resist the proprietors, interfere to help the proprietors. There are no exceptions to these rules. For examples of their working, apply to Sir Redvers Buller, Co. Clare, Ireland, any time during the winter.

"Notes", *Freedom*, October 1886

Since 1897 the history of *Freedom* – if it can be termed such – resolves itself into one long struggle for existence in conditions of almost overwhelming adversity. Reaction on all hands, with that terrible manifestation of the Jingo spirit during the Boer war, rendered it almost impossible that such a "still, small voice" should be heard. And yet during these years the paper held together comrades – mostly working men – who remained true to the propaganda, and continued to sell the paper, and at the same time many thousands of pamphlets, printed by the *Freedom* Group.

The propaganda, indeed, that has resulted from the spreading of our literature has been the most encouraging outcome of the life of the paper; and the organisation of this all-important branch of activity was never on such an excellent basis.

Perhaps this brief account should hardly be called history. History, after· all, is mostly a record of quarrels, ambitions, scandals, etc., and *Freedom* has remained unstained by these as far as human things could be. Instead of this, it gives an example in voluntary effort which may perhaps encourage others. No capitalist advertisements have ever been sought; instead of such "support" it has had only such voluntary help as sympathisers could give; and the editing and writing of the p aper have been a labour of love for twenty-one years.

[1] It should be noted that the London *Liberty* also ceased publication in 1896 after nearly two years (*Black Flag*)

[2] As can be seen from previous issues, *Freedom* had raised the necessity of anarchist participation within the labour movement for many years before 1895, although the term "syndicalism" had not been used to describe this strategy first raised in the International by Bakunin and others. (*Black Flag*)

The Struggle for Freedom

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Socialism, October 1886

The spirit of revolt has been the saving grace of humanity. The whole story of our race is full of the resistance of the mass of mankind – (always from the earliest dawn of our knowledge, more or less consciously social animals) – to the anti-social spirit of domination of certain individuals, the strongest, subtlest, and least scrupulous of the community. Without such resistance to the authority usurped by man over man, human Society must have withered away, and human beings become as unsocial as hawks and tigers. That fate has been spared us. On the contrary, the struggle for freedom has continually increased in volume and in intensity. The blind instinct which seems to have prompted its earlier manifestations is slowly passing into a conscious purpose. It has spread into every department of life, and the victories it has won are seen to be but the earnest of those which lie before it.

To those who with sympathetic eyes watch this spirit of revolt seething beneath the thin gloss of our so-called civilisation, the struggle for freedom appears at the present time to fall into three broad currents of tendency. Firstly, the efforts of individuals to assert their human dignity by the social claim to free initiative in thought, word, and deed. Secondly, the attempts of subject races to throw off alien overlordship, and make good their claim to free autonomy and self-organisation. Thirdly, the growing determination of the great masses of the people to free themselves from the rule of their masters, and claim the right to choose and direct their own labour, and to enjoy its fruits. The spirit of these three tendencies is one and the same, its manifestations differ with the diversity of conditions. For the camp of the rebels is as wide as the world, and each land, each community, each individual has special necessities, and alone can judge of them. Strikes, boycotts, riots, workmen's conferences, national and international trades' unionism, Irish outrages; the tithe-war in Wales, and the resistance of Highland crofters to the greed of the land-thieves; outbreaks of prisoners in French jails, and of peasants in Russia; the bomb of Chicago Anarchists, and the free-speech contest of English Socialists; newspaper remonstrances with the injustice of the law and its administration and the passive resistance of the Leicester anti-vaccinators; the abstention from the voting urn of French workmen and the return of political prisoners as members of Parliament by the people of Italy – these and all such actions of protests against authority, are evidence of the living spirit of revolt abroad in Society, and as such we welcome them. They are clearing the way towards a fuller and more brotherly social life; sometimes roughly, indeed, but the path is rough and choked with rubbish, and the necessity is cruel.

We propose, therefore, to devote a portion of our space to a few illustrative instances of such passing phases of the great revolt as fall beneath our notice, and of the social conditions which are its proximate cause. And we do so in the belief that from a consideration of the wrongs and the courage, the failures and the triumphs of our brethren throughout the world we may, each and all, derive inspiration, warning, and encouragement, and learn to feel that each petty action, each effort apparently isolated and fruitless, is in reality part of the universal war against oppression in all its forms, in which, consciously or unconsciously, we must all take our share, and fight for human freedom or against it.

Spontaneity Again

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Socialism, September 1887

We spoke last month of the overwhelming importance of spontaneity as an element in human existence, and of the necessity for meeting it with full recognition. Perhaps it seemed to some of our readers that such enquiries were of interest but to students and dreamers; too curious for the needs of common life.

Well, the Belgian Workman's Party left all such merely philosophical considerations out of their reckoning when their Executive Council decided that a general strike must be started "to order," at a time when the leaders should have made up their mind that all was ready. And so, when the spontaneous impulse came to the miners and metalworkers to free themselves this summer from their intolerable slavery, the leaders and wire-pullers of the Workman's Party, the politicians and co-operators, found nothing better to do than to preach peace and submission, and to throw cold water over the strike in the name of universal suffrage and co-operation, until for the time being they had effectually managed to swamp the revolutionary movement.

Here is what a special communication from some members of the party to the *Sozial Demokrat* has to say about it: "First we saw partial strikes... They spread rapidly and seemed to gain cohesion. In the centre the Anarchists took possession of the active part of the movement for several days, until certain of their orators were arrested. Still the movement continued. It spread over the Lidge basin... Numerous indications of strikes were to be seen elsewhere, especially at Brussels. The Council of the Workman's Party continued to strive with all their might against the movement. They seemed resolved to nip it in the bud, especially at Brussels and Ghent.... The chiefs of the party left the different trades to themselves, they gave them no word of encouragement."

In fact the organisers stifled the rising enthusiasm of what might have become an important revolutionary outbreak on the plea – *our* machinery is not ready; and so the healthy impulse of revolt was wasted and lost, and the forces of reaction in Belgium have gained the confidence which is strength.

the organisers stifled the rising enthusiasm of what might have become an important revolutionary outbreak on the plea – *our* machinery is not ready; and so the healthy impulse of revolt was wasted and lost

A little more than fifteen years ago the citizens of Paris were passing through a sharper crisis than our Belgian comrades. It was the first week after the Commune had been proclaimed by the spontaneous action of the people. The bourgeois world had lost its head. It was paralysed by that helpless confusion amongst the authorities which always follows a sudden outbreak of energetic revolutionary action. The impulse of the people was to march at once upon the disorganised army and terrified government at Versailles. "But wait," insisted certain well-meaning leaders, "we must first elect a popular government in due democratic form."

And "Paris sent her devoted sons to the Hotel de Ville. There disbanded from active service, up to the eyes in musty parchments forced to govern when their instincts impelled them to be and act with the people; forced to discuss when it was time to do, and losing the inspiration that comes from continual contact with the masses, they saw themselves reduced to impotence. Paralysed by their distance from the well-spring of revolution, the people, they themselves paralysed the popular initiative" ('Les Paroles d'un Révolté'). And so the general enthusiasm died down, and the Commune was lost.

But it is not in grave social crises only that the spontaneous outleap of energy is the all-important factor of effectual action. It is the same in everyday conduct and everyday relations. Ask a man who has laboured to keep together a political club worthy the name in a district where people have learned from bitter experience that parliamentary talk is no benefit to the workers, and where as yet they are not ardently inspired by the idea of Socialism. Such a man will tell you that, for all his pains, he has been whipping a dead donkey along the road. And yet whilst the hope was fresh in men's hearts that the ballot-box could bring them deliverance from their misery, there was no lack of cohesion and energy in the political clubs with which England was honeycombed. Any shed or garret was attractive enough then for a meeting-place wherein to exchange eager thoughts and plan common action; whereas now, in localities where the old idea is dead, men can only be drawn into sham fellowship by an endless round of amusements.

We might multiply instances in social and individual life by the thousand to illustrate a fact which, once recognised, seems self-evident, yet a fact more persistently ignored than any other of equal importance. But perhaps enough has been said to show why we – and especially those of us who are awakening to the inevitable necessity of great social changes – must, on reflection, come to consciously realise the enormous influence of spontaneity in human life, whether it be for good or ill. Next month we will return to the subject.

Looking through the files of *Freedom*, since its first appearance in October 1886, till the present date, we gather through it the whole history of the Labour movement in this country for the last twenty-one years

Peter Kropotkin, "1886-1907: Glimpses into the Labour Movement in this Country", *Freedom* , October 1907

Forward!

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Socialism, November 1887

After the summer's apparent listlessness and inaction, the Revolutionary movement has started into fresh life, and, with that awakening, has entered upon a new phase of development.

The keynote of the new departure was struck last month by the unemployed of Norwich in the little placard, written and posted by unknown hands, which so seriously alarmed the local authorities that they swore in 200 special constables. "NOTICE TO ALL CONCERNED: *The unemployed do not intend to starve any longer. If employment is not found for them, they will soon make some.*"

As the result of the Government house-to-house enquiries at the close of the slack season last winter, it appears that amongst 29,451 men 8008 were out of work. At the beginning of September there were from 400 to 600 men, women and children utterly homeless, sitting night after night in and near Trafalgar Square – criminals in the eye of the English law, in that they were vagrants wandering about with no visible means of subsistence. From the statistics collected by the S.D.F. and the *Pall Mall Gazette* last year, it appears only too certain that at least 600,000 able-bodied men and women were out of work in London before the frost set in this October, and that calculation leaves unheeded the hundreds of thousands slowly starving on wages inadequate to maintain healthy life in a human being.

Yet this mass of misery is nothing new, nothing unusual. The distress is at present merely normal, say the committee of superior persons gathered in the Lord Mayor's comfortable parlour. But if the distress is the old, old story, the attitude of the sufferers is changed. What is new is the rising determination to suffer no longer.

Last winter the unemployed were so many isolated units, each man and woman tramping wearily and hopelessly from one property monopolist to another, imploring for leave to work – meekly accepting any odd job which kept him or her hanging, as it were, upon a single hair above the pit of starvation. With the exception of such spasmodic outbursts as the window-breaking in London and the Norwich riot, the people of late years have made no protest against the inhumanity of those men who appropriate to themselves the wealth of society, and live in luxury and ease on the labour of others, whilst masses of their fellows are starving. The only conscious and definite revolt came from small knots of Socialists – impracticable visionaries even in the eyes of their fellow-workmen.

Suddenly the scene is changed. The people are no longer tramping, each helpless and alone, entreating work as a boon. They are boldly meeting together and demanding work as a right. They have made common cause, and withstood and defeated like men the attempts of the police – the hired guardians of property-monopolists – to drive them, their sufferings and their wrongs, out of sight. And they have done this at the bidding of no leaders, in obedience to the rules of no organisation. Their action is the spontaneous outgrowth of the pressure of social needs and the ferment of ideas amongst the masses themselves.

The movement is small as yet, and formless, but nevertheless it is the beginning of the end. For the first time since middle-class Radicals threw dust in the eyes of the English people, and turned the revolt of the workers against capitalist and landlord tyranny into an agitation for the extension of the franchise, the inhabitants of London have swarmed unbidden and unsummoned into its streets and squares and parks to discuss, not a political, but a social grievance, and successfully asserted their right to do so.

At last the people seem to have lost all faith in patiently waiting for better days on earth to grow out of the "enlightened self-interest" of their masters, as they have lost all hope of the off-chance of better days in heaven. And the impulse is forming and growing in them to seek better days here and now by their own initiative, by the common action of those men who are equals and brothers in toil and misfortune. In the development of that impulse lies the salvation of society.

There is only one effectual relief for the suffering of the unemployed and ill-employed alike. To employ themselves; to substitute for the wage-system free and self-organised co-operation amongst the workers, for the direct supply of the needs of all.

Is it mockery when, instead of Government relief-works, we Anarchist Socialists preach such a remedy to starving men, who have nothing to work with, and no food or shelter whilst they work? No. To advise desperate men to wring temporary scraps of relief from the terrors of their oppressors – that is the mockery; for it puts into the hands of those oppressors

the means to retain their monopoly of power by ineffectual concessions, and so to prolong the cause.

The unemployed cannot employ themselves. Why? they need for their work – food, clothes, shelter, tools, workshops, factories, land – are monopolised by individuals, who will not let these things be used unless they can make a profit out of the labour of those who use them. The first thing, then, that the unemployed, and those whose lives are stripped of all joy by excessive work and miserable pay, and all who feel the wrongs of their fellows as their own, have to do, is to put an end once and for all to this monstrous monopoly of property. To lay hands directly on those stores of wealth which have been created by the workers, and from which all who work have a just claim to supply their needs.

The monopolists will resist? Then let them. The fight must be fought – and won; for it is the price of human development. We cannot shirk it and be men. And for those who fall in the struggle, it is a happier fate than slow starvation in a rat-hole, or to be chevied by the police from one door-step to another.

Then, when existing wealth and the land are free and common to all, self-employment will no longer seem a mockery to the workers, and every able-bodied man or woman who is unemployed will be so because he or she is a thief, a lazy vagabond who chooses to live idly on other people's labour.

The Commune of Paris

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Socialism, March 1888

The Commune of March, 1871, was a new departure along an old track. When the workmen of Paris rose against the middle-class assembly at Versailles, they did more than revolt against mere political tyranny, more than revolt against incapacity and treachery in face of a foreign foe. They revolted against property-rule. They revolted to regain an old popular right lost by the people in the evil days which grew up with the growth of government and law, and the rule of the property grabbers – the right of each group of workers, each locality to manage its own business.

It is an old saying: If you want your business done go yourself, if not send some one else. Of late years the people have had plenty of this method of sending some one else. Sending them right away out of sight and hearing almost; there to settle how everybody is to do everything. And when the deputies of the French people handed over Paris to Bismark, the workers of Paris felt they had had enough of it. So they proclaimed the Commune, i.e., the management of the affairs of the town by the people of the town, as had been the way of the free associations of workers federated for mutual help and protection in past ages, when they were fighting against the encroachments of robber barons and churchmen and kings, the spiritual ancestors of our robber landlords and capitalists and kings and parliaments of today.

But when Paris, and the other towns of France which followed her example, proclaimed the Commune, they did more than re-assert an old popular right. They took the first active step in realising that new social state towards which the hope of all the workers of the civilised world is strained.

Not that they formally proclaimed the freedom and equality of all men; still less the abolition of property. But that the pressure of their masters, the monopolists of property, being removed, they just began, without thinking of it, to lead amongst themselves that peaceful and orderly social life, which must be free and equal because there is no authority to protect monopoly, and no monopolists of social wealth to divide the workers from the means of production, and to live idly upon the forced labour of others. This sort of free and natural social life has been the real object off every genuine popular movement. It is the spontaneous idea of what social life ought to be amongst the masses of the people.

It is by the forcible suppression of this true social life of the people, that the ruling classes have established their "law and order." It is by the resurrection of this true social life in its new form of International Anarchist-Socialism that they and their law and order will be overthrown.

In 1871 the masses were still hampered by the evil traditions of past ages of slavery. They had burst their chains, but the broken links still hung round their feet and prevented them from moving forward.

They waited, let themselves be persuaded to wait, to elect deputies, to construct a government, as if a government of any sort were not the very incarnation of the anti-social principle which they had revolted to overthrow.

This feeble shadow of a representative body which, to do it justice, was very deficient in the tyrannical spirit of a real government managed nevertheless to fall into a series of blunders worthy of a middle-class

parliament. It tried to put itself on a legal and constitutional footing with its rival at Versailles; as if the revolted workers had any fair chance of treating with their angry masters! It issued edicts which no one thought of even trying to obey. It tried to organise an administration *à la bourgeoise* right in front of the enemy's bayonets. It deceived the people as to the state of the war. Worse than all, it checked them not only in fighting, but in seizing upon the Bank of France, the wealth which they had helped to create and the title-deeds of the land which belonged to the whole people of France.

And whilst these well-meaning administrators were discussing, and hesitating, and deliberating, the dismay and confusion of the ruling classes subsided and the first outburst of revolutionary ardour amongst the people died down. The moment for decisive and successful action was irrevocably lost, and nothing remained for the brave workmen of Paris but to die fighting for the hope they had missed.

Do we reproach these men, our brothers who led the forlorn hope of the Social Revolution? Do we reproach a child who tumbles when he first begins to walk alone? Their errors of judgment committed in the stress of battle, battle for which they were not prepared have been washed out in their blood. Their noble courage and devotion to the cause which was theirs and ours remains a shining example for ever.

Nevertheless we owe it to them, as well as to the cause to profit by their bitter experience, that it may not have been suffered in vain.

Agitate, educate, organise! But always in accordance with the new social relations which we look to see universally established

Let us lay to heart the necessity of being prepared to act, when our opportunity comes to us, as theirs to the workers of Paris in 1871. Prepared, not with the preparation of an army, organised in well-drilled battalions, where every man is part of a machine which will not act until the leaders pull the strings. But prepared like free men, ready each one of us in heart and mind, sure of our principle of action, decided as to our aim.

Agitate, educate, organise! But always in accordance with the new social relations which we look to see universally established. Never forget that the sole end of preparation is that the people shall be ready to rely on their own revolutionary initiative and not be scared from it by the scruples and prejudices or the plausible pretences of leaders, either timid or self-interested.

The end of the social revolution is not to make men obedient servants of a reorganised state, but to set them free to live the social life which is the spontaneous outcome of their inmost desires.

Notes

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Socialism, April 1888

[...]

Most English and French workmen are less favourably impressed with existing profit-sharing and co-operative enterprises than our correspondent, the well-known American Mutualist-Anarchist who signs himself Edgeworth. Probably distance, in his case, lends enchantment to the view. But we would draw our readers' attention to his admission that the "constructive idea" of Proudhon, the solution of the social problem by Mutual Banking, is inapplicable in present conditions. Mutualist "co-operative unions are feasible only when the means of production are owned by the producers". Certainly the producers do not own the means of production today, and have no prospect under our present economic system of owning them. We fully agree with Edgeworth that "nothing less than expropriation will meet the exigencies of the case."

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Revolutionary Anarchism and the expropriation of property monopolists are preached by the Chicago *Alarm*; but the other American Mutualist papers zealously repudiate all but passive resistance to oppression, and cling to the peace-at all costs doctrine of George Fox, Godwin, Shelley, Proudhon, Leo Tolstoi, and many another spirit touched to fine issues, but blind to the fact that domination is still an aggressive force in society, only to be destroyed by an outburst energy more active and powerful than itself.

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Can one do a greater wrong to any human being than consciously to allow him to domineer over oneself or any one else without offering the most vigorous protest within one's power?

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We Revolutionary Communist-Anarchists differ from our Revolutionary Mutualist comrades in their theory that after the workers have destroyed the existing monopoly of property they will set about creating it afresh-by attempting toto secure to every individual neither more nor less than the exact amount of wealth resulting from the exercise of his own capacities. Are not the scandalous inequalities in the distribution of wealth today merely the culminative effect of the principle that every man is justified in securing to himself everything that his chances and capacities enable him to lay hands on?

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If the social revolution amidst which we are living means anything, it means the destruction of this detestable economic principle, which delivers over the more social members of the community to the domination of the most unsocial and self-interested.

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Jus died last month, singing the swan-song of English Individualism. The hopes of the people are set on Socialism, and the privileged classes have no heart to defy them – so moans the expiring organ of the Liberty and Property Defence League. The whole attention of the propertied classes and their government is strained towards evading social revolution by skilful conjuring with timely concessions. The L. P. D. L. contains fewer conscientious Individualists than could be accommodated in a four-wheeled cab; in fact, it is merely "The Harassed Interests Defence League." It "is extremely unpopular amongst working class audiences." It "is credited, justly or unjustly, with a lively respect for the liberty of the wolf to devour the lamb, and a cynical admission of the equal right of the lamb to devour the wolf." A just charge, apparently, to the minds of the aforesaid single-minded Individualists off the staff of *Jus*, who have thus publicly shaken the dust of the League from their feet.

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It is reported that they are preparing to revive the paper as an Exponent of Individualist Anarchism, As comrade Hicks says, "We are all Anarchists now," and the defenders of "Liberty and Property," like many State Socialists, believe "that the society of the remote future will be held together on the principle of absolute philosophical anarchy." But – also like State Socialists – they are perfectly prepared to pursue a policy in utter contradiction with their profession of faith – *vide* Mr. Auberon Herbert's "Right and Wrong of Compulsion by the State," and Mr. W. Donnisthorpe's criticism thereon in the last two numbers of *Jus*.

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Surely an Anarchist is one who adopts Anarchism as the guiding principle of his life, who takes the moral attitude of an Anarchist towards his fellows here and now-not one who believes in a possible Anarchist Millennium in the dim future.

The Strike Movement in Germany

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Communism, June 1889

Recent events in the country of the Kaiser have been most encouraging for all those who really wish a. happier time for the workers, and tor Anarchists especially. In all parts of Germany we have had strikes and rumours of strikes, and although the demands made have not been very important, the general effect of the movement has been excellent and the attitude taken up by the German Emperor and the Prussian capitalists very instructive.

The idea of a general strike continues to grow in popularity on the Continent and faith in political agitation and methods is giving way. The workers are getting tired of waiting for the parliamentarians to do something for them; they are making up their minds to do something for themselves. Hence the spread of the idea of a general strike. At the lowest estimate the strike is a means of improving the present condition of society much more efficacious than the visionary palliatives the Social Democrats propose to obtain in the dim and distant future by legislative means. Our comrades of the S.D.F. here in England admitted that in a practical way when they supported with such comparatively good results the strike of the match girls employed by Bryant and May. The strike is in fact a method of resisting the encroachments of the capitalists which experience has proved to be effective. The trade unionists of this country have won their position of superior well-being amongst the workers chiefly by strikes, and the nine-hour day and the Saturday half holiday are due to strikes. In America, too, it has been admitted by the official labour statistician that strikes on the whole have resulted in a train to the strikers. Moreover the strike is an independent, self-respecting method of enforcing demands, a straightforward, direct attack upon the capitalist position. Consequently the exploiters fear it far more than any amount of talk about Bills for reducing the hours of labour. But the general strike to

which the workers of the Continent begin to look forward would be the commencement of the Social Revolution, as the capitalists very well recognise. The day of small things and small demands is not yet over, but it is nearing its end. Now the workers on strike only ask for a reduction of hours, a slight increase of pay. But the example of a body of workers in one spot is followed by other bodies of workers in other places, and the demands grow as the strikes become more numerous and the solidarity between the workers is more apparent. 'The workers begin to rely upon one another. They begin to say, Why should we be content with only a slight increase in our wages? why pay tribute to the robbers at all?

In Germany at present the demands made are small and the Emperor recommends the employers to grant them while at the same time he threatens the workers with assassination at the hands of his hirelings. He feels timid, but thinks it wise to keep up the swagger of the bully.

The miners in Westphalia have demanded an increase of 15 per cent, in their wages, which will increase them to 2s. 6d. for the lowest paid, and 3s. 4d. for the highest, a day. They also want to reduce their working day to 8 hours. Over one hundred thousand men have been concerned in this affair, and the government has not hesitated to murder several persons. According to a Berlin telegram, on May 9th at Bochum the strikers assembled in the interior streets of the town and the troops were called out. The miners retreated slowly before the military as far as the railway station, and there halted and faced the troops, but made no attack. Just at this critical moment a train arrived in the station, and the passengers, not knowing what was going on, walked as usual into the street towards the troops. The officer in command, believing, it is said, that these inoffensive persons were strikers about to attack his men, ordered the troops to fire. The volley killed a platelayer and a gentleman who had just arrived by the train. Two other men, one woman, and a boy were seriously wounded. Blood has also been shed at Brackel, whore the troops fired on a meeting, killing three, and wounding several others. A Dortmund telegram of May 12, stated that the whole of this district was in a terrible ferment. A telegraphic message reached the commander at Dusseldorf at midnight, upon receipt of which the whole garrison was alarmed, and called to arms. Another of those conflicts with the troops which have already resulted in several deaths occurred in the neighbourhood of the Schleswig pit. The miners attacked the foremen of the works. There were then no troops in the immediate neighbourhood, and by the time a detachment of the 13th Infantry had arrived from Hoerde, the crowd had reached large proportions, and had become very threatening. The troops came up at the double, steaming with perspiration, but in perfect and compact order. people divided into two separate bodies and made a rush for the shelter of a neighbouring railway embankment. On the other side of this is a large "beer garden," kept by one Enser, and much frequented by the miners. Here they made a final stand, and from behind this cover assumed a defiant attitude, hooting and jeering the soldiers, at whom they repeatedly hurled the opprobrious epithet "sandhasen," a slang term equivalent to "cowards" or "white livers." Lieutenant Pape, in command of the troops, thrice summoned the rioters to disperse, but his warning was received with further ridicule. The ominous drum-roll, accompanied with trumpet-blasts, was then ordered, and twice repeated, the preliminary to the firing of a volley. Still the crowd did not move. The word to fire was then given, and a hail of bullets fell amongst the crowd. Six persons instantly dropped dead, amongst them *a child of four years old*, who was in the front row of the crowd. Shrieks from amongst the compact mass showed that many others were wounded, but these were instantly removed by their comrades in an inexplicably secret manner. One woman was found wounded, but the others were

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carried away, no ono knows where. The other half of the crowd maintained their defiant attitude, and with singular daring faced the troops. At this moment Director Hahne, willing to save further bloodshed, shouted at the top of his voice, whilst pointing, to the other body of rioters, "There lie six corpses; will you hazard the same fate?" The people then slowly dispersed. Tho bodies of the dead were removed by their comrades.

At the time of writing it appears that many of the colliery owners have yielded, or in other ways induced many thousands of the men to return to work. Probably the threats of the Emperor have also had their effect upon the less determined section of the miners. A Berlin telegram of May 25 says that it is stated in the Rhenish newspapers that the proclamation of martial law may be looked for. A miner named Weber, who is the President of the Strike Committee in Bochum, has been arrested on account of a speech in which he is alleged to have used the words, "War against capital – victory or death." regarded by the authorities as a Socialistic utterance.

In Saxony, Silesia and elsewhere the mining strikes extend and telegrams are continually appearing in the daily newspapers that troops are being sent to the various districts. In Silesia there has been loss of life. Strikes are also being started in other industries. On the 21st of May 3000 masons at Berlin came out demanding that their wages be raised from 5d. to 6d. an hour, that their hours of work be reduced to 9 daily, and that a fortnight's notice should be given before dismissal. Also in the capital the brewers' assistants, basket makers, furriers' assistants, omnibus employees, tailors and carpenters, are either on strike or about to go out. At Bremerhaven the tailors were going to strike for a reduction of their working day to 11 hours and an increase of some shillings a week in their pay, but the masters gave way at once. The men had been working from 13 to 16 hours a day. At Wurzburg, Lubeck, Konigsberg and Bunzlaw the carpenters and joiners, at Sprottau the builders and at Dortmund the brewers' assistants have also joined the strike movement.

Whether this growing movement in Germany is due to the recent successful example of the tramway men in Vienna or is the result of an understanding between the workers to effect a general strike is difficult to determine. We incline to the belief that there has been a good deal done towards organising a general strike but that the miners' movement in Westphalia is apart from it and due largely to local influences, a rise in the price of coal, and the Vienna example. Undoubtedly the party of action, that is to say the Anarchists, have made considerable headway in Germany since the death of Frederick. Bebel and Liebknecht have no longer the same influence upon the masses; they are beginning to be regarded as too moderate, too slow. »So far back as the 5th of March we saw in *Le Matin* of Paris a long letter from its Berlin correspondent in which a general strike was declared to be imminent, which would have Berlin for its centre and which would result in great things. At any rate it is evident that Germany is getting ready to act.

Is Communism Just?

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Communism, July 1889

The letter from our Spanish correspondent which we print this month is especially interesting, containing as it does an explanation of the differences existing between the two schools of Anarchists who in Spain are fighting side by side against the capitalist foe. We of course are Communists. We do not believe it either possible, just or expedient to reward individuals strictly according to their performances, and we believe that any attempt to do so must inevitably prove unsatisfactory to the world at large. Science tells us that the development of all animals, including man, depends upon the environment. A man is what is termed bad or good, dull or clever, idle or industrious, just in proportion as his environment is favourable to the growth of the desirable or the undesirable qualities. A boy or girl who is dragged up in a slum cannot be expected to follow the path of virtue and industry. A man who never has a chance to hear good music, to see fine paintings, to read noble-spirited books, must necessarily be dwarfed in his intellectual character. A man who has no leisure, but toils on hour after hour, day after day, week after week and year after year with hardly any intermission, cannot be expected to have wide views and comprehensive knowledge. Therefore communists demand, not that all men shall be reduced to one dead level, but that all men shall have an equal opportunity to progress, that they shall be hampered in no way in their desire to advance, which means not only that they shall have the most complete freedom of thought, speech and action, but that they shall have food, clothing, housing and everything else they require up to the limit of production. Who knows what undeveloped talent there is stowed away at the present time in the minds

of those myriads of workers who, chained so to speak to their work, have no opportunities. We workers at any rate know that there are some great capacities amongst us, lost because of the present slavery, and we believe that if we were free and untrammelled the world would progress with gigantic bounds, and all these cramped intelligences would shed light upon our pathway. Our Collectivist friends appear to think that some of the workers will try to shirk their fair share of the necessary work in a society where their wants would be supplied whether they work or not. Our position is that we do not think so. It is not natural for a man to be idle, and if the work of the community is made light and agreeable as it ought to be and can be, it will be regarded as a pleasure. Of course there may be individuals, suffering from the bad conditions under which they and their ancestors have lived who will interfere in some way with the harmonious working of a free society, and in the transitional revolutionary period communities and individuals may sometimes be obliged in self-defence to make it their rule that "He who will not work neither shall he eat." It is not always possible for us to act up to our principles, and just as today necessity compels us to pay rent, interest and taxes and to contribute profit to the capitalist coffers, so tomorrow expediency may force us to confine our communism to those who are willing to be our brothers and equals. But we do not think that many individuals would be willing to incur the contempt which the community would bestow upon an able-bodied shirker.

The Collapse of Marxism at the Two International Congresses of Paris

By a Comrade who was present at both

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Communism, August 1889

The two international congresses held last month in Paris were separated by the rivalries of cliques, but they have alike ended by voting for the so-called international labour legislation.

The Marxists who have been pretending until now to be the sole *true* French Socialists and who branded the Parti Ouvrier (Workmen's Party) with the nickname, of Possibilists, have during this congress entirely stepped down from their eminence and have, in fact, so acted as to suggest their own full acceptance of the nickname of Impossibilists. They have added the ridiculous to the futile by resolving that on a certain day and at a certain hour all the organised workers of the world should present a petition to their respective municipalities! A sort of Chartism, half a century overdue!

The Possibilists, on the other hand, have descended in their resolution to details which are characteristic of the reactionary work they are engaged in. The resolution deals with fines, years and months of imprisonment, inspections, prohibitions and regulations so strict and severe as to suggest the corporations of the Middle Ages. In fact, the monstrosity of the illusion as to the good to be hoped from this labour legislation is only equalled by the monstrosity of the despotism it would introduce, were it ever adopted. But nobody thinks that it will be. Domela Nieuwenhuis, a member of the Dutch Legislature, said if it were passed it would put a stop to Socialism for five years. And, indeed, the only good of it is to gain votes for so-called Socialist candidates at municipal and parliamentary elections. This result being obtained and the people being edified by discovering the true worth of labour legislation, something new will be invented to keep them quiet for a little longer.

The following is the general sense of the revolution presented by Comrade Merlino, one of the Italian delegates, at both congresses. National or international labour legislation, if accepted by the workers, would confirm their slavery and be a negation of revolutionary Socialism; also it is an economic impossibility that it should be practically carried out and therefore it is holding out a false hope to delude the people. Domestic servants and wage-slaves in workshops, artisans and agricultural labourers, factory hands, and men and women engaged in home industries, can never be subjected to one set of rules; still less workers of varying races and countries. In a social order so opposed to justice and reason as ours, the attempt to subject countries in various stages of economic development to one law, would only end in the sacrifice of the weaker to the stronger.

Moreover, existing governments continually fail even in reconciling the interests of the capitalist classes whom they represent, and go always armed to the teeth; how can they unite to protect the interest of the workers, their enemies? How can that economic engine of violence and destruction, the capitalist state, whose every department is in the hands of the masters, be made into an instrument of peace and good understanding between masters and workmen?

Moreover the great moral principle of freedom is incompatible with any regulations and measures which interfere with the free development of society and would mould it on a Procrustean bed; freedom which has become a need of the civilised man, one of the most urgent of needs. The offer of labour legislation officially made by governments has only one aim, that of dressing up parliamentarism again in the eyes of the masses, when it was becoming utterly discredited, and the efforts of all true Socialists should be directed to overthrowing the great superstition of this century, the belief that social problems can be solved by the ballot box and Acts of Parliament. After the experiences of the old International, we should not go back over the ancient ground, but proceed to the overthrow of private property and, together with it, of government, that monstrous centralised engine of fraud, corruption, oppression and social discord; to establish in its place a society of free associations of workers, settling their own affairs and organising their own work. The bodies of thousands of victims and a whole humanity oppressed, lie between us and our enemies, and this abyss must be deepened more and more, not bridged over, by compromises which amount in fact to treason to the cause.

Comrade Merlino, in conclusion, called upon the congresses to remain true to the principles of revolutionary Socialism and inscribe upon their banner the abolition of the parliamentary and governmental system as an essential condition of the real abolition of the capitalist system, and to denounce the proposed labour legislation as anti-Socialistic and reactionary.

The Possibilists gave our comrade the opportunity of reading his resolution and supporting it in a well received speech. John Burns replied that the eight hours day was the only thing the electors cared for and therefore the only means of getting votes. A French Possibilist added that if the Possibilists had not elected municipal councillors in Paris the delegates would not have been invited to the “Wine of Honour” at the Town Hall. With such arguments was the Anarchist resolution combated amongst the Possibilists.

At the Marxist congress they spent three days in discussing the fusion of the two congresses and two in reading reports which did not add greatly to what may be known as to the situation in various countries by reading the daily papers. This left them only the last day, before which many delegates had been obliged to return home, on which to discuss all the questions on the agenda paper’ Though comrade Merlino sent in his name in the morning, he was not permitted to speak and in the afternoon, when he insisted upon his claim before the vote was taken, he and the French Italian and English delegates who took his part, were violently expelled from the hall after a sharp fight. The benches were left half empty, whilst many French, Italian, Dutch and Belgian delegates sent in a protest to the bureau against the clique formed by Liebknecht and the French Marxists to manoeuvre the whole affair and form a new party which has no right to call itself Socialist.

This congress marks the end of the old Marxist State Socialism. Henceforward we shall have but two parties – Parliamentarians or Reformers and Socialist Anarchists.

As for the tinkering which the former have set before them as an ideal, it can only tend to push real Socialism backward.

The delegates of three nations voted against the labour legislation. It was voted for chiefly by the German Social Democrats, divided info Germans and Alsatians, to gain another vote, and such representative delegates as a *Brussels* student for Romania, etc.

The final sitting was to have taken place on Saturday night; but was omitted “for fear of the Anarchists.”

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Reform, parliamentary and diplomatic law-making is not Socialism, not even a step towards it. The fundamental principle of Socialism is that no real amelioration for the workers as a body, but only a

shifting of various miseries from one section of them to another, can be attained until Private Property is abolished. This fundamental principle even the Marxists have now forsaken. Their late congress will mark their gradual disappearance from the Socialist field. That field will be seen henceforth to be held only by those who have always been the advance guard of the Socialist army – the Anarchists. The duel between the Marxists and Anarchists has been going on ever since the Congress of the Hague. It has just ended at the Congress of Paris in the complete moral defeat of the Marxists.

Unable to imagine a social organisation otherwise than as a State, the Marxist school considered the social revolution as a class struggle, and entrusted the working class with the special mission of accomplishing it. The working classes should, according to that school, conquer the power and the wealth in order to destroy the first and to socialise the latter. This is quite utopian. Never a whole class will wield the power; never will a class or a *clique* possessing the power abdicate it. The social question is more than a class question; it is also more than a purely economical question. The Marxist theories about the indefinite concentration of wealth and misery, that on labour and value, that on equity of exchange, and almost all the theories which Marx took from Political Economy, are disproved. The very fact that labour legislation has been thought of speaks against them. It remains now for Anarchists to push forward the claims of the proletariat, to show the identity of economical and political privilege, of property and the state, and to open the way to the destruction of both through the social revolution.

Eight Hours and an Eight Hours Bill

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Communism, May 1890

An eight hours working day? By all means. The only objection to it is that it is too long. But an Eight Hours Bill. What is the good of that? Bills are the middle class way of doing things, which suits the propertied classes nicely, since it is a way that keeps the whip and reins in their hands, and even when they have to make a little bit of a concession to the workers they can do it with an air of patronage and free consent, grateful to their sense of superiority. “You are our masters now,” they say to the worker who comes to them cap in hand for some little bill or another, “how can we serve you?” Meanwhile they tip one another a wink; “We know what labour legislation means. We must guard our property and keep the toilers quiet, and much cry and little wool is the good old way.” So they talk a great deal at all sorts of political meetings, from clubs to the House, and do – exactly what the workers force them to do. The workers get out of their masters in Parliament merely the official recognition of what they have had the energy and courage to get out of them outside. A change becomes inevitable. It takes place in men’s minds; it begins to influence their conduct; and Parliament passes a bill about it amid an immense flourish of trumpets; generally a miserably inadequate enactment, which has to be remodelled over and over again, and is unsatisfactory in the end. Parliamentary legislation has about as much influence (for good at least) in any serious social reform as the proverbial fly, which sat on the axle of the chariot wheel and said, What a dust I raise!

If the workers, or even a fair sprinkling of them, are determined to get Eight Hours, those who act together will get what they want. Recent strikes have shown them that where they are resolute and united capitalists are powerless. And if the workers insist on Eight Hours, the governing classes will very likely amuse themselves by passing an Eight Hours Bill. They naturally cling to the forms of law and order, and don’t like to yield too openly to the direct “revolutionary” action of strikes and big demonstrations. It pleases them, and in itself will do the workers no harm; so long as they keep it clearly in their heads that it is their own active determination that has shortened their working day, and not the Bill and its machinery.

The worst is that many don’t realise this, and think the law has worked the change, and that delusion tends to keep up the slavish old habit of looking to the ruling classes for direction and help. These believers in law fall an easy prey to active, young, middle-class democrats on the look out for a following, and ready to lead the workers a devil’s dance through a whole series of petty economic and political reforms, which they call “Socialism,” and “Steps to Socialism,” diverting the attention of the masses from that united, direct action wherein their hope lies.

One big, determined strike is worth a dozen bills; one strong union a dozen political associations. The future of the workers lies in their own hands, they have only to act together and to act for themselves, and they can not merely raise wages or gain an eight hours working day, but re-organise the whole system of work and the whole method of sharing its produce. They need no Acts of Parliament to enable them to put an end to the rule of one set of men by another, and to bring about the Social Revolution

Individual Or Common Property

A Discussion

A Letter from a Communist

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Communism, October 1890

It appears to me that Anarchy without Communism has no reason for its existence. For as Anarchy is the negation of Authority, so Communism is the negation of Property. he who says Authority says Property, and he who says Property says Authority.

If this proposition be admitted, the question is solved in favour of Communism, and this should be enough to bring round all those undecided people who, in their sincere love of freedom, are afraid of being false to Anarchy if they cut the "right of property" out of its programme. Much the same sort of pretext as that on which certain Socialists wish to maintain authority.

The "right" of any man to anything depends on his co-existence with that thing. This "right" is. only limited by the possibility of exercising it. If there were actually but .one man in the world, that man would have every sort of "right" to every sort of thing in the world; If instead of this one man, whom we will call John, there happened to be another named Peter, Peter would in the same way be master of all things. But if both John and Peter are in existence, can the presence of one deprive the other of a part of his "right"?

Hitherto, it has been contended that this was the case, and governments are based upon this very supposition. But we Anarchists cannot admit any such thing. We believe that all men have the same "rights" to all things. This is why these "rights" are not collective; one's share does hot begin where another's leaves off; all rights are common and unlimited for all; the hypothesis set forth above, that the whole world belonged to one man, might be repeated for each particular individual. We have all the same "rights" to the universal banquet; but these rights are independent of one another, and we have not all the same needs. Communists are thus absolutely opposed to the theory which would have all products massed together and then re-divided. They would prefer to take freely what they need, without there being any strife on the subject, since everything is for everybody and everything belongs to everybody.

Thus harmony will come about naturally. Each will live more and more according to his personal tastes, taking care in no wise to restrain those of others. As Communism has no other object than equality, by means of freedom in its most complete sense, it is hardly to be imagined that any Anarchists can refuse to admit it.

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It seems to me that Communism is the mother-idea of Anarchy, that Anarchy without it would be a vain theory, to which Collectivism might well be preferred. If Property partakes of the nature of Authority, how can anyone who calls himself an Anarchist wish to maintain it?

In the same way that the believers in Authority are convinced that by abolishing law we shall be giving criminals a free scope, the partisans of property seem to fancy that by abolishing it we shall be providing a career for the lazy and for robbers. Whereas if we add to "Do as thou wilt" its necessary completion, "To each according to his needs," we enunciate a principle which is at once the expression and the result of absolute liberty. It is certain that there can be no true liberty whilst each has not all that he needs, and that it is only upon this system of perfect freedom that such close relations can be established between production and consumption that each can do, be, and have all that he desires. And then nothing more will remain but to develop our aims scientifically, to perfect ourselves, so to speak, into a superior sort of animal with boundless faculties of intelligence and boundless possibilities of happiness.

M.

Conference of London Anarchist Communists

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Communism, November 1891

On Sunday, October 25, about 60 Anarchist Communists from different parts of London, assembled in the Socialist Co-operative Hall, 7 Lambs Conduit Street, by invitation of the London Socialist League and the Freedom Group, to discuss the following Agenda: I. Our attitude towards existing trade and labour unions. Is it consistent and advisable for Anarchist Communists to join them? If yes, what position is best to be taken up by comrades within such organisations? II. What use can we make of the coming election? III. The carrying on of Anarchist Communist propaganda by means of lectures, discussions and literature in the various workmen's clubs; the issue of an Anarchist Communist Lecture List. IV. The desirability of comrades proclaiming themselves everywhere Anarchist Communists. V. The advisability of having a monthly meeting of London Groups.

The discussion was opened by W. Wess, who urged the desirability of taking up active work amongst trades unions. A workman's best chance of spreading his ideas must necessarily be amongst his mates. At present an Anarchist Communist who belongs to a union merely sends up his subscription by post, and does not even take the trouble to enquire whether the money is used for a parliamentary committee or making a god of some leader by sending him into the House. Those Anarchist Communists who have taken an active part in organising labour unions have even been cried down by comrades as reactionaries. But as a matter of fact trade unions did originally adopt revolutionary tactics and theoretically they are based on the principle of self-reliance. Lately they have been turned aside by Social Democratic influence and there is a danger they may be converted into mere electioneering engines. S. Merlino pointed out that the aloofness of English Anarchists from the main current of the English Labour Movement had been visible in the indifference of the English Labour delegates about the Anarchist question at the Brussels Congress; whereas the wire-pullers did not dare to exclude him (Merlino), knowing that the Italian delegates identified the Anarchist cause with the Italian Labour Movement and would have retired with him. E. Malatesta gave a short sketch of the Spanish Labour Movement, saying that in all the great towns but two it was identified with Anarchism; and Kropotkin added some details and remarked upon the readiness to be interested in Anarchism which he had noticed amongst Trade Unionists in the North of England.

Mowbray dwelt on the arbitrary and despotic elements which had crept into and depraved Trades Unionism and the need to counteract them. Nicoll, Cantwell, Turner, Tochatti, and other comrades followed up the line taken by the previous speakers. After an earnest discussion, it was unanimously agreed that Anarchist Communists would do well to belong to their respective trades unions, just as they belong to their respective propagandist groups, and to take every opportunity to spread their views amongst their fellow workers. In cases where they find no possibility of doing this, it would be best to work up a new union on definitely Anarchist lines. It was suggested that the best thing an Anarchist Communist could do would be to take part in all serious discussions and meetings within his union, about matters affecting its special aims and tactics, handling each subject from a distinctly and avowedly Anarchist standpoint; and further to do his best to promote weekly or fortnightly educational discussions upon labour questions amongst the members of his union; but above all to lose no opportunity of combating the evil principle of authority, the rule of the executive, election of presidents, etc. It was also agreed that Anarchists would do wisely to avoid office. It was settled that a manifesto should be drawn up to set forth Anarchist Communist views upon Trades Unionism, the Eight Hours Bill,

and other matters now agitating the Labour movement. The draft will be published in The *Commonweal* (it is not ready in time for this number of *Freedom*) that all comrades may consider it carefully before the next Conference, which will be held on Sunday, Nov. 22, at 3 p.m., in the Hall, 7 Lamb's Conduit Street, W.C. Comrades unable to attend the Conference, who wish to make any suggestions, are invited to write to W. Wess at the *Freedom* office, or T. Cantwell, 7 Lamb's Conduit Street, W.C.

The rest of the agenda was held over for full discussion at the next Conference, but it was decided that a leaflet should be drawn up to deal with the coming general election; also that a lecture list should be published. Comrades able and willing to lecture are invited to send their names and subjects to W. Wess, *Freedom* office.

Seven shillings was collected, of which three shillings went to defray expenses and four shillings was given towards the expense of sending an Anarchist speaker to Brighton.

Must We Pass Through State Socialism?

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Communism, January 1892

When the revolution breaks out, it will not be thanks to the Social Democrats, who are rapidly ceasing to be revolutionists at all, but thanks to the impatience of the masses and the spread of Anarchist ideas.

Now, whilst the people are in a state of revolt, they must eat. The articles of consumption they find in the warehouses and shops will not last long, and neither gold from the bank nor jewels and ornaments from the houses of the rich will satisfy hunger. Therefore it will be needful to organise production immediately, and everywhere to take possession of the houses, means of production, land, machinery, etc. A piece of work in which a Socialist State would be powerless, one which must be done in a revolutionary, an Anarchist fashion.

Doubtless the State, or a Central Committee, could take possession of certain capitalist enterprises and make these into national workshops. But what use would that be? They could pronounce a sentence of forfeiture against certain Captains of Industry who had already left the country; but that is about all they would dare or be able to do. The State or Central Socialist Committee will never expropriate property and capital to put them in common. How could they set about it? They would have to get a law voted, a very complicated law, a whole series of laws, to provide for all cases and give rules for all circumstances. There are many sorts of property, and it is extremely difficult to distinguish on paper, between ownership of articles of personal use, which must not be interfered with, and property employed for the exploitation of the worker, which must be abolished. Certainly it would never do to take their cottages and vegetable garden away from a peasant family, or to tear the clothes off folks' backs. Thus the law must establish a maximum, or some other regulations difficult to apply, particularly in a time of revolution, or else it must confide the business entirely to the direction of officials especially charged to carry it into effect. Just fancy this army of property distributors swarming over the country, searching and inquiring in the houses, valuing property and capital down to a given limit, and afterwards deciding what is to be left to each family and what must put in common!

Apart from the crying injustices which would be committed and set everyone again the Revolution, it would a work of years, ages, as we have seen during this century in the case of the abolition of feudal and communal domains in Italy and Germany.

No. a government or a law cannot carry out expropriation. Expropriation must be the work of the people… they will take possession of land, workshops, machinery, mines, everything needed to set about organising production at once… no waiting for orders. During a revolution men must *act*. Those who have initiative will set the example

Finally, all this would come to nothing, or nothing but a counter-revolution.

No, a government or a law cannot carry out expropriation. Expropriation must be the work of the people, in tumultuous, summary fashion, at the same time all over the country, managed with the good sense and discretion that the "real" people always bring into their actions.

In every direction they will take possession of land, workshops, machinery, mines, everything needed to set about organising production at once.

Again, no waiting for orders. During a revolution men must *act*. Those who have initiative will set the example; the factory hands will only have to go on working on their own account, instead of working for a master; new associations of workers will turn up and set to work with the materials they have collected or received from other associations. Production also will be organised "Anarchically," for it would be madness to wait for the permission and regulation of a central authority. A government may organise tyranny, oppression, the exploitation of the masses by a class: but as for organising the real interests of the people, it is not able to do anything of the sort.

We shall be met with the objection that the organisation of labour is a very complicated matter, that it is not enough merely to have the instruments of production, one must set oneself a task, fix a definite

number of hours for the working day, and, especially, divide and subdivide labour. All this supposes knowledge not possessed by every one, and it may cause discord.

Let us reply, first of all, that just because the organisation of labour is a complicated affair, and differs much from one industry to another and one locality to another, it cannot be done by a general law and under the orders of a central government. All that a government could do would be to name commissioners in each locality, who in their turn must consult the workers themselves and refer the matter to them. For this service, which would be useless, and dangerous on account of the injustices to which the intervention of the commissioners might give rise, the workers would have to pay heavy taxes.

As for the pretended incapacity of the workers to organise their work, we absolutely deny it. Moreover, there is no want of workers, even among those toiling today in factories, who know what has to be done; the others, if they really feel themselves incapable, can refer to these without thereby conferring any authority upon them.

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We must further remark that the point of departure of the future organisation of labour will be the existing organisation. The factories are there, the machines are fixed in them; it is known how much coal an engine consumes, how many hours of labour such and such a quantity of produce takes, etc. Here is a basis to go upon. Doubtless in time much of this will be changed: some products will be limited, some stopped altogether, others increased and developed, more will be thought of the necessary, less of the superfluous; production must be decentralised; no more enormous factories built to provide articles of commerce, no more excessive subdivision of labour, killing the worker's intelligence and undermining his health. There must be alternation of work, and intellectual must be combined with manual labour, that the worker may exercise all his faculties.

But all these changes will come afterwards, little by little. At the beginning, what is most pressing must come first, and people will cling only too closely to the habits and systems of today. Those who dread too many novelties need not be afraid.

The only thing remaining for the associations of workers to do will be to come to a common understanding, federate with one another, for the purpose of putting the respective products in common, exchanging with other federations, and in general for all common interests: dwellings, means of communication, education, public health, and social security.

Here the authoritarian Socialists will put in their oar. They will demand the constitution of a Central Committee to organise all the public services, or at least to sit in judgment and regulate differences. If they have their own way, they will create a police, impose taxes, make partisans, and intrigue to keep their places. Claiming intellectual and official work for themselves and their functionaries, they will condemn the public to manual labour, and, considering themselves as superiors, they will also demand larger emoluments, were it only for the sake of their *prestige*; or rather they will levy supplies for themselves and thus finish by pushing us back into the present system again.

It is against this danger that Anarchists must energetically act. They ought to leave the masses themselves to look after their own interests. All that could be done by a Central Government, can be better done by the workers of different localities. Take dwellings for example. The best organisation for managing them and all needful changes connected therewith is a union of the inhabitants of the ward or district. Hygiene belongs to the dwelling department. The maintenance of streets and means of communication is the object of one or several industries: all those employed in existing tramways, omnibus, and other such companies will form one or several associations. Each association will bring its quota of labour to the Federation; each will let the others benefit by its work, and will itself benefit by the labour of the others. To come to an understanding, they could hold meetings, either general or of delegates bearing a fixed mandate. They will adopt one or other criterion for the division of produce; there will be no difficulty from the first about the things that

have been produced in sufficient quantities. Less plentiful things will he assigned to the most pressing needs. Certain dainties, for instance, will be reserved for the sick. In time, the workers will make what arrangements seem good to them, provided there be no central government commissioned to fix the price of the hour of labour, the exchange value of goods, etc.

Doubtless there will be *some* inequalities, injustices even, and some strife. But such strife will be the life of the new society, the pledge of progress; whilst the uniform and despotic system of a central government would inevitably end in stagnation and reaction.

There will be not only inequalities, but entirely different systems. Very probably, for instance, the peasants of some countries will want to divide the land and till it separately. But when they go to exchange their produce with those engaged in town industries, they will have to do business with Communist organisations, and be led for the sake of obtaining a regular exchange, to put their produce in common. Afterwards, the necessity of increasing production by the use of machinery, will bring them to put the land itself in common.

Another change will take place. The industrial towns will wish to spread themselves, taking in a little of the surrounding country, were it only that the workers might do agricultural and industrial work, turn and turn about, and at the same time, secure a minimum of subsistence.

On the other hand, the country folk, as they acquire new needs, will be led to vary their occupations and to supply themselves with certain tools, were it only to learn how to use them, and will claim their share in intellectual work and town civilisation.

Hence will result the formation of associations at once industrial and agricultural, the organic unity of the future society.

Such changes ought not to appear unlikely to us; we knew in how short a time industrial England has arisen, and how fast German towns are growing today.

If there is one thing certain concerning the on-coming Revolution, it is that (in France at least) it will not be centralised, but communal. Marseilles and Lyons will not await the orders of Paris, nor submit to her dictation. Anarchists will thus have every chance to give full weight to their principles; and if they cannot hope to see them adopted everywhere, they can, at least, put them in practice in many places. These will be centres round which neighbouring associations will group themselves, until society is entirely reconstructed upon the Anarchist plan. Either this or a political and economic autocracy of the most obnoxious sort.

It is for us to strive that the spirit of solidarity, the conviction of its advantages and its necessity may penetrate the masses and modify the various organisations formed at the moment of the Revolution, in the direction of Communism and of Anarchy.

What's To Be Done

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Communism, February 1892

Now that the Anarchist movement has taken a firm hold on what the sturdy old rebel Chatterton is pleased to call the 'disunited kingdom', comrades are asking themselves what they can do to help forward the movement; how they can best work for the establishment of that free condition of society which they so earnestly desire. The answer to the question was given at the conference held at the hall in Lamb's Conduit Street on the 25th of last October. The key note of the new policy was struck on that memorable occasion and we are so satisfied of this and so pleased with it ourselves that we think the date might well be borne in mind for anniversary purposes. If the policy then proposed is acted upon with energy and determination, we feel sure that there will be every reason to celebrate the date by a public meeting this year at which we may record the progress we have made during the twelvemonths and get up steam for another burst of propaganda in the ensuing year.

Anarchists, in fact, must avail themselves of the trade unions. In other words the trade unionists must be converted to Anarchy. This is by no means a very difficult matter. There are now a great many trade unionists who are also Anarchists. Let them start on the job at once. They have an admirable manifesto ready for circulation, which is calculated to awaken thought and prepare the ground for them to converse with and thoroughly bring around their fellow workers. Moreover the trade unionist is naturally inclined towards Anarchism, towards the principle of working out his own emancipation without having recourse to parliament and the legislators. The trade unionist class is in fact the most self-reliant, and energetic portion of the workers. By means of their organisations, we, or rather they, can certainly do very much to lay the foundations of the new society. If it appears to some of us that they are at present as a body rather inclined towards parliamentary methods, let us not forget that

this is due to the fact that the Social Democrats have been working amongst them for years and turning their ideas in the direction of state help. Their real inclination however, is towards independent action. It is an undeniable fact that the basis on which all existing trade unions were founded was self help, defence against the extortions of the capitalist class. In most cases the leaders were strong advocates of direct action and it was only when they became imbued with the spirit of officialism, had made positions for themselves and aspired to parliamentary honours, that they turned away from the old traditions of the movement. This is still to be seen in the action of the present leaders of the older trade unionism and their differences with the leaders of the "new" unionism. The former having been corrupted by their intercourse with the capitalist class, though they cling to the old ideas of independence refuse to act upon them thus justifying the criticism of the new school, who profess to be anxious to pass all sorts of acts of parliament for the benefit of the workers. What we Anarchists have to do at this juncture is simply to take up the work where the old, corrupted leaders have left off, to continue the movement but at the same time to give it a broader, wider, more complete ideal, to point out the imperfections of the existing unions and how they may be remedied.

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Of course there is much in the existing trade unions which is objectionable. They are far too centralistic in their tendency, the ordinary worker has by no means so large a share of influence as he should have. They are often not managed on sufficiently broad lines. In many unions difficulties are put in the way of workers gaining admission. They are too much inclined to rest on their oars, that is to say they are not sufficiently aggressive, and the official is far too powerful. But all these and the other defects which might be mentioned, are comparatively insignificant. Unions are free spontaneous associations of working men and women waiting to do anarchistic work. The great fault to be found with them is that the economic education of their members is too far back, that their ideal is too narrow. What is that ideal? Merely to defend themselves against the exactions of the capitalist class, to obtain a minimum wage and in some eases to pay a small "out of work benefit." This should be altered. They are already discontented: they must be inspired with the anarchist ideal of being their own employers, their own masters. They must realise that if the worker is to be a free man he must be a joint owner with his fellows of the means of production, and that to obtain the control of these is the end and aim of the labour movement.

To the most men amongst the mass of trade unionists the thought has never occurred that it lies in their power to create a new state of society in which co-operation will be substituted for competition and in which the exploiting middleman between the producer and the consumer will have disappeared. Once this ideal is explained to them in such a fashion as they will readily understand, they will be only too eager to work for it themselves and to enrol themselves under the banner of Anarchism. Here and there the idea is even now finding ground, but only as a sort of resource for the unemployed members. For example the busmen have recently held one or two meetings, at which it was proposed that their union should start a few buses, so that the unemployed and boycotted members might have employment provided for them. Here again we see the germ of the idea which we Anarchists ought to put clearly before the workers. What we have to convince them of, however, is that they should aim not merely at starting business "on their own hook," for the purpose of establishing a refuge for the unemployed and boycotted members, but that they should seek to eliminate the capitalist altogether; that they should not only feel a spirit of solidarity with their-fellow-unionists but with all workers, that is to say that each trade should look upon it as their business to find employment for all the workers, inside or outside the union, in their particular trade; that they should consider themselves responsible, as indeed they are,

for there being unemployed men in their line of business, and seek to provide employment for them. Once this spirit of universal solidarity and this new ideal begins to be generally accepted, the unemployed question, the blackleg question, the overtime question, the eight-hour question, and all the subsidiary matters in which workers interest themselves will solve themselves. For when the union and the unionists understand that the unemployed men of their trade are a burden upon them, that they must be either supported by the funds of the society, or in other words out of the pockets of the members, or that work must be found for them, the workers will begin to see that it is against their personal interest if they work long hours and overtime whilst others are not working at all. If there are a large number of men dependent upon the union, a movement will immediately arise in favour of a strike to reduce the hours of labour, not merely to eight, but to such a degree as will find employment for the unemployed men. Once the workers get controlled by this spirit of solidarity, the capitalist will find himself in an impossible position, for he will be unable to make profit. There being no longer any blacklegs, strikes must necessarily be successful and the survival of the fittest will result in his being crushed out of existence as capitalist, to be converted, ix he is a wise man and accepts the position philosophically, into a fellow-worker enjoying the blessings of a higher civilisation in common with the rest of mankind.

The first thing to be done is to encourage the decentralisation movement. Small unions, federated if the members desire it, are the most effective and give the fewest opportunities to scheming ambitious officials. A very great many of the workers see the dangers of officialism and continual grumbling goes on, but they also j-ee the necessity for organisation. A little discussion, a little thrashing out of the subject with these discontented ones and the Anarchist trade unionists will very soon have a host at their back. And this leads us to the question of economic education, one of primary importance. We would suggest that the different unions should be urged to start educational meetings, or that Anarchist unionists should start educational meetings themselves, specially addressed to the members of their union. We shall do all we can to help in this matter by the publication of articles, specially dealing with such matters as require elucidation in order to gain over the trade unionists, and by advertising and noticing such meetings. In this connection we would earnestly invite our readers who are trade unionists to send us all the information they can, to report their personal progress in the way of propaganda, to let us know of such difficulties as they encounter, to make arrangements for our speakers to address their members, and in a word to keep us thoroughly well-informed at the same time that they demand from us such aid as we are able to give. There is also a desire amongst unionists to modify the power of their representatives at congresses and conferences and to make them rather delegates carrying out instructions than representatives who say and do as they choose rather than as those who have sent them there desire. This feeling ought specially to be encouraged, even if it is only that the workers may be induced to gather together more frequently and to discuss their own affairs, instead of leaving them in the hands of a few individuals.

This sort of work may seem very prosaic and insignificant to some of our comrades, but it is work that has to be done, of that there can be no doubt. By helping to convert the trade unionists to Anarchy you will be laying the foundations of the new society and preparing for the impending struggle

This sort of work may seem very prosaic and insignificant to some of our comrades, but it is work that has to be done, of that there can be no doubt. By helping to convert the trade unionists to Anarchy you will be laying the foundations of the new society and preparing for the impending struggle. When once the trade unionists get hold of the Anarchist ideal and enlarge their unions so as to include all the workers, agricultural, industrial and clerical, and there is no longer any excuse for a man being outside the guild of his calling, the differences between the workers and the exploiters will be forced to a head, the landlords and capitalists will be compelled to stand aside and let the workers have free access to the materials and tools which are necessary to their living happy lives. Then doubtless will come a struggle, but it will be one in which the force and the victory will be on the side of the workers.

The Wild Beasts of Society

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Communism, May 1892

In consequence of the recent events in Paris, Madrid, Xeres, Vienna and elsewhere – not to speak of the Walsall affair – the literary serfs of capitalism have been piling on the agony in their lucubrations in the daily and weekly press. Anarchism, according to these worthies, is a sort of organised murder and robbery, and its advocates are the vilest creatures that ever breathed the breath of life. "The confession of Ravachol" says one paper, "shows what Anarchy is when carried to its legitimate conclusions, and we see that Anarchists are not only public enemies but that in pursuit of their objects, theft and murder are regarded by them as justifiable. Anarchists are, indeed, the wild beasts of society, and as they war against society, so society in self defence must carry on a war of extermination against them." The object of this sort of stuff is of course to prejudice the minds of the masses and to prevent enquiry into our principles and, as far as possible, their dissemination. That it may have some such effect is probable, for the defenders of the existing society have been, and are, by no means slow to take advantage of their opportunities, and not content with recording the actual acts of desperate men calling themselves Anarchists, they term almost every one who revolts against their tyranny an Anarchist although he may have no knowledge whatever of Anarchist principles and not cure in the least as to the future of society so long as he himself gets along all right. Moreover, whenever they can they father any act of violence or robbery which takes place upon the Anarchists, and back up their lying statements by screeds of vituperation, so that many a poor plundered and ignorant worker who detests the present state of things as heartily as anybody, would turn pale if you told him you were yourself an Anarchist. Acts of violence, such as the blowing up of individuals or buildings by dynamite, robbery and forgery, have no more to do with Anarchy than they have with Liberalism, Conservatism or Christianity. Because a member of Parliament appropriates trust money, or keeps a mistress, or uses a Frenchwoman as a tool with which to seduce a respectable English girl, or flies the country to avoid trial for an unnatural offence, is the dignity of M.P. to be considered a sign of dishonour and are embezzlement, adultery, etc., to be considered a part of the Liberal and Conservative political faith? Perhaps some "right honourable gentleman" will supply us with the information. Almost every week we notice one or more cases in the paper of indecency or theft charged against a clergyman. Are these black sheep to be held as representative of the whole flock? Oh, dear no! we shall he told, certainly not! But a Ravachol is to be considered a typical Anarchist!

Almost every week we notice one or more cases in the paper of indecency or theft charged against a clergyman. Are these black sheep to be held as representative of the whole flock? Oh, dear no! we shall he told, certainly not! But a Ravachol is to be considered a typical Anarchist!

As a matter of fact, amongst those calling themselves Anarchists – and there are many varieties, Communists, Collectivists, Individualists, Peaceful or Quaker Anarchists, and those of the Revolutionary type – there is a far higher standard of morality, even according to conventional ideas than amongst any other section of the community. When an Anarchist is arrested for some political offence, the first thing the prosecution does is to inquire about his character – and what do they find? Take the case of the Chicago men- all with records pure as snow. Kindly, honest, upright citizens, whose only crime was loving their fellow-men. Take the case of the Walsall men, their employers came forward to speak of them as good and steady workmen, and in two cases at least supporting their aged parents. The mere fact of a murderer like Ravachol adopting Anarchy as his political faith proves only one thing that the criminal classes, the "wild beasts" manufactured by our present system of society, are beginning to realise how it is that they are made what they are, that it is because of present inequalities, because of their evil surroundings created by the capitalist and the landlord that they have been made thieves and murderers; they recognise the truth of what Anarchists are saying, and they, too, are endeavouring, according to their own ideas, to do their part towards pulling down the old and building up the

new society. “Wild beasts,” they may be, but capitalist society has made them what they are, and instead of taking matters quietly they are beginning to turn and rend. The French Revolution of a century ago struck its first great blow in destroying a prison, it would seem that the Parisian rebels wish to commence the coming upheaval by making life unsafe for judges. No doubt it is a very unpleasant thing for a judge to be unable to get lodgings and for him to be a source of terror to his neighbours, shunned as though he had the plague, but he can hardly expect to have all the fun on his own side. It is a simple matter to sit in an easy chair and send men off to penal servitude for a number of years, or to death, as the case may be, at the same time reading them a lecture on the enormity of their crimes, which after all would never have been committed if society had not made them what they are. But it is not to be wondered at that the “wild beast” should seek to have revenge for the vindictive sentences passed upon him, and claim an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. “Do as yon would he done by,” said the revolutionary Anarchist of Nazareth, who laid the foundation of the Christian religion. But the learned magistrates and judges do not seem to have come across that command of the one whom they profess to obey. “Let ‘em have it hot” is their motto and “hot” it is accordingly. Some of the Parisian revolutionists seem desirous of drawing the attention of these worthy dispensers of heavy sentences to the divine command in a rather forcible manner. We pity the neighbours, but we think the tribe of Jeffries can hardly be surprised 3t their recent experiences.

But Anarchism has nothing to do with all this. Anarchism is, and always will be, whatever may be said of it and whoever may claim to be Anarchists, the No Government theory of Socialism; the doctrine which teaches that people can only be truly happy and prosperous when tyrannical authority is abolished and freedom and comradeship prevail. That is what all Anarchists teach now and always have taught. There will no doubt be many differences of opinion as to the best methods of realising it. Even now the several schools of Anarchist thought are continually arguing the question. For our part we do not believe much can be done unless public opinion is with us and we are doing what we can to bring around the great masses to our side. Whether a struggle will come then is a question for them and not for us to decide. But those Anarchists who suffer most from the whip of want, the tyranny of government, and whose patience is under such circumstances naturally exhausted, are not content to wait for the conversion of the masses. They want to act at once and their desperate condition makes them care little what they do. These are the men the capitalist press talks of exterminating. Well it seems to us a big job, especially as their ranks are being continually recruited by fresh victims of the tyranny of capitalism and government. The only way we see of exterminating the “wild beasts of society” is by removing the conditions which create them. Make life only bearable to the worker, and he is such a patient dull animal that he will submit to be governed for many a long year yet and the advent of Anarchy will be put off for a considerable time. It is because the exploiters have no pity, no humanity, because their greed is insatiable, that the “wild beasts” increase and multiply, and it appears as though the Social Revolution, which we would fain see brought about as the result of a peaceful understanding between the whole of humanity, will be inaugurated by wholesale massacre, by relentless cruelty. Surely the French Revolution. when the masses repaid the cruelty of the classes by acquiescing for a while in the bloody Jacobin Reign of Terror, should teach our present rulers that as they sow so they will reap. Surely the massacre of Saint Bartholomew should show them that a belief is not to be exterminated by any amount of bloodshed. Twenty-two years ago thirty thousand communards were murdered in the streets of Paris, and what is the result? That the Paris revolutionist of today has no pity and expects no mercy. You cannot crush out an opinion in blood, but you can make its upholders more determined, more relentless and more revengeful. If tyranny could do aught surely Russia’s Czar could exterminate his “wild beasts” the Nihilists, but the autocrat of all the Russias knows that he is surrounded by a host of enemies and is in constant fear of meeting his father’s doom.

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All the talk of extermination and of international leagues of the governments will only make the "wild beasts" more determined and turn what are today open associations into secret societies. And after all what is a mere name. Our enemies are more responsible than we for the word Anarchist. It is applied to us as a term of reproach; we accept it and make it a term of honour. If the governments seek to bling the word into disuse by rendering it impossible for any man to claim it as descriptive of his opinions, what of that? The word may perhaps be suppressed, but the idea itself is insuppressible. As a matter of fact it is impossible for society to go on much longer on the present lines. If the rich would only themselves begin to study the social problem and read some of the many books which are now issuing from the press dealing with it in its different phases, they would marvel at society having lasted so long and, wondering at the patience of the poor, would regard the "outrages" which have taken place as nothing to be surprised at. We are living on the eve of great events. An Economic and Moral Revolution, whose far-reaching consequences no man can foresee, is in the making. What utter madness it is for anyone to attempt to stop it. Anarchist-Communism is simply the embodiment of all the great aspirations of civilised mankind. Anarchy, which is only another word for Freedom carried to its logical conclusion, is the solution of the enigma which modern civilisation must solve or perish; Communism is but the Brotherhood and Solidarity of Man spelt in another way. Anarchist-Communism is not the theory of a few dreamers, which would die with them. It is the verbal expression of the people's actual needs, and sooner or later it is bound to be realised whatever change of name it may undergo. If the powers that be drive it underground they may make the struggle more cruel and bitter but they cannot avert it.

Choice Samples from the Authoritarian Press

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Communism, June 1892

The public have heard a good deal lately about the violence of Anarchists in speech and writing, and the desirability that social reformers should put forward their views in temperate and humane language. Well and good; but example goes further than precept. Here are a few typical samples of the style in which the accredited organs of middle class respectability speak of those among their fellow mortals who, conscientiously believing that government and private property are evils, agitate against these particular methods in human co-operation.

The "Times." Leading articles, April 5, 7, 25, 28: Anarchism is a ''crude and monstrous creed." "Most of them (Anarchists) use it as a mere cloak under which to sate the vilest passions that till the human heart. Hate, envy, lust of plunder, lust of blood,.... inordinate vanity and overwhelming love of power." We Anarchists are "audacious miscreants," "common criminals banded together to commit a crime." "That robbery, arson and murder are acts, not only innocent, but virtuous when perpetrated with the design of benefiting humanity sounds marvellously comfortable to those who have a natural propensity to commit them. Accordingly such person flock to the Anarchist standard." We are therefore "a fraction of the criminal classes," having "no capacity for the steady and sustained pursuit of a common object, saturated with a distrust of each other as profound as it is just." We are "enemies of the human race," "desperadoes," "as reckless, unscrupulous and ignorant of the real events of things as was Marat," "an insignificant gang of criminals or madmen," "persons of low intellectual organisation," "scoundrels" of "immeasurable inferiority in all physical and moral qualities." There may be among us "a sprinkling of more choice spirits, who are looking forward to some hare brained scheme of political reform"; nevertheless, our propaganda is "anti-social," and consists in "idiotic ravings," "imbecile folly," "the production and distribution of murderous literature." Soon the hunt against the 'wolves' will begin, and it will be earned on with all the 'resources of civilisation.'"

The minor London dailies follow suit.

The "Daily Telegraph" of May 7th:

> "It is quite logical that an Anarchist, who desires to see all society and government destroyed, should demand for himself the licence of savagery; but civilisation has a perfect right to recognise him as its bitterest foe and to use all its resources for his punishment. The prisoner Nicoll, however, not only claims what his anarchical theory involves, but when he finds himself confronted by outraged society he shifts his ground and whines for the liberty which he has forfeited – the liberty of the citizen, in which the Anarchist can have no share."

The "Standard" of April 22nd:

> "In Chicago the Anarchists are preparing to take advantage of the occasion to stimulate bitter feeling and class hatred. It will not be the fault of these reckless fanatics if the day closes without a disturbance that might possibly end

in bloodshed. In language of the most incendiary character, they call upon the workmen to 'rise en mass' and protect against the oppression of the police; and they recall, as they have done so often, the memory of the local 'martyrs' – meaning the ruffians who threw dynamite cartridges among a crowd, and were most righteously hanged for the massacre that followed."

The "Daily Chronicle" of April 11th:

> "What is anarchy but individualism run mad, when it is not made a pretext for savage rapine or wanton blackguardism."

A correspondent of the "St. James's Gazette":

> "What a pleasure it would be to mete out to dynamitards the measure that they deal to us. We might take a dozen or a score and confine them in some disused building, with plenty of food and drink to relieve the tedium of manacles. They would be informed that at some hour not fixed, on a day not yet arranged, an explosion would occur in the building they were occupying. To fill up what might be otherwise an uneventful interval, a few select members of the company might have small canisters attached to them, with ominous clock-work tickings – some charged with combustion and others empty. But which were which, that would be a secret for the dynamitards to discover by experience."
>
> (In fiendish ingenuity of revengeful torment surely this beats the "Feast at the Opera" horror.)

We might fill a paper twice the size of *Freedom* with such quotations; but these are amply sufficient to show of what spirit are the hired apologists of middle-class rule, and the hypocrisy of the contention that when Anarchists are prosecuted it is not for their opinions, but merely their violence of expression.

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Now we had as soon answer seriously the ravings of the "St. James's Gazette" as the lying insinuations of "Justice," were it not just possible that some ill-informed, but honest Social Democrat may have been misled thereby

There is, however, one more authoritarian organ to whose attack we must allude, because the paper in question professes a sort of Socialism, and strikes at us under an ostentatious affectation of quasi-comradeship.

Justice, "The Organ of the Social Democracy," April 16, writes under the heading "Ravachol, the Anarchist Hero":

> "Whenever we have met Anarchists, and we have met a good many in public and private, they have openly proclaimed that all means are fair against our present society." Here follows a quotation from Bakounine, "whom Anarchists regard as their chief theorist and teacher," to the effect that destruction by all and any means is the sole end of the social revolutionist. "Anarchists denounces organisation." (Where and when have we denounced it?) Ravachol has successfully proclaimed the principles laid down by Bakounine and the "Révolte" (When did the "Révolte" advocate robbery and murder?), but is now 'repudiated' by the Anarchists, who had better therefore 'publicly' confess that they have given up their theories."

No Anarchists having been drawn by this farrago of misrepresentations and lies, "Justice", of April 30, proceeds to name individually several Anarchists, including Mr. Tucker of Boston, for whom it feels "something" akin to contempt in that all "Anarchist. theories of necessity lead to terrorism," and the Anarchists, "while denouncing discipline, deriding elected authority, and upholding the absolute supremacy of the individual – which is the creed of the most complete individual selfishness – at the same time repudiate those who put their theories into practice."

Finally, Comrade Burnie having written to "Justice" for May 7, explaining his position, the Editor takes the opportunity to repeat in a footnote the names of various Anarchists, English and foreign, now in England, and to state that he has "heard 'propaganda by deed' vehemently defended by the best known Anarchists in Europe." the context clearly implying that deeds à la Ravachol is meant. [Is our comrade the Editor of

"Justice" afraid that Inspector Melville may forget to lock some of us up?]

Now we had as soon answer seriously the ravings of the "St. James's Gazette" as the lying insinuations of "Justice," were it not just possible that some ill-informed, but honest Social Democrat may have been misled thereby. To avoid this we briefly note and expose the most glaring misstatements.

In the first place, we absolutely deny that we or, as far as we are acquainted with their opinions, any of the Anarchists named, believe or have ever published or privately stated that "ALL means are fair against our present infamous society." We doubt if there be an English Anarchist group who would make such a statement. The most headlong and fiery would at all events draw the line at Parliamentary action; and the greater number would oppose inhumane or underhand methods in offensive tactics as contrary to the very essence of Anarchism.

we deny that the pretended quotation from Bakounine is in any sense a fair expression of his views as recorded in his public writings…

Secondly, we deny that the pretended quotation from Bakounine is in any sense a fair expression of his views as recorded in his public writings. It purports to be taken from "The Revolutionary Catechism." This, it appears, is a Russian manuscript written in cipher and, as far as we are able to learn, never published! It was read by the police at Netchaieff's trial, in 1871, as being Bakounine's, though most probably it was one of Netchaieff's many forgeries in Bakounine's name. Certainly it holds much the same relation to Bakounine's authentic expressions of his views as the "Feast at the Opera" to the opinions of the rational and bona fide Anarchists of today as set forth in their recognised organs. And this obscure and questionable document, which none of us have seen, and most of us never heard of, is quoted by "Justice" as a sort of text book of Anarchist theory!

Thirdly, we deny that Bakounine, greatly as we honour the man and admire his work, is our "chief thinker and theorist." Anarchism has developed and expressed itself more fully in many directions since his time, and it would be misleading to take a phrase or two even from his acknowledged writings as an adequate summary of the views of living Anarchists. The Anarchists named by "Justice" are most of them public speakers and writers. Why are their own words not quoted as expressing their views?

Fourth. When, where and how has "Justice" found the public organs of the Anarchists mentioned "denouncing" and "repudiating" Ravachol, or any sincere man who rebels against the present, social disorder and oppression? They may think certain actions regrettable or ill advised, but when have they denounced any man who was driven to rebel even ill-advisedly against the social wrongs of today? We keep our denunciations for the cowards who lie down under oppression, the indifferent who pass by on the other side saying "am I my brother's keeper?" the exploiters and tyrants, who grind the faces of the poor, and those miserable apologists who, with tongue and pen, play into the hands of the oppressors of mankind.

Traitors to the Cause!

(From a Correspondent well acquainted with the Belgian labour movement)

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Communism, May 1893

A few days ago Belgium was on the verge of a social revolution. Hundreds of thousands of workmen had struck work; conflicts had taken place in several localities between the strikers and the troops; in one or two cases the soldiers had joined the workmen, and the situation was so alarming that already the government was discussing the military intervention of Germany and England.

It is true this movement aimed apparently at nothing better than universal suffrage. But it matters little what the OCCASION is on which a revolution is started. All revolutions have had the humblest origins. There are different phases in a revolutionary movement: the flood rises by degrees. And it would be a mistake to expect that the Social Revolution must of necessity begin by a revolt with the definite object of establishing Socialism. Besides, what the Belgian workers understand by universal suffrage is difficult to define. Like the English workers in 1832, they have been given to believe that an extension of the suffrage means a better state of things altogether: more freedom, better food, a more human existence, and

the end of all human injustices and the exploitation to which they are at present subject.

In time of peace it is our duty to point out to them that they are mistaken; but in time of action we Anarchist Socialists must never forget that, after all the misunderstanding as to the real meaning of words, the aspirations of the proletariat are at bottom the same as ours.

The situation in Belgium may be summed up in two sentences: the Social Democrats have played a farce – the very same farce they played in May 1890. And the Anarchists· have kept aloof (with a few exceptions) from the movement, or have failed in the part they were called upon to take.

In 1890 the miners went on strike and called upon the leaders of the Social Democratic party to keep an old promise and proclaim a general strike. The labour party leaders promised them that, if the revision of the Constitution was not decided upon by the Chamber on a certain day, and universal suffrage agreed upon, the general strike should be proclaimed.

The day came, the Chamber had done nothing. The Social Democratic leaders were forced to issue a manifesto calling for a general strike. But at the end of a few days the said leaders took advantage of the fact that a committee of the Chamber had nominated one of its members to report on the question of the revision of the Constitution, and at once issued a counter-manifesto inviting the men to resume work. The result was that the report was not presented for months, the whole subject remained in abeyance, and after three years the only way to urge matters on a little seemed to be another general strike.

This time again the people have been diddled by their leaders, who have played into the hands of the middle classes by accepting as. a victory the plural vote, which the Chamber has enacted. For those who honestly believe in universal suffrage as a panacea, this plural vote is a sham, and worse than a sham – an outrage-on the working man. By giving to professional men and property owners three votes against the workman's one, it emphasises the worker's condition of inferiority, and the domination of the classes over the masses of the people. Practically the system will result in the triumph of the Catholic party at the next elections.

And what have the Anarchists done? Where were they? If they had lost their influence with the people by, for some time past, HOLDING ALOOF FROM THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

Yet the Social-Democratic leaders. have shouted "Victory" over this miserable fiasco, and have induced the workmen to resume work without taking advantage of the situation to obtain a single social reform.

And what have the Anarchists done? Where were they? If they had lost their influence with the people by, for some time past, HOLDING ALOOF FROM THE LABOUR MOVEMENT. They played their part beforehand in so far as the denunciation of universal suffrage goes; but when the moment came to act, not to discuss; when there was the opportunity to fight; when tens of thousands of people were assembled together, and only thirty gendarmes confronted them; when the people saw some of their ranks fall under the balls of the soldiers, no one was there to turn the uprising into a revolution!

The Zurich Anarchist Conference

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Communism, October 1893

The Conference held by; the Anarchist and Independent Socialists expelled from the Marxist Congress was attended by Congress delegates of almost all nationalities, and by its harmony and earnestness contrasted favourably with the other assembly. The meetings were held in the Plattenhaus, in the evening, August 10-13. The first question discussed was whether Anarchist and Revolutionary Socialists could work together, and after aa animated debate, in which Werner, and Landauer (Berlin), Gumplowitz and Kähne (Zurich), Watts and Cleeves (S.D.F.), Mowbray and Roland (London Anarchists), Gilles (W.C.P.S. London), Nieuwenhuis and Cornelisson (Holland), Mada.me Collard (Paris) and others took part, it was unanimously agreed that all who agree that the workers must strive to abolish the capitalist system by all means, legal and illegal, peaceful and violent, can work together to that end. Nieuwenhuis, in his speech, commented on the folly of the official Social Democratic party, in withdrawing its hand from the left, while almost always ready to hold it out to the right.

The second subject on the agenda was May Day. The proletariat all over Europe, said Kähne (Zurich}, have taken up the proposal of the Paris Marxist Congress of 1889 in an actively revolutionary sense its authors little anticipated, and now for the last two years the official Social Democratic party in Germany have been doing all they can to check the revolutionary action of the masses. The First of May rightly understood, said Molinari (Italy), should be the beginning of a general strike.

The Conference next passed on to consider the labour movement, especially with reference to the general strike. The strike of the future, said Landauer (Berlin), will be successful only when the workers come out *resolved not to starve*. Strikes, attempts at labour organisation, partial agitations, all that we call the labour movement today is revolutionary education, and it is our business to rub its lessons in; trade unions are the germs of a Socialist society, and a general strike would begin a social revolution. Gumplowitz (Zurich), though agreeing with the above, would lay more stress on co-operative societies, such as now exist in Belgium. They render capitalist employers ·superfluous while strikes, even partial ones; are eliminating the small fry of capitalism. When self-employing co-operative societies, trade societies and such like voluntary workmen's organisations have brought the greater part of economic power into the hands of the workers, then will be the time for the general strike. – Most of the meeting agreed with Landauer's point of view.

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On the War question Nieuwenhuis brought forward his proposal for a general strike of all privates and workers connected with the army and transport service on a declaration of war, which was rejected by the jingo and political element at the other Congress. The Anarchist Conference agreed to heartily.

Landauer next proposed a resolution against the use of parliamentary action. as a means even of propaganda, on account of its corrupting influence. – Most of the meeting agreed with him, but seven revolutionary Socialists preferred a resolution by Gilles, which, while advocating the destruction of parliament as a mere bourgeois instrument of oppression, "antagonistic by its whole nature to the Socialist idea of freedom," left, while it does exist, its use as a means of exposing present evils to be decided by circumstances.

Finally, the following was unanimously adopted: "To rouse-the revolutionary spirit in the labour· organisations and actions of the proletariat; to develop as much as possible the independence of the individual; to point out to the workers the uselessness of parliamentary polities – this is·what we understand by revolutionary propaganda." Thus closed the Zurich Independent Congress. It received telegrams and messages of sympathy from the French delegation of the other Congress, from the Anarchists and revolutionary Socialists of Vienna, Frankfort, Höchst, a group Communard exiles at Geneva, etc.

A crowded meeting of protest against the outrageous expulsion from the orthodox congress was held on the 8th August in Zurich; like meetings took place in Berlin, Vienna, Prague, Paris, etc.

There were few native anarchists in America, while the movement in England supported several weekly and monthly publications. One of them was *Freedom,* among whose contributors and co-workers were some very brilliant and talented people, including Peter Kropotkin, John Turner, Alfred Marsh, William Wess, and others…

– Emma Goldman, *Living My Life*

The Revolt of Labour

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Communism, May 1894

Millions of workers of all trades and nationalities are coming together the afternoon of the First of May, in all the industrial centres of Europe and America, to assert their strength, their solidarity, their firm decision to throw off the yoke of Capital, before the face of Capital itself and of its true and vile servants – the Governments.

Hope grows in the hearts of the oppressed at the sight of their combined forces – the hope of seeing, at last, the day when Freedom and Equality will no longer be vain words, used to conceal from the workers the fact that they are slaves.

But whence does this great movement come? How has it grown? What is its real meaning? What does it promise us in the future?

It was born in the very hearts of the working classes themselves. Notwithstanding the efforts of politicians to keep it within the smooth channels of legality, it continually bursts these artificial walls and becomes an open revolt against the oppressors. And, from revolt to revolt, it marches, not towards a mere improvement in the method of capitalist exploitation, but towards the overthrow of the whole system of the enrichment of the few by the misery, starvation and slavery of the many.

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The Socialist propaganda which has been carried on for the last twenty years all over the world, has not been in vain. The Socialist idea has made its way. The impossibility of continuing under the present capitalist mismanagement of industry and trade has become more and more evident to the workers' minds. They have begun to understand and to assert their right to all the wealth which their fathers have produced and they themselves are producing with their own hands. They are beginning to realis~ that what exists now will not last forever; that they MUST and CAN break the chains rivetted on them by the past and go forwards towards a new era of Freedom, Equality and Mutual Support; that upon their own energies and self-reliance depends their liberation, nay, the very future of civilisation.

While politicians have been endeavouring to reduce the Labour movement and Socialism itself to the narrowest possible limits, a wider conception of what they owe to themselves has grown up among the labouring classes.

A new idea has taken possession of their minds:

"To begin a war against Capital on a grand scale – not in Parliament but in the very stronghold of capitalism, the workshop, the mine, the manufactory;

"To make this struggle more resolute than labour wars have ever been before; and to resist Capital by force, whenever it appeals to force;

"To fight to the death against those workers who would betray their own cause and give support to the oppressors;

"To make strikes into a formidable weapon; to render them general, national and international, in order to hit the present system hard, and force its supporters to capitulate by an unceasing war;

"And to prepare for these great struggles and awake solidarity and self-reliance among the workers by means of great demonstrations on the First of May, a holiday taken for themselves by the workers of the world."

This idea was not born in one single head. This plan of campaign has been slowly elaborated by the workers themselves, beside the blast furnace, in the depths of the mine, amid the rattling of the engine and the loom.

It was proclaimed for the first time at Chicago on the First of May, 1886, when a general strike was planned for that date, and it is only fair to recognise that the first Anarchist victims who expiated their hatred of Capitalist oppression on the scaffold fell for having attempted to give to that strike a vigour and

seriousness which would have dealt a decided blow at Capitalism.

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The awakening of the masses which was shown by the first May day demonstration in Europe, five years ago, filled the middle c asses with terror. Everyone remembers how eagerly telegrams were expected on that day in middle-class clubs, and what was their relief on learning that the terrible movement had passed without the Social Revolution being proclaimed in any city of Europe.

To crush the movement in blood was simply impossible: it would have meant the massacre of women and children in the streets, and the rousing in the workers' hearts of a hatred which no later concessions could eradicate. The middle classes had simply to accept it and to try to divert it into safer channels.

And every means has been tried to divest the movement of its original character: to prevent it from being a holiday taken by the workers, not conceded by the Capitalists, a one day's general strike; to limit the demands of the workers to an eight hours' labour day; and, finally, to deprive the movement of its very. meaning of open war against capitalist rule by making it a simple demonstration in favour of labour legislation.

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Thus the original meaning of the First of May demonstration has been lost.

But the Labour Movement has not lost its meaning. A revolt of Labour it was at the outset; a revolt of labour it still remains.

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The two years, 1892 and 1893, have been an uninterrupted succession of Labour revolts.

In 1892 there were the Unemployed riots in Berlin, Hanover, Leipzig Vienna etc.; starving masses marching to the palaces and loudly claiming the work which society denied them while it sent them lead instead of bread.

Then came the great strikes of the dock-labourers in Australia, the coal-porters in London, the ship-builders in the North, and those terrible strikes of the miners in Durham and the weavers in Yorkshire, during which so many producers of the immense wealth of this country had to live through a famine almost as bad as the famine among the subjects of the Russian Tzar.

The summer brought with it the labour revolts at the Carnegie works in America, during which the exasperated workers burned and destroyed, and killed Pinkerton hirelings who, a few weeks before, had shot down the Tennessee miners.

All these outbreaks in the course of one single year! How different it was from the "good old times," when the workers died from. Starvation during their strikes and silently buried their children and wives, without ever making the world speak of their sufferings by any daring deed of revolt.

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On the approach of the First of May, 1893, Belgium was ablaze: Miners, weavers, iron workers left their treadmills, loudly proclaiming the general strike and the end of capitalist rule. The threatened insurrection was quenched in bloodshed and a rain of arrests, after politicians had succeeded in substituting a miserable political program, never carried out to this day, for the grand aims which animated the workers at the outset.

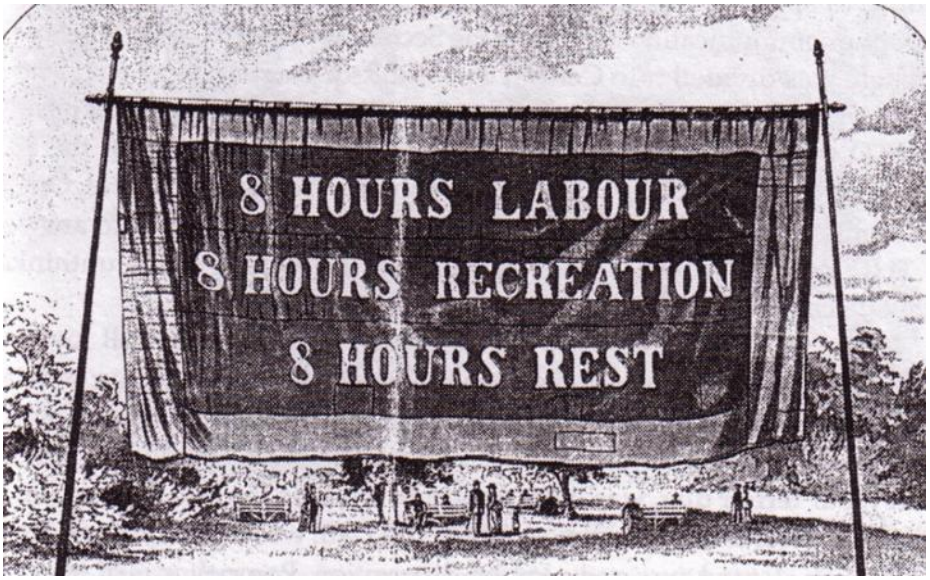
All the summer through the rebellion of labour never ceased, and everywhere it assumed an unexpectedly serious character.

The strike at Hull was not a simple "War with folded hands". At Paris a mere students' riot became the signal for a serious labour struggle, and on both occasions a general strike of all workers in every trade was on all men's lips.

A month later, in August, a wave of labour revolts swept over Europe. From Bohemia, where it assumed a most serious character; it spread to Vienna, and thence to Italy, where a mere cab-drivers' strike resulted in a popular insurrection during which palaces were looted, food freely taken by the people from the shops, and bourgeois "ORDER," only restored by grapeshot; while on August 30th., a sudden rising of the Unemployed nearly swept away the buildings of the World's Fair in a terrible conflagration.

Then came the great strike and labour riots in Wales and Yorkshire, during which England saw half a million of people reduced to absolute starvation, simply that the coal-owners' association might sell stocks of worthless coal at high prices. One of the worst crimes ever committed by Capital throughout its bloody history of crime.

By the end of the year, Sicily was in revolt; the peasant masses, organised into labour unions, rising in arms to re-take possession of the land, and to get rid of the unbearable oppression of the landlords. These Sicilian riots were accompanied by an outbreak at Massa Carrara, and followed, during the present year, by serious agrarian disturbances in Hungary, strikes in Poland and Austria, and an attempt on the part of the starving Spanish peasants to possess themselves of the soil upon which the landlords refuse to allow them to work.



And now, while the mining districts of the United States are convulsed by a tremendous strike, the labour war is taking a quite new departure. Armies of Unemployed a:re marching in columns through the American Continent, towards the capital where the rich are enjoying the fruits of spoliation under the protection of the bayonets of the States.

But these partial revolts are merely the forerunners of the great upheaval to come.

How many more labour wars, surpassing all previous ones in extent, in determination and in bitterness are now preparing under the surface, not to mention the continual recurrence of individual acts of revolt, the bitter outcry of the downtrodden, outraged humanity of the individual, who, whether alone or followed by the crowd, whether blessed or cursed by it, is driven to revolt single-handed against a society based upon the cruellest injustice.

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Such is the great movement which is now going on in the civilised world. No false promises, no political intrigues, no corruption, no threats can stop it. Every day it spreads, every day, springs higher in the masses the hope of final liberation.

The only fatal enemy of such a movement is the want of self-reliance among the workers themselves, their childish confidence in those who have hitherto so shamelessly starved and misruled them, in those who now are ready to come forward with promises which no man can keep.

The strength of the labour movement has hitherto been not in the political or socialist parties riding upon its giant waves, like the fly upon the coach wheel, but in the growing desire of the masses themselves to be rid of present conditions, in the increasing Solidarity among all those who produce wealth by the work of their ·own hands, in the spirit of revolt which is so manifest in all the labour wars of the last few years.

By this spirit, not by any political trickeries the workers will win the day. This is their only, their invincible force.

When the millions who come together on the first of May shall shout with one accord that they have decided, on the morrow, not to stay in the workshop after eight hours' work there, and are determined to take their five o'clock tea at home – the eight hours' day will be an accomplished fact, whether it has or has not the benediction of parliaments and kings.

The will of the workers will be law.

And when they assert that they consider that all the production of the country and all its exchanges ought to be managed by the producers themselves, in the interests of the whole nation, and not of the few only – their will again will be law, whether liked or not by those who too long have feasted upon the misery and the degradation of the poor.

Workers. know your strength. Stand firm by the grand idea and Victory will be yours!

London, May-Day, 1894.

A Lesson to Socialists

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Communism, August 1895

Disaster has overtaken the Liberals; their majority has disappeared; their administration has been condemned by the merciless vote of the electors. The different sections of the party are occupied in picking holes in each other; but for us their dissensions have little interest. What we care to do is to make clear to ourselves the causes which have contributed to the fall of this progressive and reforming government.

How comes it that what legalist Socialists call "the national opinion" should reject a government whose measures were such as the Home Rule Bill, Eight Hours Bill, Parish Councils Act, Factory and Workshops Bill, and many projects of a kindred nature, to say nothing of the "Democratic Budget" of 1894? And for whose benefit? For the benefit of a coalition of the upholders of the divine and hereditary legislative rights of the House of Lords, of coercion in Ireland, the hoodwinking of the people by clerical instruction, and their degradation by the enlarged privileges of capitalism and exploitation!

It will not be the fine talkers of the Social Democratic Federation, the Fabian Society, the Independent Labour Party, who will decree Communism or Collectivism, but the people themselves, who will organise upon their own initiative self-governing, producing, and consuming associations

Certainly, from our point of view, all these Liberal measures were but superficial palliatives. As Anarchists and Communists, it is not what is generally called "Home Rule" that we desire, but the complete self-government of every Irishman in an equal and Communistic Society. It is no eight hours of slavish labour that we desire for the toiler, but the right of each to work at his own pleasure and for himself, his family, his friends, his neighbours; for a free, united, and Communistic mankind: From our point of view, the Liberal measures were means whereby the people might have been turned out of the direct road towards social and economic freedom. Burt it must, in justice, be recognised that the Liberal government was putting in practice what the Social Democrats of all Europe are preaching to the people as "Socialistic reforms." More than that: the English Liberals, with their Home Rule and federalist ideas, are in advance of the representatives of "Scientific Socialism," who declare themselves for an absolutely centralised State (Liebknecht and the "Communist Manifesto" of 1848) – for a State where the minority will be forced to submit or to leave their country; where the worker will have less liberty of choice in his work than in our days of capitalist exploitation (Kautsky, "Erfurt programme"); where rebels will be deprived of daily bread (Bebel); where, in a word, the minority will be treated as they were at the Zurich Congress of 1893. Yes, the English Liberals have gone ahead of the Social Democrats.

And yet this Liberal government has experienced an overwhelming defeat at the elections. Are the people disgusted with it, or are there other causes for its condemnation?

It seems as if the successors and former colleagues of Mr. Gladstone have threatened too many vested interests at once, too many stupid prejudices of jingoism, landlordism, clericalism, too many ancient rights, to the degradation and exploitation of the masses, as enjoyed by brewers, spirit distillers, and publicans. They did not realise that they were not strong enough to resist a coalition of privilege-mongers and monopolists, of clericalism and ignorance. An all-powerful coalition indeed! since it is the landlords, capitalists and plutocrats, the clergy of all denominations, and the church by law established, who are in possession, the masters of the nation. Such a coalition could be resisted only by the people united in a general strike, by an armed revolutionary movement. To go forth against it with voting papers while it is supreme is as silly as the faith of legalist Socialists in their parliamentary majority declaring for a collectivist "social liquidation."

Let the partisans of legalism and parliamentary action ponder the fate of the Liberal party. Perhaps they will at length perceive that, in a conflict of interests, triumph lies with those in possession, and that the first acts of social emancipation must be to dispossess the possessors, and to destroy and abolish the State organisation, which protects the privileges of the exploiters and puts at their disposal all these

formidable means of hoodwinking, degrading, and exploiting the people, The Liberals, now so disgracefully beaten, had not only a majority, but the reins of government in their hands. Amongst them were men of great political capacity, great administrative experience, men of European popularity. But scarcely had they touched, or shown a disposition to touch vested interests and privileges, than they were thrown to the ground. Is it likely that at some future tithe – perhaps half a century hence – a Social Democratic majority, and its vote for a social liquidation, will fare better than the Liberal government of today'? To believe that it will is to be very simple-minded.

As long as the rich and the exploiters of labour are left in absolute possession of their wealth, as long as the people are taught that legal methods and electoral agitation can do everything,- and that the economic struggle is useless, the autonomous organisation of social production and consumption is an idle dream; as long, in fact, as the Communist-Anarchist's idea, with its conception of the revolutionary initiative of groups and self-governing federations of producers, is denounced as "unscientific" and dangerous; as long as this is the case, we may predict, without exaggeration, that the measures of the future Social-Democratic Labour Party, and other such legislators, must inevitably meet with as striking a defeat as those of the Liberals: The people can only force the rich, the rulers, to yield to demands when it actually revolts. It was not Marat and Robespierre who made revolutionary changes by their decrees; it was the direct action of the-revolted country places which, as the Abbe Gregoire puts it, had each its own Marats and Robespierres.

And in the coming social struggle it will be the same: It will not be the fine talkers of the Social Democratic Federation, the Fabian Society, the Independent Labour Party, who will decree Communism or Collectivism, but the people themselves, who will organise upon their own initiative self-governing, producing, and consuming associations – i.e., true Anarchist-Communism.

But, to arrive at this, English workmen must stick to their old tactics of economic warfare, their self-organising societies of workers, bravely conducted strikes, bold revolts like those of the earlier part of this century. Electoral parades may be left to the admirers of law and order, government and bureaucracy – whatever they call themselves.

English workers, the German Social Democracy is held up for your admiration. But do you know that in Germany the workmen labour 13, 14, and 16 hours a day for from 2s. to 4s.? Why are they behind you and behind the French? Because, instead of struggling for them-Selves, they vote, and vote only; because they submit to a stupid and centralised discipline; because the initiative of individuals and of groups has been trodden out; because the idea of social revolution is presented to them as an easy affair of rules and laws, to be managed for them by men acting as their special providence, and not by them for themselves. And it is this belated country, the land of huge armies and military discipline and parliamentary votes resultless to the worker, that is set before you as an ideal!

No, let us keep to our own line, the economic struggle; let us try to get ready as soon as possible for a general strike; let us do our utmost to make that strike a triumph, and we shall have no need of electoral contests; *for a victorious general strike is the beginning of a social revolution*

Order – True or False

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Communism, December 1895

Without government, we are told, order would be impossible; and those who believe this statement assert, at any rate by implication, that under Anarchy disorder would necessarily be (if we may apply the expression) the *state quo.* Both these statements are equally absurd. Let us glance round for a moment and see how far actual facts and present conditions tend to verify them.

Formidable social problems are demanding a solution – everybody knows that, from the Prime Minister to the boy in the street, though probably the boy in the street knows how urgent is the necessity for their solution far better than the Prime Minister, who has been born and bred in the principles of " How not to do it."

But these problems in their various forms are constantly before the world – today bewildering a semi-barbarous Sultan, to-morrow disturbing the land of "Triumphant Democracy"; and we all know that the "order" which reigns in Chicago will be maintained with as much ruthlessness by the millionaires and their hirelings as is the "order" which reigns in Turkey.

Now in what does this "order" consist of which kings and governments boast so much, and without which we are assured that social life would be impossible?

One would imagine it to be a matter very vital for the welfare of humanity, since it costs this nation alone tens of millions sterling annually to maintain it. And in the end what does it result in? Simply in the state of things we see around us.

Now-a-days there are very few people who do not know what that means. But, unfortunately, there are still many persons who are ignorant of the real causes of the evils they see around them and, consequently, fall easy victims to the lies and slanders of that interested class in the community who wish things to remain as they are, and denounce as criminals those who seek to bring about a radical change in the basis of society.

The impeachment of the present system with its brazen boasts of "law and order" can be heard on every hand: it is no longer necessary for the Anarchists to devote all their energies to its denunciation. That is being done by others who certainly find no difficulty in laying bare some of the evils which are dead-sea fruit of our present social order. The *Weekly Times & Echo* in a leading article of November 24th, referring to the suicides which are now so numerous, says:

> "Everybody knows there is no insanity about it, but everybody shrinks from the real truth, which is, that so devilish is the struggle for existence in this nineteenth century of Christianity that ninety-nine out of every hundred of us believe solely in the gospel of the weakest to the wall,' whatever other profession we make with our lips. That we are ground daily into things harder than the nether millstone, devoid of pity or compassion. We spare neither ourselves nor others. We exact the pound of flesh from those who serve us with the rigidity of a Shylock, and we pass the stricken victims of competition with the indifference of Attila or Napoleon on the battlefield…. And we all know in our hearts that there is no remedy for it all but a return* to the simpler life that is denied to most of us by the present system. We are parts of a machine that creaks heavily in every wheel, unit's of a total that grows in complex vastness daily. If we are ignoble we strive for the ease and wealth which seem to render the fortunate few secure; if we are not quite case-hardened we endeavour to palliate the misery around us: in the one case we find disappointment and in the other failure. And beneath all our superficially advancing civilisation the graves multiply of the nameless ones who gave it all up in the despair that is the shame and reproach of us who call ourselves men, and yet we let the Devil run the world still for the benefit of his children."

We all know that the exploiters rob the workers of their wealth with one hand and their freedom with the other; and this leads to the most frightful disorder… But, for these things to cease, the injustice which breeds them must cease… we are compelled to seek for true order in… a society which has justice for its basis

All which might be added to tenfold and still be within the truth; for surely no one, knowing our social life in all its details, has yet succeeded in adequately describing half the misery which can be found in any one of the principal cities of this happy kingdom. And this pandemonium with its starving workers, its outcast women, its strikes, its daily list of killed and maimed, its prisons, its workhouses—this ocean of misery with iniquitous financiers floating on the top they call "order"!

Order, indeed! It is Chaos legalised.

Since no honest person can gainsay all this, and since we now understand in what the "order" of the governing and exploiting classes consists, let us consider what might truly be regarded as order by just and reasonable persons. To attain true order we *must* have Freedom; and that freedom must be an actual, an *experienced* fact, so to speak, in our daily life. For this to be so it is necessary for our freedom to be economic as well as political: indeed, we will never really have one without the other. We all know that the exploiters rob the workers of their wealth with one hand and their freedom with the other; and this leads to the most frightful disorder, as we saw in the lock-out of the miners, and as we can see today in the struggle between the engineers and their employers. But, for these things to cease, the injustice which breeds them must cease; and, therefore, if we are in earnest we are compelled to seek for true order in a new form of society a society which has justice for its basis. We shall then see that

we cannot help attacking the present "order" and that, in so doing, far from being impelled by any anti-social motives, we are really actuated by the highest desire to procure for humanity the best possible conditions of existence.

We maintain that the best possible conditions are to be found in Anarchist Communism. – Anarchism, the equal liberty of all; Communism, the best means of supplying our manifold necessities and of aiding the weak and incapable.

From such conditions order, true order, must necessarily follow; not by virtue of any sudden and miraculous change in that complex abstraction which we call "human nature." The Anarchist, if anyone, knows something of the springs of human action, knows how deeply inwoven in the human ego are those latent attributes which result in such multifarious manifestations. He takes man as he finds him, as indeed we all must; but he knows how profoundly man's actions are modified by his surroundings. Free and well-conditioned he needs no government, no police, no legal fiction to control his relations with his fellowman. But starved and kicked and coerced he naturally turns to the brutal pleasures which the present "order" delights to offer him; or, if not, to despair and revenge. The logical outcome is clear: Humanity cannot live by the false order of a rotten society. It needs a complete change, a revolution, to establish an order worthy of the name.

The First of May

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Communism, May 1896

Once more, millions of workers of all nations of the world will come together on that date to loudly protest against the servitude which they are still kept in. Once more, their speakers will denounce those who have taken advantage of the people's misery to take possession for themselves of all that man needs to live upon and to work with. And, once more, the worker, on returning from what is sure to be an imposing demonstration, will ask himself: "How much nearer has the hour of the workers' emancipation from the leeches which devour them been brought by such an imposing gathering? What is to be done next in order to bring that hour nearer to us, so that brighter times may shine before our children and ourselves too?".

One thing is now certain. The May Day demonstrations have created and widely spread among the workers a feeling of common interest and of solidarity, which knows no frontiers, no nations, no creeds, no race. If, on the next First of May, a telegram could be read at the thousands of workers' gatherings which will be held on that day – a telegram announcing that anywhere in the world, in Belgium or in Austria, or in any part of the two Americas, the workers have taken possession of the workshops or the mines, and have sent away the owners of those mines and workshops – that the army has refused to obey its chiefs and to dislodge the workers from what in truth and justice belongs to them, – if such a telegram could be read, a unanimous -cry of victory would escape from the millions of workers' breasts – a cry which would make all those who live by the blood and sweat of the workers tremble. Germans or Poles, Russians or Dutch, French or Americans, whosoever they might be, they would be cheered to the skies – those who should give the signal of the Great War, not the war between land and land, race and race, nation and nation, but the war for the conquest of the land, the docks, the canals and railways, the mines and the factories, the dwelling-houses and the storehouses by the people – by those who live on that land, run those railways, work in those factories, dwell in those houses, and fill those stores with the work of their hands.

While the rulers breed hatreds from nation to nation, while they forge wars, in which they' will build their riches out of the sufferings of the millions; while in every line they write and every utterance they make in public they sow the hatreds out of which future wars may grow – the workers in every nation of the world have gathered round red flag of the May Day and have affirmed their readiness to join hands.

More than anything else, more than even the International Working Men's Association, has the May Day contributed to awaken the feeling of common interests, common slavery and the common enemy among the toiling and labouring classes all over the world.

So much has been achieved. But this is not enough: more remains to be done, and, if it, is not done, all previous efforts will be labour lost.

The idea of a May Day holiday, which would be *taken.* by the workers, *imposed by* the workers upon their masters, was not born among the leaders of Socialist opinion. It was born within, the masses themselves, chiefly among the American, Knights of Labor. Their leading idea was: "Enough of sterile political agitation! Enough of playing into the hands of Capital by aiding it

to maintain the political power which, in. a State, unavoidably belongs to the rich!"

Politics, like creed, divides men: it never unites them. In politics men divide into parties and chapels. They worship, each party its heroes. In every small spot they passionately take up the cause of this or that party leader. Rivalries between leaders became rivalries between the workers. Names, individuals, come forward, and their personalities, their names, overshadow the facts, the conditions, the common, sufferings, the common aims. In politics men are ready to fight for or against a Gladstone or a Cleveland, while their interests are at one when, they face their common enemy – Capitalism – which reduces both of them. to an equal misery. Like Papists and Lutherans, High Church people and Nonconformists, Wesleyans and Methodists, who hate each other more than any other two sets of men, so also Tory and Liberal, Radical and Unionist, and all their countless subdivisions are emblems of discord – so long as they do not combine against the masses; but all the *workers,* those who work with their hands and carry on their shoulders those who do not work with their. hands, have common enemies in the twin brothers – Capital and State – to whatever party or sect they may belong.

The American labourers fully understood this, and therefore they made an appeal to their fellow workers all over the world. to abandon, be it only for one day in the year, all their divisions, and to join hands in one common move against the owners of Land and Capital.

War to them! was their leading idea. And if, they thought, the workers answer the call, the next move will be to declare that war in the shape of the General Strike.

Let the rich see what they can do if, on one given day, we stop work in all the workshops, abandon the railways, cease to load and unload the ships – when we cease to hammer for them, to spin for them, to hew the coal for them, and so on.

Facts have proved since that the idea of an international universal strike has much more in it than was supposed at first. Of course, unanimity of action may not be attained; but it need not be attained either, once some of the vital trades of each country show an approach to unanimity. The Dockers' Strike in London, the railway strikes in America and the Belgian miners' strikes, have shown to the blindest of us what a strike sufficiently widespread brings with it: it paralyses all industries; it renders the cessation of work a necessity; it spreads and becomes general.

All attempts at diverting that great and imposing economical, international movement into the shallow waters of national and narrow party politics must be resisted by the workers

This was the primary aim of the May Day movement, and this it must remain. All attempts at diverting that great and imposing economical, international movement into the shallow waters of national and narrow party politics must be resisted by the workers. We have enough of political party demonstrations, meetings and gatherings. Let one day, at least – the Workers' Day – remain free from party drudgery. Let one day, at least, remain an emphatic affirmation – not of this or that tactic in politics, but *of the workers' common interests and common aspirations,* to whatever party, nation, race, or creed they may belong. Not of what divides, but of what unites them.

And if every worker on leaving this day's demonstration, should fully understand the importance of a direct contest between Capital and Labour – not before the voting urn, but in the workshop, the mine, the dock itself – not for electing a ruler in Parliament, but for knowing *who will henceforward rule in the workshop and the mine itself – the capital-grabber or the worker* – then we should not need many more May Days to come before the master of the land, the workshop, the mine and so on, would be he who has made the workshop with his hands and gives to it and to the land, life – that is, the free worker himself.

"The serious arguments underlying this often grotesque criticism were that there is, and has always been, a necessity for a weekly popular anarchist paper and *Freedom* being monthly… never pretended to fill this want … but the great majority of the meeting was hostile to *Freedom* because it was not what it never claimed to be… the illogical character of this position was pointed out and now the right idea prevailed: to publish a weekly paper themselves and to let the bickering about *Freedom* alone"

– "Anarchist Communist Conference", Freedom, January 1898

The International Labour Congress

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Communism, July 1896



Before our next number goes to print, the International Labour Congress will have met at London. Hundreds of workers, from all countries of the world, will probably meet at this Congress and assert the solidarity of the workers, to whatever nation, race or creed they may belong, in the face of the middle-classes of all countries, which foment a European war.

Whatever else the Congress may be it will be a formidable demonstration on behalf of the workers, to affirm once more that their enemies are not those who speak other languages, nor those who toil in other countries, but those who live on the labour of the toiling masses; those who have appropriated for themselves the land, the dwelling-houses, the docks, the railways, the factories, the mines; those who continue to keep the masses in poverty and, consequently, in ignorance, while their children learn in the universities how to rule the masses so as to maintain their own privileges.

In that sense the Congress will certainly be an imposing manifestation.

It may also, and let us hope it will, contribute to propagate Socialism among the workers of all countries, especially the workers of this country. The trade unionists who will come to London during the Congress may see that – whatever colourless aspects Socialism takes in the mouths of middle-class Socialists – the great mass of the manual workers of the world is animated with the desire of throwing off the yoke of Capital, and not merely of patching up in some modest way the miserable conditions of the wage-slaves. They will see, we hope, that for American and Continental workers the question is not whether school-meals will be distributed to hungry children and gas supplied by vestries, not even whether the wage-slave will be kept eight or nine hours in the factory. For them the question is to take possession of the land, the factories, the dwelling-houses in the city – of all, in fact, that is necessary for life, work and well-being. The Socialist worker only searches his way as to what is to be done in order to take possession of that common inheritance of mankind. He asks himself, *how to manage it in the interest of all?* And if he hears no answer to these questions at the Congress; if all attempts to go deeper into those vital questions are drowned in petty repetitions of *what the workers already know* – then the Congress will have entirely failed in its fundamental purpose.

In fact, the fundamental purpose of an International Labour Congress is that awakening of ideas, that deeper insight into the present conditions and present' relations between Capital, Labour and State, which can be given to the masses of labourers by a great Congress better than by any amount of personal and local propaganda.

This made the force and the world-importance of the earlier Congresses of the International Working Men's Association. Each of them marked a new advance in *ideas.* At the first Congress co-operation and limitation of the hours of labour were spoken of as serious changes. But gradually, at each new Congress, the idea that partial reforms in the mutual relations between Labour and Capital are either simply impossible or utterly inadequate grew deeper and deeper in their minds. Each Congress marked a step forward. At Brussels, in 1868, the land question and the necessity of land-expropriation came to the front, and the reports on this question, as well as the discussion which followed, spread a flood of light and enlightenment on that fundamental question.

The next year, at Basel, the question as to the necessity of abolishing private ownership, not only in land, but also in all that is needed for production, was brought under discussion. Again several deeply thought over reports were read, and an animated discussion followed, which again spread a flood of light among the workers upon this crucial matter in Socialism.

Each Congress thus attacked a new problem; each went deeper into Socialism; and what was discussed at the Congress became matter for discussion in labour circles for the next year.

That such discussion is badly wanted at the present time is only too evident – be it only from the attitude of the British trades unions towards "the Socialist resolution" and the "Alien question" at their last Congress. Because we, a small minority, are Socialists, there is no use saying that all workers are imbued with the same ideas. They certainly are Socialists by desire, but every one who knows the English, French, German,

Italian, Spanish and American workers – to say nothing of Eastern Europe – knows how much remains to be done in order to clear among them the forests of old prejudices.

Unhappily the last International Congresses have totally forgotten that task. They have taken quite a different direction.

Labour Congresses began to be looked at as a sort of parliaments which carry on legislative business. The great questions of Socialism pure and simple were simply cast aside; and, under the impression that "business" must be done at such congresses, questions of detail were brought forward in the most incoherent way; while the very discussion of those questions became simply nominal.

No reports dealing with the questions were read; owing to the great number of delegates each one was only allowed to speak ten minutes, and matters which it would have been necessary to treat at length from a general point of view were dispatched in small committees which brought forward mere resolutions to be voted upon – resolutions evidently worded so as to say the least in the vaguest manner possible, and thus to gather the greatest number of votes: The result was, that in "business matters" no thorough discussion took place and could not take place; while the function of the Congress – that of sowing broadcast larger and deeper views among the toilers of the two worlds— was simply wiped out. Moreover, owing to the formidable differences in the political conditions of different countries, the resolutions of the Congress lost all value and all interest.

The idea that an International Labour Congress must be considered as a Parliament of Labour rather than as a means for making a large Socialist propaganda is utterly false 'in itself. What can German or French workers induce English workers to do which they already are not doing And what may English workers induce Russian or Italian workers to do which they already are not desirous to do (strikes, unions and so on) but can *not* do on account of the accursed tyranny under which they are suffering, the want of close intercourse, and the like?

Labour Congresses are not legislative bodies. Even if they limit themselves to simply *recommend* this or that action to labourers of different countries, they will simply express pious wishes. Their educative function, on the contrary, could be rendered immense. By an appropriate choice of questions to be brought under discussion, and by a thorough discussion of the same – both in written reports and during the Congress itself – they could contribute immensely towards spreading more and more thoroughly Socialistic and more and more advanced views among the workers of Europe and America. They could clear the view among the most active spirits of the labour movement themselves.

The every day struggle against Capital and against State's tyranny has certainly to be carried on, and it necessarily must take a variety of aspects. But what is all this struggle for if it does not aim at a higher state of organisation in which man has no sweater and no master?

To imagine that Socialism has said its last word is simply absurd. If the huge mass of the workers are so far yet from realising the *possibility* of taking possession of the common inheritance of mankind, and of managing it in the interests of all—it is not because they have never thought of it nor desired it. It is because they do not well see; and the Socialists have not yet told them distinctly, *how they can take possession of that inheritance and how they can manage it.*

The every day struggle against Capital and against State's tyranny has certainly to be carried on, and it necessarily must take a variety of aspects. But what is all this struggle for if it does not aim at a higher state of organisation in which man has no sweater and no master? And what energy can be put in this struggle if a higher conception of labour solidarity ceases to inspire the struggling workers – if the final aim does not grow clearer and clearer before the eyes in proportion as the struggle goes on from year to year? It is high time that the Labour Congresses should manfully face these great problems imposed by history upon our generation, and if Anarchists speak at all at the coming Congress they certainly will raise these great problems.

It will however depend upon the workers themselves to decide whether they wish to have those problems discussed, or whether they prefer to have a semblance of d1scussion of how to patch up the present wage-slavery, and blindly let themselves be led by the events, instead of consciously taking the lead themselves.

Anarchism And Its Enemies

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Communism, September 1897

When the class struggle – which is always going on, even when to superficial observers the surface appears calm – when this struggle from some cause or other takes an acute form, there is always an excuse for the bigoted and the obtuse, as well as the hired and mercenary opponents of progress, to deluge the public mind with infamous distortions of the cause which happens to be in sharp conflict with the established order of things when this "order" has indulged in some more than -usually iniquitous measures against the rebellious spirits who question its rights. Such a state of things has arisen over the assassination of Canovas. Although no observant person can really and truly have felt any surprise at the occurrence, it has nevertheless afforded an opportunity for a section of the most stupid and brutal of the reactionaries -to shine forth in their true colours. It is nothing new that these persons should demand that Anarchists should be treated as outside the pale of humanity; that is generally the way with people who pretend to be so shocked at the fall of a tyrant. To show their horror of bloodshed they talk openly of a crusade of extermination against Anarchists, and they lose no opportunity of making a disgusting travesty and burlesque of Anarchist principles.

Along with economic emancipation they must and will claim political freedom; they are the sides of the agitation, and the problem cannot be solved in the absence of either. These are the facts the Anarchist recognises

It is necessary under these circumstances to assert a fact which government and the classes try to ignore, and which unfortunately many of the workers do not fully grasp, namely, *that the social revolution is inevitable.* Whether sooner or later, whether successful or unsuccessful, whether peaceably or with violence and bloodshed, the social revolution must come. It is not only the Anarchists who recognise this fact; it is perfectly well understood by the more intelligent section of the ruling classes, whose tactics, whether reactionary or "advanced," are really actuated by the desire of postponing the inevitable.

Now, Anarchism asserts that the birth of a new society will not only involve an economic revolution, but also a political and social readjustment of human relationships. The true ideal is not the well-fed man - who vegetates in mental and moral slavery, taking orders from superiors in return for the assurance of a good dinner. A man should be, as Mazzini said, part of the living truth, realising the fullest significance of life and willingly accepting the responsibilities that freedom brings with it. Under such conditions there is neither room nor necessity for the official with his cumbrous, irritating and costly "administration." Hence the necessity for the abolition of government. And in advocating this lies the head and front of our offending.

To declare for common property and the abolition of government- is the unpardonable sin in the eyes of the exploiters. But a moment's reflection is sufficient to convince any honest person that it is only the legal robber and oppressor who feels his *interests* threatened by Anarchism; for whilst denying the need for man-made laws, or rather whilst denouncing them as sins against humanity, it affirms the necessity for mankind to place. itself in harmony with natural laws, to study them, to learn by experience their true effects, and so ensure the healthy and normal progress of the race.

If we glance at the evils that surround us – the fraud and chicanery, the stupid and brutal lust for wealth and power, all the misery and degradation, too well known to need naming – we have no difficulty in tracing them as the effects of the capitalist system; and all upholders of that system must, whether they will or no, share the responsibility :for these evils. Happily, there exists today a wide-spread discontent amongst the workers, who are compelled by hard experience, to recognise the truth of the Socialist principles they hear and read. Discontent, with a knowledge of the cause of its misery, makes, as we said, the social revolution inevitable.

For those who study the tendencies of social and economic evolution without prejudice it is not difficult to foresee broadly what the workers will strive to attain in the approaching revolution. Along with economic emancipation they must and will claim political freedom; they are the sides of the agitation,

and the problem cannot be solved in the absence of either. These are the facts the Anarchist recognises, and he preaches them uncompromisingly in the face of all opposition, in spite of all abuse.

Capitalistic society is rushing on to a catastrophe, the result of its own greed and folly, spreading as it goes havoc and ruin amongst friends and foes alike. Now it is the homes of the workers desolated by strikes and lock-outs, the result of the capitalist's struggle to maintain his profits at all costs; now even the small fry of his own class, mad with the lust of gain, brought to ruin by the tricks of the financiers. And this is called Life; and it is expected or desired by these vampires that human beings should rest content with it. For us the issue is clear. It is our duty – a self-imposed duty – to enlighten the worker as to his true interests; to trace out how the conditions may be conquered that he may at last have a human existence with all its possibilities of a healthy and happy development. We want bread and freedom and happiness for all. This is Anarchist Communism: its enemies may call it what they choose.

New Tactics in the Economic Struggle

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During the last few years, the struggle between labour and capital has become more and more acute. If, on the one hand, the number of organised and solidary workmen augments, on the other hand we see capitalists falling into line and federating, to resist the demands of organised labour by determined and united action. The workers' trade union is opposed by a capitalist federation, the International of the oppressed and disinherited is opposed by the International of governments, capitalists, churches and landlords. Thus we see that, without the influence of friendly capital and privilege, strikes, even admirably organised and supported by the people drag on from month to month without any positive result. The miners' strike of 1893, those of Hamburg, Chicago and Penrhyn, and especially the present engineers' strike earned on with so much solidarity and supported, not only by trade unions of this country, but by all organised workers of the civilised world. . . . all these strikes and ever so many others have resulted in no material improvement for the workers; neither have wages gone up, nor have working hours diminished. Their principal object has been to resist the employer and maintain the ground already won. Organised capital supported by State, Church and Privilege defeats not only such or such an organised trade, but as we have already remarked, it overthrew the liberal government in 1895 that dared touch the interests of exploiters . . . . At first sight we might believe that federated capital and privilege are in truth almighty. But are the efforts of exploiters and governing classes really almighty? Are they invincible if a nation is united and determined to enfranchise itself from exploitation and misery? A parasite does not nourish the organism it devours. The unproductive and parasitic classes are not the most powerful, but it is the people, the great creators of our wealth and culture who are; it is not the former but the latter that will triumph in the supreme struggle for social emancipation.

The unproductive and parasitic classes are not the most powerful, but it is the people, the great creators of our wealth and culture who are…

Only, in order to reach this final goal, they must oppose the alliance of exploiters, not with an isolated union, merely supported by others, but with the efforts of all trade-unions in a great national *federation*.

Only, in order to reach this final goal, they must oppose the alliance of exploiters, not with an isolated union, merely supported by others, but with the efforts of all trade-unions in a great national *federation*. It was so in the days of the great Owen agitation, from 1832-36. At that time exploiters were not only united among themselves, but they directed the government; and the latter armed with the abominable "conspiracy act," persecuted, imprisoned and deported isolated strikers. Only in uniting and in organising *popular* demonstrations of a not too peaceful character, were the federated trades-unions of that time, able to force their reforms on the government and the bourgeoisie. So in our time it is obligatory for all organised trades to federate. Not only among themselves must they come to an understanding, not only "skilled" workers, but the entire working class must be united and federated. In

adopting a really democratic system of unionism, the future federation of trades-unions should also come to an understanding and even unite for solidary action, with cooperative societies of production and consumption. How? On what basis could this federation of producers and consumers be realised? – It is not for us Anarchists, for us, partisans of free popular initiative, to give directions. We only wish to point out to our brothers, exploited and oppressed by capital, that they can only enforce their demands by uniting all popular forces in a national federation. Groups and organisations to be autonomous in their respective affairs, and solidary in their common struggle for social emancipation.

We ardently desire that producers and consumers, in other words, trades-unions and cooperative societies recognise that to fight united capital and privilege, they must adopt new tactics – that of a solidary working class, and fight for the well-being of all.

The idea being conceived, we are sure beforehand that the people with their practical sense, will know how to create a federation of trades-unions and a free agreement with cooperators and consumers. Then we shall see if the federated bourgeoisie protected by the State will remain almighty for ever.



The Insurrections in Spain and Italy

[Peter Kropotkin]

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Communism, June 1898

At a time when everything seemed to be so quiet in Europe, and the working populations seemed to have been so well converted to the theory of trusting everything to their representatives—two great popular insurrections, in Spain and in Italy, broke out to remind us that until now, for the masses of the people insurrection still remains the only available means for redressing their wrongs.

Want of bread and famine were the causes of the upheavals in both peninsula. By the end of the nineteenth century, after all the tremendous progress that has been realised in science and industry, the masses of the people have again only one means to escape starvation: to throw themselves, unarmed, against the soldiers; to see their wives and children throwing themselves under the hoofs of the cavalry horses, against the bayonets of the infantry, and under the guns of artillery... This is where we are after a century of all sorts of industrial improvements and of parliamentary rule.

And – let not our rulers say in excuse that they had before them in this case one of those great social problems which may require dozens of years for their solution. In Italy and Spain, the problem was as plain as its solution was simple. It, was known, months ago, that the crops were very bad in those countries which usually export bread-stuffs; it was known that people were starving and plague striker in India, and that a famine had broken out in the chief grain-growing provinces of Russia; that crops were bad in Hungary; that war was going to break out between the United States and Spain; that the corn-traders were going to bring bread to famine prices by speculation. Everyone knew that. But those gentlemen who undertake to govern and to represent the people, *had they done anything to prevent the starvation which everyone saw coming?*

No. They had done absolutely nothing; they had thought of nothing. It was only after they had shot hundreds of men and women of the people that they made up their minds to abolish the import duties on corn. It was only after the massacres which were perpetrated at Milan that the rulers of Italy thought of taking some measures to prevent famine; and by opening the granaries of the Ministry of War, reduced the price of the pound of bread from 2½d. to 1½d. And yet, no one – the so-called radical deputies no more than the others – had even so much as *thought* beforehand about what had to be done in order to prevent bread from reaching famine prices.

It was necessary that insurrections should break out in a hundred little towns of Spain and in 143 towns of Italy (according to official information); that the peasants should march against the townhalls, loot the grain -stores, shoot the corn merchants, and die by the hundred under the shots of the soldiers, before these gentlemen thought of bread for the people.

The result is that all over the country in Spain, insurrections bearing a truly popular character are now going on. In scores of small towns and villages the people march against the townhalls, take possession of all the taxation papers and property registers and burn them. The gates of the prisons are opened and all those who are kept therein are set free. The shops of the corn-dealers, and very often all richer shops as well, ate plundered, and the richer citizens are compelled to disburse money for feeding the people.

At the same time, the insurgents loudly proclaim that they have enough of the monarchy, enough of the Cuban war which is fought in the interest of a few big exploiters; and they proclaim the so-called "cantonalist" program, which means the independence of every city and township and their free federation. That movement grows every day, and it is certain that when it has reached Andalusia, the peasants. as they have already attempted to do more than once, will simply take possession of the big landowners' lands. When the war conies to an end, the movement will only take a still greater extension.

In Italy the insurrection took a still more determined character. For a fortnight in succession, there were, every day, from three to four insurrections in different towns, in which the workers came into an armed conflict with the army, and eery day in succession there were from 15 to 50 killed in those conflicts.

In Milan, the insurrection took a much more formidable development. It is now known that for the last twelve months a general uprising was often spoken of in Italian workers circles and amidst the advanced republicans. To overthrow the monarchy and to proclaim a federal republic, in which every province and every city would obtain full home-rule, in the same sense as it had in the mediaeval republics – was an idea which began lately to be widely spread in Italy. The starvation-revolts which broke out during last month with such an unexpected vigour, and the barbarous and cruel way in which they were suppressed, only increased the agitation which resulted in an outbreak of such force at Milan, that it could be considered as the beginning of the Social Revolution. Nearly all trade organisations took part in it. It was no more a famine-revolt : it was an uprising of the poor against the rich, with a vague idea of proclaiming the commune of Milan, and ultimately the commune of all the neighbouring region.

The people entered the palaces of the rich and built its barricades with carved-oak furniture and velvet cushions seized in these palaces. The rich shops and especially the grain stores were plundered, while barricades erected in the suburbs of Milan at all the gates, encircled the army which occupied the central parts of the town, and the circle grew narrower and narrower with every hour. There was a moment on Sunday when the position of the soldiers in the centre of the town became critical, and it was only the arrival of half an Army corps, with artillery, from Lodi, which changed the situation. The rescue-army opened for itself a passage from the suburbs of the town to its centre by sweeping the streets with the shot and the shells of its guns.

We learn from eye-witnesses that there was a moment at the beginning of the uprising when more unanimity on behalf of the workers and a more determined purpose might have turned the scales in favour of the insurrection. If the Commune of Milan had been proclaimed at the outset, and if the next purpose of the insurgents to establish a Federative Republic had been made widely known, it appears probable that the soldiers, who began the battle against the people most unwillingly, might have refused to perform the butcher's work which they did perform later on in the heat of the battle.

The idea of the Social Revolution, beginning by the Commune and extending in a federation of Communes, has been proclaimed... It will bear its fruit. And the chasm between the rich and the poor, the rulers and the ruled, has been dug deep that nothing will ever be able to fill it

Unhappily, the railway workers, who first intended to join the insurrection and to destroy the railways, and had a great gathering the station for that purpose, were persuaded by one of the deputies to return to their homes. He found of course that "the time had not yet. come for a revolution," and advised inaction. As the revolution did not openly proclaim its wider purposes, a few hours of hesitation gave the rulers the time to concentrate their forces.

The people, unarmed, inaugurated new tactics. by storming the roofs of the palaces, and throwing therefrom bricks, tiles and marble-corners upon the troops; it fought desperately in the streets and on the roofs. As to the butchers, they performed their work in the most outrageous way. When the soldiers entered a street, they occupied the side-walks and opened fire upon the windows, thus killing scores of inoffensive people – women and children – on the balconies and in the rooms themselves. They swept the streets, crowded with women and children, with artillery fire, and the most moderate estimates put at 500 the number of killed (38 women and more than 100

anarchists in their number), and more than 1,000 wounded— most of them in a ghostly way, by the modern small bore-bullets which, owing to their rapid rotation. make immense funnel-shaped holes in the body.

Now the courts martial and wholesale exile by order of the administration will complete the work of the butchers.

One thing, however, is certain. The idea of the Social Revolution, beginning by the Commune and extending in a federation of Communes, has been proclaimed in Italy. It will bear its fruit. And the chasm between the rich and the poor, the rulers and the ruled, has been dug deep that nothing will ever be able to fill it. The people all over Italy learns how the noble ladies of Milan supplied the soldiers with wine and food, and decorated them with flowers, asking them "to strike hard" and "to shoot straight" when it came to the extermination of the workers and the salvation of their jewels and wardrobes. They now know that in the eyes of these ladies the life of a worker's wife and her child is not worth a silk-dress in the ward-rube of these ladies, or a piece of carved-oak furniture in their drawing rooms. And the most timid of the Milanese workers have now learned that their keeping aloof from the insurrection will not whitewash them in the eyes of their rulers. Insurgents or not, they are treated like a conquered nation; they are deprived of all their rights and forbidden even to meet and to discuss their needs.

Once more history has repeated itself. A great revolution has always been preceded by great insurrections. And it is certain that the uprising of Milan and the butchering of the people which followed it will do more to give a truly social character to the next revolution, which is already thunders in Italy, than all that, has ever been said or written by the revolutionists.

And then – Is the uprising of Milan the last or only the first act of the great struggle now going on in Italy?

Co-operation And Democracy

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Communism, August-September 1899

The annual festival of the Co-operators at the Crystal Palace is an occasion when the aims and methods of the co-operative Movement are explained, or at any rate criticised from various points of view. Of course, the movement is growing; the large figures increase; and new people from all quarters are found to be interested in it. But surely amongst its sympathisers· some strange mixtures can be found, and it does not require a great deal Of insight to understand that there must be a vast deal of difference between the motives that induce an interest to be taken in it by such high and mighty persons as Earl Grey and others of his class, and the exploited workers who hope to find in it some relief from the terrible grip of the capitalist.

there is something else to be aimed at besides all that has been done… by our friends the co-operators. What is that something? Beyond a doubt: expropriation and the socialisation of the means of production. Otherwise co-operation will remain what it is…

Now, co-operation in its broadest sense is one of the best and most essential factors – indeed, an indispensable one – in social organisation. But it must not be forgotten that the capitalist can co-operate as well as the worker; much better, in fact, while he remains master of the economic field and the wealth which he consequently exploits. And he *does* co-operate, and becomes thereby a greater enemy of the worker. Obviously, then, there is something else to be aimed at besides all that has been done – good though it may be – by our friends the co-operators. What is that something? Beyond a doubt: expropriation and the socialisation of the means of production. Otherwise co-operation will remain what it is, or rather will become more and more a hunting ground for capitalistic investors; for as Mr. Gerald Balfour remarked, "if co-operative production could show methods for the investment of capital which were safe *and yield a fair return;* it could get all the capital it required." Of course it can; and we did not need this enlightened Tory-Democrat to tell us so. But if co-operation is to follow on capitalistic lines, it will develop more and more within itself the evils of the capitalist system. And what this has already done for the movement can be best understood by those who know the sweating, the profitmongering, the bribery and corruption which already exist.

Mr. Gerald Balfour said one very true thing, viz., "that Democracy, with all its advantages, was the most difficult form of government that existed." And so it is, as they have already discovered in the United States , but let it be understood that we can never get *true* co-operation under any form of government whatever. Before all things in co-operation no matter what its aim may be, its organisation must be free, plastic, with the inherent capacity for forming and reforming according to the requirements which man's varied and multifarious activities demand in an ever-increasing degree.

It hardly needs the logic of a schoolboy to see that nothing less, than the Anarchist conception of freedom in social and economic organisation, can ever attain this end; and this, to our thinking at least, presupposes Communism as the surest basis upon which the necessary solidarity. of interests could be established.

In this case what is to become of the Earl Greys and the rest of them, who are co-operators in England and capitalists and cutthroats in South Africa? Let our co-operative friends beware of the company they choose. This situation reminds us of an incident that happened some twelve years ago at, the Phoenix Hall, when Earl Meath came to speak to the. Social Democrats on "Co-operation and Emigration." Poor Dan Chatterton got on to the platform in his rags to oppose, and he asked the lecturer, "How. can I co-operate with you, with your wealth and your land your fine carriages? I tell you, while I am starving and you have all these, for all your philanthropy you're my bitterest enemy."

And Dan Chatterton was right.

For inequality and true co-operation are impossible; and to fulfil its mission co-operation will have to be free from the capitalist and the profit-monger.

Political or Revolutionary Method?

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Communism, October 1899

Anarchists are often derided for their supposed lack of practicality, and it is a source of supreme pleasure 'to the so called "scientific" Socialists to profess to regard Anarchical proposals with an air of amusement, and to murmur, "'utopian." It is scarcely needful to enter into a discussion over the respective values – as applied – of the terms "practical," "scientific" and "utopian," the world is somewhat "topsy-turvy," and adjectives ofttimes acquire a meaning exactly opposite to that intended by a well regulated dictionary.

Unfortunately, shadowy substances – especially when clothed with a respectable halo – appear far more acceptable than the more substantial – if more homely – facts that are before us every minute of our lives. To advise people to vote, to capture the political machine in order to achieve industrial emancipation, sounds delightfully easy, and certainly has the merit of not entailing too much exertion. All that one has to do, is to sit down and wait until election day comes round and then by voting, to carefully put nails into the coffin of misery, and, hey presto! you wake up some fine day and find that the sun is shining upon an industrial commonwealth. What is easier? You need not bother your head about trade unions, except in so far as you may *scheme* to use them for political ends: your vast co-operative movement – child of mighty growth of the spirit of association – is nothing; *use* all these movements, capture them, such is the lesson of "scientific Socialism."

As a matter of fact, I suppose that Anarchists are as desirous of being practical and of getting down to the concrete things of life as most other people. But a mere shibboleth does not do this. The difficulty is to get our reforming friends to see that you cannot change a society by merely changing its forms. Surely it does not require a very brilliant intelligence to see that the organisation of society is dependent for its character upon the economic condition of the peoples. The economic condition is the basis upon which rest the forms of society and unless you tackle and alter this basis you can effect little permanent good. One may be ready to admit that some temporary amelioration may be effected by legislation, say as with the Factory Acts, but it is only a temporary respite and in the long run has but the effect of lengthening the reign of exploitation. To make exploitation bearable is to lengthen its life, for all men are more or Jess conservative, and stick with avidity to that which serves their present turn.

Anarchists are not foolish enough to imagine that "talk" alone is needed; that the Revolution will come of its own accord; they recognise that it needs working for. But they recognise that Society has to be attacked from its only vulnerable side: the economic. The workers produce all, they have to be taught to control the results of their labour. If a large percentage of the workers reused to produce for· the exploiters, they would have at once the means of cutting off their supplies, no matter how great the number of these exploiters may be. It, is not the place of the Anarchists to suggest any particular schemes, for conditions are so changeful that what may appear suitable for today may

be decidedly unsuitable to-morrow, but Anarchists can and do work arduously in the various economic movements for the furtherance of such schemes as come forward from time to time.

Without at all attempting to lay clown programs, it does appear to most of us that our place is to enter into the working class movement not to "boss" it, not "use" it, but to take our part as comrades and fellows.

Let us imagine the idea of federation – National and International – carried through a not unlikely thing, and a corresponding growth of the co-operative productive spirit among the unions. what would be the result? Revolution, undoubtedly! Through federation the workers would have learned the power that they possess; through co-operation they would be able to withdraw their support from the drones, and in their very midst start the nucleus of a Communistic society. Were this to happen, it is clear that the worker would have an opportunity of realising Socialism that he at present does not possess.

Here, then, is the plain issue before the Socialist: you have a decided trend of organisation on the part of the working-class movement. what place should we occupy? Should we go to them and ask them to vote and in the pursuit of legislation destroy the labour movement and transform it into a political one? Or should we not rather go amongst them and here and there fan the smouldering fire of economic common sense, so that each step made by them toward the future may be a step to the Social Revolution.

Yes, the economic method is the *practical* one; the political weapon is a chimera, a "will o' the wisp," invented by rogues and used by dreamers, fools and knaves.

Reports

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Communism, March-April 1900

A meeting was held, on March 16, at the Athenseum Hall, 73 Tottenham Court Road, to commemorate the 29th anniversary of the Commune of Paris. Speeches were. delivered by Kelly, Mainwaring, Louise Michel, Caplan, Kitz, Tcherkesov and Cuiccioli. Kropotkin, having to keep his bed through a bad cold, sent the following letter:

DEAR COMRADES,

Illness prevents me from being with you at this 29th anniversary of the Paris Commune. I regret it the more as, at this moment, it is absolutely necessary that all the branches of the great Socialist movement should lose no opportunity to affirm and to stimulate *the international solidarity* which unites all workers, of all nationalities, *against their oppressors – national or international*.

The war in South Africa, which will be known in history as the most unjust war ever fought; *as the most scandalous* slaughtering of human beings *in the interest of a handful of capitalists*, and as *the most terrible illustration of the crimes* which even such a freedom-loving nation as England is capable of committing *once it endeavours to base its wellbeing upon the exploitation of serfs in Africa* – this war is not yet concluded, but guns and rifle are already prepared for new wars and new conquests.

The capitalist papers are now doing all they can *to raise a bad feeling between France and England*; and if the workers of both countries do not interfere with their mighty voices at the proper moment, we may see, before this century is over, *the most fratricidal of all possible wars* fought between the two most advanced nations of Europe.

Take it as a rule: *One war brings another war as its sequel. "You did not want Socialism? Well, you will have War – a new Thirty Years' War!"* Herzen wrote after 1848. Now we are in the *same position*.

The two great nations which are most advanced in civilisation – Britain and France – have before them this choice:

Either to boldly march hand in hand *towards true Liberty and Equality*, by working for the realisation of *Well-being for All*. *Creating wealth by Free Labour, in the interest of all* and marching boldly towards *a Communist life based upon Free Co-operation*;

Or, to go about conquering new slaves in Africa and Asia, trying to exploit all the world by means of their accumulated capital; and fight, bitterly fight one another like robbers fight for the spoil; and to both march towards decay.

It is with you, with the workers of France and Britain, that the choice lies. Don't expect that the moneyed classes will take the lead in that movement towards a better Future. You, you alone, can impose upon the greedy, bigoted capitalists the new lines of Progress towards Equality and Liberty.

Anarchist Propaganda

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Communism, August 1900

It is not a mere empty saying which reminds us that each one has within him some capacity to help mould the future. It may seem infinitely small to ourselves or to others, but energy and intelligence will increase its effect a hundredfold. Yet, even if small, it cannot be dispensed with, because in social evolution as well as in the domain of physical phenomena many things are accomplished by apparently ineffective but oft-repeated efforts, as, in time, the drops of water wear the stone.

If we regard Anarchist propaganda in the same light, we shall find that great opportunities for educating the public mind come seldom; but the occasions when our individual efforts, whether in speech or action, can be applied in ever so limited a degree, are always with us.

If it were possible to, form an accurate estimate of the work accomplished by Socialists and Anarchists in England during the past fifteen years, we should certainly find that while a really considerable number of workers have a fairly distinct idea of what Socialism means, not one in twenty has any clear ideas as to how it could be obtained. On the other hand, although comparatively few have as yet become convinced Anarchists, they at least are clear as to the effective means that can be employed to overthrow the rule of the capitalist. The tendency of the Social Democrat – and we say it with regret – is to confine himself to the struggle for municipal and political reforms. He neglects the economic, the revolutionary propaganda, and after years of voting finds nothing is gained for the people to "ameliorate" their condition.

A much wider field of activity is open to the Anarchist, though requiring a greater determination and a deeper moral conviction to adhere to it. In every factory and in every field toil the men and women we wish to educate and to enlighten. We do not seek their votes; we ask them to think and to act, to unite and to organise, to encourage the spirit of solidarity on all possible occasions. And to restore to themselves the land, the factories, the accumulated wealth stolen from them through the centuries of exploitation, we do not ask that they should send us to mingle with the thieves at Westminster; but, rather, to use the weapon they have in their own hands – a weapon dreaded by their masters far more than all their votes, the only weapon, we verily believe, that will conquer the world for the workers – the GENERAL STRIKE.

We do not seek their votes; we ask them to think and to act, to unite and to organise, to encourage the spirit of solidarity on all possible occasions. And to restore to themselves the land, the factories, the accumulated wealth stolen from them through the centuries of exploitation… to use the weapon they have in their own hands… that will conquer the world for the workers – the GENERAL STRIKE

How can it be said, then, that Anarchists have either to talk vaguely of a distant ideal, or resort to secret societies and a system of terrorism in their propaganda? As to the "idealists," Bakunin has shown us who they really are; the Terrorist only arises when political liberties are suppressed, or when some terrible economic crisis drives starving men to desperation.

No, the propaganda of Anarchism is the driving home to the minds of the people the hard, the real, the matter-of-fact truths of every-day life. The difficulty is not in getting the people to accept these, but in sweeping away, in rooting out the political, the religious, the economic lies and illusions which are instilled everywhere and always by the ruling classes and their parasites.

What sane person does not wish to enjoy the life which under present conditions is too often but a miserable existence? We claim that right for the whole of humanity. Who wishes, day after day, to be at the beck and call, to do the bidding of another? Not one of us. Therefore we demand human liberty, not as a favour, but as a thing as necessary to individual welfare as the air we breathe. What can be more practical than the earnest endeavour to obtain these things? And this is the goal of Anarchist propaganda. Hard, uphill work it may be; but it does not deceive the people with promises unfulfilled. With clear consciences we can repeat to them again and again: "If you would end your slavery, organise for the General. Strike. But hold on to the means of production which lie ready to your hands, and use them for the benefit of all."

Politics and the People

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Communism, December 1900

The political struggle which is just ended has for the Anarchist but one moral – it proves that the ruling classes are right in regarding the political machine as their safest bulwark against the onward march of Socialism. "Onward march" did we say? Would it were possible even to distinguish a clear marking of time! All is confusion worse confounded where Socialism has – shall we not say? – succumbed to Parliamentary and electoral tactics; for after a perusal of the programmes of the Socialist candidates one may well ask where is the Socialism? It is both stupid and misleading to speak of old-age pensions, factory inspection, and better housing of the poor as Socialism. If this were so, we could name many fossilised upholders of the present system who could claim to be excellent Socialists, in so far as they pay their slaves "fair wages," work them under decent conditions, and make some provision for their old age. This alone would indicate to what mean and paltry compromises one is compelled to descend in order to attain the avowed object of furthering the cause of Socialism in Parliament! But worse remains, for even these miserable sops will not be gained by political methods in time to benefit the generation that has voted for them. And then a howl is raised over the apathy of .the people who won't trouble to vote, or if they do vote, persistently vote for the "wrong man," After which that benign dispenser of political wisdom and master of cajolery, Lord Rosebery, rises to the occasion and addresses us on "The Duty of London," in which, after saying a great deal that he doesn't mean, he expresses a fear that he may be taken for a Socialist. But who would dream of asking this cute millionaire if he believed in the socialisation of wealth and the means of production? Yet this is the real basis of true Socialism, and neither the Roseberys, the Harcourts, nor the busybodies on the Borough Councils, who are prepared to tinker with the rotten edifice, will alter that fact.

It is both stupid and misleading to speak of old-age pensions, factory inspection, and better housing of the poor as Socialism. If this were so, we could name many fossilised upholders of the present system who could claim to be excellent Socialists, in so far as they pay their slaves "fair wages," work them under decent conditions, and make some provision for their old age

But while Social. Democracy has been wasting time, energy, and the people's patience in its hopeless electoral contests, the bitterest enemies of the people have been fostering the spirit of Imperialism, breeding international rivalries, plundering, annexing, exploiting with the help of this precious British Government which becomes such an excellent tool, such a willing instrument in the hands of the financiers.

Yes, truly the political machine is admirably adapted to the schemes and the interests of the governing classes, and for that very reason it is a delusion and a snare for the workers.

For the past fourteen or fifteen years Social Democrats have been striving to realise, through Parliamentary means, some of the points in their programme. Most of this time the teaching the people so much needed – the clear exposition of the economics of Socialism, with a firm adherence to the ideal of a free and fully-developed life which Socialism proclaims – has been so much neglected that it is largely owing to this that the present disastrous condition of the movement exists.

A glance at the political programme of the Social Democratic party in England will prove the complete failure of Parliamentary action to obtain for the people any of the " reforms " that are indicated as tending towards Socialism.

Take a few of the most prominent planks:

An eight-hour day.

Raising the age of child labour to 16 years.

Free education with free maintenance for the children. Repudiation of the National Debt.

Nationalisation of the land; and the

Organisation of labour in agriculture and industry under State or municipal control on co-operative principles; etc., etc.

Everybody knows, of course, that not only have none of these things been obtained, but they are not even within "measurable distance" of being obtained. What is the consequence? A policy of retreat has been sounded, and compromise and retrogression is the order of the day, and a large section of advanced Democrats have found it necessary to form a National Democratic League, whose soul-inspiring programme is as follows:

(a) Automatic registration with a three months' qualification.

(b) Adult suffrage.

(c) One man one vote.

(d) Official expenses of elections to be defrayed from State funds.

(e) Second ballot.,

(f) Payment of members.

(g) Extinction of the hereditary principle in the Legislature.

And this is the best answer our Democratic friends can give to the acknowledged failure to obtain Social Democratic palliatives. This is the result of all the energy expended in Parliamentary and Municipal action during the past fifteen or more years. We know only too well how good and sincere comrades of the S.D.F. and I.L.P. have striven in the midst of their daily labours to help this forlorn hope, blindly believing that from. the politician would come a certain though gradual amelioration of their enslaved conditions. Do they now realise how they have been playing the game of the ruling classes? How disappointment and apathy have eaten the heart out of the Socialist movement? How they have receded into the ranks of mere Radicalism? They may turn their faces against Anarchism, but what then will they do? After all, the enemy is strong, and by some means or other he must be fought and conquered. Is it wise to waste time? Surely not when the issues are so great and to momentous. More than ever we need a return to the advocacy of pure Socialist principles. How long will it be before Social Democrats realise the situation?

The Superstition of Government

Henry Glasse

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Communism, November 1901[1]

An impression fixed by long habit of mind, especially where that habit has been transmitted through many generations, ends by assuming the form of instinctive knowledge, too clear to admit of discussion, still less to require demonstration. If such impression is originally based on facts accepted by reason, we call it *common sense*; if, on the other hand, it springs from error in matter of fact or is the result of distorted reasoning, we call it *prejudice.* In expounding Anarchism we are met by a certain stolid repugnance as well as a seeming inability to grasp our idea, and this we find to be owing to a prepossession in favour of Government. Let us therefore examine and see if this superstition is based on common sense, or whether it is not the result of prejudice carefully maintained and cultivated in the past by those who have put themselves forward as the guides of humanity.

Throughout the whole of authentic history this fact of Government is continually presented to us as a permanent factor of human life, as well as its most important and interesting aspect; even the legends and myths which precede history are full of the glorious or terrible deeds of rulers—giants on earth, and gods and devils innumerable throughout the universe divide between them the government of men and things. Are we therefore to conclude that government is natural to man? or that it is a requisite of man's social life? We might be tempted to answer this question in the affirmative, but for another fact which is co-universal with Government and which entirely upsets its claim to be in harmony with man's moral and social nature. That fact is Revolt. In no historic time has Government failed to encounter Revolt, either overt or covert; individuals or classes have at all times contended to subvert the dominion of other classes or individuals in order to win that dominion for themselves. This traditional spirit of revolt is also presented to us in those legends and myths which are the echoes of prehistoric times: Jehovah has to struggle for pre-eminence with the archangel Satan, who leads to rebellion a portion of the angelic host, and who continues, even after his expulsion from heaven we are told, to keep up a fairly successful warfare against heaven's monarch. So, also, in the ancient classic story, Jupiter dethrones his father Saturn, and in his turn becomes "Father of the gods and King of men." I have spoken of the hostility of individuals and classes who happen for the time to be *out* of power, as directed

[1] This was published in 1902 as a pamphlet alongside Kropotkin's *Organisation of Vengeance called "Justice"*. (*Black Flag*)

against those who for the moment are *in* power; but of course this hostility would be powerless without the co-operation of the people or a considerable section thereof, and therefore it is that whoever raises the standard of revolt or of opposition (which is only revolt minus military warfare) professes to do so in the interest of the people, who are led to hope for a betterment of their condition as a result of a successful change. Insurrectionary and opposition leaders have always posed as deliverers of the people in order to gain its support, and have taught it to regard the exercise of power and the spoils of office as the just reward of their condescension in taking up the cudgels on behalf of its interests. Obviously, therefore, during the many ages that personal ambitions and rival castes hare warred for supremacy, it has never suited them to so much as even hint to the vile populace whose help they were soliciting that the evils it suffered were inherent in Government itself; on the Contrary, it was their policy to leave the principles of Government and Authority unchallenged, and to insist only upon the transfer of power to themselves, together with the privileges and perquisites of power, whilst promising the people as its share of the advantage gained some alleviation of its servitude, generally, in practice.

When, therefore, the Anarchist proposes the abolition of Government and the rejection of Authority, and claims that the affairs of society shall he arranged by mutual understanding of the people themselves, instead of being imposed on them by some external force, he finds that the minds of those he addresses never having been used to contemplate such a possibility, the suggestion bewilders them, and no clear corresponding idea is awakened. This is shown by the question almost invariably asked by those who for the first time hear of Anarchism: "How, then, will you regulate this, that, or the other, for us?" not grasping the fact that Anarchism (or Libertarianism, if you prefer the word) repudiates regulation and leaves the persons concerned to manage each matter for themselves by mutual agreement, compromise, or concession.

Anarchism (or Libertarianism, if you prefer the word) repudiates regulation and leaves the persons concerned to manage each matter for themselves by mutual agreement, compromise, or concession

Moreover, so accustomed are people to regard those who propose political changes as candidates for political power, that when they hear that Anarchist propagandists do not desire power or place, and reject authority for themselves as well as for others, they are puzzled to conceive the motive which actuates them, used as they themselves have always been to regard the desire for personal advancement as inseparable from the *role* of an agitator; hence a suspicion is apt to affect them that there must be something hidden, something kept back in such an unusual proceeding as that of an individual championing an unpopular and persecuted cause and, at the same time, disclaiming any special personal advantage as his proposed reward.

There is, it seems to me, no other way of combating this prejudice – for prejudice, I think, it has been shown to be – than by patient reiteration of our principles and repeated pointing out of their logical character; in this way we shall go on in the future, as we have already begun, to familiarise the popular mind with our ideas, which is the indispensable preliminary to their acceptance. In this good work let us persevere; our success will be commensurate with our efforts.

Social Democracy and Anarchism

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Communism, February 1902

In *Justice* for Feb. 8th, D.B.M. contributes an article "Some Words in defence of Fichte and Lassalle," being a reply to Geoffrey Langtofts' article in the *Fortnightly Review* on "Assassination a Fruit of Socialism." Social Democrats of all schools naturally resent the imputation implied in the title, though there is as much sense in it as if it had been worded ''Assassination a Fruit of Anarchism." The most correct title would have been "Assassination a Fruit of Social Conditions'"; but then Mr. Langtofts' article would have had to have been re-written by the light of truth and common sense, and that would not have answered his purpose.

D. B. M. is quite right in saying that Anarchists and Socialists are not *identical* in their teachings and

programmes, but is not correct in saying we should disclaim *any* affinity in methods and programme with Socialism. On the contrary, we affirm with perfect truth that Anarchism is Socialism *without government*; Social Democracy when it is not advanced Radicalism is simply a mitigated wage-system under State control.

Of course, many Social Democrats look to Communism as the ultimate outcome of an economic revolution. But when they preach this they have to leave Social Democracy behind – its State organisations would never fit the free and healthy life of the Commune.

D.B.M., in defending Fichte from the charge of having advocated Anarchism, is really over zealous. No doubt Fichte, like many Socialists, regarded Anarchism as an ideal condition which might be realised in a far distant future – so, at least he implies when he says "there will come a point when all relations of the State will become superfluous." But there is no occasion for D.B.M. to confuse and pervert the true meaning of Anarchism; to make the ridiculous assumption that the crimes of the State are forms of Anarchy; to assert that the millionaire and the pauper are the makers of Anarchy, when she knows full well they are the children of the wage-system and monopoly. All this comes of that slavish adherence to the Marxian view that all things are *anathema* that do not fit the one and only creed of political and economic evolution.

Notes

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Communism, April 1903

FIRST MILLERAND – THEN JAURES.

"All who enter here leave Socialism behind." That is what should be written over the doors of all parliaments to warn the workers what they may expect from their "representatives" whom they elected at such a cost of money, time and trouble.

In *Justice* for March 21st, Hyndman, in a much-needed protest, has pilloried the two renegades Millerand and Jaures, and has dealt them some well-deserved blows with all his fiery indignation. If he had been logical this attack would have been of inestimable worth, but unfortunately Hyndman himself is too much tied to the wheels of the political Juggernaut, too much imbued with Marxism and State Socialism, to hew straight to the line of true Socialist principles. Were it otherwise, Hyndman would see that his impeachment of Millerand is an indictment of the whole policy of the parliamentary Socialists, who, following religiously their "scientific" theory, work for the "conquest of political power." For it is not merely that Millerand is a traitor, a murderer of the workers: he justifies himself on the very grounds assumed by Social-Democrats for the taking of the first step which costs .so much. Hyndman says, however, "Yet Millerand is no worse than others would be. He meant well, I have no doubt, but he could not rise superior to his surroundings. He could not be Minister of Commerce in a bourgeois government without swallowing a lot of bourgeois dirt. And he has swallowed it. It seems to have agreed with him." Very well; but why blame him? If you encourage a child to play with the fire when you know it will burn itself, who is responsible if the house is burned down? Yet the same policy is being pursued in England. Comrades who have done good work in the early clays of the movement get themselves elected, and immediately. (as Millerand has done) they deny the Revolution. We have enough "shocking examples" at home without looking abroad. The pressing need of the moment is not a "united political Socialist party," but that all Socialists, in face of recent events, should reconsider the whole position and return to first principles.

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[…]

COMPULSORY ARBITRATION

We get so little reference even to Socialism now in the *Clarion,* that we cease to look for anything of interest in that direction. Nevertheless we are hardly prepared to find such reactionary stupidity as an advocacy of compulsory arbitration for English workers. Yet we find a note claiming that such a thing has innumerable advantages for the workers. If the writer is sincere, he is blind to the fundamental cause of strikes, and incapable of gauging the outcome of the compulsory method. He might have enlightened himself somewhat by a perusal of the *Daily News* of March 4th, wherein

appears a report of an address by the Attorney-General for New South Wales to the Australasian Chamber of Commerce in London. The large audience, we are told, included Lord Rosebery – happy omen for the workers.

The report says Mr. Wise began his address by reference to the fears of Socialistic legislation in Australia, and said it would be his endeavour to show that there was no cause for alarm on that score. No country in the world offered greater security to capital than New South Wales. Why? Because of the stability insured to political and industrial institutions by Old Age Pensions and Compulsory Arbitration! And the *Clarion* advocates this and yet claims to write for Socialists! Why does not it leave these absurdities to our enemies the Capitalists?

One other cheerful result of compulsion we must not forget to mention. *The Court makes it a misdemeanour for one workman to urge another to go on strike.* Bravo, *Clarion!*

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We should like to have congratulated *Justice* on its thousandth number, but what is there to say? Years of hard toil and self-sacrifice have been given for the paper; yes, we know it well. But what is it teaching today? Is it teaching us what true Socialism means? Not at all. It is teaching always palliatives, reforms and political compromise. Does it put principle before personality? No. For the homage paid to persons who have worked for the paper has warped the editorial sense of fair play.

Spite of the assertion to the contrary, the present number compares very unfavourably with the first, so far as the preaching of pure Socialist principles is concerned. *Justice* has done some good work, but what might it not have accomplished had it not so early developed all the crass theories of State Socialism.

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It has remained for those staunch defenders of restraint, the Individualist Anarchists, to out-do the daily press in their cheap sneers at the refusal of Voltairine de Cleyre to prosecute (restrain is their word) Herman Helcher for the attempt on her life. Messrs. Tucker and McDonald, editors and publishers of *Liberty* find *Truthseeker* (N.Y.), are naturally quite upset over Voltairine's absurd conduct in trying to practice Anarchism as well as preach it. Some men reach their second childhood early, and if we refrain from comparing Mr. Truth-seeker McDonald to the "sere and yellow leaf" it is because we sympathise with a brother who has gone astray, but truth (seeker) compels us to say he is old enough to know better, and if he does not it is not our fault. As for Mr. Benjamin R. Liberty, his case has been diagnosed years ago – and declared hopeless. When the average man discovers a truth he is a hard man to get along with, when he *thinks* he has discovered a truth and has not – he is impossible. Ben belongs to the latter genus. Long ago he discovered that "the only good Injun is a dead Injun," and the best way to make people peaceful is to hit them over the head with a club (voluntary, of course), the best way to abolish prisons is to call them houses of restraint; in short, he has discovered the-best way to abolish a thing is to strengthen it – and change its name. Anarchism to him is a philosophy to be discussed after a sixty-cent. dinner, a cigar and a cup of coffee (why not velvet smoking jackets and silk tea-gowns) and I would warrant that the tenor of his articles depends entirely upon the state of his digestion. The best and the worst thing that can be' said about the editor of *Liberty* and his misuse of the word "liberty" is what Edelman once said, "Ben Tucker is much better than his philosophy." Meanwhile here is a pointer for the voluntary police libertarians. We shall continue to propagate Anarchism and – to practise it.

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The Labour Representation Committee decided at its recent conference to grant a salary of £200 per year to all of their candidates who are elected to the House of Commons. This is rather a small (?) salary for such arduous duties as gentlemen in that institution are subjected to. On second thoughts, however, when we remember that most of them are salaried officials in trade unions or professional gentlemen, things look different. Richard Bell, we understand, is in receipt of £300 a year from his union, and if he receives £200 from the L.R.C. he will have a real working man's salary. Or take Pete Curran and John Ward, both officials of trade unions and candidates of the L.R.C., if they only receive £150 a year each from their unions, that with the salary of L.R.C. would make their total incomes equal to that of five navvies or gasworkers at 30s. per week. They probably think they are worth it, but we wonder what the slaves who toil in the gasworks and in the docks think of it. For our part, we hope this point will be driven home by comrades throughout the country, and especially by those who are trade unionists. Point out not only the danger but the stupidity of boosting navvies and gasworkers to power and paying them the wages of a bank clerk, and expecting them to remain in touch with their downtrodden brethren. They are adopting the very best way of turning working men into middle-class men, and no one need be surprised if they fall victims to the exploiting class, as so many have done before them.

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Kropotkin's Letter to the Commune Meeting

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Communism, April 1903

Dear comrades,

I am so sorry that the state of my health prevents me from being with you tonight.

It is always good to refresh one's energy by the commemoration of the glorious fight which the working men of Paris fought, thirty-two years ago, against the united forces of International Capitalism.

The more so now when we enter a period of general awakening the working men of all nations; when the ideas of international solidarity amongst labourers of all nations and all trades are so loudly proclaimed, and so well practised, as they have been during the last twelve months.

The spirit of the old *International Working Men's Association*, which has made the Paris Commune, is alive once more. It is that spirit which has breathed in the general strikes at Barcelona, at various smaller towns of Andalusia, in Belgium, at Geneva, in Holland.

It is that same spirit and that same enthusiasm which have inspired the downtrodden working men – Poles, Jews, and Russian – in Poland and in Western Russia at Rostoff, and so on.

The same spirit which has inspired the *Dock Laborers' Federation* in their menace of *boycotting Dutch commerce* if the Dutch government dares to take its measure for paralysing the strikes. That same spirit *which breathed in the great Coal Strike of America*. a strike which has shown the powers of united labour and the weakness of the capitalist State.

The same spirit, again, which inspires the great deep and powerful movement that goes on in France for preparing THE GENERAL STRIKE. Its possibility has been proved. Its significance is self-evident. This is why it is so dreaded by middle classes. The general strike is not yet the Social Revolution. Surely it is not. But it is the act which will unite the workers, the act which will divide society into two camps – those who work and those who don't; and will put the great problem of *Work* and *Exploitation* before mankind in all its nudity, free of all political tinsel.

Thirty-two years have not passed in vain, especially in the Latin countries, A new Commune movement is already ripe. The lesson of the Commune: *Act for yourselves, and let the others follow. Do not order, but preach by example*. This lesson has been understood by the proletarians. The other lesson – *Communalise, without delay, what is necessary for life and work* – begins also to be understood.

Both – let us hope and work for that – will soon be put into action.

March 18, 1903

State Capitalism and Social Democracy

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Communism, June 1903

The great railway strike in Victoria, which has just ended in a defeat of the strikers, is full of the deepest meaning for the labour movement all over the world. It is a lesson and a warning.

For some time past Australia was described by some enthusiasts as the great field for a Socialist experiment, which was going to convert the world to State Socialism. Nearly all the railways of Victoria belong, as is well-known, to the State, and there is, moreover, a system of old-age pensions, which are paid by the State to its railway employees. Two important points, which we find in the electoral programs of the European Social Democrats, were thus realised in Victoria, and the result, as we see now, is most pitiful. The railway workers of Victoria are even more restricted in their liberties than the workers of any European State.

As soon as Mr. Irvine, the present Prime Minister of Victoria, came to power a few months ago, there was a serious dispute between the railway workers and the State upon the question of wages. The workers lost, and the State, encouraged by its victory, went a step further. It boldly proclaimed the theory that, once the railway workers are functionaries of the State, they must break all their connections with other workers all over the world. They must throw in their lot with the governing classes, and if they have any local grievances against the Government in whose service they are, the only way to ventilate these grievances is to follow the channels of bureaucratic hierarchy and, in the last resort, to appeal to Parliament. The theory of agreement between employer and employee applies no more in their case. They are no more working men: they are functionaries; and, in the expectation of the happy times when all working men will become the functionaries of the future Socialist State, the channels of resistance which are open to other working men are closed to them. All their labour sympathies must

disappear; they are "gents" of the Civil Service, to whom the Government was kind enough to assign the dirty, fatiguing, badly paid work on the railways – keeping the best paid "functions" for themselves. Soldiers if you like, perhaps slaves, but not working men.

Consequently, when the railway workers of Victoria determined to associate themselves as a body with the central organisation of the Trades Unions of Victoria, which is known as the "Trade Hall," the Government interfered. It declared that no such affiliation would be permitted, because the railway workers, if they belonged to the general Trade Union organisation, might go on strike in support of any labour struggle, both within and without the colony. Therefore, if they disobeyed-and affiliated themselves nevertheless to the said Trade Hall they would be dismissed at once and would lose all their rights to pension.

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This theory was openly expressed the other day by Mr. Dobson, who is acting at London as the Agent-General for Victoria. In an interview with the *Daily News* representative, he said, "We look upon the ten or twelve thousand railway employees as civil servants. They work for the State, are paid by the State, and expect later on to draw pensions from the State. Therefore we maintain that they should keep themselves free from all political cliques, bodies, or organisations." "Free from all *labour* organisations," was evidently what the said Dobson meant, because every functionary of the State belongs to one or the other political middle class organisation, while he gets his pension from the State. It is working men organisations which State-employed labourers must not join, because they might give support to other labourers, and the State is a machine for the support of the capitalists – not workers.

It is interesting also to note how the Government were sure beforehand of their victory. As they have in Victoria old-age pensions paid by the State, they were quite sure of possessing the most powerful arm to put an end to the strike—much better than the Russian Tsar's or the Italian King's grapeshot.

"You see," Dobson continued, "a very great number of the men are well on in years. They have families, and they are looking forward for their pensions. A *lot of these men will stand by the Government in any case."*

Alas, the Victorian foxes had calculated quite right. Already on May 18th, the railway strikers, in a vote by ballot, decided by an over-whelming majority to resume work on the Government's terms.

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What lesson will the middle classes of Europe draw from this failure of our Australian brothers? They will conclude, of course, that State Socialism is the most effective protection for Capitalism. To sweep a city with bullets, like Milan was swept, is not always safe for the rulers. How much better it is to give such a stick to the workers that they should beat with it themselves! Old Europe, we hope, will hasten to imitate Australia. Balfour will hasten (if he is not displaced by the ex-Republican "Three acres and a cow") to grant old-age pensions – of course, with a vengeance; just as in the Irish Land Bill – so as to make it a charming instrument for keeping the elder working men on the side of the drones. The French *bourgeois* will adopt, in a hurry, the pension law for the plunder of the workmen and for increasing the moneys handed by the State, which was elaborated last year by the Social Democratic Minister of Trade, M. Millerand, but was stupidly rejected by the over-cautious shopkeepers. And the German Social Democrats will this time, we hope, get a hearty support from all the Philistines, and get through without delay, a truly "Victorian" scheme for the transformation of the working men into "servants of the State" – for menial work, of course.

Similar declarations were also made from time to time by old Bebel at the German Congresses. But… know it themselves, and they have cautiously introduced that charming expression – "genuine Social Democracy" – to describe their conception of the stuff, because they very well know that real Social Democracy is now exactly the thing which they condemn in Australia

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True, the Executive Council of the British Social Democrats has tried to establish the other day a

distinction between "genuine" Social Democracy and State Socialism, such as we have in Australia.

"The Executive Council further calls attention," we read in their resolution "to the fact that the ownership of monopolies under the present Capitalist State in the interest of the commercial classes is entirely opposed. to genuine Social Democracy."

Similar declarations were also made from time to time by old Bebel at the German Congresses. But – who cares now among the Social Democrats about such out-of-date declarations of half-a-dozen of Old Mohicans? Nobody in the least! The Old Mohicans know it themselves, and they have cautiously introduced that charming expression – "genuine Social Democracy" – to describe their conception of the stuff, because they very well know that real Social Democracy is now exactly the thing which they condemn in Australia. The State ownership of monopolies, and the State administration of the same, so as *not* to interfere with the fundamental principles of Capitalism, are the first points of the Social Democratic creed all over the world.

See, indeed, the last congresses of the Social Democratic Party in France, Germany and Switzerland. In the Swiss Republic, the program of the party states it quite distinctly: "State ownership of railways" (as in Russia), "of the trade in spirits" (as in Russia), and "of the bank monopoly." Not in the future State, but just now, today, in the middle class Capitalistic State. And no Social Democrats, not even the 'British, have ever condemned that program. In France, au attempt was made at the last Congress to exclude the State Socialist, Millerand, from the party; but the result was that the majority of the Congress was won to his program and approved his policy. As to Germany, the State Socialism policy of Vollmar and Bernstein was twice approved by the Congresses of the party, against the wish of the old ex-Fourierist, Bebel.

Social Democracy *IS* State Socialism – that is, State Capitalism – and this is why it is everywhere a failure. It is *the acceptation, by the exploited workers, of the existing Capitalist State,* an agreement to share power with the present Capitalist rulers, for the duration of a couple of generations, under the fallacious pretext of getting in this way, in the meantime, some concessions in favour of Labour – which concessions, in reality, are usually won much better otherwise, by a direct pressure on the employers. Social democracy is that: and thirty years ago every revolutionary Socialist predicted that it would necessarily end in such a compromise with Capitalism. "Who goes to Parliament will compromise and practise [i.e., make deals]," even Liebknecht wrote this, in 1879, when he was yet a revolutionist. And the Old Mohicans, like Bebel, Guesde, and their English friends, must perfectly realise that, although they do not say it publicly.

They may talk still of "genuine" Social Democracy, but they know there is only one Social Democracy – the one that strives at State Capitalism, and brings about for the worker a loss of all liberty, in exchange for some miserable protection by the State – by the present State, the Capitalist State

The day they shelved ("for the time being," as they said then) the revolutionary aspirations which they cherished in their youth, the day they took "the conquest of power in *the present middle class State,"* as their immediate aim – Social Democracy was bound to become the *compromise with Capitalism* which it is now. They may talk still of "genuine" Social Democracy, but they know there is only one Social Democracy – the one that strives at State Capitalism, and brings about for the worker a loss of all liberty, in exchange for some miserable protection by the State – by the present State, the Capitalist State, the State which, when it owns monopolies, "owns them in the interest of commercial classes," and protects the capitalist by its armies – and cannot do otherwise, without ceasing to be what it is. They know that. And so it will be, so long as the revolution, of which it is permitted no more to speak in Social Democratic papers, comes some day, notwithstanding all prohibitions, and totally changes the whole face of affairs.

when Hyndman once asked me what I thought of the [Social Democratic] Federation, I could but answer him: "Very good! Because – mark it – you are yet scores of miles away from Parliament; but the day that you shall approach it within a measurable distance, that day your party will become as noxious for the revolutionary movement, and as insignificant for Socialism, as German Social Democracy already is."

Peter Kropotkin, "1886-1907: Glimpses into the Labour Movement in this Country", *Freedom* , October 1907

Anarchism and Social Democracy

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Communism, April-May 1904

Some recent vulgar and peevish attacks in *Justice* and the *Social Democrat* against the Anarchists revives once again the question of the differences between the two movements. Passing over the abuse and personalities indulged in by the amiable people who do so much to make the S.D.F. loved and respected, we would point out to the honest members of the Federation that the fundamental principles of Anarchist Communism are at least worth as much consideration as the political programmes of so-called Socialist organisations. But the difficulty is to gain for Anarchism a free and fair hearing. In Conservative England it is so easy to cry down a movement that not only attacks the capitalist system, but the State itself, the back-bone, so to speak, of that system. It so easy to rouse the ire of the "compact majority" against those who would destroy the soul-killing fetters of all religious superstitions, who deny authority in all its forms, and who wish to imbue the peoples of all nations with the pure spirit of international solidarity. Well, Anarchism has been cried down and unscrupulously attacked, not only by the *Daily Mail* and similar organs that live on such work, but by *Justice*, which pretends to know something of advanced movements, and professes a desire for a realisation of Socialism. As a result, younger members of the Social Democratic movement, who have no opportunity of obtaining Anarchist literature, have a total misconception of what Anarchism truly means. The academic discussion of the rights and wrongs of minorities, however important, need not be dwelt on to make the average man understand that a State-controlled Socialist society would be as repugnant to self-respecting human beings as the present system, or possibly even more so. See how the State treats its employés in Australia .and Hungary, and even hero in England in its arsenals and dockyards. Under State Socialism they might be better fed, better -housed, better clothed. But would it give the liberty which Anarchism claims for all, and without which life not only becomes intolerable but loses its real significance? Never. The army of officials would be indefinitely increased and each would justify his necessity by sophisms, as they do today, from Balfour to the hangman. But we are told by people who have simmered their Socialism down to vanishing point in their craving after Parliamentary honours that the Anarchists who preach revolution are becoming a "bourgeois party." Such nonsense is too absurd even for *Justice*. The social revolution from the Anarchist point of view means not only the substitution of Communism for wage-slavery, but also free association and free organisation in place of State-slavery. Social Democracy, however, no longer talks of the social revolution, and even its "stepping stones" get small by degrees and beautifully less. But it talks a good deal of political program, the objects of which would sound tame on the tongue of a good Radical; and in the ranks of its own party the cry of Socialism is lost amidst the din and the clamour of political warfare, with its pitiful personalities and mutual recriminations; whilst the ambitious self-seekers who hope some day to rule us are showing us the capers they are likely to cut when wrapped in a little brief authority. For the Anarchists there is no compromise with these people, who are doing their best to kill Socialism.

a State-controlled Socialist society would be as repugnant to self-respecting human beings as the present system, or possibly even more so… Under State Socialism they might be better fed, better -housed, better clothed. But would it give the liberty which Anarchism claims for all, and without which life not only becomes intolerable but loses its real significance? Never. The army of officials would be indefinitely increased and each would justify his necessity by sophisms

Millerand and Jaures have shown us what to expect from the political Socialists, and we hope the lesson has not been lost on the English workers. We suppose 'that even the best friends of Hardie and Hyndman would feel regret at their ordering out the troops against strikers, or threatening the right of free speech in Hyde Park. But that such things can happen the two French Social Democrats have proved for us. You can hardly get a closer affinity to bourgeois politics than this. Can *Justice* point to any Anarchist in the French ministry? As usual, this unhappy journal has got mixed over cause and effect.

The New Movement in French Labour Unions

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Communism, September 1905

A movement which will probably have far-reaching consequences has been going on lately in France in the Labour unions or *syndicats*; their last congress, which was held last autumn at Bourges, marking an important step in this direction.

For the last fifteen years, or so a deeply-rooted struggle has been fought within the' Labour unions between the advanced and the moderate wings of the French workers ; and for a moment the ideas represented. by the German Social Democrats had apparently gained the upper hand. Strenuous efforts were made, indeed, to convert the Labour unions into simply political organisations for running candidates of all sorts – of middle-class and Labour men, anxious to acquire importance through Parliament. And these efforts succeeded. The German program – Labour legislation through the middle-class Parliament – had prevailed for a time with the French workers.

On the other side, the Republican Government made a bold step, with the intention of taking the whole of the Labour movement under its protection and management. It opened in 1900 the so-called Labour Exchanges (*Bourses du Travail*), through which it hoped to keep the movement in its hands. The municipal councils provided special buildings for these exchanges, and voted special subventions in order to keep these buildings in repair, to light and to heat them, and – still worse – to keep quite a number of functionaries (a manager, an accountant and a number of secretaries) nominated by the municipal councils. Moreover, small subsidies were voted by the municipal Councils, especially at Paris, for several unions.

All Labour unions of a given city could now come together in these buildings; there they held their committee meetings, and gradually the Labour Exchanges became centres for the life of all those workers who had at heart the interests of Labour. The Social Democrats evidently tried to get hold of these, exchanges and to use them as electoral centres, while the central Government saw in these exchanges an excellent arrangement for "the taming of the rebels."

However, a new spirit began gradually to develop in the working men of France. They began to realise how useless were their endeavours to obtain any redress of their wrongs through the usual parliamentary channels, and the old idea which had prevailed at the foundation of the International Working Men's Association – the idea that the freeing of the workers must be accomplished by the workers themselves – began to take root in their minds.

the revolutionists… consider that improvements in the present conditions of labour will only have a real value, and lead to further improvements, when they have been *wrested* from the employers. In this they are at one with the Anarchists

To speak of Paris only, about which we have more direct information, the chief characteristic of the new movement is, first of all, the elimination of the politicians and the "intellectuals" altogether. They had taken too prominent a place in the French Labour movement, diverting its attention towards matters political, literary and so on, things of minor importance, and neglecting those points which are essential and vita for the working man in his struggle against capitalism; and now the workers perceive it. One cannot insist too much upon the importance of this point. The "intellectuals", as a rule, with their literary, abstract, and governing classes' education, have a special turn of mind which unavoidably prevents them from joining heart and soul in the movements that are going on amongst the working men. It is the more so when they constitute a governing group apart from the labourers. The first step to be taken by the workers is, therefore, to get rid of these outside influences. Let those who sincerely intend to bring their forces into the service of the toiling masses merge their lives in the life of these masses. *Then only* will they be serviceable to the workers. This is what the French workers have learned once more by a painful experience.

The other feature which is noticeable now in the French Labour movement is that the "revolutionists" are decidedly gaining the upper hand. over the "reformists." These two terms have, however, a certain limited sense within the Labour unions. The reformists do not condemn revolutionary measures or acts; nor do the revolutionists refuse reforms. But while the

former still believe that useful reforms may be obtained through legislation, the latter consider that improvements in the present conditions of labour will only have a real value, and lead to further improvements, when they have been *wrested* from the employers. In this they are at one with the Anarchists, and their central organ, *La Voix du People*, of which Comrade Pouget is the editor, has carried on a splendid propaganda in this direction.

"Direct action" has now become the watchword of the French Labour unions. More than that, in accordance with the decision taken at the Labour Congress of Bourges, the next First' of May (1906) has been fixed *as the date of the General Strike, to be declared all over France, to demand from the employers the eight. Hours' day*. In the meantime all forms of "direct action" are advocated.

Politics are now absolutely excluded from the French syndicates, especially at Paris. Members of the syndicates may or may not go to church – that is their private affair, with which the Labour union has nothing to do. The same is applied to politics. Vote if you like, but don't bring your electoral pettifogging into the unions.

In this the French unions are like the British trade unions of some ten years ago. But there the likeness ends.

The French unions do not attach the same importance as is attached in England to the cash in hand in the union. They consider that a large sum owned by a union is very often a cause of weakness – not of force. When a strike breaks out, don't rely, they say, upon the cash in hand – it will soon be exhausted. Rely upon free subscriptions, organise Communist kitchens, and above all – inspire a salutary. fear in the employers. This is what the French unionists consider the best weapon in strikes. And we think that the events by which recent strikes in this country have been characterised are meant to give great support in favour of the French view.

Of course, as a consequence, they do not attach an overwhelming importance to the *number* of workers who have joined the union. Let the men of action in each trade join together, they say, and such unions will be as good as unions which embrace scores of thousands, men having no energy to undertake any desirable step in case of need.

It need hardly be said that both the politicians in Parliament and the Government are extremely dissatisfied with this new spirit which pervades the French Labour unions. They have grown alarmed, and the series of conflicts taking place at this very moment at the Labour Exchange of- Paris between the Municipal Council and the Prefect (at Paris the head of the police is the mayor) on the one side, and the revolutionary syndicates on the other, proves how deeply alarmed the rulers are. The Prefect has already once invaded the Labour Exchange with his policemen, and has closed it for a fortnight. Now the struggle has been renewed upon a. question of rules which the. Municipal Council wants to impose upon the Labour Exchange, and which most unions have refused to accept. They maintain that the building which they get from the municipality is *due to them*: the city is not an estate of the upper ten, and the working men have a right to a building for discussing their affairs. But as to rules, they will accept none within their house which they have not sanctioned themselves. This is their own affair, not that of the police or of the Municipal Council.

Therefore a conflict in which the Labour unions must necessarily gain the supremacy is now raging in Paris.

The above remarks will give a general idea of the new direction which the Labour unions in France have taken. The working man., has at last turned out the politician; and the revolutionary spirit wins ground as against those who for fifteen years had intrigued for making the working man a docile instrument in the hands of the middle-class-politician.

It is a new birth of the International Working Men's Association which has begun in France, and it is due to the same cause: the Workers have lost faith in their would-be Radical and Socialist political saviours.

It was high time, indeed, that such a movement took place. Since the victory of Germany over France in 1870, the Labour movement in. Europe has been dragged into Philistine channels, so as to deprive it of every sign of energy. The more some people talked of "class war" and "class interests", the more they used these words to make the working men serve the interests of the Philistine politician. Now the French working men have put the whole question in a few words:

The working men organise themselves for *direct action – a direct-struggle* against the capitalist. Are you with them or against them? Let Parliament alone! and say plainly: Do you join us in this direct struggle or not?

And then – nine months hence the French working men are going-to declare the General Strike for obtaining the eight hours' day. Are you *with* them, with the strikers, or *against* them? No subtleties, please. With the General Strike or against it? Say "Yes" or "No," and we shall know who you are.

The Parting of the Ways

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Communism, October 1905

Those who follow closely the rapidly developing phases in the Labour movement must be keenly aware of the near approach of a great struggle in the heart of the movement itself, between the advocates of political and opportunist methods on the one hand, and the advocates of " direct action" on the other. The battle has been waged before. It was fought in the old International, and as Tchekesov has shown in his *Pages of Socialist History* has echoed and re-echoed in many a Socialist congress since held.

In 1886 the Fabian Society issued a tract (No. 4) called "What Socialism Is." While not endorsing either collectively or individually the views therein expressed, that society had in those days the moral courage to print side by side the State Socialist and the Anarchist Communist conceptions of the political and economic basis of society. It is interesting to note that. even at that time the divergence of methods and ideals clearly indicated the gulf that must eventually separate those who clung to the worn-out political formulas of a decayed society and those who accepted the Anarchist conceptions of Free Communism. The Fabian position was practically summarised in the following sentence: "Education and political power have been the means of suggesting to the oppressed the possibility of changing their social conditions by legal methods, and in this direction such English Socialism as exists has hitherto mainly moved" (page 6). The Anarchist position was expressed as follows: "Anarchists believe the existing organisation of the State only necessary in the interests of monopoly, and they aim at the simultaneous overthrow of both monopoly and State. They hold the centralised administration of productive processes a mere reflection of the present middle-class government by representation upon the vague conception of the future. They look rather for voluntary productive and distributive associations utilising a common capital, loosely federated trade and district communities practising eventually complete free communism in production and consumption" (page 10).

Here we have the two standpoints briefly put, but in neither case was the importance of the Labour movement in future developments fully emphasised. Today the importance of that movement looms large on the horizon. And just as in the Socialist movement the "moderates" turned to politics, which satisfied at once their love of respectability and security, and flattered their sense of their own importance so in the Labour movement the great majority of the leaders have done nothing but accentuate political reform, leaving the direct action of the strike, and more especially the idea of the General Strike, very much in the background.

Whilst the Anarchists can honestly claim to have initiated and advocated the General Strike, whose importance is being more and more understood – even by Bebel – the politicians, your Jaures and Millerands, have answered the strikers with bullets and bayonets, and have faithfully fulfilled all that was predicted of them

It was impossible that things could continue to drag their weary length along the barren paths of mere parliamentary trifling with vital social problems without the more intelligent and courageous workers becoming impatient and disgusted, and turning to the consideration of other means to attain their ends. In France, as we have shown in our last number, direct action, independent of political leaders and political methods, has developed into a powerful movement, which promises to have immense influence in the immediate future. And here it may be remarked with what inexorable certitude the two opposing principles have given their object lessons to the workers. Whilst the Anarchists can honestly claim to have initiated and advocated the General Strike, whose importance is being more and more understood – even by Bebel – the politicians, your Jaures and Millerands, have answered the strikers with bullets and bayonets, and have faithfully fulfilled all that was predicted of them. The logical development of free organisation on the one hand and of State Socialism on the other could hardly be thrown into bolder relief.

The moment has arrived for the English workers to consider the situation as it affects themselves. While it

must be confessed that the majority of the leaders are as conservative and reactionary as the capitalist class could hope to find, there are signs that the workers themselves are not so blind to the real issue as might be supposed. We have not forgotten the action of the Glasgow engineers in refusing to acknowledge the authority of the executive in deciding their right to strike. The stupid policy of Barnes has left the dissatisfaction deeper than ever.

The idea of the French unions must he brought home to the English workers; for while the Trade Union Congress gave no sign of comprehending the new departure in tactics that _has become vitally necessary, the workers themselves are being brought face to face with the parting of the ways. On the one hand they are told to vote and to "pay, pay, pay," and much patience have they shown in this direction. But times are changing, and even the English worker begins to see that the vote gains him nothing, while in the field of "direct action," which is to be the watchword of the future, the issues become clear, the victories more sure, and the ultimate conquest of his economic emancipation no longer an idle dream, but a grand reality.

Social Democracy and the General Strike

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Communism, October 1906

The Social Democratic Congress at Mannheim, it must be said without prejudice, would have had no interest whatever for the Socialist world had it not been for the consideration of a question forces upon it by the progress and development of trade unions and their new tactics – the General Strike. The history of Social Democratic Congresses will not make a very inspiring study for future generations. Not because of the quarrels and personalities which are more or less inevitable in all active organisations, but because of the *causes* of these quarrels, the motives that underlie the trickery and the wire-pulling which absorbs three-fourths of their time. That is why the Mannheim Congress was for the most part a dull repetition of those that have gone before.

At last, after years of hostility and aloofness, and sometimes of calumny and bitter attacks, the Marxists are discovering that labour unions are a growing force to be reckoned with; and they begin to recognise that the time has arrived for them to reconsider their attitude towards them; since if they can be harnessed to the car of the Social Democratic party it may help it out of the rut of political sterility where this cumbrous anomaly has been sticking fast for years. On the other hand, should they escape from the leading strings of the politicians, should they be left free to develop their own methods of direct attack on the economic side rather than the political, taking the initiative in these struggles instead of consulting the leaders – then they see clearly that the days of Social Democracy as at present organised will be few in the land.

Clearly the force of the General Strike is now fully recognised, except by the most hopeless of Socialist reactionaries. But it is equally clear from Bebel's resolution that it is to be employed solely in the interests of the political party of which he is the head, and that never may the exploited and downtrodden worker adopt this means of combatting the robbers without first asking the consent of the political bosses. Some compromise, however, was necessary to secure the goodwill of the trade unions, and to this end the resolution of Dr. Braun (Nuremberg) urging the General Strike as indispensable "not only for the political but also for the trade union aims of the Labour movement" was allowed discussion. Finally, the adoption by the Congress, by 386 to 65 of the second part of the resolution declaring trade unions to be indispensably necessary organisations for the improvement of the social condition of the workers, and to *be as essential as the Social Democratic party itself,* gives a pretty clear idea of the immense influence the labour organisations are gaining in Germany. And the fear that the Social Democrats have lest they should slip from their grasp may be gathered from the further declaration that "it is absolutely necessary the trade union movement should be imbued with the spirit of Social Democracy," and

But it is equally clear from Bebel's resolution that it is to be employed solely in the interests of the political party of which he is the head, and that never may the exploited and downtrodden worker adopt this means of combatting the robbers without first asking the consent of the political bosses

that every member of the party should work for this end.

All this forebodes the struggle that has to be fought out not only in Germany but in all countries where the two parties exist – between those who "fight" by the ballot and those who fight by direct action. In a word, between those who would hold to the State through "the conquest of political power" and those who are for expropriation and the free federation of the workers. In France this struggle has commenced; in Italy, as we explain in our "International Notes," it is developing in its own way; in England it is a question of the immediate future; in America we fear that the workers will wait until Gompers and his party are head and ears in the mud of American politics.

The situation, however, so far as Germany is concerned has its own peculiar interest. Here we have the spectacle of a nation where revolution is overdue. Perhaps the most pitiable exhibition in the whole course of the Congress was the abject plea of Bebel that "the Germans had much for which the people of Russia were still struggling." But the people of Russia are also struggling for much that the German Social Democrats dare not breathe of in the Reichstag. No wonder their sterile political tactics are a byword even among their own supporters, and are the laughing-stock of the ruling classes. It is for this reason that men like Dr. Barth can gibe at them for having no power whatever in administrative affairs, for, being excluded, as he says, from the humble post of a night-watchman, and being denied any share in the work of elementary education, "a condition of things that is not met with in any other country in the world."

The truth is, where the spirit of revolt has been crushed – and Social Democracy has done this for Germany – their three million votes have little terror for the powers that be. That is why "free speech" and "free assembly" are such a mockery in the best educated nation in the world! That is why rampant militarism has the privilege of killing inoffensive citizens. Yes, in Germany a revolution is overdue, and this happens because Social Democracy bars the way. And now arises the question whether the one great hope of Germany, as for the civilised world – a revolutionary labour movement – shall achieve its real aim, its complete emancipation by its own efforts and through its unions, or whether it shall allow that "old man of the sea," political action, to destroy its force.

For ourselves, we believe that the German workers have learned their lesson; that the future is for the General· Strike and Direct Action. We are assured that many members of the unions are working for this end. And if the comrades who are sharing in this struggle hold firm to the arduous yet inspiring work that is needed to ensure success, the results will bring Germany the freedom that should have been hers in the past, and must be hers in the future.

Notes

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Communism, January 1907

WAYS AND MEANS

Does it not seem a strange contradiction that in their efforts to obtain the vote the Suffragettes should have to turn rebels? It seems that if you desire to be enfranchised by the State you must first become a law-breaker. And there is no denying that the Suffragettes are right in their methods, whatever one may think of their aims. But let us have fairness. If the Anarchists are right in their contention that the spirit of revolt has directly or indirectly won practically all that humanity has gained in the teeth of its oppressors, it should be admitted without cavilling that there ·is something else to be done for progress besides voting.

In the preface to the *Reformers' Year Book* for 1907, Mr. Pethick Lawrence makes the following statement *re* the action of the·Suffragettes:

> "With fearless courage they have set the ordinary conventions at defiance. and being all women of the highest personal character and reputation; they have taken upon themselves the mantle of breakers of the law in order that women throughout the country might see and understand and rally to their standard."

It is only to be regretted that so ·much good fighting should be done to gain so little. The vote, if obtained, will leave poor woman .as much the slave of the sweater as she is today. That is certain. But it is to be hoped that the moral of this revolt, and at the same time the organisation of women in trade unions, will prepare_ them for a bold and widespread attack on the present economic system, that will open up a new path to their complete economic freedom. In the meantime it is well to remember that they have commenced on the lines of Direct Action.

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Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Communism, February 1907

THE GERMAN ELECTIONS

The defeat of Social Democracy in Germany hardly supports the Marxian formula that Socialism is inevitable in spite of all the opposing tactics of the ruling classes. The *voting* power of the Social Democrats continues to grow, but how far this helps on the Social Revolution can be judged by the losses just sustained by this party. Reaction, ever ready to use any means to stem the tide of progress, knows how to deal its blows at political opponents just as well as it knows how to use brute force against popular movements. The Socialist who goes into politics need not think he will necessarily escape riot· and rebellion. The political *émeute* claims as many victims as the revolution, and the rulers know better hew to' provoke the former than to avoid the latter. In any case it is the same thing to Kaiser or capitalist – when he scents danger he is prepared to shed blood.

A CONTRAST

Twenty years ago two men were working side by side in the ranks of the Socialists, fighting the cause of the workers. Many things can happen in twenty years, and strange things have happened in the case of these two individuals, from which, as it seems to us, a moral can be drawn. Tom Mann and John Burns were Revolutionists in 1886, and although political action was in their minds, the fatal step that leads astray had not been taken by either of them. Soon after, as we all know, the latter was elected to Parliament, and commenced that political career that has ended in making his name a by-word in the Socialist movement and something for the governing classes to conjure with. During these years Tom Mann has remained more or less continuously an active propagandist, and whatever may be said for or against him, has never deserted the cause of the workers. And now we read in the pages of the *Socialist* of Melbourne how strenuously he continues the good fight in that city. He, with other comrades, has during the past twelve months created a militant Socialist movement that now rests on a firm basis. Indeed, so well has the work been done that it may fairly be said a new life with Socialist ideals is beginning to animate the people of Australia. In all this Tom Mann has worked simply like an energetic comrade amongst others, speaking, demonstrating, fighting as in the good days at home. And the results are something to be proud of, something that all can see, appreciate and understand. In the struggle for free speech now being carried on in Melbourne he has taken a prominent part, and the news is to hand of his release from prison after serving a term of six weeks. These are the men who make movements, and long may they keep their activities for such good work free from the snares and intrigues of politics. So after twenty years we see the results consequent on the parting of the ways: Tom Mann, still with the people, goes to prison in the cause of free speech; John Burns, a political tool of the classes, dines with the King.

Surely there never was a greater mistake than to suppose that to turn one's back on politics was to paralyse all one's energies for useful propaganda. It is indeed perfectly clear to those who reason on passing events that while all the pettiness and the lies of electioneering breed disgust in decent minds, a strike generally arouses the highest instincts of mankind

THE MORAL INFLUENCE OF THE STRIKE

Surely there never was a greater mistake than to suppose that to turn one's back on politics was to paralyse all one's energies for useful propaganda. It is indeed perfectly clear to those who reason on passing events that while all the pettiness and the lies of electioneering breed disgust in decent minds, a strike generally arouses the highest instincts of mankind. In France we have seen a fine example of this in the eagerness with which the workers on all hands have taken the strikers' children to their homes to feed, shelter, and clothe them while their parents fight the hard and never-ending battle for the living wage. Such splendid solidarity has won the admiration of cynical opponents of the strike. Even here, in apathetic London, amongst the music hall artists the strike has aroused a spirit of altruism that was almost unexpected, and will have its influence for good when other and more serious struggles arise.

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Moral of the Belfast Strike

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Communism, August 1907

Our political friends are very much mistaken if they imagine the chief interest in Labour questions will be centred in the House of Commons. We venture to predict that precisely the reverie will be the case. Even those who have actively supported the election of Labour Members begin to look very grave at the barren results of all their efforts. When, however, we turn to the Labour struggles that are in progress on other lines than political ones, a very different lesson is to be learned. In the case of the Belfast strike, which for the moment claims primary attention, we find a spirit developing amongst the organised workers that is most encouraging for the future of the strike movement. It is quite evident that the Belfast men .are worth their salt. Their solidarity, their pluck and pertinacity, are admirable. One feels they know what they want and are ready to fight to get it.

We hope they will win all, for it is little enough. But the spirit they have shown will ensure they are not treated in the dog-like fashion of the Erith strikers. There is a moral in all this. The workers should learn that tameness and submission breed greater contempt in their masters

The *Star* in its defence of the Government's action in pouring troops into Belfast trots out the old formula that "law and order must be maintained." This is the great bourgeois lie that is used again and again to cover and excuse the crimes of Governments when the "classes" are thirsting in the 'depths of their respectable souls for a little of the worker's blood. This sounds extreme, you will say. Nothing of the kind. It is simply a plain, unexaggerated statement of fact. For remember, that never do the workers show the spirit of revolt against the injustice of the exploiters, never is the sacred "property" of those eternal thieves, the capitalists, in danger from the "mob," than the cry is for force – for bayonets and machine guns – for the maintenance of law and order."

Hear the silk-hatted, frock-coated bourgeois talk when *his* wealth – stolen wealth, as everybody knows – is in danger! Why he is the most bloodthirsty animal on the face of the earth. A man-eating tiger is reasonable by comparison. He at least is satisfied with one victim at a time. Not so our man-devouring bourgeois. He would decimate humanity in his lust for profits, dividends, and the rest. No one has estimated how many human beings are done to death every day to keep him contented. The toll of life he exacts every year on railroads and in coal mines makes a fairly bloodstained total. But this is his usual repast, and hardly counts by the side of the orgies he indulges in when he has. his South African wars, his concentration camps, his Chinese compounds, and other little peccadilloes such as occasional massacres, all of which whet his appetite for gold.

So there is no exaggeration in putting the case as we have done. It is in reality understated. But we speak plainly, because if anything should happen in Belfast the workers may understand that it is not the justice of *their* class the Government is concerned to defend, it is not their right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness the troops are there to protect, but the "maintenance of law and order," or, in other words, in the defence of capitalist robbery. If blood should flow it will be for this reason.

Poor working man, who creates the wealth you are forbidden to enjoy! When you ask for a little more butter on your bread, a little more respect for your rights as a man, it is the guns of those you have elected to "protect" you that you must face.

The Belfast strikers will win concessions: that is undoubted. We hope they will win all, for it is little enough. But the spirit they have shown will ensure they are not treated in the dog-like fashion of the Erith strikers. There is a moral in all this. The workers should learn that tameness and submission breed greater contempt in their masters.

One great feature of the strike is that it *tends* to breed courage, dignity, manhood in the workers even when it fails in other ways. Look, for example, at the revolt of the Belfast police. At the bidding of the British Government, the Irish Constabulary have done the most detestable things men could do. They have turned helpless women and children on to the road-

side in winter weather, and this in support of one of the cruellest systems of landlordism the world has known. Our Liberals (in opposition) have told us this and denounced it. They have done worse. They have "created crime" by the most revolting "detective" methods ever employed, and Barrett deserves the moral support of all honest folk when he cries "No. more Sheridanism!" He places himself at once on the side of justice and humanity as against government and crime. Let the world judge between them.

So that the struggle in Belfast holds our attention, teaches us something, lifts the Labour question out of the slough of politics into the light of truth. It puts the vital issues between Labour and Capital in their true proportions and significance. That is why strikes carry us forward, while politics elbow us back.

Notes

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Communism, November 1907

A LESSON FROM "LEGALITY"

In the Melbourne *Socialist* for September 14 Tom Mann puts the last nail in the coffin of compulsory arbitration. He points out how legal methods keep the workers waiting years for a decision, and after a decision is given how an "appeal" by the masters will entirely reverse it, and, to quote his words, "in five minutes the efforts of years are utterly ·destroyed, and the bosses have the men again 'by the wool,' who become a laughing-stock and a byword of reproach." So much for the legally appointed Wages Board. But Mann admits that at one time he was favourably inclined towards compulsory arbitration. Now he admits its failure:

> "Genuine fighting virility seems to have disappeared, and given place to smoodgy, feeble respectability, manifesting little or no concern about the settlement of the industrial and social problem, until in New South Wales the Arbitration Act is now treated as an incubus and dead weight – a hindrance to progress. In Victoria the Wages Boards' decisions when favourable in any degree to the workers can be and are entirely upset by the Industrial Appeal Court. Thus we are compelled to declare that these legal means, whether of Arbitration Courts or Wages Boards, are not a success."

In the end, Mann comes to conclusions in favour of Direct Action:

> "By the ruthless logic of experience must we turn to more active and effective organisation. No more of -the old-time sectional fights lasting any time up. to five or six years, but definite, clear-cut, straight-out Universal Unionism – now more generally known as the Industrial Organisation of the Workers of the World, where engineer and carpenter, tailor and hatter, baker and butcher, and the general mass of· labourers too, shall treat each other as true comrades in the great fight for Industrial Freedom."

They will perhaps learn also that the glorification of a man like Bell… means putting power into one man's hands that no man ought to possess… Bell is everything: the workers are mere cyphers… Successful strikes are never made by the farcical tactics of a Bell. Recognition forsooth! They'll recognise you when you strike. Workers, watch your leaders!

"WATCH YOUR LEADERS"

The railway crisis must have shown very clearly that if the men had but the will, they have the power to bring about at any time a revolutionary situation in the struggle of Labour against Capital. Some day they will have to do this, for the conditions of the conflict will leave them no choice. They will perhaps learn also that the glorification of a man like Bell – whose fooling of their cause is his method of advertisement – means putting power into one man's hands that no man ought to possess. Nothing could be more absurd than the prolongation of this "crisis," which has been done so that one man might have the centre of the stage, while hundreds of thousands of men toil on in suspense. Bell is everything: the workers are mere cyphers. Yet this man is mistrusted by many; and everyone knows how on occasion he can join the feast of the directors and be one of them. And if generalship were needed, what an ass this would be to attempt to lead the men to victory! Successful strikes are never made by the farcical tactics of a Bell. Recognition forsooth! They'll recognise you when you strike. Workers, watch your leaders!

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To Tobacco Workers of Every Country

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Communism, December 1907

COMRADES – The attempted operations of politicians in the interior of the Trade Union movement in Holland have provoked discord in the Cigar-makers' Organisation as well as in other organisations of the country. Among the cigar-makers and tobacco workers the decision was taken by all those who called themselves frankly Anti-Parliamentarian to quit the old Union, the daily practical life of which at least taught that workmen's organisations should not be the prey of incessant quarrels over politics; that we can only fight the masters efficiently upon economic grounds (in strikes, lockouts, boycottings, etc.) if we have thorough agreement among ourselves and do not, try to impose upon others, by discipline and Social Democratic intolerance, political opinions which they themselves do not desire.

The Federation of Cigar-makers and Tobacco Workers (male and female) who, about two years ago, seceded. from the International Union of Cigar-makers and Tobacco Workers, has developed rapidly during its short term of existence. Numbering at the present 1,500 members spread over 33 sections, .it has already almost reached the numerical strength of the Union, which has diminished exactly in proportion as the Federation has gained in adherents.

It is precisely the rapid growth of our new organisation which has chiefly contributed to the recognition that the tobacco workers in other countries most have suffered just the same experiences as ourselves. The intolerance of politicians, who will sacrifice every effort at unity in the economic struggle to their petty task of legislation, is international.

It seems to us certain, therefore, that our work of organisation upon a strictly economic base will not have attained its aim unless we have an International Union of tobacco workers, who, with ourselves, stand plainly upon the revolutionary ground of the class struggle, firmly resolved not to permit mutual separation or division by electoral campaigns and Parliamentary tactics.

Never has the need of an international and revolutionary organisation become more apparent than since the International Congress of Tobacco Workers held in Amsterdam in September, 1904.

From first to last the benefits of political action were emphatically upheld at this congress. And the fact that certain very distinct party tactics were in operation there, has revealed itself by this: that the delegates of the cigar-makers of different countries came one after another to make their Social Democratic profession of faith. In Holland, where Social Democracy degenerates more and more into a purely "small bourgeois" political party, this fact alone was likely to cause offence. But it appears to us that our colleagues, the cigar-makers of other nationalities, can never view with indifference that the workers (in our trade especially) are affected by a feebleness and inertia which disposes them to hope all from their deputies and, as a last resort, from the State, in place of learning to have confidence in their own powers.

In September, 1904, however, we yet hoped – though faintly – to come to a mutual understanding in spite of different political opinions. It was in this hope and not to leave one method untried whereby to fulfil the saying – Workers of all the World Unite! – that the Federation of Cigar-makers and Tobacco Workers (male and female) in Holland requested to be allied to the international organisation side by side with the Union. Invited to explain and justify our demand before the International Congress, we there met with the same intolerance from which we had just escaped.

"We must take part in political action," said Berner, our colleague from Berlin, to the delegates of the Federation: "as *men* we are Social Democrats." And it was with a certain professional pride that he reminded us – "Cigar-workers, some years ago, were the first to follow Lassalle in fighting with all their power and before all for the conquest of universal suffrage."

This is, undoubtedly, very fine, but Lassalle lived fifty years ago, and during that half-century we have at least learnt something – that in the countries where universal suffrage exists, there reigns the same capitalist exploitation as in those where the suffrage is more or less restricted. Are we then, after half a century, to be lured by the same electoral phrases, and shall we because of electioneering interests, permit that our revolutionary action be paralysed?

Comrades, at the International Congress of September, 1904, at the time of the discussion as to our admission, we were confronted with a resolution which we could not accept and which rendered impossible affiliation with the international organisation, since upon the adoption of such a resolution whosoever is not a Social Democrat finds himself at once an outsider.

The exclusion of our Federation becomes striking in consequence of the resolution, which seems to us to be of considerable importance to the world at large.

As the most characteristic portion of this resolution appeared subsequently in a tactical proposal unanimously adopted by acclamation at the Congress, we reproduce it. below:

> "The sixth International Congress of Cigar-makers cannot decide to recommend Trade Unionist organisations of Cigar-makers and Tobacco Workers to affiliate themselves to any one political party in particular ; but the Congress declares political action to be necessary in conjunction with purely Trade Union action, that is to say, of course, the old and tried political action of the Social Democrats ; to this end the Congress recommends all Trade Union workers to take part in politics, and deems it right to state that this Trade Union and political action will furnish the working class not only with the means for the amelioration of the conditions of life, but also for the final enfranchisement of the proletariat."

It is this curious phrase as to political action – "that is to say, the old and tried political action 'of the Social Democrats" – which was so repugnant to us at the time of the discussion upon the' admission of the Federation, and which impels us to say:

It is an international danger which faces the workers' movement, a *danger of being ruled and Social Democratised as formerly the workers' movement was clericalised and catholicised !*

We, however, claim that from the moment of the adoption of the above-cited proposal such of our fellow cigar-makers who are a little less bound by dogmatic conceptions and somewhat more advanced than the Social Democrats will feel as little at home in the present international organisation as will those among them who adhere to other than the Social Democratic party. Even certain partisans of Social 'Democracy have not hesitated to state that the adoption of the above-cited resolution and its being made an essential part in the debates upon our admission, has been a "mistake" and an "act wanting tact."

Nevertheless, on the other hand, this very act has had the advantage of showing us where we stand in what concerns international relations.

Comrades, tobacco workers of other lands, we call for your opinion as to whether the moment has not arrived when the International Organisation of Tobacco Workers, which we see ruled by intolerance and fallen in an evil hour into the hands of Social Democratic leaders, should be opposed by a new and freer International Union – a Union based strictly on the standpoint of the class war and cordial agreement between all the workers in the same trade, an agreement which we can only find in common action upon an economic ground.

Unions and workers in other countries who believe with us that such an attempt at organisation should be made henceforth, are requested to send proof at least of their sympathy. At the same time we ask them particularly to forward us (before February, 1908) their opinion as to organising an International Congress of Cigar-makers and Tobacco Workers, a Congress in which the endeavour for an international agreement on the basis suggested shall stand ns the first point of order of the day.

If the desired agreement, particularly on this point, can be reached, the Federation of Cigar-makers and Tobacco Workers of Holland will undertake all the necessary preparations for the projected Congress, the time and place of which, in this case, can be ultimately fixed in the summer of 1908.

Amsterdam, October, 1907.

All communications should be sent to the Secretary, J. J. HOMBURG, Borgerstraat 124, Amsterdam (Holland).

The last twenty-one years were years of a general triumph of the middle-class ideals and policy over the Socialist ideals. All that could be done by the Anarchists was consequently to keep high the banner of Anarchism; to spread as widely as possible the ideas of a free, no-government organisation of Communism; and to counterbalance as much as we could the centralistic, bureaucratic ambitions of Social Democracy.

In this respect, *Freedom* has undoubtedly accomplished a task which will live. It has helped to shatter these ideas, and it has done something towards keeping alive amidst the British workers those ideas of Free Communism…

And we may be certain now, that when a new revival of Socialist agitation comes, as it came in 1884-86, it will bear the seeds of Communism as against Collectivism, and of Anarchism as against State Socialism.

Peter Kropotkin, "1886-1907: Glimpses into the Labour Movement in this Country", *Freedom* , October 1907

Guy A. Aldred, 1886-1963

Nicolas Walter

The Raven: Anarchist Quarterly, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1987)

The centenary of the birth of Guy Aldred is a good opportunity to remember one of the most energetic and eccentric figures ever involved in the British anarchist movement.



Guy A. Aldred (1886-1963)

He came from the indeterminate area between the lower middle class and the upper working class. His parents were Alfred Arthur Aldred, a former naval officer of 22 who hoped to become a playwright (and later became a theatre manager), and Ada Caroline Holdsworth, a parasol-maker of nineteen. The circumstances of their relationship are unknown, but on September 13, 1886 they married solely to legitimise the approaching birth of their child. They never lived together but separated immediately after the wedding service, and both later contracted bigamous marriages. The child was born at his mother's parents' tenement at 24 Corporation Buildings,[1] Farringdon Road, Clerkenwell, in North London, on November 5, 1886; he was appropriately named Guy Alfred Aldred.

He was brought up by his mother first with her parents and later with her new husband at 133 Coswell Road,[2] Clerkenwell. The main influence on his early development was his grandfather, Charles Holdsworth, a half-Jewish bookbinder who had radical views of politics and religion, supported Gladstone and Bradlaugh, favoured Irish and Indian independence, opposed war, and encouraged Guy in all his activities until his death in 1908. Aldred was educated at the Iron Infants' School in Farringdon Road and then at the new Hugh Myddelton School in Myddelton Street (the latter still exists). He did very well, and there was some talk of his going on to take orders in the Church of England, but he left school at the usual age of fourteen in 1901.

By this time he had already begun a public career that was to last more than sixty years, joining campaigns against smoking and drinking. His intense opposition to the Boer War soon led to his first publication in June 1902-a duplicated leaflet called *The Last Days: Peace or War,* a Christian pacifist tract that showed remarkable precocity. At the same time he adopted the style of clothes-a Norfolk suit with knickerbockers-that he retained for the rest of his life.

For six years he earned his living in a conventional way. After a few months working as a receptionist for an insurance doctor, he got a job as an office boy at the National Press Agency. He soon became a sub-editor, and seemed to be set on the traditional path to a successful career in journalism; in 1907 he moved to the *Daily Chronicle,* a leading Liberal newspaper, but he left after a few months. At the age of twenty he abandoned paid employment forever.

During the same period he travelled rapidly along a well-trodden ideological road from Christian and Liberal radicalism through secularism and socialism to atheism and anarchism. The special gifts he brought to this journey were an insatiable thirst to acquire knowledge and an equally irresistible urge to impart it, together with an extraordinary combination of extreme youth and

[1] Demolished after the Second World War.

[2] Also demolished after the Second World War.

enormous energy (the latter lasting long after the former had gone). At the same time he had the defects of a complete lack of any sense of humour or proportion and an extraordinary combination of self-confidence and self-conceit, which made him an *enfant terrible* in all the many organisations he joined and made him quarrel with almost all the many people he worked with during the next thirty years.

He began as a Christian preacher, and although he soon ceased to be a Christian he remained a preacher for the rest of his life. He was a member of his grandfather's Anglican church of St. Anne and St. Agnes (near St. Paul's Cathedral), but he soon proved too enthusiastic and too ecumenical for such a conventional institution. He took part in the Lamb and Flag Mission to the London poor. In November 1902, when he was just sixteen, he joined an evangelical preacher called Willoughby Masters as a boy preacher in the Christian Social Mission in Holloway. But his message was altogether too social, and he left after a few months. Meanwhile he met some interesting and influential religious characters, such as George Martin, a High Anglican worker priest who served the poor in the Borough district of South London and who taught Aldred about Greek literature and philosophy, and Charles Voysey, an unfrocked Anglican priest who preached to the rich at his Theistic Church off Piccadilly and who befriended Aldred until his death in 1912.

In 1903 Aldred began to attend the Peel Institute, a Quaker settlement for men in Clerkenwell, where he was soon lecturing and where he became disenchanted with Liberalism. In April 1904 he established his own Theistic Mission at Clerkenwell Green, but he quickly ran into difficulties with the attempt to combine Unitarian theology and humanistic ethics, and under the influence of T. H. Huxley and Herbert Spencer he became an agnostic. In August 1904 he took his last step away from religion, changing the name of his project to the Clerkenwell Freethought Mission, speaking several times a week at Clerkenwell Green and Garnault Place nearby, and arguing and even fighting with Christian fanatics. He also began a lifelong practice of writing letters to the press and of producing his own articles and leaflets. (Incidentally, from the start he signed himself "Guy A. Aldred," always using the middle initial.) In November 1904 he began to contribute to the *Agnostic journal,* an established freethought weekly edited by the individualistic Scottish writer William Stewart Ross, who called himself "Saladin" (after the Muslim soldier who fought the Christians in the Holy Land during the 12th century). Saladin called Aldred "a contributor of high promise" in April 1905, and wrote in October 1905: "This Guy, born on Guy Faux day, and intent on an argumentative blow-up of the Houses of Priestcraft, has done so much at eighteen that I am sure the readers of the *AJ* would all like to see what he will have done by the time he is eighty." Aldred later said, "The *Agnostic Journal* office was my college." There in Farringdon Road, as well as Saladin he met the equally individualistic Scottish writer Morrison Davidson, who was sympathetic to anarchism, and other leading freethinkers. He learnt about the lives of Richard Carlile and Charles Bradlaugh, and tried to model himself on their examples of courage and persistence. He called himself "the Rev. Guy A. Aldred," a "Minister of the Gospel of Freethought" and later "Minister of the Gospel of Revolt." For two years he was a frequent contributor to the *Agnostic Journal,* both in his own name and as ''Ajax Junior" (in imitation of the pseudonym ''Ajax" used in the *National Reformer* from 1878 by Annie Besant, whom he interviewed in July 1905). But Saladin died in November 1906, and Aldred soon disappeared from *the Agnostic Journal* (which ceased in June 1907).

During this period he was also an active member of the National Secular Society, frequently speaking on its platforms, and occasionally writing in its associated paper the *Freethinker.* At the same time he was involved in the dissident British Secular League, and in 1906 he tried to form his own group, the London Secular Society (not knowing that there had been one more than fifty years earlier). But by 1907 he had turned away from formal freethought, though he continued to have contacts with the secularist and ethical movements, and he always retained a favourable opinion of Jesus and a mystical view of the world.

He had already been combining secularism with socialism. He was impressed by Robert Blatchford's non-sectarian paper, the *Clarion.* At

meetings in Clerkenwell he heard Daniel DeLeon, the American socialist leader, and John Burns, the British socialist leader. He became convinced that political radicalism should parallel religious radicalism, and at the age of eighteen he embarked on a lifelong political career. In March 1905 he joined the Social Democratic Federation, the leading Marxist organisation in Britain, and soon began to speak on its platforms and contribute to its papers, the weekly *Justice* and the monthly *Social Democrat.* At the beginning of 1906, when a new Parliament was elected with a large Liberal majority and 29 Members representing the new Labour Party, he became the parliamentary correspondent of *Justice.* But he was quickly disenchanted by this experience and gave up his column in disgust in May 1906, his main reasons being the respectability of the Labour MPs, the religious bias of the Liberal Government's education policy, and the evasion of the religious issue by the SDF.

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In September 1906 he left the SDF, disappearing from its papers by the end of the year. He approached other socialist organisations, the new Socialist Labour Party and the newer Socialist Party of Great Britain, but he wasn't happy with either of them. He was increasingly attracted by what he called anti-parliamentary communism, by which he meant participation in electoral politics with a revolutionary program on an abstentionist basis (like the Irish Nationalists), combined with a policy of direct action in political and industrial struggles. In December 1906 he issued an anti-parliamentary election manifesto to the electors of Finsbury, and at the age of twenty he began a lifelong association with the anarchist movement.

At the end of 1906 he made contact with the Freedom Group, formed under the inspiration of Peter Kropotkin in 1886. This produced the monthly *Freedom,* which had been revived in 1895, and was just about to add the weekly *Voice of Labour* as a syndicalist supplement, produced by John Turner, Alfred Marsh, and Thomas Keell. This appeared from January to September 1907, and throughout its run Aldred was the most active (and awkward) contributor. He initiated the Industrial Union of Direct Actionists in May and the Communist Propaganda Group in June, the latter meeting in the basement of his mother's house. From June the paper commonly contained labour movement notes at the beginning by Ajax Junior and IUDA notes at the end by Guy A. Aldred, together with long feature articles in both names in between. In August he made his first speaking tour outside London, visiting Liverpool. At the same time he began contributing to *Freedom,* his articles appearing from June 1907 to November 1908, and he also had some pamphlets printed at the Freedom Press. But at the age of twenty-one, he had become firmly convinced of his own powers, and began to want his own organisation and his own paper.

Aldred's involvement with the anarchists also opened a new stage in his personal life. As a non-smoking, non-drinking puritan, he had little to do with the opposite sex in his youth (though he had flirted innocently with the girl who played the harmonium at the Holloway Mission), and in 1907 he both wrote and spoke in favour of celibacy rather than contraception as the solution of the population problem. But the "life force" – which Bernard Shaw had recently dramatised in *Man and Superman* (1903) – was about to catch up with him. When he opened a benefit meeting for the *Voice of Labour* at the Workers' Friend Club in Jubilee Street, the centre of the Jewish anarchist movement in East London, on February 9, 1907, he met a Jewish girl called Rose Lillian Witcop. She had been born as Rachel Vitkopski near Kiev, the capital of the Ukraine, on April 9, 1890 – so she was even younger than Aldred. She was the fourth

daughter of Simon Witcop and Freda Grill, who had brought her from Russia to Britain in 1895, and like all her family she worked in the garment trade, as a milliner. Her eldest sister, Milly, was the companion of Rudolf Rocker, the German Gentile leader of the British Jewish anarchist movement; another sister, Polly, was also an anarchist; and she was herself already involved in the movement.

Rose Witcop's first known public action was the appearance of a letter in the *Voice of Labour* on March 2, 1907, criticising the women's suffrage movement for giving too much attention to Parliament and too little to working women. Aldred, who was impressed, met her again at the May Day meeting at the Jubilee Street Club, and she soon became associated with his work and then with his life. She went to Liverpool with him in August, though they still slept apart. They don't seem to have been very popular; according to a letter to Keell from E.G. Smith of the Liverpool anarchists on September 16, 1907, there was a parody of a hymn about them:

> Praise Guy, from whom all blessings flow.
>
> Praise Guy, all anarchists below.
>
> Praise him below, ye hellish host.
>
> Praise Guy and Rose, but Guy the most!

They were both very young, very poor, and very determined. Both their families disapproved of their relationship, so they decided to live together without the sanction of Church or State or relations. Aldred left his mother's home, where he had based all his religious and antireligious, socialist and anarchist activities, a few weeks after his twenty-first birthday; Rose left her parents' home in Stepney; and in January 1908 they set up house together in Shepherd's Bush, West London, where they remained companions for the next dozen years.

Guy Aldred and Rose Witcop were together, but they were almost alone. Voysey characteristically and charmingly gave them his (literal) blessing. They earned a precarious living from odd jobs and hack work, supplemented by gifts from Voysey and a few other sympathetic friends. Aldred had left the *Daily Chronicle* in July 1907 in order to become a self-supporting speaker and writer. He lost the use of his mother's house for the Communist Propaganda Group, but he tried to keep it alive and spoke in every place where he was welcome and in many where he was unwelcome. He had launched his Bakunin Press in his mother's home-with the help of Karl Lahr, a German socialist later well known as Charlie Lahr, the bookseller and publisher-and he continued it in Shepherd's Bush. He began his first series of publications – "Pamphlets for the Proletarian'' – mainly based on his own speeches and articles, which he rewrote and republished several times during the next forty years; the fifth in the series was his first autobiography, written at the age of twenty-one. He had more ambitious projects-a "Library of Synthetical Iconoclasts," to include biographies of various radicals and freethinkers, and a book on organisation-but neither got beyond groups of pamphlets.

His main problem was that he belonged to no viable organisation. He had left all those he had joined, often offending senior figures in them-G. W. Foote among the secularists, H. M. Hyndman among the socialists, Kropotkin and Rocker among the anarchists-with the comment, "Wisdom comes before whiskers!" In 1907 he had founded the Communist Propaganda Group and produced a single issue of his own paper, the *Herald of Revolt;* but the former declined and the latter took three years to be revived. By 1909 he was almost isolated in both thought and action, but it turned out to be an important moment in both personal and political life.

Guy's and Rose's first (and only) child was born on May 2, 1909 (her labour appropriately began during the May Day demonstration in Hyde Park). The boy was called Annesley, one of the names of Voysey, who was still helping them financially and emotionally. Later in 1909, Aldred went to prison for the first time. He had been under police surveillance since 1907, when a member of the Special Branch told him was on a list of known agitators, but he eventually got into trouble not so much for doing something himself as for showing solidarity to someone else. In July 1909, a member of the Indian Civil Service was assassinated in London by a member of the Free India Society, and the official reaction included the suppression of its paper, the *Indian Sociologist.* Aldred decided to defend the principle of press freedom, and in

August he produced a new issue of the paper, reprinting much of the suppressed material. He was arrested in August and tried in September 1909 for seditious libel at the Central Criminal Court. Despite his skilful legalistic defence, he was inevitably found guilty and was sentenced to a year's imprisonment-the judge commenting that he was "young, vain, and foolish." He spent ten months in Brixton. Voysey insisted on visiting him as his "spiritual adviser"; Rose Witcop also insisted on visiting him, although she refused to call herself "Mrs. Aldred." (In his absence she began one of her many affairs, with E. F. Mylius, who shared their house.) A new friend who added his support was Walter Strickland, a rich and eccentric baronet who lived abroad and gave Aldred financial help for the next thirty years.

When Aldred was released in July 1910, he began to make his own way on the left. He resumed his work for the Communist Propaganda Group. He and Lahr ran a Ferrer School in Whitfield Street, North London, on Sundays from November 1910 to February 1911. And in December 1910 he at last managed to begin the *Herald of Revolt* as a monthly "Organ of the Coming Social Revolution," the first of the many periodicals he edited and published for the rest of his life. He certainly produced a lively paper, but it was marred by his personal preoccupations. By this time he was combining his early Marxism with his later anarchism and attempting to reconcile Marx and Bakunin in an idiosyncratic synthesis. At the same time he was attacking both Marxists and anarchists with equal abuse, incidentally beginning a feud with the Freedom Press, which lasted forty years. He wrote most of the paper himself Rose Witcop wrote little at first but more later, originally over her initials in reverse order (WLR) and then in her own name; her writing was markedly better than his. One of the more interesting features of the paper was a series of Lahr's clumsy translations from Bakunin. In 1912, Aldred began his second series of publications-the "Revolt Library"-which included his second autobiography.

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Aldred continued speaking as well as writing, covering the country as well as London. In 1912, he visited Scotland for the first time, and became involved with the Glasgow anarchists. He opposed George Ballard (alias Barrett), who was editing a local weekly paper, the *Anarchist,* which was connected with the London Freedom Group; instead he helped to found a new Glasgow Communist Group, and he kept in close touch with it.

In 1911, Mylius was imprisoned for criminal libel, alleging in the *Liberator,* a republican paper published in Paris, that the new King George *V* was a bigamist, and he later immigrated to the United States. Aldred was caused embarrassment followed by relief.

In 1912, he was briefly involved with the *Freewoman,* the remarkable weekly paper produced by Harriet Shaw Weaver and Dora Marsden from November 1911. It began as a "Feminist Review," became a "Humanist Review'' in May 1912, and in June 1912 was succeeded by the *New Freewoman,* an "Individualist Review," which in January 1914 was itself succeeded by the *Egoist,* a paper which combined philosophical anarchism with artistic modernism. Aldred was probably introduced to it by Rose Witcop, whose characteristically sour letter about marriage appeared in it on February 22, 1912. From January to July he wrote interesting articles on women's emancipation, then on the treatment of suffragettes in prison, then on civil liberties and syndicalism, and he edited a reprint of Richard Carlile's 1825 birth control tract *What Is Love?* (July *25,* 1912). A Freewoman Discussion Circle began in April 1912, and he spoke to it on July 3 about "Sex Oppression''-both the oppression of one sex by

the other, and the oppression of both sexes by sex itself. This was a favourite theme, and he seems to have been rather under-sexed by nature, meaning by free love free monogamous unions, whereas Rose Witcop not only preached but practised free love in its more general meaning.

Later in 1912 Aldred became involved with the Industrialist League, a syndicalist organisation that had seceded from the Socialist Labour Party in 1908, and contributed to its paper, the *Industrialist.* One of its leading members, Henry Sara, soon joined Aldred as assistant editor of the *Herald ofRevolt* and a leading activist in the Communist Propaganda Group (and as a lover of Rose Witcop).

In June 1914 the *Herald of Revolt* was succeeded by the *Spur,* subtitled "Because the Workers Need a Spur." Within two months the First World War began, and Aldred entered his finest hour. The *Spur* was one of the few papers that opposed the war without hesitation or qualification from beginning to end. Within two months, it was arousing complaints from the public to the authorities, and in November 1914 a Home Office internal memorandum agreed that it should be suppressed, commenting that "it appears to dissent from all views hitherto expressed" (PRO H045/10741/263275) – a rather good summary of Aldred's position. In fact the paper was never suppressed, but he ran into plenty of trouble. Meanwhile he began his third series of publications-the "Spur Series." He also produced a single issue of a paper called *War News* in 1914.

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Aldred continued his busy speaking program, appearing on the platforms of several socialist organisations and opposing the war at every opportunity. He also opposed the imposition of conscription in January 1916, not only in speech and writing but in bitter practice. In March 1916, Sara was called up and refused to go, and in April he was arrested and imprisoned, being brutally treated in both military and civilian custody. In April 1916, Aldred was also arrested (illegally, as it happened, since he hadn't been formally called up). At that time only single men were liable for conscription, and he argued that he was married to Rose Witcop according to Scots law, having lived with her for short periods in Scotland during speaking tours; in May, a Scottish lawyer agreed, but this argument was rejected by the West London Magistrates' Court, and he was handed over to the Army. The resulting ordeal lasted nearly three years.

In May 1916, he was sentenced by court martial to six months' detention. In June, he was sentenced by court martial to nine months' hard labour. In August, he accepted the status of a conscientious objector, without having to go before a tribunal, and he agreed to go to the labour camp at Dyce, near Aberdeen. He took a leading part in the Men's Committee, edited a prison paper called the *Granite Echo,* and spoke in several places in Scotland. In October, he left the camp, and in November 1916 he was arrested and imprisoned in Wormwood Scrubs. On his release in March 1917, he was immediately rearrested and in May sentenced by court martial to eighteen months' hard labour. He was imprisoned in Wandsworth, where he helped to lead a brief prison revolt in February 1918, for which he was sentenced to six weeks' solitary confinement in Brixton. On his release in August 1918 he was again immediately rearrested and sentenced by court martial to two years' hard labour. He was returned to Wandsworth, where he refused to work or obey orders, and helped to lead a total strike from October 1918. The war ended in November, and the authorities were unable to impose discipline on the political prisoners. Among their many activities, Aldred characteristically gave a series of lectures from his cell. He helped to organise a hunger strike on New Year's Day, 1919, and after a week was conditionally released for a month. He refused to return voluntarily to prison,

and instead began a speaking tour until he was yet again rearrested in March. But after a few days he was unconditionally released in March 1919. He had spent more than two-and-a-half years in custody and, although his health was temporarily damaged, his spirit was never broken. He should be remembered as one of the heroes of the resistance to the First World War.

Rose Witcop continued to produce the *Spur* during his absences, and it was never directly attacked by the authorities like many other anarchist and pacifist papers. Aldred resumed control on his return to a new political situation. The war was over, and the revolution that had come in Russia in 1917 seemed to be spreading across Europe and coming to Britain. Aldred briefly became a prominent leader of the struggle in the British left to form a unified party to support the Russian Revolution and work for a British Revolution.

Among the many complex developments that eventually led to the emergence of a single Communist Party, in March 1919 the London section of the Socialist Labour Party held a Socialist Unity Conference, which established a broad Communist League with a paper called the *Communist* from May 1919. Aldred was the main organiser for the rest of the year, working again with Sara and campaigning all over the country. But this particular venture was soon swept aside by the rival ambitions of two larger parties-the Workers' Socialist Federation (the successor of Sylvia Pankhurst's East London Federation of the Suffragettes), which took the title of the Communist Party in June 1919 and again in June 1920, and the British Socialist Party (the successor of H. M. Hyndman's Social Democratic Federation), which under strong Russian influence became the core of the Communist Party of Great Britain in August 1920-and the amalgamation of the two (together with other organisations) in January 1921. Revolutionary socialist parties, which didn't take the same route fell apart or fell aside, and Aldred moved on again. (Henry Sara moved in a different direction, soon joining the Communist Party and later being expelled in turn from the Labour Party for being a Communist in 1926, from the Communist Party for being a Trotskyist in 1932, and from the Trotskyist Revolutionary Socialist League for being a pacifist in 1939!)

From the beginning of 1920, Aldred concentrated his activities in Glasgow, then the main centre of revolutionary agitation in Britain, and for a time he was one of the leading propagandists, alongside such figures as John Maclean, William Gallacher, John McGovern, and Emmanuel Shinwell. In May 1920, he joined the Glasgow Anarchist Group, which had been re-formed in 1916, and other anti-parliamentarians in re-forming the Glasgow Communist Group, and after the unification of the Communist Party in January 1921 this became the Anti-Parliamentary Communist Federation (APCF). In February 1921 it published the first issue of a new paper, the *Red Commune;* Aldred was not a member of the editorial committee, because he already had the *Spur,* and he had nothing to do with the content of this issue, though it expressed his policy of abstentionist electoral politics analogous to that of the Irish Nationalists, but the authorities used it to strike at him. In March 1921, its office was raided and three of its members were arrested in Glasgow; at the same time his home was raided and he was arrested in London (illegally, as it happened, since the Scottish warrant wasn't valid) and remanded in custody. In June 1921, they were tried at the Glasgow High Court for seditious libel; he was sentenced to a year's imprisonment and the others to three months' imprisonment each. He was held in Barlinnie Prison for the full twelve months, without counting the time spent in custody on remand or any remission.

The *Red Commune* wasn't published again, and the *Spur* ceased publication in April 1921. Rose Witcop had travelled to Germany in 1920. In 1921 she seems to have travelled to Russia, partly to get support from the Third International; but apparently this was offered only on condition that the APCF joined the Communist Party, which was rejected. This episode marked the beginning of the end of the relationship between Aldred and Rose Witcop. Although he never identified himself with the Communist Party in Britain, however, he continued to support the Russian Bolsheviks for several years, even against socialist and anarchist critics.

After Aldred was released in June 1922, he stood as an anti-parliamentary socialist candidate for Shettleston, Glasgow, in the general election, coming at the bottom of the poll with a few hundred votes-an experience he was to repeat several times during the next forty years. This episode marked the beginning of the decline of his influence in the revolutionary socialist movement.



Meanwhile, Rose Witcop remained in London and concentrated on the movement for contraception propaganda and provision. When Margaret Sanger, the American pioneer (who invented the phrase "birth control"), visited Britain at various times from 1914 to 1920, Guy Aldred and Rose Witcop were among her strongest supporters and closest friends; she shared platforms with them, and she accompanied Rose to Germany in 1920. Her pamphlet *Family Limitation* was printed by anarchists in the United States in 1914 and persecuted by the authorities, and the same thing happened in Britain. From 1920 the Bakunin Press published a series of British editions. In December 1922, the police raided the London home of Aldred and Rose Witcop and seized 1,720 copies of the third British edition. They were then proceeded against under the Obscene Publications Act-not a prosecution for the criminal offence of publishing an obscene libel, but a summons to show cause why the seized copies should not be destroyed as obscene. The case was heard at the West London Magistrates' Court in January 1923, Rose Witcop being defended by a lawyer but Aldred as always defending himself with great ability. Despite the strength of the defence and the calibre of the expert witnesses, they lost the case and also the appeal at the London Sessions in February 1923; a further appeal to the High Court was abandoned because of lack of money and unity. The police also raided Aldred's Glasgow home in February 1923 and seized more copies of the pamphlet, but no proceedings followed.

The defendants were supported by the old birth control organisation, the New Generation League (successor of the Malthusian League), but were repudiated by the new Society for Constructive Birth Control led by Marie Stopes (which provoked Bertrand Russell's resignation from the latter). This was the last known court case in the long campaign for freedom of contraception propaganda in Britain, though suppliers of literature and articles were harassed by the authorities until the Second World War, and it prompted a strong reaction from the labour movement. Rose Witcop was involved in the developments which led in early 1924 to pressure on the new Labour government to allow official encouragement for birth control, an overwhelming vote from the Annual Conference of Labour Women, and the formation of the Workers' Birth Control Group, but she soon began to work independently. The prosecution in her case had concentrated not so much on the text of the pamphlet as on the explicit illustrations, and from late 1924 she published further editions without the illustrations and with a new introduction and an account of the case. She also published British editions of other works by Margaret Sanger and other material on birth control and sex education. In May 1925, she opened a People's Clinic for Birth Control and Social Welfare in West London, with support from local Labour Party and trade union members and from health officials and the local press. Later in *1925* she was threatened by the Special Branch with deportation to Soviet Russia, never having been naturalised, and Aldred reluctantly granted her a last courtesy by going through a legal marriage ceremony with her in Glasgow on February 2, 1926, giving her automatic British nationality; they had no further contact.

She ran her clinic, first in Fulham and then in Hammersmith, until she unexpectedly died on July 4, 1932 of peritonitis following an operation for appendicitis. Several articles by and about her were published in the rival *Freedom,* including a long memoir by Aldred in November 1932.

From 1923, Aldred lived in Glasgow, though he used his London address until the beginning of 1926. The APCF had branches elsewhere in Scotland and one in London, but it was essentially a local organisation. In May 1923, he began a new paper, the *Commune,* which lasted until May 1929, supplemented by an occasional *Special Anti-Parliamentary Gazette* from May 1926 to May 1929. For ten years, Aldred took a leading part in a series of free speech campaigns in Glasgow, frequently being arrested for speaking in public and fined for obstruction. In September 1931, the Free Speech Committee which coordinated the campaigns was transformed into a wider Council of Action, for which Aldred produced a new paper, the *Council,* in association with the APCF, from October 1931 to May 1933.

the Second World War began. Aldred opposed this as strongly as its predecessor, and the *Word* became a leading anti-war paper. Aldred... was for a time a leading member of the No Conscription League

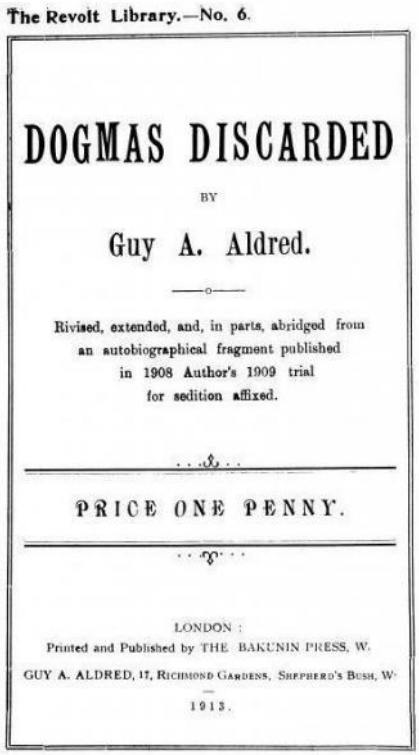
The APCF was involved in the development of what became known as Council Communism, an uneasy and unstable combination of anarchism and Marxism with an anti-parliamentarian and syndicalist flavour. It made contact with similar organisations in Europe and America, and it was involved in attempts to form a Fourth International. For a time Aldred was sympathetic with Trotskyism, and he often launched bitter attacks on anarchist individuals and organisations; according to a letter to Keell from Charles E. Ahlgren of the Leicester APCF on November 26, 1924, Aldred was "running with Communism and hunting with Anarchism." In February 1933 the APCF split, and Aldred's group seceded to form the Workers' Open Forum. (The APCF continued, producing a series of *papers-Advance, Workers' Free Press, Fighting Call, Solidarity* and becoming the Workers' Revolutionary League in 1941, eventually joining a new Workers' Open Forum which was formed in 1942 and continued until the 1950s.)

In 1932, the Independent Labour Party disaffiliated from the Labour Party, of which it had been the largest element, and it immediately became the target of entrism from Communists, Trotskyists, and other revolutionary socialists (a process which continued until it was reabsorbed by the Labour Party half a century later). In February 1934 Aldred joined the Townhead branch of the ILP, in an attempt to support anti-Fascist unity without sacrificing his anti-parliamentarian principles. But his branch soon left the party and joined the Workers' Open Forum in forming a new group, the United Socialist Movement. Aldred had at last achieved stability in unity, but at the expense of numbers or movement, for the USM was virtually a one-man band-or rather a quartet, for he always had the loyal and loving co-operation of Jane Hamilton Patrick (who had been imprisoned in the 1921 trial and who became his companion), Ethel MacDonald, and John Taylor Caldwell-and it stagnated for thirty years, being a populist rather than a socialist or anarchist organisation.

Aldred tried several times to start a new paper-the *New Spur* (December 1933-April 1934), a *Socialist May Day Special* (May 1934), the *United Socialist (October* 1934), and the *Attack* (May 1936)-but he was hampered by isolation and poverty. The beginning of the Spanish Civil War in July 1936 revived him, like everyone else on the left. He began a new paper, *Regeneración* (named after the paper produced by the Flores Magon brothers during the Mexican Revolution twenty years before), which appeared (in duplicated form) from July to October 1936 and again (in printed form) from February to March 1937, and then *News from Spain* and the *Barcelona Bulletin* in May

1937. His publications had the advantage that Ethel MacDonald and Jenny Patrick went to work for the CNT-FAI in Spain, the former becoming well known as a radio broadcaster and then prisoner of the Communists in Barcelona, but the impulse of the Spanish Revolution failed to sustain Aldred's activity, especially as *Spain and the World* grew in influence.

Aldred produced a series of *BE Leaflets* against the British Empire Exhibition at Bellahouston from January to February 1938, and still tried to start a new paper-the *Word* in May 1938 and *Hyde Park* in September 1938 (the latter connected with a free speech campaign in London). Then his situation was unexpectedly changed by the death in August 1938 of Walter Strickland, leaving most of his fortune to be used by Aldred for peace propaganda. Only a small proportion could be recovered from the various countries where it had been invested, but this was enough for him to revive the Bakunin Press as the Strickland Press and to revive the *Word* in May 1939. In 1940, he began his last series of publications-the *"Word* Library''-which included his third autobiography; the series was also bound up as *Essays in Revolt.*


The Revolt Library.—No. 6.

DOGMAS DISCARDED

BY

Guy A. Aldred.

Rivised, extended, and, in parts, abridged from an autobiographical fragment published in 1908 Author's 1909 trial for sedition affixed.

PRICE ONE PENNY.

LONDON:
Printed and Published by THE BAKUNIN PRESS, W.
GUY A. ALDRED, 17, RICHMOND GARDENS, SHEPHERD'S BUSH, W.
1913.

Within a few months, the Second World War began. Aldred opposed this as strongly as its predecessor, and the *Word* became a leading anti-war paper. Aldred hadn't been involved in the formal pacifist movement before (though he was elected to the Anti-Conscription Committee of the No Conscription Fellowship immediately after the First World War), but now he was for a time a leading member of the No Conscription League. He was also closely associated with the Marquess of Tavistock (later the Duke of Bedford), a supporter of Social Credit who took his pacifism almost as far as becoming a fellow-traveller with Fascism. Above all he was a consistent advocate and practitioner of free speech, making the *Word* a forum for all kinds of social and political dissent.

After the Second World War Aldred remained on the fringe of the left, an eccentric figure who jokingly called himself "the Guy they All Dread," though the emotion he inspired was exasperation rather than fear. He continued to speak regularly and to produce the *Word,* and an occasional *Word Quarterly* in 1950 and 1951. He called himself a humanist and established friendly relations with the ethical movement. He was active in the world government movement, and formed a shadowy organisation of world federalists. After the death of Stalin, he once again became a fellow-traveller with Soviet Russia. He continued to abuse all and sundry on the left who broke his rigid rules of correct conduct-including many leading anarchists, and even the editors of *War Commentary* at the time of their trial in 1945. On the other hand, he fought several elections as an independent socialist candidate. He stood in Central Glasgow as a peace candidate in the 1945 general election, and came bottom of the poll. In the 1948 Camlachie by-election he stood as a world government candidate, and came second to bottom. He stood as a peace candidate in Central Glasgow in the general elections of 1950 and 1951, and twice more came bottom of the poll.

Towards the end he began to mellow, living increasingly in the past and treating old antagonists with more respect. During the 1940s and 1950s he suffered extra difficulties when the Strickland Press was blacklisted by the print unions for being a non-union shop (the ironic situation of so many left-wing printers), and he was deeply affected by the death of Ethel MacDonald in 1960. During the last eight years of his life he wrote the final though still incomplete version of his autobiography. In 1962 he stood as a peace candidate for the last time in the Woodside by-election, and for the last time came bottom of the poll.

Aldred suffered a heart attack in January 1963, but he continued to speak and write to the end, dying

of heart failure in the Western Infirmary, Glasgow, on October 17, 1963. A memorial meeting was held in Glasgow on November 3, 1963, and many obituaries were published. Aldred left his body for medical research, and it was eventually cremated in Glasgow on May 4, 1964. John Taylor Caldwell continued the *Word* until May 1965 and occasional issues of the *Word Quarterly* from 1965 to 1967, and finally closed the Strickland Press in May 1968. Large numbers of Aldred's publications remained in circulation for many years, but he left no viable organisation or tradition, only the memory of an extraordinarily courageous but essentially solitary man whose vanity and oddity prevented him from taking the part which his ability and energy seemed to create for him in the revolutionary socialist movement.

Sources

Aldred wrote four versions of his autobiography – From *Anglican Boy Preacher to Anarchist Socialist Impossiblist* (1908); *Dogmas Discarded* (1913); *Dogmas Discarded(2* volumes, 1940); *No Traitor's Gait!* (19 parts in 3 volumes, 1955-63) – but never got beyond 1932. Autobiographical material also appears in some of his other *publications* – *Socialism and Parliament* (1923), revised as *Socialism or Parliament* (l926, 1934, 1942); *For Communism* (1935), revised as *Communism* (1943); *Rex v. Aldred* (1948) – and in many issues of his various periodicals.

Unpublished manuscripts: Aldred Collection, Mitchell Library, Glasgow; Home Office Papers, Public Record Office, Kew; Nettlau and Freedom Collections, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam; Margaret Sanger Papers, Library of Congress, Washington; Marie Stopes Papers, British Library, London. There is an unpublished biographical study by John Taylor Caldwell in three volumes – "The Red Evangel" (1976), "The Essential Aldred" (1983), "Come Dungeons Dark'' (1986). First-hand biographical material appears in publications by other authors: R. M. Fox, *Drifting Men* (1930) and *Smoky Crusade* (1937); William Gallacher, *Revolt on the Clyde* (1936); John McGovern, *Neither Fear nor Favor* (1960); Hastings Russell, Duke of Bedford, *The Years of Transition* (1949); Margaret *Sanger, An Autobiography* (1938).

The Possibility of Anarchism

Guy A. Aldred

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist-Communism, August 1907

The prophet of despair is ever with us, and to him there is no silver lining to any cloud, no promise of sunshine after the storm, no people so fair and upright as to be able to act honourably without force or fear are brought to bear upon them. To him the whole social horizon is shrouded in darkness, and not a ray of freedom's sun is there to separate cloud from cloud. Humanity is inherently bad, and is for ever doomed to be divided into dominated and dominators. Governments, based on fraud and coercion, a representative system founded on legislative corruption, a poverty to offer the contrast to an equally immoral bestial luxury; these things are the ends of all being, the tombs of all aspirations, the alpha .and. the omega of the social serfs existence. And to dream of a society not founded on the "law of constructive murder," of a social state in which all are brethren and peace and good fellowship prevail, of a society founded on truth and freedom, is to become an enemy of the. society .that is, and to be regarded as a dreamer of the most fanatical type. And in the eyes of your "practical" and "business man," no less so than in the eyes of any other prophet of despair, to dream of anything other than of personal success or mammon is an unforgivable offence, socially like unto the theological sin of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost.

Why, then, if the socially maleficent dream of the millionaire can be realised, cannot the socially beneficent dream of the Communist be realised?

What these deprecators of idealism fail to realise is that all social progress turns upon the continual striving of the individual and the community after something better, the continual being and becoming of the whole of Nature, the eternal discontent underlying the most practical of human endeavour. It follows, therefore, from a recognition of this fact that no serious argument can be urged against the propaganda of the Anarchist Communist on the score of his idealism; for if by idealism be understood the yearning after some state of society or of individual being, and

the moulding of the present to realise your dream in the future, then surely there is a touch of the impracticability of idealism about the operations of Wall Street and Stock Exchange financiers. And yet they realise their dreams. Why, then, if the socially maleficent dream of the millionaire can be realised, cannot the socially beneficent dream of the Communist be realised? Is it that behind the forces of Nature there exists an omnipotent power for evil, and that not God, but Devil, reigns o'er all? If so, whence the sweet fragrance of the flowers, the artistic culture of the race, the rich verdure of the fields, the impressive heights, of mountain ranges, the beauties of the undulating plains, the luxury of Nature's foliage? Does not the evil in Nature counteract the good? Is it not obvious to the student that the whole of being is reducible to no explanation that turns upon the existence of either moral or immoral conscious sources of being, but that the basis of all physical and social activity is an *un-moral* tendency to be.

If this be granted, as needs it reasonably must, then we are faced with the fact of man not merely being a social animal, but also a selfish one; the development of the selfish instinct being of. Such a kind as to increasingly occasion the production of those types of character which serve to give an ethical turn to the survival of the fittest, and to make for a state of society in which the purest and ethically fittest can survive. This assertion is founded on no mere Anarchist's dream, but is the substance of the well-reasoned address on "Evolution and Ethics" which Professor Huxley delivered as the Romanes Lecture for 1893. And even though this distinguished scientist and veteran philosopher confessed that "strict Anarchy may be the highest conceivable grade of perfection of social existence," no one will accuse him of basing his expositions of ethical evolution on romantic musings, or on data other than that which he had submitted to severe analysis. Nor is it necessary to rely on Huxley's testimony; it is but sufficient that we trace up the evolution of species, watch the development of the social spirit in man, examine the basis of "duty," and read the pages of history. All these studies will but serve to vindicate the truth of Huxley's contention.

What, then, is man as we know him in the highest stage of actual and potential development? What is his relation, as actual or potential being, respectively to his present environment and an Anarchist Communist state of society? Let us see.

Man, as we know him, in the highest actual stage of development, loves learning, yearns after truth, and identifies his personal happiness with the realisation and maintenance of his ideals. The vast number of artists, poets, philosophers, and scientists who have suffered penury and persecutions for their, principles prove this; the numerous pioneers of Free-thought and social liberty who have been burned at the stake, murdered by the Inquisition, racked, tortured, hanged, and strangled, bear a like testimony; the willingness of the mother to suffer for her children lends further testimony to the inherent social idealism of the individual; whilst the fact that those who would prey on their fellows do so in the name of justice, of spirituality, and of truth supplies the final emphasis. Hence we see humanity is not ruled, at bottom, by coercion, nor by fear, nor yet by injustice. That these things should exist but means that ignorance abounds; let that be removed, and it will be seen that neither justice, nor freedom, nor happiness can exist where the many are dominated by the few. For, self-contained as each individual should be, loyal unto the internal canons of thought, as opposed to external authority, man is, nevertheless, so far as his sense impressions and social existence is concerned, a part of the social organism, an ethical unit, and an intellectual cellular activity acting and reacting upon the society of which he is a part, and, upon the cellular activities to which he is related. Each of these activities or social atoms is dominated by the will to be, adaptation being the order of being. Hence we find that adaptation to and of the environments is continual, those organisms surviving longest which adapt themselves the more readily to their environment. If, then, as has been shown, the environment be favourable to this ethical development – intellectual and economic forces demanding that each organism should perform certain social functions in order to maintain its own right to existence – the logical social expression of this selfishness of the individual is the doing of the good because it is good, the abolition of suffering because pain in others occasions agony for ourselves, the producing, of the best of which we are capable because our natures demand thoroughness in the doing of that for which our organisms are fitted, the taking from the community of that necessary to the maintenance of our being because the welfare of all as also of the individual requires it. And as idiosyncrasies vary, since men and women find hobbies with which to amuse themselves after having sweated for a master, it follows that in a free society not only would each work for all, but each working at that which best suited his or her temperament, there would exist not only happier individuals, not merely a purer and freer society, but likewise individuals living in a society in all forms and modes of productivity tended to good food, healthy living, and deceit clothing for all. Hence the thoroughness of production would be co existent with a minimum of labour and a maximum of social pleasure.

But I shall be told, this is but theory? Quite so; but what of that? If the theory be but a logical reasoning from data scientifically collected, if all data has been considered and none been left out of consideration, if there be no facts that militate against either the basic assumptions or main contentions of the theory, it is but an equivalent in thought of what will inevitably occur in reality. In other words, the theory must of necessity be a correct anticipation and outlining of the future.

If, therefore, the Anarchist theory be not a correct anticipation of the future state of society, if it be impossible of realisation in the not far distant future, it can only be because there have been no pioneers who died for Truth, none: who have been burned for Liberty; because there exists no mother love, have been no Brunos, no Spinozas, no Chicago Martyrs; because behind the most depraved breast there exists no spark of chivalry, no virtuous inclination, nothing above the sordid criminality on which modern society thrives.

Yet we know that these things do and have existed. Then let us be logical, and recognise likewise that the Free Society of which we dream is not only a possibility, not merely a dream of better things which might be, but the inevitable goal to which we are rapidly nearing and which in the course of our social evolution we shall ere long have attained.

In Defence of Anarchism

Guy A. Aldred

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist-Communism, September 1907

Humanity's embracement of the principles of utilitarian philosophy has been in inverse proportion to the hold exercised over the minds of children and adults by the dark serpent of theological superstition. Underlying all social progress is the first law of Nature, the law of self-preservation; and so long as man could live unto himself, for the most part he paid little attention to the wants of his fellows. Only as he realised that from time to time he ran risks of being deprived of his existence and means of sustaining his being did he consent to ever-increasingly recognise the obligations he was under to his fellows. And so we find that individual selfishness lies at the root of all social and industrial development, the apparent growth in the altruistic mode of expressing individual selfishness having no relation to the primary, selfishness of the individual's desires. Thus we find in the tribal state a slow decay in the massacring of prisoners in order to turn them to account as slaves; thus does chattel slavery give way to free slavery; thus has a dominant class ever conceded advantages to those under the yoke of their oppression. In the march of industrial progress altruism has played no part, the utilitarian instincts begotten of the self-preservation desire have ever been the deciding factors; and not a dualistic crossing of altruism and egotism, but a naturally evolved egoism explains the nature of the individual's progress in Communistic inclinations. So much for the State and the economic aspects of man's development. It is now my intention to glance for a moment at the individual or idealistic side of the subject.

As the reader can well see, the nature of a species can be wholly changed as a result of the modifications resulting from the passage through a series of environments; but *only the expression* is modified in the case of the effect of factors operative in the environment on the nature of an individual member of the species. By adding to or subtracting from the ethical factors in a human's environment, therefore, it is possible to divert the inclination of that person from one channel to another. In the meantime it should never be forgotten that economic conditions are continually tending to alter the individual's attitude towards abstract ideas, and to occasion a modification as a result of the action and re-action which exists between the abstract idealism of philosophy and the economic determinism of industrial conditions.

From this it can be seen to follow as a necessary consequence that, whilst the slowly dying fires of theology's hell and the decay of heaven's immortal glory have served to divert men's minds more and more from a regard for a metaphysical paradise for a consideration of how best to benefit themselves here, and have made for a negation of godly endeavour only to secure a more devoted consecration to humanitarian effort. Whilst, on the one hand, it is true of the resulting mental attitude of those who have freed their minds from the thraldom of Mother Church, on the other, economic conditions are more and more making for a modification of churchly influence on the minds of men. In the fact of this action and re-action so existing is to be found the cause of our present chaos and uncertainty in all revolutionary propaganda, our only emancipation from which will be found in the intellectual and economic destinies which constitute the logic shaping the ends of communities as well of individuals. Whilst individually, therefore, man may be said by virtue of his heredity to largely mould his

environment to his own ends, the ideals and inclinations of the race are moulded by external conditions. Hence, socially a creature of circumstances, man is individually a free being capable of influencing his environment, as also of adapting it to his own ends. Only in so far, therefore, as he is a member of a society which recognises his natural freedom can he identify his interests with that of society; and only in proportion as he realises the influence society exercises in the moulding of the character of the race can he consciously contribute to the securement of his own freedom and that of his posterity, along the lines of least resistance; Hence the natural evolution of man, his place in society and his attitude towards abstract problems which have often supplied an excuse for mundane activity, only serve to emphasise humanity's potential possession of the cardinal principles of Anarchist Communism, of mankind's present promise of its inevitable arrival at that state of society which shall witness the combination of absolute individual liberty with the greatest amount of social order. With the many coerced by the few, the only "order" existent at present is that of disorder; with all enjoying the advantages of a free society there can only exist the true harmony of a social order based on an enlightened social expression of individual happiness.

Hence the natural evolution of man, his place in society and his attitude towards abstract problems which have often supplied an excuse for mundane activity, only serve to emphasise humanity's potential possession of the cardinal principles of Anarchist Communism

In order that we might the better understand this phase of our subject it is perhaps as well to note Spencer's contribution to the consideration of society as a social organism. Referring to the individual as a unit in society, he notes the tribal tendency to a small aggregation of individual units, augmenting insensibly in mass. At first, the communities thus formed seem structureless, so simple, is the nature of their structure. In the course of their development, however, they become more and more complex, and the mutual dependence of their component parts or units become more and more firmly established, until, at last the life of each unit is only made possible by the consent and activity of the remaining parts. And, to complete his analogy, Spencer shows that the life of society is interdependent of, and far more prolonged than the lives of any of its component units, which are conceived only to grow, work, reproduce and die, while the body politic, which is composed of them, survives generation after generation, increasing in mass, in completeness of structure and in functional activity. This is society as we know it, the state in which the individual is made by schoolmaster and nurse, by priest and politician, a unit existing merely for the well-being, not of the whole organism, but of the consumptive or parasitical portion of the organism; or, to vary our conception, in which the working section just have sufficient food to keep the central stomach of the organism in activity, whilst the vitals of the organism are being eaten away by the parasitic growths living, in luxury on its activity.

As Spencer points out, however, whilst up to the point named, the analogy between society and biological organism would seem to be complete, the comparison entirely breaks down in that the body cells are of no importance in themselves, but are only of value in so far as they contribute to the well-being of the whole; whilst, in the case of the State, it having no corporate consciousness, its existence is only of importance in so far as it contributes to the happiness of the individual. In the case of the animal, it is well that the directive power should be central, inasmuch as the cellular consciousness is corporate, and therefore central. But as the consciousness in society of its units is individual, the directive force must be individual, and hence all central authority is artificial and an impertinent imposition. Only by the operation of internal canons of thought, only by the individual's growth in the direction of social feeling, by virtue of his own experience and observation, can he learn to identify his own interests with that of the community's well-being. A central activity, devoid of conscious control, cannot do this, for there exist no nervous tissues to convey the results of central legislative effort to all parts of the body politic and inspire the units of legislative vitality. Moral suasion, educative endeavour, rational conviction – these are the only forces which will accomplish this desirable end, and inasmuch as Anarchist Communists stand for these ends as well as for the ideals already enunciated, they need have no fear of submitting their principles to analysis in the mental laboratory of reason.

The Anarchist Sayings of Aristide Briand

Arranged by Guy A. ALDRED

Mother Earth, February 1911

”At the time of a General Strike there will be in the French army in great numbers, sons, brothers, and other relations of the striking workers. When the soldier, – who serves his term far away from the home where he has left a workman’s family behind him, – is commanded to fire on the strikers, he might easily reflect: ‘They order me to fire on these workers, whom they represent to me as enemies. But the soldiers of those regiments which are garrisoned near my home, are ordered, perhaps at this very hour, to fire on my own father or brother, or one of my own nearest friends!’ And then, if the authorities uphold the order to fire, if the officer in command, unrelentingly, would yet force the will of the soldier, when the latter is so full of doubts and troubles – ah then! very likely the guns would go off, but not in the ordered direction! Is not this possibility of weakening the army in the hands of the capitalists a convincing argument for the idea of the General Strike?” – *Speech at the Paris Congress, 1899.*

Thus Briand, the renegade and capitalist Premier, has given practical proof of the truth of the contentions of Briand, the Socialist syndicalist.

“Reflect! Would you not be indignant at the thought that a child of yours might be brought before a court martial because he had hesitated to fire on women? Would you be proud to know that one of your sons had run his bayonet into the body of a child?” – *Ibid.*

“There is not a government nor despot on the face of the earth who would dare to declare war if they could not depend upon the ignorance and indifference of the people furthering their man – murdering plans, – if the signal for war would give the signal for rebellion!” – Ibid.

“Go to the battle with pikes, sabres, and guns! Far from keeping you back, I regard it as my duty to take my place amongst you.” – *Speech at Nantes Trade Union Congress, 1894.*

“It is said that the General Strike is a Utopia, a swindle! No; it is the flag that is destined to lead us to victory. It is a social weapon against the entire capitalist order of society.” – *Ibid.*

“‘We must make use of the ballot-box,’ some of you will say. Quite right! I am no opponent of the ballot paper. But on the day when universal suffrage becomes a nuisance and a menace to the governing class, they will do away with it. And in an emergency they will even have the workers shot down.”[1] – *Ibid.*

“If the government means, through the play of its laws, to regulate or to arrest, in its course, an evolution, which is conditioned by economical necessity and often mocks all presupposition, – it is preparing for itself a bitter disappointment. It dreams about founding a harmony between capital and labour, – a dream that is as futile as the search for the philosopher’s stone or perpetual motion. This social harmony can only be created by the destruction of the exploitation of man by man, by the overthrow of the wage system, - by the coming of the Liberating Communism!” – *La Lanterne, 21 June, 1901.*

“In general, history proves that the people have never obtained anything except what they have taken, or could have taken, themselves. This is also true of every particular case. How many stations are there on the road to the Liberation of Humanity that are not marked by pools of blood? Even apart from the periods of revolutions, it is always under the effect of menace, – through a successful intimidation, – that improvements in the condition of the people – step by step – have been granted. The power of persuasion, even when

[1] Amongst those who have lived to act as capitalist statesmen anxious to verify the truth of these statements is M. Briand himself. This fact should be a warning to those Industrialists who are willing to help men like Tom Mann to get into the English Parliament. Men who realise the futility of the ballot are ringing insincere changes on words when they profess not to oppose the ballot-paper. It is an overt confession of place-hunting, an open expression of a desire to be sent to Congress or Parliament only to betray the interests of the workers. Compromise with Congress or Parliament is a slippery incline upon which no true interpreter of working-class aspirations will consent to enter. G.A.A.

combined with that of circumstances, cannot suffice to dictate laws to the bourgeois class. And besides, were these laws created would there be any security that they would be applied, if the sanction for their existence did not exist in the firmly founded and permanent revolutionary strength of the organised proletariat?" – *Speech for the Defence Before the Jury at Yonne, 1903.*

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An interesting comment upon these Anarchist Sayings of the French Premier is to be found in his open repudiation of the necessity for a constitutional control of the government. The fact that this repudiation has been openly supported by the international capitalist press serves to emphasise the truth of his 1894 declaration that whenever universal suffrage becomes a menace to the security of the capitalist class, they would repudiate it. It also supports his contention – in the passage quoted from the 1903 speech – that the only guarantee of the permanence of any laws benefiting the workers is to be found in "the firmly founded and revolutionary strength of the organised proletariat." In this light it is worthwhile reproducing the following passage from his speech in the Chamber of Deputies, on October 29th, 1910, made in defence of the attitude he adopted with reference to the then recently suppressed French Railway Strike:

> "If the government had not found in the law a possibility of defending the existence of the nation when the country was in danger, if we could not have protected the frontier line of France by legal methods, then, gentlemen, we would have assured the running of the rail ways which are necessary to France's defence, by methods which are illegal. It would have been our duty."

Thus Briand, the renegade and capitalist Premier, has given practical proof of the truth of the contentions of Briand, the Socialist syndicalist.

That Economic Army

Guy A. Aldred

Mother Earth, November 1914

All armies are recruited on their stomach, from that of Salvation to that of Kitchener. This fact explains many anomalies in connection with the present war. Faced with "the bullet" from his job, the average worker turns to face the bullet on the battlefield. Our masters are not ignorant of this fact. Large firms have discharged their male employees between the ages of eighteen and thirty, with a view to compelling them to enlist. Lord Derby has dismissed from his stables every unmarried man who has refused to enlist. Other employers have circularised their staff as to the causes and consequences of the war. This document promises immense trade and much employment in the event of Germany being crushed. It threatens loss of both should the Kaiser prove victorious. Urges every able-bodied man to take up arms, and demands to know what the staff individually is going to do about it. The London breweries called upon unmarried men in their employ to join the army immediately, or take a week's notice. Lastly, the Local Government Board advised the local distress committees to grant no relief to single men, within the prescribed ages, and physically fit for enlistment. This is how the worker has been, and is recruited. Poverty made Charles Bradlaugh a Dragoon. It is making lesser men into Kitchener's conscripts.

"The conditions of life among British workers," said the *Railway Review* for December 13, 1912, "precludes them from taking any interest in their country. Their whole time is spent in making sufficient money to keep them alive. Millions of their number exist on the abyss of pauperism. During this exceptional prosperous year, there has never been less than 300, 000 men and women out of work. In bad times the number is increased to a million or more. Men, women and children, too, to our eternal shame, are sweated nearly to death in heated factories for wages which do not provide them with a sufficient quantity of the necessities of life, luxuries they dare not dream about. Under our present industrial system, workers' lives are wasted as recklessly as ever they are wasted on the field of battle. A shunter on the rail. way runs thirteen times more risk than a soldier did in the South African Campaign. In 1911, there were 4, 306 workmen killed, and 167, 650 injured; ponder on these figures, and then try to imagine what the average work man, who daily runs the risk of losing his life or limbs, must think, when he is asked to vote for compulsory service, so that he may repel a foreign enemy."

Today he does not need to vote for conscription. He enjoys it without the vote. Hunger has compelled him to rally to the flag. On the battlefields of France, he may ponder how little political power a wage-slave possesses. He may reflect how the economic drive has impelled the recruiting agents to their task. We are thinking, in this connection, of the following Labour M. P.'s: Will Crooks, Will Thorne, G. Barnes, and Arthur

Henderson. These worthies represent the Labour Party on the Parliamentary Recruiting Committee, and are appearing, up and down the country, on the same platforms as Earl Curzon, the Marquis of Lincolnshire, J. F. Remnant, M. P., T. MacKinnon Wood, Winston Churchill, F. E. Smith, F. E. Wilde, C. F. G. Master man, etc. All tried and trusted friends of labour!

On the eve of the war, Henderson issued, in conjunction with Keir Hardie, on behalf of the British Section of the International Socialist Bureau, a manifesto against the conflict. This asserted that the success of Russia would be a curse to the world. We do not see how it can be either worse or better than the success of Prussia. Certainly, we have no sympathy with the absurd pro German-government attitude adopted by Keir Hardie. But we would have maintained it, had we been convinced once that it was true. Not so Henderson, he is working his hardest to secure the triumph of Russia. So are Barnes, Thorne and Crooks. Even Ramsey MacDonald – who stood out with Keir Hardie against the war after it was declared – has addressed a letter to the Mayor of Leicester applauding the recruiting campaign. This, though he has explained that the war only aims at substituting Tzarism for Kaiserism. The cause of this debacle is economic. Labour M. P.'s, also, are among Kitchener's conscripts.

Pursuit of the logical working-class course of opposition to the war, recruiting for it, and the interests behind it, would have meant empty coffers both now and in the future. There would have been no paid spectacular plat form appearances today. There would have been no safe seat, no governing class votes, at the next general election. That £400 a year would cease in consequence. All this had to be considered.

Very similar consequences would have attended de liberate silence, in face of the capitalist agitation, and certain craft labour interests involved.

Cannot we understand, then, why the Labour Party has placed the services of its National Agent at the disposal of the Parliamentary Recruiting Committee to assist in the necessary secretarial work? It has forgotten the snub administered by the King and his advisers in connection with the Royal "Home Rule" Conference.

Only the force of economic compulsion can explain such toadying.

With the platforms and press controlled by the capitalist class, there was but one comfortably popular path to take. This was to recruit. It promised immediate finance at a time of threatened famine. It guaranteed the future.

Support is lent to this assertion by the manifesto is sued by the Parliamentary Committee of the Trade Union Congress. This document congratulates the Labour Party upon its recruiting activities. It adds that, unless the voluntary system affords enough recruits, the demand for conscription would become so persistent and so strong, as to become irresistible. It thinks that this prospect should stimulate recruiting.

All who fear the coming moment of action are slaves, who, owing to their incapacity to conquer true freedom, are most willing to surrender even the pretence of liberty

Lord Haldane, when Secretary for War, avowed that universal military training would be possible after the next great war. It does not follow that the response to Kitchener's Appeal, however great, will stay the attempt to foist conscription upon us. It might accelerate it. As long as possible, however, our Labour Leaders must avoid a crisis. They are obliged to follow the line of least resistance – and pray that decisive action, indicating real opinion, may never be necessary. Rushing up recruits may avert the evil day. It at least staves it off. So the present form of economic conscription is applauded, by the Trade Union Leaders – who are also conscripts.

To drive men into the Army, by telling them that if they do not, they will be forced to join, is conscription. The issue is not between the sham voluntary system and the full-blown coercive one; not a question of marking time, but of going forward. We are not so anxious to cherish volunteering as to abolish capitalism. All who fear the coming moment of action are slaves, who, owing to their incapacity to conquer true freedom, are most willing to surrender even the pretence of liberty. So long as they maintain their jobs, what does the cause of the commonwealth matter?

Organised labour takes its stand on the craft struggle, not the class struggle. It wishes to regulate its wages, not to free itself. It consents to lose its life in its efforts to solve it. The job alone is its principle. Union conditions reconcile it to the blatant murder howl, "My

Country, Right or Wrong." Wages made the construction of death's battery right in time of peace. They justify it now – in time of war and depression, when few jobs are going, and money is a consideration. Engineers are interested in the protection of ammunition hoists and the studding of machine-faced scarphed joints. Boilermakers are concerned also in the studding of armour-plate. So keen has been the competition for this work, that the demarcation disputes between the two organisations of skilled labour have led, often, to threats of strike. When we add that coppersmiths, braziers, and other metal-workers also gain their livelihood in dock yards and armament factories, it can be seen that Mr. Barnes represents not only his own economic interests in boosting recruiting, but also that of organised labour, as represented by the Engineers, Boilermakers, Copper smiths, and Sheet Metal Workers Societies. He represents their needs as wage-workers, their power to accumulate Union funds, the living of their secretaries.

Quietly and firmly, each Socialist must decline to serve the murder cause, but refuse to handle a rifle at the bidding of the ruling class. We can do no less than this. We shall do much more.

Will Thorne, again, represents the East End of London, the needs of its misery, the call of its degradation. Here was constructed in 1911, at the Thames Ship building Works, the Super Dreadnought, the battleship "Thunderer," which the Archbishop of Canterbury launched. To the inhabitants of Canning Town, the construction of this vessel meant the subsistence level, the bread line. When the warship work was lost to the Thames, the West Ham member, in company with Lord Roberts, addressed a huge protest meeting, demanding the work for London as opposed to Newcastle. So with Will Crooks. He applauds the war, and represents an industrial constituency interested in the creation of armaments.

Last year it was reputed that Armstrong, Whitworth & Co. supported 120, 000 men, women and children by the Newcastle-on-Tyne works alone – that is, about a third of the city's whole population. Which means lively working class, and trade union working class, interests in war scares. The call for certain literature means work for those engaged in printing it. Without a revolution, the compositors, linotype operators, etc., cannot control the printing presses in the interests of labour. So long as their demand is for wages or better conditions, their interest is with the market. They are glad to print the recruiting appeals, glad to print war scares, glad to see the papers rushing out – regardless of their contents. Opposition to such work, indeed, would militate against the well-being of the armament workers, would affect their livelihood, and disorganise the entire trade union movement. So organised labour works against its own emancipation; gives no heed to the character or purpose of its production; and is very anxious to discover a blackleg in the printer of every radically-socialist magazine. Dreading the development of militarism, the workers eke out their miserable existence by promoting it.

Similar relations between capital and labour exist in Germany. Similar results are seen. The interest of the German workers, as commodity sellers, unites them with the assassin profit interests of the German ruling class. *Nowhere do the real interests of the workers as a class enter into the consideration. Nowhere do they come together as a class.* To do so, would be to precipitate the revolution, to declare war on all class society, its industrial despotism, its hypocritical political superstructure. It would be to proclaim all international well-being; to wreathe the universe in sunny smiles, to rock the world with joyous laughter, to banish want from every clime, restore to maidenhood its modesty, to youth its innocence; to maturity, all healthy endurance, to old age, a sweet evensong, to all things the high mysterious charm of worth.

That charm is but a vision, a dream of unreality, today. Leaving the un-fine arts for the intrigues of labour, we have the international shammed in the international federations of the workers. But yesterday, our brother secretary of the pottery workers of Germany, affiliated to the pottery workers of England, sent his greetings, and evidence of his union's solidarity. Today, our brother secretary is at the front, fighting his brother-secretary from England. By the same mail, a common brother secretary in America received their greetings – despatched ere their departure for the front. He writes a Canadian brother, stating: "Our brothers are at the front." At the front? Yes! What, fighting the common foe? No, fighting, each other! Still, they are our brothers in the international, members of the same union. Let us wish them luck. Let us send them our trade union greetings.

In North London resides a family whose father is a German, whose mother is English. The two eldest sons, born in Germany, have returned thither to join the German Army; the two younger sons, both of whom were born in England, have joined the British Army and have gone to the front. Like trade union brothers, they have joined the firing line.

Not that the trade union brothers are hypocrites. Only their international is a wage's international, not a free man's federation. Potters join hands with potters across the frontiers – to keep up the potter's wages; carpenters with carpenters, and so on with the textile, transport, to bacco, wood, boot and leather, and factory workers; with the tailors, saddlers, lithographers, furriers, etc. Sincerely they wish each other well. Heartily they would support wage-struggles in other industries – after their own! But their own industry comes first, and they do not consider the effect of their success upon the lot of the other workers. Slaves of the market, they rejoice in its briskness. Where they are concerned in the manufacture of guns and warships, the workers in Krupp's rejoice with those in Vicker's, at the war-scares which keep them in bread. They internationally organise on the strength of the busy time, and greet each other with affection. All they want is a fair price – for their labour power. When war comes, and distress prevails, then they are still glad to make the means of their own destruction; for work means less want. During the recent years of "Dreadnought" clamour, the National Society of Coppersmiths, Braziers, and Metalworkers, has been active, trying to secure better conditions for coppersmiths working in Home *and Foreign* Dockyards! Ben Tillett has supported the armed nation theory – and secured work for members of the Dockers' Union, digging trenches! At the next strike, we shall hear Tillett and others abusing Thomas Atkins. Shall we forget that trade unionism has helped to promote this war? Has drawn its wages from circulating the interested lies of the warmongers? Has paid its leaders out of gun-making? Has armed, clothed, and cheered Tommy to the front – both in Britain and Germany? Shall we forget that the elect of Labour. has assisted in crushing its fellows into the barrack room? That it wishes to perpetuate the system – on the prostitute's terms, the best possible price?

Capital alone, is not responsible for this war, labour has done its share. We know Dean Inge, that gloomy light of St. Paul's Cathedral, has derived profit from his interest in the British manufacture of Austrian torpedoes. We know the Postmaster-General, the Colonial Secretary, the Speaker of the House of Commons, and Mr. Asquith's brother-in-law, the Under Secretary for War, are among his confreres in this infamy. But were trade unionists unwilling to turn out Spanish, Japanese, Chinese, Chilian, Turkish, Brazilian, Argentine and British Warships in our dockyards? Or did they rejoice to think that Vickers' Automatic rifle-calibre gun had been adopted by five governments? Was it not pleasing to their international that the standard rate of wages was paid in the Canadian, Italian, Japanese, Spanish, Russian, Portuguese, and other works of the British Armament Trust?

The. wage-labour object of the workers' international has compelled it to back, at one and the same time, the German "Flottenverein" or Navy League, and also the British Navy League: Pan-German and Pan-British on the same grounds, for the same reasons. Thus the international trade union movement is, itself, the recruiting office for the Kaiser's Army as well as Kitchener's Army. Could folly reach lower depths of outrage?

Dr. Ludwig Franck, Social Democratic member for Mannheim, died fighting at Luneville – for the Kaiser's cause!

Men not only think from their stomach. They listen from it. Interviewed in London, the end of last year, Professor Delbrück, told the *Daily Mail* representative:

> Germany for the past fifteen years has been a country of immigration, not of emigration, and her excellent school and university system is producing every year a surplus of educated men. If we possessed more territories inhabited by inferior races, their administration and development would afford to this educated surplus the same kind of occupation and employment that Englishmen of a similar class find in Egypt or India.

We can complete the picture for ourselves. Patriotic lectures – at so much a lecture, journalistic exploitation of commercial antagonisms – at so much a column. International trade union subserviency to the national con centration of capitalist rivalries. Endangerment of the fatherland, and death of Franck. What if he had op posed the sentiment of the economic interests which swept him on to his doom, in company with so many German workers? We know the consequences. Franck was an economic conscript.

Try to relieve the picture by a reference to those native Indian troops and the seven princes who have accompanied it to the front. Surely this is no economic army. These are no conscripts. Pause – and inquire, ere you assert too much. Consult the *Treaties, Engagements and Sanads* published under the authority of the British Government in India. Consider how the political occupancy of India followed on its

economic exploitation. Remember that Anglo-Indian officialdom objects to constitutional government in the native states, on the grounds that the chiefs personally are responsible to the British Government for efficient management, and that they cannot divide their responsibility with their subjects. As early as 1820, in an official *communiqué*, No. XXVI, found on page 142, of volume VI, of the book mentioned, the Gaekwar of Baroda is told:

> With regard to internal affairs Your Highness is to be unrestrained, provided you fulfil your engagements to the bankers, of which the British Government is guarantee. The Resident is, however, to be made acquainted with the plan of finance which Your Highness shall determine on at the commencement of each year. He is to have access to the accounts whenever he requires it, and is to be consulted before any new expenses of magnitude are incurred. The guarantees of the British Government to ministers and other individuals must be scrupulously observed. Your Highness to choose your own minister, but to consult the British Government before you appoint him.

The other native rulers are less independent even than the Gaekwar of Baroda, more completely under British domination. None of their troops are, individually, economic free agents; and Anglo-India does not wish them to enjoy any pretences, even, to the position of political citizenship. What sane man can consent to view them other than as conscripts?

We have seen then the economic army in its process of evolution; have noted its many ramifications. It is for capitalism to take the bull by the horns, to proceed to its militaristic crisis, and to proclaim compulsory military service. Lord Glenconner – brother-in-law of Mr. Asquith, an interested party in the Nobel Dynamite Trust, who derived profit from arming Germany and Austria – as an officer of the National Service League, would urge it on to this extreme. It is not for us to say him nay. We are prepared to welcome the conflict. Our reply will be to assert the first line of revolutionary offence. The capitalist bid for the final slavish recognition of its complete authority, its absolute supremacy, will meet with no talk of an economic army. It shall discover a revolutionary one. Quietly and firmly, each Socialist must decline to serve the murder cause, but refuse to handle a rifle at the bidding of the ruling class. We can do no less than this. We shall do much more. If violence is to be the final arbiter of rights, the workers will decide on the arbitration in their own way, on their own day, for their own cause – the establishment of the world-wide Socialist Republic, the Anarchist Commonwealth.

– *The Spur*, London.

Trades Unionism and the Class War

Guy A. Aldred

1919

AUTHOR'S NOTE (1919 Edition).

Trade Unionism and The Class War was published first in 1911. It met with a great deal of criticism and received one complimentary notice. This was from "Dangle" in the *Clarion*! It was reprinted in 1914 in the *Herald of Revolt*. The present edition is revised. The introductory section is expanded into a chapter. The third section of the original pamphlet – which would have been the fourth as the essay now stands-treating with the question of representation is omitted. This properly belongs to the companion essay, *Representation and the State*, and will be embodied in it when that pamphlet is revised. Many persons object to the reasoning of this essay because they consider its logic fatal to all idea of action. This criticism is based on a misunderstanding. I do not deny that men and women must function under capitalism and engage constantly in petty disputes. I only insist that such disputes are not 'vital. By preaching up dissatisfaction, I am removing the tendency to engage in worth-less palliative effort, and hastening the crisis. After all, action which accomplishes nothing, is not of much moment. And trade unionism has accomplished nothing so far as the well-being of the entire working-class is concerned. The plea for revolution is not pedantry. It is a simple statement of stern necessity. The second and third chapters are unaltered, except for a passing word here and there, from the original pamphlet.

London, W., June 1919. G. A. A.

I – Trade Unionism and Revolution

The struggle of the Tolpuddle Martyrs for the right of combination under the Reform Ministry of 1832 marks the beginnings of British Trade Unionism. The glamour of romance which belongs to its origin has contributed to its successful development as a social institution. Eight years after the Repeal of the Combination laws, Trade Unionism was deemed an illegal conspiracy. Today, it is a bulwark of the capitalist system.

Something more than tradition is necessary to explain this passage from outlawry to respectability. The explanation is an economic one. Trade Unionism has conquered social power and commanded influence in so far as it satisfied and arose from the social necessities of the capitalist epoch. Because it has answered capitalist needs, the Trade Union has qualified for its modern position as the sign manual of skilled labour.

But the growth in social and political importance of the Trade Union leader has not menaced the foundations of capitalist society. He has been cited more and more as the friend of reform and the enemy of revolution. It has been urged that he is a sober and responsible member of capitalist society. Consequently, capitalist apologists have been obliged to acknowledge that he discharged useful and important functions in society.

This admission has forced them to assert that the law of supply and demand does not determine, with exactness, the nominal –or even the actual price of the commodity, labour power. Hence it has been allowed that Trade Unions enable their members to increase the amount of the price received for their labour-power, without being hurtful to the interests of the commonwealth – i.e. the capitalist class – when conducted with moderation and fairness.

Modern Trade Unionism enjoys this respectable reputation to a very large extent because it has sacrificed its original vitality. This was inevitable, since, in its very origin, it was reformist and not revolutionary. Trade Unionism has sacrificed no economic principle during its century's development. It has surrendered no industrial or political consistency. But it has not maintained its early earnestness or sentiment of solidarity. Had it done so, it would have been compelled to have evolved socially and politically. Instead of stagnating in reform, it would have had to progress towards revolution.

The Trade Union apologist, consistently with his reformist out-look, has had to defend the restrictive tendencies of sectional organisation. He has had to deny the revolutionary solidarity of labour in order to defend the Union manufacture of blacklegs. He has rejoiced in a craft organisation that materially injures the interests of labour as a whole, without even benefiting it sectionally. He has shown no qualms about supporting a representative system of administration, which betrays the worker to capitalist interests.

All this activity proceeds inevitably from the belief that Trade Unionism benefits the worker economically. It follows naturally from the notion that the worker can improve his social and economic status under capitalism.

Trade Unionism, therefore, is intelligible only on the ground that reform is possible and revolution unnecessary. Industrial palliation, like political palliation, is based on the understanding that no epoch ever attains to a crisis. This is the best that can be said for the necessity of Trade Unionism.

But suppose that the law of supply and demand does determine, with exactness, the nominal as well as the actual price of the commodity, labour power?

Then the best that can be said for the necessity of Trade Unionism as opposed to revolutionary communist organisation and action has ceased to possess any meaning.

To develop this economic argument in favour of the social revolution, and against Trade Union reform, is my purpose in writing the present brochure.

II – The Case for Trade Unionism

Nominal wages are actually received in cash, irrespective of the conditions of employment. Actual wages are nominal wages, plus the conditions of employment, hours of labour, etc.

What is the basis of wages?

Marx has asked us to suppose that an average hour of labour be realised in a value equal to sixpence, or twelve average hours of labour realised in six shillings. If, then, in the raw material, machinery and so forth, used up in a commodity, twenty-four hours of average labour were realised, its value would amount to twelve shillings. If, moreover, the workman employed by the capitalist added twelve hours of labour to these means of production these twelve hours would be realised in an additional value of six shillings. The total value of the production would therefore, amount to thirty-six hours of realised labour-power, and be equal to eighteen shillings. But as the value of labour-power, or the wages paid to the workman, would be three shillings only, no equivalent would have been paid by the capitalist for the six hours of surplus value worked by the workman and realised in the value of the commodity. By selling this 'commodity at its value for eighteen shillings, the capitalist would, therefore, realise a value of three shillings for which he had paid no equivalent. These three shillings would constitute the surplus value or profit pocketed by him. Any increase in the wages of the workers must reduce the amount of his surplus value, since that is the only fund out of which such increase could be obtained. It is possible for the wages of the workman to rise so high as not only approximately to equal the value of his

product, but actually to equal it. In a word, if the law of supply and demand works with the inexactness assumed by the Trade Unionist to be the case, palliation is not merely justifiable on the grounds of expediency; it is the direct path to emancipation.

Is it true that the law of supply and demand fixes the price with so little exactness, that supply and demand become equal not at an exact point of price? May it be that several prices, or a range of prices, will satisfy the requirements of the law? That there is, or may be, a kind of table-land within which the law does not operate? Let us take the Trade Union political economists? typical example. A hundredweight of fish is sold by Dutch Auction, .i.e., the seller bidding down instead of the buyers bidding up. One buyer may be willing to give 20s. for the lot, and no other buyer willing to give more than 18s., and the man who is willing to give 20s will get the fish at 18s or a fraction over it. So that in the same market, with the same quantity of fish for sale, and with customers in number and every other respect the same, the same lot of fish might fetch two very; different prices, the law of supply and demand being equally and completely fulfilled by either of these prices. Within a limit of 2s. the law is inoperative.

It is claimed, that in a case such as this, much depends on who has the initiative in bargaining. In the instance given, the possessor of the initiative gives to the seller a distinct gain of 2s., not accounted for by the law of supply and demand. Supposing the price of labour-power to fall within a similarly excepted category, the same principle as operated against the buyer in the case of the Dutch Auction will now operate against the seller in the labour market. It is the buyer who has the initiative in fixing the price. The employer, the purchaser of labour-power, makes the offer of wages. The dealer or seller, i.e., the labourer, accepts or refuses. The advantage of the initiative is with the employer therefore. This can only be modified by a close combination among the employed, whereby they may place a reserve price on their labour. Under these circumstances Organised Labour may secure a larger positive amount of the produce of its labour-power, within the limits not covered by the law of supply and demand. It may, therefore, secure the economic equivalent of culture by virtue of its organised status.

Outside of this tableland the law of supply and demand remains intact. The more numerous the competitors for employment the lower will the wages be, other things being equal. This fact forces on the attention of the Trade Unionists the necessity for restrictive rules, forbidding the employment of non-unionists and limiting the number of apprentices. Such rules are indispensable to the complete efficacy of Trade Unionism. They make the Trade Unionist the apologist for an aristocracy of skilled labour.

Trade Unionism's final refuge is Malthusianism. Its specious pretence is that the ignorant and untrained part of the proletariat will people up to the point that will keep their wages at that miser able rate which the low scale of their ideas and habits makes endurable to them. As long as their minds remain in such a state the Unionist claims that he does them no real injury in preventing them from competing with him for employment. He only saves himself from being brought down to their level. He does no wrong by entrenching himself behind a barrier to exclude those whose competition would bring down his wages, without more than momentarily raising theirs.

Again, even were it to be shown that Trade Unionism did not increase the nominal rate of wages, it has to be admitted (says the Unionist) that it is able to do much by raising the actual rate of wages. Its least accomplishment is to successfully resist irritating, arbitrary, and oppressive conditions of employment.

But the power of the organisation of labour in this direction turns upon its recognition. In times of dispute there may be room for negotiations between employers and employed upon the question of maximum or minimum demands. For the Trade Union to be effectual there can be no room for compromise on the question of recognising the Union and receiving the Union official representatives. This limits all need or apprehension of a strike to such recognition. So that the right of combination recognised, the men's demands become a matter of amicable arrangement.

Such is the case for Trade Unionism. We now propose to expose its fallacies, and lay bare its hypocrisies.

III – The Workers' Case Against Trade Unionism

The reply to the argument which I have developed in defence of Trade Unionism in the foregoing section, naturally divides itself into the following division:-

1. The operation of the economic law against the possibility of palliation, so far as the entire working-class is concerned: – Although it is true that the law of supply and demand does not fix the terms of any particular bargain, the operation of that law does not finish with the conclusion of that particular bargain. This has been clearly demonstrated by Cere in his reply to Mill. According to whether buyer or seller secures what is termed "a bargain," – demand or supply is checked or stimulated. This applies to the Dutch Auction Fish Sale. A sale of 20s would tend to stimulate future supply and check demand. The consequent

tendency would be towards a fall in price. A sale of 18s. would tend to bring out more buyers and reduce the inducement to go to sea. The consequent tendency would be towards a rise in price. This would bring out more sellers and reduce the number of buyers once more. This is true also of the wages of labour. Higher wages bring out more workers but reduce the employer's profits. So that the employer becomes less anxious to secure workers. A lower wage has the reverse effect. The worker now becomes less anxious to be employed. But the employer is more willing to employ. Once more there is repetition. Working by tendency only, the economic law approaches exactitude over a multiplicity of cases, but not in any particular case. The means of the oscillations of price is now an exact point, not a range of prices. The terms of any particular bargain are, consequently, only of the most transient importance even to those immediately concerned. But they are of little or no importance to the workers or employers as a class, since they are constantly being brought back to their true economical point. The compensating influences being inevitable and automatic, it will be seen that, in its position as a class, the working-class has nothing to gain from Trade Union Palliative activity. Its only practical hope, as well as its beautiful daydream, is, first, last, and all-the time, Socialism the Communal Individualism of which Oscar Wilde made himself the prophet in that magnificent book, The Soul of Man.

Trade Unionism must go. The only hope of the workers on the industrial, as on the political field, is Revolutionary Socialism.

2. The impossibility of raising actual wages without regard to 'nominal wages: – Mavor has put the case in a nutshell. If a reduction of the hours of labour results in decreased production, wages will fall, other things being equal. If reduction of hours results in maintenance of production per man there will be no additional employment, other things being equal. The equality of other things turn upon the law of supply and demand which palliative combination does not effect. Consequently, Trade Unionism can neither effect wages nor yet the question of employment.

3. The impossibility of organising the whole of labour on the basis of Trade Unionism: – The Trade Unionist when excluding the blackleg and manufacturing him pretends to look forward to a complete federation of labour. But if all labour stands upon the platform of palliative combination a very different thing from revolutionary solidarity – the effect will be nil in view of the operations of the law of supply and demand. A union of all labour is as good as no union at all from the palliationist viewpoint. Even a "minimum wage" of higher rate than at present established means only the decreased purchasing power of money. Between labour-power as a commodity and other commodities there exists a definite ratio of exchange. So that a 'minimum wage" is meaningless. But a union of all labour on the basis of Trade Unionism is impossible. With all trades organised on a restricted basis it would be impossible for any trade to rid itself of its surplus by causing them to be absorbed into any other trade. But for Trade Unionism to succeed – with the increasing use of machinery and the consequent reduction of skilled to unskilled labour-it must also organise unskilled labour. Such organisation to succeed must be even more restrictive than in the case of skilled labour. Unskilled labour cannot, therefore, absorb the surplus from all the skilled trades Not only so, but to this surplus it would add an enormous surplus of its own. So that restrictive Unionism can only result in first deluding the working-class, then betraying it, and finally reducing the greater portion of it to blacklegs in the present and future.

4. The menace of Trade Union Representation; A question of Labour Leading: – Trade Unionism embodies the menace of the representative system in its constitution no less certainly than the legislative machine. Its elected leaders conclude strikes and disputes by consenting to terms of compromise offered by Capitalistic Ministers for Labour, and Presidents of the Board of Trade. To pretend that such terms of agreement are antagonistic to capitalist interests is to be disturbed by a bogey. On the other hand, for what does the strike-leader generally strive? To get his authority recognised. This is the first step to position and power. It is pretended that the greater the support given to the labour-leader the greater the concession he can wring from the capitalist class It is forgotten that the greater the confidence reposed in him, the more effectually he can betray that confidence. Consequently, your "official" strike-leader is always for "enthusiasm and earnestness" of the "slow and sure" variety. His plea is for caution, which means that he is to be allowed to do the bargaining but not to be

submitted to criticism. Criticism be regards as a menace to his authority. It certainly reduces his selling-out value.

5. The initiative Absurdity: – The Trade Unionist argument that the unorganised worker suffers from not having the initiative is nonsense. Rather – if it really counted, which it does not – one's sympathy should be with the employer who uses it against the unorganised worker. In the case of the organised Trade Unionist, it should be with the worker who is menaced by having it used on his behalf by the labour leader who generally succeeds in misrepresenting him. Everyone knows that employers often throw the onus of initiative on the worker. In a bargain both buyer and seller are anxious only to avoid it. "What do you want?" says the buyer. "That is not the question, what will you give?" replies the seller. Both parties are desirous of securing a bargain, and consequently avoid the initiative. It has no advantages although it operates very little one way or the other in the labour market. So that Trade Unionism has nothing to offer the worker in this respect.

On these counts, therefore, and for these reasons, Trade Unionism must go. The only hope of the workers on the industrial, as on the political field, is Revolutionary Socialism.

IV – The Question of Representation

Much that has been urged in the present brochure has tended to negate the idea of majority rule, as also the representation principle. Like most rebels – and, for that matter, most students of history – I have no faith in the majority, less unbelief in the minority, and most reliance in the individual. Thomas Paine regarded Government as being, like dress, a badge of lost innocence. He also looked upon the abolition of formal government as the beginning of true association. This seems to me to be incontrovertible. Consequently, if my opinion be correct, representation, as an expression of formal government, can have no weight, and must necessarily play a small part in the revolutionary birth-struggle of the proletarian commonweal.

To bring this theory down to the realm of the practical, I want the reader to consider the following case which has often been put to me in the course of debates and discussions in which I have played the part of principal. It has been said that if a certain individual was working in a shop where sixty men were employed, and fifty wished to come out on strike whilst ten wished to remain in, the author of this hypothetical case was in favour of coercing the ten and making them come out, whilst the fifty fought the "boss." Such coercion, it is urged, alone will rid the proletariat of their subjection to the capitalist and Capitalism.

From this opinion I venture to differ. Indeed, I repeat in print what I have often urged on the platform in reply to the hypothetical case already enunciated that the majority have no more right to coerce a minority than the minority have to coerce a majority. The fifty have no more right to coerce the ten, than the ten have to coerce the fifty, since in relation to society, the hypothetical fifty strikers are but a small minority, and if it be true that many are right where few are wrong, then the presence of seventy strike-breakers in the neighbourhood of the strike plus seventy soldiers, would entitle the "majority" of 150 men, as opposed to the minority of fifty, to "coerce them" out of the neighbourhood. Herein lies the capitalist apology for Mitchelstown, Featherstone, Homestead, Belfast, and every other scene of the patriotic murder of the working-class by the hired assassins of profit mongers. For it must be remembered, that we are not treating of the ethics of coercion in relation to oppressed minorities, but of the economics of apparent majorities' rights to coerce a minority.

If we were to consent to deal with probabilities rather than with fact, it would be urged that the one hundred and fifty men do not represent society, nor the whole working-class, for it is probable that the latter would stand by the fifty. Yet every worker, as also every employer, knows that the news of the strike could be flashed throughout the length and breadth of the land without the official scoundrelism which imported blacklegs being denounced to the extent of all the workers striking in sympathy and thus threatening to coerce the blacklegs who were in a minority. With all their feelings of sympathy and faithful devotion to the cause of united endeavour it would be impossible for the whole working-class organisations to exhibit industrial solidarity.

If all the workers were willing to strike, they need only stay in work and take over the means and instruments of production for their own use. Revolution would replace a mere industrial struggle. The workers would not be concerned with craft or industrial divisional organisation, nor with the local coercion of blacklegs, nor with the propaganda-strike even, but with the emancipation of their class only. The struggle would be constructive, not negative. There would be no necessity for "physical force coercion of blacklegs, since the economic existence of gentlemen of this fraternity would be impossible under such circumstances. If all the workers were educated up to that stage of economic solidarity, that they were willing to strike in sympathy and massacre blacklegs according to Union-laid regulations, the working-class revolution

would be international and spontaneous. There would be no strike for higher nominal, or for higher actual, wages; only the coming together of the workers internationally for the political and industrial overthrow of the bourgeoisie, and the taking of whatever united industrial and political activity the Class War demanded by way of its culminating expression.

If the workers declined to strike in sympathy, it would be because they did not sympathises industrially with the revolting fifty. Yet, as consumers and fellow wage slaves, by the logic of economic production and distribution, they would be affected alike by the existence of the strike and its termination. The question as to whether they were right in passively siding with the employes does not enter into the problem as stated by the psuedo-proletarian defender of representation. The only question is the right of the majority.

democracy usually signifies the surrender of majority incompetence and mis-education to the interests of minority expertism and bourgeois concentration of its power over the lives and destinies of the exploited proletarians

By refusal, the majority have shown that they are opposed to this gentleman and his forty-nine imaginary colleagues. His position is altered slightly, and the manifesto of the resolute fifty now is addressed to the whole of the rest of the working-class, which is engaged not in striking in sympathy, but in passively siding with local minority of blacklegs and the Capitalist class. The manifesto, therefore, should run: "Being in a shop where sixty men are at work, and fifty of us want to strike, and ten do not, I am in favour of coercing the ten and making them come out, while we fifty fight the 'boss.' As the rest of the working-class and the whole of the Capitalist class side with the 'boss' and the ten non-strikers, I am in favour of coercing the majority of my own class and the whole of the Capitalist class also."

What would be society's answer? Why, that of the Trade Union-apologist-or-strike-believer-in-majority righteousness! Thus, a worker who was not in favour of the striker would say: "If I am in a society where a vast majority of the proletariat can have their present ill-being intensified, and poverty added to their poverty, by fifty men going on strike, I am in favour of coercing the fifty and making them go back to work, whilst we, the majority of the workers, meet the 'boss' through our representatives on arbitration and conciliation boards, and through peaceful agencies, secure higher wages and better conditions."

Maybe the revolting strike defender would turn aside with his sturdy band of followers, numbering forty-nine all told and sighing somewhat critically, relieve his feelings by giving utterance to the following piece of philosophy "The majority have no more right to coerce a minority than the minority have to coerce a majority. The fifty have no more right to coerce the ten than the ten have to coerce the fifty. Society has no more right to coerce the fifty strikers than the fifty strikers have to coerce society But the minority has as much right to coerce majority as the majority has to coerce the minority. Ten strikers have as much right to coerce fifty non-strikers as fifty have to coerce ten non-strikers. And society has as much right, and no more, to coerce fifty strikers as fifty strikers have to coerce society. Where might reigns rights do not exist. Where the political reflex of industrial complexity is centralisation of control and administration, individual autonomy is impossible. The only question is: Seeing that the emancipation of the working-class means the emancipation of the world, and that we base our argument on logic and reason; that by quiet and resolute activity the workers can he brought together in one revolutionary 'Impossiblist' movement to tie up the workshops of the world, amid the anathemas and violence of impotent Capitalism struggling in its death-throes; that violence against our own class can never atone for the violence of the capitalist against us, but only make for an orgy of bloodshed which will delay the sure and certain overthrow of parasitism; seeing, in fact, that Socialism is inevitable and that the very oppression of the working-class constitutes its final economic and political strength, is extraneous violence, i.e., an interference with the liberty of the strike-breaker by virtue of physical force above and beyond the law of economic effect in production, distribution, and consumption, advisable in the interests of the workers today, and the securement of the commonweal for which they are striving?"

This, I repeat, is the question which our physical force constitutional palliationist, supposing he understood the situation, would ask himself.

My reply – since I own no arsenals, have no monopoly of gatling or Maxim guns, and am not a Nonconformist Cabinet Minister – would be "no," especially since, in accordance with the law of social evolution, I believe in conserving all the principles of past progress in the direction of liberty. And freedom, so far as economic tendencies permit, I hold to be such a principle. Indeed, the fact that I have to so qualify it, means that the right of freedom is admitted, with rare, if any, exceptions, so long as the economic status quo is not disturbed.

Though the expression of the Class struggle will be political, its basis will be economic, so that it can no longer be willed into a physical force one. It does not require that the reader should agree with me on this point for him to realise that no prerogative to murder, boycott, or coerce is specially invested in the majority, because the deity of abstract rights has decided that the majority is the majority. If coercion be right, its successfulness must decide its employment. Successful or otherwise, it is no more right for the minority than the majority to coerce, and neither more nor less obligatory upon it not to do so.

This is my position – as a Socialist – of equal rights for majority and minority, which, being recognised, would not lead to the hopeless confusion that majority rule does. It is a confusion of bourgeois begetting, leading to the experiences of Motherwell, Hull, Grimsby, Featherstone, Penrhyn, Mitchelstown, and Belfast. The negation of the alleged right of majority violence is based upon the economics of the Class War.

Our Trade Unionist friend, with his loose revolutionary violence and threatening, as opposed to a sound revolutionary activity, finding himself either consciously or unconsciously on the side of bourgeois society, will insist that there must be representation and delegation of authority.

To this I reply with the statement of Marxian philosophy, that every industrial epoch has its own system of representation. The fact that minority and majority rule find their harmonious expression in the political bureaucratic autocracy of capitalism signifies that its negation in the terms of Socialism shall embody a counter affirmative which embody the principle of true organisation and freedom of the individual idiosyncrasy. What the details of that organisation will be shall be made the subject of discussion in another essay. That it will not be "a Socialist majority" can be seen from the fact that democracy usually signifies the surrender of majority incompetence and mis-education to the interests of minority expertism and bourgeois concentration of its power over the lives and destinies of the exploited proletarians, no less through the medium of the worker's Trade and Industrial Union, than through that of the Capitalist State.

Marx truly conceived of the bourgeois State as being but an executive committee for administering the affairs of the whole bourgeois class, which has stripped of its halo every profession previously venerated and regarded as honourable, and thus turned doctor, lawyer, priest, poet, philosopher, and labour leader into its paid wage workers. The Trade Union becomes daily more and more an essential department or expression of the bourgeois State.

Out of the class or property social system there cannot emerge a "representation" which signifies an honest attempt to secure just exposition of principles and expressions of antagonistic interests. Where there is no social or economic equality, there can be no democracy and no representation. The barren wilderness of money-juggling "freedom" cannot secure real personal liberty of being to any citizen. True organisation like true liberty belongs to the future – and the Socialist Commonwealth, or, as I have termed it elsewhere, the Anarchist Republic.

Socialism and Parliament

Guy A. Aldred

1923

The advent of a Labour opposition in the House of Commons, the near possibility of that opposition becoming His Majesty's Government, have revived interest in the question of parliamentary action. Bitter plaints at the historic failure of Parliamentary methods are tempered with a faint hope that something may be achieved by parliamentarism. It is forgotten that reform activity means constant trotting round the fool's parade, continuous movement in a vicious circle. Something must be done for expectant mothers, for homeless couples wishing to housekeep, for rent-resisters, something to reform here or there, regardless of the fact that capitalism is a hydra-headed monster, that the reforms needed are as innumerable as the abuses begotten of the capitalist system, and such abuses increase with every modification of capitalist administration, the better to perpetuate the system. Under these circumstances it is necessary to restate the arguments against parliamentary activity, to explain and to prove that parliament was never

intended to emancipate the working class from the evils of capitalism, that it never can and never will achieve this result.

So much is clear from the very conditions under which electioneering is conducted. Before even a single vote has been obtained the Labour candidate has compromised. His very candidature exposes the weakness and inefficiency of parliamentary action. Seeking votes from an electorate anxious for some immediate reform, he puts aside the need for social emancipation to pander to some passing bias for urgent useless amelioration. He panders to prejudice, and avoids facts. This is because Parliament is an institution existing for the defence of class society, the domination of man by man, the representation of opinions, and not the administration by the wealth producers of the wealth produced. Consequently the candidate must time the pulse of capitalist society, subject his first principles to the opinions arising out of capitalist conditions, to current local superstitions and respectabilities and immediate needs or fancied interests. He does not aim at assisting the toilers to secure the direct administration of wealth production by the wealth producers in the interests of the wealth producers. He aims only at representing, as toilers, in the capitalist political institution, the opinion of men who must remain toilers so long as the parliamentary system continues. Pandering to capitalist needs and interests, electioneering stifles the revolutionary idea without which the Social Revolution and the Industrial Commonwealth can never be achieved.

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Emma Goldman has stated the point well in the following words: “Parliamentarians are not Socialists at all, but politicians. Their only purpose in the world is to get the old politicians out, in order that they might work themselves into their places. In their mad effort to get office they deny their birth right for a mess of pottage, and sacrifice their true principles and real convictions on the polluted altar of politics.”

Thus Ramsay MacDonald wrote a letter in October, 1910, in connection with the selection of a Labour candidate, in which he stated: “The whole matter was very carefully considered, and I was instructed to state that my committee cannot agree to conferences for the selection of candidates being held on a Sunday.”

Is not this letter eloquent of the fact that all parliamentary action necessitates abandonment of principle? Does it not proceed from the capitalist code, recognise a superstitious cant current in respectable capitalist society, and assume a desire to maintain the integrity of capitalist illusions? And is there not at least one Labour M.P. for London, who has opposed Sunday games on the Commons, because he wants to preserve the rest-day on the Sabbath? All which means that parliamentarism is the domination of the working class, its aim and outlook by the small trader’s party, its cramped vision and mean class interest. It is the perpetual sacrifice of democracy to social and economic exploitation.

No one knew this better than Marx. Shortly after the publication of the Communist Manifesto in 1848, the revolutionary storm that burst over Europe called forth Marx’s Eighteenth Brumaire and Revolution and Counter-Revolution. Both these works are classics of revolt, and bear on the vexed question of parliamentarism. As history and philosophy they have never been surpassed. Definitely, and with monotonous reiteration, their author proclaims Parliamentary and Constitutional action to be counter-revolution, because the strength of the middle class, the small-traders’ class, is in Parliament, whilst the workers’ strength is on the street. He shows that Parliament is at the mercy of the military, not the military at the deposition of Parliament, and ridicules “constitutional freedom” as a comfortable middle-class way of negating real freedom. He also impeaches Social-Democracy, in name and in substance, that very Socialist parliamentarism of which Ramsay MacDonald is the leader today: the “proletarian leaders’” political betrayal of the workers to the small traders’ interests, the sad record of inherent weaknesses, constitutional limitations, revolutionary trimmings, and treacherous substance. Parliamentarians, Marx dismisses, in scornful words that apply forcibly to the acrobats at Westminster of today, as poor, weak-minded men, so little accustomed to anything like success during their generally very obscure lives, that they actually believe their parliamentary amendments more important than external events. Could better description be conceived of Welsh, the miner-poet M.P., who followed up his much applauded maiden speech by an account in the

Sunday Express of the ghosts of dead legislators, all capitalists, he saw at Westminster and his veneration for the atmosphere of "the Mother of Parliaments," actually employing this cant capitalist description as his own? Can one imagine the speech of such a man being intended to emancipate the workers when its author is so desperately anxious for admiration and a political career. Fancy seeing the ghost of that hoary old humbug, Gladstone, and wishing to emulate him when one should be inspired by the spirit of one's dead and living comrades of mine, the field and workshops.

Welsh pled in the atmosphere of capitalism to the assembly of capitalism for the amelioration of capitalist conditions. He awed the representatives of capitalist finance! Are we to believe that their awe will militate against their determination to perpetuate capitalism? Are we to forget that parliamentarism gave France Aristide Briand and President Millerand? That men who once sentimentalised as Welsh does, murdered in Germany Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxembourg? Are we to suppose that speeches in Parliament effect legislation, that they reach the workers outside of Parliament, that they appeal to the capitalists within? Nothing of the kind.

Speaking in the debate on the address, on Tuesday, February 13th, 1923, John Wheatley complained of the empty benches to which anti-parliamentarians always said he would address his protests. The following night the Pall Mall Gazette reported his protest with a sneer as follows: "During the dinner hour last night, when the Labour members seized the opportunity to harangue each other and a handful of Government supporters on the grievances of the hunger-marchers, Mr. Wheatley was indiscreet enough to make reference to the smallness of the attendance."

But it may be said that Parliament is a sounding board, that although the members withdraw from the street corners and the workers' lecture halls, the speeches they make in Parliament are broadcast through the columns of the ordinary press to the workers of the country. This is not true. Here are the number of words given by the London penny morning papers to Labour M.P.'s who took part in the House of Commons' debate on Tuesday, February 13th, 1923:

The papers other than the Daily Herald made no reference to the intervention in the debates of David Kirkwood, J. Maxton, J. Buchanan, Neil Maclean, Campbell Stephen, J. Muir and T. Johnson. If Wheatley makes a good speech we have to turn to Forward for the public report, which means that the report reaches only the readers of Forward, and is confined more or less to Socialist readers. Newbold's efforts are reported in the Communist press. Scrymgeour relies on his Prohibitionist. Obviously the value of speeches in Parliament turn upon the power of the press outside and exercise no influence beyond the point allowed by that press. So long as the workers are dependent upon that press for their news and for their outlook, so long as they have no intention of doing other on the industrial field than to obey for wages the press magnates and so to poison the wells of knowledge, Labour parliamentarism is impotent as a propaganda activity. When the workers decide no longer to be the stool pigeons of their own destruction, Labour parliamentarism will be unnecessary. The complete failure of parliament as a sounding board compels us to realise that the political struggle of the class war is an economic one, a direct struggle between the financial ownership of the press and of the workers' thought and the revolutionary agitation and social-industrial power of the workers themselves. So long as the workers are devoid of economic power, so long as they remain represented slaves where they should be active and communing freemen and freewomen, the workers have no social voice, no press, no political power.

However often they advise the worker that revolution is impossible, they know and feel that it is not impossible. So do the Conservative reactionaries… the Labour member and the Tory member are moved by a common dread… by fear of the consequences of Anti-Parliamentary agitation if nothing is done by Parliament.

Aristide Briand, who was to become the miserable capitalist premier of France after he entered on a parliamentary career, put this point well when he made his famous speech for the defence before the jury at Tonne in 1903: "In general, history proves that the people have never obtained anything except what they have taken, or could have taken themselves. This is also true of every particular case. How many stations are there on the road to the Liberation of Humanity that are not marked by pools of blood? Even apart from the periods of revolutions, it is always under the effect of menace – through a successful intimidation that improvements in the condition of the people –

step by step – have been granted. The power of persuasion, even when combined with that of circumstances, cannot suffice to dictate laws to the bourgeois class. And besides, were these laws created, would there be any security that they would be applied, if the sanction for their existence did not exist in the firmly founded and, permanent revolutionary strength of the proletariat?"

It is only the effect of this menace, only the fear of the power of the revolutionary agitator outside parliament, that persuades the capitalist class to tolerate the presence of Labour members inside. This is well-known to every student of politics. Bonar Law, during the General Election of 1922, expressed the need for Labour members in Parliament in order to avert revolutionary activity and collapse of the capitalist system. Major Birchall, the Conservative member for N. E. Leeds, who publishes an occasional printed letter from Westminster to his constituents, backs this up. Describing the effect on the Commons of the Labour Party's speech-making in the debate on the address, February, 1923, he says: "Chief interest was attracted, as usual, by those who made the most noise – the Labour members. There have been several scenes, but no one was any the worse for the small explosions which occurred. These extreme men are much safer in the House of Commons than outside."

The Labour members respond anxiously to this idea. They also urge on Parliament the need for Parliament to do something for the down-and-out in order to avert social revolution. However often they advise the worker that revolution is impossible, they know and feel that it is not impossible. So do the Conservative reactionaries. Whatever division of interest is created by career-hunting, however much difference may exist between the extent that one is willing to palliate as opposed to the other, the Labour member and the Tory member are moved by a common dread. They are admittedly moved by fear of the consequences of Anti-Parliamentary agitation if nothing is done by Parliament. Thus, Mr. Scrymgeour, the honourable member for Dundee, in his maiden speech in the House ,of Commons in November, 1922, warned the Government of the strength of the Anti-Parliamentary feeling existing among the working-class in the following passage, which embodies the spirit of the entire speech:

> "I speak as one representing a most important industrial constituency in which there has been a very decisive change in its Parliamentary representation ...
>
> "I want to say that there is a growing conviction among the vast body of the people in this country, and by that I mean the workers, that this House has unfortunately, altogether, irrespective of what Government is in power, been trifling with these gigantic issues.
>
> "I have had considerable experience in different, parts of the country, more especially among the miners of Scotland, and I know there are forces growing among them which are absolutely convinced in regard to aggressive ideas and arguments which have been driven home in public debates by one whose name will be familiar to all in this House, I mean Mr. Guy Aldred. Mr. Aldred is a very able man and he is desperately in earnest in every point which he drives home, and he was cheered to the echo when he denounced any belief in religion and when he was committing himself to the most drastic line of action, he was cheered by men and women on every point. I want Hon. Members to realise what that means.
>
> "I wish to emphasise that this House has not been grappling with those issues in the way that earnest working men and women feel they ought to be grappled with. With all due respect to those who officially represent the Labour Party, I have pointed out from my independent platform that there has been a growing feeling among the workers that the Labour Party has not been so aggressive or determined in carrying out their professions, and as the outcome of this there has been a growing feeling in favour of the Communist movement. My anxiety is that we should have some clear line of action laid down on this question in order to give proof to the workers that we mean business."

Is it not clear from this speech that the only live political movement of the working-class is the Anti-Parliamentary, that movement sets the pace of all social reform, that Labour members speak from fear of its criticism, that Conservative members listen because such talk is less effective than the action it holds up, because parley is better than revolution for those who live on the backs of those who produce?

It may be said that something real might be achieved, that there would be less pandering if only the Labour members were in a majority at Westminster and were sure of the complete backing of the working-class as a class. It is said that revolutionists have done nothing at all for the people. This pleading is very old, and reminds one of the very stupid speech made by Wilhelm Liebknecht long ago at the famous Erfurt

Social Democratic Congress. W e select two gems that sum up the entire apology of the Parliamentarians – and destroy it with equal conciseness:

“The fact that up to the present time we have got nothing from Social Democracy is not a valid objection to Parliamentarism, but is simply due to our comparative weakness in the country among the people.”

“What have the Anarchists done? Nothing, absolutely nothing.”

It never occurred to W. Liebknecht to think, nor does it occur to modern Parliamentarians to reflect, that if the Anarchists or Social Revolutionaries achieve nothing by Anti-Parliamentarism and the Parliamentarians achieve nothing by Parliamentarism, that honours are easy between the two sections. Again, if the explanation is the weakness of Socialist thought among the workers, the cure is Socialist agitation. Such weakness may explain the failure of the Parliamentarians. If so, it only means that Parliament can do nothing for the people that they cannot do for themselves, that Parliamentary activity, therefore, is unnecessary. Certainly, this weakness – aggravated by men withdrawing to the Parliamentary arena when they should be working and agitating directly among the workers on the field of production, spreading the gospel at the street-corner, in the lecture hall, and wherever the workers assemble to consider and discuss – explains the failure of revolutionary thought to translate itself into achievement. The difference between Parliamentarism and Revolutionism consists in the effect of overcoming this weakness that bulks so largely in the Parliamentarian apology. Let agitation acquaint the workers with Anti-Parliamentary thought and they think in the terms of the Socialist Commonwealth, they stand for the direct enfranchisement of industry, for immediate working-class society, a true golden age. But let the agitation be Parliamentarian, and the workers have no other notion than that of state pauperism, the direct enfranchisement of a Labour bureaucracy to administer Capitalism and preserve its authority by a system of doles, the real servitude of the workers to an age of gold. Parliamentarism can never give the workers control of industry, can never solve the problem of Capitalism, can never secure to the wealth-producers the ownership by themselves of the means of production and distribution. Access to the means of life proceed from direct action. A class-conscious proletariat will emancipate itself by spontaneous action. A consciousless proletariat will tolerate Parliamentarism because of its consciouslessness, because it lacks initiative, and can never be emancipated. Labour Parliamentarism is but the shadow and not the substance of working-class emancipation. It is the shadow that masquerades as the body and sets up in opposition to the body, proclaiming the body to be the shadow. No one knows this better than the Parliamentarians themselves.

H. M. Hyndman was the father of Parliamentarism in the Socialist movement in this country. Naturally, he was at one with the Parliamentarians of Socialism in Germany. Yet during the years of navalism and militarism, of preparedness for the Great War by the capitalist interests in Britain and Germany, Hyndman and his colleagues in the Social Democratic movement here were busy prating of the German menace. They watched the growth of Social Democratic representation in the Reichstag and they spoke of the achievements of Parliamentarism. But they never explained how, if Social Democratic representation in the Reichstag meant the existence of a Socialist proletariat and a real working-class conquest of political power, there could be a German menace. Why should Germany, with its powerful Social Democratic representation in the Reichstag, with its voting strength greater, much greater, than its representation in the Reichstag, have been the military menace of Europe? W. Liebknecht’s apology is invalidated by reason of the very great disproportion between its rapid increase of voting strength and the smallness in the increase of its membership of the Reichstag. It required many more votes to return a Social Democrat than it took to return any avowed capitalist candidate. Surely, this is an actual conquest of political power by the workers to the extent of the votes polled. Surely, these representatives were backed in the country. Yet they were returned only that they might administer the Kaiser’s imperial interests. Hyndman and his Parliamentarians took this view. Similarly, the German Parliamentarians considered the British Parliamentarians as representatives of Britain’s imperial interests. Both were right. In both countries Parliamentarism expressed the failure of the workers to be class-conscious, and but measured their sheepish subjection to a brutal and impudent Imperialism. The Great War revealed its impotence and expressed its opposition to Socialist thought and action and to the emancipation of the workers.

In 1912, Karl Liebknecht captured the Kaiser’s seat, Potsdam, for the politics of the red republic. Two years later, his electors were shedding their blood in defence of the black eagle. They were fighting enthusiastically in the army of the Kaiser who, in 1891, had addressed publicly these words to the soldiers of the Fatherland: “Recruits! Before the altar and the servant of God you have given me the oath of allegiance ... you are my soldiers, you have surrendered yourselves to me body and soul. Only one enemy can exist for you – my

enemy. With the present Socialist machinations, it may happen that I shall order you to shoot your own relatives, your brothers, or even your parents – which God forbid – and then you are bound in duty implicitly to obey my orders."

Yes, the good Social Democratic Parliamentarians, the conquest-of-parliamentary-power-ites, fought against the enemies of this Imperial assassin and died winning his Iron Crosses. They helped to imprison the heroic Socialist son of the step-father of German Parliamentarism, Wilhelm Liebknecht. Once a social revolutionist, imprisoned and exiled for his loyalty to Socialism, a man who took unkindly to compromise, but finally consented swearing he would ne'er consent, Wilhelm Liebknecht at last sacrificed his revolutionary energy to further and consolidate the futile Parliamentarism of Lassalle: "Through universal suffrage to victory." It was the inevitable logic of that Parliamentarism, its appeal to immediate economic interests, that reconciled the German workers to their imprisonment of Karl Liebknecht. The father would say that Parliamentarism could not save the son because the Socialists were comparatively weak in the country. Well, after the political revolution of 1918, the Social Democrats, the Parliamentary Socialists, were in power in the country. They drove the Kaiser into exile. They murdered on the streets the real Socialists, the Socialists of thought and action, they became the tools of British as well as German Capitalism, and they consummated their criminal connection by becoming parties to the murder in cold blood of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxembourg in January, 1919. Not the Kaiser, with the reluctant acquiescence of the Parliamentary Socialists, but the Parliamentary Socialists with the acquiescence of the German Capitalists, accomplished this assassination. We cannot say that Parliamentarism has done nothing. It slaughtered to preserve the tottering power of Capitalism.

During "red week" of March, 1913, the German Social Democratic Party gained 148,108 new members, most of whom served the Kaiser in the Great War: It secured 32,298 new subscribers, few of whom hesitated to rally to the German Imperialist war-flag. It held 41,969 agitation meetings, which offered no menace to the ruling patriotism. It made house to house canvas in 1,288 cities and towns, besides distributing 6,759,320 and selling 1,580,010 books and pamphlets. Every man canvased, every recipient of a free leaflet, every purchaser of a book or pamphlet, either served, was prepared to serve, or wished to serve the murder lords of his country.

Parliamentarism claims to represent organised labour. We concede the claim. Parliamentarism does represent organised labour. It represented organised labour before the war, whilst the capitalists of all lands were preparing for the world war. It represented organised labour during the war, whilst the capitalists of all lands were inspiring the workers with their hymns of hate. It represents organised labour today, whilst the capitalist clash is tinkering with and mocking the misery of the unemployed.

When the Social Democratic member for Mannheim died fighting at Luneville, for the Kaiser's Cause, it was organised labour that drove him to his doom, an economic conscript. Interviewed in London, at the end of 1913, Professor Debrück told the Daily Mail representative: "Germany for the past fifteen years has been a country of immigration, not of emigration, and her excellent school and university system is producing every year a surplus of educated men. If we possessed more territories inhabited by inferior races, their administration and development would afford to this educated surplus the same kind of occupation and employment that Englishmen of a similar class find in Egypt or India."

One can complete the picture easily. Patriotic lectures – at so much a lecture. Journalistic exploitation of commercial rivalries – at so much a column. A Social Democratic Party anxious to secure political power and dominated in consequence by the palliative interests of the 774 Trades Councils, to which 9,418 trade unions were affiliated, with a membership of 2,339,571 members. This meant Social Democratic subserviency to the national concentration of capitalist interests. The Mannheim member never would have sat in the Reichstag had he opposed the sentiment of the economic interests which swept him on to his doom, in company with so many German workers.

Parliamentarism means being practical. In every country it operates in the same way to the same disastrous results. An industrial constituency interested in the creation of armaments may return a Labour member, but it insists that he shall support war-interests. In 1911, at the Thames Shipbuilding works, the Super Dreadnought, the battleship "Thunderer," was launched by the Archbishop of Canterbury. To the inhabitants of Canning Town, the construction of this vessel meant the subsistence level, the bread line. When the warship work was lost to the Thames, Will Thorne, West Ham's Parliamentary Socialist member, in company with Lord Roberts, addressed a huge protest meeting, demanding the work for London as opposed to Newcastle.

The force of economic compulsion explained this tragedy of misery and degradation. Inevitably, Labour M.P.'s – representing the workers as toilers subject to Capitalism, having immediate interests under

Capitalism to serve – were compelled to make dramatic platform appearances in support of war. With the platforms and the press controlled by capitalist interests, with the workers conditioned by wages, there was but one comfortably popular path to take. That was to recruit. It promised immediate finance at a time of threatened famine. It guaranteed the immediate future. It voiced the immediate wants of the war workers. It was practical It meant a safe seat and governing-class votes at the election and the continuance of £400. All this had to be considered. Consequently, the Labour Party placed the services of its National Agent at the disposal of the Parliamentary Recruiting Committee to assist in the necessary secretarial work. Organisation for murder was the natural task of Parliamentarism. Remember this inevitable toadying to Moloch when next some Parliamentarian tells you that Parliamentarism is opposed to violence.

Parliamentarism is practical. Because it is practical it stands for Capitalism, for war, for misery, for continued class society, for mass subjection and exploitation. Naturally, and inevitably, it prepares the way for treachery, evolves from its agitators statesmen for the administration of Capitalism, open and avowed enemies of working-class emancipation. The evolution of Aristide Briand is but a study in the logic of Parliamentarisnn. His career is an Anti-Parliamentary commentary. It is but one of many.

Speaking at the Nantes Trade Union Congress in 1891, Briand said: "'We must make use of the ballot-box,' some of you will say. Quite right! I am no opponent of the ballot-paper. But on the day when universal suffrage becomes a nuisance and a menace to the governing-class, they will do away with it. And in an emergency they will even have the workers shot down."

Speaking in the Chamber of Deputies, as Premier of France, on October 29th, 1910, the same Briand defended the methods he employed to suppress the French Railway strike in the following terms: "If the Government had not found in the law a possibility of defending the existence of the nation when the country was in danger, if we could not have protected the frontier line of France by legal methods, then, gentlemen, we would have assured the running of the railways which are necessary to France's defence by methods which are illegal. It would have been our duty."

The illegal defence of capitalist interests is the natural product of Parliamentarism. Marx destroys once and for all the case for Parliamentarism when he shows in his civil War in France that the issue in the social conflict is between the Empire and the Commune. Written in 1871 to criticise and to depict the struggle of the Paris Commune, this work shows how the State Power originated from the days of absolute monarchy, and how the placing of the Government under Parliamentary control was placing it "under the direct control of the propertied classes." All which trenchant criticism leads Marx to utter his final challenge to Parliamentary Socialism, of which he was very proud: "But the working-class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made State machinery and wield it for its own political purposes."

History shows how right were these Anti-Parliamentarian conclusions. Parliamentary power was conceded to the people only to avert revolution, a toy to keep the noisy children quiet. Parliamentary power was developed by the slow assassination of the people's liberty and power of action.

Marx shows how political changes have occurred "simultaneously with economic changes in society" and depicts the State power as the national engine of class despotism, a public force organised for the social enslavement of labour by capital. He proves, as did Daniel De Leon later, despite all his talk about the civilised plane, by inexorable economic logic, that universal suffrage can never lead the workers to victory, can never emancipate them from the shackles of wage-slavery. Did not William Morris, the greatest of all English Socialist thinkers, reiterate in pamphlet after pamphlet a like logic? Was not John Most through his experiences in the Reichstag, driven to the same conclusion? History shows how right were these Anti-Parliamentarian conclusions. Parliamentary power was conceded to the people only to avert revolution, a toy to keep the noisy children quiet. Parliamentary power was developed by the slow assassination of the people's liberty and power of action.

One needs but to study the wonderful message of Paris, the Paris of the Great French Revolution, to discover how Parliament outrages and betrays the struggle of the people. The National Assembly, the Convention, the Safety Committees, the Directory – a

consistent Parliamentary debacle, a natural evolution, ending in Napoleon and Empire and the tragedy of French Imperialism. The Commune and the Sections, Proletarian and Anti-Parliamentary Institutions, serving the people, strangled by order of the Bourgeois Democracy and Parliamentarism, shopkeeper politics.

For the Assembly and the Conventions were representative institutions. Here was the Parliament that betrayed and assassinated the rights of the people. The Commune and the Sections were not representative institutions. They were the people themselves – the forums of discussions and decision. From them proceeded the life of the revolution. From Assembly and Convention the decrees to arrest the revolution. History places the forum not on a level, with Parliament, but above it. The living and imperishable record of the people's struggle proves that the people had but to resolve, but to realise their claims in thought, to more than realise them in fact, as Paris did in those years of heroic striving. True, oratory reached a high level in both Assembly and Convention. But it was only in response to the demands of the Commune and the Sections who would stand no halting phrases, and insisted on the oratory of the Rights of Man, of Liberty, Equality, Fraternity.

How the Parliamentarians sought to delay the triumph of the Republic! How they laboured to preserve the Monarchy! And when the Monarchy fell of its own worthlessness, when in rage and anger Commune and Sections urged its abolition, when in fear and trembling the legislators bowed before the storm, then was invented the grotesque and tremendous sham that prepared the way for Napoleon and Empire – the Republic One and Indivisible!

The idea seems magnificent, does it not? The Monarchy is dead – long live the Republic One and Indivisible!

And then the Republic begins to think for the people, to feel for the people, and to act for the people. At last it calls itself "the people" and wars on the people. It proclaims martial law and proceeds to deprive the Commune and the Sections of arms and the power to resist the Central Authority. It denies Equality of Fact and proclaims a false and metaphysical equality before the law. It crushes the life of the people, the power of spontaneous revolt, of immediate vital action in the departments, and substitutes representative action, uncontrolled decrees, oligarchic and bureaucratic committees, all leading to misery, terror, and Empire. All that was Republican was destroyed by the Republic One and Indivisible! If only it had not been One and Indivisible! If only it had been Multiple and Divisible! If only the Republic had been Federal, drawing its vitality from the Commune, the Sections and the Primary Assemblies, instead of deriving its authority from a stagnating life-destroying Central Enacting Authority. Then it would have been a Republic of Fact, of Life and Reality; a true Republic, One and Indivisible!

So that Parliamentarism destroyed the Revolution and the Republic. It neither served nor conceived it. It preserved the Republic much as the Church preserved the teachings of Jesus. Much as the rats preserve for their nests the manuscripts of genius.

Parliamentarism has always meant the same. It was. the working-class who fought against borough-mongering, with the result that the capitalist Reform Bill of 1832 eras passed into law securing representation to the capitalist class in opposition to the landed interest. Justin McCarthy, by no means a revolutionary, states in his History of Our Own Times, that "this was all the more exasperating because the excitement and agitation and success of the Reform Bill was brought about by the working-men. They came round to the belief that they had been made tools of by the capitalists, and when the Reform Bill became law they were thrown over by those whom they had helped to pass it." The same author tells us: "It was 30 years, before the people secured Household Suffrage, and they only secured it in 1867 because the classes feared a revolution. And out of nine Parliaments elected from 1832 to 1865 the Liberals had a majority in eight, and the people eventually secured the franchise by a coalition of Radicals and Tories, headed by the late Lord Beaconsfield. It was conceded to dish the Liberals and from fear of the people not from sincere conviction. The Liberals in 1867 had a majority of 67, and they were unable to pass a Franchise Bill, and the people are gulled today into the belief that the Liberals gave the franchise."

C. A. Vince, M.A., in his *Life of the Late John Bright*, says: "The statesmen of the Liberal Party still were scarcely less disinclined to reform than their Conservative competitors. Both parties regarded reform as an inevitable event of the future; both were anxious not to anticipate the necessity; yet both were eager to intercept the credit of being the first to yield to the popular will so soon as it should become obviously irresistible."

Were it necessary to prove the healthy fear entertained for the results of possible mass action at all times by the ruling class it would only be necessary to detail the history of the Franchise struggle, to relate the facts of Liberal and Tory hypocrisy from 1832 to 1867. One might refer to the Home Rule agitation and circumstances under which the Free State was by law established in order to dish the Irish Republic. But the

facts are so well known and the deduction so obvious that citation and comment become an insult to the readers' knowledge and intelligence.

Parliamentarism cannot solve, and does not seek to solve, the only problem that matters, the key problem of all social misery, the problem of class society, its transformation into true, equal, or free society. Its aim is to perpetuate Imperialist or exploiting society. It is a legacy of Roman Imperialism, a remnant of the Roman code. It registers no progress. One quotation will prove this fact beyond all contradiction. Tiberius Gracchus flourished B.C. 102–133. He was a social reformer, seeking to reform the lot of the people, never wishing to overthrow the Empire. He gave his life for his poor measures of reformism. He described the lot of the Roman soldiers in these words: "Without houses, without any settled habitations, the disbanded militia wander from place to place with their wives and children; and the generals do but mock them when, at the head of their armies, they exhort their men to fight for their sepulchers and die for domestic household divinities ... The private soldiers fight and die to advance the wealth and luxury of the great; and they are called masters of the world, while they have not a foot of ground in their possession." Is it such a far cry from B.C. 133 to A.D. 1923? Can we say that these words have lost any of their force, that they no longer apply? Is it not time we proved them false for all future generations? Will Parliamentarism aid us in this struggle?

The House of Commons, as the folks-chamber, is composed of a Speaker, clerks, doorkeepers, waiters, reporters, and a few silent members. That is to say, these persons are the necessary requisites, in or about the Commons, to set off the glory of the conspicuous characteristic of the Chamber – the vapid and unprofitable chatter of the expectant placeman. This gentleman is an inevitable result of, and necessary adjunct to, the political machine which reflexes the principles and policy of a system which produces for private gain. He is quite conspicuous on the Labour benches, a rigorous attender of the House, always ready to interpose in a debate, persistent in his efforts to make a mark and prove his fitness for office, his heart bleeding for labour and his discretion pandering to the Stock Exchange gilt-edged fraternity, and his imagination conjuring up the great ghosts of the traditional mighty dead of the Mother of the Parliaments who were lying, deceiving swashbucklers in real life, as the records of the Chartists and the biography of Lord Shaftesbury will show. Is it not obvious that the entire career of a man of this type, and his name is Legion, for he is the future Labour Government, the present Labour Opposition, is founded on an ambition that denotes him to be a hireling of law and order, a traitor to the working-class, who never can and never will seek to emancipate his class. Such is Parliamentarism! Whoso wishes to remain a slave and considers his role a honourable one, whoso wishes to perpetuate slums and inequalities, banquets and famine, hovels and palaces, a disordered whole ironically termed civilised society, will support it. Whoso believes that the workers can pursue a better and braver path to a real goal and a truer end will reject it. They will desert Parliamentarism for what must be when one does not parley: the social struggle, and all that struggle means. They will stand for Socialism, the social upheaval, as distinct from Capitalism, the Parliamentary revision. Thus, will they solve the problem of class struggle and so inaugurate the Social Revolution, the Workers' Industrial Republic.

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Appendix. Labour Party Facts.

John S. Clarke, who in the course of a varied political career, has come, via the Third International and much Marxian-Lenin reading, back to the fold of reformism and Labour-fakerism, wrote in his "Cigarette Papers" in the Worker for November 5th, 1922, as follows: "Yes! if anything on God's earth is calculated to prolong the capitalist system, it is surely a Labour Government."

The facts establish the unquestionable truth of this assertion, whatever Clarke's present interests may inspire him to write. Those facts emphasise the unanswerable character of the Anti-Parliamentarians' logic, a logic not of schools, but of everyday experience and grim sordid reality.

Consider the facts.

At Princess Mary's wedding on February 280, 1922, at Westminster Abbey, among 2,000 selected persons admitted to the Abbey were:

Mr. J. H. Thomas, M.P., and Mrs. Thomas. Mr. J. R. Clynes, M.P., and Mrs. Clynes. Mr. C. W.Bowerman, M.P., and Mrs. Bowerman. Mr. Harry Gosling, now M.P. for Whitechapel.

When the King and Queen dined with Viscount and Viscountess Astor at Lord Astor's residence, No. 4, St. James's Square, on Thursday, March 8th, 1923, the guests included several prominent Labour members and their wives.

Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Thomas were there, Mr. and Mrs. J. R. Clynes, and Mr. and Mrs. Philip Snowden.

Members of all political parties were represented, and those received by Lady Astor besides the Royal entourage included: The United States Ambassador, the Prime Minister, Mr. Lloyd George and Dame Margaret Lloyd George, the Speaker and Mrs. Whitley, the Marquis and Marchioness of Salisbury, the Earl of Balfour, Lady Frances Balfour, Lord and Lady Eustace Percy, the Earl and Countess of Kerry, Viscount and Viscountess Milner, Viscount and Viscountess Gray of Fallodon, Lord and Lady Islington, Lord Robert Cecil, Sir John and Lady Simon, and the High Commissioner for Canada.

The Queen wore a dress of eau de nil with diamond ornament, and Viscountess Astor a dress of old gold with diamond ornaments, including a very fine tiara.

Next morning the press was able to announce that Mr. Ramsay MacDonald (Leader of the Labour Opposition) had accepted an invitation to dine with the King and Queen at Buckingham Palace on the Thursday following.

I have said that a Labour Government is pledged to maintain Capitalism. Is that true?

J. R. Clynes, the Deputy-Leader of the Labour Party, speaking the last week in January, 1922, before the Imperial Commercial Association, at the Cannon Street Hotel, London, found himself in the congenial company of Lord Balfour of Burleigh, Sir Lynden Macassey, Lord Ashfield, and the chairmen of several banks and commercial trading associations. He insisted that the Labour Party tried to compose and not to extend or aggravate trade disputes. He added, apparently with heat: "A great deal of nonsense is talked about the designs of Labour upon private enterprise. It is not Labour that has imposed upon it a tax of 6s. in the £, rising in some cases to double that amount. Private enterprise has to carry a heavy load of rates, payments and interests. and none of these could be worse under any condition of Labour authority. Labour will be as considerate as any other Government in composing claims as they arise between public well-being and private gain."

A week later Clynes spoke at Berkhampstead, the actual date being Saturday, February 4th, in reply to Lord Birkenhead. Repudiating the then Lord Chancellor's strictures on the Labour Party, the Deputy-Leader of the Labour Party said: "Industrial, troubles since the war had often been composed and prevented by the political Labour Party, and never in any instance provoked by it. Their service had been a service of restraint and a sustained appeal for patience which was nearly exhausted. The political policy of the Labour Party, he claimed, would have reduced or prevented many of the industrial upheavals which the country had suffered."

Fourteen days later John Bull publishes from the pen of Mr. J. R. Clynes his article on "How Labour Would Govern." In this he states that "no rash innovations would be introduced by him and his Party." Some are alarmed by the cry that the Labour Party would be pushed and terrorised by extremists, and would be unable to carry out a policy of its own ... How preposterous such a fear is! ... Precedent has already, been established in the matter of bringing from outside the service of great organisers and business men whose value to the State everyone must recognise ... If in any elected majority men were not included who possessed the required legal standing the attractions of the positions would evoke many offers of service."

The Daily Herald for 22nd October, 1921, gave the following account of conditions in New South Wales under the Labour premiership of Mr. Dooley: "Mr. Dooley quotes statistics to show the remarkable progress of N.S.W. under Labour rule. Comparing the seventeen months under the Labour administration with the eighteen months under Nationalist regime, he says 972 new factories have been built as against 577. 988 new companies, with a capital of £72,000,000 have been formed, as against 498, with a capital of £18,000,000, additional capital has been invested in existing companies to the amount of , £18,747,330, and the bank deposits have swollen to £155,000,000, an increase of £10,000,000."

The Rt. Hon. John Hodge, M.P., in January, 1922, addressed the Gorton Trades' Council. He said: "What is required at the present time is more unanimity between capital and labour."

He was questioned concerning the oath that he, a Labour member, had taken on becoming a Privy Counsellor. That oath is as follows: "I do swear by Almighty God to be a true and faithful servant unto the

King's Majesty, as one of his Majesty's Privy Council. I will not know or understand of any manner of thing to be attempted against His Majesty's Person, Honour, Crown, or Dignity Royal, but I will let and withstand the same to the uttermost of my Power, and either cause it to be revealed to His Majesty Himself, or to such of His Privy Council, as shall advertise His Majesty of the same. I will in all things to be moved, treated, and debated in Council, faithfully and truly declare my mind and opinion, according to my Heart and Conscience, and will keep secret all matter committed and revealed unto me, or that shall be treated of secretly in Council. And if any of the said Treaties or Councils shall touch any of the Counsellors, I will not reveal it unto him, but will keep the same until such time as, by the Consent of His Majesty, or of the Counsel, Publication shall be made thereof. I will to my uttermost bear faith and allegiance unto the King's Majesty, and will assist and defend all jurisdictions, pre-eminences and Authorities, granted to His Majesty, and annexed to the Crown by Acts of Parliament, or otherwise, against all Foreign Princes Persons, Prelates, States, or Potentates. And generally in all things I will do as a faithful and true Servant ought to do to His Majesty. So help me God."

Hodge explained: "The reason for taking the Privy Councillorship was that it was compulsory on becoming a Crown Minister. "

The following questions were put to him and answered as follows:

Q. Are you, if re-elected to Parliament, prepared to support the Government in bringing out the White Guards against strikers, as you did during the boilermaker's strike in Liverpool?"

A. Yes.

Q. "If the Labour Party is elected in a majority to Parliament, have they any policy by which they hope to solve the unemployment problem?"

A. "No! we will have to play ca-canny until we find our feet."

I extract from the Glasgow Herald for 15th February, 1922, an item from the meeting of the Glasgow Magistrates at which Bailie Dollan was present: "As the duty of making arrangements in connection with executions in Glasgow Prison devolves on the Magistrates, they have remitted to the two junior Magistrates – Bailie Black and Bailie George Smith – to see to the carrying out of the death sentence pronounced on William Harkness and his wife. The executions are fixed for Thursday next."

Like Bailie Dollan, Bailie George Smith is a Labour man – a member of the I.L.P.!!

Finally, since their return as Members for the Eastern Divisions of Glasgow, we have had started by John Wheatley, on behalf of himself and Maxton, the Glasgow Eastern Standard. I have the second issue (dated March 10th, 1923) before me as I write. A more vulgarly capitalist effort has never been produced by a man who owes his circulation to the blind and stupid support of a sincere and trusting, but grossly abused and much deceived working-class. There is not a word of Socialism, not a note of culture in the whole vulgar sheet. It is edited on Wheatley's behalf by McCrea, the ex-school teacher and member of the I.L.P., who was returned to the Town Council for Shettleston as a Labour man. Its banalities include (apparently) a weekly portrait gallery of "Prominent Business Men." What a theme for a Labour M.P.'s paper! The celebrity chosen for March 10th is one Armstrong, who seems to have made his fortune out of the credit drapery business. Wheatley's class conscious journal tells us of this Anti-Socialist, beneath a well-printed half-tone block

"Ex-Councillor Matthew Armstrong is our prominent man this week. Born in the East End fifty-six years ago, he early entered the drapery trade, and has now built up one of the largest businesses of its kind in the city. His premises, as a wholesale warehouseman, and manufacturer of all kinds of garments, in Great Hamilton Street, are a monument to his efficiency and business acumen. He is a pillar of the 'Auld Kirk,' and his recreations are bowling and golf."

Postscript: As I pass these page proofs (April 10th, 1923), I notice that, when the Anti-Socialists introduced a Bill into the Commons last week for forcibly closing Communist and Socialist Sunday Schools the Labour Party acquiesced. The London correspondent of the Glasgow Herald declares that this Bill was discussed at a meeting of the Labour Party and it was decided to let it pass without a division. "Mr. Ramsay Macdonald stated that if the Bill was an attack on the Labour Party, the Party must vote against it, but if it were aimed against the Communists, it was not a matter that concerned them."

If this Capitalist journalist is incorrect perhaps the Labour Party will explain its attitude towards this Tory Sedition Bill that has only one object – to menace and hinder working-class emancipation, whilst Boy Scouts and Girl Guides organisations capture and corrupt the child-mind in the interests of Imperialism and Class-society.

Against Terrorism in the Workers' Struggle

Guy A. Aldred

1938

(As this pamphlet goes to press, some of the leading men of the Bolshevik Revolution, including Bukharin, Rykov, Yagoda, Krestinsky, and Rakovsky, the heroic founder of the 3rd International, are awaiting death in another Stalin frame-up. The S.A.C. calls upon the workers to organise to destroy Communist Party and Stalin Terrorism, and to rank it with Fascism and all other terrorism.)

Stalin's Frame-Ups

The rise of Capitalism, with the growth of the factory and the resulting supremacy in society of the manufacturer and financier, gave cohesion and class purpose to the workers driven from the soil and forced to live under the worst possible conditions near the place where they were exploited in herds. This development created a new class struggle and gave birth to the propaganda of Socialism. Since this term was first employed, Socialist thought has experienced many evolutions. Today, it is more and more associated in men's minds with futility and with terrorism. Such association of ideas would have appalled those who pioneered the struggle towards Socialism and saw in its propaganda the conquest of the workers of bread and freedom.

Bread and freedom! This is exactly what Socialism meant to the working men whom it first inspired. Never once did the pioneers of Socialism think of the Red Flag except as the symbol of liberty: liberty from economic exploitation and liberty from political oppression. When one looks back on the history of Socialist thought and propaganda in Britain, when one thinks of the meetings, crowds roused by the fate of the Chicago martyrs, when one turns back to the writings of William Morris and whether one reads the old Social Democratic publications or Anarchist sheets, always one is brought in contact with the atmosphere of freedom. It is impossible to believe that the working men who rallied round John Burns[1] at Trafalgar Square or marched in procession past the Carlton Club, conceived of Socialism meaning the perpetuation of persecution, firing squads, and the supremacy of the State. Least of all did one associate that with the struggle in Russia.

At the various meetings held in London in the nineties of the last century, to welcome exiles from the Czar's oppression, and to be horrified by stories of the White Terror in Russia, programmes were put forward far less extreme than that of the Bolsheviks of 1917, but not a single programme excluded the all-important item. of political liberty. Socialism meant a new world, a world of international well-being bathed in freedom.

This was the dream and the ambition. When Bakunin wrote of two Communisms, an authoritarian Communism that would persecute like an autocratic or bureaucratic State, and of a free Communism that would produce freedom, his remarks were viewed with scepticism. In those days no Socialist dreamt that one Socialist would take power in order to murder another. It is true that anti-Socialist writings sneered at Socialism and avowed that Socialism meant State persecution. No Socialist would accept this statement but replied that it was a gross and malignant slander invented for the purpose of perpetuating the evils of property society.

Today, if Stalinism and the Communist Party are correct, the anti-Socialist arguments of yesterday must be acknowledged as being right in their anticipation. In the Soviet Union and in Spain, wherever the Third International and the Communist Party has developed power, irresponsible ruling Terrorism is the order of the day. What was once termed scientific Socialism has been reduced to an expression of medieval. terror. The Inquisition that the Catholic Church was compelled to abandon owing to the progress of thought and knowledge has been re-established by the Stalinists with audacity and a brutal claim to authority almost unbelievable in the name of Communism and Socialism. The strange and appalling fact is that by a process of hireling propaganda this terrorism is defended throughout the working-class movement in every land as being the quintessence of revolution. The

[1] John Elliot Burns (1858-1943) was an English trade unionist and politician. In 1889, he played a major part in the London Dock Strike along with Tom Mann. Originally, a social-democrat he was elected to the London County Council and then Parliament before eventually becoming a Liberal Member of Parliament and Minister. (*Black Flag*)

victims of this terror are termed counter-revolutionists all the time that the promoters of the terror actively develop counter-revolution and defeatism wherever they develop their power. In China; in Germany; in France with its Popular Front tactics; in Spain, also with its Popular Front and its definite repudiation of Socialism and working class struggle; in Britain, at the time of the General Strike, and later in its compromises with the Labour Party and the Transport Workers' Union; in Britain also, with its urge towards a war policy, and in America with its defence of the Roosevelt administration and its attack of the Ludlow War Referendum Bill on the ground that it would impede the power of the American. Government to make war; in all these countries the Communist Party paved the way for Fascism, destroyed the class consciousness and ideals of the Working class. Similarly, in Italy, the Communist Party aided actively the development of Mussolini's Fascism. To criticise its policy to persuade the workers to think for themselves on these points was to invite persecution or exclusion from the workers' movement.

There can be no freedom and there can be no well-being for the working class, there can be no security against war and persecution and hunger unless Socialism is established… Socialism means the conquest by the worker of bread, but it means that conquest in freedom and means the conquest of freedom

All this is not to say that the pioneers of Socialism were wrong. It does mean, however, that if these pioneers are to be justified and if Socialist thought and propaganda are to mean anything to the workers, those who call themselves Socialists must rally against this terrorism and denounce it in the name of Socialism and the workers' struggle. Which necessity explains the formation of the Socialist Anti-Terror Committee and its present appeal to the workers.

The Socialist Anti-Terror Committee accuses the Communist Party of three crimes against the workers' struggle: (1) terrorism; (2) imperialist opportunism and counter-revolution; (3) corrupt destruction of working-class propaganda throughout the world.

It is not possible within the space of this small pamphlet to develop details of these charges. The facts are there and can be published in full at some later time. It is possible, however, to indicate some of the terrorism of which this so-called Communism has been guilty. Those who followed the Russian struggle will know how Zinoviev, with Stalin, played a part in hiding Lenin under the Kerensky Provisional Government. They will -recall how Zinoviev and Lenin returned from exile together and the speech that Zinoviev made at the station before Moscow saluting the Russian Fatherland and glorying the triumph of Socialism. We all know how Zinoviev, with Kamenev, denounced Trotsky, only to be driven afterwards by the logic of events to support that opposition. Today, Zinoviev and Kamenev are buried as political felons for crimes they did not commit and by the movement they helped to create. Had they been murdered by the Czar the Socialist press of the world would have been loud in protest. But they were murdered by "Communism," by Stalinism, and those who once played the part of lickspittles to them in Great Britain and other countries applaud their murder. Then there is Rakovsky, who at one time was Soviet Ambassador to Great Britain and afterwards Soviet Ambassador to France. At the beginning of the Russian Revolution the Communist Party papers described his great "thirty years' continuous fight for Socialism, undaunted by police, prisons or victimisation." This description is taken from the *Sunday Worker* for November 15th, 1925, describing his great send-off from Victoria when he went to take up his position as Ambassador to France. The *Sunday Worker* added: "In the British Labour movement, two years of his championship of the workers' cause have been sufficient to win him universal admiration and esteem. We send him our heartiest good wishes for new and still greater successes."

Down to this date the Communist Party organ describes his tremendous work for Socialism in Rumania and in other parts of Europe. It also pointed out how he founded the Third International in 1916 Two years after the Communist Party eulogised him, namely November, 1927, Rakovsky was expelled from the Central Committee of the Communist Party with Kamenev and others as being a counter-revolutionist. Since that time he suffered arrest, torture, persecution, and finally we have the report of his trial. All his eulogists in the Communist Party, including those who

were never known to be Communists until after the Russian Revolution and Communism paid dividends from the blood and sweat of the Russian peasants and workers, wiped aside his thirty years' activity and suggested that he had always been a counter-revolutionist. There is no need to bother about the other names. Many of them are public property and the story of confessions with bogus facts is too well known to require repetition.

Under the pretence of making war on counter-revolution, the Third International has not only attacked Stalin's critics in the Soviet Union but has conducted a campaign against every other phase of Socialist thought and culture in other countries. Its activity in Spain is notorious in this respect. The destruction of the P.O.U.M., the murder of the great Italian Anarchist Camillo Berneri, and of Andres Nin,[1] the murders and exilings that followed the May Days in Barcelona are all attributable to this sectarian love of power.

We have examples of Italian Communists being returned to Fascist Italy to their death at the hands of Mussolini by the Soviet Government, and we have Eric Muchsam's widow invited to Soviet Russia for asylum only to be imprisoned and tortured there as her husband was in Nazi Germany.[2] Other names are listed at the end of this pamphlet. Sufficient has been said to show what the purpose of the Socialist Anti-Terror Committee is.

There can be no freedom and there can be no well-being for the working class, there can be no security against war and persecution and hunger unless Socialism is established. But Socialism cannot be established in one country whilst the surrounding world is imperialistic. Socialism cannot be established and maintained by methods of State militarism, State bureaucracy, and opportunist diplomacy. Socialism must be international. It must express the class struggle. It must be united to the workshops and express the ideas of the conquest of bread and freedom. Socialism means the conquest by the worker of bread, but it means that conquest in freedom and means the conquest of freedom.

Because the various individual Socialists and groups affiliated to the Socialist Anti-Terror Committee hold that this truth must be propagated as part and parcel of Socialist propaganda, the Committee has come into existence. Its members are pledged to see that it remains in existence until its work is accomplished and terrorism banished from our movement.

Among the thousands of victims are the following: Erwin Wolfe (or Braun, Secretary to Trotsky); Gonzales Moreno, Secretary of Mascaraqhe C.N.T.; Ignace Reiss, O.G.P.U. Agent who resigned; Camilo Berneri, Italian Anarchist; Andres Nin, Leader, P.O.U.M.; Alfredo Martinez, Domingo Ascaso, Kurt Landaur, Mark Rein.

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"So far as Catalonia is concerned, the cleaning up of Trotskyist and Anarcho-Syndicalist elements there has already begun, and it will be carried out there with the same energy as in the U.S.S.R." – *Pravda*, December 17, 1936.

Soon afterwards I realised how absurd it was for a revolutionary to wish to go to Parliament. I accordingly defined myself as an Anarchist Communist. But it must not be concluded that I was any less a Socialist. Central power or authority seemed to rely on no especial merit for its support, and merely represented the executive committee of a society founded on property. Its continued existence was incompatible with the fundamental principles of Socialism. So I repudiated it. Hence I was an Anarchist. My own reason must decide my every act. But I believed in nothing short of communism. Hence I was a Socialist.

– Guy A. Aldred, *Dogmas Discarded: An Autobiography of Thought 1886–1908*

[1] Andrés Nin Pérez (1892-1937) was a Spanish state socialist, who helped found the Spanish *Communist Party* before joining the Left Opposition. Returning to Spain, he was instrumental in forming the *Communist Left of Spain* (ICE), the self-described Trotskyist group, before breaking with Trotsky. He helped form the *Workers' Party of Marxist Unification* (POUM) in 1935. After the "May Days" of 1937, he was arrested, tortured and killed by the Stalinists as part of their crushing of the POUM. (*Black Flag*)

[2] Erich Mühsam (1878-1934) was a German-Jewish anarchist and one of the leading agitators of a federated Bavarian Soviet Republic, for which he served 5 years in prison. He was murdered in the Oranienburg concentration camp in 1934. (*Black Flag*)

The Charter of Lyon

Confédération Générale du Travail – Syndicaliste Révolutionnaire[1]

Le Combat Syndicaliste, November 1926

Adopted by a conference of the CGT-SR, Lyon, 1–2 November 1926[2]

In view of the financial and political instability of the French state and the possibility that at any moment the regime will go into crisis, posing the question of a new social order through a revolutionary road, Congress declares that syndicalism must draw from this catastrophe those outcomes that are best suited to workers' liberation, simultaneously refusing to offer capital the means to regain equilibrium.

Consequently, it affirms that the proletariat should not only direct its energies towards the overthrow of the existing regime but also act to obstruct political parties and their all too eager struggles to possess power. Thus, syndicalism must know how to take advantage of every attempt by parties to take power, syndicalism should itself become the playmaker, syndicalism should make the decisions, destroy power, substitute for that power a social order that depends on organisation – the organisation of production, exchange and distribution organisation. The interaction between every cog and wheel in the union will assure all this activity.

congress affirms that syndicalism, as the natural and concrete expression of movement of worker-producers, contains within itself, in latent and organic form, all those essential activities – in both policy-making and getting things done – that are needed for a new way of life

As it proclaims the profoundly economic significance of the coming revolution Congress is careful to insist on its essence: the revolution must embrace those indispensable features of radical social transformation that both capitalism and the proletariat regard as being inevitable. In this class-centred workers' planning, these features can be set in place only by the proletariat organised in unions, devoid of direction from beyond its midst, free from direction that can only be harmful. Only if these features are respected can the leaps and surges of the popular revolution, that have hitherto been used and directed by political parties, accomplish finally and successfully those decisive changes in economic and social order that are made necessary by modern social development.

Congress observes the profound novelty of events that are developing, events that render useless and impossible partial political transformations. It also notes that fascism, the new government doctrine of the rich and powerful, reordering everything in the capitalist system is also placing on the agenda the social problem from the same economic angle, and intends to use syndicalism by manipulating it to fit in its own particular desires, and to achieve its own designs.

Considering all the above, Congress declares that future events, as they unfold in the economic sphere will open new parameters for the life of the people and for genuine characteristics of social life, and these will take root and grow with surprising force. This vitality will arise out of the growth of productive and creative forces harmoniously bringing together the energy of unskilled manual workers, technicians, and intellectuals, directed constantly towards progress.

The logic of transformation that we need is defined so. Reiterating the words of that part of the [Charter of]

[1] https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/confederation-generale-du-travail-syndicaliste-revolutionnaire-the-charter-of-lyon

[2] This text is a founding document, it situates the thinking of Pierre Besnard and the French Revolutionary-Syndicalists (*Confédération Générale du Travail Syndicaliste Révolutionnaire* or CGT-SR). The CGT-SR organised several thousand workers, especially in building trades in the period up to the outbreak of the Second World War. Other libertarians preferred to work in other workplace organisations closer to the Socialist and Communist parties or in autonomous local syndicates. The CGT-SR affiliated to the 'Berlin' International Workers' Association and published *Combat Syndicaliste*, a journal is available on the website ArchivesAutonomies.org (Translator)

Amiens resolution[1], which declared: "Syndicates, which today are structures of resistance will become, in the future, the structure of social reorganisation, production and distribution", congress affirms that syndicalism, as the natural and concrete expression of movement of worker-producers, contains within itself, in latent and organic form, all those essential activities – in both policy-making and getting things done – that are needed for a new way of life.

From this day on then, syndicalism should bring together, in just one organisational plan, all those energies of manual labour, technology and science which being dispersed have worked separately in both industry and agriculture. From the moment it can bring together in just one body all the various energies that contribute and assure life in society, syndicalism will be ready, from the beginning of a revolution, to take in hand the direction of production and administration of social life through its various organs.

While understanding the magnitude and great difficulties of these responsibilities, congress is bound to affirm that syndicalism must begin to repair its organisation, spread its organs, adapting them to circumstances, just as capitalism itself does, so as prepare to act tomorrow as an administrator and enlightened manager of production, distribution and exchange. It is not unaware of the extreme complexity of problems that will emerge when capitalism disappears. And it does not hesitate to declare that the labour movement, which so far has not yet brought together all the forces needed for tomorrow's social life, needs to prove its intelligence and flexibility by summoning to its side everyone who through their activity, whose work, know-how or knowledge will have a natural place among them and who will be needed to assure a new way of life at every level of production. Congress does not overlook the profound changes that have occurred in the field of science and technology, in both industry and agriculture and does not hesitate to appeal to scientists and technicians as it focusses on indispensable transformation. Likewise, it calls on peasants to ensure jointly with their brother [urban] workers, the life and defence of the revolution which cannot be completed without their conscious, constant and complete cooperation. Thus, Congress believes that through concord, and through harmonious and fruitful effort, all will be united together for the task of human liberation, a unity of hand and brain workers in agriculture and in industry.

Syndicalists, being ambitious only to be the bold pioneers, working as agents building and directing social transformation within a syndicalist framework, wish that their movement – the living reflection of the aspirations and material and moral needs of the individual – should become the genuine synthesis of the social mechanism that already now is coming together. Everyone will find the human, ideal and organic conditions of the future revolution desired by all workers in that development. Tomorrow must belong to the worker-producers, associated or organised through their economic practice. Social and political organisations will rise up among them; everything needed to complete, organise, coordinate, unify, expand and act, is to be found among them. In this way the worker will arise, a living reality, an essential prop, a natural motor of human society, confronting that fleeting, unstable, artificial entity, the citizen.

Syndicalism and the nation – its general activities

Since it was formed, the Revolutionary Syndicalist CGT has affirmed, that it intended to be an exclusively class formation, one of workers. Therefore, and in complete agreement on this point with the Charter of Amiens, it must itself lead social and economic struggles. As a genuine organ of class defence and of class struggle it opposes parties and stands above them; it is the active force that helps all workers defend their interests, be they immediate or future, material or moral. Having reflected on current circumstances it affirms its desire to prepare without delay a comprehensive outline of tomorrow's social and economic life and wishes to examine potential features and general workings immediately.

Congress intends to substitute syndicalism, the natural expression of social life of individuals marching onwards towards free communism, in place of capitalism, the outcome and result of past life, on its the last lap of historical evolution – something suited to and fashioned by the ruling classes with no doctrine or theory. Rejecting the principle of shared privilege, so dear to the defenders of the general interests and class hierarchy, syndicalism must pursue its own mission destroying privilege and establishing social equality. It will achieve its aims by making management disappear, abolishing individual and collective wage earning, and abolishing the state. As regards this it recommends the general strike, expropriation of capitalism, taking

[1] The Charter of Amiens was adopted by the CGT in October 1906 and reflected the core principles of French pre-war revolutionary syndicalism. It can be found in *Black Flag* *Anarchist Review* Volume 1 Number 3 (Autumn 2021). (*Black Flag*)

possession of the means of production and exchange, as well as the immediate destruction of all state power.

Its means of action

Congress, to define its conception of a general strike, wishes to affirm that in its view this means of action preserves all its importance, in every circumstance, (corporately, locally, regionally, nationally or internationally). The partial or general strike rests and remains the only true weapon of the proletariat to ensure the triumph of its demands – be they partial or general; federal or national; defensive or offensive. As for the expropriating general strike, the first revolutionary act in a capitalist system, this strike will be marked by an immediate, concerted and simultaneous ending of work, and congress affirms that it can only be violent. It will have as its objectives:

- To deprive the state of any ability to act, by taking over the means of production and exchange; removing whoever is then in power.
- Defending proletarian conquests, which must serve to assure the existence of the new order.
- Restarting the system of production and exchange after, and through taking ownership, reducing to a minimum any break in rural or urban production and exchange.
- Replacing the state power that has been destroyed with a rational, federalist organisation of production, exchange and distribution.

Confident in the power of these means of struggle, congress declares that the proletariat will have the ability, not only to take possession of all the productive forces, destroying the current forms of state power, but will also be able to use its force in the interest of the liberated collective commonwealth defending it, arms in hand against every counter-revolutionary attack. The proletariat will avail itself of whatever form may be needed for social organisation in line with the stage of development achieved by people living at that moment.

It declares that the yardstick for revolutionary achievement will be determined only by workers' mental faculties and by their potential to build up their economic organism and it is to that end that their maximum efforts should be directed. The stability of the revolution from one moment to the next must be maintained, congress indicates, irrespective of any preconceived system, abstract theory or dogma, which may be in contradiction with the new social and economic reality.

Proclaiming its indefectible loyalty to revolutionary struggle, and to provide a better definition of its thinking, congress declares its beliefs that revolution is a social fact structured by the permanent contradiction of class conflict; and that this antagonism erupts brutally and suddenly, as precipitation takes effect, breaks its normal banks. Consequently, it declares that syndicalism – like all other movements – has the right to use it [revolutionary antagonism] in line with its own intentions to achieve as much as it can those goals that it has set itself; and in so doing it acts without confusing its activity with those of parties that also pretend to transform the social and political order, parties who propose for these ends the dictatorship of the proletariat, and the creation of a so-called provisional state.

In addition to this essential action, congress declares that through the action of its everyday demands, syndicalism pursues the coordination of workers' struggles, the greater well-being of labour, working through winning immediate improvements such as: the reduction of working hours, salary increases, etc. Day by day, it prepares for the liberation of workers that can be achieved only through the expropriation of the capitalist system.

While it condemns 'class collaboration' and general-interest-unionism, congress declares that the inevitable discussions between management and labour do not constitute class collaboration. While its sees in these discussions – which result from the current situation – an aspect of ongoing class struggle, congress defines class collaboration as being characterised by the fact of participating in bodies which bring together labour, management or the state for a common approach to economic problems, for solutions that will only prolong and reinforce the current regime.[1]

Confident in the power of these means of struggle, congress declares that the proletariat will have the ability, not only to take possession of all the productive forces, destroying the current forms of state power, but will also be able to use its force in the interest of the liberated collective commonwealth defending it, arms in hand against every counter-revolutionary attack

[1] Further paragraphs discuss syndicalism in a pre-revolutionary period, relations with other revolutionary forces, international issues and youth. (Translator)

A failed revolution?

The French Popular Front of 1936-38

David Berry

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Seventy years ago, France went through one of the defining moments of its modern history, and one whose anniversary is still regularly celebrated – and not just by the left and labour movement.

In the popular media, it is perhaps celebrated most for introducing paid holidays for all, with photographs of smiling workers setting off for the coastal resorts – hitherto the reserve of the bourgeoisie – in subsidised trains, or cycling through the countryside, or hiking to one of the new socialist youth hostels.

On the left, the Popular Front has become one of the central myths of the republican and revolutionary traditions, and has been held up as a counter to the failure (i.e. violent suppression) of the Paris Commune.

It is still today seen on the left as a strong reminder of what can be achieved by unity. Indeed, the particular constellation of parties involved – Socialist, Communist and Radical (the latter, despite its name, representing the centre-left) – has reappeared every time the left has come to power since (most recently, under Jospin, with the addition of the Greens).

But was the Popular Front such a great success, or was it a failed revolution?

The Popular Front elections, 1936

Although to do so pre-empts, in a way, our understanding of the meaning of the Popular Front, most accounts focus – perhaps understandably, given the fact that they led to the first constitutionally elected socialist government in France – on the legislative elections of April-May 1936. In those elections, the Communist Party doubled its share of the vote and increased the number of its deputies (MPs) from 10 to 72.

The Socialist Party became the biggest party in the Chamber of Deputies (i.e. the equivalent of the House of Commons) with 146 seats (up from 97).

On the left, the Popular Front has become one of the central myths of the republican and revolutionary traditions… as a strong reminder of what can be achieved by unity… But was the Popular Front such a great success, or was it a failed revolution?

And the so-called Radicals (a very broad and ideologically heterogeneous party of the centre, and up until then the dominant party of the Third Republic) fell from 159 seats to 116. This gave the 'Rassemblement Populaire' ('People's Rally') 376 seats against 222 for the right.

The evening of the first round of voting saw an explosion of joy in working-class areas across France, with spontaneous demonstrations in the streets. There had been, however, no major swing in public opinion from right to left.

What had changed was 'republican discipline': the agreement by all left candidates not to stand against the best placed candidate of the left in the second round of voting (in order to ensure the defeat of the candidate of the right).

Having said that, although the Radical Party nationally was officially part of the Popular Front, since signing up to the coalition in 1935, in some constituencies the local candidate was opposed to the Popular Front.

The Communists made some surprising inroads into rural areas among smallholders, and also made significant gains in major industrial centres, particularly in the 'red belt' (i.e. the working-class suburbs) around

Paris, in the coal-mining areas of the north; and in the south-coast ports of Marseille and Toulon.

Many of these advances by the Communists were made at the expense of the Socialist Party, and represented the beginning of a long-term turnaround in the relation between the two big parties of the left, with the PC (Communist Party) remaining the biggest party (in the country, let alone of the left) until the late 1970s.

At the famous Tours Congress of the Socialist Party of 1920, a majority of delegates had rejected the stance adopted by the party leadership with regard to both the 'Union Sacrée' (government of national unity and support for the war effort in 1914-18) and the question of support for the October revolution.

This majority had thus created a new party affiliated to the Moscow International.

The rump of the Socialist Party, however, had quickly rebuilt the party, overtaking the Communists as the biggest party of the left by 1924, whilst at the same time the newly launched Communist Party (known from its creation in 1920 until 1934 as the Communist Party, French Section of the Communist International) had rapidly lost support and members and turned itself into an isolated and sectarian Stalinist 'groupuscule'.

What the overall 1936 election results suggested was a rejection of economic liberalism and a weakening of the centrist Republican consensus. The corollary of this was the desire of the majority – after years of economic recession, taylorisation and a series of liberal reforms which hit the working classes hardest – for social reform.

This represented, in the words of historian Rod Kedward, "a historic swing of the republic away from a purely political definition" (*La Vie en bleu. France and the French since 1900*).

Economic recession, racism and the rise of fascism

The Popular Front as an electoral coalition did not appear overnight out of thin air. It was one manifestation of a broad, deep-rooted popular movement, which in turn was the product of a number of factors, notably the growing taylorisation of industry, economic recession and political radicalisation on both left and right.

As Kedward has put it, the election campaign of 1936 was launched "as the climax to a long ideological struggle largely fought out on the streets."

The global recession that followed the Wall Street crash of 1929 was felt in France from 1931, and especially from 1933.

Between 1931 and 1936, over a million jobs were cut in France, with textiles and the metalworking industries being particularly hard hit. Small-scale agriculture and small businesses also suffered.

In a climate of economic crisis and ideological extremism, xenophobia increased. The nationalist right warned of the danger of the arrival of what they called 'Jewish Bolsheviks' (namely German Jews fleeing Nazism), and the right of asylum, something which French republicans have always been proud of, came under attack.

A number of high-profile corruption cases linked to Radical Party politicians (the Stavisky affair of 1934 being the most famous) led to a widespread popular conviction that the whole system was corrupt.

The nationalist right used such perceptions to attack the left (the Radicals) which dominated successive governments of the Third Republic (1871-1940).

The PC and others on the left insisted on the contrary that such cases of corruption were an indictment of bourgeois society.

There was a widespread belief among the working class that the main cause of their hardship was monopolisation, profit and an unregulated market, and this produced a surge of support for trade union action by the early 1930s.

Many on both left and right believed that capitalism itself was on the brink of collapse. On the far left, a common belief was, as the Anarchist Union put it, that "We are faced more and more with the dilemma: fascism or revolution".

Radicalisation, antifascism and trade union unity

One of the upshots of this in an increasingly unstable atmosphere of economic, social and political crisis was the attempted storming of the Chamber of Deputies on 6 February 1934 by tens of thousands of supporters of right-wing 'leagues' and nationalist paramilitary groups. In the most violent scenes in Paris since the Commune of 1871, a policeman and sixteen extreme-right demonstrators were killed.

It was a watershed in the growing polarisation between left and right in inter-war France. As the left-wing intellectual Gilles Martinet wrote after the events: "In the grey light of winter 1934, the two Frances which had never renounced their old passions, revolutionary

or counter-revolutionary, once again confronted each other. I don't think they were unhappy about it."

Most historians now reckon 6 February did not represent a real threat of a right-wing coup. At the time, though, that was certainly how it felt. The effects of the economic depression, street activism and radicalisation meant that both left and right believed they had a chance to achieve their ambitions.

The response to 6 February from the left was immediate. A PC counter-demonstration held on 9 February led to four deaths in clashes with police.

The CGT (*Confédération Générale du Travail* or General Labour Confederation, by far the biggest national trade union centre) called for a one-day general strike on the 12th in protest at the actions of the right-wing 'leagues', and the CGTU (the 'Unitary' CGT, dominated by the Communist Party), PC and PS (Socialist Party) all eventually called for national action on the same day.

In highly unionised areas, 12 February was very successful: in Le Havre, for instance, 70-80% of workers walked out and nearly all the factories were shut down.

An interesting development in some towns was that the CGT succeeded in bringing out blue-collar and white-collar workers together– indeed, given the role of public sector cuts in successive governments' response to the depression, the 'fonctionnaires' (public sector employees) were seen as playing a central role.

The CGT's strike call had immediately led to the spontaneous creation in some towns of unitary CGT/CGTU organising committees, including in the naval dockyard and foundries of Saint-Nazaire, which had in the past been seen as a barometer of working-class militancy. And as a CGT official in Périgueux said: "The working class of our town has understood that, faced with the threat of fascism, internal quarrels should stop." In Paris, on the afternoon of the 12 February one-day strike, the PS had organised a demonstration which the PC had decided to support.

When the two contingents converged at the Place de la Nation, thousands of grass-roots activists began shouting "Unité! Unité!" A joint national congress in March 1936 would eventually formalise the re-unification of the CGT and CGTU, something for which revolutionary syndicalists (such as Pierre Monatte) and a majority of anarchists had been campaigning for many years.

The *Union Anarchiste* (UA) had been calling for a 'united front' against fascism ever since Hitler had come to power… From October 1936, the official UA strategy was a 'revolutionary front' with all non-anarchist revolutionaries

The CGT was split by the conflict between, broadly speaking, reformists and revolutionaries in 1921.

The growing domination of the CGTU by the PC led a minority of anarchists to create the anarcho-syndicalist CGTSR (*Confédération Générale du Travail-Syndicaliste Révolutionnaire*) in 1926, thus weakening the labour movement even further.

The *Union Anarchiste* (UA) had been calling for a 'united front' against fascism ever since Hitler had come to power, and was one of the eight groups invited to join the organising committee for the 12th.

From October 1936, the official UA strategy was a 'revolutionary front' with all non-anarchist revolutionaries (notably the PS's Revolutionary Left faction and a small number of Trotskyists), although so many anarchists were practically allergic to Marxists of any kind by this stage that the front was only patchily effective, with many local groups simply failing to implement the policy decision agreed on at national congress – the Revolutionary Front's main contribution seems to have been to organise solidarity with republican Spain, particularly the CNT-FAI.[1]

Stalinist strategy: from 'class against class' to the 'outstretched hand'

Apart from socio-economic factors and a growing understanding of the need for unity against fascism, another factor played a role: international relations, Stalin's foreign policy and the Comintern's strategic about-turns.

[1] For more detail on this, see Dave Berry, "'Fascism or Revolution!' Anarchism and Antifascism in France, 1933-39", *Contemporary European History* Vol. 8, No. 1 (March 1999).

The 'bolshevisation' of the newly created national communist parties (i.e., the eradication of all factions and internal dissent) had been called for by the 5th Congress of the Comintern (June 1924). The Comintern's 'Third Period' was instigated in 1928 and would last until 1935.

It was based on an aggressive, intransigent and sectarian stance that came to be known as 'class against class'. Socialists were condemned as being in league with the bourgeoisie and thus the working class's worst enemy, and were labelled 'social fascists'.

Anarchist activists' autobiographies of the period are horrifying in their description of the levels of routine sectarian violence provoked largely by this shift in the Comintern's position.

The French PC did not benefit from this new strategy either electorally or in terms of membership: the 1928 elections saw the party's number of deputies (i.e. MPs) reduced from 26 to 12, and by 1932 membership had dropped to 25,000.

But Stalin and the Comintern finally abandoned their sectarianism in June 1934, adopting instead – rather belatedly, many non-Communist militants thought – the policy of a united front against fascism and nazism.

The French PC immediately adopted a policy of left-wing unity, and signed a 'Common Front' with the PS. 1935 also saw the signing of a Franco-Soviet pact between the two governments.

This was a turning-point in the development of 'people's fronts' across Europe, and saw national CPs fall in line behind national defence. This is when the hitherto intransigently internationalist and antimilitarist 'Communist Party, French Section of the Communist International' became the 'French Communist Party' (PCF), and – in line with Stalin's pact with the French foreign minister Laval – declared its 'understanding' of the French state's preoccupation with national defence.

The PCF also discovered a liking for the French tricolour, and on demonstrations its stewards now began attacking anarchists for singing the International...

The PC slogan had become 'la main tendue', the outstretched hand, but this new policy was aimed not only at Socialists and CGT members, it was also directed at the middle classes, the Radical Party, and at catholics (who had always been not only socially conservative supporters of the right and extreme right, but actively opposed to the republican democratic tradition).

The Popular Front electoral programme

For the first time, the 1936 elections saw the publication of a common programme by the parties of the left – albeit one couched in fairly general terms.

There was also, as we have seen, an agreement not to stand against another Popular Front candidate in the second round of voting.

The biggest policy compromises were made by the PS, whose policy of nationalisation was opposed by the Communists and the Radicals, neither of which wished to antagonise the middle classes.

Former Communist demands for collectivisation and the creation of soviets had been dropped. The official slogan of the Popular Front as electoral coalition was 'Pain, Paix, Liberté' ('Bread, Peace and Freedom'). Its programme rejected deflation and cost-cutting. It promised a reduction of the working week without loss of pay, pensions for retired workers, a national unemployment fund and a programme of public works.

Control of the Bank of France was to be taken away from the 'economic oligarchy' of the largest shareholders. The right-wing paramilitary leagues were to be abolished, women's right to work would be guaranteed, trade union rights and secular state education defended and equality of access to state radio was promised.

There was also a commitment to the League of Nations, disarmament and the nationalisation of the arms industry. A parliamentary enquiry was promised into the situation in the colonies.

There was no Popular Front commitment to women's suffrage (there had been universal manhood suffrage since 1848), but a majority of Socialist and Communist candidates supported it. This was a progressive programme, but certainly not a revolutionary one.

The "Popular Front of the streets"

The trouble was that the narrowness of the electoral victory made it clear that virtually half of France was opposed to the reform programme, so the inevitable resistance had to be pre-empted.

Before Léon Blum, leader of the PS, was even endorsed as Prime minister of the first Popular Front government, a wave of strikes spread across France through May, June and July 1936.

The strikes were novel in two ways: firstly, they involved a very large number of occupations of workplaces (there had been a very few occurrences of workplace occupation in France in the early 1920s and

early 1930s, but it was a tactic known primarily through the Italian example from 1918-20); and secondly, numerous commentators and historians have emphasised the cheerful, confident, festive and even carnivalesque nature of these occupations – partly at least because the strikers assumed they could depend on the support of the new government.

When the leftwing philosopher Simone Weil revisited the famous Renault works at Boulogne-Billancourt (on the edge of Paris) where she had worked the previous year, she described it as the moment "when workers dared to take control of and assert their humanity over both the employers and the rationalisation of work".

Women workers played an important role in the strikes, either directly (one of the best-known examples being women sales assistants in the big modern department stores such as the Galeries Lafayette) or indirectly through their solidarity (bringing food and suchlike to the occupied factories). Branches of industry with relatively low unionisation rates were often in the vanguard of the movement.

When the leftwing philosopher Simone Weil revisited the famous Renault works… she described it as the moment "when workers dared to take control of and assert their humanity over both the employers and the rationalisation of work".

The strike wave of May-July 1936 was the biggest in French history (up till then – it would be surpassed in May-June 1968).

Nearly 2 million workers took part in over 12,000 strikes, three quarters of which also involved occupations.

The strikes were nearly all in the private sector, as public sector employees believed the new government would look after them.

The first occupations occurred in Le Havre and Toulouse, and were defensive strikes in support of workers who had been sacked for taking the day off work on May Day.

Such defensive strikes and occupations rapidly spread, however, and began to involve demands related to pay and working hours.

Metalworkers and mechanics (particularly in the aviation and automobile industries) in the Paris region played a particularly important role.

But the action soon spread to include a range of branches, much smaller workplaces and even white-collar workers such as office and shop workers – in the Seine-et-Marne and Seine-et-Oise departments (just outside the Paris region) 10,000 agricultural labourers occupied farms.

All this time, the prime minister Léon Blum and the reformist general secretary of the CGT, Léon Jouhaux, tried to restore 'order' and persuade workers to go back to work, arguing that there was no need for direct action since there was now a Popular Front government.

The impact of the occupations was enormous, and prompted Marceau Pivert, the leader of the 'Revolutionary Left' faction within the PS (to which Daniel Guérin belonged at the time), to declare: "Everything is possible!"

The anarchists likewise emphasised the revolutionary potential of the situation. The reformist leadership of the CGT, however, felt that a major programme of social reforms supported by a majority of the electorate was already enough and was immediately achievable, whereas 'revolution' was a mirage.

Leon Blum and the PS leadership were concerned with the legal exercise of power in a constitutional framework.

The employers quickly asked for a meeting with the PM and CGT representatives on 7 June, and the negotiations only took one afternoon, the balance of power had shifted so much thanks to the strength of the strike and occupation movement (and, it must be said, the election results).

The employers conceded the main demands and the Blum government also passed a number of laws during June.

The upshot was:

- The right to form or join a union, and the right to union representation in the workplace (the 'délégué du personnel');
- The legal right to strike;
- The introduction of collective bargaining;
- A blanket 15-17% pay rise for all workers;

- The 40 hour week (with no loss of pay);
- Two weeks' paid holidays for all.

This was undoubtedly a major turning point, for the collective strength of the working class had forced these concessions out of the employers despite relatively high unemployment.

However, even after the legislation, strikers continued their action, wanting to go beyond the concessions their 'representatives' had got for them.

This greatly worried the PS and CGT leaders, and on 11 June, the PCF leader Maurice Thorez, arguing that this was not the time for taking power, uttered the (in)famous words: "Il faut savoir terminer une grève" "When our demands have been met, we have to know how to end a strike". Within days, the return to work began to accelerate, although around 300 factories were still occupied at the end of July.

The employers' concessions and the changes in the law were nevertheless seen as a great success by most French workers, and the 14 July Bastille Day celebrations made this clear, with a million on the streets in Paris and red flags (then still the symbol of the labour movement in general, not of Communism) hanging from many windows.

A more negative note was sounded by the libertarian and other socialist revolutionaries associated with the group Révision in 1938.

Looking back on the widespread enthusiasm regarding the 1936 agreement with the employers, they wrote:

> "Not only did the Matignon Agreement, a treaty concluded under the auspices of the Socialist government between the big employers and the leadership of the CGT, fail to limit profits or restrict the power of capital.
>
> "It has actually forced capital to organise itself more seriously than in the past and has reinforced the influence of the most powerful capitalists over the capitalist class as a whole. The working class is deluding itself as to the value of the reforms it won."

The Popular Front government: problems and disillusion

The Blum government was certainly in trouble within months of coming to power, as financial problems led to a loss of middle-class support and even greater hostility than before from business interests. Inflation led to further strikes (mostly unsuccessful).

Along with fear of possible contagion from Spain (where civil war broke out in July), these factors also led to unease among Blum's coalition partners in the Radical Party. Blum's response – and one which would in essence be repeated under François Mitterrand in 1982-4 – was not to radicalise or accelerate the reform programme, but to criticise union 'irresponsibility' and impose legislation requiring workers to go to arbitration before calling a strike.

The following February, Blum announced a 'pause' in the reform programme. The right correctly saw this as a major ideological retreat and the reactionary Senate prevented Blum bringing in the financial reforms he thought necessary.

March saw the infamous events at Clichy (on the northern edge of Paris), when the government refused to ban a meeting held by the quasi-fascist Parti Social Français, despite the wishes of the local left-wing council: a counter-demonstration by Communists and left-wing Socialists led to a street battle with police, who shot dead six activists.

The subsequent funeral was the scene of a powerful, mass demonstration of the dissatisfaction of many with the Popular Front's leaders.

Algerians who had had high hopes of the Popular Front government, were also to be bitterly disappointed by its failure to make any move towards Algerian independence.

The Etoile Nord-Africaine was even dissolved in January 1937 by the same law which had supposedly been introduced to get rid of the far-right 'leagues'. Its leader, Messali Hadj, launched a new party, the Parti de Peuple Algérien, but he and others were arrested in August 1937.

Blum resigned in June 1937. He and other Socialists became members of the new, more socially conservative, Radical-led government, but the impetus for reform was lost and this was to all intents and purposes the end of the Popular Front as a progressive electoral coalition.

Nevertheless, trade union membership, having grown to around four million, stayed high throughout 1937 and only began to drop off again in the winter of 1937-38. By this point, the economic situation was worsening, the Radicals had shifted back to the right and the employers were launching an offensive on gains won by workers in 1936. The unions were forced to fight a rearguard action which they eventually lost.

A second Blum government in the spring of 1938 lasted only a few weeks when its Keynesian reform proposals were blocked by the Senate.

The Radical government which came to power in April 1938, led by Edouard Daladier, ruled by decree-laws

and set about attacking the 40-hour week; it also relaunched arms production and promoted a pro-natalist policy, reinforcing legal restrictions on abortion and contraception.

There was a clampdown on immigration and asylum-seekers fleeing fascism and nazism abroad, and the Daladier government was alone among the so-called democracies not to condemn the nazis' 'Kristallnacht' pogrom. An attempted one-day general strike on 30 November 1938 was a miserable failure and was the last straw in the disillusion of the working-class movement.

Was a revolution possible in 1936?

It was argued then and it has been argued many times since that 1936 could have given birth to a social revolution.

The conditions certainly seemed to be present: the country was suffering from economic recession; the ruling Radical Party was in disarray as far as economic policy was concerned; the right was divided and confused; popular confidence in the institutions of the Third Republic and in the ' political class' as a whole was low; the social effects of recession, taylorisation and government policy (spending cuts and so on) had led to widespread popular dissatisfaction and growing militancy.

Workers' class consciousness was very strong and resistance to fascism had led to a massive groundswell of support for working class and left unity.

The Spanish revolution just over the Pyrenees provided a wonderful example of what could be achieved; the French bourgeoisie were completely taken aback by the militancy of strikers in 36/37; the fact that so many strikes also involved occupations in so many parts of France could have provided a solid base for co-ordinated workers' control on a large scale, leading to a situation of dual power.

In the words of one anarchist activist who lived through those events: "Rarely have the circumstances been so completely favourable to social revolution." (UTCL [Union of Libertarian Communist Workers], *Il y a 50 ans: le Front populaire*).

But the legalism of the PS leadership, the PC's subservience to Stalin and Soviet foreign policy, the reformism of the CGT leadership, the essential statism of the French republican tradition and the attachment of a majority of the working class to parliamentary democracy, the relative strength of the anarchist current and the existence of other, more influential, revolutionary tendencies (the Revolutionary Left in the PS and minorities in the PC and CGT the Trotskyists were very few and isolated).

On the one hand there was… the 'Popular Front no.1' – an electoral alliance between social democracy, Stalinism and bourgeois liberalism.

On the other hand was the 'Popular Front no.2' – a powerful, extra-parliamentary movement, the initiative for which came from the working class – "the true popular front, the popular front of the streets and not of the politicians" as the Anarchist Union insisted

All these factors gravitated against revolution, despite the country's revolutionary tradition.

Another negative factor was the lack of grassroots committees. Individual workers tended to remain loyal to their respective parties and trade unions.

There were joint demonstrations, but the Popular Front 'Local Committees' did not play much of a role, and this had an impact on the character of the Popular Front.

On the one hand there was what Daniel Guérin called the 'Popular Front no.1' – an electoral alliance between social democracy, Stalinism and bourgeois liberalism.

On the other hand was the 'Popular Front no.2' – a powerful, extra-parliamentary movement, the initiative for which came from the working class – "the true popular front, the popular front of the streets and not of the politicians" as the Anarchist Union insisted in July 1936.

However powerful this popular movement was, the lack of democratic, grassroots organisation meant there was little or no resistance (outside a few small minorities) to the movement's being controlled by the party and trade union hierarchies.

Guérin made a similar point in his semi-autobiographical account of the Popular Front, which was for him a 'failed revolution'.[1]

[1] See Rob Hall, *Daniel Guérin's "Popular Front in France: A Lost Revolution"– Modern Parallels*.

Engaging both with the failures of his own group, the Revolutionary Left, and the criticisms made by Trotsky and his French supporters, Guérin wrote: "The revolutionary organisation which was lacking in June 1936 was not, in my opinion, an authoritarian leadership emanating from a small group or sect, but an organ for the co-ordination of the workers' councils, growing directly out of the occupied workplaces.

The mistake of the Revolutionary Left was not so much that it was unable, because of its lack of preparation, to transform itself into a revolutionary party on the Leninist or Trotskyist model, but that it was unable […] to help the working class to find for itself its own form of power structure to confront the fraud that was the Popular Front no. 1."

The libertarian communist tendency within the UA had pushed for the creation of factory committees after the reunification of March 1936. These factory committees had three objectives: to disseminate anarchist ideas; to encourage direct action; to work in and foster the revolutionary militias some socialists were setting up.

Factory committees were established in various of the bigger companies in the Paris region, although estimates of how successful they were vary.

But when their representation at the UA congress of October-November 1937 was discussed, it was rejected for fear that the organisation might be "diverted into the domain of workplace affairs", as one UA member put it. The 'policy' was eventually abandoned by the UA.

Similarly, with regard to the workplace occupations, anarchist and other critics have pointed out negative as well as positive aspects.

Firstly, revolutionary socialists, anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists, then as now, have emphasised the significance of the occupations, not just because they were spontaneous, widespread, had mass support and were carried out against the wishes of the PS, PCF and CGT leadership (who did everything they could to control and limit the strikes), but also because of their great symbolic importance.

They demonstrated once again that the working class has only ever made real gains when they have taken them by force, and more often than not by going outside the law.

The act of occupying their workplaces suggested a widespread questioning by workers of the very principle of private ownership of the means of production.

As *Le Combat Syndicaliste* (weekly paper of the anarcho-syndicalist CGTSR) put it: "Attacking both the right to property and the principle of authority, the workers have taken control of the means of production, which are their means of work; for a moment, they have stopped the source of profit and exerted their right of occupation, proving in the process their capacity for organisation and self-management. They have proved the value of direct action."

Having said that, the available evidence seems to show that the 1936 occupations in fact tended to be defensive and based on the assumption that they were temporary: in most cases, the occupiers' main concern seems to have been to prevent lock-outs, and to protect the plant or shop contents from damage so that work could be started again once the strike was over.

The workers remained unarmed, and their main purpose was to protect plant and premises from attack by police or fascists, not least so as to make it possible for production to be restarted once strikers' demands were met.

There was rarely any talk of expropriation or of the organisation of production by workers.

Secondly, there were strike committees which stayed in close contact with the strikers. General assemblies were held each day, and these also put proposed agreements with employers to the vote of all strikers.

Often, the assemblies rejected the recommendations of their delegates on the committee. On the other hand, the strike committees were in many cases unelected and consisted just of well-known union or party activists who acted more or less as spokespersons for their union or party.

One contemporary libertarian communist activist would write 50 years later:

> "There can be no doubt that in June 36, we can see expressed in the proclamations, but also perfectly clear in their actions, the revolutionary will of the working class.
>
> "What the workers wanted was a radical change in the system and in their everyday lives."

The reasons the movement failed (beyond achieving anything other than a few social reforms which it would prove easy for the ruling class to claw back once the strike movement subsided and the working class put its faith in their political representatives) were that the workers' struggles were contained in such a way that their demands never went beyond relatively superficial economic and social issues, and because the vast majority never lost their faith in their traditional

leaders or their illusions about the liberatory potential of a reformist government.

Anarchists and other revolutionaries had proved unequal to the task in that they were unable effectively to counter the arguments of the reformists in the PS and CGT leadership, or to counter the lies and manipulations of the Stalinists.

The anarchists and popular frontism

The French anarchists had from the very beginning attacked what they saw as the fundamental deceptiveness of the Popular Front policy, the naivety of believing that anything significant could be achieved by electing a Popular Front government: 'make the rich pay' was a seductive but misleading slogan.

This was, of course, a matter of very basic anarchist principle, as the UA's manifesto (adopted at its Paris congress of April 1936) made clear: parliamentarism was the gravest danger to the working class, being no more than an anaesthetic.

An electoral alliance with the bourgeoisie was a trick, because it had the working class believe that their interests were the same as their rulers', and a century's experience showed that it was "always the working class that pays the cost of such alliances".

It was therefore foolish to believe that a Popular Front government would or could achieve what the working class needed:

> "Will it expropriate the industrialists and the financiers?
>
> "No. That is not its aim – our nice republican Radicals could never subscribe to such a thing."

Popular Front governments in France or Spain would not be able to achieve what the working class wanted without going beyond the legal framework of a bourgeois parliament, and they would not be able to do that without destroying themselves as coalition governments.

Anarchists wondered what would happen then:

> "Parliamentary resistance? Capitalism has shown in several countries that it is quite capable of overcoming such opposition without lifting a finger.
>
> "The Popular Front, if it wishes to hold on to power, will have to protect itself by adopting a 'neutrality' which will be greatly appreciated by capital.
>
> "Otherwise, it will be forced to step down. There is no other possible solution."

As the UA had predicted even before Blum et al were elected: "The Popular Front experiment will be the greatest confirmation of our ideas on the incapacity of political parties to lead the proletariat to its complete emancipation."

They were right, and their analysis has been repeatedly demonstrated to be correct by every subsequent Popular Front-type government.

The Working Class in Struggle

J. Ribeyron

Le Libertaire, 5 June 1936

In a powerful movement, workers strive to break the bosses' iron rule strengthen by 15 years of division.

More than 300 factories are occupied.

The metal-workers' General Strike is underway.

A formidable movement, the first and how delightful repercussion of the rebuilt union unity, has just cast a multitude of proletarians into an arduous struggle against the bosses, accustomed since 1921 to impose their law harshly and with impunity on their producers of profit.

The workers emboldened by the regrouping of working class forces, becoming aware of their power and scornful in advance of the mirages brandished by political demagogues, have undertaken a tough assault on their exploiters, by the at last magnificently rehabilitated means of direct action.

The workers certainly understand the value of the old adage that proclaims: *A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush*. In this case, taking at their word the promises of dumbfounded professional politicians, suddenly prisoners of their demagogy. They have set themselves the duty of extracting as many of their demands as possible.

It is an event that, in regard to the new political situation, reveals a certain political maturity of workers burnt by numerous far too disappointing experiences.

In their fundamental and hard good sense, they judged it unnecessary to wait for the splendid achievements promised by the Popular Front: perhaps they have understood that the actions of the ministerial gang of the Popular Front of Spain, that sent the civil guards – of notorious memory – against peasants out of patience waiting for the land reform promised during the election period, are well made to warn them against dangerous illusions.

So the workers were right to take action without further delay, for history shows that what we obtain on the domain of protest is that which we are capable of seizing and nothing more.

Let us say without displaying the slightest audacity, that the future will not pass without giving all its meaning and its value to the method of struggle brilliantly employed by the convicts of the factory, as it appears to have been fraught with confusion, hypocrisy, filled with renunciation, overloaded with disturbing intrigues, if not indeed daunting dangers.

So the workers were right to take action without further delay, for history shows that what we obtain on the domain of protest is that which we are capable of seizing and nothing more

How could it be otherwise, in face of the attitude, the language of those who are about to govern and, above all, the worker cadres whose action leaves nothing to be desired?

The current serious conflict has allowed us to see a very strange sight, so to speak.

On the one hand, workers full of energy and desire for revenge have stopped the machines, symbolically and very appropriately occupied the factories, revealing once again to all their strength and their decisive role in social life. In the suburbs, industrial life has been paralysed as a result of successive movements. The factories [previously] most refractory to action like Renault have joined the fray. Everywhere the same will to fight, the same confidence, unanimous enthusiasm.

On the other, in contrast, the political-schemers clan of bigwigs, hesitations, errors, deficiencies. See even a certain panic!

Yes! those who have the task of organising the struggles of the exploited have been hopelessly overwhelmed, including those who for more than fifteen years have passionately preached to us the radicalisation of the masses.[1] No attempt at coordination has been made. If the strike has become generalised, we have the feeling the leaders had nothing to do with it.

It even seems that effective brakes have been applied. The hasty ending of the Renault factory strike did its utmost to give us that impression and it appears that the anger of the workers in this sweatshop who have shouted the swearword of treason at Costes is justified.[2]

For their part, the workers from Citroën showed their outrage for the union delegate with repeated cries of: Timbault into the Seine![3]

But have you not noticed the strange attitude of the press of the Popular Front?

After the whacking the big drum of the early days, then sudden discomfort began to ooze from its columns in the face of the generalisation of the movement. What fear, what a curious fright! And unable to deny its magnitude, with what zeal, what unity it began to lessen, to minimise the movement, to falsify its character and its meaning.

It could be said that it had a secret concern to reassure the exploiters! It is through the journal of decaying communism which strives, by the authorised pen of sir Frachon[4] – the same who in the Allier previously

[1] A reference to the Communist Party. (*Black Flag*)

[2] Alfred Marie Irenee Costes (1888-1959) was a leading member of the metal-workers' union. He became a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party in 1925 (remaining there until 1950) and a member of the union's Executive Board in 1927 (and elected president of the CGT's metalworkers' union in 1952). (*Black Flag*)

[3] Jean-Pierre Timbaud (1904-1941) was a trade union activist, member of the French Communist Party and secretary of the CGT metal-workers union in the 1930s. He was executed by the Nazis along with 26 other Communist hostages in punishment for the assassination of a German officer by the resistance. (Editor)

[4] Benoît Frachon (1893-1975) was a French metalworker, trade union leader and a leader of the French Communist

breathed his hope of seeing the bullets of mercenaries lay workers on the pavement, to increase their spirit of revolt!, – to use a playful tone and the worse journalistic artifices to demonstrate to the bourgeoisie that, all in all, it has nothing to fear from the serious movement underway!

In truth, what a strange sight! Is it, by any chance, that they are afraid of jeopardising the governmental experiment of the Popular Front?

They dread excessively alarming the bourgeoisie by too energetic a movement!

Since the workers, too careless of the necessities of political intrigue, have taken action, should they be forced to curb their momentum, moderate their impatience, to calm beleaguered capitalism and prepare the unctuous and harmless, necessarily sterile, reign of the politicians of the Popular Front?

Posing these questions is to take a big step towards the answer, is it not?

But for now, the workers remain masters of their action since new work stoppages are strengthening the movement.

Despite the leaders who, to say the least, are overly reluctant, the strike is spreading.

The workers are obviously resolved to a supreme effort to break the shackles of their slavery.

It is necessary to proclaim the general strike. But will they do it? We doubt it. If such an attempt is tried we fear that it is to make the fighters see "reason."

Without doubt, some panel will be skilfully held out to make them stumble and eventually tumble into the soothing path of conciliation.

It is necessary, obviously, that they understand the high concerns that haunt the soothsayer brains of the Popular Front!

It is high time! The desired outcome cannot be delayed much longer. Soon the horizon will clear in front of the Popular Front to the great happiness of its politicians. And the working class will be able to realise the immense deception of which it has been the victim, unless it does not reject its bad shepherds with a fierce jolt.[1]

From the collective contract to worker control

N. Faucier

Le Libertaire, 3 July 1936

The workers have acquired valuable lessons during the vigorous action they have successfully conducted against the well organised bosses, which they will have to know how to use in the constant struggle they have to wage for their emancipation.

After long neglecting union organisation, undermined by internal divisions, they understand today the necessity of association and at the same time forced the bosses to recognise the right to organise and established a collective contract which put an end to the abuses to which they were too long the victims.

But this is only the beginning of the task at hand, and, these initial gains made, the victors this day would be wrong to consider them definitive and to rely for their implementation upon the honesty of their exploiters who now have only one goal: to reconquer, by every means, the ground lost.

However, it seems that this time the workers, grouped in a powerful organisation, are hardly disposed to let themselves be robbed of the fruit of their victory. They organise themselves within the company to consolidate the improvements gained. The union sections are functioning, the collectors of [union] dues are chosen: the world of labour, beginning its work, is becoming aware of its dignity and the social role it has to play.

By means of delegates wisely chosen from amongst the best and most competent, workers now have the ability to defend and improve the conditions of their exploitation. Permanent control over the application of social laws, compliance with the [agreed] wage-scale, hiring and firing, hygiene and safety at work gives the worker a sense of his ability to manage the business.

Indeed, it is for this role that he must prepare. The collective contract, to be effective and beneficial to the

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Party. He became secretary of the reunited CGT at the trade union unification congress in Toulouse in March 1936, and Secretary-General from 1945 to 1967. (*Black Flag*)

[1] Anarchist analysis and activity during the occupations and the Popular Front period is summarised in Chapter 8 ("Popular Front or Revolutionary Front? Anarchist Anti-Fascism") of David Berry's *A History of the French Anarchist Movement, 1917 to 1945* (Edinburgh/Oakland: AK Press, 2009). (*Black Flag*)

workers' interests, must not be confined to regulating the relations between bosses and workers in social peace; it must be the means by which the worker extends his control over the running of the business and asserts as a consequence better living conditions.

Of course, the application of this scheme requires an immense work of social education to be undertaken without delay by the company section, the extension of the union in the place of work. Its immediate role consists of sustaining within the worker the necessity of continuing his effort and preserving the class struggle in the place of work to increase his gains. It must, moreover, seek to develop his understanding of the industrial struggle, to raise his competency in the economic sphere which will enable him to penetrate the workings of the system of capitalist exploitation and to ever more widely apply his supervision to pass from the collective contract to worker control of production and capitalist profit.

By information meetings after work, by the [union] newsletter within the company in which will be set out specific demands for the business, finally by a wide circulation of the pamphlets announced by the C.G.T. on the role of the workshop delegates, the collective contract, trade unionism, etc., this work must produce excellent results.

Indeed, worker control must no longer remain a theoretical demand. The events of these last few years have definitively established the bankruptcy of a regime that has resulted in the creation of ever more misery as the means of production developed.

After the magnificent industrial action which has just been completed and which has demonstrated the power and cohesion of the labour movement, the workers cannot limit their demands to wage increases or for an end to the boss's bullying.

They must demand an ever-widening right of scrutiny over the conditions of exploitation to which they are subject, in order to condemn the economic contradictions resulting from the law of profit and to prepare themselves for the exercise of the management of the means of production and exchange, with the aim of expropriation which remains the goal of our common effort.

In the battle we have just embarked upon, the proletariat has clearly shown by the methods used, and whose results often exceeded those set by the union leaders, that it had only little confidence in the latter and that it no longer intended to rely upon them for the defence of its interests by interventions with the public authorities or compromises with the bosses which too often turned to its disadvantage.

In a surge of revolt, simultaneously against his oppressors and the hypnotisers [*endormeurs*[1]] of social peace, it has returned to the sound concepts of direct action which have proven themselves in the past and which have given it self-confidence for fulfilling its liberating mission.

Let it be persuaded that this method will be needed to remove from its path the political mediators and others who multiply obstacles to maintain its enslavement.

Worker control is precisely one of those forms of direct action by which the working class affirms its capacity for future management.

It is that indispensable weapon which will allow the realisation of Proudhon's expression so much decried by certain "realists" and according to which "THE WORKSHOP WILL REPLACE GOVERNMENT."[2]

[1] A reference to those who seek to beguile, smooth-talk or otherwise pacify the working class with hopes of change by means of reforms legislated by politicians rather than, as anarchists argued, by direct action and economic self-organisation. The term was used by both Bakunin and Kropotkin, with the former writing in 1869 articles for *L'Égalité* entitled "Les endormeurs." ("The Hypnotizers," *The Basic Bakunin: Writings, 1869-1871*, [Buffalo, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 1992]). (*Black Flag*)

[2] A popular quote amongst French syndicalists, it is a slight paraphrase of Proudhon's "the workshop will banish government." ("À Pierre Leroux," *La Voix du Peuple*, 13 December 1849). In this article, Proudhon stresses that "the capitalist principle and the monarchist or governmental principle are one and the same principle; that the abolition of the exploitation of man by man and the abolition of the government of man by man are one and the same formula" and so "the labour question and the State question resolve each other and are, fundamentally, one and the same issue, that no distinction should be made between them." He also takes umbrage at Leroux's suggestion that he thought "that *ownership of the instruments of labour must forever stay vested in the individual and remain unorganised*," replying he had "never penned nor uttered any such thing: and have argued the opposite a hundred times over.[...] I deny all kinds of proprietary domain. I deny it, precisely because I believe in an order wherein the instruments of labour will cease to be appropriated and instead become shared." The "democratic organisation of credit" would result in "the spontaneous, popular formation of groups, workshops or workers' associations" (*Property is Theft!*, 496-500). (*Black Flag*)

Revolutionary Front!

Editorial, *Le Libertaire*, 1 April 1937

This is the new concept that must rally all proletarians disillusioned by the betrayals of the Popular Front. It will unite in a revolutionary manner all the exploited against their masters.

IT IS THE ONLY ONE CAPABLE OF GUARANTEEING BREAD, PEACE, FREEDOM

The events in Clichy brutally exposed the leaders of the Popular Front.[1]

In those days the working class rediscovered the admirable fighting spirit of the June strikes. Aware, tense, it rose up as one against the crime. The dead were workers; they belonged to the working class. Demonstrating its full strength by bringing the capital's economic life to a standstill, it made it clear to both the would-be dictators and their leaders that they would not shed workers' blood with impunity.

Taking advantage of their influence over it, the leaders of the Popular Front deflected its anger, throwing the likes of La Rocque and Doriot to the wolves. This may have been enough to quell its initial fury, but it does not change the fact that the Popular Front leaders were in a tight spot. The general strike was imposed upon them; they endured it, mitigated it, but they did not unleash it willingly. It would have happened without them. Which amounts to saying it took place against them.

It suffices to recall the facts to realise this. On Wednesday morning, *Humanité*, *Populaire*, *Peuple* appeared, trying to downplay the facts, none of these newspapers mentioned the general strike. They seemed embarrassed. This is understandable. The matter had to be suppressed, and everyone was doing their best to do so.

But now the workers, obeying their class instinct, their just anger, leave work. The construction sites of the exposition were deserted.[2] And Italian workers from Fascist Italy joined the movement. The black flag flew over the CGT pavilion, clearly indicating the direction the movement was about to take. The metalworking factories followed the example, the workers walked off the job. All the efforts of the union leaders to get them back to work were in vain. Discontent was at its peak. The safety valve had to be activated by offering the workers some semblance of satisfaction. It will be a half-day strike. The next day the so-called workers' newspapers did not give an account of this movement, but dwelled at length on the spirit of discipline which had animated the proletarians, and had made them very wisely resume work in the afternoon, forgetting to mention that many construction sites and factories had not restarted.

This magnificent workers' response gives us every hope for the future. Who, after the June strikes, after this movement, will still dare to speak of the cowardice or spinelessness of the proletariat? Only dilettantes lost in the contemplation of their navel, or the so-called elites who want to want to live off popular credulity, can still utter such words. The workers want to fight. They are gaining more and more confidence in themselves, in their political capacity, every day.

Parties can still fool them, but they will not fool them for much longer. It is in the midst of these daily struggles that the proletariat educates itself. Facts are stronger than men and theories.

The Clichy massacre marks a turning point in the failure of the Popular Front. May workers understood this. Many realised, after the national defence loan and the shooting in Clichy, that this socialist-led government was there to serve the interests of the bourgeoisie, not the proletariat. The divide between classes, which will force the party leaders to side with the bourgeoisie, will accentuate the separation between them and their troops who, increasingly disillusioned, will leave them.

Under these circumstances, our role as anarchists is clearly defined: to draw ever closer to the proletarian masses.

The Popular Front has failed, we must replace this motley front of conflicting interests with a front of proletarian interests. We must accomplish this as quickly as possible.

The Popular Front is dying, now make way for the Revolutionary Front.

[1] On March 16, 1937, a riot broke out in Clichy, a suburb of Paris, when police clashed with anti-fascist demonstrators protesting a meeting of the far-right Parti Social Français. The confrontation resulted in 6 deaths and over two hundred injured. A wave of strikes hit the city the next day. (*Black Flag*)

[2] The *Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne* (International Exposition of Art and Technology in Modern Life) was held from 25 May to 25 November 1937 in Paris. (*Black Flag*)

Looking Back at Spain

Murray Bookchin

The Radical Papers (Montreal/New York: Black Rose Books, 1987) – *Our Generation*, Spring-Summer 1986

In the morning hours of July 18,1936, General Francisco Franco issued the *pronunciamiento* from Las Palmas in Spanish North Africa that openly launched the struggle of Spain's reactionary military officers against the legally elected Popular Front Government in Madrid.

The Franco *pronunciamiento* left little doubt that, in the event of victory by the Spanish generals, a parliamentary republic would be replaced by a clearly authoritarian State, modelled institutionally on similar regimes in Germany and Italy. The *Francista* forces, or 'nationalists,' as they were to call themselves, exhibited all the trappings and ideologies of the fascist movements of the day: the raised open-palm salute, the appeals to a 'fold-soil' philosophy of 'order, duty, and obedience,' the avowed commitments to smash the labour movement and end all political dissidence. To the world, the conflict initiated by the Spanish generals seemed like another of the classic struggles waged between the 'forces of fascism' and the 'forces of democracy' that had reached such acute proportions in the thirties.



What distinguished the Spanish conflict from similar struggles in Italy, Germany, and Austria was the massive resistance of the 'forces of democracy' to the Spanish military. Franco and his military co-conspirators, despite the wide support they enjoyed among the officer cadres in the army, had grossly miscalculated the popular opposition they would encounter. The so-called Spanish Civil War lasted nearly three years – from July 1936 to March 1939 – and claimed an estimated one million lives.

For the first time, so it seemed to many of us in the thirties, an entire people with dazzling courage had arrested the terrifying success of fascist movements in central and southern Europe. Scarcely three years earlier, Hitler had pocketed Germany without a shred of resistance from the massive Marxist-dominated German labour movement. Austria, two years before, had succumbed to an essentially authoritarian State after a week of futile street-fighting by Socialist workers in Vienna. Everywhere fascism seemed 'on the march' and 'democracy' in retreat.

But Spain had seriously resisted – and was to resist for years despite the armaments, aircraft, and troops which Franco acquired from Italy and Germany. To radicals and liberals alike, the Spanish Civil War was being waged not only on the Iberian peninsula but in every country where 'democracy' seemed threatened by the rising tide of domestic and international fascist movements. The cloak of ideological legitimacy which was shrewdly cast over this conflict is betrayed by the journalistic vernacular that surfaced from the struggle in the liberal press of the thirties. The opponents of the Franco forces were called 'loyalists' as well as 'republicans'; the Franco forces, 'rebels' as well as 'nationalists.' The Spanish Civil War, we were led to believe, was a struggle of a liberal republic that was valiantly and with popular support trying to defend a democratic parliamentary State against authoritarian generals – an imagery that is conveyed to this very day by most books on the subject and by that shabby cinematic documentary "To Die in Madrid."

What so very few of us outside Spain knew, however, is that the Spanish Civil War was in fact a sweeping social revolution by millions of workers and peasants who were determined, not to rescue a treacherous republican regime, but to reconstruct Spanish society along revolutionary lines. We would scarcely have learned from the press that these workers and peasants viewed the republic with almost as much animosity as they did the Francoists; indeed, acting largely on their own initiative against republican ministers who were trying to betray them to the

generals, they had raided arsenals and sports-goods stores for weapons and with incredible valour had aborted the military conspiracies in most of the cities and towns of Spain. We were almost totally oblivious to the fact that these workers and peasants had seized and collectivised many of the factories and farms in 'republican'-held areas, establishing a new social order based on direct control of the country's productive resources by workers' committees and peasant assemblies.

While the republic's institutions lay in debris, abandoned by most of its military and police forces, the workers and peasants had created their own institutions to administer the cities in 'republican' Spain, formed their own armed workers' squads to patrol the streets, and established a remarkable revolutionary militia force to fight the Francoists – a voluntaristic militia in which men and women elected their own commanders and in which military rank conferred no social, material, or symbolic distinctions.

Largely unknown to us at this time, the Spanish workers and peasants had made a sweeping social revolution. They had created their own revolutionary social forms to administer the country as well as to wage war against a well-trained and well-supplied army.

The Spanish Civil War was not a political conflict between liberal democracy and a fascistic military corps, but a far-reaching socio-economic conflict between the workers and peasants of Spain and their historic class enemies, ranging from the landowning grandees and clerical overlords inherited from the past to the rising industrial bourgeoisie and bankers of more recent times.

How had the revolutionary scope of this conflict been kept from us? And by 'us' I refer to the many thousands of largely Communist-influenced radicals of the 'red' thirties who responded to the struggle in Spain with the same fervour and agony that young people of the sixties responded to the struggle in Indochina. We need not turn to Orwell or Borkenau, radicals of obviously strong anti-Stalinist convictions, for an explanation. Burnett Bolloten, a rather politically innocent United Press reporter who happened to be stationed in Madrid at the time, conveys his own sense of moral outrage at the misrepresentation of the Spanish conflict in the opening lines of his superbly documented study *The Grand Camouflage*:

> Although the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in July, 1936, was followed by a far-reaching social revolution in the anti-Franco camp – more profound in some respects than the Bolshevik Revolution in its early stages – millions of discerning people outside of Spain were kept in ignorance, not only of its depth and range, but even of its existence, by virtue of a policy of duplicity and dissimulation of which there is no parallel in history.
>
> Foremost in practicing this deception upon the world, and in misrepresenting in Spain itself the character of the revolution, were the Communists, who, although but an exiguous minority when the Civil War began, used so effectually the manifold opportunities which that very upheaval presented that before the close of the conflict in 1939 they became, behind a democratic front piece, the ruling force in the left camp.[1]

The details of this deception – one may reasonably call it a conscious Stalinist counter-revolution comparable only to the treachery of Ebert and Noske in the German Revolution of 191819 – would fill several large volumes. Bolloten, whose *The Grand Camouflage* examines the revolution and counter-revolution up to May 1937, a period of less than a year, requires more than 300 pages to narrate the most salient events. Many details can be further gleaned from works in French and Spanish. To contemporary radicals, however, the Spanish revolution and counterrevolution are virtually a closed book, even to those who were active in the thirties. Bolloten's book seems to be a victim of the very camouflage it was written to disclose; much the same could be said for Borkenau's and Brenan's books. Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia,* while better known, tends to be dismissed as sentimental and 'personalistic.'

The silence that gathers around Spain, like a bad conscience, attests to the fact that the events are very much alive – together with the efforts to misrepresent them. After fifty years the wounds have not healed. In fact, as the recent revival of Stalinism suggests, the disease that produced the purulence of counter-revolution in Spain still lingers on in the contemporary left.

But to deal with the Stalinist counter-revolution in Spain is beyond the scope of this article. It might be useful, however, to examine the revolutionary tendencies that unfolded prior to July 1936 and explore the influence they exercised on the Spanish working class and peasantry. The Spanish revolution was not

[1] Burnett Bolleten, *The Grand Camouflage*, London, 1961, p. 17. (Republished by Russell and Russell in N.Y.) Bolleten has since expanded and revised this work into *The Spanish Revolution*, University of Carolina Press, 1979.

the result of virginal popular spontaneity, important as popular spontaneity was, nor was it nourished exclusively by the collectivist legacy of traditional Spanish village society. Revolutionary ideas and movements played a crucial role of their own and their influence deserves the closest examination.

The Social Revolution

The Spanish generals started a military rebellion in July 1936; the Spanish workers and peasants answered them with a social revolution – and this revolution was largely anarchist in character. I say this provocatively even though the Socialist UGT was numerically as large as the anarchosyndicalist CNT.[1]

During the first few months of the military rebellion, Socialist workers in Madrid often acted as radically as anarchosyndicalist workers in Barcelona. They established their own militias, formed street patrols, and expropriated a number of strategic factories, placing them under the control of workers' committees. Socialist peasants in Andalusia and Estramadura formed collectives, many of which were as libertarian as those created by anarchist peasants in Aragon and the Levant. In the opening 'anarchic' phase of the revolution, so similar to the opening phases of earlier revolutions, the 'masses' tried to assume direct control over society and exhibited a remarkable elan in improvising their own libertarian forms of social administration.



Looking back beyond this opening phase, however, it is fair to say that the durability of the collectives in Spain, their social scope, and the resistance they offered to the Stalinist counter-revolution, depended largely on the extent to which they were under anarchist influence. What distinguishes the Spanish Revolution from those which preceded it is not only the fact that it placed much of Spain's economy in the hands of workers' committees and peasant assemblies or that it established a democratically elected militia system. These social forms, in varying degrees, had emerged during the Paris Commune and in the early period of the Russian Revolution.

What made the Spanish Revolution unique is that workers' control and collectives had been advocated for nearly three generations by a massive libertarian movement and, together with the fate of the militia system, became the most serious issues to divide the so-called 'republican' camp. Owing to the scope of its libertarian social forms, the Spanish Revolution proved not only to be 'more profound' (to borrow Bolloten's phrase) than the Bolshevik Revolution, but the influence of a deeply rooted anarchist ideology and the intrepidity of anarchist militants virtually produced a civil war within the civil war.

Indeed, in many respects the revolution of 1936 marked the culmination of more than sixty years of anarchist agitation and activity in Spain. To understand the extent to which this was the case, we must go back to the early 1870's, when the Italian anarchist Giuseppi Fanelli introduced Bakunin's ideas to groups of workers and intellectuals in Madrid and Barcelona. Fanelli's encounter with young workers of the *Fomento de las Artes* in Madrid, a story told with great relish by Brenan, is almost legendary: the volatile speech of the tall, bearded Italian anarchist who hardly knew a word of Spanish, to a small but enthusiastic audience that scarcely understood his free-wheeling mixture of French and Italian.[2] By dint of sheer mimicry, tonal inflections, and a generous use of cognates, Fanelli managed to convey enough of Bakunin's ideals to gain the group's adherence and to establish the founding Spanish section of the International Working Men's Association (IWMA) or so-called First International. Thereafter, the 'internationalists,' as the early Spanish anarchists were known, expanded rapidly from their circles in Madrid and Barcelona to Spain as a whole,

[1] Both the UGT (*Union General de Trabajadores* or General Workers' Union) and the CNT (*Confederacion Nacional del Trabajo* or National Confederation of Labour) probably numbered over a million members each by the summer of 1936. The officious, highly bureaucrat it UGT tended to overstate its membership figures; the more amorphous, decentralised CNT – and the most persecuted of the two labour federations – often exercised much greater influence on the Spanish working class than its membership statistics would seem to indicate.

[2] See Gerald Brenan, *The Spanish Labyrinth*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1961, pp. 139-40.

taking strong root especially in Catalonia and Andalusia.

Following the definitive split between the Marxists and Bakuninists at the Hague Congress of the IWMA in September 1872, the Spanish section remained predominantly Bakuninist in its general outlook. Marxism did not become a significant movement in Spain until the turn of the century, and even after it became an appreciable force in the labour movement it remained largely reformist until well into the thirties. During much of its early history, the strength of the Spanish Socialist Party and the UGT lay in administrative areas such as Madrid rather than in predominantly working-class cities like Barcelona. Marxism tended to appeal to the highly skilled, pragmatic, rather authoritarian Castilian; anarchism, to the unskilled, idealistic Catalans and the independent, liberty-loving mountain villagers of Andalusia and the Levant. The great rural masses of Andalusian day-workers, or *braceros*, who remain to this day among the most oppressed and impoverished strata of European society, tended to follow the anarchists. But their allegiances varied with the fortunes of the day. In periods of upheaval, they swelled the ranks of the Bakuninist IWMA and its successor organisations in Spain, only to leave it in equally large numbers in periods of reaction.

Yet, however much the fortunes of Spanish anarchism varied from region to region and from period to period, whatever revolutionary movement existed in Spain during this sixty-year period was essentially anarchist. Even as anarchism began to ebb before Marxian social-democratic and later Bolshevik organisations after the First World War period, Spanish anarchism retained its enormous influence and its revolutionary elan. Viewed from a radical standpoint, the history of the Spanish labour movement remained libertarian and often served to define the contours of the Marxist movements in Spain. "Generally speaking, a small but well-organised group of Anarchists in a Socialist area drove the Socialist s to the left,'' observes Brenan, "whereas in predominantly Anarchist Areas, Socialists were outstandingly reformist"[1] it was not socialism but rather anarchism that determined the metabolism of the Spanish labour movement – the great general strikes that repeatedly swept Spain, the recurring insurrections in Barcelona and in the towns and villages of Andalusia, and the gun battles between labour militants and employer-hired thugs in the Mediterranean coastal cities.

It is essential to emphasise that Spanish anarchism was not merely a programme embedded in a dense theoretical matrix. It was a way of life: partly, the life of the Spanish people as it was lived in the closely knit villages of the countryside and the intense neighbourhood life of the working-class *barrios*; partly, too, the theoretical articulation of that life as projected by Bakunin's concepts of decentralisation, mutual aid, and popular organs of self-management.

That Spain had a long tradition of agrarian collectivism is examined in some detail in Joaquin Costa's *Colectivismo Agrario en Espagna*. Inasmuch as this tradition was distinctly precapitalist, Spanish Marxism regarded it as anachronistic, in fact as 'historically reactionary.' Spanish socialism built its agrarian programme around the Marxist tenet that the peasantry and its social forms could have no lasting revolutionary value until they were 'prole tarianised' and 'industrialised.' Indeed, the s000ner the village decayed the better and the more rapidly the peasantry became a hereditary proletariat, "disciplined, united, organised by the very mechanism of the process of capitalist production itself" (Marx) – a distinctly hierarchical and authoritarian 'mechanism' – the more rapidly Spain would advance to the tasks of socialism.

Spanish anarchism, by contrast, followed a decisively different approach. It sought out the precapitalist collectivist traditions of the village, nourished what was living and vital in them, evoked their revolutionary potentialities as liberatory modes of mutual aid and self-management, and deployed them to vitiate the obedient, hierarchical mentality and authoritarian outlook fostered by the factory system. Ever mindful of the *embourgeoisement* of the proletariat (a term continually on Bakunin's lips in the later years of his life), the Spanish anarchists tried to use the precapitalist traditions of the peasantry and working class against the assimilation of the workers' outlook to an authoritarian industrial rationality. In this respect, their efforts were favoured by the continuous fertilisation of the Spanish proletariat by rural workers who renewed these traditions daily when they migrated to the cities. The revolutionary elan of the Barcelona proletariat – like that of the Petrograd and Parisian proletariat – was due in no small measure to the fact that these workers never solidly sedimented into a hereditary working class, totally removed from precapitalist traditions, whether of the peasant or the craftsman. Along the Mediterranean coastal cities of Spain, many workers retained a living memory of a non-capitalist culture – one in which life was not strictly governed by the punch clock, the factory whistle, the foreman, the machine, the highly

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 273.

regulated workday, and the atomising effects of the large city.

Spanish anarchism flourished within the tension created by these antagonistic traditions and sensibilities. Indeed, where a 'germanic proletariat' (to use another of Bakunin's cutting phrases) emerged in Spain, it drifted toward either the UGT or the Catholic unions. Its political outlook, reformist when not overtly conservative, often clashed with the more *déclassé* working class of Catalonia and the Mediterranean coast, leading to conflicting tendencies within the Spanish proletariat as a whole.



Ultimately, in my view, the destiny of Spanish anarchism depended upon its ability to create libertarian organisational forms that could synthesise the precapitalist collectivist traditions of the village with an industrial economy and a highly urbanised society. I speak here of no mere programmatic 'alliance' between the Spanish peasantry and proletariat, but more organically, of new organisational forms and sensibilities that imparted a revolutionary libertarian character to two social classes who lived in conflicting cultures. That Spain required a well organised libertarian movement was hardly a matter of doubt among the majority of Spanish anarchists. But would this movement reflect a village society or a factory society? Where a conflict existed, could the two be melded in the same movement without violating the libertarian tenets of decentralisation, mutual aid, and self-administration? In the classical era of 'proletarian socialism' bet ween 1848 and 1919, an era that stressed the 'hegemony' of the industrial proletariat in all social struggles, Spanish anarchism followed a historic trajectory that at once revealed the limitations of the era itself and the creative possibilities for anarchist forms of organisation.

Anarchist Organisation

By comparison with the cities, the Spanish villages committed to anarchism raised very few organisational problems. Brenan's emphasis on the *braceros* notwithstanding, the strength of agrarian anarchism in the south and the Levant lay in the mountain villages, not among the rural proletariat that worked the great plantations of Andalusia. In these relatively isolated villages, a fierce sense of independence and personal dignity whetted the bitter social hatreds engendered by poverty, creating the rural 'patriarchs' of anarchism whose entire families were devoted almost apostolically to 'the Idea.' For these sharply etched and rigorously ascetic individuals, defiance of the State, the Church, and conventional authority in general, was almost a way of life. Knitted together by the local press – and, at various times, there were hundreds of anarchist periodicals in Spain – they provided the sinews of agrarian anarchism from the 1870's onwards, and, to a large extent, the moral conscience of Spanish anarchism throughout its history.

The revolution, in fact, essentially enlarged old IWMA and later CNT nuclei, membership groups or quite simply clans of closely knit anarchist families into popular assemblies. These usually met weekly and formulated the policy decisions of the community as a whole. The assembly form comprised the organisational ideal of village anarchism from the days of the first truly Bakuninist congress of the Spanish IWMA in Cordova in 1872, almost echoing the immemorial traditions of Spanish village life.[1] Where

[1] I would not want to argue here that the Spanish village formed a paradigm for a libertarian society. Village society differed greatly from one region of Spain to another – in some areas retaining undisturbed its local quasi-democratic traditions, in others ruled tyrannically by the Church, the nobility, caciques, and custom. Quite often, both tendencies co-existed in a very uneasy equilibrium, the democratic still vital but submerged by the authoritarian. The anarchists tried to develop the former at the expense of the latter. The myth, so widely disseminated by the current sociological literature on the subject, that agrarian anarchism in Spain was anti-technological in spirit and atavistically sought to restore a neolithic 'Golden Age' can be quite effectively refuted by a close study of the unique educational role they played in the countryside. It was the anarchists, with inexpensive, simply written brochures, who brought the French enlightenment and modern scientific theory to the peasantry, not the arrogant liberals or the disdainful Socialists. Together with pamphlets on Bakunin and Kropotkin, the anarchist press published simple accounts of the theories of natural and social evolution and elementary introductions to the secular culture of Europe. They tried to instruct the peasants in advanced techniques of land management and earnestly favoured the use of agricultural machinery to lighten the burden of toil and provide more leisure for self-development. Far from being an atavistic trend in Spanish society, as Hobsbawm and even Brenan would have us believe, I can say with certainty from a careful

such popular assemblies were possible, their decisions were executed by a committee elected from the assembly. Apparently, the right to recall committee members was taken for granted and they certainly enjoyed no privileges, emoluments, or institutional power. Their influence was a function of their obvious dedication and capabilities. It remained a cardinal principle of Spanish anarchists never to pay their delegates, even when the CNT numbered a million members.[1] Normally, the responsibilities of elected delegates had to be discharged after working hours.

Almost all the evenings of anarchist militants were occupied with meetings of one sort or another. Whether at assemblies or committees, they argued, debated, voted, and administered, and when time afforded, they read and passionately discussed 'the Idea' to which they dedicated not only their leisure hours but their very lives. For the greater part of the day, they were working men and women, *obrera consciente*, who abjured smoking and drinking, avoided brothels and the bloody bull ring, purged their talk of 'foul' language, and by their probity, dignity, respect for knowledge, and militancy, tried to set a moral example for their entire class. They never used the word 'god' in their daily conversations (*salud* was preferred to *adios*), and avoided all official contact with clerical and State authorities, indeed, to the point where they refused to legally validate their life-long 'free unions' with marital documents and never baptised or confirmed their children. One must know Catholic Spain to realise how far-reaching were these self-imposed mores – and how quixotically consistent some of them were with the puritanical traditions of the country.[2]

In their personal qualities, dedicated urban anarchists were not substantially different from their rural comrades. But in the towns and cities of Spain, these urban anarchists faced more difficult organisational problems. Their efforts to create libertarian forms of organisation were favoured, of course, by the fact that many Spanish workers were either former villagers or were only a generation or so removed from the countryside. As Brenan observes, these workers viewed their local unions as 'industrial villages' from which they expected a system of self-government, placing liberty, leisure, and dignity above demands for higher wages.

In 'black' Saragossa, where the working class was even more firmly committed to anarchist principles than the Barcelona proletariat, Raymond Carr quite accurately emphasises that "strikes were characterised by their scorn for economic demands and the toughness of their revolutionary solidarity: strikes for comrades in prison were more popular than strikes for better conditions."[3] Yet within the factory itself – the realm of toil, hierarchy, and brute material necessity – 'community' was more a function of the bourgeois division of labour and command with its exploitative, even competitive connotations, than of humanistic cooperation, playfully creative work, and mutual aid. Working-class solidarity depended less upon a shared meaningful life nourished by self-fulfilling work than the common enemy – the boss – who exploded any illusion that under capitalism the worker was more

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review of the issue that anarchism more closely approximated a radical popular enlightenment.

[1] In the case of the CNT there were exceptions to this rule. The National Secretary was paid an average worker's salary, as were the clerical staff of the National Committee and the editors and staff of daily newspapers. But delegates to the national, regional, and local committees of the CNT were not paid and were obliged to work at their own trades except when they lost time during working hours on union business. Which is not to say that there were no individuals who devoted most of their time to the dissemination of anarchist ideas. "Travelling about from place to place, on foot or mule or on the hard seats of third-class railway carriages, or even like tramps or ambulant bullfighters under the tarpaulins of goods wagons," observes Brenan, "whilst they organised new groups or carried on propagandist campaigns, these 'apostles of the idea,' as they were called, lived like mendicant friars on the hospitality of the more prosperous workers" – and, I would add, 'villagers' (pp. 145-46). This tradition of organising, which refers to the 1870's, did not disappear in later decades; to the contrary, it became more systematic and perhaps more securely financed as the CNT began to compete with the UGT for the allegiance of the Spanish workers and peasants.

[2] Yet here I must add that to abstain from smoking, live by high moral standards, and to especially abjure the consumption of alcohol, was very important at the time. During the period of anarchist ascendancy Spain was going through her own belated industrial revolution with all its demoralising features. The collapse of morale among the proletariat, with rampant drunkenness, venereal disease, and the breakdown of sanitary facilities, was the foremost problem which Spanish revolutionaries had to deal with, just as Black radicals today must deal with these problems in the ghetto. On this score, the Spanish anarchists were eminently successful. Few CNT workers, much less committed anarchists, would have dared show up drunk at meetings or misbehave overtly among their comrades. If one considers the terrible working and living conditions of the period, alcoholism was not as serious problem in Spain as it was in England during the industrial revolution.

[3] Raymond Carr, *Spain: 1808-1939*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966, p. 515.

than an industrial resource, an object to be coldly manipulated and ruthlessly exploited.

If anarchism can be partly regarded as a revolt of the individual against the industrial system, the profound truth that lies at the heart of that revolt is that the factory routine not only blunts the sensibility of the worker's image of his or her human potentialities, of his or her capacities to take direct control of the means for administering social life.



What uniquely distinguished the Spanish anarchists from the socialists was their attempt to transform that factory domain – in the long run, by their demand for workers' control of production; more immediately, by their attempt to form libertarian organisations that culminated in the syndicalist CNT.

The extent to which workers' control can eliminate alienated labour and alter the impact of the factory system on the worker's sensibilities requires, in my view, a more probing analysis than it has yet received. The Spanish anarchists were spared the need to deal practically with this problem until 1936. Until then, one of the main issues confronting their movement was to evolve those forms of working-class organisation that could assimilate and elaborate the Spanish collectivist tradition along libertarian lines. How could it be applied to the world of factories and cities? How could it vitiate the spirit of obedience, of hierarchical organisation, of leader-and-led relationships, of authority and command instilled by capitalist industry? For only if the authoritarian consequences of capitalist industry could be blocked, or, where necessary, uprooted in the Spanish proletariat would it be possible to achieve a libertarian society, based on self-management and self-realisation.

Syndicalism and the Unions

Spanish anarchism dealt with these issues ambiguously. No sizable radical movement in modern times had seriously asked itself if organisational forms had to be developed which promoted changes in the most fundamental behavioural patterns of its members. It is to the lasting credit of Spanish anarchism – and of anarchism generally – that it posed this question.[1] The term 'integral personality' appears repeatedly in Spanish anarchist documents, and tireless efforts were made to develop individuals who not only cerebrally accepted libertarian principles but tried to practise them. Accordingly, the organisational framework of the movement was meant to be decentralised, to allow for the greatest degree of initiative and decision-making at the base, and to provide structural guarantees against the formation of a bureaucracy.

These requirements, on the other hand, had to be balanced against the need for coordination, mobilised common action, and effective planning. The organisational history of anarchism in the cities and towns of Spain – the forms which the anarchists created and those which they discarded – is largely an account of the pull between these two requirements and the extent to which one prevailed over the other. But this tension was not merely a matter of experience and structural improvisation. In the long run, the outcome of the pull between decentralisation and coordination depended on the ability of the most dedicated anarchists to affect the consciousness of the workers who entered anarchist-influenced unions.

[1] For Marx and Engels, organisational forms to change the behavioural patterns of the proletariat were not a problem. This could be postponed until 'after the revolution.' Indeed, Marx viewed the authoritarian impact of the factory ("the very mechanism of the process of capitalist production itself") as a positive factor in producing a "disciplined, united" proletariat. Engels, in an atrocious diatribe against the anarchists titled "On Authority," explicitly used the factory structure – its hierarchical forms and the obedience it demanded – to justify his commitment to authority and centralisation in working-class organisations. What is of interest here is not whether Marx and Engels were `authoritarians' but the way in which they thought out the problem of proletarian organisation – the extent to which the matrix for their organisational concepts was the very economy which the social revolution was meant to revolutionise.

Before we discuss the extent to which these unions provided an arena for the realisation of libertarian ideals, let us examine their basic structure. Long before syndicalism became a popular term in the French labour movement of the late nineties, it already existed in the Spanish labour movement of the early seventies. The anarchist-influenced Spanish Federation of the old IWMA was, in my opinion, distinctly syndicalist. At the founding congress of the Spanish Federation at Barcelona in June 1870, the 'commission on the theme of the social organisation of the workers' proposed a structure that was to form a model for all later anarchosyndicalist labour unions in Spain, including the CNT.

The commission suggested a typical syndicalist dual structure: organisation by trade and organisation by locality. Local trade organisations (*Secciones de oficio*) grouped together all workers from a common enterprise and vocation into a large occupational federation (*Uniones de oficio*) whose primary function was to struggle around economic grievances and working conditions. A local organisation of miscellaneous trades gathered up all those workers from different vocations whose numbers were too small to constitute effective organisations along vocational lines. Paralleling these vocational organisations, in every community and region where the IWMA was represented, the different local *Secciones* were grouped together, irrespective of trade, into local geographic bodies (*Federaciones locales*), whose function was avowedly revolutionary – the administration of social and economic life on a decentralised libertarian basis.

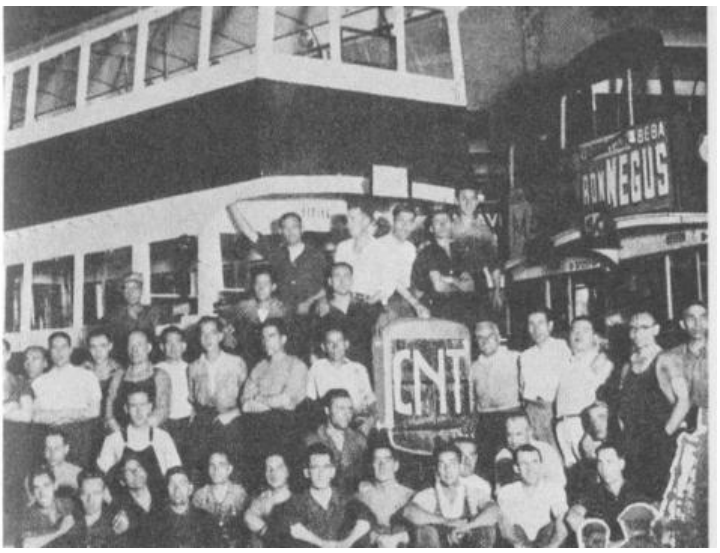
This dual structure forms the bedrock of all syndicalist forms of organisation. In Spain, as elsewhere, the structure was knitted together by workers' committees, which originated in individual shops, factories, and agricultural communities. Gathering in assemblies, the workers elected the committees that presided over the affairs of the vocational *Secciones de oficio* and the geographic *Federaciones locales*; these were federated into regional committees for nearly every large area of Spain. Every year, when possible, the workers elected the delegates to the annual congresses of the Spanish Federation of the IWMA, which in turn elected a national Federal Council.

With the decline of the IWMA, syndicalist union federations surfaced and disappeared in different regions of Spain, especially Catalonia and Andalusia. The IWMA of the 1870's was followed by the rather considerable Workers' Federation of the 1880's. After the suppression of the latter, Spanish anarchism contracted either to non-union ideological groups such as the Anarchist Organisation of the Spanish Region or to essentially regional union federations like the Catalan-based Pact of Union and Solidarity of the 1890's and Workers' Solidarity of the early 1900's. Except for the short-lived Federation of Workers' Societies of the Spanish Region, established in 1900 on the initiative of a Madrid bricklayers' union, no major national syndicalist federation appeared in Spain until the organisation of the CNT in 1911. With the establishment of the CNT, Spanish syndicalism entered its most mature and decisive period. Considerably larger than its rival, the UGT, the CNT became the essential arena for anarchist agitation in Spain.

Yet in none of the federations cited here was the structural form very different from the old Spanish Federation of the IWMA. The CNT was not merely 'founded'; it developed organically out of the Catalan Workers' Solidarity and its most consolidated regional federation, the Catalan Federation (*Confederacion Regional del Trabajo de Cataluna*). Later, other regional federations were established from local unions in each province – many of them lingering on from the Federation of Workers' Societies of the Spanish Region – until there were eight by the early 1930's. The national organisation, in effect, was a loose collection of regional federations which were broken down into local and district federations, and finally, into *sindicatos*, or individual unions. These *sindicatos* (earlier, they were known by the dramatic name of *sociedades de resistancia at capital* – societies of resistance to capital) were established on a vocational basis and, in typical syndicalist fashion, grouped into geographic and trade federations (*Federaciones locales* and *sindicatos de oficio*). To coordinate this structure, the annual congresses of the CNT elected a National Committee which was expected to occupy itself primarily with correspondence, collection of statistics, and aid to prisoners.

The statutes of the Catalan regional federation provide us with the guidelines for the national movement as a whole. According to these statutes, the organisation was committed to 'direct action,' rejecting all "political and religious interference." Affiliated district and local federations were to be "governed by the greatest autonomy possible, it being understood by this that they have complete freedom in all the professional matters relating to the individual trades which integrate them." Each member was expected to pay monthly dues of ten centimes (a trifling sum) which was to be divided equally among the local organisation, Regional Confederation, National Confederation, the union newspaper (*Solidaridad Obrera* – Workers' Solidarity), and the all-important special fund for 'social prisoners.'

By statute, the Regional Committee – the regional equivalent of the CNT's National Committee – was expected to be merely an administrative body. Although it clearly played a directive role in coordinating action, its activities were to be bound by policies established by the annual regional congress. In unusual situations, the committee could consult local bodies, either by referenda or by written queries. In addition to the annual regional congresses at which the Regional Committee was elected, the committee was obliged to call extraordinary congresses at the request of the majority of the local federations. The local federations, in turn, were given three months notice of a regular congress so that they could "prepare the themes for discussion." Within a month before the congress, the Regional Committee was required to publish the submitted 'themes' in the union newspaper, leaving sufficient time for the workers to define their attitudes toward the topics to be discussed and instruct their delegates accordingly. The delegations to the congress, whose voting power was determined by the number of members they represented, were elected by general assemblies of workers convened by the local and district federations.



These statutes formed the basis for the CNT's practice up to the revolution of 1936. Although they notably lacked any provision for the recall of the committee members, the organisation in its heroic period was more democratic than the statutes would seem to indicate. A throbbing vitality existed at the base of this immense organisation, marked by active interest in the CNT's problems and considerable individual initiative. The workers' centres (*centros obreros*), which the anarchists had established in the days of the I.W M A, were not only the local offices of the union; they were also meeting places and cultural centres where members went to exchange ideas and at tend led tires. All the affairs of the local CNT were managed by committees of ordinary unpaid workers. Although the official union meetings were held only once in three months, there were "conferences of an instructive character" every Saturday night and Sunday afternoon. The solidarity of the *sindicatos* was so intense that it was not always possible to maintain an isolated strike. There was a strong tendency for a strike to trigger others in its support and generate active aid by other *sindicatos*.

In any case, this is the way the CNT tried to carry on its affairs and during favourable periods actually functioned. But the picture I have described here should not be idealised. Repression and sudden, often crucial turns in events made it necessary to suspend annual or regional congresses and confine important policy-making decisions to plenums of leading committees or to 'congresses' that were little more than patchwork conferences. Charismatic leaders at all levels of the organisation came very close to acting in a bureaucratic manner. Nor is the syndicalist structure itself immune to bureaucratic deformations. It was not very difficult for an elaborate network of committees, building up to regional and national bodies, to assume all the features of a centralised organisation and circumvent the wishes of the workers' assemblies at the base. This actually happened in France when the syndicalist CGT (General Confederation of Labour) fell under the control of opportunists, socialists, and finally the Communist Party.

Finally, the CNT, despite its programmatic commitment to libertarian communism, was primarily a large trade union federation rather than an anarchist organisation. Angel Pestana, one of its most pragmatic leaders, recognised that roughly a third of the CNT membership could be regarded as anarchists. The great majority of *cenetistas* probably avowed ambiguous libertarian views, but the extent to which they took them seriously is questionable. Many were militants rather than revolutionaries; others simply joined the CNT because it was the dominant union in their area or shop. And by the 1930's, the great majority of CNT members were workers rather than peasants. Andalusians, once the largest percentage of members in the anarchist-influenced unions of the previous century, had dwindled to a minority. Despite the sentimental accounts of Spanish anarchism as an atavistic rural movement, the CNT had become overwhelmingly proletarianised.

To the degree that the CNT had rooted itself in the factories, its collectivist ideals began to lose the deeply humanistic communitarian content imparted to them

by the village. It would have been difficult before the 1930's to find a leading Spanish anarchist like Santillan dealing with internal factory relations in crassly utilitarian, alienating, and coldly rationalistic terms. "We believe there is a little confusion in some libertarian circles between social conviviality, group affinity and the economic functions," observed Santillan in *After the Revolution*, a highly influential book that was to appear shortly before the 1936 uprising.

> Visions of happy Arcadias or free communes were imagined by the poets of the past; for the future, conditions appear quite different. In the factory we do not seek the affinity of friendship but the affinity of work. It is not an affinity of character, except on the basis of professional capacity and quality of work, which is the basis of conviviality in the factory. The 'free commune' is the logical product of group affinity, but there are no such free communes in economy, because that would presuppose independence, and there are no independent communes.[1]

The contrast which Santillan draws between past and present concepts of 'free communes' is unerring: Salvochea, the venerable patriarch of early Andalusian anarchism, would never have recognised his own ideals in Santillan's description of work.[2]

With the slow change in the social composition of the CNT and the growing supremacy of industrial over village values in its leadership and membership, it is my view that the confederation would have eventually turned into a fairly conventional Latin-type of trade union. Famous CNT leaders like Salvador Segui, Angel Pestana, and Juan Peiro were syndicalists rather than anarchists; others were trade unionists rather than syndicalists. But employer intransigence and UGT rivalry of the most crassly back-stabbing type made it difficult for these elements to gain exclusive control over the union. Segui, perhaps the most influential CNT leader of the First World War period, earnestly tried to collaborate with the UGT and work out practical compromises with the Catalan bourgeoisie. His efforts were continually frustrated by all the parties to the compromises he sought – and with every betrayal, anarchist militants surged to the surface and played a decisive role in orchestrating the union's angry reaction. But sedimenting below them was a large syndicalist confederation of leaders and led – in some cases even of canny Latin-type labour politicians whose fiery rhetoric concealed a proclivity for manipulation, and for docile followers who were being conditioned by their factory lives to leave decisions in the hands of their 'superiors.' This sedimentation did not take place suddenly; it occurred very slowly, often perhaps imperceptibly as stormy periods of struggle and repression interrupted it. But the appearance of CNT and 'anarchist' ministers in Largo Caballero's coalition government during the first year of the 1936 revolution was not an impulsive episode. This event had been in the making for years.

The Anarchist Response to Syndicalism

The Spanish anarchists were not oblivious to these developments. Although syndicalist unions formed the major arena of anarchist activity in Europe, anarchist theorists were mindful that it would not be too difficult for reformist leaders in syndicalist unions to shift organisational control from the bottom to the top. They viewed syndicalism as a change in focus from the commune to the trade union, from all of the oppressed to the industrial proletariat, from the streets to the factories, and, in emphasis at least, from insurrection to the general strike.

Malatesta, fearing the emergence of a bureaucracy in the syndicalist. unions, warned that "the official is to the working class a danger only comparable to that provided by the parliamentarian; both lead to corruption and from corruption to death is but a short step." Although Malatesta was to change his attitude toward syndicalism, he accepted the movement with many reservations and never ceased to emphasise that "trade unions are, by their very nature, reformist and never revolutionary." To this warning he added that the "revolutionary spirit must be introduced, developed and maintained by the constant actions of revolutionaries who work from within their ranks as

[1] Diego Abad de Santillan, *After the Revolution*. New York, 1937, p. 99 (now out of print).

[2] This is not to say that Santillan's work was a total denial of libertarian communist principles. His book tries to establish a pragmatic – and, on this score, interesting – balance between a libertarian communist approach and the need for economic coordination. It blends Marxist and anarchocommunist, especially in dealing with the material preconditions for a communist society. For example, "Communism will be the natural result of abundance, without which it will remain only an ideal." This distinctly Marxian formulation is balanced immediately afterward by a libertarian one: "In each locality the degree of communism, collectivism or mutualism will depend on the conditions prevailing. Why dictate rules? We who make freedom our banner, cannot deny it in economy. Therefore there must be free experimentation, free show of initiative and suggestions, as well as the freedom of organisation."

well as from outside, but it cannot be the normal, natural definition of the Trade Union's function."[1]

The soundness of Malatesta's criticism is, in my view, beyond question: to see in trade unions (whether syndicalist or otherwise) an inherent potentiality for revolutionary struggle is to assume that the interests of workers and capitalists, *merely as classes*, are intrinsically incompatible. This is demonstrably untrue if one is willing to acknowledge the obvious capacity of the system to remake or to literally create the worker in the image of a repressive industrial culture and rationality. From the family, through the school and religious institutions, the mass media, to the factory, and, finally, trade union and 'revolutionary' party, capitalist society conspires to foster obedience, hierarchy, the work ethic, and authoritarian discipline in the working class as a whole, indeed, in many of its 'emancipatory' movements.



The factory and the class organisations that spring from it play the most compelling role in promoting a well-regulated, almost unconscious docility in mature workers – a docility that manifests itself not so much in characterless passivity, but in a pragmatic commitment to hierarchical organisations and authoritarian leaders. Workers can be very militant and exhibit strong, even powerful character traits in the most demanding social situations; but these traits can be brought just as readily, if not more so, to the service of a reformist labour bureaucracy as to a libertarian revolutionary movement. They must break with the hold of bourgeois culture on their sensibilities – specifically, with the hold of the factory, the locus of the workers' very *class* existence – before they can move into that supreme form of direct action called 'revolution,' and, further, construct a society they will *directly* control in their workshops and communities.

This amounts to saying that workers must see themselves as human beings, not as class beings; as creative personalities, not as 'proletarians,' as self-affirming individuals, not as 'masses.' And the destiny of a liberated society must be the free commune, not a confederation of factories, however self-administered; for such a confederation takes a part of society – its economic component – and reifies it into the totality of society. Indeed, even that economic component must be humanised precisely by bringing an 'affinity of friendship' to the work process, by diminishing the role of onerous work in the lives of the producers, indeed, by a total 'transvaluation of values' (to use Nietzsche's phrase) as it applies to production and consumption as well as social and personal life.

Syndicalism had divided the Spanish anarchist movement without really splitting it. Indeed, until the establishment of the *Federation Anarquista Iberica* there was rarely a national anarchist organisation to split. The disappearance of Bakunin's Alliance for Social Democracy in Spain scattered the forces of Spanish anarchism into small local nuclei which related on a regional basis through conferences, periodicals, and correspondence. Several regional federations of these nuclei were formed, mainly in Catalonia and Andalusia, only to disappear as rapidly as they emerged.[2]

Yet a Spanish anarchist movement held together on two levels: by means of well-known periodicals like *La Revista Blanca* and *Tierra y Libertad* and in the form of small circles of dedicated anarchists, both inside and outside the syndicalist unions. Dating as far back as the eighties, these typically Hispanic groups of intimates, traditionally known as *tertulias,* met at favourite cafes to discuss ideas and plan actions. They gave themselves colourful names expressive of their high-minded ideals *(Ni Rey Ni Patria)* or their revolutionary spirit (*Los Rebeldes*) or quite simply their sense of fraternity (*Los Afines*). The Anarchist Organisation of the Spanish Region to which I have already alluded, founded in Valencia in 1888, consciously made these *tertulias* the strands from which it tried to weave a coherent

[1] See Daniel Guérin, *Anarchism*. Monthly Review Press, 1970, pp. 79-80, for a rounded discussion of Malatesta's views on syndicalism.

[2] Madrid, although with a largely Socialist labour movement, was the home of an intensely active anarchist movement. Not only were the Madrid construction workers strongly anarchosyndicalist, but at the turn of the century many Madrid intellectuals were committed to anarchism and established a renowned theoretical tradition for the movement that lingered on long after anarchist workers had cut their ties with the Spanish intelligentsia.

movement. Decades later, they were to reappear in the FAI as *grupos de afinidad* with a more formal local and national structure.

Although Spanish anarchism did not produce an effective national movement until the founding of the FAI, the divisions between the anarchosyndicalists and the anarchocommunists were highly significant. The two tendencies of Spanish anarchism worked in very different ways and were disdainful of each other.

The anarchosyndicalists functioned directly within the unions. They accepted key union positions and placed their emphasis on organising, often at the expense of propaganda and ideological commitment. As 'practical' men, they were ready to make compromises with 'pure-and-simple' trade unionists. Catalan anarchosyndicalists such as José Rodriguez Romero and Tomas Herreros were largely responsible for the fact that Workers' Solidarity in Barcelona did not fall into the hands of the UGT during the first decade of the century and thereby laid the basis for the founding of the CNT a few years later.

The anarachocommunists were the 'fanatics over there' – in the editorial offices of *Tierra y Libertad* – 'purists' like Juan Baron and Francisco Cardinal, who regarded the anarachosyndicalists as deserters to reformism and held faithfully to the communist doctrines that formed the basis of the old Anarchist Organisation of the Spanish Region. They were not disposed to trade union activism, and they stressed commitment to libertarian communist principles. It was not their goal to produce a large 'mass movement' of workers who wore lightly the trappings of libertarian ideals, but to help create dedicated anarchists in an authentically revolutionary movement, however small its size or influence. Once fairly influential, their terrorist tactics at the turn of the century and the ensuing repression had greatly depleted their numbers.

The founding of the FAI in the summer of 1927 was expected to unite these two tendencies. Anarchosyndicalist needs were met by requiring that every *faista* become a member of the CNT and by making the union the principal arena of anarchist activity in Spain. The needs of the anarchocommunists were met by the very fact that an avowedly anarchist organisation was established nationally, apart from the CNT, and by making the affinity group the basis for a vanguard movement firmly dedicated to the achievement of libertarian communism.[1] *Tierra y Libertad* was adopted as the FAI's organ. But by establishing an anarchist organisation for the express purpose of controlling the CNT, or at least to keep it from falling into the hands of reformists or infiltrators from the newly founded Spanish Communist Party, the anarchosyndicalists had essentially enveloped the anarchocommunists in syndicalist activity.

By 1933 the FAI's control over the CNT was fairly complete. Systematic organisational work had purged the union of Communists, while its reformist leaders either left on their own accord or had defensively camouflaged themselves with revolutionary rhetoric. No illusion should exist that this success was achieved with an overly sensitive regard for democratic niceties, although the militancy of the *faistas* unquestionably attracted the great majority of CNT workers. But the FAI's best known militants – Durruti, the Ascaso brothers, Garcia Oliver – included terrorism in their repertory of direct action. Gun play, especially in 'expropriations' and in dealing with recalcitrant employers, police agents, and blacklegs, was not frowned upon. These *atentados* almost certainly intimidated the FAI's less prominent opponents in the CNT, although 'reformists' like Pestana and Peiro did not hesitate to publicly criticise the FAI in the harshest terms.

Despite its influence in the CNT, this remarkable anarchist organisation remained semi-secret up to 1936 and its membership probably did not exceed 30,000. Structurally, it formed a remarkable example of libertarian organisation. Affinity groups were small nuclei of intimate friends which generally numbered a dozen or so men and women. Wherever several of these affinity groups existed, they were coordinated by a local federation and met, when possible, in monthly assemblies. The national movement, in turn, was coordinated by a Peninsular Committee, which

[1] I employ the word `vanguard' provocatively, despite its unpopularity in many libertarian circles today, because this term was widely used in the traditional anarchist movement. Some anarchist publications even adopted it as a name. There can be no doubt that an anarchist *obrero consciente* regarded himself or herself as an `advanced' person and part of a small *avant-garde* in society. In its most innocuous sense, this term meant that such a person merely enjoyed a more advanced social consciousness than the majority of less developed workers and peasants, a distinction that had to be overcome by education. In a less innocuous sense, the word provided a rationale for elitism and manipulation, to which some anarchist leaders were no more immune than their authoritarian Socialist opponents.
The word 'leader,' on the other hand, was eschewed for the euphemism 'influential militant,' although in fact the more well-known anarchist 'influential militants' were certainly leaders. This self-deception was not as trifling as it may seem. It prevented the Spanish anarchists from working out the serious problems that emerged from real differences in consciousness among themselves or between themselves and the great majority of undeveloped *cenetistas*.

ostensibly exercised very little directive power. Its role was meant to be strictly administrative in typical Bakuninist fashion.

Affinity groups were in fact remarkably autonomous during the early thirties and often exhibited exceptional initiative. The intimacy shared by the *faistas* in each group made the movement very difficult for police agents to infiltrate and the FAI as a whole managed to survive the most severe repression with surprisingly little damage to its organisation. As time passed, however, the Peninsular Committee began to grow in prestige. Its periodic statements on events and problems often served as directives to the entire movement. Although by no means an authoritarian body, it eventually began to function as a central committee whose policy decisions, while not binding on the organisation, served as more than mere suggestions. Indeed, it would have been very difficult for the Peninsular Committee to operate by fiat; the average *faista* was a strong personality who would have readily voiced disagreement with any decision that he or she found particularly unpalatable. But the FAI increasingly became an end in itself and loyalty to the organisation, particularly when it was under attack or confronted with severe difficulties, tended to mute criticism.



There can be no question that the FAI raised enormously the social consciousness of the average *cenetista*. More than any single force apart from employer recalcitrance, it made the CNT into a revolutionary syndicalist organisation, if not a truly anarchosyndicalist one. But it never succeeded in completely ridding the CNT of its reformist elements, nor could it prevent the sedimentation of the union along increasingly hierarchical lines. Loose and decentralised as the CNT tried to be, it. attracted workers primarily because it militantly fought for improved economic conditions, not primarily because of its commitment to revolution and libertarian communism. Although the FAT stressed the latter over the former and gained a considerable following within the CNT (indeed, a more dedicated following in anarchist Saragossa than in syndicalist Barcelona), the sedimentation continued nevertheless.

In its attempt to control the CNT, the FAI in fact became a victim of the less developed elements in the union. Peirats quite rightly emphasises that the CNT took its own toll on the FAI. Just as the less outspoken reformists inside the union were predisposed to compromise with the bourgeoisie and the State, so the FAI was compelled to compromise with these reformists in order to retain its control over the CNT. This process affected the very nature of the FAI's influence. To deal with covert unprincipled opportunists in order to root out the more visible principled reformists such as Pestana, the FAI began to rely on manipulation as well as conviction. Even *faista* theoreticians like Santillan learned to defer to the prevailing tendencies in the CNT and justify the surrender of basic principles in the interests of expediency. Among the younger, less experienced *faistas*, the situation was even worse. Extravagant militancy which fetishised action over theory and daring over insight rebounded after failure in the crudest opportunism. Garcia Oliver, one of the most admired of the FAI militants, did not hesitate to 'modify' his anarchist principles and become minister of justice in the Largo Caballero government.

In the balance: the CNT had provided a remarkably democratic arena for the most militant working class in Europe; the FAT added the leavening of a libertarian orientation and revolutionary deeds within the limits that a trade union could provide. By 1936, both organisations had created authentically libertarian structures to the extent that any strictly proletarian class movement could be truly libertarian. If only by dint of sheer rhetoric – and, doubtless, considerable conviction and daring actions – they had keyed the expectations of their memberships to a revolution that would yield workers' control of the economy and syndicalist forms of social administration.

This process of education and class organisation, more than any single factor in Spain, produced the famous collectives that followed the 1936 uprising. And to the degree that the CNT-FAI (for both organisations became fatally coupled after July 1936) exercised the major influence in an area, the collectives proved to be generally more durable, communistic, and resistant to

Stalinist counter-revolution than other 'republican'-held areas of Spain.

Moreover, in the CNT-FAI areas, workers and peasants tended to show the greatest degree of popular initiative in resisting the military uprising. It was not Socialist Madrid that first took matters into its own hands and defeated its rebellious garrison; it was anarchosyndicalist Barcelona that could lay claim to this distinction among all the large cities of Spain. Madrid rose against the Montana barracks only after sound trucks broadcast the news that the army had been defeated in the streets and squares of Barcelona. And even in Madrid, perhaps the greatest initiative was shown by the local CNT organisation, which enjoyed the allegiance of the city's militant construction workers.

The CNT-FAI, in effect, revealed all the possibilities of a highly organised and extremely militant working class – a 'classical' proletariat, if you will, whose basic economic interests were repeatedly frustrated by a myopic intransigent bourgeoisie. It was out of such 'irreconcilable' struggles that anarchosyndicalism and revolutionary Marxism had developed their tactical and theoretical armamentorium.

But the CNT-FAI also revealed the limitations of that type of classical struggle — and it is fair to say that the Spanish Revolution marked the end of a century-long era of so-called proletarian revolutions which began with the June uprising of the Parisian workers in 1848. The era has passed into history and, in my view, will never again be revived. It was marked by bitter, often uncompromising struggles between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, an era in which the working class had not been admitted into its 'share' of economic life and had been virtually denied the right to form its own protective institutions. Industrial capitalism in Spain was still a relatively new phenomenon, neither affluent enough to mitigate working-class unrest nor sure of its place in political life — yet still asserting an unqualified right to ruthlessly exploit its 'hired hands.'

But this new phenomenon was already beginning to find its way if not toward traditional European liberal political forms, then to authoritarian ones which would give it the breathing space to develop. The bureaucratic UGT already commanded the allegiance of the organised skilled workers, railroad workers, and the politically sophisticated Asturian miners; it had grown enormously at the expense of the CNT among the agricultural proletariat of Southern Spain. The Socialists predominated in heavy industrial areas, such as the Basque cities, where their main rivals were Catholic unions rather than anarchosyndicalists. This kind of working class, assimilated to the factory routine, industrial hierarchy, and the work ethic, tended to favour bureaucratic and authoritarian forms of organisation. It was trained to accept orders and leaders; its goals were largely economic rather than social, even if the rhetoric of the day was filled with hortatory demands for a socialist republic.

I have already expressed the view that time would have favoured the development of the CNT along the same lines, perhaps leading to a merger of the two organisations. But the economic crisis of the thirties (which radicals throughout the world viewed as the final 'chronic crisis' of capitalism), coupled with the myopic policies of the Spanish liberals and ruling classes, turned the class struggle in Spain into an explosive class war.

The agrarian reform policies of the early thirties republic turned out to be farcical; the liberals were more preoccupied with baiting the Church than dealing seriously with the long-range economic problems of the peninsula. The Socialists, who joined the liberals in governing the country, were more concerned with promoting the growth of the UGT at the expense of the CNT than in improving the material conditions of the working class as a whole. The CNT, strongly influenced by volatile *faistas* whose radical education had been acquired in the *pistolero* battles of the early twenties, exploded into repeated insurrections – uprisings which its leaders probably knew were futile, but which were meant to stimulate the revolutionary spirit of the working class.

These failures by all social elements in Spain during the early republican years to meet the promise of reform left no recourse hut. revolution and civil war. Except for the most dedicated anarchists, it was a conflict that no one really wanted; but between 1931, when the mona[r]chy was overthrown, and 1936, when the generals rebelled, everyone was sleep walking into the last of the great proletarian revolutions – perhaps the greatest in terms of its social programmes and the initiative shown by the oppressed. The century-long era seemed to have collected all its energies, its traditions, and its dreams for its last great historic confrontation, thereafter to disappear forever.

Evaluating the Anarchist Movement

Could there have been an anarchist society in Spain if the revolution had been successful? Very few serious anarchist theoreticians seem to have thought so. A mixed economy, yes – although how long the revolutionary fervour of the more ascetic communistic collectives might have resisted the temptations and demands of a co-existing market economy is difficult to predict. It has never been an arguable issue between

Marx and the anarchists whether a communist revolution could occur in an industrially undeveloped country, indeed whether such a revolution might temporarily succeed under materially demanding, even ascetic conditions of life.[1] Whether such a revolution could *permanently* establish a communist society, however, is another matter. Santillan was quite realistic about this problem. "We are cognisant of the fact that the grade of economic development and material conditions of life influence powerfully human psychology," he observes in *After the Revolution*.

> Faced with starvation, the individual becomes an egoist; with abundance he may become generous, friendly and socially disposed. All periods of privation and penury produce brutality, moral regression and a fierce struggle of all against all, for daily bread. Consequently, it is plain that economics influence seriously the spiritual life of the individual and his social relations. That is precisely why we are aiming to establish the best possible economic conditions, which will act as a guarantee of equal and solid relationships among men.[2]



The problem of material scarcity is not merely that "man pitted against man is a wolf and he can never become a real brother to man, unless he has material security," to use Santillan's words again (p. 96). With material security, indeed with abundance, 'man' can also discover what he or she does *not* need. I refer here not only to material needs but also to spiritual ones – notably competition, money, even contracts and social institutions that underwrite systems of justice based on equivalences and reciprocity.

No longer driven by material insecurity, no longer a creature of brute necessity, the individual can advance from the realm of justice to the more humanly fulfilling realm of freedom. And perhaps most significantly, in an abundant economy that can provide for the individual's needs with minimal toil, he or she can acquire the free time for self-cultivation and full participation in the direct management of social life.

Quixotically, communist values tend to emerge in the least industrialised of areas, where survival demands the utmost social cooperation, or the most industrially advanced, where abundance tends to bring into question all the egotistical mores generated by material want. Indeed, the repressive values we associate with material want, insecurity, and hierarchy develop in the social space between these two historic poles where material surpluses are large enough to allow for the development of privilege for a few but are not large enough to permit security and a life freed from onerous toil for all.

It is not surprising that the most communistic collectives appeared in the countryside rather than in the cities, among villagers who were still influenced by archaic collectivistic traditions and were less ensnared than their urban cousins in a market economy. The ascetic values which so greatly influenced these highly communistic collectives often reflected the extreme poverty of the areas in which they were rooted. Cooperation and mutual aid in such cases formed the preconditions for survival of the community. Elsewhere, in the more arid areas of Spain, the need for sharing water and maintaining irrigation works was an added inducement to collective farming. Here,

[1] Toward the end of his life, Marx in fact tended to accept the possibility that the European socialist revolution would be initiated by 'backward' Russia rather than France or Germany. In his correspondence with Vera Zasulitch of 1881 he even entertains the possibility that a timely revolution in Russia might make it possible for the collectivistic peasant village or *mir* to bypass the capitalist development of the West and "gradually slough off its primitive characteristics and develop as the direct basis of collective production on a national scale." The Government institution of the *Volost*, which "links a fair number of villages together," could be replaced by a "peasant assembly elected by the commune itself and serving as the economic and administrative organ of their interests." For an interesting discussion of this correspondence, see Martin Buber's *Paths in Utopia*.

[2] Diego Abad de Santillan, *op. cit*., p. 96.

collectivisation was also a technological necessity, one which even the republic did not interfere with.

What makes these rural collectives important is not only that many of them practised communism, but that they functioned so effectively under a system of popular self-management. Accounts of these collectives totally belie the notion held by so many authoritarian Marxists that economic life must be scrupulously 'planned' by a highly centralised State power and the odious canard that popular collectivisation, as distinguished from statist nationalisation, necessarily pits collectivised enterprises against each other in competition for profits and resources. Certainly owing to the terrible scarcity of resources that developed with the civil war, such competition tended to occur in a number of cases, but here the anarchists played a decisive role in mitigating its effects and diminishing its significance.

In the cities, however, collectivisation of the factories, communications systems, and transport facilities took a very different form. Initially, nearly the entire economy in CNT-FAI areas had been taken over by committees elected from among the workers and were loosely coordinated by higher union committees. As time went on, this system was increasingly tightened. The higher committees began to pre-empt the initiative of the lower, although their decisions still had to be ratified by the workers of the facilities involved. The effect of this process was to centralise the economy of CNT-FAI areas in the hands of the union. The extent to which this process unfolded varied greatly from industry to industry and area to area, and with the limited knowledge we have at hand, generalisations are very difficult to make.

After the famous May Days of 1937, when the Barcelona proletariat raised barricades to resist a Stalinist attempt to seize the *Telefonica*, or central telephone building, the process of centralisation followed an unrelenting course. The entry of the CNT-FAI into the Catalan government in 1936 had already wedded the union-controlled facilities to the State; the failure of syndicalist workers to take Barcelona in May 1937 indissolubly cemented the ties between the economy and the newly strengthened government. Outside Barcelona, overt or *de facto* nationalisation of industry occurred even more rapidly. By early 1938, a political bureaucracy had largely supplanted the authority of the workers' committees in most 'republican'-held cities. Although workers' control existed in theory, it had essentially disappeared in fact.

If the commune formed the basis for the rural collectives, the committee formed the basis for the industrial collectives. Indeed, apart from the rural communes, the committee system predominated wherever State power had collapsed — in villages and towns as well as factories and urban neighbourhoods. "All had been set up in the heat of action to direct the popular response to the military *coup d'état*," observe Broué and Témime in *Revolution and Civil War in Spain*.

> They had been appointed in an infinite number of ways. In the villages, the factories, and on the work sites, time had sometimes been taken to elect them, at least summarily, at a general meeting. At all events, care had been taken to see that all parties and unions were represented on them, even if they did not exist before the Revolution, because the Committee represented at one and the same time as the workers, a whole and the sum total of their organisations: in more than one place those elected came to an `understanding' as to who was to represent one or another union, who would be the 'Republican' and who the 'Socialist.' Very often, in the towns, the most active elements appointed themselves. It was sometimes the electors as a whole who chose the men to sit on the Committee of each organisation, but more often the members of the Committee were elected either by a vote within their own organisation or were quite simply appointed by the local governing committees of the parties and unions.[1]

Broué and Témime, to be sure, are referring mainly to the municipal committees that appeared throughout the 'republican'- held territories, rather than the factory committees, which were elected by workers' assemblies. But their description indicates a very significant feature of the Spanish Revolution. The revolution was unique not only as evidence that workers and peasants could manage a national economy along collectivist lines; it was also unique in the extent to which it reflected the power of organised radical movements like the CNT and the UGT, the FAI and the Socialist Party, the official Communists and the dissident communists such as the POUM. This extraordinary patchwork of radical organisations gave the revolution an intensely ideological character, to a degree perhaps unprecedented in 'proletarian revolutions,' and simultaneously vitiated popular initiative.

[1] Pierre Broué and Emile Témime in *Revolution and Civil War in Spain*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1970, pp. 127-128.

The outcome of the revolution was decided not by new social forms created by the workers and peasants themselves, but largely by pre-existing parties, unions, and libertarian federations. Precisely because the Spanish workers and peasants had been organised for years in highly institutionalised mass organisations of one type or another, the destiny of their revolution depended more on the resoluteness of the movements to which they adhered than on their own initiative.

On this score the CNT-FAI was far from successful. The power it received from working-class uprisings in Barcelona, Valencia, Malaga, and other Mediterranean cities, acquired a curious function: it served to bring into sharp relief the opportunist tendencies that had slowly marbled the organisation for years.

The CNT-FAI, on the excuse that it refused to establish an `anarchist dictatorship,' permitted the bourgeois State to re-establish its own dictatorship over the Spanish working class. The process of CNT-FAI collaboration with the State had already begun as far back as February 1936, when *cenetistas* were not 'discouraged' by their organisation from voting for Popular Front candidates. By all accounts, it was the heavy syndicalist vote in Catalonia that carried the day for the new Madrid government. CNT-FAI collaboration gained momentum when its leaders entered the Catalan government and finally Largo Caballero's cabinet in Madrid. Frozen in the defensive posture of 'everything for the war,' CNT-FAI ministers and leaders surrendered one conquest of the revolution after another – some with an odious alacrity that verged on overt counter-revolution.



The knell of Spanish anarchism was sounded when t lie Barcelona proletariat was cajoled by its 'ministers' into abandoning the May Day barricades. Its complete demise was symbolised by the virtual conversion of the FAI into a conventional political party when the affinity group structure was replaced by geographic branches.

The fact that Spanish anarchism was confronted by terrifying enemies on every side – by a horribly bloody civil war initiated by the generals and ruthless Stalinist subversion of the revolution – does not excuse the behaviour exhibited by its leaders. Vernon Richards points out [in *Lessons of the Spanish Revolution*] that if the movement had tried to persuade its considerable following to abstain from voting, the Popular Front would have certainly been defeated. In that case, a rightist government, although bitterly repressive, would have obviated the need for a military uprising. Certainly this kind of regime would have driven the Spanish labour movement underground, but it would have survived; a military defeat after three years of bloody civil war destroyed it completely.

Yet even if one assumes that with the deadly polarisation of political forces in 1936 the Barcelona workers would have voted for the Popular Front irrespective of a strong 'no vote' campaign, the anarchists had no business entering the Catalan and Madrid governments. Their entry into these governments contributed nothing to the defeat of the Franco forces or to the weakening of the Stalinist counter-revolution. The 'anarchist' ministers were compelled by the growing tensions in the cabinet to become mere minions of Largo Caballero – a 'lesser evil,' to be sure, when compared with the Stalinists, but the man who more than any other in Spain restored the authority of the State and initiated the demolition of the revolutionary institutions.

Underlying all these errors, at least in theoretical terms, was the CNT-FAI's absurd notion that if it assumed power in the areas it controlled, it was establishing a 'State.' As long as the institutions of power consisted of armed workers and peasants as distinguished from a professional bureaucracy, police force, army, and cabal of politicians and judges, they were no more a State than the Paris Commune or the Soviets of 1905 and 1917. These institutions, in fact, comprised a revolutionary people in arms – a minority of the Spanish people, to be sure, but still a people, not a professional apparatus that could be regarded as a State in any meaningful sense of the term.

This fact must have flashed across the minds of many 'influential militants' in the CNT and the FAI. That the 'taking of power' by an armed people in militias, libertarian unions and federations, peasant communes, and industrial collectives could be viewed as an 'anarchist dictatorship' reveals the incredible confusion that filled the minds of the 'influential militants.' What

these 'militants' clearly feared was the civil war within the civil war and the ensuing Franco victory that would have followed the establishment of such a separate libertarian power. To anyone who recalls the mass executions that followed in the wake of Franco's army, this fear is understandable enough. None of the revolutionary gains in Spain could have been stabilised while 'Nationalist' guns were trained on Madrid, Malaga, and Teruel. Broué and Témime rightly observe that the

> great weakness of the Spanish workers' revolutionary gains was, even more than their improvised character, their incompleteness. The Revolution, still in its infancy, had to be defended. It was the war that reduced the revolutionary gains to rubble before they had time to mature and prove themselves in a day-to-day experiment compounded of progress and retreat, of groping and discovery.[1]

It was the war, too, that provided a favourable setting for the Stalinist counter-revolution, leaning on the manipulation of Russian military aid to score its piecemeal triumphs. The assumption that Franco could have been defeated by guerrilla warfare or by revolutionary propaganda is simply preposterous if one recalls the massive aid the 'Nationalists' received from Italy and Germany. The Spanish Legionaires and Moslem mercenaries who formed the core of Franco's army were not susceptible to propaganda. Even the Moslem troops were not likely to respond to a government declaration that liberated Spanish Morocco from the mainland's control. These backward hill troops had been used for years to police their own countrymen.

In the absence of the paralysing rivalries between the great powers and workers' revolutions in Europe which ultimately rescued the Bolshevik revolution from military defeat, the Spanish Revolution was doomed once Italy, Germany, and Russia entered into it. Lacking support from the international working class, lacking even the territorial space in which to manoeuvre, the revolution was totally isolated. However fervent its spirit, the bared flesh of the Spanish Revolution could not stop massed artillery, tanks, machine guns, and aircraft. The only significant aid it received from abroad carried the price tag of surrender of the revolutionary conquests; and it is clear that the CNT-FAI, in the vain hope that this payment would arrest a Franco victory, was willing to pay the toll. Only from hindsight do we now realise that the payment would not have prevented a 'Nationalist' victory. The real tragedy of Spanish anarchism is not that it miscalculated the odds, but that it paid the price too readily, in violation of its principles.

What is no less disconcerting is the extent to which the working class deferred to this confused leadership. CNT-FAI workers, even with arms in hand, were obedient to the pleas of their `anarchist' ministers, although organisations like the Friends of Durruti incessantly subjected the 'influential militants' to public criticism. But the Friends of Durruti never numbered more than a few hundred members. No great demonstrations in the streets of Barcelona protested the dissolution of the Antifascist Militias Committee or the entry of anarchists into the central government or the militarisation of the militias. The conflicts that emerged from these grave compromises were generally fought within the CNT-FAI itself and usually concluded with attempts to allay popular concern.

Even the May Days of 1937, the most serious act of resistance by the Barcelona proletariat to the Stalinist counter-revolution, were marked by irresolution and despair. The action was entirely defensive; leaflets by the Friends of Durruti calling for the takeover of the city by the proletariat were ignored. Orwell accurately captures the nature of the May Day uprising in his *Homage to Catalonia* when he notes that the

> workers went out into the street in a spontaneous gesture of defence, and there were only two things which they were wholly conscious of wanting: the handing back of the Telefonica [central telephone exchange] and the disarming of the *Asaltos* [Assault Guards] whom they hated.[2]

The May Days, moreover, were not as spontaneous as Orwell seemed to think. They were initiated by the CNT-FAI District Defence Committee, which, as Broué and Témime observe, "Played the leading role in the absence of any instructions [from the 'influential militants']. The discipline of the workers in laying down their arms on instructions from the CNT would prove this, were it necessary."[3]

Heroic as this uprising surely was, it was performed by workers who in the last analysis gave priority to organisational 'orders' over libertarian principles and to the organisation itself over the revolution. That these workers would have fought to recover the gains of the revolution is more than likely, but not if it meant

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 170.
[2] George Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia*. London: The Folio Society, 1970.
[3] Pierre Broué and Emile Témime, *op. cit*., p. 287.

breaking with the organisation they reified and the leaders they respected.

Implications of the Spanish Experience

The fifty years that separate our own time from the Spanish Revolution have produced sweeping changes in Western Europe and America, changes that are also reflected in Spain's present social development. The classical proletariat that fought so desperately for the minimal means of life is giving way to a more affluent worker whose major concern is not material survival and employment, but a more human way of life and more meaningful work. The social composition of the labour force is changing as well — proportionately, more toward commercial, service, and professional vocations than unskilled labour in mass manufacturing industries. Spain, like the rest of Western Europe, is no longer predominantly an agricultural country; the majority of its people live in towns and cities, not in the relatively isolated villages that nourished rural collectivism. In a visit to Barcelona during the late sixties, I seemed to see as many American-style attaché cases as lunch boxes.



These changes in the goals and traits of the non-bourgeois classes in capitalist society are the products of the sweeping industrial revolution that followed the Second World War and of the relative affluence or expectations of affluence that have brought all the values of material scarcity into question. They have introduced a historic tension between the irrationality of present lifeways and the utopian promise of a liberated society. In Spain, it is significant that the privileged university students, who played such a reactionary role in the thirties, were among the most radical elements of society in the sixties and seventies.

Anarchist concepts that can encompass, indeed fully express this 'post-scarcity mentality' (as I prefer to call it) could be more relevant to them than thirties-type authoritarian ideologies, despite the tendency of the latter to fill the vacuum left by the absence of meaningful libertarian alternatives and organisations. Such anarchist concepts could no longer rely in practical terms on the collectivist traditions of the countryside; these are virtually gone as living forces, although perhaps the memory of the old collectivist traditions lives among Spanish youth. Burgeoning urbanisation has posed more sharply than ever the need for decentralistic alternatives to the megalopolis; the gigantism of the city, the need for the human scale. The grotesque bureaucratisation of life, which in Camus' words reduces everyone to a functionary, has placed a new value on non-authoritarian institutions and direct action.

Slowly, even amidst the setbacks of our time, a new self is being forged. Potentially, this is a libertarian self that could intervene directly in the changing and administration of society – a self that could engage in the self-discipline, self-activity, and self-management so crucial to the development of a truly free society. Here, the values prized so highly by traditional anarchocommunism establish direct continuity with a contemporary form of anarchocommunism that gives consciousness and coherence to the intuitive impulses of this new sensibility.

But if these goals are to be achieved, contemporary anarchocommunism cannot remain a mere mood or tendency, wafting in the air like a cultural ambiance. It must be organised – indeed, *well-organised* – if it is to effectively articulate and spread this new sensibility; it must have a coherent theory and extensive literature; it must be capable of duelling with the authoritarian movements that try to denature the intuitive libertarian impulses of our time and channel social unrest into hierarchical forms of organisation. On this score, Spanish anarchism is profoundly relevant for our time and the Spanish Revolution still provides the most valuable lessons in the problem of self-management that we can cull from the past.

To deal with these problems, perhaps I can best begin by saying that there is little, in fact, to criticise in the *structural* forms that the CNT and the FAI tried to establish. Indeed, my principal criticism in the pages above have been not so much of the forms themselves, but of the departures the CNT and the FAI made from them. Perhaps even more significantly, I have tried to explain the social limitations of the period – including the mystique about the classical proletariat – that vitiated the realisation of these structural forms. I have been concerned with showing how derelict anarchocommunists were in giving priority to developing 'integral personalities' over organising a large and presumably 'powerful' but raw and

undeveloped 'following'; the desperation of the FAI in trying to control the immense sprawling CNT at almost any cost. I have noted that the CNT-FAI was confused about the nature of leadership within the movement, the relationship of public power to State power, and the CNT-FAI's departure from libertarian principles. And, of course, I have examined some of the myths that I have collected around the Spanish anarchist movement and the revolution.

But the structure of the CNT as a syndicalist union and that of the FAI as an anarchist federation was, in many respects, quite admirable. The CNT, almost from the outset, organised its locals as factory rather than craft unions and the nationwide occupational federations (the *Uniones de oficio*, or 'internationals,' as we would call them [in North America]) which emerged with the IWMA were abandoned for local federations (the *Federaciones locales*). This structure situated the factory in the community, where it really belonged if the 'commune' concept was to be realistic, rather than an easily manipulated industrial that so easily lent itself to statist nationalisation. The restoration of the *Uniones de oficio* in the early thirties was a distinct setback; as Garcia Oliver was to point out, ironically enough, it fostered the centralisation and bureaucratisation of the CNT. Yet the *centros obreros*, the local federations, the careful mandating of delegates to congresses, the elimination of paid officials, the establishment of regional federations, regional committees, and even of a National Com mittee, would not have been transgressions of libertarian principles had all of these institutions lived up to their intentions. Where the CNT structure failed most seriously was in the need to convene assemblies of workers at the local level and in national or regional conferences in sufficient number to continually re-evaluate CNT policies and to prevent power from collecting in the higher committees. It also lacked a recall mechanism, one which workers should have been encouraged to use.

Confusion developed over the crucial problem of the locus for making policy decisions. The place for this process should have been shop assemblies, regular congresses, or, when events and circumstances dictated, conferences of clearly mandated and recallable delegates elected for this purpose by the membership. The sole responsibility of the regional and national committees should have been administrative — that is, the coordination and execution of policy decisions formulated by membership meetings and conference or congress delegates. Instead, both the policy decision-making process and the administrative process were often pre-empted by plenums of regional committees, the National Committee, and at times even by cliques in the Catalan regional committee.

A bureaucratic, centralised, hierarchical organisation like the UGT would have produced such abuses at the very outset; indeed, they wouldn't have been regarded as abuses at all but rather as invaluable assets that make for 'efficiency' and 'effectiveness.' In the CNT, where such practices were theoretically regarded as abuses, their correction ultimately depended upon the membership's level of consciousness. We have already examined the limitations of a strictly proletarian movement, its predisposition to admire 'strong' leaders even when leadership is officially frowned upon as an authoritarian trait. Whether the predisposition of workers to be 'led,' an inclination fostered by the very nature of their lives, could have been overcome by an ever-vigilant anarchist movement is difficult to assess. The thirties did not favour such independence of mind in movements that spoke of 'masses' and the 'rank-and-file,' least of all among workers who knew no cultural environment other than the factory. And by the thirties, the Catalan CNT, the backbone of the national movement, was composed to a very large extent of such a classical working class.

In any case, the FAI was not the organisation to adequately educate the CNT's membership, much less provide the vigilance to fully democratise it. It direly needed an education of its own. The disdain which many *faistas* had for theory, the emphasis they placed on activism and daring, the desperation with which they tried at all costs to control the CNT – these factors alone would have precluded the FAI from fulfilling the vital role that a dedicated anarchist movement was required to play in a sprawling mass syndicalist union.

Moreover, despite the admirable nature of the affinity group concept, the importance of the local federation, and granting even the need for a peninsular committee, the FAI also suffered from the structural defects of the CNT. Although its local federations were probably quite manageable, it too required frequent conferences and an effective recall mechanism to keep a check on the higher committees and the 'influential militants.' It too was confused over the distinction between the policy-making decision process and the administrative process, although FAI documents show a remarkable understanding of this issue. But perhaps even more than the CNT, the FAI failed to deal adequately with the problem of the 'influential militants' —the more informed, experienced, 'strong,' and oratorically gifted individuals who tended to formulate policy, at all levels of the organisation.

It will never be possible to eliminate the fact that human beings have different levels of knowledge and

consciousness. Our prolonged period of dependence as children, the fact that we are largely the products of an acquired culture, and that experience tends to confer knowledge on the older person, would lead to such differences even in the most liberated society. In hierarchical societies, the dependence of the less-informed on the more-informed is commonly a means of manipulation and power. The older, more experienced person, like the parent, has this privilege at his or her disposal and, with it, an alternative: to use knowledge, experience, and oratorial gifts as means of domination and to induce adulation – or for the goal of lovingly imparting knowledge and experience, for equalising the relationship between teacher and taught, and always leaving the less experienced and less informed individual free to make his or her decisions.



Hegel brilliantly draws the distinction between Socrates and Jesus: the former, a teacher who sought to arouse a quest for knowledge in anyone who was prepared to discuss; the latter, an oracle who pronounced 'truth' for adoring disciples to interpret exegetically. The difference, as Hegel points out, lay not only in the character of the two men, but in that of their 'followers.' Socrates' friends had been reared in a social tradition that

> developed their powers in many directions. They had absorbed that democratic spirit which gives an individual a greater measure of independence and makes it impossible for any tolerably good head to depend wholly and absolutely on one person. They loved Socrates because of his virtue and his philosophy, not his virtue and his philosophy because of him.[1]

The followers of Jesus, on the other hand, were submissive acolytes.

> Lacking any great store of spiritual energy of their own, they had found the basis of their conviction about the teaching of Jesus principally in their friendship with him and dependence on him. They had not attained truth and freedom by their own exertions; only by laborious learning had they acquired a dim sense of them and certain formulas about them. Their ambition was to grasp and keep this doctrine faithfully and to transmit it equally faithfully to others without any addition, without letting it acquire any variations in detail by working on it themselves.[2]

The FAI, illegal by choice, often terrorist in its tactics, and aggressively 'macho' in its almost competitive daring – developed deeply personal ties within its affinity groups. Durruti's grief for the death of Francisco Ascaso revealed real love, not merely the friendship that stems from organisational collaboration. But in the FAI, friendship or love was often based on a demanding association, one that implicitly required conformity to the most 'heroic' standards established by the most 'daring' militants in the group. Such relationships are not likely to shatter over doctrinal disagreements or what often seem like 'mere' points of theory. Eventually, these relationships produce leaders and led; worse, the leaders tend to patronise the led and finally manipulate them.

To escape this process of devolution, an anarchist organisation must be aware of the fact that it *can* occur, and it must become vigilant against its occurrence. To be effective, the vigilance must eventually express itself in more positive terms. It cannot co-exist with an adulation of violence, competitive daring, and mindless aggressiveness, not to speak of an equally mindless worship of activism and 'strong characters.'

The organisation must recognise that differences in experiences and consciousness *do* exist among its members and must handle these differences with a wary consciousness – not conceal them with euphemisms like the term 'influential militant.' The taught as well as the teacher must *first* be taught to ask himself or herself whether domination and manipulation is being practised – and not deny that a systematic teaching process is taking place. Moreover, everyone must be fully aware that this teaching process is unavoidable within the movement if relationships are eventually to be equalised by

[1] G.W.F. Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971, p. 82.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 81.

imparting knowledge and the fruits of experience. To a large extent, the conclusions at which one arrives about the nature of this process are almost intuitively determinable by the behaviour patterns that develop between comrades.

Ultimately, under conditions of freedom, social intercourse, friendship, and love would be of the 'free-giving' kind that Jacob Bachofen imputes to 'matriarchal' society, not the demanding censorious type he associates with patriarchy. Here, the affinity group or commune would achieve the most advanced and libertarian expression of its humanity. Merely to strive for this goal among its own brothers and sisters would qualitatively distinguish it from other movements and provide the most assurable guarantee that it would remain true to its libertarian principles.

Whether the FAI raised these issues in its midst I do not know. That it fostered many attitudes that were incompatible with truly 'free-giving' relationships is evident from the most cursory survey of its history. Given the workers' movement of the thirties and the formidable limitations that blocked its development, it may well be that the FAI had very limited choices. But we have much to learn from the organisational forms it developed – and those which it lacked. Had its commitment to libertarian goals and principles been reinforced by the frequency of 'grassroots' conferences convened by organisations such as SDS in the mid-sixties, the FAI's organisational forms might have served as a model for our times.

Our period, which stresses the development of the individual self as well as social self-management, stands in a highly advantageous position to assess the authentic nature of libertarian organisation and relationships. A European or American civil war of the kind that wasted Spain in the thirties is no longer conceivable in an epoch that can deploy nuclear weapons, supersonic aircraft, nerve gas, and a terrifying firepower against revolutionaries. Capitalist institutions must be hollowed out by a molecular historical process of disengagement and disloyalty to a point where any popular majoritarian movement can cause them to collapse for want of support and social substance. But the kind of development such a change will produce – whether it will occur consciously, whether it will have an authoritarian outcome or one based on self-management – will depend very much upon whether a conscious, well-organised libertarian movement can emerge.

Whatever its limitations in other spheres, Spanish anarchism's achievements in the economic sphere boggle all the conventional perspectives of liberal and socialist thought. In Spain, millions of people took immense segments of the economy into their own hands, collectivised them, administered them, even abolished money and lived by communistic principles of work and distribution all of this in the midst of a terrible civil war, yet without producing the chaos or even serious dislocations that are anticipated by authoritarian 'radicals.' Indeed, in many collectivised areas, the efficiency with which an enterprise worked by far exceeded that of a comparable one in nationalised or private sectors. This 'green shoot' of revolutionary reality has more meaning for us than the most persuasive theoretical arguments to the contrary. On this score it is not the anarchists who are the 'unrealistic day-dreamers,' but their opponents who have turned their backs to the facts or shamelessly concealed them.

Underlying all these errors, at least in theoretical terms, was the CNT-FAI's absurd notion that if it assumed power in the areas it controlled, it was establishing a 'State.' As long as the institutions of power consisted of armed workers and peasants as distinguished from a professional bureaucracy, police force, army, and cabal of politicians and judges, they were no more a State than the Paris Commune or the Soviets of 1905 and 1917. These institutions, in fact, comprised a revolutionary people in arms – a minority of the Spanish people, to be sure, but still a people, not a professional apparatus that could be regarded as a State in any meaningful sense of the term.

This fact must have flashed across the minds of many 'influential militants' in the CNT and the FAI. That the 'taking of power' by an armed people in militias, libertarian unions and federations, peasant communes, and industrial collectives could be viewed as an 'anarchist dictatorship' reveals the incredible confusion that filled the minds of the 'influential militants.'

Buenaventura Durruti

Iain McKay

Anarchism, in spite of claims otherwise, has always stressed the importance of the masses in social struggle and change. This does not mean it ignores the individual and their need for self-expression and self-development, simply that social transformation – the foundation for individual freedom – can only be achieved by the masses. Given the weight of current institutions, attitudes and forces defending social hierarchies, this should be uncontroversial.



Buenaventura Durruti (1896-1936)

However, anarchists recognise that "the masses" are marked by varying degrees of social and class consciousness – indeed, part of the need for mass struggle is precisely to develop both for we change ourselves as we change the world. This unevenness is why anarchists organise into groups and federations to influence the class struggle. In the mass struggle the role of individuals is clear – they can provide a lead, clarify ideas and push the struggle onwards.

As such, it is no surprise then that anarchists do have their outstanding comrades – individuals who are recognised as making a significant contribution to anarchism. Buenaventura Durruti is one of these – his role in the Spanish libertarian movement and the Revolution of 1936 was significant, indeed the stuff of legend.

Born into the working class on the 14th of July 1896 in Leon, he became a mechanic by trade and a prominent local union organiser of the socialist *Unión General de Trabajadores* (UGT, General Union of Workers). Expelled from UGT after the August 1917 general strike for his militancy, he left Leon and joined the mass anarcho-syndicalist union, the *Confederación Nacional del Trabajo* (CNT, National Confederation of Labour), and became an anarchist.

Living in both Spain and France, he took an active part in the CNT and its struggles. In response to intensifying state terrorism against the labour movement, like many anarchists he met violence with violence (including robbing banks to acquire arms and finance the CNT). He helped form the *Los Solidarios* group in Barcelona, taking a part in the anarchist movement and resistance to the wave of employer and state assassinations of union activists. With the establishment of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, Durruti went into exile in France as did many activists. There he and his fellow *Los Solidarios* member Franciso Ascaso deepened their understand of anarchism before leaving for Latin America in December 1924, where they continued their union and anarchist activities.

Returning to France in 1926, they were arrested for plotting to assassinate the Spanish King. Released the same year due to public pressure, they returned to the movement and its debates and activities. While resisting attempts to expel him from France, he and Ascaso met with famed Ukrainian anarchist Nestor Makhno. Eventually, he settled in Brussels and found employment as a metal worker.

With the fall of the Spanish monarchy in April 1931, Durruti and Ascaso where amongst the first anarchist exiles to return to Spain. They argued that the new Republican government would fail to make the pressing social reforms the country needed and instead provoke popular discontent while the role of anarchists was to encourage this discontent towards social revolution. Subsequent events confirmed this analysis, with the new regime repressing strikes and protests as had previous ones.

Los Solidarios was reformed as the *Nosotros* group. Durruti took at active part in the CNT, particularly the struggles against the more moderate members of its leadership. While rarely writing for the libertarian press, he participated in the movement's debates and was a popular public speaker. When a revolutionary general strike broke out in central Catalonia, Durruti

was arrested as part of its suppression. Deported to the Carnary Islands, he returned to Barcelona in September 1932. Speaking at various anarchist rallies, he stressed that the emancipation of the working class could only be achieved by expropriating the bourgeoisie and abolishing the state. Seeking to achieve this, he took a leading role in the insurrection of January 1933. After its suppression, Durruti defended it against claims of Blanquism:

> "We never believed that the revolution consisted of the seizure of power by a minority which would impose a dictatorship on the people... We want a revolution by and for the people. Without this no revolution is possible. It would be a Coup d'Etat, nothing more. And we, from the factories, the mines and the countryside, are seeking to develop an effective social revolution. There is nothing in this of Blanquism or Trotskyism…"



Émilienne Morin, Colette Durruti and Buenaventura Durruti

With the election of a right-wing government in 1933, the libertarian movement resolved to organise another insurrection before fascism was imposed. Again, he took an active part in its organising. Again, he was arrested during its repression. Again, he took part in the movement whilst imprisoned (previously, his baby daughter played a part with messages written on her nappies during prison visits). He sided with those who rejected the top-down alliance suggested by the UGT in favour of a bottom-up one:

> "The alliance, to be revolutionary, must be genuinely working class. It must be the result of an agreement between the workers' organisation, and those alone. No party, however, socialist it may be, can belong to a workers' alliance, which should be built from its foundations, in the enterprises where the workers struggle. Its representative bodies must be the workers' committee chosen in the shops, the factories, the mines and the villages. We must reject any agreement on a national level, between National Committees, but rather favour an alliance carried out at the base by the workers themselves. Then and only then, can the revolutionary drive come to life, develop and take root."

When released from prison in April 1934, he found himself blacklisted. This meant his partner became the family's breadwinner while Durruti stayed at home to care for the daughter. He criticised those anarchists who joked about this:

"When will you stop thinking like the bourgeoisie, that women are men's servants? It's enough that society is divided into classes. We're not going to make even more classes by creating differences between men and women in our own homes!"

He was arrested during the failed October 1934 revolt organised by the UGT and then again in June 1935. Recognising that civil war was imminent, Durruti argued that the CNT had to build its strength in preparation and so anarchists had to avoid activities which could weaken or discredit it. When the military did revolt on the 17th of July 1936, Durruti took a leading part in organising the resistance in Barcelona amongst the various CNT unions and defence committees. A general strike was called, weapons seized and the 19th of July saw the army was defeated by the people armed – a feat repeated across two-thirds of the country.

Leading figures of the Catalan CNT met to discuss what to do next. Ignorant of the wider situation, fearing isolation and potential foreign intervention, the majority of the meeting decided to not speak of libertarian communism but rather of anti-fascist unity. This led to the formation of the Central Committee of Anti-Fascist Militias based on representatives of various unions and parties. Rather than seek to create a federation of workers' organisations from below as long argued by anarchists, a top-down alliance was formed.

Durruti appears not to have taken part in these discussions but seems to have supported cooperation until the anarchist stronghold of Zaragoza was freed, something he – like many – thought would be swift (in Zaragoza, unlike Barcelona and elsewhere, the CNT limited itself to a general strike in response to the military coup and did not arm its members, trusting the word of Republican politicians – unsurprisingly, the army quickly seized the city and started to systematically slaughter radicals).



Later various justifications were provided for this compromise and the ignoring of anarchist theory and CNT policy, rationales which, at best, show an unlikely confusion in the ideas of leading militants such as the notion that creating a self-managed society equated to an "anarchist dictatorship" (which, if taken at face value, made a mockery of all previous attempts at revolution made by these very same people). Regardless, this proved to be a critical mistake: ignoring the State allowed it the space and time needed for it to recover and start the counter-revolution against the gains of July 1936.

For, regardless of the wishes to the CNT leadership, the long desired social revolution swept the city and other parts of free Spain – as anarchists had long argued, workers seized the workplaces, peasants the land, popular assemblies and revolutionary committees were formed. The collectivised economy benefited all rather than the owning class while also providing weaponry to the militias (with workplaces refashioned to do so). Non-economic social relationships likewise began to transform, and anarchist women organised the *Mujeres Libres* to empower women and fight the sexism that permeated Spanish society and, sadly, the anarchist movement.

Anarchist theory, which had always argued that a social revolution could only be defended by the people armed, was also applied when the CNT organised militias to liberate those areas of Spain under military control. Other unions and parties did likewise, although unlike those the CNT militias were run by their members with elected officers and committees, all sharing the same living conditions. As Durruti argued:

> "I don't believe – and everything happening around us confirms this – that you can run a workers' militia according to classic military rules. I believe that discipline, co-ordination, and planning are indispensable, but we shouldn't define them in terms taken from the world that we're destroying. We have to build on new foundations. My comrades and I are convinced that solidarity is the best incentive for arousing an individual's sense of responsibility and a willingness to accept discipline as an act of self-discipline.
>
> "War has been imposed upon us... but our goal is revolutionary victory. This means defeating the enemy, but also a radical change in men. For that change to occur, man must learn to live and conduct himself as a free man, an apprenticeship that develops his personality and sense of responsibility, his capacity to be master of his own acts. The workers on the job not only transforms the material on which he works, but also transforms himself through that work. The combatant is nothing more than a worker whose tool is a rifle – and he should strive toward the same objective as a worker. One can't behave like an obedient soldier but rather as a conscious man who understands the importance of what he's doing. I know that it's not easy to achieve this, but I also know that what can't be accomplished with reason will not be obtained by force. If we have to sustain our military apparatus by fear, then we won't have changed anything except the colour of the fear. It's only by freeing itself from fear that society can build itself in freedom."

As the Durruti column marched towards Zaragoza, liberated villages and towns started the process of

transforming society and the economy by forming collectives. These voluntary groups turned the land, machinery and other resources into common property, to be managed, worked and benefited by all rather than a few landlords or capitalists. Those outside the collectives had access to whatever land they could toil by their own efforts. For Durruti, the war and the revolution were inseparable:

> "Our comrades on the front know for whom and for what they fight. They feel themselves revolutionaries and they fight, not in defence of more or less promised new laws, but for the conquest of the world, of the factories, the workshops, the means of transportation, their bread and the new culture."



Durruti's funeral on 22 November 1936

The militia columns, on the advice of their military advisors, decided to dig in before reaching Zaragoza. This proved to be a mistake, leading to stalemate. However, behind the lines the social revolution continued. What the CNT had refused to do in Catalonia in the name of anti-fascist unity, it did in Aragon and swept away the State by forming, in line with anarchist theory and CNT policy, the Aragon Defence Council. This body was formed by a congress of collectives, unions and militia columns, aiming to coordinate joint activities, equalise the conditions inherited by the collectives and supply the militia columns in a regular manner.

With the Republican government preferring to arm the rearguard (against the revolution) than the CNT militias, Aragon Front stagnated. Yet the CNT militias were recognised as being the best fighters, as shown by part of the Durruti being sent to Madrid to help in its defence. Whilst there, he was killed at the front line on the 20th of November 1936. His funeral in Barcelona saw hundreds of thousands crowd the streets to commemorate the man who embodied the libertarian social revolution and the aspirations of millions for a better world.

Durruti died before the full force of the Communist-led counter-revolution was imposed upon Republican Spain. That this was possible after the heady-days after the 19th of July was a product of many factors, not least the decision of the Catalan CNT to ignore anarchist theory in favour of a top-down, ultimately spurious, anti-fascist unity. The revolution was not complete, with some aspects of anarchism successfully applied (workers' self-management, the people armed, etc.) whilst others not (the State ignored rather than smashed, "unity" forged at the top rather than the bottom, etc.). With his death, a potential focus for those libertarians seeking to consistently apply anarchist theory was lost – unsurprising one such grouping called itself *The Friends of Durruti*.

The Trotskyist Felix Morrow proclaimed in his *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Spain* that Durruti was "the greatest military figure produced by the war" while, of course, dismissing anarchism by suggesting he was "no theoretician, but an activist leader of masses... his words express the revolutionary outlook of the class-conscious workers". This ignores that Durruti's words, activity and outlook did not spring out of thin air but rather were informed by and reflected his anarchist politics, history, activity and vision which in turn reflected his experiences and needs as a member of the CNT and the working class.

Suffice to say, this is but a summary of both Durruti's life and the libertarian social revolution he helped create. For more details, Abel Paz's *Durruti in the Spanish Revolution* cannot be bettered.

The Hungarian Workers' Revolution

Syndicalist Workers' Federation (1957)

"The Central Council of the Hungarian Workers has issued a manifesto addressed to the workers. It says that against the terror of the Russian rulers, assisted by their Hungarian henchmen, there is only one thing to be done – to fight to the bitter end. It is a question of 'To be or not to be,' the statement adds.

"Because of the terror, however, and the death penalty even for distributing leaflets, the Council exhorts the workers to spread all news concerning the underground by word of mouth Sabotage and passive resistance are the order of the day. Strikes and go-slow tactics are recommended."

– *The Times,* 15.1.57.

The spectacular return to the barricades of the early days of the Hungarian Revolution tended to obscure what was unquestionably its most important achievement – the spontaneous formation of workers' and peasants' councils, probably the first organisations in the history of Hungary to truly represent the interests and aspirations of the working-class. We believe that this development will prove to be the most momentous event in Modern history – a signpost to the future not only of Hungary but of the whole of the Soviet-dominated world.

The Hungarian people did not want to return to a capitalist form of society – a fact admitted by the more honest sections of the British Press. Bruce Renton, writing in *The New Statesman and Nation* (17.11.56), commented that "Nobody who was in Hungary during the revolution could escape the overwhelming impression that the Hungarian people had no desire or intention to return to the capitalist system."



Woke snowflakes erasing history by pulling down statues…

It was also borne out by the statements of non-Communist political and religious leaders. Bela Kovacs, the leader of the Small-holders' Party, who spent many years in Soviet concentration camps, declared: "No one must dream of going back to the world of counts, bankers and capitalists: that world is over once and for all." The Socialist leader Anna Kethly wrote: "Freed from one prison, let us not allow the country to become a prison of another colour. Let us watch over the factories, the mines and the land, which must remain in the hands of the people." Even Cardinal Mindszenty declared: "No one fought in this national uprising' against tyranny for the right to exploit the workers or peasants. What we are fighting for is to end eleven years of exploitation of these people by the Communists."

This fact alone is sufficient to make nonsense of the official Communist line that the workers (who, it is magnanimously admitted, had some justified grievances) were misled by Horthyite-fascists and reactionary capitalists sponsored by American dollars, though such elements obviously made what pitifully small capital they could out of the uprising. As for the allegations that the rebels were supplied with American arms, Peter Fryer, the young correspondent of the *Daily Worker,* which suppressed and 'distorted his dispatches from Hungary, causing

him to resign from the paper, says in his book *Hungarian Tragedy:* "No one has yet been able to produce a single weapon manufactured in the West."

If a reversion to capitalism would never be accepted by the Hungarian workers and peasants, nothing is more certain than that, after eleven years of ruthless exploitation and betrayal, never again will even a substantial ,minority of the Hungarian working-class put their faith in the Communist Party. Even at the very summit of their popularity, in the general election of 1945, after the Nazis had been driven from the country by Russian troops, the Communists succeeded in gaining only 17 per cent of the people's votes. A further 17 per cent went to the Social Democrats and 56 per cent to the Smallholders' Party, whose overwhelming success underlines the important fact that Hungary is still largely a peasant community.

In January, 1957, it was reported that of the 800,000 former members of the Communist Party only 25,000 had joined the new Workers'-Peasants' Party founded by Janos Kadar; and at the time when his government was still pretending that it would hold free elections, Kadar made the astonishing admission that "We must envisage probable thorough defeat through elections."

The terroristic methods by which the Communist Party, with the shadow of the Red Army in the background, succeeded in dominating its numerically stronger partners in the post-war coalition government make revealing reading but cannot be dealt with here. It is sufficient to say that the Smallholders! Party was made illegal and that the Social-Democratic Party was submerged with the Communist Party in June, 1948. The "dictatorship of the proletariat" had begun! Peter Fryer speaks of "the absolute failure of the Hungarian 'Communist Party, after eight. years in complete control of their country, to give the people either happiness or security, either freedom from want or freedom from fear . . . The Communist leaders promised the people an 'earthly paradise and gave them a police state as repressive- and as reprehensible as the pre-war fascist dictatorship of Admiral Horthy."

Add to this their realisation that their real masters were not even Hungarians, but Russians, of the same kind as those brutal ,oppressors who, a hundred years before, had answered the appeal of Hungary's Hapsburg rulers to assist them in crushing their glorious revolution, and it is small wonder that they rose at last, almost to a child, to shake off their yoke.

Workers lead the way

From the first, intellectuals and students played a vital role in expressing the seething discontent of the whole people.

Discussion circles, named after the great lyric poet Sandor Petofi and Lajos Kossuth, the revolutionary. leader, both of whom fought for Hungarian freedom in 1848-9, were formed in Budapest and other cities. These circles recall strongly to mind the revolutionary circles which played such an important part in undermining the Czarist regime and in preparing the way for the Russian Revolution. Students began to demand the abolition of compulsory lectures in Marxist-Leninist doctrines and said that they should be allowed to study Western languages instead of Russian.

On October 22, 1956, students at the Budapest Polytechnic Institute drew up a 14-point manifesto. Among other concessions, the students demanded: (1) a national congress of the Communist Party to elect new leaders by secret ballot; (2) the constitution of a new government under Imre Nagy, the former premier who was expelled from the Communist Party for deviationism; (3) the immediate withdrawal of all Soviet troops from Hungary; (4) free elections, with the right of other parties besides the Communist Party to put up candidates. Other demands were for freedom of speech and the Press, the ending of the exaction of compulsory quotas of farm produce from the peasants, the release of Hungarian prisoners-of-war and civilians held in Russia, and the retrial in open court of all persons serving sentences for political or economic offences.

At noon on October 23, a mass meeting was held in the university park, attended by student delegates from other faculties and several workers' delegations from nearby factories. At 3 p.m., ignoring the Minister of the Interior's refusal for permission to demonstrate, the students began to march along the banks of the Danube, their ranks constantly swelled by ordinary citizens. It is estimated that 10,000 people came out into the streets to demonstrate. Outside the Parliament buildings in Kossuth Square the crowd shouted for Nagy, who, when he did appear at last, could do no more than appeal for calm, At the foot of the statue of Josef Bem, the Polish general who fought for the Hungarians in the Revolution of 1848-9. students demonstrated their solidarity with the Polish people's struggle for independence from Russia, recalling the words of Petöfi:

> Our battalions have combined two nations,
>
> And what nations! Polish and Magyar!
>
> Is there any destiny that is stronger
>
> Than those two when they are united?

From the monument to Petöfi, where the medical students were demonstrating, a student recited the

poem Petöfi himself had written to incite his countrymen to rise:

> By the God of our Hungary we swear
>
> We shall be slaves nevermore.

Erno Gero, the Stalinist Party Secretary, broadcast a speech calling the demonstrators counter-revolutionaries and declaring that "the Soviet Union must continue to be treated by us with respect as the liberator of Hungary." The so-called "counter-revolutionaries" replied by demolishing a 26-foot bronze statue of Stalin and destroying every Red Star in sight.

Towards evening, the main body of demonstrators had converged on the radio station, where they demanded that the student manifesto should be broadcast. The building was packed with 300 men of the AVH *(Allamvedelmi Hatosagnom)* who opened fire on the crowd. The people's long-smouldering hatred of the political police burst into a wild flame, and soon they were hunting them through the streets and lynching those luckless enough not to be killed by rebel bullets.

The sympathy of the Hungarian Army for at least the initial aims of the rebels was never in doubt. Lorry-loads of soldiers sent to assist the AVH in defending the radio station handed their arms to the demonstrators. And it was not long before Hungarian soldiers were themselves fighting alongside Freedom Fighters.

George Sherman, in his story of the first triumphant days of the revolution pieced together from the first-hand accounts of refugees *(The Observer,* 11.11.56), quoted these words from a 17-year-old girl student who took part in the demonstration outside the Parliament buildings:

> "For weeks we had been talking about reforms – at first educational, and then more and more political and economic. We were peaceful. We only wanted to better the lot of the students. *No one thought it would end in revolution.* We sang our National Anthem and then put 'put the Red Star which shone on top of the Parliament."

The revolution spread like a bush fire across the length and breadth of Hungary. In Magyarovar, where the AVH machine-gunned a demonstration of 5,000 men, women and children, massacring more than 80 people, the people took a terrible revenge, lynching all the officers who survived the battle which followed.

Revolutionary committees of delegates elected by factories and mines, colleges and military units, took over the administration of almost every town in Hungary. From some, freedom radio stations broadcast caustic comments on the political manoeuvrings in Budapest. Györ radio described Nagy as a "tool of the Communists" and Miskolc radio urged the Budapest students to disregard Government exhortations to give up their arms.

But the chief centres of resistance outside Budapest were almost certainly the mining and industrial towns, like Varpalota, Dunpentele, Tatabanya and Pecs. The miners of Pecs, where some of the fiercest fighting took place, had a particular grievance of their own in that their toil in the uranium mines had been solely for the benefit of their Russian overlords.

It was the rising of the workers which turned the revolt into a revolution. If the students were at first the voice of the revolution, expressing its spirit and its initial purpose, the workers were, as they always must be, its backbone. A 21-year-old worker in the huge United Electric factory in Ujpest, an industrial suburb of Budapest, told Sherman:

> "On 'Wednesday morning the revolt began in our factory. It was unorganised and spontaneous. If it had been organised, the AVH would have known and stopped it before it started. The young workers led the way and everyone followed them. Yes, it was the young workers who made the revolution against Communism – the workers on whom the whole system was supposed to be based."

And George Sherman reported: "A 28-year-old refugee who had fought alongside these workers tersely summed up their role in the revolution:

> "'The young workers were the power of the revolution. The students began it but when it developed they did not have the numbers or the ability to fight as hard as those young workers.'"

As Peter Fryer testified: "It was the proletariat of Hungary, above all, that fought the tanks which came to destroy the revolutionary order they had already established in the shape of workers' councils."

All honour to the youth of Hungary, whether students or workers, who fought side by side in the streets of Budapest against the Russian tanks, called in by Hungarian politicians who described themselves as "men of the people" to crush the spring-flower of.. the people's freedom.

Whether or not Imre Nagy, who became premier on the second day of the revolution, was responsible for the appeal for Russian tanks to bolster the tottering Communist regime is of 'little importance. At no time during the revolutionary period were the politicians in

control of the situation. Nagy and Kadar, who replaced him after the second Soviet assault on Budapest, were mere puppets. But all politicians are shown to be men, of straw when the workers realise their united strength and march resolutely towards a common goal. Even Stalin, "the man of steel", would have proved so, and the leaders of the Kremlin will fall like nine-pins when the Russian workers rise.

While the first Russian assault failed, the helpless Hungarian authorities made a futile attempt to frustrate the workers' own initiative by offering concessions:

> "From October 28, 1956 . . . Imre Nagy recognised the existence of a power stemming directly from the people: '. . . the government is adopting the new democratic forms which have arisen from the people's initiative and will endeavour to incorporate them in the State administration' – Talk on Budapest Radio, 28.10.56 at 5.24 p.m.

"What does this statement mean? Quite simply that the central governing power has no longer any authority and that factories, public services, offices, villages, whole regions have spontaneously created their own organisations.

"In fact, manifestoes and proclamations from different parts of the country show that revolutionary committees exist in the provinces of Borsod, Baranya, Szatmar, Versprem, Szabolcs; that 'national' committees are functioning in the provinces of Vas, Zala, Gyor and Sopron; that other committees are working in most of the towns, the different districts of Budapest and its suburbs.

"On the evening of October 28, these various committees sought to co-ordinate their efforts by forming. a National Committee. At provincial and district. level, the same tendency prevailed for linking together these natural bodies, born of the absence and impotence of centralised power, to fulfil the essential needs of social life and armed struggle." – *Pourquoi et Comment se bat la Hongrie,Ouvrière* (Union des Syndicalistes, Paris, 1956).

"My friends, it is I, Imre Nagy, who have chased these Russians out," crowed the pathetic little man with the walrus moustache, while the flower of Hungarian youth fought and died on the barricades.

The Red Army, its tanks short of fuel, their crews short of food and mutinous, withdrew from the city, only to return four days later on November 4 with fresh "untainted" troops and in overwhelming strength. A thousand tanks are reported to have taken part in the second assault on Budapest, firing blindly, shelling buildings indiscriminately and at point-blank range. Lajos Lederer, Hungarian-born correspondent of *The Observer,* reported that in some parts of the city the devastation was greater than in Coventry after the heavy bombing, and Peter Fryer stated that "vast areas of the city – the working-class areas above all – are virtually in ruins."

The Hungarian Revolution was the most marked development of the unrest behind the Iron Curtain, but it was far from being an isolated instance. Everywhere there was the spirit of revolt among workers, peasants and students

But house by house, street by street, the Freedom Fighters fought the invaders. In one night battle watched by Lederer more than thirty tanks were destroyed. "After that," he said, "the Soviet tanks never stayed in the centre of the city at night. Every night, before midnight, they moved out, to come back at dawn."

Twice the world gave up for lost the cause of Hungarian freedom: when Soviet tanks first went into action and when they returned in far greater numbers. For many the struggle for freedom ended with death in the gutter. One report gave the number of Hungarian dead as 25,000 – yet who would dare to say that they had not chosen life? Well over 100,000 people fled across the border into Austria. But the revolution did not end with the end of most of the fighting. Thousands of rebels hid their arms and joined in a general strike the like of which the world has never seen before. It is impossible to pay too high a tribute to

the. endurance, faith and courage of the Hungarian people. They showed the world that nearly forty years of terror, and deceit – first under Fascism and then under Communism – cannot quench the spirit of freedom.

Despite the mass arrests, trials by court-martial, executions and deportations of Hungarian youth, the union of university students was, in January, 1957, still openly demanding the. fulfilment of its manifesto of October 22, with the consequence that the entire Budapest Student Revolutionary Committee was arrested, while the imprisonment of scores of militant members of the Workers' Councils, which refused to "co-operate" with the Kadar spittle-lickers, had completely failed to bring • the workers to heel. "The waves of arbitrary arrests continue. Four hundred members of former revolutionary councils are in prison. During the last week there have been a number of judges who have resigned in protest against what they called the farce of this jurisdiction" *(The Times,* 21.1.57).

While all non-Communist accounts (as well as a good many Communist ones, too) agreed that the uprising was unorganised, how hard it is for those brought up in the comfortable public-school philosophy of bourgeois democracy to understand such a spontaneous movement of the people as shown by this typical comment from Boris Kidel *(News Chronicle,* 29.10.56): "The people . . . appear confused as to how to make use of their newly; won freedom. And they lack leaders and officials to take charge."

That the revolution had no leaders who could claim to speak for the country as a whole was not a sign of weakness but of strength, for while it is not too difficult to execute a few leaders, it is very difficult to execute a whole people; and a people who do not put their trust in leaders cannot be betrayed by leaders. As H. G. Wells once said: "Grown men do not need leaders." Nor should the absence of national leaders be taken as a sign of disunity, for front the beginning the people spoke with one voice on the fundamental issues of the revolution.

Workers' Councils supreme

The day before the Revolution, the workers of Hungary were organised in State trade unions, patterned on the Russian State unions and the Nazi Labour Front. These were controlled by the Communist Party and, it seemed to the outside world, completely subjugated. But on the day of the Revolution, the Hungarian workers went into action, brushing aside these unions and their Communist officials and, from necessity, forming their own organisations,

What form did the revolutionary organisation take? Certainly not that of trade unionism so well known to us – sick benefits, homes of rest, funeral funds, worker-employer collaboration and parliamentary politics. The basis of the organisation was the meeting of the workers at their workplace – the factory, pit or railway depot. From these, committees of known and trusted workers were formed. The next day, the linking together of these committees by industry, by district and nationally, followed quickly: "It is quite extraordinary to note how these councils, born spontaneously in different regions, partially isolated by the Russian armies, immediately sought to federate themselves. At the end of the first revolutionary week they tended to form a republic of *councils."* – *L'Insurrection Hongroise* (Socialisme ou Barbarie, Paris, 1957).

The seeming disadvantages of the situation were turned to advantage. Because the unions were completely Communist controlled, they were incapable of creating illusion. Had they been half Communist and half wishy-washy, they might have confused and caused hesitation among weaker brethren. Because only Communist propaganda was allowed, no publicity blown-up personalities were on hand to capitalise the crisis. The workers had to start by picking, from their own ranks, those they knew and could trust, and they had to start on an industrial basis. It is the dilemma of capitalism and its ugly offspring, Fascism and Bolshevism, that, while. they seek to destroy working-class organisation, they must herd the workers into industrial units of production, where rebel slaves may again organise against their masters. Ironically enough Marx recognised this:

> "Modern industry has converted the little workshop of the patriarchal master into the great factory of the industrial capitalist. Masses of labourers, crowded into the factory, are organised like soldiers. As privates of the industrial army, they are placed under the command of a perfect hierarchy of officers and sergeants." – *Communist Manifesto,* 1848.

At once, the Communist officers fled to the shelter of The Russian Army, while the industrial workers formed their organisation – on the spot.

Need and circumstance, if not design, indicated to the revolutionary workers the Syndicalist principle of organisation. The overwhelming importance of the workers as a factor in the Hungarian Revolution gave a special character to the revolt of the people and made it a Social Revolution. The workers, while abhorring Stalinism, would never be willing to go back to capitalism.

But the principles of social revolution thus introduced were not only social aims and aspirations, they were weapons of revolt. Denied the use of tanks, aircraft and heavy artillery, the revolution creates its own weapons, which are denied to the enemy.

The workshop committees did more than organise units of the Freedom Fighters. They organised essential supplies. Miners dug coal for hospitals and workers' homes, bakeries and flour mills organised bread distribution, transport workers moved foodstuffs, public service workers maintained health services and factories, repaired the scant store of arms available to the rebels and improvised weapons.

> "A fantastic aspect of the situation is that although the general strike is in being and there is no centrally-organised industry, the workers are nevertheless taking upon themselves to keep essential services going for purposes which they themselves determine and support. Workers' councils in industrial districts have undertaken the distribution of essential goods and food to the population; in order to keep them alive. The coal miners are making daily allocations of just sufficient coal to keep the power stations going and supply the hospitals in Budapest and other large towns. Railwaymen organise trains to go to approved destinations for approved purposes. It is self-help, in a setting of Anarchy." – The *Observer,* 25.11.56.

> "The Council of Miskolc . . . was formed on October 24, democratically elected by all workers in the Miskolc factories, irrespective of their political position. It immediately called a general strike, with the exception of three services: transport, electric power and hospitals. These measures show its care to administer the region and ensure for the people maintenance of public services. Very quickly, too (the 24th or 25th), the Council sent a delegation to Budapest to establish contact with the insurgents of the capital, to assure them of the active support of the provinces and to act in agreement with them." – *L'Insurrection Hongroise.*

Lest we should fall into the error of supposing that all this was done by Workers' Councils, let us remember that the motive force of this social revolution was always the main body of workers – always, and not just at the beginning. The workers did not abdicate their revolutionary role when they elected councils. The council men were but delegates. Even where a workers' council was arrested or murdered by the AVH, the Communist Gestapo, the workers continued their revolt. And in cases where some councils had seemed to wilt before the dreadful military might of Russia, the workers insisted on a policy of no-compromise, revealing the grass-roots basis of the Revolution.

We must not, of course, suppose that all the revolutionary workers of Hungary were in the factories, or even in towns. Even now, the majority are land workers, peasants. The farms, too, joined the revolt, forming Freedom Fighter groups, denying large areas of the country to the Red Army and the puppet government and leaving the enforced farm collectives of the Communists, to decide themselves whether to farm the land individually or in voluntary collectives.

More, the farm' workers, acting through their Peasants' Councils, organised collections of food for the workers and Freedom Fighters of the cities. Industrial and farm workers, city and country, were united in a mutually-supporting struggle against the Russian invader and his quislings.

For months, the main effort of the Kadar government was directed against the Workers' Councils, with little success. At first military suppression was tried. That failing, the Communist regime tried to hamstring the Councils by giving them official recognition and limiting their activity to giving advice on economic matters, while outlawing the central workers' councils for greater Budapest and other regions for interfering in so-called political affairs and decreeing the death penalty. for "economic sabotage", including strikes. In this manner the Bolsheviks had killed the original true Soviets of the Russian Revolution. But the workers were too shrewd to be fooled by this old trick and insisted on the principle of workers' councils controlling the factories and the abolition of the Communist bureaucracy in economic affairs. *The Times* (2.1.57) listed this demand with others of the Councils, particularly "the right to strike as a legal weapon and as a safeguard against leaders who wish to defy the will of the people." Other principles quoted by *The Times* were: the right of peasants to choose their own way of life and free choice of joining or leaving collective farms; the end of compulsory deliveries of foodstuffs to the Communist government – a form of double taxation; and "the overthrow of the one-party monopoly held by the Communist Party." Exactly one month earlier, *The Observer* reported:

> "The Government's plan to divert the workers' councils into innocuous channels by 'legalising' them as organs of economic self-government, somewhat on the Yugoslav model, but denying them the right to put forward political

demands or issue a newspaper, has merely led to continued deadlock in Budapest. . . .

"Meanwhile life in Budapest is gradually becoming more normal. Most of the shops have reopened, queues have diminished, and even some cinemas have reopened.

"Ambulance services *are* working well, and at least in the hospitals broken windows have been repaired. Telephone and telegraph communications with abroad have been resumed – all by favour of the workers' councils, to which nobody can give orders." – The *Observer,* 2.12.16.

When the Kadar government failed to trick the Workers' Councils, it intensified the military struggle against them. But always the workers replied with the methods the occasion called for – the general strike, the stay-in strike, the fight with weapons, sabotage and non-cooperation.



"The latter (industrial workers) were, in fact, most intransigent in their fight against Muscovite rulers, and since then they have continued to fight, either with arms or with strikes and sabotage, although other sections of the population seemed ready to accept a *fait accompli." – New Statesman,* 8.12.56.

Throughout 1957 the arrests, "trials", executions and repression continued. On January 29 the Kadar Government suspended the activity of the Workers' Council of Railwaymen; on March 20, a Ministry of Interior decree stated that persons "dangerous to the State or to public security" were liable to "forced residence" at places specified by the authorities; official figures for the number of rebels arrested in July alone was 1,200; on September 29, Deputy Premier Antal Apro announced that the remaining Workers' Councils were to be replaced by "works councils, under the leadership of the trade unions"; on November 3, Minister of the Interior Ferenc Münnich wrote in Nepszábadsás that the Workers' Councils were "led by class-alien elements . . It is necessary to replace this whole set-up by new organisations as soon as possible;" and on November 17 an official announcement followed that all remaining Workers' Councils were to be abolished forthwith. – Source: *Hungary 56* (Andy Anderson, Solidarity, 1956).

The spirit of revolt

The Hungarian Revolution was the most marked development of the unrest behind the Iron Curtain, but it was far from being an isolated instance. Everywhere there was the spirit of revolt among workers, peasants and students – and everywhere the same growing demands for freedom from the oppressive slavery of the one-party State, in which "deviation" is the greatest crime.

Even in Russia, where the dictatorship is longest established, the will for freedom is far from being crushed. Since the war there have been continual reports of unrest in the Ukraine, where the Anarchist guerrilla army of Nestor Makhno fought a war on two fronts in the years following the 1917 revolution – against the White armies of Denikin and Kolchak and against the Red Army of Trotsky and Voroshilov. The Red Army of the Bolsheviks was no less ruthless than the Whites in its aim of wiping out the libertarian forces; which had raised the banner of free communism.

The spirit of freedom is still alive and refugees from Russia during the 1950's told of guerrilla fighters still waging war on the Bolshevik State, under the black flag of Makhno.

Fighting between students and the army took place at Kiev on December 27, 1956 – and there were angry clashes in other parts of Russia just after Christmas of that year.

One of the most striking episodes was at Stalingrad, where students demonstrating for "freedom of the spirit" clashed with the police and army. Forty students and two professors were arrested. On the following day, four Stalingrad- factories struck work, demanding the release of those arrested. Within hours, all but six had been set free.

Demonstrations also took place in Leningrad and Tiflis, while more than 200 foreign students were expelled from Moscow University. This latter incident followed earlier expulsions, at the beginning of December.

It is clear that in Russia, as elsewhere, the slight relaxing of the straps on the Bolshevik straitjacket, which followed the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, was eagerly seized upon by workers and students, whose thirst for freedom was only whetted by the small concessions made.

The background of this student revolt is to be found in a report, published by *The Observer* (7.2.54 and 14.2.54), from Brigitte Gerland, a. Berlin journalist released in August, 1953, from imprisonment in concentration and forced labour camps of Vorkuta region, Arctic Russia. Of interned Russian students she said:

> "The message this student movement wanted to bring to the Russian people they called 'The true word of Lenin'. Yet the word of the great Vladimir Ilyich had changed strangely in the interpretation: it had assumed Syndicalist, even Anarchist features, more in the likeness of those Kronstadt sailors who rose against Lenin in 1921 to demand 'Soviets without Communists'. In their view, the Socialist state of the future would not be run by either one or several parties, but purely by peasants' and workers' 'syndicates'."

This movement represented, not an isolated prison discussion group, but a deep-rooted and organised struggle for freedom. Before the students she met were rounded up by the secret police, Brigitte Gerland reports:

> "The initiated recruited hundreds of followers in the great universities, spreading their propaganda both by writing and posting leaflets and by means of their 'flying distribution groups'."

It was in Vorkuta, in 1953, that the prisoners rose against tyranny. Following the execution by camp guards of a Ukrainian prisoner, who had killed a Stalinist informer, the workers on forced labour in the coal mines began to take strike action on July 20, 1953. Within five days, all 50 pits in the region were idle – and 250,000 slave-labourers had struck work in a giant protest action. On August 1, 120 of the strike leaders were executed, but still the struggle went on.

It was this fantastic direct action by slave workers, with other similar heroic struggles, which forced the Russian government to abolish forced labour – at least on paper – following the Khrushchev revelations of 1956.

Highly significant, too, is the fact that the early divisions sent by the Kremlin to crush the Hungarian Revolution had to be withdrawn, because of disaffection and mass desertions, to be replaced by Mongol detachments from faraway Asia.

As in Russia, so in the other satellite states. In Bulgaria, traditionally the East European stronghold of Anarchist and Syndicalist ideas, revolt was simmering. On November 5, 1956, as the Russian tanks were shelling Budapest and the Hungarian provinces, a wave of arrests – directed mainly at Anarchist and Syndicalist militants, took place throughout Bulgaria. Among those detained was Christo Kolev, of Sofia, a well-known anarcho-syndicalist, whose life had been spent largely in the prisons and concentration camps under Fascism and Bolshevism. Among the many other Syndicalists detained on that day were Manol Vassev and Deltcho Vassilev, of Hascovo, and Stefan Kotakov, of Plovdiv.

The following quotations from *The Times,* related to Bulgaria, tell their own story:

> "SOFIA, 2.11.56. . . . Soldiers with machine-guns patrol the streets and at night identity papers are checked more thoroughly than hitherto."
>
> "Reports tell of peasants refusing to deliver their quotas and of Government collectors having to leave the villages without accomplishing their task." 6.11.56.
>
> "It would seem also that the Government, in view of the present ferment in Eastern Europe, sees no alternative to reverting to the methods of the Stalin era." 7.11.56.
>
> "A purge of the Army, begun last summer to curb a growth of `nationalist' feeling among the officer corps, appears now to have spread to the lower commands." 4.12.56.

In Rumania, too, there was enormous popular sympathy with the Hungarian Revolution. Terrified. by the unrest there, the plenary session of the Central Committee of the Rumanian Communist Party announced concessions at the beginning of 1957, which included wage increases averaging 36 per cent, with more for lower-paid workers, and the abolition of forced delivery of agricultural products.

These concessions mark the alternating pattern of kid-glove and iron-fist methods used by the Bolsheviks at the time. Here is an earlier report of events in Rumania, which shows the other side of the medal:

> "Disarmament of most of the Rumanian Army has been proceeding for the past fortnight . . . the Soviet decision that the Rumanian Army was unreliable and had to be disarmed to prevent a repetition of the Hungarian events was taken after an overnight visit to Bucharest

> by Mr. Khruschev himself. . . . The Rumanian leaders' warning of the unwillingness of their Army to fight against Hungary, which prompted this decision ... was based on reports of growing popular unrest in Transylvania and Banat, the provinces bordering Hungary, and of students' protest meetings all over the country, as far away as Bucharest and Jassy. . . meetings of railwaymen and miners, traditionally regarded as the backbone of Rumanian labour, had passed resolutions of solidarity with the Hungarian revolution . . . the Communist leaders, on their return from Belgrade, announced some wage concessions to workers and offered compensation and pensions to citizens who had been unjustly arrested." – *The Observer,* 25.11.56.

From Czechoslovakia and the Baltic States, too, came growing murmurs of protest and rebellion. From Lithuania, particularly, there were stories of unrest among the students. Reporting on Czechoslovakia, *The Times* (7.12.56) said:

> "In spite of security precautions, demonstrations of sympathy for Hungary took place at Bratislava on October 27. . . other demonstrations have been reported from Levice, Nitra, Nove Zamky, Kosice, Lucenec, Secovce, Moldava and Velke Kapusany."

In East Germany, the Hungarian Revolution stirred the workers, already seething on their own account, and strikes, minor riots and demonstrations of workers and students were from time to time reported. Although the shadow of the Russian tank lies darkly over the German workers, they remember the days of June. 1953, in East Berlin, when the spontaneous revolt of the whole people was sparked off by a demonstration of building workers on the Stalin Allee. Downing tools, they marched to the city centre to present their demands for higher wages and the cancellation of the increased work tasks introduced by the Communists.

They were joined by other workers . . . transport workers left their trams and lorries to join the demonstration, factory workers rushed from their benches, students from the colleges, housewives. from their homes .and shopping, even schoolboys from their lessons to join the fight against the Russian tanks. Soon the revolt spread throughout Eastern Germany, and it was suppressed only by Russian military might.

But the next revolt of the East German workers may not be entirely spontaneous. Organisation may well give spontaneity the co-ordination and direction it lacked in the historic days of June, 1953.

The Polish revolt, like the East German, began with a strike of industrial workers. But, unlike the Berlin revolt, the Polish was premeditated and organised. The mass feeling of revolt was certainly there, waiting to be called into action, but the character of its bursting forth showed that factory-based organisations of the workers existed.

In Poznan, on June 28, 1956, the workers of the big ZISPO locomotive works appeared as usual at their benches and machines. Within 15 minutes they were marching out to Red Army Street in the centre of the city – 15,000 of them. Almost at the same moment, other factories and work sites became idle as the whole industrial population joined in the demonstration, and the trams stopped running.

Street traffic had to stop because of the crowds, and the drivers of trams and lorries joined the strikers. Now students and housewives joined the march to the prison and police headquarters, which surrendered without a shot. The prisoners were free.

Next to the Communist Party headquarters, which were quickly ransacked. Then to the U.B., the Polish Communist Gestapo, where gun-fighting followed. Barricades went up. The radio station was seized and revolutionary broadcasts began. But the headquarters of the secret police torturers was not captured and, after heavy fighting, the Communists – with the threat of the Red Army – regained control. But for how long? Be sure Poland will again revolt! Hope burns bright, for in the forefront of the battle were the young men and boys of Poznan, who had

The growth and internationalising of the Workers' Council movement – so similar in its structure and aims to that of Syndicalism – would be the greatest possible danger to the ruling classes in both the rival power blocs.

never known any life other than that under Fascist and Communist dictatorship, but hated both equally.

The East German rising began as a spontaneous revolt of one job site. The Poznan revolt was an organised strike of most factories in the city. One day, the revolt against Bolshevik oppression will be the organised rising of the workers of all the occupied countries – and the revolution may not stop at the frontiers of Russia.

Starved of solidarity

That the Hungarian revolutionary movement received no practical and active support from the governments of Western

Europe and America is not surprising. These executive committees of capitalism were well aware that the Hungarian workers were not fighting for a return to private ownership of the land and means of production – much as they would like this to be the case.

The Workers' Councils, with their demand for workers' control of industry, are something capitalism dreads far more than seeing the monolithic Bolshevik empire preserved. Had the Workers' Councils established their control of the Hungarian economy, it would have meant the birth of libertarian communism in that country. And the example of the Hungarian working-class would surely have spread like wildfire across the frontiers, not only of Central and Eastern Europe, but ultimately westwards to our own side of the present Iron Curtain.

The growth and internationalising of the Workers' Council movement – so similar in its structure and aims to that of Syndicalism – would be the greatest possible danger to the ruling classes in both the rival power blocs.

So it is not surprising that this aspect of the Hungarian revolution – for us its most important and heartening aspect – has been given scant attention and no support from the Press and politicians of the "free world",

As one might have expected, the British Tory Government – itself adept at crushing movements of revolt when its own privileges are threatened (as in Kenya and Cyprus), or at waging aggressive interventionist war (as in Egypt) – limited itself to the admission of refugees.

Neither is it surprising that the United Nations stopped short at holding endless debates and passing resolutions condemning Russian intervention – empty resolutions, because mere force of public opinion will never restrain this totalitarian dictatorship which, for nearly forty years, had been perfecting the techniques of deception and repression.

Nor should one be surprised that men like Nehru (himself ruthless when it was a question of suppressing opposition to his own highly-centralised government) were late and half-hearted in their condemnation of the Kremlin butchers and their despicable errand boy, Janos Kadar.

But. what of the working-class of the West: those who should have been the natural allies of this epic struggle to rescue communism from those who have made its very name spell slavery and exploitation?

Unfortunately, the active support given to the Hungarian workers by their brothers of the "free world", as in the case of Spain twenty years before, was woefully small.

There was one crystal-clear way for the workers of the West to give effective expression to their solidarity with those who are sacrificing their lives in the struggle for freedom, and to their hatred for Bolshevik tyranny – co-ordinated boycott of all trade with Russia.

And this was quickly understood by rank-and-file workers. In Liverpool and Hull, for instance, stevedores and dockers refused to discharge and load Russian ships – a striking expression of practical solidarity and protest by the militant port workers.

But an appeal by the Hungarian Workers' Councils for a worldwide boycott action was rejected by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. These unions, controlled by timid social democrats and. conscienceless careerists, are far more concerned with preserving capitalism's trade balances than they were with helping their tortured Hungarian brothers.

So, while the heroic Hungarian workers battled on, using tried and trusted methods of direct action – armed insurrection, general strike, sabotage, boycott, mass demonstrations – little or nothing was done to support and succour their struggle. The. tragedy of Spain, where lack of effective international working-class action strangled the revolution, was again enacted. And, as with 'Spain, where Fascism was enabled to take a big step towards eventual enslavement of the European continent, so the working-lass movement again betrayed its principles – and, in the long run, its own interests.

Physically, the Hungarian Revolution was Crushed by overwhelming Russian military force. But the flame of freedom kindled by the Hungarian working-class during October-November 1956 is still alive, showing the way forward to workers, not in the Communist dictatorships alone, but throughout the world.

Remembering Bobby Lynn

Keith

Robert Lynn (1924-1996) was a memorable character, a beacon of his times. At the same time he was no one-dimensional politico. Leaving schooling at 14 to become an Engineering Apprentice in 1938, he was self-educated in the class struggle and the realities of life in the Calton. He became acquainted with the Glasgow Anarchists. You had Jimmy Kennedy's Marxist education Classes, but this was no primer for Leninism. And you had the Stirnerite Glesca patter of Eddie Shaw, the most prominent of the Glasgow anti-militarist street speakers in Brunswick street and outside Shipyards where they faced stern opposition from pro-war Stalinists. Additionally you had the Workers Open Forum instigated by Willie McDougall which brought left-wing elements to debate.



Robert Lynn (1924-1996)

He had taken part in the 1943 apprentices Strike. Immediately post war, perhaps black-listed, he had to turn to Merchant seafaring to earn a crust. Industrial jobs on return, followed including Howdens engineering, where he acted as a Shop Steward in later years. Bobby as he was known was well known locally for running a shebeen (illegal pub), hawking goods and other less than lawful activities.

Having been involved in the local Direct Action Group post war he joined the Syndicalist Workers Federation. He wrote short pamphlets such as *Why Vote?* and his imaginary conversation in MacKinnon's Bar, near Glasgow Cross, no doubt generated from real life. Nor did Bobby confine his activity to propaganda, he had the Anarchist Bus Run, an annual outing and helped in his later years, the 2 summer schools in the 90s run by a new generation of Glasgow anarchists. Bobby, though a rough diamond, was offended by a lack of civility to opposition groups, especially in debates, a quality lacking in many of his younger comrades. At his funeral in 1996, a bus run of anarchists complete with flags assembled at the Crematorium, with family members. When the previous service came out, for "Wee Burny" from the BBC Show Rab C Nesbitt, the west end luvvies were taken back at such an assembly.

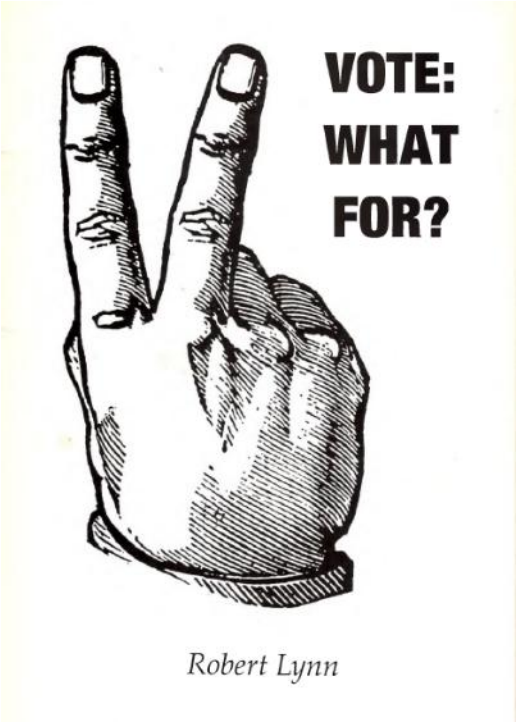
The Wee Man is Dead!

Stuart Christie

Robert Lynn has snuffed it. In the heart of Glasgow – the Calton – hundreds of people are genuinely mourning the loss of one of its best loved sons. Born in the Calton in 1924 Robert cherubic-faced, curly haired small and dapper, generous and non-judgemental he was educated at St. Mungo's Academy. Leaving school at 14 years of age he took up an engineering apprenticeship in the Yarrows Shipyard on Clydeside. Already possessing an awareness of class consciousness he was swept up in the maelstrom of political activity which was occurring during the war years in British industry, mining, shipyard and engineering. Always disaffected by the Communist Party members' policy of subordinating workers' interests to those of Stalin's foreign policy, he looked elsewhere for his ideas.

Bobby began to explore the ideas of anarchist thinkers, among them Max Stirner (1806-56). Authoritarian socialist states justified themselves by advocating that only the state can bring about and guarantee the freedom of the people. Stirner however, argued that freedom was not an abstract end in itself. Freedom was simply the means to the real end of being in control over one's own actions. Stirner's "The Ego and His own" is a powerful critique of what he called "fixed ideas", be they religious, rational, nationalist or ideological. For Stirner all "ideas" needed to be treated

simply as that-"ideas"- working hypotheses rather than ideologies. Ideologies always make hypocrites of us by denying our real, complex selves in the name of "fixed ideas". In opposition to statism, both capitalist and communist, Stirner appeared to suggest a union of "egoists", a sort of anarchist federalism. However, like most anarchists he was opposed to providing a blueprint for society. That was precisely what he was fighting against. Peter Kropotkin defined it thus: "It is impossible to legislate for the future. All we can do is to guess, vaguely, its essential tendencies and clear the road for it." Robert Lynn interpreted this "union of egoists" literally as a workers' union, a way of organising freely within industry.



Robert Lynn

In 1943 the strike on Tyneside, which saw Jock Haston and Roy Tearso imprisoned, quickly spread to the Clyde where many shipyards were brought to a halt. Robert working as an apprentice in Yarrows became actively involved in the struggle to better the wages and conditions of his colleagues - a battle that had to be fought and refought in ensuing years. During the second world war the Communist Party dominated the influential shop stewards' committees but their policy of subordinating the workers' interests to those of Soviet Russia drew a withering fire from anarchists, Trotskyists and non-Communist Party socialists alike. This experience had a profound effect on Robert and it was then he began to nurture the beliefs of Bakunin and the industrial strategy of syndicalism. In the post-war years Robert's influence in shipbuilding became increasingly irritating to both employers and communist-led union officials, he was eventually "blacklisted" with the approval of both. Unable to get work he then joined the Merchant Navy as an engineering officer and spent some years seeing the world and its peoples. During this period he devoured libraries.

Returning to Glasgow in the early fifties he threw himself into everything; politics, marriage and trade union activity. He became an active member of the Glasgow Anarchist Group which consisted of Frank Leach, Jimmy Raeside and Eddie Shaw, who were already well-respected names in anarchist circles. As George Woodcock expressed: The Glasgow Anarchist Group is the only group in the world where the egocentric philosophies of Max Stirner took root and were given popular expression. The anarchists held an open workers forum in Renfrew Street, Glasgow where anarchists, Socialist Party of Great Britain. (SPGB), nationalists and Trotskyists debated - sometimes physically. In an open air arena ordinary working class men and women discussed passionately the ideas of Feurbuch, Clara Zetkin, Bakunin, Kropotkin and many, many others. Robert Lynn revelled in this, what he called the University of Life. In the late fifties, with the death of Leach and the departure of Raeside and Shaw abroad, the Glasgow Anarchist Group disintegrated and the task of reorganisation was left to Robert. This he did by immersing himself in his local community of the Calton. He and Jean, his constant companion, became well-known, well-respected and to many, well-loved characters. Robert again went back to industry and worked at Howden's engineering plant in the south side of Glasgow. There he promoted his ideas of syndicalism and libertarianism. Sadly, thanks to trade union officials who immediately recognised the threat to their power, Robert's views did not meet with any great success. However it was the Glasgow Anarchist Group of the early seventies which was to prove the most fruitful for Robert's ideas. There became a massive blossoming of literature and direct action which exploded on the scene. The publication of booklets such as *Practical Anarchy* and *Why Vote?*, all bearing Robert's signature, appeared and were avidly read by many people who, being disillusioned with political parties of all shades, were becoming attracted to the ideas of anarchism. A great number of events were initiated by Robert especially the Glasgow Anarchist Summer School which is now becoming a tradition that attracts libertarian socialists from all over Britain. For a considerable time Robert (Bobby) Lynn held regular meetings of the Glasgow Anarchist group at 4 Ross Street Calton Glasgow. A "single-end" derelict ground floor flat just off the Gallowgate near the Barrows. His death on August 16th, was a blow to his family, his many friends and comrades, and even also to his political opponents. He was generous to a fault and although he did not suffer fools gladly he rarely had a bad word to say about anyone, even the worst of us. Robert is survived by Jean and daughters Jean, Joan and Betty.

Not a Life Story, Just a Leaf From It

Robert Lynn

Workers' City (1988)

The State is a condition, a certain relationship between human beings, a mode of human behaviour: we destroy it by contracting other relationships, by behaving differently... One day it will be realised that Socialism is not the invention of anything new but the discovery of something that was always present, of something that has grown.

– Gustav Landauer

When I was an apprentice engineer in Yarrow's I was already reading Marx. At the time I started my apprenticeship I was very naive. The Catholic Church and State indoctrination had done their usual mischief. But industry freed me from all that and it didn't take too long. Industry became my university. There was a good class-conscious and political education running alongside my engineering training. Whilst serving my time I had the good fortune to encounter some engineers and other grades of workers who were quite erudite. These people read important books and argued about what they read. There was always some social or political or philosophical controversy going on. Listening to these, and indeed taking part in them as far as I was able at the time, soon annihilated my shallow metaphysical religiosity. I began to question everything and examine things for myself and the scientific analysis of religion led on to the scientific analysis of the economic and political system. It was a logical step. If the first was a fraud, the other might be as well. I was introduced to a lot of literature on economics, mostly short popular works and pamphlets. I soon grew dissatisfied with these because they kept referring back and taking their authority from major works in the past. I decided to go in at the deep end and take on the major works for myself. That's how I started reading Marx. It was a long hard slog but well worth it. I had to acquire a whole new vocabulary. But if you have to struggle a bit at the outset, things usually take better hold in the understanding. It's better than just making do with other people's commentaries and second-hand interpretations.



Jimmy Dick speaking at an anarchist meeting Brunswick Street 1945

I was certainly drawn to Communism but not the Communist Party. There were many ex-Catholics in the CP at that time. I knew plenty of them. It was I suppose a kind of home from home for a lot of them. It had the same kind of rigid hierarchical structure after all, with a few people at the top doing all the thinking, making all the decisions and keeping all the control. I saw through that all right. Perhaps I should say I was drawn to Socialism. But the terms Communism and Socialism are really interchangeable. It was Lenin who falsely differentiated between them.

When Lenin was advocating State Capitalism in Russia he claimed that this was 'Socialism' which would, in time, with the development of production and technology, finally transform into 'true red-blooded Communism'. This was just doubletalk. And if you became a member of the CP you went about parroting this doubletalk. This was what they called Party discipline. I suppose it was my resistance to this kind of discipline which kept me out of the CP. Probably at that time it was more a matter of temperament than anything else. But then came the Apprentices' Strike, which the Communist Party opposed, and that was enough for me. This was during the last year of my apprenticeship, round about 1943-44. I was on the strike committee representing Yarrow's apprentices. The strike was against the Bevin Ballot Scheme. Ernest Bevin was the minister of labour and social services. He'd made the blunder of sending too many miners into the armed forces. To remedy this he came up with the idea of suspending some lads' apprenticeships so he could then conscript them into the coal mines. Patriotism fell on stony ground in this

instance. The apprentices struck. It was the first major protest I was involved in and it was completely successful. In something like three weeks Bevin caved in. The Communist Party had opposed the strike because Russia was by that time into the war on the side of the allies. Their opposition alienated me and numerous other young people.

It was Eddie Shaw who introduced me to the Egoist philosophy of Max Stirner. The history of human progress seen as the history of rebellion and disobedience, with the individual debased by subservience to authority in its many forms and able to retain his/her dignity only through rebellion and disobedience. Eddie was a brilliant Anarchist orator who drew vast crowds to the meetings, whether indoors or in the open air. Another popular speaker was Jimmy Raeside. In the Central Halls and at various other venues throughout the city the Anarchist meetings were jam-packed. I might add that, during World War II and for several years thereafter, the Glasgow Anarchist Group was easily the most active and vociferous of all the Left groupings in this country. There were of course regional contacts with staunch comrades in other groups. We had platform speakers from Burnbank, Hamilton, Paisley, Edinburgh and Dundee. Over any single weekend there must have been a few thousand people attending Anarchist meetings. I first came across the Anarchists at an outdoor meeting in Brunswick Street, towards the end of my apprenticeship.

The group had about sixty active members at this time. Not everybody had an aptitude for platform speaking. One would feel like doing such and such but not another. One might write but be disinclined to speak in public but perhaps would do so on occasion. Naturally most members had a shot at everything. I remember, for example, old Tommy Layden (he was old relatively speaking within the group). Tommy loved to chalk the streets advertising the meetings; he took great pride in his print and nobody could do it better. He also tirelessly sold the literature. Old Tommy breathed Anarchism. He always remembered the Commie and Trotskyite thugs who had often resorted to violence when they caught him chalking on his own. But he always spoke of them as if they were more to be pitied than despised. He was a refined, pleasant man and deserves to be remembered.

There were several shop stewards in the group. Eddie Fenwick was the convener in Hillington (you had to be in the union in a closed shop). Eddie, like most in the group, had a Syndicalist orientation. He was somewhat shy of the platform but more than made up for this on a personal man-to-man level in the workshop where he spread the Anarcho-Syndicalist case freely. We also had a lot of stewards in the heavy engineering and shipbuilding industries.

There was a small group in the Royal Ordinance Factory in Dalmuir who were most definitely Syndicalist in character. Although Jimmy Raeside and Frank Leech of the central Glasgow Anarchist Group spoke frequently at the Ordinance Factory gate, I'm certain this group had roots in Anarchism independent of this, for a lot of them were a good few years older than Leech and Raeside. I remember them coming to Brunswick Street to arrange for the production of a pamphlet called 'Equity'. It was powerfully and indubitably Syndicalist.

Charlie Baird was the secretary of the Glasgow Anarchist Group. We held business meetings in the hall in Wilson Street, ironically adjacent to the pub called 'The Hangman's Rest'. It was here, each week, the propaganda meetings were arranged, all on a voluntary basis. Some would elect to travel to Edinburgh or Paisley or Hamilton. Edinburgh meetings were held in the Mound. In Paisley the meetings were held in the Square at Gilmour Street railway station. Occasionally meetings were held on weekdays in Paisley, and also in Glasgow in Drury Street and Rose Street. Every week meetings were held outside work gates: outside Yarrow's and Elderslie Dry Dock; outside John Brown's shipyard; Blythswood shipyard; Dalmuir Ordinance Factory; Fairfield's shipyard. Dennis McGlynn, a Clydebank comrade, was well accepted at John Brown's, he being a local lad. Eddie Shaw was always well received at Yarrow's.

Eddie resided in Bridgeton and there were many of Yarrow's workers who came from Bridgeton, Calton, Partick and Govan: they could understand and always delighted in Eddie's brand of humour put over in the real speech of the Glasgow streets. This was Anarchism in the language they were best acquainted with and they loved it.

Eddie was one of the 'old School' who never went to jail for opposing the war. He was apprehended for failing to attend for medical examination (medical assassination, Eddie called it) and when he was out on bail he consulted Guy Aldred who advised him that there was a difference between being ordered to report on a specified day and being ordered to report on a specified day at a specified time. No specified time had been stated. On the day Eddie had been ordered to report, the authorities, knowing their man, had jumped the gun. They had apprehended him whilst in theory he still had time to report. Eddie appealed at the High Court and incredibly his appeal was upheld. He was acquitted and awarded £10 expenses. In a matter of months the upper age-limit for conscription was lowered, so Eddie escaped his 'medical

assassination'. Jimmy Raeside, Charlie Baird, Roger Carr, Dennis McGlynn, Jimmy Dick and others had all been forced to accept the hospitality of the Crown in Barlinnie. It was no deterrent to them. And on their release their zeal for the cause was undiminished.

The Anarchist hall in Wilson Street was a refuge for conscientious objectors and soldiers absent without leave who claimed to be Anarchist sympathisers. We didn't care whether they were genuine sympathisers or not. They were working-class and trying to escape the war. That was enough. A key hung on a string from inside the letter box and anybody could get access any time by just inserting a hand and raising the key.

Four of us linked ourselves to the Glasgow Anarchist Group after the Apprentices' Strike. A while later I joined a ship at Rothesay Dock in Yoker as an engineer.

When I got back home after that first voyage two of my old friends had drifted away but one was still with the group. That was Bill Johnson. After a year or so he began to dabble more in trade union activities. He was becoming ambitious for a place in the trade union hierarchy. He is now and has been for some years Lord Provost of Clydebank. This is not any condemnation of Anarchism. It is a condemnation of Bill Johnson. Even people calling themselves Anarchists can be opportunists. You have to look at the man as well as the 'ism'.

In a certain sense the Glasgow Anarchists of that period made a unique contribution to the broad Anarchist movement in Britain. Most of the comrades could accept the philosophy of Egoism and dovetail it into the Syndicalist tendency within the movement. For my part I was quite strong about this fusion. In fact I think I was a firmer adherent of this school than was Eddie Shaw although, as I say, initially Eddie was the teacher and I was the pupil. Many were admirers of Kropotkin as I was. Kropotkin did of course criticise the philosophy of Egoism. In spite of this, I do not think Kropotkin's 'Mutual Aid' really contradicts Stirner's argument. It is at least obvious to me that those who practice mutual aid are in fact the best egoists. This view is not a reconciliation; it is a fusion. Kropotkin is not I, and I am not Kropotkin. Stirner is not I nor am I Stirner. Both are dead: I subdue their arguments if they want to argue. I dominate my thought: I am not its slave. I am neither a Kropotkinite nor a Stirnerite nor any other 'he' or 'ist'. This, in the main, was the healthy attitude of most of the Glasgow Anarchists of the period.

Guy Aldred was not exactly endeared to the Syndicalists, although many of the Wilson Street Anarchists, such as Rab Lyle from Burnbank, were frequent visitors to the Strickland Press and had a lot of time for Guy. Nevertheless the industrial expression of Anarchism was conspicuous by its absence in Guy's paper 'The Word'. Most of the content of The Word' was anti-parliamentarian, anti-militarist and pacifist. Guy was an intellectual. His background was clerical and he had no real contact with, or profound knowledge of, the industrial workplace. He failed to recognise that those Syndicalists who worked during the war in industries producing war potential did not live in a social vacuum. What about farmers and land workers in general? They were also sucked into the war effort. Even Napoleon knew an army only marches on a full belly.



Marie-Louis Berneri addressing workers in Glasgow (1945)

A strong Syndicalist movement could have taken over the fields, factories and workshops and all the means of communication, for the benefit of the mass of the people. That's what we were about. The only place it was ever likely to happen was at the point of production. We were certain of that much. Then the horizontal war and the vertical war could have been ended. What do I mean? The horizontal war is war between different so-called nations. When this war ends, the vertical war continues: the war between the haves and the have-nots. Horizontal wars are only State-promoted diversions from the real war which is always vertical.

Guy had had long-standing problems, probably more to do with clashes of personality than anything else, with the Freedom Press group in London. During the war the Anarchist paper 'Freedom' changed its name to 'War Commentary'. In 1945 four comrades from the editorial board were charged with sedition: attempting to cause disaffection within the armed services. It stemmed from an article in 'War Commentary' in which it was urged that the armed forces should retain their weapons after the war to assist in the revolutionary struggle - the vertical war. The Glasgow Anarchists organised protest meetings in defence of the four. We rented the Cosmo cinema and another - I think it was called the Grand - which was next door to the Locarno Ballroom. Both cinemas were packed to capacity.

I do not think Kropotkin's 'Mutual Aid' really contradicts Stirner's argument. It is at least obvious to me that those who practice mutual aid are in fact the best egoists.

Speakers came along from other organisations to lend their support. Oliver Brown from the Scottish Nationalists was there. Jimmy Raeside, representing the Glasgow Anarchists spoke in the Grand. Eddie Shaw was on the platform, or stage if you like, in the Cosmo. I remember Eddie making a joke about this. "The Commical Party" (the Communist Party), he quipped, "always said I should be a comedian on the stage: now they at least should be happy to see me up here." The CP, needless to say, hated Eddie's guts, he having humiliated them in debate too many times.

Sadly, Guy Aldred gave no support whatsoever. He was still unable to put aside his deep-rooted personal conflict with some members of the Freedom Press group. Well, everybody has shortcomings in the eyes of someone. Guy was no exception, great fighter for social justice though he was.

Three of the accused were found guilty and sentenced to twelve months imprisonment. The fourth, Italian-born Marie Louise Berneri, was discharged. She and one of her co-accused, Vernon Richards, had entered into a marriage of convenience to save her being interned as an alien. In the eyes of the law this made Vernon responsible for his wife's conduct, and she was discharged on these grounds.

I would like to apologise to all comrades still living who were involved with the group at that period. I am conscious that I haven't given the group its just reward either individually or collectively. I earnestly hope some truly honest working-class historian will one day render to posterity a greater insight into the important contribution made by the Glasgow Anarchists. There is no greater wealth than knowing the story of how some people sincerely endeavoured to demolish the insane asylum the State has penned us in. I leave this as a signpost only, indicating the road we took and some of the thoughts we had on the way

Do It Yourself

Robert Lynn

The Reckoning: Public Loss Private Gain (1990)

The leader of Glasgow District Council, Pat Lally, in his defence against the critics of the "Year of Culture" has stated: "What the critics have ignored is the fact that culture money could not be spent on housing. If we spent not one penny on culture, that money could not be spent on housing because that's the way housing finance and local government finance is organised. We are prohibited by central government from doing so." (*Glasgow Evening Times*, 6 September 1990).

Let this sink in, you potential voters and perhaps you will give a "do it yourself" movement some thought. Witness the present "anti poll tax" movement. Politicians can wail about the infringement of law till the cows come home. The people's common sense will prevail. Laws are changed whenever it is necessary to safeguard the status quo. When the people take action laws can be relegated to the wastepaper basket – as will soon be the case with the poll tax.

Jimmy Reid (the "champion of the working man" according to Marion Pallister in the *Evening Times*, 6 September 1990) is double dealing as usual. After his phoney criticism of Culture City on TV, he was quick to agree with Lally that the tens of millions of pounds spent on culture could not have been spent improving the housing stock and getting rid of dampness, etc. But what he doesn't say is why the people of Glasgow were not consulted before their money was put into culture. He doesn't question the secrecy of the City Fathers who are supposed to be acting in the interests of the electorate.

In effect Lally says: "You sheep may bleat, but we must act responsibly." It's a nice excuse. The more they rob us, the more responsible they become. These political manoeuvres by tricksters like Lally are not confined to Glasgow. They pertain throughout the whole country. When have the people ever been consulted about how public money – yours and mine – should be spent? Whoever heard of an MP making such a proposal? MPs are just tails wagged by the dogs of the civil service top brass who run the country on behalf of big business. Double book-keeping is as rampant as it is in industry.

In 1953 the Post Office was presented with £75 million for capital expenditure on telephone, telegraphy and postal services. This sum included £25 million which was finally admitted under pressure to be part of the rearmament programme. Mr Gammons, the then Postmaster General, revealed that this had been the practice for many years.

The Poll Tax was the brainchild of a Mr Douglas Mason. He has now quit the Tory Party and left us with the monstrosity. The Poll Tax was designed to give an extra boost to the policy of centralisation – more centralisation, more remote control is fascism creeping in with its slippers on.

It must be resisted. We must no longer rely on politicians. We must organise ourselves into "Do It Yourself" movements with the spokespersons being subject to immediate recall.

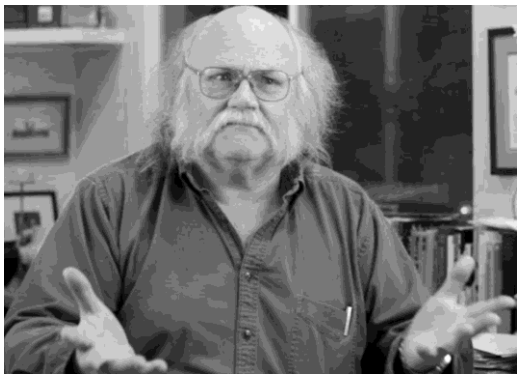
Between now and the next election think deeply about the system and how it works. Does it work for you or against you? What good has your MP ever done you?

Think of D.I.Y. It works

An anarchist in the archive: Remembering Barry Pateman

John Patten[1]

Our comrade Barry Pateman was at the heart of the Kate Sharpley Library for thirty-five years. My earliest memory of Barry is of him on the KSL stall at the anarchist bookfair in London. He was in his element. I clearly remember Barry telling me the pamphlet I'd just bought was 'as rare as rocking horse shit'. I hope this brief account throws a little more light on his life and his ideas.



Barry Pateman (1951-2026)

Barry was born and raised in a mining community near Doncaster. Radical political ideas were common, but so was non-school learning and a love of books. 'When I was growing up I met many self-educated working class men and women. They were everywhere in the community I lived in. […] They always recognized the "literary canon" and had, sometimes, a rather exaggerated respect for it. That said they brought their own frame of reference to the classics. I can remember sitting in a pub listening to two old miners tell me that Sir Walter Scott's "Ivanhoe" was a radical novel because they read it as an exercise in solidarity and anti-racism.'[2] There wasn't an awful lot of anarchist literature about though. I remember seeing the large format newsprint 'Freedom Anarchist Pamphlets' series at the KSL and Barry telling me that they were some of the few things available when he was finding his way to the anarchist movement.[3]

[1] https://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/w0vwm5

[2] Barry Pateman '"Nameless in the crowd of nameless ones…" : Some thoughts on The Story of A Proletarian Life, by Bartolomeo Vanzetti, 1923' *KSL Bulletin*, no.81 (February 2015) https://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/vhhp2j.

[3] There were eight, published 1970-71 See https://thesparrowsnest.org.uk/search.php?query=Freedom+Anarchist+Pamphlets&logic=and – some were reprinted by Freedom Press in their *Fighting the Revolution* pamphlets (two volumes, both 1971).

In London in the early 1970s, Barry worked with Albert Meltzer, Stuart Christie and Miguel Garcia in the Anarchist Black Cross. He was modest in hindsight about his anonymous writings and other contributions: 'I'd never seen myself particularly important (I'd always put the stamps on the envelopes and book the meeting rooms etc)'.[1] He also took part in the bitter internal disputes of the early 1970s: was anarchism about class and revolution or were such ideas outdated? 'I had been around the edges (and probably too involved) of some rather intense disagreements about anarchism and anarchist practice.'[2] There were other differences: London anarchist Martin said 'I recall Barry Pateman telling me he wasn't sure he was an anarchist when he first got involved, as he liked ska and all the anarchists he met thought jazz was the only music anarchists should listen to.'[3]

As a miner's son, and member of the anarcho-syndicalist Direct Action Movement, Barry was heavily involved in anarchist solidarity during the miners' strike of 1984-85. He lived through a time of 'Mutual aid, not in a fucking book, but in everyday existence'; and of not only defeat but the pain of finding that the anarchist movement couldn't make room for radical apprentices who weren't yet 'full anarchists'.[4]

His experiences as an activist and those disputes about what the anarchist movement should do or could be led him to research British anarchist history. He earned a PhD studying the Spanish anarchist exiles who came to Britain in 1939. He also researched the bigger picture of British anarchism from the 1880s to the 1940s. That laid the groundwork for his involvement in the Kate Sharpley Library. When Albert persuaded Barry to house the KSL, it shifted from a collection of books on all topics of interest to anarchists to a more focussed one. Barry said 'there was so much material by and about anarchists that I felt KSL should concentrate on that.'[5]

We should recognise that Barry's first partner, Jennie Sidney, was important in making the Kate Sharpley Library a welcoming place – even if initially she was not too happy when Barry 'arrived with a minibus full of boxes (twice!!)'.[6] With Albert working on the publications and Barry unpacking, organising and expanding the collection the KSL grew in size and influence. Barry was also an enthusiastic stallholder at anarchist bookfairs, as much for the chance to share materials as for the essential money they brought in. Matt Hart recalled how Barry helped his research into the Anarchist Black Cross: 'When I used to go to the Anarchist Bookfair up in San Francisco, Barry Pateman, every single time he saw me, he would all of a sudden bring up a large stack of old *Black Flag*s that he had collected and literally put aside for me.'[7]

'We are rescuing men and women from, as E.P. Thompson writes, "the enormous condescension of posterity." On our desk, ill-lit by lamp-light, they come alive again.'

Barry was guided by the example of Paul Avrich, the great American historian of anarchism. When Avrich died, Barry paid tribute to his 'consistent and rigorous insistence on accuracy', suggesting that we 'learn from Avrich's refusal to condescend to the people that made up his histories. He did not have a clever theory and try to prove it, a methodology that treats its subjects like chess pieces rather than people.'[8]

Albert Meltzer died in 1996, leaving Barry and the rest of the Kate Sharpley Library collective to carry on. A much greater shock came when Jennie Sidney died in 1998. Both Barry and Jennie had been teachers in East London and later in Peterborough. The next year Barry moved with their son, Paul, to a new life in California. Barry worked at the Emma Goldman Papers Project bringing his knowledge but also a curiosity about the people (anarchist or not) that Goldman worked with: 'We are rescuing men and women from, as E.P. Thompson writes, "the enormous condescension of posterity." On our desk, ill-lit by lamp-light, they come alive again.'[9] Sometimes people look for the Emma

[1] Barry Pateman 'Anarchist History: confessions of an awkward pupil' *KSL Bulletin*, no.84 (October 2015) https://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/02v7v0.
[2] Barry Pateman 'The Kate Sharpley Library Then, Now and Next: An Interview with Barry Pateman' *KSL Bulletin* no.63-64 (October 2010) https://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/0vt50w.
[3] Martin H on libcom, 2012.
[4] Barry Pateman 'Tensions in Anarchism' (a talk at the Bay Area Anarchist Bookfair in San Francisco). https://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/h44m7w.
[5] 'Then, Now and Next: An Interview'.
[6] 'Then, Now and Next: An Interview'.
[7] 'A History of Anarchist Prisoner Support (with Matt Hart)' Final Straw Radio June 11, 2025 https://archive.org/details/tfsr-20250608-MattHartOnAnarchistPrisonerSupport.
[8] KSL Collective 'Paul Avrich 1931-2006: a historian who listened to anarchist voices' *KSL Bulletin*, no.46-47 (July 2006) https://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/2z358c.
[9] Barry Pateman 'Barry Pateman is On The Edge' *Open Road: the newsletter of the Emma Goldman Papers* (Winter 2000). https://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/3r23ht.

Goldman that they want to see, but Barry brought a vital focus on recording facts: 'Rule 1 of researching: never trust anyone until you've read the original yourself'.[1]

Barry's life improved further when he met his new partner, Jessica Moran, at the Emma Goldman Papers. Jessica also joined the Kate Sharpley Library collective. The holdings of the KSL grew once Barry started buying rare anarchist materials from American booksellers. Sometimes in part exchange, sometimes with donations from friends of the library but more often out of his own pocket. I especially remember visits to Bibliomania and Bolerium (both in the Bay Area), though Barry would never knowingly pass by any second-hand bookshop.

Barry encouraged people to think about anarchy, anarchism and history. Barry was a generous student of anarchism, who would take time to support other people's research, whether by reading their manuscripts, pointing them to sources or simply talking enthusiastically about anarchist history. He shared a lot of information but also represented a personal connection to the history of the movement (in the same way as Albert Meltzer had for him). Barry was one of the moving spirits of San Francisco's Alexander Berkman Social Club (formed in 2008). He was willing to be a speaker at meetings and conferences even if he self-deprecatingly claimed 'in retrospect I had fuck all worth saying'.[2] Barry wrote many encouraging introductions and book reviews, and followed the example of Paul Avrich, 'preferring to remain silent than chastise.'[3]

Barry worked closely with AK Press, who have co-published several works of anarchist history with KSL. He also read manuscripts for them, and shared others that came to the KSL from Cienfuegos Press via Albert Meltzer. One project with AK Press that took Barry and Jessica years was the annotated edition of Alexander Berkman's *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist*. As well as providing context on people and events for the modern reader, it transcribed the diary Berkman kept while writing *Prison Memoirs*.

It was fascinating to work with Barry in the KSL as he was so interested in what the material there could tell us. Picking up a history of freethought, previously owned and annotated by Mat Kavanagh led Barry to ruminate on what it meant to see Kavanagh 'working out what knowledge he can take from this book that will be useful in his discussion on anarchism and anarchy with his work mates.'[4] Many of my conversations with Barry have stayed with me. I remember filing copies of *Red Action* (Marxist but not Leninist) in the library and Barry saying he would write something about them one day. Since Barry, as a DAM member, worked with them in Anti-Fascist Action, it might have expanded on his later remark about their anti-fascist work being 'the best thing they ever did.' We talked a lot about his research into exactly what happened to split the Anarchist Federation in 1945. That was the long-delayed harvest of his early researches into British anarchism.[5]

For Barry anarchism was all about getting to anarchy, and anarchy was all about everybody being able to realise their full potential. He warned about what we lose if 'we raid the anarchist past to justify the anarchist present'.[6] It's been fascinating to re-read his introductions, re-watch interviews and see Barry worrying away at questions of anarchist history. In his foreword to Jared Davidson's biography of Philip Josephs, an immigrant worker in New Zealand (and importer of anarchist literature) Barry asked: 'What tactics should we use, and how malleable and flexible can they be, yet still remain anarchist? […] Above all, what is it that makes people anarchists and not syndicalists, or libertarian communists, or individualists, or whatever? Make no mistake – they saw a difference and the very least we can do is to explore it. […] All those pamphlets folded and put in a pocket to read at work, at home, in the pub, or on the bus. […] We need to ask how these readers processed what they had read in the light of their own experiences. They were not empty vessels waiting to be filled by the word.'[7]

Barry and Jessica moved to New Zealand in 2012. Barry continued to work on the Kate Sharpley Library right up until his death in September 2026. The library collective is poorer without him, but we aim to carry on. He has left us with a lot to think about.

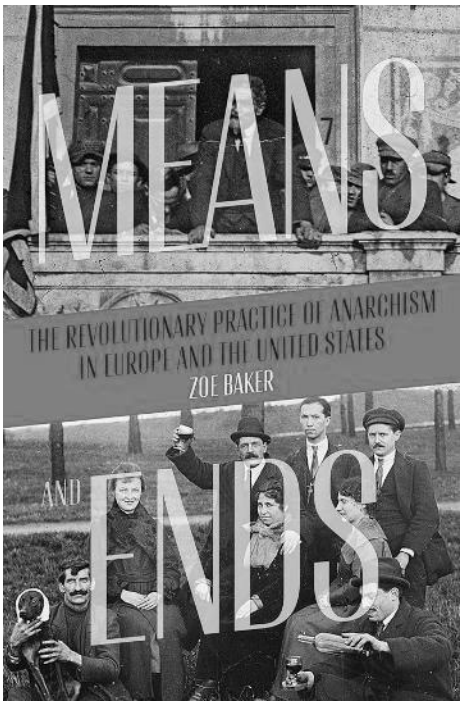
[1] 'Barry Pateman is On The Edge'.
[2] 'Anarchist History: confessions of an awkward pupil'.
[3] 'Paul Avrich 1931-2006'.
[4] Barry Pateman 'Mat Kavanagh and the History of Anarchism' *KSL Bulletin*, no.63-64 (October 2010) https://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/vdnf0f.
[5] You can read it at http://katesharpleylibrary.pbworks.com/w/page/139511268/The%201945%20split%20in%20British%20anarchism.
[6] Barry Pateman 'Free Commune and Billy MacQueen' *KSL Bulletin* no.70-71 (July 2012). https://www.katesharpleylibrary.net/ngf357.
[7] Barry Pateman 'Foreword' in Jared Davidson *Sewing Freedom: Philip Josephs, Transnationalism & Early New Zealand Anarchism* (2013).

Reviews

Nit-picking an excellent and recommended book

Iain McKay

Zoe Baker should be congratulated in producing an excellent book on revolutionary anarchism between 1868 and 1939. It is well-researched, well-written and actually understands its subject. It will, I hope, become a much referenced work in both popular and academic circles. However, as she knows what she is writing about, I fear that it will befall the fate of many such works, namely it will be ignored in favour of those which better suit the writer's prejudices and politics (often the same thing). This can be seen by James Joll's *The Anarchists* still be referenced in spite – or probably because – of its inaccuracies and failings.



In the interests of full disclosure, I was asked by AK Press to provide a blub for this book. While I started to produce one, I did not finish it – mostly because I do not like reading a book as a pdf on a screen. Baker also utilises a term I invented ("syndicalism-plus") to describe those anarchists who favoured working in the labour movement but rejected the idea that unions were sufficient unto themselves to create anarchy and so also formed specific anarchist organisations. While it is nice to see that someone appreciates my writing, I must stress that this does not impact on my evaluation of her book.

Now that I have read the book from cover to cover, I can confirm that my initial favourable thoughts were correct. This is an excellent book. It covers a wide range of subjects, starting with defining anarchism, recreating its "Values, Critique, and Vision" and then its strategies – Insurrectionist and Mass anarchism, syndicalism and organisational dualism (the need for a specific anarchist organisation) – as well as a chapter on the anarchist critique of its main rival, State Socialism. All are well researched and have relevant use of quotes from a wide range of anarchists, although – as could be expected – with Bakunin, Kropotkin and Malatesta being the most used.

Baker starts with a discussion of transhistorical against historical approaches to defining anarchism. She rightly takes a historical approach – after all, ideas do not develop in a vacuum. While Kropotkin, say, suggested at times that anarchism has always existed, a closer reading of his works makes it clear he recognised that revolutionary anarchism developed within the (First) International. Still, in any class- and State-ridden societies ideas similar to anarchism would have developed simply because those subject to them would seek to destroy them. However, they did not call these ideas anarchism even if they are anarchistic. For them to be labelled anarchist required the birth of a social movement and theory of that name, which occurred with Proudhon's *What is Property?* appearing in 1840 in response to the social conditions produced by the rise of industrial capitalism. As Baker notes, the revolutionary anarchists were deeply influenced by Proudhon even if they rejected his strategy and certain aspects of his goal and so, historically, the debt to Proudhon needs to be acknowledged as she discusses.

Baker then shows how revolutionary anarchists developed a sophisticated theory and practice based on systematically exploring and constructing five elements (pages 2-3) of anarchist thought:

1. A theoretical framework for thinking about humans, society, and social change.

2. A set of ethical principles that form the value system of anarchism.
3. An analysis and critique of existing social relations and structures in terms of their failure to promote these ethical principles.
4. A vision of alternative social relations and structures that are achievable and would actually promote these ethical principles.
5. A series of strategies (which are consistent with the ethical principles) for abolishing existing social relations and structures in favour of the proposed alternative social relations and structures.

By placing strategy in the context of values, the rationale for anarchist tactics and organisational forms becomes clear. These will be of immense usefulness for radicals today, particularly the discussion of the anarchist arguments for prefigurative politics and direct action. Likewise, the discussion on the anarchist critique of State Socialism is clear and shows its prescient nature (being proved correct does seem to be a hindrance rather than an advantage in radical politics). Those new to anarchism as well as veterans will gain something from every chapter – particularly if they follow up the references the arguments are based on. [1]

Those new to anarchism as well as veterans will gain something from every chapter – particularly if they follow up the references the arguments are based on

So this is a well-written book by someone who clearly as an excellent grasp of the subject matter. Which means – to quote the "Honest Trailer" for *Capital America: Winter Soldier* on Youtube – I will have to nit-pick.

Baker's discussion of "propaganda of the deed" is adequate and rightly discusses its two phases – the initial insurrectionist one (1876-1880, approximately) and the terrorist one (1881 onwards). However, I think her attempts to link it to the earlier anarchist movement are weak and unwarranted (they feel like an inclusion based on the suggestion of a supervisor to a PhD student rather than the views of the writer).

While rightly rejecting the all-too-common narrative that anarchists turned to syndicalism in response to the failure of "propaganda by the deed", she does not address some obvious questions provoked by her account. Most obviously, if the individual-terrorist incarnation of the notion appeared around 1881 (as shown some of the resolutions from the London Social Revolutionary Congress of that year) then why did it take over a decade for anyone to (allegedly) apply it? After all, the era of *attentats* took place from 1892 to 1894 and it took place years after the London Dock Strike of 1889 had seen the likes and Kropotkin and Malatesta re-issue their calls for anarchist participation in the labour movement and to follow the example of the anarchists within the (First) International.

Even in terms of the most famous examples (pages 203-6), it is actually doubtful that they can be considered "propaganda by the deed" in the sense of committing an act which would (somehow) provoke a revolution. The spate of acts in the early 1890s were acts of *revenge* and not viewed as a means to revolution or propaganda. Ironically, Ravachol's acts were provoked by a police attack on anarchists marching on 1st of May 1891 as part of agitation for the 8-hour day, something Kropotkin had been urging since the previous year. So the era of *attentats* started, ironically, with an act of revenge for State repression of an expression of "mass anarchism". This started a cycle of State repression and rebel revenge completely independent of any strategy or hope to provoke a revolution. Likewise with the assassination of Umberto I in 1900. The Haymarket bomb of 1886 was thrown *after* the police attacked a peaceful protest meeting (and it may have been the work of an agent provocateur) while Berkman's act of 1892 was primarily in revenge of the attack on strikers at Homestead although he doubtless hoped his act would inspire workers by showing them that the lords of capital were vulnerable.

Yes, "propaganda by the deed" was a failure and harmed anarchism but some discussion of whether its most famous examples were actually its expression would not have gone amiss. Not least because the basic facts for questioning the conventional wisdom are there – the decade long gap and that they were acts of revenge rather than propaganda. It is clear that suggestions that anarchists turned to syndicalism after the failure of "propaganda of the deed" is simply false

[1] For those so inclined, some fun can be had by trying to guess the book or writing a given quote comes from. I'm happy to say that I had good results – helped no doubt by editing two of the Kropotkin books used.

as they do not reflect the actual chronology, as Baker sketches. Yet Baker's account could have been more critical. Still, the importance of the book lies in its other chapters.

Then there is the source material. As Baker herself acknowledges, the book is limited by its reliance upon English-language sources, primarily from Western Europe and North America. However, that can be said of many works on anarchism simply because the wider global movement is still, shamefully, unknown in the west. In general, this is not as much as issue as it once was thanks to recently translated works. Yet it can cause problems, as can be seen from her quoting Bakunin thusly: "[We] must spread our principles, not with words, *but with deeds for this is the most popular, the most potent, and the most irresistible form of propaganda*." (page 187)

This is from the collection *Bakunin on Anarchism*[1] which references volume 2 of *Œuvres*, edited by James Guillaume. Consulting that book, the extracts in question appear in the original manuscript by Bakunin and not in the edited version issued by Guillaume as the (anonymous) pamphlet *Lettres à un Français sur la crise actuelle*. These words did not become publicly known until 1907 when Guillaume included them in the *Works* multi-volume collection.

So this passage is unlikely to have contributed to the idea of propaganda arising in 1870 "and gained prominence." Yes, Bakunin wrote these words in 1870 but it is doubtful anyone other than him and Guillaume knew of it until 1907. As such, their inclusion could be misleading. And reading Bakunin's text, a stronger conclusion than "Bakunin does not appear to have been arguing that assassinations were an effective means of changing society" (page 187) is warranted – he was *not* arguing that.

Likewise, it is disappointing that Baker did not at least mention in passing that Paul Brousse rejected the idea that assassinations were "propaganda by the deed" after the attempts on the Kaiser in 1878 by Hödel and then Nobiling. She does reference the relevant book.[2] Given what his notion mutated into, this is a nice little historical irony which is worth airing.

Paul Brousse rejected the idea that assassinations were "propaganda by the deed" after the attempts on the Kaiser in 1878 by Hödel and then Nobiling… Given what his notion mutated into, this is a nice little historical irony

Then there is the claim that the "earliest known usage" of anarcho-syndicalism" occurred in 1907, when some French socialists used it as a pejorative against revolutionary syndicalists who advocated the independence of trade unions from political parties." (page 267) I recently came across a quote from a British Marxist newspaper (*Justice*, 19 January 1907) "that the Italian proletariat will see now how impossible it is to allow the Anarcho-Syndicalists, as they are called in Germany, to remain in the party".[3] This suggests its use as an insult by Marxists predates the French. This is not a criticism, just an interesting fact (at least to some).

Finally, Baker's account of Bakunin's secret societies and how they were intended to function is very similar to my own account but that is not referenced.[4] Presumably this is an example of independent research coming to the same conclusion based on the same facts, or an oversight. Unsurprisingly, I consider her account as a good summation of a topic subjected to very differing accounts, from the accurate to the Marxist.

As noted, I am nit-picking. While a bad book provides a wealth of material to criticise, a good one less so, making it harder to review. Suffice to say, do yourself a favour and read this book, particularly if you are new to anarchism and want to get a comprehensive and accurate account of what the earliest revolutionary anarchists thought, did and aimed for. This will help radicals today to apply the many aspects of it which remain relevant and to avoid the mistakes of the past.

Zoe Baker
Means and Ends: The Revolutionary Practice of Anarchism in Europe and the United States
AK Press
2023

[1] *Bakunin on Anarchism* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1980), 195-6.

[2] 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.

[3] Quoted by Logie Barrow and Ian Bullock, *Democratic ideas and the British Labour movement, 1880-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 252.

[4] Section J.3.7 Doesn't Bakunin's "Invisible Dictatorship" prove that anarchists are secret authoritarians? of *An Anarchist FAQ*.

The Next Revolution

Iain McKay

Murray Bookchin (1921-2006) was for four decades a leading anarchist thinker and writer. His many articles and books – *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*, *Toward an Ecological Society*, *The Ecology of Freedom* and a host of others – are libertarian classics and influential in the wider green movement. However, in 1995 he became involved in a vicious polemic over various negative aspects of (primarily American) anarchism with the publication of his *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism* which, in 1999, saw him break with anarchism completely, denouncing it as inherently individualist. Still considering himself a libertarian socialist, he now called his politics "Communalism" rather than "Social Ecology" or "Social Anarchism."



This context is important in order to understand this often contradictory collection of essays, for the work combines articles written between 1992 and 2002 and so ones before and after his break with anarchism. This means he indicates the anarchist pedigree of his "Commune of communes" in some chapters (63, 95) while proclaiming anarchism as being against organisation in others. So following a preface by the late, great, Ursula Le Guin and an introduction by Debbie Bookchin and Blair Taylor, we have nine chapters by Bookchin on a range of subjects written over a range of times and this produces the key flaw in the work: denunciations of anarchism sit next to praise for it.

What of these denunciations? It is hard to take them seriously. It is depressing to read someone who has actually *read* anarchist thinkers come out with the same sort of nonsense as a hack of a Marxist party parroting claims made by others about people they have obviously never read. Just as sad is that every one of his claims against anarchism can be refuted by quoting from his early works. For his list of anarchist flaws – individualism, primitivism, etc. – were once directed at his own ideas by Marxists and he refuted them with flair.

Space precludes using Bookchin to refute Bookchin, so I will concentrate on a few issues.

Sadly, post-break Bookchin is not above selective quoting when it comes to anarchism – for example, he quotes Kropotkin on rejecting majority rule (10) when he surely knew that on the page in question Kropotkin was discussing "parliamentary rule, and representative government altogether." Also, after decades of denouncing syndicalism for impoverishing anarchism, he turned around and proclaimed the superiority of the former as regards the latter – while also ignoring how he had shown that the first of the revolutionary anarchists had advocated syndicalism as a tactic. Likewise, Bookchin asserted post-break that "anarchists conceive of power essentially as a malignant evil that must be destroyed" (139) yet also quotes Bakunin on the need for the "development and organization of the nonpolitical or antipolitical social power of the working class in city and country." (12) As he himself noted long ago, "power" can mean two things, power *to do* and power *over*, and for the former to flourish, it needs the latter to be destroyed. So power over – hierarchy – must be destroyed if we want power to manage our own lives.

Bookchin points to the Spanish Revolution as evidence of Anarchism's failure here. Yet his discussion of this ("Anarchism and Power in the Spanish Revolution") ignores the circumstances in which the CNT decided to postpone the social revolution in favour of caricatures on anarchist theory. He position is that anarchism is blind to the need for institutions to replace the State and this blindness lead the CNT not to "seize power." Yet anarchism has anyways been clear on what to do in a revolution – replace the State by federations of workers' organisations. The CNT obviously failed to do so in July 1936 with obvious negative results – but the question, as Bookchin surely knew, is why they failed to apply anarchist ideas. To understand that needs context – essentially fear of isolation and the real possibility of having to fight both the Republic and the Fascists if social revolution was pursued – which Bookchin fails to provide.

Instead, we get the same superficial analysis that embarrasses Marxist journals. The only difference is that Bookchin calls this new system a "government" rather than "state." So Bookchin post-break was against the State but for government – "government" being used to describe collective decision making. Just

as Engels equated agreement with authority, Bookchin came to equate governance with government. This is hardly convincing.

So the post-break articles present a travesty of anarchism by someone who knew better. Given Bookchin's revisionism, it is unsurprising that the authors of the introduction assert that popular assemblies were "viewed with suspicion by anarchists." (xviii) This in spite of Proudhon praising the popular clubs of the 1848 revolution, Bakunin urging federation by *quartier* (neighbourhood) and Kropotkin pointing to the popular assemblies of the Great French Revolution – just as Bookchin did!

Ironically, many of the traits of "anarchism" Bookchin came to deplore and which caused his break with anarchism could be traced to certain elements of his 1960s works – even if these were selectively used and exaggerated to the point of travesty by others, they were there as his critics in the 1990s reminded Bookchin in their polemics against him. Bookchin seems like someone who found it hard to admit being wrong – and so broke with anarchism rather than admit this. Yes, some self-proclaimed anarchists have silly notions (primitivism obviously springs to mind) and some tendencies can have little in common with the main current of social anarchism. Likewise, some anarchist have little time for long term strategy and involve themselves in small-scale, insular projects. Yet this is not anarchism as such. Rather than expect all anarchists to come together it is far better to organise with like-minded people and ignore those whose politics and activities are a dead-end. Instead, Bookchin rejected anarchism – talk about cutting off your nose to spite your face!

So what of any substantive points between his new politics and anarchism? This are just a few. One is the question of "majority rule." As he put it in a particularly overheated passage:

> 'It is primarily by giving priority to an ideologically petrified notion of an "autonomous individual" that anarchists justify their opposition not only to the state but to any form of constraint, law, and often organization and democratic decision-making based on majority voting. All such constraints are dismissed in principle as forms of "coercion," "domination," "government," and even "tyranny"—often as though these terms were coequal and interchangeable.' (160-1)

Ignoring the awkward fact – which Bookchin was once aware – that the likes of Proudhon, Bakunin, Kropotkin, Malatesta, etc. not only did not speak in those terms but also explicitly attacked such notions, we should note that majority decision making within freely joined associations is hardly the same as majority rule. In addition, anyone acting in the manner Bookchin describes within an anarchist group would be asked to leave, and rightly so. Nor, for that matter, is "consensus" an "authentic" anarchist principle (25) – you would be hard pressed to find any classical anarchist thinker – "authentic" or otherwise! – discussing it. Kropotkin mentions it in passing, when discussing the Russian *mir* and that is about it.

Why are anarchists concerned about talk of majority rule? It is quite simple: majorities have often oppressed minorities – we need only think of sectarianism, sexism, racism, homophobia and such like to see that the majority need not always be right. Ironically, Bookchin admits this (94) but does not attempt to square it with his fetishization of "majority rule." And this is an issue. For example, he proclaims that a community which joins a confederation "may withdraw only with the approval of the confederation as a whole." (15) So Bookchin's "libertarian" confederation provides less rights than the UK (with regards the referendum on Scottish independence) and the European Union (with regards Brexit). Yet why is it just at a confederal level? If this is a good and democratic principle, why does it not apply to *every* association? So a worker can only leave their job if the majority of the workplace agrees? So a family can only leave a community if the majority of the local citizenry approve? A wife or husband from a family? Simple: for it would clearly be unfree.

Similarly, his "libertarian" democracy appears less than that guaranteed by our statist ones for he argues that after losing the debate "the minority must have patience and allow a majority decision to be put into practice" (61) and there would be "the commitment of municipal minorities to defer to the majority wishes of participating communities." (88) Yet, today, the right of minorities to protest exists (if always under threat by the State, always ready to proclaim its "undemocratic" nature). Would libertarian municipalism really not allow minorities to protest, to use direct action, when the majority acts in ways which we cannot wait addressing or simply cannot be undone?

A more flexible perspective is needed, particularly given Bookchin admits that there is no "guarantee" that "a majority decision will be a correct one." (88) What if the majority make racist, sexist, homophobic or ecologically destructive decisions? Can an "unswerving opposition to racism, gender oppression, and domination as such" (135) be limited to mere words or can minorities protest against them by direct action? If so, then his fetishisation of majority rule needs to be reviewed. True, Bookchin stressed the importance of

minority rights (25) – but to do so automatically means admitting (implicitly at least) the flaws of his position and the validity of anarchist concerns over terms like "majority rule."

Still, this has little bearing on the day-to-day decisions of freely joined associations in which majority-decision making will, undoubtedly, be the norm – with even a written constitution, when appropriate – in the struggle against oppression today and any future free society. Those who fetishise consensus (and there are a few, I am sure) can associate with those who feel the same – and leave the others to get on with changing the world rather than just discussing it.

Yet does Bookchin actually advocate majority rule? The answer is no, for he indicates (52-3) that all revolutions are the work of active minorities and that he does not expect the majority of a population to take part in his neighbourhood assemblies. So we have decisions being made by a majority of a minority, in other words *minority rule*. So for all his bluster, his "democratic" politics ends up recognising the key role *minorities* play in social change and that they often have to push forward in the face of the indifference of the majority: as Kropotkin, Goldman and many other anarchists indicated.

Anarchists, regardless of Bookchin's revisionism, are well aware of the need for federations of community assemblies in both the struggle for liberation and as part of the structure for the post-capitalist society

So we are left with Bookchin agreeing that the majority cannot, say, ban women from leaving the house without being accompanied by a man nor that neighbourhood assembly decisions are invalid unless a majority of people in the community attend. Which makes you wonder why he was so focused on majority rule to the extent of destroying his own legacy.

As for "libertarian municipalism," it is clear why few anarchists embraced it: "Communalists do not hesitate to run candidates in municipal elections who, if elected, would use what real power their offices confer to legislate popular assemblies into existence." (30) The notion of standing in local elections as a means of creating popular assemblies and then federating them was always unconvincing. Particularly given the all-to-correct predictions of anarchists on the effects of electioneering. Indeed, Bookchin himself repeats these and provides examples of it (83-4) – but seems to think this only happens at a *national* level. He also seems unaware that the national State can and does control the autonomy of local municipal councils and this strategy could easily mutate into *national* electioneering in the mistaken view of ensuring needed reforms for the local strategy. Electioneering is indeed a slippery slope which even the repeated experience of history does not seem to affect.

Anarchists, regardless of Bookchin's revisionism, are well aware of the need for federations of community assemblies in both the struggle for liberation and as part of the structure for the post-capitalist society. Kropotkin, for example, discussed their role in his book *The Great French Revolution* and indicated that "the libertarians would no doubt do the same today." However, these were viewed as a genuine dual-power created in opposition to the State – a community syndicalism, as it were – rather than something bestowed by a suitably enlightened local municipal council. Nor was this considered the only means – Kropotkin also advocated a syndicalist strategy as both a means of winning reforms now and for providing the framework of managing workplaces during and after a social revolution. Bookchin knew all this and so it is depressing to read him pretend otherwise.

Rejecting Bookchin's electioneering does not mean rejecting building federations of community assemblies, especially within the context of building other federations of associations (such as radical unions). Likewise, his notion of dissolving all associations into a single communal one does not take into account the complexities of modern life. Such community assemblies would be the forum for overseeing the others – to protect against, say, workplaces becoming proprietary as Bookchin rightly warns (19, 72) – but they can hardly be called upon to actually *manage* them on a day-to-day basis.

Kropotkin and other anarchists bemoaned the State and its attempts to centralise all aspects of social life and place them in the hands of a few representatives who had no real notion of what they were deciding upon. Doing the same but at the base of society may not be as problematic but it does have issues – not least, the volume of issues that would need to be discussed. So there is a pressing need for a functional federalism as well as a communal federalism. This suggests a diverse associational life embracing *all* aspects of the world – so if Kropotkin and Malatesta argued that syndicalists focused on one aspect of society (the economic) and ignored the other two

(community and leisure), Bookchin likewise focused on one (the community) at the expense of the others.

So, to conclude. This is a mixed selection of articles – with the pre-break ones being by far the best. The post-break ones often just repeat what Bookchin previously – rightly! – called anarchism but with snide anti-anarchist remarks added.

Where does that leave Bookchin's legacy?

I still remember the joy I experienced reading *Post-Scarcity Anarchism* thirty years ago – here was someone who both understood anarchism and built upon it. Yet in the last decade of his life he produced works which were marred by anti-anarchist tirades which he surely knew were nonsense. Which leaves us with a conundrum: if you utilise his earlier works, could not his later works be quoted to show that even a leading anarchist eventually saw its deep flaws? If you embrace his later anti-anarchist works, how could you reference in good-faith his earlier contributions?

Yes, Bookchin did do the latter but then he also sought to rewrite his past to suggest he had seen through anarchism at a very early stage or had never "really" been an anarchist at all. This was all very unbecoming – particularly given the numerous quotes from the early 1990s proclaiming his long-standing and continuing commitment to anarchism.

Ultimately, Bookchin left a wealth of books and articles between the 1960s and 1990s which anarchists today can draw upon, even if his strategy of "libertarian municipalism" is deeply flawed. So while *The Next Revolution* does contain important pieces which activists today would benefit from reading, it pales against his earlier works. These should be read first, simply to ensure that when reading the anti-anarchist remarks in this book the pre-break Bookchin will be fresh in your memory to refute them.

The Next Revolution: Popular Assemblies and the Promise of Direct Democracy
Murray Bookchin
Edited by Debbie Bookchin and Blair Taylor
Preface by Ursula K. Le Guin
December 2014

Parish Notices

Advisory Service for Squatters (squatter.org.uk) is a collective running a daily advice service for squatters and homeless people since 1975. It grew out of the former Family Squatters Advisory Service, which was founded in the late 1960s. ASS publishes *The Squatters Handbook*, the fourteenth edition of which is the current one, and has sold in excess of 150,000 copies since 1976. Email: advice@squatter.org.uk

The Network for Police Monitoring (Netpol netpol.org) supports social movements and communities to defend human rights, challenge repressive and discriminatory policing, and bring about positive change in society. Netpol supports communities and social movements facing repressive and discriminatory policing by: building solidarity through working directly with and being led by movements and communities most affected across all forms of policing; and by listening to and amplifying their voices and turning their experiences into campaigns for positive change; helping those they work alongside to understand the impact of legislation, police practice and operational decision-making on the freedom to participate in protests and on the policing of marginalised communities; enabling campaigners to focus on their core objectives and demands by sharing the burden of monitoring, analysing and challenging repressive policing; challenging state and media narratives around policing that are resistant to or dismissive of the need for such change. Contact: info@netpol.org

Corporate Watch is 30 years old this year. Corporate Watch (corporatewatch.org) is a research and training group that helps people stand up against corporate power. They investigate exploitative bosses, landlords and property developers, and companies profiting from prisons, deportation flights, animal exploitation and ecological devastation – as well as the wider systems of power and profit they work within. At the heart of what they do is their idea of "information for action", knowing that people can fight and win, even against powerful enemies like corporations and governments. Good information helps to understand the forces we're up against, spot their weaknesses, and so campaign effectively. Contact: Corporate Watch, c/o Freedom Press, Angel Alley, 84b, Whitechapel High Street, London, England, E1 7QX (contact@corporatewatch.org).

IWA-AIT now has Contacts in Belgium, Canada, Italy, Korea and Myanmar. Details at: iwa-ait.org/content/addresses

IFA now has member organisations in Croatia & Slovenia, Mexico, and Serbia. Details at: i-f-a.org/members

English-language libertarian newsletters coming out regularly include: *Direct Action* (IWW Ireland onebigunion.ie/directaction), *Wildcat* (IWW WISE iww.org.uk/wildcat), *Black Star* & *Class War* (Organise! - IWA organiseanarchistsireland.com), *Rebel City* (London rebelcitylondon.wordpress.com), and *Jackdaw* (ACG anarchistcommunism.org/jackdaw-2).

Please tell us if you are publishing a Libertarian Socialist freesheet (hardcopy and/or online).

The Right of Peoples to Determine Themselves
For the Independence of the Riff

Solidaridad Obrera, 28 August 1936

The latest news from the African continent reveals that a formidable unrest is brewing. An honest rebellion against the fascist forces is noted. Acts of protest are being expressed everywhere and are occurring with a rare spontaneity.

The soul of the Muslims is at a full boil. The African soil again relives great days. It will not take much for the ground scorched by a burning sun to transform into a gigantic bonfire of freedom.



Since the expulsion of Ab-Del-Krim, the Moroccan territory has been a haven of peace and tranquillity. The leader of the colossal uprising that kept in check two European powers was confined on the island of Réunion with his family and a large harem.

The phenomenon we are witnessing in the Moroccan zone is the logical corollary of the great unease that is manifesting among the faithful of Islam. In Palestine they are maintaining a fight to the death with the Jews and their protectors. The kingdoms of Arabia, of Iraq and **Hedjaz** uphold the banner of irredentist claims.

The occasion was favourable for the indigenous of the Riff. The power that subjugated an important area, graciously granted by an agreement between France and Spain, is writhing in a civil war of intense magnitude. Faced with the natives of the country, there exists no army to defend international legality. The text of the agreement has vanished entirely.

General Franco represents the breaking of the treaties established by the powers to share the terrestrial globe. The Rifians have absolutely nothing to do with the ignominious Spain embodied by the military insurgents.

Our internationalist thinking, one hundred percent, induces us to pose the problem of the colonies. We must consider the workers of the Riff as sufficiently capable of dealing with their own lives and wealth.

The struggle against fascism, which at this time has a clear international character, must advise us to try with all our means to foment a healthy atmosphere of rebellion in the communities of the Riff. It is in our interest to prevent the Spanish zone from serving as a sea and air base for our bitterest enemies.

This campaign must be carried out without losing time. We must pay attention to the measures taken by Germany in the last few days. Military service of two years has been decreed, which will be mandatory for all Germans.

It wouldn't be unusual if German and Italian Fascism could rely on some of the positions held by Spanish Fascism. We can't depend on the counterbalance of certain contradictions, because the war glimpses sharper details.

It is necessary that an irredentist spirit be fomented in the sector occupied by Franco. This decision is not at odds with our principles. It's a matter of freedom.

We must be generous and idealist. The Spanish revolution must be a mirror in which the world proletariat contemplates. Our revolution must serve as a template. And we would be counter-revolutionaries if in obtaining freedom for the workers of the [Iberian] Peninsula we were to maintain under siege the Moroccan zone, entrusted years ago to monarchical Spain.

The revolutionary right that will emerge after the completion of the Spanish revolution will grant absolute freedom to the colonies as an essential chapter of the new popular conquests.

We must erase the bloody and muddy past that the Spanish military has charted in the towns and villages of the Riff. We must rectify the barbarism and lechery of the officials who took Morocco for a place of recreation and profit.

Peoples have to determine themselves. The Spanish zone of the Riff must be granted complete independence.