



# NO GODS



>>> AN ANTHOLOGY OF ANARCHISM

DANIEL GUÉRIN



# NO MASTERS





# **NO GODS, NO MASTERS**

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COMPLETE UNABRIDGED

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No Gods, No Masters

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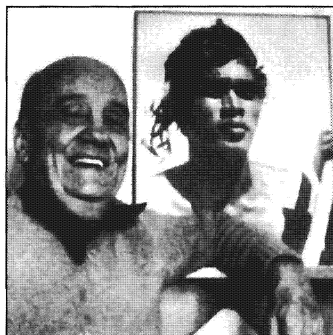
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## FOREWORD

I helped compile a version of this anthology for the late Nataf brothers, Andre and Georges, who were running the *Éditions des Delphes* publishing house. The reshuffled text we have here, condensed or expanded, is palpably different from that first edition: being more ideological than historical and anecdotal, with fuller introductions, commentaries and notes—being, in short, more didactic. This time the responsibility for the contents is mine and mine alone.

Before proceeding to the text, there is a question that needs answering: Why this title **Neither God nor Master**?

In his 1957 book *The Political and Social Ideas of Auguste Blanqui*, Maurice Dommanget, renowned for his tireless erudition, stated—agreeing here with Louis Louvet's *Worldwide History of Anarchism*—that the catch-phrase *Neither God nor Master* might be an adaptation of a 15th century German proverb to be found in Act I, Scene II of the 1659 tragicomedy, *Peter's Feast*, or the *Atheist Confounded*, written by Devilliers, a sort of fore-runner of Molière's *Don Juan*.

In 1870, while the imperial plebiscite was in progress, one of Auguste Blanqui's youngest disciples, Doctor Susini, had issued a pamphlet entitled *The More God, the More Master*.

In the twilight years of his life (1805–1881), during November 1880, Blanqui himself launched a newspaper which he endowed with the title **Ni Dieu ni Maître** (Neither God nor Master).

After the great revolutionary's death, a number of groups and newspapers laid claim to the title. It was displayed on the walls of the Maison du Peuple in the Rue Ramey in Paris. From then on it was the catch phrase of the anarchist

movement, even if the latter's inspiration was so very different from—not to say contrary to—Blanquism's.

As we shall see in Volume II of this anthology, Peter Kropotkin, in his *Paroles d'un Révolté* (1885) took the catch phrase for his very own, in the following terms:

On his death-bed, the man who, more than anybody else, was the embodiment of this system of conspiracy, the man who paid with a life of imprisonment for his commitment to that system, uttered these words, which amount to an entire program: **Neither God nor Master!**

After the bomb outrage mounted by the anarchist Auguste Vaillant against the Chamber of Deputies on December 9, 1893, the bourgeois authorities retaliated by passing the so-called “criminal” laws in order to stamp out anarchism. Following the debating of the bills, onlooker Alexandre Flandin shouted from the gallery in the Palais Bourbon: “Anarchists strive to implement the motto **Neither God nor Master.**”

In July 1896, the libertarians of Bordeaux issued a manifesto in which they eulogized “the beauty of the libertarian ideal of **Neither God nor Master.**” A little later, Sebastien Faure, writing in *Le Libertaire* of August 8–14 that year, declared: “Blanqui's catch-phrase, **Neither God nor Master**, cannot be dissected, but must be embraced in its entirety. . . .”

During the 1914–1918 war, Sebastien Faure revived the catch-phrase and, once peace had returned, the Libertarian Youth founded in Paris adopted the name **Ni Dieu ni Maître**, as *Le Libertaire* reported on June 25, 1919.

Although, as has been seen, the motto in question had not originated exclusively with anarchists, with the passage of time it came to be theirs. Hence the title given to this anthology.

The text here offered is, in a sense, the hefty dossier of evidence in a trial in defense of a reputation. Anarchism, in fact, has been victimized by undeserved slurs—slurs that have come in three shapes.

For a start, those who defame it contend that anarchism is dead. It is alleged not to have survived the great revolutionary ordeals of our times: the Russian Revolution and the Spanish Revolution, instead of leaving it out of place in this modern world characterized by centralization, large political and economic units and the totalitarian mind-set. As Victor Serge had it, anarchists had no option left but to “switch, under the lash of events, to revolutionary marxism.”

Secondly, its detractors, the better to discredit it, offer a quite contentious slant on its teachings. Anarchism is alleged to be

- essentially individualistic, particularist and refractory to any form of organization: preferring fragmentation, atomization, and inward-looking little local units of administration and production;
- incapable of unity, centralization or planning;
- nostalgic for a “golden age;” tending to hark back to obsolete forms of society;
- sinning through a childish optimism, its “idealism” prone to pay no heed to the hard and fast realities of the material infra-structure;
- incorrigibly petit-bourgeois, existing on the margins of the modern proletariat’s class movement.

In a word, “reactionary.”

Finally, some commentators are especially diligent in commemorating, and craftily publicizing only its deviations, such as terrorism, the maverick outrage, propaganda by explosives.

In the anthology which we offer the reader, the documents can speak for themselves. In re-opening the case for examination, we are not merely seeking, retrospectively, to undo an injustice, nor to make a great display of erudition. For in fact it seems that anarchy’s constructive ideas are alive and well and that they can, provided they are re-examined and held up to critical scrutiny, help contemporary socialist thinking to strike out in a new direction. Consequently, this anthology has a bearing upon the realms of thought and of action alike.

The readings were either unpublished or no longer readily accessible, or had been kept hidden in the shadows by a conspiracy of silence. They have been selected on grounds either of rarity or of interest: being doubly interesting by virtue of the richness of the contents or the exceptional promise of their form. Unlike other volumes similar to this, no attempt has been made to arrive at an exhaustive inventory of all the writers subscribing to the libertarian view: nor have we sought to beatify anyone by exception or omission. Attention has focused upon the great masters, and those we have considered their second-rate epigones have been left out. This opening volume of our anthology begins with three of the pioneers of 19th century anarchism: Stirner, Proudhon and Bakunin.

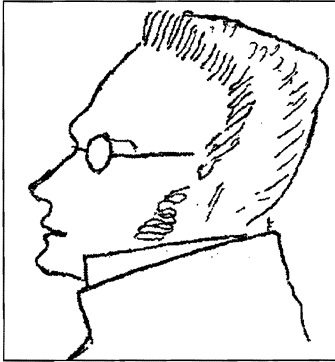
—*Daniel Guérin*



NO GODS, NO MASTERS

VOLUME I





**MAX  
STIRNER**  
(1806–1856)





## MAX STIRNER (1806–1856)

We reckon we ought to open this anthology with Max Stirner. On two grounds: First, the chronological. In fact, Stirner's earliest libertarian writings date from 1842–1844, which is to say, from a time when Proudhon was publishing his first anarchist scribbles. So, from the point of view of chronology, it really does not matter which of that pair with which we open. If we have opted to open with Stirner, the reason is that he stopped writing well before Proudhon and because it would have been hard to situate Stirner anywhere else in the anthology: Stirner being, in effect, a solitary rebel, a loner.

Even in his contemporary setting, he was a breed apart. He rehabilitated the individual in an age when, in the realms of philosophy, Hegelian anti-individualism was in the ascendancy, and when in the realms of social criticism, the one-eyed approach of bourgeois egoism had led most reformers to place the emphasis on its opposite. After all, is not the term socialism the opposite of individualism? Hence the sound birching meted out to him, somewhat too severely, by Marx and Engels.

Stirner, standing four-square against this societal approach, exalts the intrinsic worth of the “unique” individual—which is to say the individual *nonpareil*, destined by nature to be one of a kind: this notion, be it said in passing, is endorsed by the latest discoveries of biology and also reflects the preoccupations of the contemporary world, eager to rescue the individual from all sorts of oppressive alienations, the alienation implicit in industrial slavery as well as that of totalitarian conformism.

As Stirner told it, the individual, in order to free himself, must sort through the baggage inherited from his forebears and educators, and embark upon a comprehensive effort of “de-sacralization.” That effort has to begin with so-called bourgeois morality. To that end, Stirner made Puritanism a special target. The apostles of secularism had quite simply and plainly taken for their own everything that Christianity “has devised against passion.” They refuse to heed the calls of the flesh. He deplores secularism's zeal against the flesh, its striking “at the very essence of immortality.” How scathing Stirner would have been about the secular morality of the Third Republic in France!

Anticipating contemporary psychoanalysis, our philosopher notes and denounces internalization. From childhood, moral prejudices have been inculcated into us. Morality has turned into “an authority within, from which I have no escape.” “Its despotism is ten times worse now than once it was, for it mumbles in my consciousness.” “The young are herded to school so as to learn the same old cant, and once they have commended to memory the prattle of their elders, they are pronounced adults.” And Stirner becomes the iconoclast: “God, conscience, duty, laws, all of them nonsense which they have packed into our heads and hearts.” The real seducers and corrupters of the young are priests, teachers, and fathers who “fill young hearts with figments and young heads with brutishness.” Stirner is the fore-runner of May 1968.

Now, from time to time the spirit of his writing led him into certain paradoxes and drew asocial aphorisms from him, leading him to the conclusion that life in society was impossible. But these quite occasional sorties do nothing to traduce the fundamentals of his thinking. For all his hermit-like posturing, Stirner aspired to life in a community. Like lost loners, cloistered persons and introverts, he craved companionship. Asked how his exclusivism might allow him to live in society, he replied that only a man who has grasped his “singularity” can enter into relations with his fellows. The individual has need of friends and companionship: if, say, he writes books, he needs an audience. The individual joins forces with his fellows in order to bolster his own power and in order to achieve, through a pooling of resources, what each of them could never achieve on his own. “If behind you there stand millions of others to protect you, together you represent a power to be reckoned with and success will readily be yours.”

On one condition, though: such relations with others must be voluntary and freely contracted, and revocable at any time. Stirner draws a distinction between pre-established society, which is constrictive, and association which is a free action. He thereby prefigures the federalism of Proudhon, Bakunin and Kropotkin, as well as Lenin’s right to secession.

The author of *The Ego and His Own* is especially identified with contemporary concerns when he broaches the question of the party and specifically invokes the party of his Communist contemporaries. As we shall see, he is scathing in his criticism of the party’s conformism. In his view, a monolithic party is no longer an association and has become a corpse instead. So he rejects any such party, though not, of course, the inclination to join a political association: “I can always find plenty of people willing to associate with me

without having to pledge loyalty to my colors.” He could not join a party, especially if this involved “anything obligatory.” The sole condition upon his eventual affiliation would be his not “being swallowed up by the party.” “In any event, as he saw it, the party was merely a party, only a part.” “The party is freely associated and acts upon its freedom similarly.”

There is only one ingredient missing in Stirner’s thinking, albeit it is that acknowledgment of it in some shape or form underlies his writings: he cannot quite bring himself to accept that his “egoism” holds equally true for the group. Only out of “selfishness” does he countenance association with others. The Stirnerian synthesis between the individual and society remains wobbly. In the mind of this rebel, the asocial and the social are at odds with each other and never quite coalesce. Socially focused anarchists will repudiate him. All the more so as the misinformed Stirner makes the mistake of including Proudhon among the “authoritarian” communists who would condemn the individualist aspiration in the name of some “social duty.” Now, while it is true that Proudhon was critical of Stirnerian “worship” of the individual, his entire output is a quest for a synthesis, or rather, a “balance,” between defense of the individual and the interests of society, between individual power and collective power. “Individualism is the elementary fact of humanity,” “its vital principle,” but “association is its complement.”

The pages devoted to Stirner which follow open with a review of his life, written by his French disciple, E. Armand (1872–1962).

E. ARMAND

## MAX STIRNER

Who, then, was this Max Stirner whose chief work, *The Ego and His Own*, has been such an unexpected success, having been published in edition after edition, translated, re-translated, and distributed, furnishing the matter for doctoral theses in philosophy, for pamphlets and books and commentaries, and countless newspaper and magazine articles in every one of the languages spoken by the civilized peoples of the world?

*The Ego and His Own* (*Der Einzige und sein Eigentum*) was issued in 1843, only to lapse into oblivion after attracting a few critical articles. Then a German by the name of John-Henry Mackay (John-Henry's Scottish father passed away when his son was two years old: John-Henry was then educated by his mother and a step-father, both of them linguistically and culturally Germans), who would later gain notoriety<sup>1</sup> himself, found his gaze drawn while studying in the British Museum in London in the summer of 1887, to Lange's tome on *The History of Materialism*, in which there were a few lines on Stirner and his book. Eventually he got hold of a copy of *The Ego and His Own* and read it through. So affected was he by the contents that he began to wonder about the man who had written it, about his origins, the course of his life, the circumstances in which he had lived and how he had met his end. He spared no effort in his researches, scouring the public libraries for any and all information about the man who so intrigued him, seeking out the offspring of those who had associated with Stirner some half-century or forty years before, drawing them out, collecting their recollections. He also contacted Stirner's second wife, Maria Danhardt. It was Trojan work, believe me. And what I am about to set out now are the findings of that dogged and protracted pursuit.

Out of his researches came a voluminous tome of biography, *Max Stirner, sein Leben und sein Werk* (*Max Stirner, Life and Work*), the first edition of which appeared in 1897. It is my contention that book, regrettably not translated into French thus far, is of singular assistance in understanding *The Ego and His Own*.

It will surprise no one that, for all his impartiality, Mackay depicted his hero in the kindest of lights. Not unreasonably, he regarded Stirner as the most daring and significant of thinkers on that side of the Rhine, accounting him one of the successors of a Newton or a Darwin, rather than of a Bismarck, and as towering above Nietzsche who was not, moreover, unfamiliar with Stirner.<sup>2</sup>

(. . .) Mackay informs us that Max Stirner was merely a pen-name, a *nom de guerre*, and that his hero's real name was Johann Kaspar Schmidt and that he was born in Bayreuth on October 25, 1806. The name Stirner was simply a nickname given on account of his balding pate (in German *Stirn*). He held on to that nickname in *The Ego* . . . and his other publications. We shall quickly gloss over everything that Mackay has to tell us about his education, his career as a free teacher, his nondescript first marriage which ended with the premature death of his wife, and move on to his dealings with the celebrated Berlin coterie of the "The Free," and look at Mackay's revelations.

They were a curious group, a club or coterie which met in the home of one Hippel, an innkeeper famed for the quality of his beverages, whose place was located on one of the busiest streets of the Berlin of his day. Without formality or chairman, all sorts of criticisms were given an airing there and a mockery made of censorship of any sort. The most heated arguments took place there amid the steam emanating from the great porcelain pipes with which anyone who has visited the breweries beyond the Rhine will be familiar: conversations were held over a few glasses. All manner of folk were to be found rubbing shoulders there: there were the group's regulars, sitting in the same position year after year, and there were the casuals, coming and going, popping back and dropping out of sight.

To get the proper measure of the story of this group—which was, to some extent, the incubator of *The Ego* . . ., we need to immerse ourselves in the world of the German intellectual between 1830 and 1850. Germany was then turned upside down not just by criticism in matters theological—Strauss's *Life of Jesus* dates from this time—but also by the yearnings for political liberty that were to give rise to the German revolution of 1848.

Among these "Free" the main and primary topics of discussion were politics, socialism (in the communist sense), anti-Semitism (which was beginning to make some headway), theology, and the notion of authority. Theologians like Bruno Bauer rubbed shoulders with liberal journalists, poets, writers, students delighted to get away from *ex cathedra* lectures, and even with officers

whose conversation extended to more than horseflesh and women and who had the tact to leave their supercilious airs and swagger at the door. There were also a few “ladies” around: Marx and Engels also frequented these circles, albeit briefly.

Bohemians and iconoclasts as they were, the “Free” did not always get a good press or enjoy good repute. It has been argued that there were veritable German-style orgies on Hippel’s premises. One occasional visitor, Arnold Ruge, berated them one day: “You want to be free men and you cannot even see the foul mire in which you wallow. One does not free men and peoples with vulgarities (*Schweinerei*). Clean yourselves up before you embark upon any such undertaking.” The “Hippel’s place gang” was not always flush. One evening the inn-keeper refused to give them any more credit, and so they were forced—Bruno Bauer along with the rest—to pass the hat around in Unter den Linden. On one occasion there was a generous outsider who sized up the situation and, being amused and intrigued, coughed up enough money to restore their credit at Hippel’s establishment.

Mackay tells us that Max Stirner was a regular at “Free” get-togethers for ten years. He would show up with his sardonic grin, a dreamy, piercing gaze emanating from the blue eyes behind his wire-rimmed spectacles. Mackay paints him as having been cold, impassive, inscrutable, having no need to confide in anyone and keeping everyone at arm’s length: even those with whom he had everything in common were vouchsafed no insight into his joys, his griefs, any of the minutiae of his everyday life. To tell the truth, no one in the circle knew Stirner, not his close friends nor his sworn enemies. His character appears to have spared him passionate love or passionate hatred. Plain, mannerly, sober, virtually without needs or any particular disposition beyond a preference for plainness, this is how Mackay portrays him in the eyes of those closest to him. Strong and self-contained.

At the time when he married again in 1843, this time to Maria Danhardt, an affable, blond, well-to-do sentimental dreamer from Mecklemburg, Max Stirner’s star stood at its highest point. Indeed, within months, *The Ego and Its Own* would appear.

The youthful Maria, who had a distinguished education which she had taken in her stride, was also an associate of the “Free” circle. She too was a connoisseur of cigars, smoked the long-stemmed pipe so beloved of students and readily downed old man Hippel’s ales. But the marriage was not a happy one. Mackay also had wind of the calumnies to which Stirner had been sub-

jected. He had been accused of living off his wife. Mackay was keen to find what substance there may have been to the charge. He managed to track down Maria Danhardt in London, and found her profoundly religious, elderly and embittered, but with a good enough memory to be able to tell him “that it made her blood boil to think that a man of such erudition and education could have exploited the position of a poor woman like herself, and so abuse her trust as to dispose of her assets as he deemed fit.” She went even further and insinuated that this egoist of egoists had derived some curious sadistic thrill from introducing his wife to the “Free” to see her corrupted by the infection there and watch material and moral corruption at work.

How much truth was there in all of this?

Broadly speaking, I go with Mackay’s contention. Both of them—especially Stirner, who had always lived in a condition of impoverishment—being poorly versed in financial matters, the likelihood is that the money slipped through the fingers of them both. Of course, the sensitive Maria Danhardt could not understand the deep thinker who had asked her to share his journey through life. And yet Stirner was not without sensibilities, but was first and foremost a romantic. Within a short time of their wedding, they were “co-habiting” rather than living as husband and wife. A point came when separation became inevitable. It was reached in 1845.

(. . .) Far from being slothful, Max Stirner had continued to produce. Neither his conjugal debts nor those he had incurred through publication of *The Ego and His Own* had diminished his mind’s fertility. And so he set about translating the master works of J.B. Say and Adam Smith which saw publication in Leipzig in 1845–1847, eight volumes complete with his own commentary and notes. 1852 saw the publication in Berlin of his two-volume *History of Reaction*. Also in 1852, we find his annotated translation of J.B. Say’s pamphlet *Capital and Interest*, published in Hamburg.

Thereafter, no more mention of him. Mackay shows him to us ground down by poverty, flitting from lodgings to lodgings, all of them tracked down by Stirner’s indefatigable biographer. He dropped out of sight, mixing with no one and shunning his old friends. Coping day by day as best he could, he continued to profess to be a journalist, teacher, doctor of philosophy, and even rentier, although in point of fact he was a courier, a messenger. In 1853 he was twice thrown into prison for debt. He enjoyed a little respite in his last furnished room rented from his last landlady, a Frau Weiss, who was compassionate towards her tenant. On June 25, 1856 he died from an infec-



tion caused by a bite from an anthrax-bearing fly. His Calvary was at an end. He was almost fifty years old. A few people accompanied him on his final pilgrimage: among them, though, were two former “Francophiles,” Bruno Bauer and Ludwig Buhl.

## THE FALSE PRINCIPLES OF OUR EDUCATION<sup>1</sup>

*The reader is dealing here with a text that anticipates the contemporary revolutions in education:*

(. . .) Freedom of thought once acquired, our time's impulse is to perfect it, in order to exchange it for freedom of the will, the principle of a new epoch. Thus the ultimate object of education can scarcely be knowledge any more: it is, rather, the will born of such knowledge. In short, its tendency will be to create the personal or free man. What is truth but the revelation of what we are? It is a matter of our discovering ourselves, of freeing ourselves from everything extraneous to us, of refraining ourselves or releasing ourselves radically from all authority, of a return to innocence. But schooling does not produce such absolutely true men. And if there be a school that does, it is in spite of schooling. The latter no doubt affords us mastery over things, and, strictly speaking, also affords us mastery of our own nature. But it does not make free natures of us. In fact, no knowledge, no matter how profound and comprehensive it may be, no alert, wise mind and no dialectical finesse can arm us against the snares of thought and will.

(. . .) All sorts of vanity and desire for profit, ambition, slavish enthusiasm and duplicity, etc., are highly compatible with immense learning, as they also are with an elegant classical education. And this whole scholarly farrago, which does not impinge upon our moral behavior, is frequently forgotten by us, especially as it is useless to us: we shake off the dust of the school whenever we leave it. How come? Because education consists exclusively of the formal or the material, or at best of a blend of the two, but not of truth, not of the molding of the true man.

(. . .) Like some other fields, the field of pedagogy too is numbered among those where the point is that freedom should not be allowed access, and opposition not tolerated: what is sought is submissiveness. Effort is invested solely in a purely formal and material training. The stalls of humanism produce only sages;

out of the realists come only “useful citizens”; but in both cases, only submissive creatures are turned out. Our old grounding in “badness” is forcibly suffocated as is the blossoming of knowledge into free will. School life also churns out Philistines. Just as, when we were children, we were taught to accept whatever was foisted upon us, so we later accommodate ourselves to a positive life, we defer to our times and wind up as slaves and supposedly “good citizens.”

Where, then, are there signs of a spirit of opposition emerging instead of the submissiveness nurtured thus far? Where is man the creator being molded instead of man the educated? Where is the teacher turning into a collaborator, where the transmutation of knowing into wanting, where, in short, is the aim man the free rather than man the cultivated? We will search in vain: that is how rare it is.

And yet we need to get it into our heads that man’s supreme role is neither instruction nor civilization, but self-activity. Does this amount to abandoning culture? No, nor to sacrificing freedom of thought, but rather to transfiguration of it into freedom of the will. On the day when man regards it as a point of honor that he should be alive to or cognizant of self, acting for himself with complete autonomy, with full self-consciousness, and complete freedom, that day he will no longer be for himself a curious, inscrutable object and will begin to banish the ignorance that hobbles and thwarts his full self-knowledge.

Should the notion of freedom but awaken in man, free men dream only of freeing themselves now and for all time: but instead, all we do is churn out learned men who adapt in the most refined manner to every circumstance and fall to the level of slavish, submissive souls. For the most part, what are our fine gentlemen brimful of intellect and culture? Sneering slavers and slaves themselves.

(. . .) The poverty of our current education derives largely from the fact that knowledge has not been translated into ambition, into self-activity, into pure practice. The realists have indeed recognized this shortcoming, but the only remedy they have offered has been to mold “practical” folk as bereft of ideas as they are of freedom. The spirit by which most teachers are driven is dimly poignant proof of what we say. Licked into shape, they themselves lick into shape at best: tailored, they tailor. But all education ought to be personal (. . .) In other words, it is not knowledge that needs to be inculcated, it is the personality that needs to be drawn out of itself. The starting point of pedagogy ought not to be the civilizing vocation, but the calling to shape free personalities and sovereign characters: thus, there must be an end to the sapping of a will hitherto brutally ground down. From the moment that the yearning for learning is no longer

sapped, why go on sapping the urge to desire? If the former is cultivated, so too must the latter be cultivated.

The willfulness and “badness” of children are as justifiable as their thirst for knowledge. The latter is enthusiastically stimulated. Let there be work also upon the natural resource of the will: opposition. Unless the child acquires a sense of self, he fails to learn the most important lesson of all. Let there be no repression of his pride, nor of his candor. Against his petulance, I will always have my own freedom. Should his pride turn to obstinacy, the child will do me violence, against which I will react, so I am as free a being as the child. But should my defense be to retreat behind the convenient wall of authority? No. I will oppose him with the inflexibility of my own liberty, so that the child’s obstinacy will founder upon that reef. A complete man has no need to play the authoritarian. And should license degenerate into effrontery, that effrontery will weaken in the face of the sweet resistance of a thoughtful woman, her maternal temperament, or a father’s firmness: one would need to be very weak to invoke the aid of authority, and anyone who believes he can deal with a cheeky child by cowing him is fooling himself. Commanding fear and respect is something left over from the rococo style of a bygone age.

So, what are we moaning about when we analyze the gaps in our current education? That our schools cling still to the old principle, the principle of learning without will. The new principle is that of the will, of the transfiguration of knowledge. Starting from there, let there be no more “harmony between school and life,” but let schooling be life-like, and let the drawing out of the personality be a duty there as well as outside. Let the universal culture of schooling aim at an apprenticeship in freedom, and not in submissiveness: being free, that is really living.

Practical education lags very far behind personal, free education: if the former manages to make headway in life, the latter provides the breath to blow the spark of life into flame: whereas the former prepares the scholar to make his way in a given milieu, the latter ensures that, in his heart of hearts, he is his own man. Not that this work is over once we behave as useful members of society. Only if we are free men, persons creating and acting on their own behalf, can we gain free access to that goal.

The motif, the thrust of the new age is freedom of the will. Consequently, pedagogy ought to espouse the molding of the free personality as its starting point and objective. (. . .) That culture, which is genuinely universal in that the humblest rubs shoulders with the haughtiest, represents the true equality

of all: the equality of free persons. For only freedom is equality (. . .) So we stand in need of a personal education (. . .) If we want to hang an “-ism” upon those who live by these principles, I, speaking for myself, would opt for the label of personalists.<sup>2</sup>

(. . .) To conclude and briefly to summarize the end towards which our era should bend its efforts, the elimination of knowledge without will and the rise of the self-conscious knowledge which accompanies the sunburst of free personality, we might say this: knowledge must perish, in order to be resurrected as will and to recreate itself daily as free personality.

# FROM THE EGO AND HIS OWN

## WHAT IS TERMED THE STATE

What goes by the name of State is a warp and weft of dependencies and agglomerations, a common belonging, wherein all who make common cause accommodate themselves to one another and are mutually dependent. It is the ordering of that mutual dependency. Should the king, who, from the top down, confers authority upon everyone, even upon the executioner's assistant, perish, order would nonetheless be maintained in the face of the disorder of bestial instincts, by all who have a sense of order well-anchored in their consciousnesses. Were disorder to triumph, it would spell the end for the State.

But are we really to be convinced by this sentimental notion of mutual accommodation, making common cause and mutual dependency? By that reckoning, the State would be the very realization of love, with each existing for the other fellow and living for the other fellow. But would not a sense of order place individuality in jeopardy? Might one not make do with ensuring order through force, in such a way that nobody "treads on his neighbor's toes" and the flock is judiciously penned or ordered? And so all is for the best in the best of all possible orders, but that ideal order is the State.

Our societies and our States exist without our having fashioned them: they are put together without our consent: they are pre-ordained, having an independent and indissoluble life of their own, being against us individualists. The world today is, as the saying has it, at war with the "existing order of things." However, the meaning of that war is widely misunderstood, as if it were only a matter of swapping what currently exists for some new and better order. Instead, the war should be declared on every existing order, which is to say, on the State, and not on any particular State, much less upon the current form of State. The goal to be achieved is not another State (the "people's State," say), but rather association, the ever-fluid, constantly renewed association of all that exists.

Even without my intervention, a State exists. I am born into it, raised within it and I have my obligations to it, I owe it "loyalty and homage." It takes me under its sheltering wing and I live by its grace. The independent existence of the State is the foundation stone of my lack of independence. Its

natural growth, its organic existence require that my own nature should not flourish without let or hindrance, but should be trimmed to size. In order that it may expand naturally, it employs the “pruning” shears on me. The education and training it affords me are tailored to suit it and not me. For instance, it teaches me to abide by the laws, to refrain from trespasses against State property (which is to say, private ownership), to venerate a divine and earthly majesty, etc. In short, it teaches me to be beyond reproach, by sacrificing my individuality on the altar of “sanctity”(anything can be sanctified—other people’s property, lives, etc.). That is the sort of cultivation and training that the State is likely to afford me. It prepares me to become a “useful tool,” a “useful member of society.”

Which is what every State has to do, be it a “people’s State,” an absolute State or a constitutional State. And it will carry on like that for as long as we are immersed in the erroneous belief that it is an “ego,” and, as such, a moral, mystical or public “person.”

## FREEDOM OF THE INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY

Man’s primitive condition is not isolation or solitary existence but life in society. Our existence opens with the closest of unions, since, even before we draw our first breath, we share our mother’s existence: then, when we open our eyes to the light, we find ourselves at the breast of a human being: her love cradles us, keeps a check upon us and binds us to herself by a thousand ties. Society is our natural state. Which is why, as we come to self-awareness, the union that had at first been so intimate grows increasingly looser and the disintegration of primitive society becomes more and more manifest. If the mother wants to have again, all to herself, the child that but lately was nestling beneath her heart, she has to fetch him from the street and wrest him from the company of his playmates. For the child prefers the company of his peers over the society which he did not enter of his own volition, but into which he merely happened to have been born.

(. . .) Once an association has crystallized in society, it has ceased to be an association, since association is an ongoing act of re-association. It has become an association in an arrested state, it has frozen. It is no more as far as association is concerned, being now merely the corpse of an association: in short, it has become society, community. The [political] party offers us an eloquent instance of this process.

For a society, the State for instance, to gnaw away at my freedom is a matter of small consequence to me. I must resign myself to letting my freedom be whittled away by all sorts of powers, by every being stronger than myself, even by every single one of my peers. Even so, were I the autocrat of all the Russias, I could not enjoy absolute freedom. But, as far as my individuality goes, I do not want anyone tampering with it. Now, it is precisely individuality that society targets and means to subject to its power.

A society to which I affiliate certainly strips me of a few freedoms but it affords me other freedoms in compensation. It matters little, too, whether I deny myself such and such a freedom (through some contract, say). On the other hand, I will stand guard jealously over my individuality. According to the extent of its power, every community more or less tends to set itself up as an authority over its members and to restrict their freedom of movement. It requires of them, and is obliged to require of them, the limited conscience suited to subjects: it wants them subjected and only exists insofar as they are in subjection. Not that that precludes a certain tolerance: on the contrary, society will give a ready welcome to improvement schemes, reprimands, and reproaches, just as long as they are of benefit to it: but the criticism that it accepts has to be “friendly.” It must not be “insolent and lacking in reverence.” In short, there must be no trespass against the substance of the society, which must be regarded as sacrosanct. Society requires that no one should rise above it, that one should stay within the “bounds of the law,” that is, that only what is permitted by the society and its laws be allowed.

There is a difference between a society that curtails my freedom and a society that curtails my individuality. In the first case, there is union, agreement, association. But if my individuality is jeopardized, then it is because it is confronted by a society which is a power in itself, a power higher than the Ego, one that is inaccessible to me, one that I may well admire, adore, venerate and respect, but which I may never tame nor use, for the good reason that in its presence I make renunciation and abdication. Society stands or falls by my renunciation, my abnegation, my cowardliness, on what is known as humility. My humility affords its courage. My submissiveness adds up to its dominance.

Where freedom is concerned however, there is no essential difference between the State and the association. No association could be launched, nor could one exist in the absence of certain limitations upon freedom, just as a State is not compatible with boundless freedom. Some limitation upon freedom is inevitable everywhere. For one could not shrug them all off. We



cannot, merely because we would like to do so, fly like birds, for we cannot divest ourselves of our heaviness. Nor can we deliberately survive on water alone, like a fish, for we could not do without air, that being a necessity of which we cannot break free, and so on.

(. . .) True, association affords a greater measure of freedom and might be construed as a “new freedom.” In effect, it affords an escape from all the constraints inherent in life under the State and in society. However, in spite of those advantages, association nonetheless implies a number of encumbrances upon us.

Where individuality is concerned, the difference between State and association is considerable: the former being its foe, its murderer, and the latter its daughter and auxiliary. One is a spirit that demands our adoration in spirit and in truth: the other is my handiwork, my creation. The State is the master of my spirit: it demands my fealty and forces an article of faith, the creed of legality, down my throat. It wields over me a moral influence, commanding my spirit, dispossessing me of my Ego so as to supplant it as my real self. In short, the State is sacred and, set alongside me, the individual, it is the authentic man, the spirit, the spook.

Association, by contrast, is my own doing, my creature. It is not sacred. It does not impose itself as a spiritual power superior to my spirit. I have no wish to become a slave to my maxims, but would rather subject them to my ongoing criticism. I afford them no citizenship rights within myself. Much less do I wish to commit my entire future to the association, to “sell it my soul,” as the Devil would have it, and as is truly the case when the State or any other spiritual authority is involved. I am and will always remain, with regard to myself, more than the State, than the Church, than God, etc., and thus, infinitely more than the association also.

I am told that I must be a man in the company of my peers (Marx, *The Jewish Question*, page 60). I ought to respect them as my peers. As far as I am concerned, no one is deserving of respect, not even my peer. He, like others, is merely an object in which I take or fail to take an interest, a serviceable or unserviceable subject.

If he may be of use to me, then of course I am going to come to an accommodation and enter into association with him, in order to bolster my power and, with the aid of our combined might, to accomplish more than either of us might in isolation. In such communion I see nothing more than

a multiplication of my strength and I afford it my consent only as long as that multiplication brings its benefits. That is what association means.

Association is not sustained by any natural or spiritual tie, and it is not a natural alliance, a meeting of minds. In a natural alliance such as the family, tribe, nation, or even humanity, individuals are of no account except as specimens of the same ilk, the same species. In a meeting of minds, religious community or Church, the individual is only one member governed by a shared mentality. In both cases, what you describe as Ego has to be snuffed out. As a unique individual, you can assert yourself alone in association, because the association does not own you, because you are one who owns it or who turns it to your own advantage.

(. . .) The State makes efforts to stem the covetous: to put that another way, it seeks to turn them exclusively in its own direction and to satisfy them with what it has to offer them. It simply does not occur to it to assuage them out of any affection for the covetous. Instead, it labels as “egoist” the man who cannot control his appetites, and “egoist” man is its enemy. It views him that way because the State lacks the capacity to reach an accommodation with the “egoist” and to understand him. The State being what it is, it could hardly be otherwise, for it is concerned only with itself, could not care less about my needs and only turns its attention to me in order to slay me, that is, to turn me into another Ego, a good citizen. It takes its measures to “improve morals.” And what does it do to win over individuals? It sets in motion the means particular to the State. It never wearies of affording everyone a share in its “benefits,” in the benefits of instruction and culture. It makes you a present of its education. It throws open to you the doors of its educational establishments, affords you the means of acquiring property through your industry, which is tantamount to enfeoffment. In return for the award of this feoff, all it asks of you is the fair return of eternal gratitude. But there are “ingrates” who omit to pay their dues. (. . .)

In association, you invest all of your power, all that you own, and you bring it to bear. Society exploits you and exploits your labor power. In the first case, you live as an individualist, whereas in the second, you have to labor in the master’s vineyard. You are indebted to society for all that you have and you are obligated to it and laden down with “obligations to society.” In the case of association, it is you who are the user, and as soon as you see no further advantage in it, you drop out of it, without further obligation to it and owe it no further loyalty.

Society is more than you and overwhelms you. Association is nothing more than an instrument in your hands, a sword that gives an added cutting edge to your capabilities. Society, on the other hand, claims you for its very own. It can survive equally well without you. In short, society is sacrosanct, association your property. Society makes use of you, but it is you that makes use of association.

## FROM THE EGO AND HIS OWN (1843)

### CONCERNING THE PARTY

The Party, whose praises have been sung of late, also comes under the heading of Society.

The Party has its place within the State. "Party, Party, who would not belong to it!" But the individual is unique and thus no Party member. He enters freely into association and equally freely reclaims his freedom. The Party is only a State within the State and, in this tiniest of beehive societies, it is as essential that peace should prevail as in the largest. The very people who clamor loudest for there to be an opposition within the State thunder against the slightest quibble inside the Party. Which goes to prove that all that they too want is that the State should be one. It is not with the State but with the unique individual that all parties are incompatible.

In our day, there is nothing so commonplace as the sound of one being exhorted to keep faith with his Party, nothing being so reprehensible in the eyes of Party members as an individual who deserts his Party. He must follow his Party always and everywhere: he absolutely must approve its principles and support them. To be sure, things are not taken to the lengths of certain closed societies (like the religious orders, the Jesuits, etc.) which hold their members to their beliefs or to their statutes. But the Party ceases to be an association the moment that it seeks to impose certain principles through constraint and defend them against all attack. In that instant the Party is born. As a Party, it is part and parcel of established society, of a deceased association: it has turned into something akin to an *idée fixe*. An absolutist Party, it is not prepared to see doubts cast upon the infallibility of its principles by its members. The latter could only succumb to doubts if they were sufficiently individualists to want to remain something outside of their Party, which is to say, "impartial observers." They cannot be impartial as Party members. Only as individualists.

Should you be a Protestant and belong to that Party, you can only argue on behalf of Protestantism, or at best "purify" it, but not repudiate it. Being a Christian and one of the adepts of the Christian Party, you cannot withdraw from it as a member of that Party, but only if impelled to do so by your individualism, which is to say, by your "impartiality." However much the efforts

made by Christians, through to Hegel and the Communists, to strengthen their Party, they have not been able to do any better than this: Christianity encapsulates eternal truth and one should confine oneself to demonstrating and justifying it.

In short, the Party does not countenance “impartiality” and it is precisely there that individualism comes into play. What matters the Party to me? I will always find enough folk who will enter into association with me without having to take a pledge to my flag.

Anyone shifting from one Party to another is promptly labeled a “turn-coat.” This because Morality requires that one keeps faith with one’s Party, and renunciation of it is tantamount to staining oneself with the mire of “infidelity.” Only individuality acknowledges no injunction to “fidelity” and “commitment”: it permits everything, including apostasy and desertion. Unwittingly, the moralists let themselves be guided by that principle when they have to sit in judgment of a deserter defecting to their own Party: they certainly are not embarrassed by proselytization. They ought simply to take cognizance of the fact that one ought to behave immorally if one wishes to behave as an individual; in other words, one should abjure one’s belief and even break one’s pledge in order to make one’s own decisions, instead of being guided by considerations of a moral nature.

In the view of rigid moralists, an apostate is always under a cloud and does not readily earn their trust: he carries on him the stain of “infidelity,” which is tantamount to saying: of immorality. Among the common people, this outlook is virtually universal. As for the enlightened folk, they are, in this regard as in every other, wallowing in uncertainty and turmoil. The contradiction inevitably spawned by the principle of morality is one that they do not wittingly perceive, on account of the confusion of their ideas. They dare not dismiss apostates as immoral, because they themselves flirt with apostasy, with the desertion of one religion for another, nor are they willing to turn away from the moralizing viewpoint. They could truly seize upon an opportunity to shrug free of it!

And do individuals, the Unique ones, form a Party? How could they be Unique ones if they were members of a Party?

Might it be that one should not join any Party? In joining a Party, in entering into its orbit, I enter into association with it, one that lasts for as long as the Party and I subscribe to the same objective. But, while I may well subscribe to the Party’s inclinations today, tomorrow that will no longer be the case and I will become “unfaithful” to it. The Party has no powers to

bind me, nothing to commit me and I have no regard for it. If it pleases me no longer, I become hostile towards it.

Inside every Party fighting for its survival, the membership is all the less free or all the less “unique,” according to the degree to which they are deprived of their individuality and kowtow to the Party’s slightest whims. The Party’s independence entails dependency for the Party’s members.

A Party, whatever its nature may be, can never dispense with a profession of faith. Because its members have to believe in its principles and not cast doubt upon, or question them. As far as they are concerned, these principles have to be certain, beyond doubt. In short, one has to belong body and soul to the Party, failing which one is not a real Party member, but, more or less, an individualist. Do but cast doubt upon Christianity and you are no longer a true Christian, but are committing the presumption of calling Christianity into question and hauling it before your individual tribunal. You have sinned against Christianity, against the cause of a Party. (. . .) But that is all the better for you, as long as you do not let yourself be frightened: your effrontery is of help to you in recovering your individuality.

So, someone will ask, can an individualist never take sides? Of course he can. On condition that he does not let himself be gobbled up by the Party. The Party is only ever, as far as he is concerned, a part. He is part and he partakes.

## REVOLT AND REVOLUTION

Revolution and revolt ought never to be mistaken for synonyms. The former consists of the overthrow of the existing order of things, of the existing State or society, and is thus a political or social act. The latter, while inevitably involving a transformation of the existing order, does not take such transformation as its starting point. It starts from the fact that men are not at ease with themselves. It is not a strapping on of battle-armor, but an uprising of individuals, a rebellion that cares nothing for the institutions it is likely to spawn. The Revolution has new institutions as its objective. Revolt induces us to no longer let ourselves be governed, but rather to shift for ourselves. Revolt does not look to the “institutions” to come for any wonders. It is a fight against what already exists. Should it succeed, what already exists will collapse on its own. It merely sets my Ego free from the existing order of things. Which, from the moment that I bid it farewell, perishes and starts to rot.

Now, since it is not my aim to overthrow what already exists, but rather to rise above what exists, my actions are in no way political or social: they

have no object other than myself and my individuality: they are “selfish.” Institutions are a requirement of the Revolution. Revolt wants to see us rise up or stand up. The choosing of a constitution was the preoccupation of revolutionary leaders: the entire political history of the Revolution seethed with constitutional strife and constitutional issues, just as the talents of social reformers proved extremely fertile in social institutions (like the phalansteries and others). But revolt strives to wrestle free of any constitution.

# COUNTER-CRITICISM<sup>1</sup>

*In the following text, Stirner, writing in the third person, replies to several of his critics. The first part was published in the third 1845 issue of the review WIGAND'S VIERTEL-JAHRSSCHRIFT as "Authors of Reviews of Stirner." First of all, Stirner replied to Ludwig Feuerbach, author of THE ESSENCE OF CHRISTIANITY, regarding which Stirner had been especially scathing in his own book. In the second 1845 issue of the same review, Feuerbach had published, anonymously, an essay entitled "Regarding THE ESSENCE OF CHRISTIANITY in relation to THE EGO AND HIS OWN." Stirner next replied to Moses Hess, who had attacked him in a little 28-page pamphlet published in Darmstadt in 1845 as THE LAST PHILOSOPHERS. The second portion of this Counter-Criticism was published under the NOM DE PLUME of G. Edward in the fourth 1847 issue of Otto Wigand's review THE EPIGONES as "The reactionary philosophers. A reply to Kuno Fischer's The Modern Sophists," wherein, again in the third person, Stirner replied to a criticism from Kuno Fischer, which had appeared in 1847 as "The Modern Sophists," in the LEIPZIGER REVUE and which was essentially directed against him.*

*Today's reader will doubtless be interested, not so much in the arguments and quibbles of a Stirner grappling with his adversaries as in the way in which he draws a distinction between his own individualist "egoism" and vulgar egoism, and the manner in which he reconciles his individualism with the spirit of association.*

## WHAT IS STIRNERITE EGOISM?

A certain notion of egoism, whereby it is taken simply to mean "isolation," has gained currency. But what can egoism have to do with isolation? Do I (Ego) become an egoist if, say, I shun men's companionship? I isolate myself and live alone of course, but that does not make me any more of an egoist than the rest who continue to coexist with men and revel in it. If I isolate myself, it is because I no longer delight in society; if I remain within it, it is because men still have much to offer me. Remaining in their company is every whit as egotistical as isolating myself from them.

When it comes to competition, to be sure, everyone is on his own. But should competition some day disappear, because concerted effort will have been acknowledged as more beneficial than isolation, then will not every single individual inside the associations be equally egoistic and out for his own interests? The counter to that is that it will, though, not be at his neighbor's expense now,



but rather for the good reason that the neighbor will no longer be so foolish as to let anybody else be a parasite upon him.

And yet it is said: "The man who thinks only of himself is an egoist." But that would be a man who does not know and cannot appreciate any of the delights emanating from an interest taken in others, from the consideration shown to others. That would be a man bereft of innumerable pleasures, a wretched character. Why then should that runt, that loner be declared to be more egotistical than richer natures? Is the oyster more of an egoist than the dog, the Black more of an egoist than the German, the poor, despised Jewish second-hand clothes dealer more of an egoist than the enthusiastic socialist? And the vandal destroyer of works of art that leave him cold, is he more of an egoist than the painstaking connoisseur who treats them with the utmost care, because he has an interest in and taste for them? And if there should be someone—we shall pass over the question of whether there is any evidence for the existence of anything of the sort—who takes no "human" interest in men, who cannot appreciate them as men, would he not be a wretched egoist, rather than a genuine Egoist? (. . .) The person who loves a human being is, by virtue of that love, a wealthier man than someone else who loves no one: but what we have here is not a contrast between egoism and non-egoism, for both these human types are merely obedient, each after its fashion, to their respective interests.

"Even so, everyone ought to take an interest in people and should love people!" Well now, let us see where that duty, that commandment to love has got us! For the past two thousand years, men's hearts have been stuffed with it, and yet the socialists are complaining today that our proletarians are treated with less consideration than slaves in Ancient times, and yet those same socialists once again are peddling, albeit with much greater stridency, that commandment to love.

You want men to display an interest in you? Well then, make it an obligation upon them to feel some for you, and stop being uninteresting saints who wear their blessed humanity like a sacred garment and clamor like beggars: "Respect our human nature, for it is sacred!"

The Egoism for which Stirner acts as spokesman is not the contrary of love, nor of thoughtfulness, and is not inimical to a sweet life of love, nor to commitment and sacrifice: it is not hostile to the tenderest of cordiality, nor is it the enemy of criticism, nor of socialism: in short, it is not inimical to any interest: it excludes no interest. It simply runs counter to un-interest and

to the uninteresting: it is not against love but against sacred love, not against thinking, but against sacred thinking: not against socialists, but against the sacred socialists, etc.

The “exclusivism” of the authentic Egoist, which some would represent as “isolation” or “detachment” is instead a full participation in whatever arouses interest, to the exclusion of whatever does not.

There has been a refusal to give due credit to Stirner for the most significant chapter of Stirner’s book<sup>2</sup>, the chapter on “My Intercourse,” intercourse with the world and the association of Egoists.

### MOSES HESS AND THE TWO SORTS OF EGOISTS’ ASSOCIATIONS

(. . .) Hess contends that “our entire history has thus far been nothing but the history of egoist associations, the fruits of which, the slavery of Antiquity, Roman serfdom and modern, axiomatic, universal servitude, are all too familiar to us all.” For a start, Hess here uses (. . .) the expression “egoist association” rather than Stirner’s term “Egoists’ association.” His readers (. . .) will assuredly not be long in finding it accurate and indubitable that the associations to which he refers were indeed “egoist associations.” But is an association, wherein most members allow themselves to be lulled as regards their most natural and most obvious interests, actually an Egoists’ association? Can they really be “Egoists” who have banded together when one is a slave or a serf of the other? No doubt there are egoists in such a society, and on that basis it could with some semblance of justification be described as an “egoist association” but, my word! the slaves did not seek out such company out of egoism, and are, rather, in their egoist heart of hearts, against these splendid “associations,” as Hess describes them.

Societies wherein the needs of some are satisfied at the expense of the rest, where, say, some may satisfy their need for rest thanks to the fact that the rest must work to the point of exhaustion, and can lead a life of ease because others live in misery and perish of hunger, or indeed who live a life of dissipation because others are foolish enough to live in indigence, etc., such societies are described by Hess as “egoist associations” and he ventures quite candidly and intolerably to take these “egoist associations” of his as synonymous with Stirner’s “Egoists’ associations.” True, Stirner does happen to use the expression “egoist association” too, but that expression is, for one thing, spelled out as an “Egoists’ association,” and, for another, is appropriate, whereas what Hess calls

by that name is more of a religious society, a communion held as sacrosanct by right, by law and by all of the pomp and circumstance of the courts.

Things would be different had Hess agreed to look at egoist associations in real life and not just on paper. Faust was in the midst of such associations when he cried out: "Here I am a man, here I can be one (. . .)" Goethe spells it out for us in black and white. Had Hess paid close attention to real life, to which he is said to adhere so closely, he might see hundreds of egoist associations of that sort, some ephemeral, some enduring. Even at this very moment there may be some children gathered outside his window and becoming playmates: let him observe them then, and he will spot joyful egoist associations. Maybe Hess has a friend, a beloved: in which case, he may know how the heart has its reasons, how two beings come together egoistically in enjoyment of each other, neither of them thereby "losing out." It may be that he comes across good pals in the street who invite him to accompany them to a cafe: does he take up this invitation so as to do them a kind service, or does he go along with them because it holds out the prospect of pleasure to him? Should they thank him warmly for his "sacrifice," or do they appreciate that, together, they all make up, for an hour or so, an "egoist association?"

### FEUERBACH'S ABSTRACT "MAN"

(. . .) Feuerbach forgets that "man" does not exist, that he is an arbitrary abstraction and he sets him up as an ideal. Is it any wonder that in the final analysis he turns him into a generic, mysterious, impersonal being endowed with secret "powers" which, like the Greek gods alongside Zeus, confer a polytheistic function upon him? (. . .) Stirner counters this watchword, this phraseology of "humanism," with that of "Egoism." What? You require of me that I be a "man," you require of me that I be "mannish?" What? Haven't I been "man," "naked little being" and "mannish" since my cradle days? That is, beyond question, what I am, but I am more than that: I am what I have become through my own efforts, through my development, through my appropriation of the outside world, of history, etc.: I am "unique." But, deep down, that is not what you want. You do not want me to be a real man. You would not give a farthing for my uniqueness. You want me to be "Man," such as you have construed him, as an ideal, exemplary type. You want to make the "plebeian egalitarian principle" the guiding light of my life.

I match you principle for principle, requirement for requirement, with the principle of Egoism. I only want to be Me. I abhor nature, I despise men

and their laws, as well as human society and its love, with which I sever every general connection, even that of language. Your claims of obligation, to your “thou shalt,” to the pronouncements of your categorical verdict, I refute en bloc with the “ataraxia” and serenity of my Ego. It is out of sheer condescension that I make use of language. I am the “Unspeakable” and it is quite right that I should show myself, that I should appear. I ask you, do I not, with my brow-beating Ego and discarding everything human, have as much right on my side as you, with your brow-beating humanity that bluntly stigmatizes me as “non-human” when I offend against your catechism, in declining to permit any tinkering with my self-enjoyment?

Does that amount to saying that Stirner, with his “Egoism,” is seeking to deny everything that belongs to us all, to declare it non-existent, that, out of negation pure and simple, he wants to make a *tabula rasa* of all private property in our social organization, which none may escape? Does it mean that he wishes to turn his back on all human community, to turn into a chrysalis, which would be tantamount, so to speak, to committing suicide? That is, my word, a rather crass misunderstanding. (. . .) But Stirner’s book does contain a weighty “deduction,” a very important and mighty conclusion, which cannot, in most cases of course, only be read between the lines, but which has eluded the philosophers completely. For the reason that they do not know the real man, nor even themselves as real men, only ever dealing with “Man,” “Spirit” of itself, a priori, with the name only and never with the thing, the person as such. Which is what Stirner is saying, in a negative way, through the irresistible, incisive criticism with which he analyses all of the illusions of idealism and strips the veil from all of the lies of disinterested commitment and sacrifice: which, naturally, his glorious criticisms have yet again striven to construe as an apotheosis of blind, selfish interest, of the narrowest egoism.

(. . .) Stirner himself has described his book as a sometimes “clumsy” articulation of what he intended to say. It is the laborious product of the best years of his life: and yet he agrees that it is, to some extent, “clumsy,” insofar as he is grappling with a language corrupted by the philosophers, debauched by the henchmen of the State, of religion and of other beliefs, a language that has been turned into a generator of an unfathomable mishmash of ideas.





**PIERRE-JOSEPH  
PROUDHON**  
(1809-1865)



## PIERRE-JOSEPH PROUDHON

Pierre-Joseph Proudhon died in Paris on January 16, 1865, at the age of fifty-six years, prematurely worn out by his colossal cerebral endeavors. How can we sum up in a few words the personality of this erstwhile workman, the son of peasants, a self-made man and autodidact?

Quite apart from all his other qualities, he was one of the greatest writers in the French language and the critic Saint-Beuve devoted an entire book to him.

Proudhon's was a protean genius, his complete output (to which must be added the 14 volumes of his *Correspondence*, the five volumes of his *Carnets* currently being published, and the unpublished manuscripts revealed to us by Pierre Hauptmann's doctoral thesis) prolific. He was at one and the same time, the father of "scientific socialism," of socialist political economy and of modern sociology, the father of anarchism, of mutualism, of revolutionary syndicalism, of federalism and of that particular form of collectivism that has recaptured a fresh relevance today as "self-management." His views on history, and, especially, on the French Revolution and on Napoleon display an intuitive perspicacity that place him in the company of Michelet. Lastly and above all, he was the first person to anticipate and prophetically denounce the dangers implicit in an authoritarian, Statist, dogmatic socialism.

The 1848 revolution provided him with an opportunity to step, not without courage, into the revolutionary arena, and under the second Bonaparte, the subversive boldness of his writings earned him harassment, imprisonment and exile.

His original and paradoxical turn of mind, highlighted by a mightily plebeian zest, all too often induced him to let his bubbling cauldron of a mind spurt out outrageous ideas—about war, progress, feminism, racism, art, sexuality, etc. He preached a fanatically puritanical morality. He never quite broke free of the Christian education of his early years, and in his mightiest tome, one of the most vitriolic and most devastating indictments ever devised by anti-clericalism, "Justice" appears, when all is said and done, as a thinly disguised synonym for "God."<sup>1</sup> Nor did he successfully discard the strong idealistic stamp which he owed to his reading (at one remove) of the works of Hegel, and his stolidly legalistic mentality remained yoked to the materialist conception of history.



Simultaneously revolutionary and conservative, enamored of liberty and order alike, Proudhon has been claimed by the most contradictory ideologies. In his lifetime, although widely read and the focus of sensational publicity, he plowed an exceptionally lonely furrow.

Marxism, greatly indebted to him and which was not always acting in good faith in its attacks upon him, has long since eclipsed him. Although torn, in terms of action, between Blanquism, parliamentary reformism, anarchism and Statism, and, in terms of theory, between Hegelian philosophy and English political economy, Marxism is, apparently at any rate, more coherent than were Proudhon's sometimes chaotic visions. The redoubtable temporal power and intellectual dictatorship exercised in the usurped name of Marx and also to the advantage of the October Revolution and its red epigones' betrayal thereof, have wronged Proudhon's memory. Until quite recently, he was somewhat misunderstood, misrepresented, forgotten about. The belief was that there was nothing more that needed saying about him once he had been hung with the insulting label of "petit-bourgeois." But even in the "Marxist" camp, they are starting to re-read him and the insults have become less shrill.

## A SELF PORTRAIT

Of my private life I have nothing to say: it does not concern others. I have always had little liking for autobiographies and have no interest in anyone's affairs. History proper and novels hold no attractions for me except insofar as I can discern there, as within our immortal Revolution, the adventures of the mind.

(. . .) I was born in Besançon, on January 15, 1809, son of Claude-François Proudhon, cooper and brewer, native of Chasnans, near Pontarlier in the department of Doubs, and of Catherine Simonin, from Cordiron, in the parish of Burgille-les-Marnay, in the same department.

My paternal and maternal forebears were all free plowmen, exempt from *corvées* and impositions, from time immemorial.

(. . .) Up to the age of twelve years, my life was virtually entirely spent out in the fields, busy either with minor farm tasks or with tending cattle. I was five years a drover. I know of no way of life that is at once more contemplative and more realistic, more contrary to the absurd spiritualism that furnishes the basis of education and the Christian life, than that of the field hand.

(. . .) How I once relished running through the long grass, which I should have loved to browse upon, like my cattle: running bare-foot along the paths alongside the hedges: my legs working (. . .) trampling (grinding) the green shoots of *turquies*<sup>3</sup> into the deep, fresh dirt! On more than one warm June morning, it happened that I stripped off my clothes and took a bath in the dewy grass.

(. . .) I made scarcely any distinction between what was me and what was not. I was everything that I could touch with my hand, gaze upon and that was somehow serviceable to me; the not-I was anything that might harm or resist me. All day long, I gorged myself with blackberries, rape-seeds, oyster plants, green peas, poppy seeds, toasted cobs of maize, all sorts of berries, sloes, *blessons*, alders, wild cherries, sweetbriers, *lambrusques*, and wild fruits; I stuffed myself with enough salad to choke a petit bourgeois of refined education, and the only effect it had upon my stomach was to give me a ravenous appetite come evening. The soul of nature does no harm to her own.

(. . .) How many downpours I wiped away! How many times, drenched to the bone, I dried my clothes upon my body, in the north wind or in the heat of the sun! How many baths taken at a moment's notice, in the river in summer-time, in springs in the winter-time! I would clamber up trees; delve into caves; run frogs to ground, rooting around in their holes, risking encounters with a ghastly salamander; then roast my quarry whole over the coals. In every living thing, man and beast alike, there are secret affinities and animosities of which civilization has made us insensible. I loved my cows, but with a one-sided affection; I had my favorites among the hens, the trees, the rocks. Someone had told me that the lizard is man's friend; I honestly believed it. But I always waged war without quarter against snakes, toads and caterpillars. *What harm had they done me?* None. I do not know; but experience of human beings has always made me despise them the more.

### PROUDHON THE COMPOSITOR

(. . .) I left school for the workshop. I was nineteen years old. Having become a producer in my own right and a driver of bargains, my everyday toil, the training I had received and my sharper mind allowed me to probe the matter more deeply than I had hitherto known how to do. All in vain—the mystery deepened.

But, I used to tell myself everyday as I “set up” my lines, what if the producers should somehow agree to market their products and services at pretty much cost price and thus at value? There would doubtless be fewer rich people around, but there would be fewer bankrupts too. And, with everything being cheap, we should have a lot less destitution. (. . .) No positive experiment has demonstrated that minds and interests cannot be so balanced out that peace, an unbreachable peace, should sprout from them and wealth become a general rule. (. . .) The whole point is to come up with a harmonizing, evaluative principle of equilibrium.

After some weeks working in Lyon and then in Marseilles, steady work<sup>1</sup> being still in short supply, I set out for Toulon, arriving there with just three francs 50 centimes to my name. I had never been happier or more confident than at that straitened moment. I had not yet learned how to reckon life's debits and assets—I was young. In Toulon, there was no work: I had arrived too late and missed the “boat” by 24 hours. A thought occurred to me and it seemed a real inspiration at the time: while up in Paris the unemployed workers were attacking the government, I resolved for my own part to make my petition to the authorities.

I went to the city hall and asked to speak to the mayor. Ushered into the magistrate's office, I produced my passport to show him:

"Here, monsieur," I told him, "this document cost me two francs and, following information supplied with regard to me by the police superintendent of my district, along with two known witnesses, it promises me and enjoins the civil and military authorities to afford me assistance and protection should the need arise. Now, you will know, Mr. Mayor, that I am a printer's compositor, that, since Paris, I have been searching for work, without success, and that I am down to the last of my savings. Theft is punished and begging prohibited; not everybody can live off their investments. That leaves work, a guarantee of which, it seems to me, looks like the only thing likely to fulfill the purpose of my passport. Consequently, Mr. Mayor, I have come to place myself at your disposal."

I was one of that breed which, a little later, took up the slogan of *Live by working or die fighting!* which, in 1848, gave the Republic *three months to eliminate poverty* and, come June, scribbled *Bread or lead!* upon their banners. I was wrong and today I admit as much—may my example be a lesson to my peers.

The man to whom I had turned was a small, plump, pudgy, smug fellow wearing gold-rimmed glasses and he certainly was not prepared for my formal demand. I made a note of his name, as I like to know those whom I hold dear. He was a Monsieur Guieu, known as Tripette or Tripatte, a former attorney at law, one of the new men unearthed by the July dynasty and a man who, although wealthy, would not turn his nose up at a scholarship for his children. He must have taken me for someone who had escaped the insurrection which had just shaken Paris when the general was buried.<sup>5</sup>

"Monsieur," he said to me, skipping back to his armchair, "yours is an unusual request, and you have misconstrued your passport. It means that, should you be attacked; should you be robbed, the authorities will leap to your defense: and that is all."

"Forgive me, Mr. Mayor, but in France the law protects everyone, even the guilty whom it cracks down upon. The gendarme does not have the right to strike the murderer who stabs him, except in self-defense. If a man is put in prison, the governor cannot seize his effects. The passport, as well as the record book, for I carry both, suggests something more to the working man, or it means nothing at all."

"Monsieur, I am going to award you 15 centimes per league so that you can go home again. Which is all that I can do for you. My powers go no further."

“That, Mr. Mayor, is alms and I want no part of it. Whenever I get back to my own district, upon discovering that there is no work to be had, I am going to seek out the mayor of my commune, just as I have sought you out today: so that my return trip will have cost the State 18 francs, with no benefit to anybody.”

“Monsieur, that is outside of my powers . . .”

And he would not budge from that. Defeated and driven back on to the terrain of legality, I tried another tack. Perhaps, I wondered, the man is worth more than the official: quiet manner, Christian face, less mortification: but the best fed ones are still the best.

“Monsieur,” I resumed, “since your powers do not allow you to accede to my request, let me have your advice. If need be, I can make myself useful other than in a printing works, and I will not turn my nose up at anything. You are familiar with the area: what work is there? What would you advise me?”

“To take yourself off, Monsieur.” I gave him a dirty look.

“Fine, Mr. Mayor,” I told him between clenched teeth. “Let me assure you that I will not forget this interview.”

Leaving the city hall behind, I left Toulon via the Italian approach road. (. . .) For two years I roamed the world, studying, questioning the little people to whose social circumstances I found my own were closer—with scarcely the time to read and less for writing.

(. . .) So much for my life to date and indeed my life is still the same: living in workshops, witnessing the people’s vices and virtues, eating my daily bread, earned by the sweat of my brow, obliged to help my family and help with my brothers’ education out of my modest earnings: and, in the middle of it all, reflecting, philosophizing, jotting down the tiniest details of unexpected observations.

Wearied of the precarious, impoverished circumstances of the working man, I eventually wanted to attempt, along with one of my colleagues, to set up a little printing establishment. The meager savings of two friends were pooled and all of their families’ resources committed to this lottery. The treachery of business life crushed our hopes—our method, toil and parsimony had availed us nothing: of the two partners, one wound up in the corner of a wood to perish of exhaustion and despair and the other now has nothing left for it but to repent of his having squandered his father’s last crust of bread.

## PUBLIC DEBUT

(. . .) My public life began in 1837, in the middle of the Philipian<sup>6</sup> corruption. The Besançon Academy had to award a three-year scholarship bequeathed by Monsieur Suard, secretary of the Academie Française to young penniless natives of Franche-Comte destined for a career in letters or sciences. I entered the lists. In the memorandum which I forwarded to the Academy and which is in its archives, I told it:

Born and raised in the bosom of the working class, belonging to it yet in my heart and in my affections, above all by a community of suffering and hopes, my greatest delight, were the Academy to vote for me, would be to work tirelessly, through philosophy and science, with all of the energy of my will and all of my mental powers, for the physical, moral, and intellectual betterment of those who I am pleased to account my brothers and companions: so as to be able to plant among them the seed of a doctrine that I regard as the law of the moral universe, and, pending the success of my efforts, to act, gentlemen, even now as their representative in dealings with you.

As may be seen, my protests date from a long time ago. I was still young and full of faith when I articulated my wishes. It is for my fellow-citizens to say whether I have kept faith with them. My socialism received its baptism from a learned company: I had an academy for my sponsor, and, had my vocation—long since fixed—wavered, the encouragement that I then received from my honorable countrymen would have confirmed it beyond relapse.

I immediately set to work. I sought no enlightenment from the schools of socialism then in existence, these beginning even then to fall out of fashion. Likewise I left the party members and journalists, overly preoccupied with their day-to-day struggles to spare a thought for the implications of their own ideas. Nor did I sample, nor seek out the secret societies—all these people seemed to me to be as far removed from the aim I was pursuing as the eclectics and the Jesuits.

I opened my work of lonely conspiracy with a study of socialist antiquities, which I reckoned was necessary if I was to identify the movement's theoretical and practical law. I found those antiquities first in the Bible. Speaking to Christians, the Bible had to be the primary authority for me. An essay on the sabbatarian institution—examined from the viewpoint of morality, hygiene, family and civic relationships—earned me a bronze medal from my academy.

So I hurtled headlong away from the faith in which I had been raised into pure reason, and even then, by some freak which I took to be a good omen, I was applauded for having portrayed Moses as a philosopher and socialist. If I have now gone astray, the fault is not mine alone: was there ever such a seduction?

But I was studying primarily with an eye to practicality. I cared little for academic laurels; I did not have the time to become a scholar, much less a literatus or archaeologist. I tackled political economy right away.

I had taken it as the basis for my opinions that any principle which—taken to its logical conclusion—would result in a contradiction, had to be regarded as mistaken and rejected: and that if that principle had given rise to an institution, that institution itself was to be regarded as contrived: as a utopia.

Armed with that criterion, I selected as my topic for examination the oldest, most respectable, most universal and least controversial thing that I had found in society: property. What befell me, we know. After a protracted, painstaking, and, above all, impartial analysis—I arrived, like an algebrist led by his equations—at this startling conclusion: property, no matter the angle from which it is examined or the principle to which it is related, is a contradictory idea. And as the negation of property implies that of authority, I immediately deduced from my definition this no less paradoxical corollary: that the authentic form of government is anarchy.

(. . .) I thought my work sufficiently unsettling by itself to merit public notice and to arouse the curiosity of scholars. I forwarded my essay to the Academy of Moral and Political Sciences. The benevolent reception that greeted it, the praises which the rapporteur, Monsieur Blanqui,<sup>7</sup> felt it appropriate to bestow upon its author, gave me reason to think that the Academy, without claiming responsibility for my theory, was satisfied with my work, and I pressed on with my researches.

Dialectics intoxicated me; a certain fanaticism particular to logicians had planted itself in my mind and turned my memorandum into a pamphlet. The Besançon courts having seen fit to initiate proceedings against that pamphlet, I was brought before the Doubs departmental court of assizes on the four-fold indictment of attacking property, incitement to contempt of government, insulting religion and giving offense to morals. I did what I could to explain to the jury how, in the current state of commercial intercourse, use value and exchange value being two unknown quantities perpetually at war with each other, property is quite illogical and unstable, and that this is the reason why

workers are increasingly poor and property-owners less and less wealthy. The jury appeared not to understand much of my proof; it stated that this was scientific matter and thus beyond its competence and it delivered a verdict of acquittal in my favor.



# PROPERTY IS THEFT'

Had I to answer the following question: What is slavery? and answer with a single word—Murder—my reasoning would be grasped immediately. I would not need any protracted discourse to demonstrate that the power to strip a man of his mind, his will, his personality, is a power over life and death, and that making a man a slave is tantamount to murder. So why cannot I answer this other query: What is property? in similar vein—Theft—without being assured that I would not be heeded, even though this second proposition is merely a re-casting of the first?

I undertake to discuss the very principle of our government and our institutions, property: I am within my rights; I may go astray in the conclusion that will emerge from my inquiries: it amuses me to place my book's concluding thought right at the start of it—again, I am within my rights.

One writer teaches that property is a civil right, sprung from occupancy and sanctioned by law; another contends that it is a natural right, its source in labor, and those teachings, contradictory as they may seem, are encouraged and applauded. My contention is that neither labor nor occupancy nor law can create property; that it is a cause-less effect: am I to be held reprehensible?

What a brouhaha erupts!

—Property is theft! That's the tocsin of '93! The mayhem of revolutions!

—Calm yourself, reader; I am not an agent of discord, a seditious firebrand! I am a few days ahead of my times: I spell out a truth whose emergence we strive in vain to stem; I am writing the preamble to our future constitution. If our preoccupations would but let us hear it, this definition, Property is theft, which sounds to you such a blasphemy, would act as a lightning conductor; but how many are the interests and prejudices that oppose it! Philosophy will not, *alas!* alter the course of events: destinies will be worked out regardless of prophecy; moreover, should justice not be done and our education completed?

—Property is theft! What an inversion of human ideas! Proprietor and thief were forever contradictory terms, just as the entities they describe are antipathetic; every language has articulated this contradiction in terms. So on what authority would you assail this universal convention and throw down the gauntlet to the human race? Who are you to refute the reasoning of peoples and ages?

—What is my puny person to you, reader? I, like you, am of a century when

reason bows only before fact and proof; my name, like your own, is seeker after truth<sup>2</sup>; my mission inscribed in the words of the law: *Speak without hatred and without fear—tell what you know*. Our species' task is to build the temple of science, and that science embraces man and nature. Now truth discloses itself to all, to Newton and Pascal today, to the shepherd in the valley and the journeyman in his workshop tomorrow. Everyone has his contribution to make, and, mission accomplished, he vanishes. Eternity goes before us and comes after us: between those two infinities, what is the span of mortal man, that the century should take him under its notice?

So, reader, forget about my title and my character, and concern yourself with my arguments alone. My aim is to remedy the universal error of universal convention: It is to the faith of humankind that I appeal the opinion of humankind. Make so bold as to follow me and, if you have an open mind, if your conscience is free, if your mind can blend two propositions in order to arrive at a third, my ideas will infallibly become your own. In opening with my final conclusion, my intention was to inform and not to taunt you: for I am certain that if you will but read me, I will command your assent. The matters of which I must speak to you are so simple, so palpable, that you will be stunned that you never noticed them, and you will say to yourself, "I never thought about that." Others will offer you a display of genius cracking the secrets of nature, and gushing sublime oracles—here you will encounter only a series of experiments in justice and right, a sort of assaying of the weights and measures of your conscience. The operations will be carried out before your very eyes; and it is for you yourself to gauge the outcome.

In addition, I offer no system: I seek the end of privilege, the abolition of slavery, equality of rights, the rule of law. Justice; nothing but justice: such is my discourse in sum—I leave to others the care of disciplining the world.

I said to myself one day: Why so much pain and misery in society? Must man be forever unhappy? And, without dwelling upon the all-purpose explanations of the peddlers of reform who record the general distress—some the cowardice and incompetence of the authorities, others plotters and disturbances, still others ignorance and widespread corruption. Weary of the interminable battles of rostrum and press, I have sought to plumb things for myself. I have consulted the master scientists, read a hundred volumes of philosophy, law, political economy and history, and it has pleased God to have me live in an age when so much reading was useless to me! I have made every effort to locate precise information, comparing doctrines, measuring

answers alongside objections, forever manipulating equations and reductions of arguments, weighing syllogisms by the thousands in the balances of the most scrupulous logic. By this tiresome route, I have gleaned several interesting facts, which I will impart to my friends and to the public just as soon as I rest from my labors. But, it has to be said, I reckoned that first I should acknowledge that we had never understood the meaning of such commonplace and sacred words as justice, equity, liberty; that our thoughts on each of these things were unfathomably obscure; that in the end, that ignorance was the sole cause both of the pauperism that consumes us and of all the calamities by which the human race has been afflicted.

My mind started at this curious discovery—I doubted my very reason. What! I said, could it be that you have discovered that which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor intellect penetrated! Tremble, wretch, that you should mistake the visions of your ailing mind for the plain truths of science! (. . .)

So I resolved to devise a corollary to my reckonings, and these were the conditions which I myself imposed upon this new undertaking: is it feasible that mankind should have been so long and so universally mistaken in the application of the principles of morality? How and why might it have gone astray? Given its universality, might that error not be invincible?

These questions, upon the solution of which I made the accuracy of my observations dependent, failed to withstand analysis for long.

(. . .) Yes, all men hold and repeat that equality of circumstance is the same thing as equality of rights: that property and theft are synonymous terms; that all social pre-eminence, awarded or, more properly, usurped on the pretext of superior talent and service, is iniquity and banditry; all men, I say, bear witness to these truths in their souls: it is simply a matter of making them cognizant of them.

### THE ADVENT OF LIBERTY<sup>3</sup>

Community<sup>4</sup> is oppression and servitude. Man is quite willing to bow before the law of duty, serve his country and oblige his friends, but he wishes to work at what pleases him, when it pleases him, and for as long as it pleases him; he wants to be able to arrange his own schedule, obedient to nothing except necessity, to choose his own friends, his recreations, his discipline; to serve out of conviction, and not upon command; to make sacrifices out of self-interest, and not from slavish obligation. Community is essentially contrary to the unfettered exercise of our faculties, our noblest inclinations, our innermost feelings; anything that one might devise to reconcile it with the

requirements of individual reasoning and will would suffice only to change the substance while retaining the name. Now, if we genuinely quest after truth, we must steer clear of quibbles over words.

Thus, community is trespass against autonomy of conscience and equality. The first, by constricting the spontaneity of mind and heart, the spirit of enterprise in action and in thought. The second, by offering equal reward to industry and laziness, talent and stupidity—even to vice and virtue.

(. . .) Which form of government shall we prefer?

— Ah, you may well ask—one of my younger readers will doubtless say—you are a republican.

— Republican? Yes, but the word is meaningless. *Res publica* means public business. Now, anyone seeking public office, regardless of the form of government, can call himself a republican. Kings, too, are republicans.

— Well then: are you a democrat?—No.

— What! A monarchist, then?—No.

— Constitutionalist?—God forbid!

— Are you an aristocrat, then?—By no means.

— Do you want a mixed government?—Far from it.

— What are you, then?—I am an anarchist.

— I understand: you are being sardonic: your sarcasm is directed at government.

— Not in the least—you have just heard my authentic and duly deliberated profession of faith: although very much enamored of order, I am, in the fullest sense of the term, an anarchist. Listen to me.

In order to satisfy his needs as directly and comprehensively as possible, man looks around for a rule: in its inception, that rule is, as far as he is concerned, a living, visible, tangible thing: it is his father, his master, his king. The greater a man's ignorance, the more implicit his obedience, the more absolute his confidence in his leader. But man, whose habit it is to accommodate himself to a rule,—which is to say, to discover it through deliberation and reasoning—deliberates upon the orders of his leaders. Now, such reasoning is a protest against authority, an inkling of disobedience. The moment man looks into the well-springs of the sovereign will, from that moment that man is a rebel. If he obeys now, not so much because the king commands, but because of the king's logic, it can be stated that henceforth he acknowledges no authority, and that he has set himself up as his own king. Woe betide anyone who dares lead him

and has only the cachet of a majority to offer him, by way of an endorsement for his laws—for, sooner or later—the minority will become the majority, and the shortsighted despot will be toppled and all his laws annulled.

As a society achieves enlightenment, royal authority retreats: this is a fact to which the whole of history bears witness. At the birth of nations, men had no need to reflect and reason: without method, without principle, not even knowing how their reason might be employed, they did not know if theirs was the right view or if they were deceiving themselves; so overwhelming was the kingly authority that there was no acquired knowledge to challenge it. But little by little, experience conjures usages into existence, and these customs. Then these customs are phrased as maxims, articulated as principles, in short, are translated into laws, to which the king as the embodiment of law is required to pay homage. A time comes when customs and laws are so numerous that the will of the prince is, so to speak, bound by the general will. Upon assuming the crown, he is required to swear that he will govern in accordance with custom and practice, and that he is himself only the executive arm of a society whose laws are made without him.

Thus far, everything happens instinctively, and, so to speak, unbeknownst to the parties concerned; but let us take a look at the inevitable conclusion to this trend.

As he educates himself and is exposed to ideas, man ends up acquiring the notion of science, which is to say, a notion of a system of knowledge reflecting the reality of things and making deductions from observation. Whereupon he searches for the science or system of brute bodies, the system of organized bodies, the system of the human mind, the system of the world; how could he fail to search for the system of society as well? But, having reached that peak, he realizes that truth or political science is something quite independent of the sovereign will, the majority view or popular beliefs: that kings, ministers, magistrates and peoples, being so many wills, are of no consequence to science and deserving of no consideration. In a flash he realizes that, if man is born sociable, his father's authority over him ceases the day when, his mind fully-fledged and his education complete, he becomes his father's partner: that his real master and king is demonstrated truth: that politics is a science, not an art: and that the calling of the law-maker boils down, in the final analysis, to a methodical questing after truth.

Thus, in a given society, man's authority over his fellow-man is in inverse proportion to the intellectual development attained by that authority, and the likely duration of that authority can be calculated on the basis of the pretty well

general longing for true government, which is to say, government in accordance with science. And likewise, the rights of might and the entitlements of cunning diminish in the face of the widening province of justice, and should end by melting away into equality. Similarly, sovereignty of the will retreats before the sovereignty of reason, and will wind up fading into a scientific socialism. Property and royalty have been in decline since the world began: just as man looks for justice in equality, so society looks for order in anarchy.

Anarchy, absence of master, of sovereign—that is the form of government to which we draw closer day by day, and which the inveterate habit of mistaking the man for the rule and his will for the law makes us regard as the last word in disorder and the exemplification of chaos. The story is told that a 17th century Parisian bourgeois, having heard tell that in Venice there was no king, the fellow was dumbfounded beyond recovery, and thought that he would die from laughter upon first hearing anything so ridiculous. Our prejudice is like that: we all more or less want a leader or leaders: and right now I have in my hand a pamphlet whose author, a communist zealot, dreams, like a second Marat, of dictatorship.

(. . .) This synthesis of community and property we shall nominate liberty.

In order to identify liberty, then, let us not amalgamate community and property indiscriminately—that would be absurdly eclectic. Through analytical method, we seek out the kernel of truth in each, in accordance with the wishes of nature and the laws of sociability, and we discard the foreign bodies within. And the end-result provides an apt expression for the natural form of human society—in a word—liberty.

Liberty is equality, because liberty exists only in a state of society, and, outside of equality, there is no society.

Liberty is anarchy, because it countenances no government of the will, only the authority of law, which is to say, of necessity.

Liberty is infinite variety, because it respects every will, within the limits of the law.

Liberty is proportionality, because it affords full scope to merit's ambition and to emulation of glory.

Liberty is essentially organizing: in order to ensure equality between men, equilibrium between nations, agriculture and industry, centers of education, trade and distribution are distributed in accordance with the geographical and climatic conditions of each country, the type of product, the character and natural talents of inhabitants, etc., on a scale so fair, so wise and so well

married that there is nowhere a population surplus or deficit, no excessive or insufficient consumption or production. The science of public entitlement and private entitlement—real political economy—begins right there.

(. . .) Politics is the science of liberty: man's government of his fellow-man, no matter the name under which it lurks, is oppression: society's highest perfection lies in the marriage of order and anarchy.

The end of the old civilization is nigh: under a new sun, the face of the earth is going to be remade. Let us leave a generation to die out; let us leave the old prevaricators to perish in the desert—the blessed earth will not cover their bones. Young man, outraged by the corruption of the times and consumed by a yearning for justice—if you hold your country dear, and have any feeling for the interests of humanity—make bold and embrace the cause of liberty. Strip off your ancient selfishness and immerse yourself in the popular tide of nascent equality. There, your rehydrated soul can drink deep of a sap and an unknown vigor: your wit, gone flabby, will recover irrepressible energy; your heart—even now shriveled perhaps—will be rejuvenated. Your purified eyes will see everything in a new light: new sentiments will inspire new thoughts in you; religion, morality, poetry, art, language, will loom taller and more beautiful; and, certain then of your faith, thoughtfully enthusiastic, you will greet the dawning of universal regeneration.

# THE SYSTEM OF ECONOMIC CONTRADICTIONS<sup>1</sup>

(. . .) I realized that the first step towards an understanding of revolutions within society was to draw an inventory of the whole list of its antinomies, a catalogue of its contradictions.

I would be hard put to give those who have not read it an idea of that work<sup>2</sup>. I will make the attempt, however, employing language accessible to every book-owner today; for, if I could, in a few lines, succeed in giving a clear idea of what I consider the authentic economic method, it is unlikely that it would not soon override every conviction.

In my first memorandum, in a frontal assault upon the established order, I said things like, Property is theft! The intention was to lodge a protest, to highlight, so to speak, the inanity of our institutions. At the time, that was my sole concern. Also, in the memorandum in which I demonstrated that startling proposition using simple arithmetic, I took care to speak out against any communist conclusion.

In *The System of Economic Contradictions*, having recalled and confirmed my initial formula, I added another quite contrary one rooted in considerations of quite another order—a formula that could neither destroy the first proposition nor be demolished by it: Property is freedom. Property is theft; Property is freedom: those two propositions are equally demonstrable and co-exist, one alongside the other, within the *System of Economic Contradictions*.

I adopt the same approach with regard to each of the economic categories, the division of labor, competition, the State, credit, Community, etc.: demonstrating, turn and turn about, how each of these concepts, and, consequently, how the institutions deriving from them have a positive aspect and a negative aspect; how they give rise to a double series of diametrically different outcomes: and in every case I concluded that what was required was agreement, conciliation or synthesis. Thus property features here alongside other economic categories, with its *raison d'être* and its reason not to exist, which is to say, as a two-edged element of the economic and social system.

Put like that, it seemed sophistry, afflicted with error and bad faith. I shall strive to render it more intelligible, taking property as my example.



Property, considered as encompassing the range of social institutions, has, so to speak, a double-entry record: one is the record of the benefits that it brings and which derive directly from its essence: the other is the entry for the drawbacks it entails, the expenses it causes, these also deriving, like the benefits, directly from its nature. The same holds true for competition, monopoly and the State, etc.

In respect of property, as of all economic factors, harm and abuse cannot be dis severed from the good, any more than debit can from asset in double-entry book-keeping. The one necessarily spawns the other. To seek to do away with the abuses of property, is to destroy the thing itself; just as the striking of a debit from an account is tantamount to striking it from the credit record. The best that can be done against the abuses or drawbacks of property, is to amalgamate, synthesize, organize or balance them with a contrary factor, which is to it what the creditor is to the debtor, the investor to the director, etc. (as in, say, community), so that, without the two principles altering or destroying each other, the advantages of the one can compensate for the disadvantages of the other, just as—in accounting, the entries—once matched one against the other, give a final result, which is either entirely loss or entirely profit.

The solution to the poverty problem thus consists of taking the book-keeper's expertise to fresh heights, setting down the entries for society, recording the credits and debits of each institution, with the general accounts or divisions in the social ledger being, not the terms of ordinary accountancy such as capital, funds, general merchandise, orders and deliveries, etc., but those of the philosophy of legislation and politics, like competition and monopoly, property and community, citizen and State, man and God, etc. Finally, and to round off my analogy, the entries must be kept up-to-date, that is to say, there must be a precise recording of rights and duties, so that at any given moment one can gauge the scale of order and disorder and a balance be arrived at.

I have devoted two volumes to explaining the principles behind this system of accounts which I shall call, if you like, transcendent; twice since February,<sup>3</sup> I have rehearsed these elementary ideas, which bookkeeping and metaphysics have in common. Conventional economists have laughed in my face; political ideologues have politely invited me to write for the people. As for those whose interests I have taken so much to heart, they have treated me even more badly.

The communists cannot forgive me for having made a critique of community, as if a nation was one huge polyp and there were no rights of the individual alongside society's rights.

The property-owners wish a fatal illness upon me for having said that property, alone and of itself, is theft; as if property did not derive the whole of its value (rent) from the traffic in products and thus were not dependent upon a phenomenon higher than itself, the collective strength and solidarity of labor.

Finally, the politicians, whatever their colors, are insurmountably repelled by anarchy which they construe as disorder; as if democracy could be achieved other than by distribution of authority and as if the true meaning of the word "democracy" was not dismissal of government.

(. . .) In society, the theory of antinomies is at once the representation and the basis of all movement. Mores and institutions may vary from people to people, just as a trade and mechanics vary from century to century, from town to town; the laws that govern their evolutions are as inflexible as algebra. Wheresoever there are men banded together for work; wheresoever the notion of exchange value has taken root and where, due to the separation of industries, there is traffic in values and products. There, regardless of society's being upset, in deficit or bankrupt with regard to itself, and regardless of poverty and of the proletariat, the antinomial forces of society, inherent in every exercise of collective effort, as well as in every individual motive, have to be kept in a constant equilibrium, and the antagonism perpetually reproduced by the essential tension between society and the individual has to be perpetually redirected into synthesis.

## PROUDHON IN THE 1848 REVOLUTION

The 1848 revolution was a political revolution, its social content being as yet faltering and confused. Proudhon was torn by it. An apolitical anarchist, he was in danger of being a foreign body in it. But the tide of events turned him into a journalist-cum-parliamentarian: like it or not, he had no option but to get involved.

Prior to the popular explosion in February, he had been nothing short of reticent. He could sense that the monarchy was approaching its end, but he did nothing to speed its demise. For Louis-Philippe's adversaries and for the "poor democrats," he had nothing but contempt: "The greatest good fortune that could befall the French people, would be for a hundred Opposition deputies to be thrown into the Seine with a millstone about their necks. They are worth a hundred times less than the conservatives, for they are more hypocritical than the latter." He even looked upon the Guizot government's ban on public gatherings as quite natural. As he was later to admit, the approach of the republic struck terror into him.

The advent of it first "dumbfounded" him and he prematurely wore "mourning for the republic and carried the burden of the calumnies about to strike socialism." However, he very quickly recovered and welcomed the revolution. In his *Carnets*, he noted: "Today's victory is the victory of Anarchy over Authority," only to let his uneasiness surface once again: ". . . or else it is a mystification." "There is no going back from this fait accompli; it is foolish to look backwards. I would not have made the revolution of February 24: but the people's instinct has decided otherwise. . . . I stand by them all." "No matter what happens, I will stand by the people." "You wrought the revolution and here you have the revolution."

Proudhon's anxiety, which was to be largely justified by ensuing developments, sprang from his libertarian conception of the social revolution. "The social revolution is seriously compromised if it is delivered by political revolution," he was noting as early as 1845. And, later: "Power in the hands of the proletariat (. . .) will be an embarrassment until such time as the social revolution has been made." With hindsight, he was to agree: "I am the only revolutionary who did not put his shoulder to the February coup de main, because I wanted a social revolution." The disagreement between himself and the democrats was total. They were, above all else, politicians. They aimed to carry on the tradition of

the Revolution of 1793 and “establish true socialism at the instigation of the government.” They proclaimed “the need for the Revolution to be imposed from the top down, rather than proposed from below,” as Proudhon wanted. And the founding father of anarchism forcefully asserted: “Socialism, by virtue of the very fact that it is a protest raised against capital, is a protest raised against power. Now, the Mountain meant to achieve socialism from a position of power and, worse still, to make use of socialism in order to achieve power.

Inevitably, under pressure from the workers, the political revolution was to broach the social question, which democrats were not at all equipped to resolve. “The social revolution cropped up without anybody at the top or at the bottom having any apparent understanding of it. . . . The Revolution, the Republic and socialism, each one reliant upon the others, was approaching with giant steps. . . . That revolution, which was about to erupt in the political order, was the birth date of a social revolution that was in no one’s vocabulary.”

No one, that is, except Proudhon. Since 1846, he had had a very settled idea of it. It fell to him to launch a “crucial revolution” an “economic revolution.” He had his own “solution to the social question.” In the form of the mutual association, what we today would describe as self-management. “I am the Revolution,” he noted proudly in his Carnets. The panacea he proposed was a curious blend of realism and utopia. Realism when he called for a proliferation of workers’ production associations as the only way of side-stepping capitalism and Statist nationalization alike. Utopia, when he deluded himself that his system would spread like an oil stain and wind up progressively taking over the whole of industry, without violent expropriation, thanks to interest-free loans granted to workers’ associations by a “People’s Bank,” a sort of mutual fund operating outside of the orbit of any State control.

But politics snatched Proudhon away from his panaceas. Defeated at first in the April elections, he was returned as a deputy in the follow-up elections on June 4-5, 1848, by some 77, 000 votes. A few weeks earlier he had been thundering: “Universal suffrage is counter-revolution.” As will be seen anon, he was to concede now that: “When I think of everything that I have put down on paper and published over the past ten years regarding the State’s role in society, bringing the authorities under control and the revolutionary incapacity of government, I am tempted to think that my election on June 1848 was the result of incomprehension on the part of the people.”

A fortnight later, the workers from the faubourgs rose up to register their protest at the closure of the “national workshops,” a sort of work scheme that

had been devised for the purpose of reducing unemployment. But Proudhon had taken his parliamentary calling too seriously: "As for me, the memory of the June events will forever be a burden of guilt upon my heart. . . . Out of parliamentary cretinism, I failed in my duty as a representative. I was there to see and saw not: to raise the alarm and did not cry out!"

But whenever the disturbances in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine were crushed savagely by General Cavaignac's<sup>1</sup> troops, Proudhon took to the streets. He went to the Place de la Bastille. To a questioner, he replied: "I am listening for the sublime hour of cannon fire." While a terror-stricken bourgeoisie screamed hysterically, he insisted that the rebels be not slandered. He eulogized the unselfishness and lofty morality of the working classes. "The combatants of June (. . .) they used you ill who, in the name of the authorities, made you a promise that the authorities were powerless to keep."

After the June events, Proudhon was no longer quite the same man. He spoke a class language, aggressively proclaiming his socialism. From mid-July on, he was up to his neck in the fray. He mounted the parliamentary rostrum to turn it into an instrument of social struggle. "Whether it was hubris or lightheadedness," he was to write, "I reckoned that my time had come. It was up to me, I told myself, to throw myself into the whirlwind. From my seat in the audience, I hurled myself—a new actor—into the drama." He tabled a bill which was designed simultaneously to hit the rich and exonerate the poor: a one third levy upon all income, with a one-third discount on all rents or farm dues. The suggestion provoked widespread scandal. On the finance commission, "Monsieur" Thiers, the spokesman for the bourgeoisie, cut lumps out of Proudhon. On July 31, Proudhon explained himself in a great speech delivered before the assembly. Exasperated by interruptions and insults, he turned provocateur. He "questioned" the "propriety of proceeding with social liquidation," only to add: "In the event of refusal, we would proceed with the liquidation without you." (Violent grumbling). And, by way of reply to his interrupters, he added also: "When I say 'we,' I identify myself with the proletariat, and when I say 'you,' I am identifying you with the bourgeois class."

A deputy cried out; "That's social warfare!"

The speech closed with what were adjudged these inflammatory words: "Capital will not be making a comeback. Society is wise to it." Proudhon was to comment: "Which meant: the social question has been posed and you will resolve it or you will not have an end of it." "It was no longer I who was speaking from the rostrum, it was all toilers!"

The scandal created by this parliamentary outburst was tremendous and Proudhon's bill was rejected virtually unanimously by 691 votes to 2, the latter being Proudhon and a certain Greppo. Proudhon was to deliver this forceful comment: "From July 31 forward, I became, to borrow the expression of one journalist, the bogeyman. (. . .) I have been preached at, toyed with, eulogized, placarded, had my life story rehearsed, been caricatured, condemned, insulted, cursed. (. . .) In anonymous letters, the bigots have threatened me with the wrath of God: pious women have sent me blessed medals. (. . .) Petitions have been forwarded to the National Assembly, asking that I be expelled as unfit."

The by-elections of September 17, 1848 provided Proudhon with a further opportunity to espouse a clear-cut revolutionary stance. Swallowing his repugnance vis-à-vis universal suffrage yet again, he gave his endorsement through his newspaper to the candidacy of François-Vincent Raspail. A scientist renowned for his work in the fields of botany and organic chemistry, and a specialist in the medical uses of camphor, Raspail (1794–1878) had earned a reputation as "doctor to the poor" and in 1846 had been prosecuted for practicing medicine unlawfully. On February 24, 1848, he had been one of the first to march on the city hall and proclaim the Republic there. Later, he had declined all public office and gone on to launch a newspaper in which he was scathingly critical of the provisional government. Alongside Auguste Blanqui, he had been one of the leading lights behind the mighty demonstration by the popular clubs which had stormed into the Palais Bourbon on May 15, declaring the assembly dissolved and installing a short-lived insurgent government in the city hall. That same evening, along with Barbès and a handful of others, Raspail had been arrested and committed to the Vincennes fortress.

Consequently, it was as a prisoner that he offered himself to the electors of the Seine department in the partial elections. Raspail romped to victory. "Socialism," Proudhon was to relate, "made the elections of September 17. Even as everything stood ready to crush him, 70,000 men answered his call by way of protesting against the June victors, and appointed Raspail to represent them. The democratic election committee held its meetings in the offices of *Le Peuple*. In the face of an extreme backlash, the democracy adopted its most vigorous mouthpiece as its flagship. (. . .) The issue was no longer a choice between monarchy and democracy, but rather between labor and capital."

Within a few weeks, at a banquet, Proudhon proposed a resounding "toast to the Revolution." He resolutely added the adjective "socialist" to that of

“democratic,” arguing that from now on there was no way of “disentangling the Republic from socialism.” “Only the people, shifting for itself, without intermediaries, can carry through the economic Revolution launched in February.”

But the June revolt and the horrific repression of it had not just radicalized the vanguard: it had also, to a much greater extent, given a fillip to the counter-revolution. Except in the Seine department, the by-elections had favored the conservatives and a newcomer, Prince Louis Bonaparte, nephew of the great Napoleon, who successfully had himself returned by 300,000 votes across five departments. Whereupon he put himself forward as a candidate in the presidential elections of December 10.

Proudhon once again urged Raspail to run in those elections.<sup>2</sup> At first, his newspaper had urged abstention, before urging that votes be spoiled by way of protest. By then, Louis Bonaparte, General Cavaignac (the butcher from June) and the bourgeois democrat Ledru-Rollin had already declared their intentions to run. What good would it do for Raspail to run? Proudhon was to explain: “Raspail’s candidature was specifically prompted by Ledru-Rollin’s.” By voting for Ledru-Rollin, the democracy “was coming out in support of the governmental thesis and was no longer socialist. (. . .) The honor of its future opposition required that it register its protest.”

In the tide of reaction that swept the provinces of France, especially in rural areas, Ledru-Rollin’s candidature stood no chance. But, as Proudhon explains, even if it “stood no chance of success and it were up to us to contrive its failure, we should have done so.” Raspail’s candidacy was a gesture of defiance towards the bourgeois democrats who had proven themselves bankrupt in their exercise of power since the February revolution.

In the end, it was the Prince who carried the day, by a huge majority. Proudhon had this to say about this stunning result: “France has appointed Louis Bonaparte president of the Republic, because it is weary of parties, because all of the parties are moribund.” And he went on to explain that the righteous horror inspired by General Cavaignac had, in any case, “herded most democrats in the direction of Napoleon.” The Revolution had given up the ghost.

The incoming regime wasted no time before throwing Proudhon into prison. As a result of which he had plenty of time to probe and draw the lessons of the revolution’s failure. This was his chance in 1848, if not to venture quite so far as anarchy “which, like any other principle, is more indicative of an ideal than of

a reality," then at least to attack State centralization. Citizens had to be "enjoined to recover possession of themselves." "Departments and communes [had to recover] control of their affairs, control of policing, the disposition of funding and of their troops."

Unless these minimum requirements were met, "all talk of revolution was hypocrisy." But the men of 1848 "held back as they were by the general prejudice and that fear of the unknown that stalks the greatest minds, lacked daring." "The political question was devolved . . . upon the National Assembly: whereupon it was foreseeable that it would be buried there. There, the understanding was that the people, being a minor, could scarcely be trusted to its own counsel: governmentalism was upheld with increased vigor." "The flaw, the very great flaw of the government (. . .) resides in its failure to demolish. Power has to be disarmed," its "nails and teeth drawn," "half of the army let go, and troops banished from the capital." Instead of which, the government raised twenty-four battalions of the National Mobile Guard, made up of volunteers. "What then did it intend to do with all these soldiers? June was to teach us the answer to that."

Proudhon had arrived at the following libertarian conclusions from his scrutiny of the historical precedent of 1793: "Clubs had to be organized. The organization of popular societies was the fulcrum of democracy, the corner-stone of the republican order." "If there was one institution that democratic authorities should have respected, and not just respected but also fostered and organized, it was the clubs." "Everything was done the wrong way round in February (. . .) Instead of restoring to the people its fertility of initiative by subordinating the authorities to its wishes, an attempt was made to resolve, from positions of authority, matters on which time had not [enlightened] the masses." "The provisional government, having none of the genius of revolutions (. . .) wasted days and weeks on pointless trial and error, agitations and circulars." "Driven by the breath of opinion, it strove to latch on to some initiative. A dismal venture!" Aside from the odd positive measure, "everything else was merely farce, bluster, nonsense and flying in the face of common sense. We could say that power has a stultifying effect on men of intellect.

And Proudhon gave a sound thrashing to those who, like the members of the Popular Front government of 1936, had but one thought in their heads: keeping within the bounds of the law. "The whole of their ambition (. . .) has been to render a true accounting like good stewards. Haunted by the memory of '93 (. . .) not wishing to be taken for wreckers, nor to usurp the nation's sovereignty,



they have confined themselves to the maintenance of order. (. . .) They reckoned that by straying from the legal path and pitching (. . .) the people into Revolution, they would have forfeited their mandate. It was noised abroad that the Revolution was going to throw the State into disarray, that democracy was anarchy. (. . .) Rather than resort to summary, extra-legal methods against the rich (. . .) they have set integrity in the place of policy. (. . .) They were filled with honor and scruples (. . .) slaves of legality, incorruptible guardians of democratic decency.” As Colette Audry has written apropos of Leon Blum, they were determined to be “just.”<sup>3</sup> They took “delicacy to the lengths of meticulousness, respect for persons, opinions and interests to the lengths of [self-] sacrifice.”

Among the bankrupters of 1848, the one whom Proudhon bore the most animosity was Louis Blanc. In his estimation, Blanc bore the heaviest responsibility, in that he styled himself a “socialist.” On 17 March 1848, Louis Blanc had been one of the organizers of a huge popular demonstration that had attracted upwards of 100,000 workers. But he had prevented its being turned into a gauntlet thrown down to the government to compel it to take a more vigorous line with regard to those sabotaging the Revolution. Proudhon could not forgive Blanc this let-down. “What! Here we have a man convinced that the men in power, his colleagues, are hostile towards progress: that the Revolution is in jeopardy unless they are successfully replaced: he knows that opportunity is rare, and, once past, is never repeated: that he has but one chance to strike a decisive blow: and when that chance comes along, he seizes upon it only to hold back those who offer him their commitment and their muscle!” And, to conclude his embittered description, the imprisoned Proudhon lets slip this bittersweet comment: “The revolution evaporated like drawn-off alcohol.”

But this swinging criticism of its unsafe steersmen was not the only lesson that Proudhon drew from the 1848 Revolution: as we shall have occasion to see, it prompted him in his vigorous and innovative condemnation of the State and of power generally.

#### PROUDHON JOINS IN THE FRAY<sup>4</sup>

The February Revolution erupted. As indeed might be imagined, I had no inclination to throw myself into this politico-social mess where Monsieur Lamartine<sup>5</sup> was translating the commonplaces of diplomacy into poetic prose; where there was talk of bringing the whole of commerce, of industry, and soon of agriculture, one after another, into associations or State control; of buying

out all property and working it along administrative lines; of centralizing capital and competences in the hands of the State; then of carrying this governmental regime out to the peoples of Europe at the head of our victorious armies. I felt that there was greater usefulness in pressing ahead with my laborious studies behind the scenes, in the conviction that that was the only way in which I could be of service to the Revolution, and in the certainty that neither the provisional government nor the neo-Jacobins would steal a march on me.

(. . .) While I, alone of my persuasion, was slicing through the carapace of the old political economy. While P. Leroux, Villegardelle, Vidal<sup>6</sup> and a handful of others were pressing ahead in different directions with this scientific task of demolition, what were the organs of democracy up to? What were they about? Alas! Allow me to remind them, least the socialists alone bear the responsibility for the misfortunes of the Republic: they were indulging their parliamentary preoccupations. Stubbornly sidestepping social issues lest they frighten their subscribers, and preparing to cloak February in mystery. Through this deliberate oversight, they were organizing the national workshops: they were drafting the provisional government's decrees and unwittingly laying the foundations of the reasonable, moderate republic. *Le National*, no harm to it, heaping curses on socialism, was pushing through the fortifications of Paris; *La Réforme*, smugly well-meaning, was standing by universal suffrage and by the governmentalism of Louis Blanc. They were allowing utopia to flourish when it ought to have been pulled up by the roots:

(. . .) Nevertheless it took the experience of February for our Statesmen to be convinced that a revolution is not prescribed nor improvised.

(. . .) Thus, democracy spent itself in the pursuit of that power which it is precisely designed to annihilate through diffusion. All party factions had fallen, one after another; with the Executive Commission dismissed, we were on to the next generation of republicans, rubbing shoulders with the doctrinarians. Unless we could stem this retreat, or at least accommodate it within the constitutional orbit, the Republic was in peril—but that required a complete change of tack. We had to stand in opposition, and place the authorities on the defensive, widen the battlefield, and simplify the social question by generalizing it: stunning the enemy by the audacity of our proposals, henceforth lobbying the people rather than their representatives, steadfastly countering the blind passions of the reaction with the philosophical and revolutionary idea of February.

One party did not play along with this tactic: it demanded a steadfast, even eccentric individualism, a spirit forged for protest and negation. Whether it

was hubris or lightheadedness, I thought that my time had come. It was up to me, I told myself, to throw myself into the turmoil. The democrats, seduced by the memories of our glorious revolution, sought to re-enact the drama of 1789 in 1848: while they staged their comedy, we strove to make history. The Republic's fate was now in the hands of God. While one blind force was pulling the authorities in one direction, might we not manage to push society forwards down another? The directions of minds having changed, it would follow that the government, in persisting with reaction, would then, unwittingly, spark off revolution. And from my seat in the audience, I hurled myself, a new actor, into the drama.

My name had caused enough of a sensation over the preceding 18 months for me to be forgiven for offering a few explanations, a few apologies for my notoriety. For good or ill, I had had my portion of influence upon my country's fate: who could tell if that influence, stronger now precisely because it was concentrated, might yet be brought to bear? Thus it was important that my contemporaries should know what I wanted, what I had done, what I am. I am not bragging; I would simply be flattered if, after reading, my readers were to be left with the conviction that there is neither folly nor fury in my actions. The only vanity my heart has ever entertained was the belief that no man had conducted his entire life with more deliberation or more discernment than I have.

But I discovered to my cost that in the very moments when I thought myself most free, I was still, amid the torrent of political passions to which I was seeking to give some direction, merely an instrument of that immoral providence that I deny and repudiate. Perhaps the history of my deliberations, which cannot be disentangled from that of my actions, may prove of some advantage to those who, whatever their views, like to look to experience for justification of their ideas.

(. . .) The revolution of contempt brought low the government that had established the materialist principle of interests. That revolution which condemns capital, by that very action ushers and carries labor into government. Now, accordingly to the widespread prejudice, labor, having become government, ought to proceed along governmental lines: in other words, it is up to government henceforth to do that which had been done without it and in spite of it, to seize the initiative and prosecute the revolution. Because, that prejudice contends, the revolution has to come from above, since it is up above that one finds intellect and strength.

But experience testifies and philosophy demonstrates, contrary to that prejudice, that any revolution, to be effective, must be spontaneous and emanate, not from the heads of the authorities but from the bowels of the people: that government is reactionary rather than revolutionary; that it could not have any expertise in revolutions, given that society, to which that secret is alone revealed, does not show itself through legislative decree but rather through the spontaneity of its manifestations; that, ultimately, the only connection between government and labor is that labor, in organizing itself, has the abrogation of government as its mission.

(. . .) As for myself, and I make no bones about it, I have given my all to political disorganization, not out of revolutionary impatience, not out of love for some empty notoriety, not out of ambition, envy or hatred, but in anticipation of inevitable backlash and, in every instance, out of the certainty I had that democracy could achieve nothing of any good through the governmental hypothesis to which it persisted in clinging. As for the masses, meager though their intelligence might be and weak though I know their virtue to be, I found them less frightening in the midst of anarchy than at the ballot box. Among the people as among children, crimes and trespasses have more to do with shifting impressions than perversity of the soul, and I found it easier for a republican elite to complete the people's education in a setting of political chaos than to have it exercise its sovereignty, with small prospect of success, through the ballot box.<sup>7</sup>

#### **PROUDHON THE UNSEATED CANDIDATE (APRIL 1848)<sup>8</sup>**

(. . .) Along came the April elections. I deluded myself into running as a candidate. In the circular that I addressed to the voters in the Doubs, dated April 3, 1848, I stated:

The social question has been posed; you will not get out of it. If it is to be resolved, we must have men who marry the extreme of the conservative mentality with the extreme of the radical spirit. Workers, reach out to your employers; and you employers, do not shun the advances of those who were your wage-slaves. After all, what is it to you whether I have been more or less touched with good fortune. It is not enough, if I am to earn your votes, that I should have only poverty to offer, and your votes are not on the look-out for an adventurer. However, if I should fail to reveal my calamitous existence to you, who will commend me to your notice? Who will speak for me?

When I said that, the influence of democracy was still at its height. I had not awaited a turn of luck before preaching universal reconciliation as the object and meaning of socialism.

April 16 put paid to my prospects as candidate. After that dismal day, people wanted to hear no more about extreme radicalism: they preferred to compromise everything by throwing themselves into the embrace of extreme conservatism.

As a defeated candidate, a publicist without readership, I had to turn away from the press. Day in and day out, I was told; write books: they are more worthwhile than newspapers. I agree: but nobody reads books; and while the author of *La Philosophie positive*, Monsieur Auguste Comte, could scarcely muster a couple of hundred loyal followers for his course, *Le Faubourien*, *Le Pere Duchene* and *La Vraie Republique* lead the country. You spend ten years of your life writing your manuscript: 50 amateurs buy a copy, then along comes the journalist who tosses you on to the rubbish heap and that is that. Books now have no purpose other than the training of journalists; in our day, the highest form of literature is the Paris early edition, the penny dreadful.

#### **PROUDHON THE SUCCESSFUL CANDIDATE (JUNE 4, 1848)<sup>9</sup>**

When I think of everything that I have said, written and published over these past ten years regarding the State's role in society, bringing the authorities to heel and government's disqualification from revolution, I am tempted to believe that my election in June 1848 was the result of some incomprehension on the part of the people. Those ideas have been in my head ever since my earliest deliberations; they are coeval with my conversion to socialism. Study and experience have expanded upon them; they have guided me constantly in my writings and actions; they have inspired all of the actions for which I shall answer; curious that after the reassurance they offer and which is the best that an innovator has to offer, I may have appeared momentarily to the society which I take for my judge and the authorities with whom I want no truck, as a formidable agitator.

#### **AFTER THE WORKERS' REVOLT OF JUNE 1848:**

##### **PROUDHON'S CONFESSION OF GUILT<sup>10</sup>**

(. . .) This rising is of itself more terrible than any of those which have taken place over the past 60 years. . . . Thiers<sup>11</sup> was seen recommending the use of artillery to bring it to an end. Atrocious massacres have been carried out by

the Garde Mobile, the army and the National Guard. . . . The rebels have displayed indomitable courage. . . . Terror reigns in the capital. . . . In the Conciergerie, at the city hall, forty eight hours after victory,<sup>12</sup> there is shooting: they are shooting wounded, unarmed prisoners. . . . The most disgusting slanders are being peddled about the rebels in order to incite vengeance against them.

(. . .) After the June events, I raised no protest against the abuse that a few ignoramuses might have made of a few of my aphorisms and reneged upon my popular inclinations: I did not insult the dying lion. But nor did I wait for the events of June before attacking governmental tendencies, and manifesting my sympathies with intelligent conservatism. I have always had and always will have the authorities against me: are those the tactics of an ambitious man and a coward? In addition, drawing up a balance sheet for the authorities, I proved that a governmental democracy is nothing but a monarchy resuscitated.

(. . .) As for me, the memory of the June events will forever be a burden of regret upon my heart. It pains me to confess it: up until the 25th, I anticipated nothing, knew nothing, guessed nothing. Returned a fortnight before as a representative of the people, I had entered the National Assembly with all the timidity of a child and the ardor of a neophyte. Assiduously attending meetings of the bureau and committees from nine o'clock onwards, I would not leave the Assembly before evening, weary from fatigue and disgust. Ever since I had set foot on the parliamentary Sinai, I had lost all contact with the masses: as I became absorbed by my legislative tasks, I had lost sight completely of current affairs. I knew nothing either about the situation of the national workshops or the government's policy, nor the intrigues underway inside the Assembly. One would have to have spent some time in the isolator called the National Assembly to have any idea how men utterly ignorant of a country's state are nearly always the ones who represent it.

I set to work to read everything that the distribution office issued to representatives: proposals, reports, pamphlets, down to *Le Moniteur* and the *Bulletin des Lois*. Most of my colleagues on the left and the extreme left were in the same perplexed frame of mind, wallowing in the same ignorance of everyday happenings. The national workshops were spoken of only with a sort of fright, because fear of the people afflicts all who are numbered among the authorities; as far as the authorities are concerned, the people is the enemy. Every day, we voted fresh subsidies to the national workshops, shuddering at

the incompetence of the authorities and our own powerlessness.

Disastrous apprenticeship! The impact of this representative mess amid which I had to live was that I had a grasp of nothing; and on the 23rd when Flocon stated from the floor that the rising was being directed by political factions and had foreign backers, I fell for that ministerial canard; and I was still asking on the 24th whether the rising really had been prompted by the dissolution of the national workshops! No, Monsieur Senard, I was not a coward in June, the insult you flung into my face in the Assembly: I was, like you and like many another, an imbecile. Out of parliamentary cretinism, I failed in my duty as a representative. I was there to see and saw not; to raise the alarm and did not cry out. I was like the dog that failed to bark at the enemy's approach. I, elected by the plebs, a journalist of the proletariat, ought not to have left those masses without guidance and without counsel. One hundred thousand regimented men deserved my attention. That would have been better than my moping around your offices. Since then, I have done what I could to make up for my irreparable shortcoming.

# PEOPLES' ELECTION MANIFESTO

*The Manifesto below is one of the most telling of Proudhon's writings. Within it, one finds, side by side, an inspired anticipation of contemporary self-management, a somewhat utopian and, to be sure, petit bourgeois "mutualist" notion of social reorganization, a rather aberrant preoccupation with preserving property on a small scale, and a reluctance to impose taxes upon it or upon larger scale property, and, finally, a revolutionary socialist stance vis-à-vis participation in presidential elections which Proudhon regarded as a "dismal affair," and a straightforward opportunity to set out his program.*

The central electoral committee, comprising delegates from the fourteen Seine arrondissements and designed to make preparation for the election of the president of the Republic, has just concluded its operations.

Citizen Raspail, the people's representative, has been selected unanimously as the candidate of the social democratic republican party.

The central committee is to publish its circular to electors without delay.

As for ourselves, who have associated ourselves intellectually and emotionally with that candidature, who, in that context, have seen fit, in defense of the dignity of our views, to stand apart from other, less advanced factions of the democracy, we consider it our duty here to recall what our principles are: that being the best way of justifying our conduct.

Our principles!

Throughout history, men who have sought popular endorsement in order to succeed to power have abused the masses with alleged declarations of principle which, in essence, have never been anything other than declarations of promises!

Throughout history, the ambitious and scheming have, in more or less pompous language, promised the people:

Liberty, equality and

Work, family, property and progress;

Credit, education, association, order and peace;

Participation in government, equitable distribution of taxes, honest and inexpensive administration, fair courts, movement towards equality of income, emancipation of the proletariat and eradication of poverty!

So much have they promised that, coming after them, it has to be confessed, there is nothing left to be promised.



But then again, what have they delivered? It is for the people to answer: Nothing!

The true friends of the people must henceforth adopt a different tack. What the people expects of its candidates, what it asks of them, is not promises now, but practicalities.

It is upon these practicalities that they suggest men should be judged: and it is upon such that we ask that we be judged.

As socialist-democrats, we belong, in truth, to no sect, no school. Or, rather, if we were obliged to come up with a description of ourselves, we should say that we are of the critical school. For us, socialism is not a system: it is, quite simply, a protest. We believe, though, that from socialist works is dedicated a series of principles and ideas at odds with economic convention, and which have been absorbed into popular belief, which is why we call ourselves socialists. Professing socialism while embracing nothing of socialism, as the more artful do, would be tantamount to gulling the people and abusing its credulousness.

Being a republican is not the last word: it is not the last word to acknowledge that the Republic ought to be surrounded by social institutions; it is not enough to inscribe upon one's banner, DEMOCRATIC AND SOCIAL REPUBLIC—one must plainly point up the difference between the old society and the new. One has to spell out the positive product of socialism: and wherein and why the February Revolution which is the expression thereof, is a social revolution.

For a start, let us recall socialism's underlying dogma, its pure dogma.

The objective of socialism is emancipation of the proletariat and eradication of poverty, which is to say, effective equality of circumstances between men. In the absence of equality, there will always be poverty, always be a proletariat.

Socialism, which is egalitarian above all else, is thus the democratic formula par excellence. Should less honest politicians be mealy-mouthed about admitting it, we respect their reservations, but they ought to know that—in our view—they are no democrats.

Now, what can be the origin of this inequality?

As we see it, that origin has been brought to light by a whole series of socialist criticisms, particularly since Jean-Jacques [Rousseau]—that origin is the realization within society of this triple abstraction: capital, labor and talent.

It is because society has divided itself into three categories of citizen corresponding to the three terms in that formula—that is, because of the formation

of a class of capitalists or proprietors, another class of workers, and a third of talents—that caste distinctions have always been arrived at, and one half of the human race enslaved to the other.

Wheresoever an attempt has been made to separate these three things—capital, labor and talent—effectively and organically, the worker has wound up enslaved: he has been described, turn and turn about as slave, serf, pariah, plebeian and proletarian, and the capitalist has proved the exploiter. He may go variously by the name of patrician or noble, proprietor or bourgeois—the man of talent has been a parasite, an agent of corruption and servitude. At first he was the priest, then he was the cleric, and today the public functionary, all manner of competence and monopoly.

The underlying dogma of socialism thus consists of reducing the aristocratic formula of capital-labor-talent into the simpler formula of labor! . . . in order to make every citizen simultaneously, equally and to the same extent capitalist, laborer and expert or artist.

In reality as in economic science, producer and consumer are always one and the same person, merely considered from two different viewpoints. Why should the same not be true of capitalist and laborer? of laborer and artist? Separate these qualities in the organization of society and inexorably you create castes, inequality and misery; amalgamate them, on the other hand, and in every individual you have equality, you have the Republic. And that is how in the political order, all these distinctions between governors and governed, administrators and administered, public functionaries and tax-payers, etc., must some day be erased. Each citizen must, through the spread of the social idea, become all; for, if he be not all, he is not free: he suffers oppression and exploitation somewhere.

So, by what means is this great amalgamation to be brought to pass?

The means is indicated by the affliction itself. And, first of all, let us try to define that affliction better, if possible.

Since the organic origin of the proletariat and of poverty is located in the division of society into two classes: one that works and owns not; and another that owns but works not and, consequently, consumes without producing. It follows that the affliction by which society is beset consists of this singular fiction according to which capital is, of itself, productive; whereas labor, of itself, is not. In fact, for all things to be equal in this hypothesis of the separation of labor and capital, then, because the capitalist profits by his capital without working, so the worker should profit from his labor, in the absence

of capital. Now, that is not the case. So, in the current system, equality, liberty and fraternity are impossible: and thus, poverty and proletariat are the inevitable consequence of property as presently constituted.

Anyone knowing that but not confessing it is lying equally to bourgeoisie and to proletariat. Anyone courting the people's votes but keeping this from it is neither a socialist nor a democrat.

We say again:

The productivity of capital, which Christianity has condemned under the designation of "usury," is the true cause of poverty, the true origin of the proletariat, the never-ending obstacle to establishment of the Republic. No equivocation, no mumbo-jumbo, no sleight of hand! Let those who profess to be socialist democrats join us in signing this profession of faith; let them join our company. Then, and then only, will we acknowledge them as brothers, as true friends of the people, and will we associate ourselves with their every act.

And now, what is the means whereby this affliction can be eradicated, this usury terminated? Is it to be an attack upon net product, seizure of revenue? Is it to be, while professing utmost regard for property, the ravishing of property by means of levy, as it is acquired through work and enshrined by law?

It is on this count above all that the true friends of the people stand apart from those whose only wish is to command the people; it is on this count that true socialists part company with their treacherous imitators.

The means of destroying usury, is not, let us repeat, the confiscation of usury: it is by countering principle with principle, in short, by organizing credit.

As far as socialism is concerned, the organization of credit does not mean lending at interest, since that would still be an acknowledgment of capital's suzerainty: it is, rather, organizing the workers' mutual solidarity, introducing their mutual guarantees, in accordance with that vulgar economic principle that anything that has an exchange value is susceptible to becoming an article of exchange and can, in consequence, furnish the basis for credit.

Just as the banker lends money to the businessman who pays him interest upon the loan. Or the estate-owner lends his land to the peasant who pays him a rent for it.

Or the house-owner lets his tenant have lodgings in return for payment of rent. Or the merchant lets his goods go to the customer who pays on the installment plan:

So the worker lends his labor to the employer who pays him by the week or by the month. Every one of us vouchsafes something on credit: do we not talk about selling on credit, working on credit, drinking on credit?

Thus labor can make an advance of itself, and can be as much the creditor as capital can.

Furthermore, two or more workers can advance one another their respective products, and, if they were to come to an arrangement regarding permanent transactions of this sort, they would have organized credit among themselves.

This is what those labor associations are to be admired for having grasped which have spontaneously, without prompting and without capital been formed in Paris and in Lyon, and which, merely by liaising with one another and making loans to one another, have organized labor as we said. So that, organization of credit and organization of labor amount to one and the same. It is no school and no theoretician that is saying this: the proof of it, rather, lies in current practice, revolutionary practice. Thus application of one principle leads the people towards discovery of another, and one solution arrived at always opens doors to another. If it were to come about that the workers were to come to some arrangement throughout the Republic and organize themselves along similar lines, it is obvious that, as masters of labor, constantly generating fresh capital through work, they would soon have wrested alienated capital back again, through their organization and competition; they would attract to their side, to start with, small property, small traders and small industries: then large-scale property and large industries; then the very biggest ventures, mines, canals and railways: they would become the masters of it all, through the successive affiliation of producers and the liquidation of property without the proprietors' being despoiled or indemnified.

(. . .) Such is the undertaking upon which the people has spontaneously embarked before our very eyes, an undertaking that it prosecutes with admirable vigor, weathering all difficulties and the most frightful privations. And we ought not to weary of saying that this movement was initiated, not by the leaders of schools, and that the primary instigation came not from the State but from the people. We are merely its spokesmen here. Our creed, the democratic and social creed, is not a utopia any more: it is a fact. This is not our doctrine that we are preaching; these are the people's ideas that we have taken up as themes for our explorations. Those who sneer at them, who

prattle to us of association and Republic and yet do not dare to acknowledge the true socialists, the true republicans as their brothers are not of our ilk.

Committed to this idea these ten years past, we have not waited for the people to triumph before lining up on its side.

(. . .) Should the government, the National Assembly, the very bourgeoisie sponsor and assist us in the accomplishment of our undertaking, we will be grateful for that. But let none try to distract us from what we regard as the people's true interests; let none try to deceive us with the empty sham of reforms. We are too clear-sighted to fall for that again, and we know more of the workings of the world than the politicians who regale us with their admonitions.

We should be delighted if the State were to contribute through its budgetary provisions to the emancipation of the workers. We would look only with mistrust upon what is termed State organization of credit, which is, as we see it, merely the latest form of man's exploitation of his fellow-man. We repudiate State credit, because the State, in debt to the tune of eight billions, does not possess a centime that it could advance by way of a loan: because its finances repose solely upon paper of obligatory usage: because obligatory usage necessarily entails depreciation, and depreciation always hits the worker rather than the proprietor: because we associated workers or workers in the process of association, need neither the State nor obligatory usage in the organization of our intercourse: because, in the end, credit from the State is always credit from capital, not credit from labor, and still monarchy rather than democracy.

Under the arrangement suggested to us and which we reject with all of the vigor of our convictions, the State, in the awarding of credit, first has to secure capital. For such capital, it must look to property, by way of taxation. So we still have this reversion to principle when the point is to destroy it; we have displacement of wealth, when we ought to have its creation; we have withdrawal of property, after it has been declared by the constitution to be inviolable.

Let others of less advanced and less suspect ideas, meticulous in their morals, support such ideas, and we will not question their tactics. But we, who wage war, not upon the rich but upon principles: we whom the counter-revolution never wearies of vilifying; we have to be more demanding. We are socialists, not despoilers.

We do not want progressive taxation, because progressive taxation is the validation of net product and we wish to do away with net product, through

association: because, if progressive taxation fails to divest the rich man of all his wealth, it is merely a concession made to the proletariat, a sort of ransom for the right of usury, in short, a trick; and if it seizes all income, it amounts to confiscation of property, to expropriation without prior indemnification and is of no public use.

So let those who claim to be primarily politicians invoke progressive taxation by way of a reprisal against property, a punishment for bourgeois selfishness: we respect their intentions and if it should ever happen that they get the chance to implement their principles, we will bow to the will of God. As far as we representatives of those who have lost everything to the rule of capital are concerned, progressive taxation, precisely because it is an enforced restitution, is off-limits to us: we will never propose it to the people. We are socialists, men of reconciliation and progress: we seek neither reaction nor *loi agraire*.

We do not want levies upon State revenues, because such a levy is, like progressive taxation in the case of rentiers, mere confiscation, and in the case of the people, mere sleight of hand, trickery. We believe that the State is entitled to repay its debts, and thus to borrow at the lowest rates of interest: we do not think that it is licit for it, under cover of taxation, to default upon its commitments. We are socialists, not bankrupters.

We do not want taxes upon inheritance, because such a tax is likewise merely a retreat from property, and, property being a constitutional right acknowledged universally, the wishes of the majority must be respected with regard to it because that would be a trespass against the family; because, in order to emancipate the proletariat, we need not indulge in such fresh hypocrisy. Under the law of association, transmission of wealth does not apply to the instruments of labor, so cannot become a cause of inequality. So, let the assets of the deceased proprietor pass to his most distant and often his most impoverished relative. We are socialists, not stealers of inheritances.

We do not seek taxes upon luxury items, because that would be to strike a blow against the luxury industries: because luxury items are the very badge of progress: because, with labor in the ascendant and capital subordinated, luxury must extend to each and every citizen. Why, having encouraged property, would we retaliate against proprietors for their pleasures? We are socialists, not begrudgers.

(. . .) We do not want to see the State confiscate the mines, canals and railways; that would be to add to monarchy, and more wage slavery. We want the mines, canals, railways handed over to democratically organized work-

ers' associations operating under State supervision, in conditions laid down by the State, and under their own responsibility. We want these associations to be models for agriculture, industry and trade, the pioneering core of that vast federation of companies and societies woven into the common cloth of the democratic social Republic.

Nor do we want government of man by his fellow-man any more: have those who are so quick to seize upon the socialist formula given it any thought?

We want savings in State expenditure, just as we want the worker to enjoy the full range of the rights of man and the citizen, the attributes of capital and of talent. For which reason we ask for certain things that socialism suggests, and which men who purport to be particularly political fail to understand.

Politics tends to lead to specialization and indefinite proliferation of jobs: socialism tends to amalgamate them all.

Thus we believe that virtually the totality of public works can and should be carried out by the army; that such participation in public works is the primary duty that the republican youth owes to its homeland; that, as a result, the army budget and the public works budget duplicate each other. That represents a saving of more than 100 millions: politics overlooks that.

There is talk of trades education. We believe that agricultural training comes in the form of agriculture: the school for arts, crafts and manufacture is the workshop; the school for commerce is the counting-house; the mining school is the mine; the navigation school the navy; the administration school the civil service, etc.

The apprentice is as necessary to the job as the journeyman; why put him to one side in a school? We want the same education for everybody: what good are schools which the people sees as only schools for aristocrats and which represent a double drain upon our finances? Organize association, and by the same token, every workshop becomes a school, every worker becomes a master, every student an apprentice. Elite figures are turned out as well and better by the workshop as by the study hall.

Likewise in government.

It is not enough to say that one is opposed to presidency unless one also does away with ministries, the eternal focus of political ambition. It is up to the National Assembly, through organization of its committees, to exercise executive power, just the way it exercises legislative power through its joint deliberations and votes. Ministers, under-secretaries of State, departmental heads, etc. duplicate the work of the representatives, whose idle, dissipated life, given over to

scheming and ambition, is a continual source of troubles for the administration, of bad laws for society and of needless expense for the State.

Let our young recruits get this straight in their heads: socialism is the contrary of governmentalism. For us, that is a precept as old as the adage: *There can be no familiarity between master and servant.*

Besides universal suffrage and as a consequence of universal suffrage, we want implementation of the binding mandate. Politicians balk at it! Which means that in their eyes, the people, in electing representatives, do not appoint mandatories but rather abjure their sovereignty! That is assuredly not socialism: it is not even democracy.

We seek unbounded freedom for man and the citizen, along as he respects the liberty of his neighbor:

Freedom of association. Freedom of assembly.

Freedom of religion.

Freedom of the press.

Freedom of thought and of speech.

Freedom of labor, trade and industry. Freedom of education.

In short, absolute freedom.

Now, among these freedoms, there is still one that the old politics will not countenance, which makes a nonsense of all the rest! Will they tell us once and for all if they want freedom on condition or unconditional freedom?

We want the family: where is there anyone who respects it more than we do? But we do not mistake the family for the model of society. Defenders of monarchy have taught us that monarchies were made in the image of the family. The family is the patriarchal or dynastic element, the rudiment of royalty: the model of civil society is the fraternal association.

We want property, but property restored to its proper limits, that is to say, free distribution of the products of labor, property minus usury! Of that we need say no more. Those who know us get our meaning.

Such, in substance, is our profession of faith.

(. . .) And now to this small matter of the Presidency.

Assuredly, it is a serious business knowing on the one hand whether the people should vote or abstain: and, on the other, under what colors, under what profession of faith the election would proceed.

(. . .) The central electoral committee has decided unanimously to support citizen Raspail in his candidacy for the presidency.



Raspail, returned by 66,000 Parisian and 35,000 Lyonnais votes; Raspail, the socialist democrat;

Raspail, the implacable exposé of political mythologies;

Raspail, whose work in the field of healing has elevated him to the ranks of the benefactors of mankind.

In lending our backing to this candidature, we do not, as the honorable Monsieur Ledru-Rollin had written somewhere, intend to endow the Republic with a possible chief: far from it. We accept Raspail as a living protest against the very idea of Presidency! We offer him to the people's suffrage, not because he is or believes himself possible, but because he is impossible: because with him, presidency, the mirror-image of royalty, would be impossible.

Nor do we mean, in calling for votes for Raspail, to issue a challenge to the bourgeoisie which fears this great citizen. Our primary intention is reconciliation and peace. We are socialists, not muddleheads.

We back Raspail's candidacy, so as to focus the eyes of the country all the more strongly upon this idea, that henceforth, under the banner of the Republic, there are but two parties in France, the party of labor and the party of capital.

# THE AUTHORITY PRINCIPLE<sup>1</sup>

*Here, after the revolutionary tempest of 1848 had passed, Proudhon draws the lessons from it: an unanswerable indictment of the State and of authority.*

## THE GOVERNMENTAL PREJUDICE<sup>2</sup>

The form in which the earliest men thought of order within society was the patriarchal or hierarchical form, which is to say, in essence, authority and, in operation, government. Justice, which was later dissected into the distributive and commutative, at first showed itself to them under its first aspect only: a superior bestowing upon his inferiors the portion that was their due.

Thus the governmental idea arises out of family practice and domestic experience: consequently, there was no objection voiced, government appearing as natural to society as the subordination that obtains between the father and his children. Which is why Monsieur de Bonald<sup>3</sup> was correct in saying that the family is the embryo of the State, whose essential categories it reproduces: the king being the father figure, the minister being the mother, the subject the child. For that reason too, the fraternity socialists who accept the family as a building-block of society, all arrive at dictatorship, the most exaggerated form of government. Monsieur Cabet's administration in the States of Nauvoo<sup>4</sup> is a splendid example of this. How much longer will it be before we grasp this ideal connection? The primitive conception of order through government is the common property of all peoples: and while the efforts made right from the beginning to organize, curtail, and modify the operations of authority and tailor them to general needs and to circumstances, demonstrate that negation was implicit in affirmation, the certainty is that no rival hypothesis has been advanced; the spirit has remained the same throughout. As nations have emerged from the savage and barbarous state, we have seen them promptly embark upon the government path, run the gamut of institutions which are always the same, and which all the historians and publicists categorize under these successive headings: monarchy, aristocracy and democracy.

But here is a matter of greater seriousness.

The governmental prejudice having permeated every recess of the consciousness, striking the reason in its seat, every other outlook has long since been rendered impossible, and the most daring of thinkers have as a result

ventured the opinion that while government was undoubtedly a scourge, and a blight upon society, it was nevertheless a necessary evil.

Which is why, right up to our own day, the most liberating revolutions and all of freedom's stirrings have repeatedly culminated in a pledge of loyalty and submission to authority: why all revolutions have served only to reconstitute tyranny: and I no more except from this rule the Constitution of '93 than the one in 1848, even though both were the most advanced expressions of French democracy.

What has sustained this mental predisposition and made this fascination for so long invincible is that, following the supposed analogy between society and the family, government has always been presented to men's minds as the natural agent of justice, the protection of the weak and the keeper of the peace. As a result of this providential and sacrosanct attribute, government ensconced itself in men's hearts and minds alike. It became part of the mental furniture of the world: it was citizens' faith, their innermost and invincible superstition. If it should weaken, it was said of it, as it was of religion and of property: it is not the institution which is evil, but the abuse of it. It is not that the king is mischievous, it is his ministers: "AH, IF ONLY THE KING WERE AWARE!"

And so, added to the hierarchical and absolutist aspects of a governing authority, there was an ideal that addressed the soul and conspired unceasingly against the yearning for equality and independence: while the people, every time there was a revolution, thinking to effect reforms, obedient to the promptings of its heart and the vices of its government, was betrayed by its very own ideas. In the belief that it was entrusting its interests to the authorities, it had always in reality acted in its own worst interests: instead of a protector, it found itself a tyrant.

Experience shows, indeed, that always and everywhere, government, no matter how popular it may have been in its origins, has sided with the best educated and wealthiest class against the poorest and most numerous one: that after having shown its liberal face for a time, it has gradually become exceptional and exclusive: finally, that instead of securing freedom and equality for all, it has toiled doggedly at destroying these things, on account of its natural predisposition towards privilege.

(. . .) The negation of government, which is, in essence, Morelly's utopia,<sup>5</sup> which beams out a hastily extinguished light, through the sinister demonstrations of the Enragés and Hébertistes and which would have emerged from the teachings of Babeuf, had Babeuf been able to think his own principle through

and make deductions from it—that great and telling negation traversed the whole of the 19th century, all misunderstood.

But an idea is imperishable: it is forever being reborn out of its opposite (. . .) Eventually, in the fullness of political evolution, the following hypothesis was to emerge: government, merely by its practice, will give birth to Socialism as its historical postulate.

Saint-Simon<sup>6</sup> was the first to trace the connection, albeit in faltering terms and with a still vague grasp of the phenomenon:

“The human species,” he wrote in 1818,

has been fated to live first under governmental and feudal rule:

It has been doomed to pass from governmental or military rule to administrative or industrial rule, after having made sufficient progress in the positive sciences and in industry:

Finally, it has been doomed by [the manner of] its organization to pass through a long and violent crisis in the course of its transition from the military to the peaceful system.

The present time is an age of transition:

The transitional crisis opened with Luther’s preaching: since that time, minds have been of an essentially critical and revolutionary bent.

(. . .) The whole of Saint-Simon is encapsulated in those few lines, written in the style of the prophets, but too hard to digest for the times in which they were written, too condensed for the young minds which were the first to latch on to the noble innovator.

(. . .) What was Saint-Simon’s meaning?

From the moment that, on the one hand, philosophy supplants faith and replaces the old notion of government with that of contract: when, on the other hand, in the wake of a revolution that has done away with the feudal regime, society seeks to develop its economic potential and achieve harmony within it: from that moment forth, it is inevitable that government, being repudiated at the level of theory, is progressively demolished in practice. And when Saint-Simon, in describing the new order of things, keeps to the old style and employs the word “government” together with the qualification “administrative” or “industrial,” it must be obvious that the term, coming from his pen, takes on a metaphorical or rather analogical meaning to which only

the uninitiated could be blind. How could there be any misreading of Saint-Simon's thinking after reading this even more explicit passage. I quote:

If one looks at the course taken by the education of the individual, one finds, in primary schooling, that the act of governance is the primary factor: and in schooling beyond that level, one sees the act of governing the children continually lessening in intensity, while teaching plays an increasingly important role. The same has been true of the education of society. Military, which is to say feudal (governmental) action, must have been stronger in its infancy; it has always had to assert its importance: and administrative power must, of necessity, wind up triumphant over military power.

To these extracts from Saint-Simon we ought to add his famous *Parabole* which struck the world of officialdom like an ax in 1819, and in consequence of which its author was arraigned before the assizes on February 20, 1820 and acquitted. The length of that all too notorious piece prohibits us from citing it.

As may be seen, Saint-Simon's negation is not a deduction from the notion of contract, which Rousseau and his sectarians had corrupted and dishonored over an 80-year period: rather, it flows from another flash of quite experiential and a posterior intuition, as befits an observer of events. What contract theory, prompted by providential logic, had supposedly anticipated in society's future prospects ever since Jurieu's<sup>7</sup> day—to wit, the end of governments—Saint-Simon, putting in an appearance in the heyday of the parliamentary scrimmage, registers as part and parcel of the law of human evolution. Thus, the theory of right and the philosophy of history, like two surveyor's staffs planted one behind the other, led the mind towards an unknown revolution: one more step and we are grappling with the phenomenon.

(. . .) The 18th century, as I believe I have demonstrated more than amply, had it not been derailed by Rousseau's classical, backward-looking, declamatory republicanism, would, by extrapolation upon the contract idea, which is to say by the juridical route, have arrived at negation of government. Saint-Simon deduced that negation from his scrutiny of history and of the education of mankind. If I may cite myself at this point when I alone represent the datum of revolution, I in turn derive it from analysis of economic functions and from the theory of credit and exchange. In order to establish this conclusive discovery, I need not, I think, review the various books and articles wherein it is encapsulated; they have created enough of a sensation

over the past three years.

Thus the Idea, the incorruptible seed, has survived down through the ages, from time to time illuminating the man of good intentions, until the day when an intellect cowed by nothing picks it up, incubates it and then hurls it like a meteor at the galvanized masses.

The idea of contract, thrown up by the Reformation by way of a counter to the idea of government, traversed the 17th and 18th centuries without a single publicist's disclosing it, without a single revolutionary's taking it under his notice. Instead, the most illustrious elements within Church, philosophy and politics conspired to fight against it. Rousseau, Sieyès, Robespierre, Guizot, that whole school of parliamentarians, were the standard-bearers of reaction.<sup>8</sup> One man, very belatedly alerted by the degradation of the guiding principle, brought this young and fruitful idea once more into the light: unfortunately, the realistic aspect to his doctrine blinds his own disciples: they fail to see that the producer is the negation of the governor, that organization cannot be reconciled with authority: and for a further 30 years the formula was lost from sight.

(. . .) The idea of anarchy had scarcely been planted in the popular soil before there instantly sprang up so-called conservatives to water it with their calumnies, fatten it upon their violence, warm it beneath the cloches of their hatred and afford it the support of their inane reactions. Thanks to them, it has today mooted the idea of anti-government, the idea of labor, the idea of contract: it grows, it climbs, its tendrils wrap themselves around the workers' societies: and soon, like the little mustard seed in the Gospels, it will blossom into a huge tree whose branches will cover the whole of the earth.

The sovereignty of reason having replaced that of revelation: The notion of contract taking over from that of government: Historical evolution necessarily steering humanity into fresh practice: Economic criticism even now registering that under this new regime, the political institution must be absorbed into the industrial organism:

We fearlessly conclude that the formula for revolution can no longer be either direct legislation, nor direct government, nor simplified government: but is—no more government.

Neither monarchy nor aristocracy nor even democracy, insofar as this third expression might imply some government, operating in the people's name and purporting to be the people. No authority, no government, not even popular government: therein resides the revolution.

## FROM ABSOLUTE AUTHORITY TO ANARCHY

(. . .) Any idea is established or refuted by a series of terms that is, so to speak, its agent, the last term being an irrevocable demonstration of its truth or error. If evolution, instead of taking place merely in the mind, in the form of theories, is simultaneously effected through institutions and acts, it constitutes history. This is the case with the authority principle or government.

The first term in which that principle is displayed is absolute authority. That is the purest, most rational, most emphatic, frankest and, all things considered, least immoral and least irksome formulation of government.

But absolutism, in its unadorned form, is odious to reason and to liberty: throughout the ages, peoples' consciousnesses have bridled at it: in the wake of consciousness, rebellion has made its objections heard. So the principle has been forced into retreat: it has retreated step by step, through a series of concessions, each of them more inadequate than the next, the latest of which, pure democracy or direct government, amounts to impossibility and absurdity. The first term in the series being absolutism, its fateful, final term is anarchy, taken in its broadest sense.

We shall now review, one by one, the main staging-posts in this great becoming.

Humanity asks its masters: "Why do you seek to rule over me and govern me?" To which they reply: "Because society cannot do without order: because a society has need of men who are obedient and who labor, while others command and direct: because, since individual talents differ, interests conflict with one another, and passions compete and the particular advantage of the individual runs counter to the common good, there is a need for an authority to prescribe the limits of rights and duties, some arbiter to settle disputes, some public force to see that the sovereign's verdict is carried out. Now, power, the State, is precisely that discretionary authority, the arbiter that renders unto each person that which is his, the force that guarantees and enforces the peace. Government, in short, is the principle and guarantor of order in society: common sense and nature both proclaim it."

Throughout the ages, from out the mouths of all authorities, you will hear the same, unvarying message—in the tomes of the Malthusian economists, in the newspapers of the reaction and in the testimonials of republicans. The *only thing that differentiates them one from another* is the extent of the concessions they intend to make to freedom on this principle: those concessions are illusory concessions which add to so-called temperate, constitutional,

democratic etc., forms of government a seasoning of hypocrisy, the taste of which merely leaves them more unpalatable.

Thus government, in its simplicity, offers itself as the absolute, necessary, *sine qua non* condition for order. Which is why it always, regardless of what mask it may wear, aspires to absolutism: indeed, according to the principle, the stronger the government, the nearer perfect order. Those two notions—government, and order—therefore, allegedly, have a cause and effect relationship with one another: government being the cause and order its effect. That indeed was the reasoning of primitive societies.

(. . .) But that reasoning is nonetheless false, and its conclusion wholly untenable, since according to the logical classification of ideas, government's relationship with order is not at all, despite what heads of State may claim, that of cause with effect, but rather the relationship of the particular to the general. Order being the general; government being the specimen. In other words, there are several ways of looking at order: who can prove to us that order in society is that which it pleases society's masters to describe as such?

On the one hand, they invoke the natural inequality of talents, from which they arrive by inductive reasoning at the conclusion that there should be a natural inequality of conditions: on the other, they cite the impossibility of reducing divergent interests to unity and of reconciling sentiments.

But at best that antagonism should be viewed as a problem to be resolved, not as a pretext for tyranny. Inequality of talents? Divergence of interests? Well now, you sovereigns with your crowns, fasces and sashes, that is precisely what we mean by the social question: and do you believe that it can be banished by baton and bayonet? Saint-Simon was quite right to take those two words, governmental and military, as being synonymous. Government bringing order to society is Alexander cutting the Gordian knot with his sword.

Who then, ye shepherds of the peoples, authorizes your belief that the problem of contradictory interests and unequal talents admits of not resolution? That class differences naturally follow from them? And that, in order to preserve that natural and providential differentiation, force is not merely necessary but legitimate? I contend, on the contrary—and all those whom the world describes as utopians because of their repudiation of your tyranny contend with me—that a solution to that problem can be found. Some have thought to discover it in community, others in association, still others in massive industrialization. For my own part, I say that the it lies in the organization



of economic forces under the aegis of the supreme law of contract. Who tells you that none of these hypotheses is true?

By way of a counter to your governmental theory, which has no derivation other than your ignorance, no principle other than a sophistry, no method other than force, no purpose other than exploitation of human endeavor, of the progress of labor and of ideas, you place in my mouth this liberal theorem: find some form of compromise which, reducing divergence of interests to unity, identifying the particular good and the general good, substituting inequality of education for innate inequality, resolves all political and economic contradictions; where every individual is equally and synonymously producer and consumer, citizen and prince, administrator and administered: where his freedom is forever expanding, without his being required ever to forswear any of it: where his well-being increases indefinitely, without his being able to suffer trespass by society or his fellow-citizens against either his property, his labor, his income or his interest, "opinion" or sentiment-based dealings with his neighbors.

What! Such specifications strike you as impossible to meet? The social contract, when you think of the terrifying multitude of relationships that it has to regulate, seems to you the most unfathomable thing conceivable, something akin to the squaring of a circle and to perpetual motion. Which is why, war-weary, you lapse again into absolutism, into force.

Consider however that if the social contract can be agreed between two producers—and who could doubt that, reduced to such simple terms, it would be susceptible to resolution?—it can be agreed between a million too, since we are still talking about the same commitment, the number of signatories, while rendering it more and more effective, adding to it not one iota. Whereupon your powerlessness argument falls apart: it is laughable and leaves you without a defense.

In any event, you men of power, this is what the producer, the proletarian, the slave, the man whom you would have work in your place, has to say to you: I ask for no man's property and no man's *brasse*,<sup>9</sup> and am not disposed to countenance the fruits of my labors becoming another man's prey. I too want order, every bit as much as, and more than, those who breach it with their alleged government: but I want it to be a product of my will, a condition of my labor and a testimonial to my reason. I will never tolerate its coming from someone else's will, foisted upon me with servitude and sacrifice as its preconditions.

## ON LAWS

In the face of the impatience of peoples and the imminence of rebellion, government was forced to yield: it promised institutions and laws: it has stated that its most fervent wish was that everyone might enjoy the fruits of his labor in the shade of his vine or of his fig tree. Its position required as much of it. Since, in fact, it posed as judge of the law, sovereign arbiter of men's fates, it could not purport to lead men according to its whim. King, president, directory, committee, popular assembly—whatever—power must have a code of rules to live by; without that, how can it ever establish discipline among its subjects? How can citizens abide by its order, if they are not notified of it: if, right after being notified, it is rescinded: if it should change from day to day, from hour to hour?

The government, then, has to make laws, that is to say, impose limits upon itself: because everything that is a rule for the citizen becomes a limitation upon the prince. He will pass as many laws as he finds interests: and since interests are beyond number and the relationships that are struck up multiply into infinity, and there is no end to antagonism, the law-making will have to operate non-stop. Laws, decrees, edicts, ordinances, writs will shower down upon the poor people like hailstones. After a time, the political ground will be covered with a layer of paper, which the geologists need only register as the "papyraceous" formation in the earth's rotations. In three years, one month and four days, the Convention issued 11,600 laws and decrees: the Constituent Assembly and Legislative Assembly were scarcely any less prolific: the Empire and governments since have done likewise. At present, the *Bulletin des Lois* registers, they say, upwards of 50,000; if our representatives were to do their duty that enormous figure would soon be doubled. Do you think that the people and the Government itself can preserve its reason in this maze?

True, we have come a long way since the primitive institution. In society, the government plays, so they say, a father's role: now, what father ever bothered to enter into a compact with his family? To issue a charter to his children? To strike a balance of power between himself and their mother? In his governance, the paterfamilias is prompted by his heart: he does not prey upon his children but supports them through his own toil: by his love, he considers nothing except his family's interests and circumstances: the law to him is what he wishes, and everyone, mother and child, trust in that. The petty State would be lost, if there was the slightest resistance to the father's actions, if those actions were limited in their prerogatives and predetermined in their effects. What! Might

it be that the government is not a father to the people because it is subject to regulations, makes compromises with its subjects and makes itself the prime slave of a rationale—be it divine or popular—which is not its own?

Were that the case, I do not see why I should conform to the law myself. Who offers me a guarantee of its justice and sincerity? Whence does it come to me? Who made it? Rousseau teaches correctly that in a truly democratic and free government, the citizen, in obeying the law, is obeying only his own will. Now, the law has been made without my participation, and in spite of my absolute dissent, regardless of the trespass it may inflict upon me. The State does not negotiate with me; it offers nothing in return, it holds me to ransom. So where are the ties, of conscience, reason, passion or interest that place me under an obligation?

But what am I saying? Laws—for him who thinks for himself and should be accountable for his own actions only, laws for him who aims to be free and feels called to become so? I stand ready to negotiate, but I want no part of laws: I acknowledge none: I protest against every order with which some authority may feel pleased on the basis of some alleged necessity to over-rule my free will. Laws! We know what they are and what they are worth. Gossamer for the mighty and the rich, fetters that no steel could smash for the little people and the poor, fishing nets in the hands of government.

You say that few laws will be passed and that they will be kept simple and be good ones. There we have another concession. The government really must be guilty if it admits its trespasses like that!

A small number of laws and excellent laws at that? Impossible. Must not government regulate every interest, sit in judgment of every challenge? Now, by the very nature of society, interests are innumerable, relations variable and infinitely fluid: So how can there be only a few laws made? How could they be straightforward? How could the best of laws not soon be despicable?

They talk of simplification. But if there can be simplification on one count, there can be simplification on another: instead of a million laws, one will do. And what might that law be? Do not do unto others that which you do not wish done unto yourself. The law of the prophets. But obviously that is no longer a law: its is the basic formula of justice, the rule governing all intercourse. So legislative simplification brings us back to the idea of contract and consequently to negation of authority. Indeed, if the law is singular, if it resolves all of society's antinomies, if it has everybody's consent and endorsement, it will suffice for the social contract. In promulgating it, you are

proclaiming the end of government. So who is stopping you from proceeding at once with this simplification?

### THE REPRESENTATIVE SYSTEM

(. . .) There are not two sorts of government, any more than there are two sorts of religion. Government is government by divine right or it is not: just as religion is from Heaven or it is not. Democratic government and natural religion are two contradictions, unless one would rather look upon them as two mystifications. The people no more has a consultative voice in the State than in the Church: its part is to obey and to believe.

Also, just as principles cannot fail and men are alone in enjoying the privilege of inconsequentiality, so government, according to Rousseau, as well as under the '91 Constitution and all succeeding ones, is still, regardless of the election procedure, only government by divine right, a mystical and supernatural authority over-riding freedom and conscience, while seeming to woo their support.

Follow this logic:

Inside the family, where authority is implanted in men's hearts, government proceeds from procreation:

In savage and barbarous settings, it proceeds from patriarchy, which meets the preceding definition, or of force:

In priestly settings, it proceeds from belief;

In aristocratic settings, it proceeds from primogeniture, or caste;

In Rousseau's system, which has come to be ours, it proceeds from fate, or numbers.

Procreation, force, belief, primogeniture, fate, numbers—all of them equally unintelligible and unfathomable things, which it is pointless to reason about and which we would do better to just accept: these are, I will not say the principles—authority like liberty recognizes only itself as a principle—but the different modalities by which power is bestowed in human societies. For every primitive, superior, preceding and incontrovertible principle, the popular instinct has, down through the ages, always looked for an expression that was equally primitive, superior, preceding and incontrovertible. As regards the production of power, force, belief, heredity or numbers are the fluid forms assumed by this ordeal; they are the judgments of God.

So, do numbers make a more rational, more authentic, more moral appeal to your mind than belief or force? Does the ballot box seem more reliable to you than tradition or heredity? Rousseau rails against rule of the strongest, as if force, rather than numbers, represented usurpation. But then what are numbers? What is the index of them? What are they worth? What is the relationship between the more or less unanimous and genuine views of voters and that thing which lords it over every opinion, every vote, truth and right?

What! That thing is all that I hold most dear, my liberty, my labor, the survival of my wife and children; and when I try to come to an accommodation with you, will you defer it all to a congress whose formation is entrusted to the whim of fate? When I show up ready to enter into a contract, are you telling me that we have to elect arbiters who, without knowing me, and without hearing from me, will determine my innocence or guilt? I ask you, what has that congress to do with me? What assurances can it offer me? Why should I make the huge and irrecoverable sacrifice to its authority of accepting whatever it will have been pleased to determine is the expression of my wishes, the just measure of my rights? And whenever that congress, at the end of proceedings of which I hear not one word, should venture to force its decision upon me as law, and proffer me that law at the point of a bayonet, let me ask, if it be true that I am a part of the sovereign, what becomes of my dignity? And if I am to regard myself as a supplicant, what becomes of contract?

The deputies, it is argued, will be the most capable, most upright, most independent men in the land: selected on that basis by an elite of citizens who have the most interest in order, liberty, the welfare of the workers and progress. A cleverly devised initiative, which is dependent upon the candidates' kind hearts!

But why might the honorable bourgeois who make up the middle class have a better grasp of my true interests than I do? Look, what is at stake is my labor, the exchange of my labor, the thing which, next to love, is least tolerant of authority. (. . .)

(. . .) And you are going to hand over my labor, my love, by proxy and without my consent! Who can assure me that your proxies will not use their privilege to turn power into an instrument of exploitation? Who can guarantee me that their small number will not deliver me up, bound hand and *foot and in conscience*, to corruption? And should they refuse to succumb to corruption, should they manage to make the authorities see reason, who can guarantee me that the authorities will be willing to give way?

## ON UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE

(. . .) The solution has been found, cry the undaunted. Let every citizen participate in the ballot; there is no power capable of standing in their path, no seduction capable of corrupting them. So thought the founders of the Republic after February.

A few add: let the mandate be binding and the representative liable to recall at all times: and the law's integrity will be guaranteed and the law-maker's loyalty assured.

Drawing us into the mess.

I have no belief at all—and with good cause—in the sure-footed intuition of the multitude which is supposed to enable it to discern the candidates' merits and worthiness at a glance. There are examples galore of persons elected by acclamation who, even as they strode the platform to parade before the intoxicated onlookers, were at work on the hatching of their betrayals. The people would be doing well if at its rallies it could pick out one honest man for every ten scoundrels. . . .

But, once again, what are all these elections to me? What need have I of proxies, or indeed of representatives? And since I must set out my wishes, can I not articulate them without help from anyone? Will the cost to me be any greater, and will I not be all the surer of myself than of my advocate?

I am told that the thing must be settled: that it is not feasible for me to look to such a diverse range of interests; that, when all is said and done, a whole panel of arbiters whose membership will have been appointed by the unanimous vote of the people, holds out the promise of an approximation to truth and right that is much superior to the justice of an unaccountable monarch, as represented by insolent ministers and magistrates whose tenure places them, like the prince, far beyond my reach.

For a start I see no need to settle at that price: above all, I do not see it as being settled. Neither election nor vote, even should they be unanimous, resolve nothing. We have had recourse to both, to varying degrees, over the past sixty years, and what have we settled? What have we even defined? What illumination has the people obtained from its assemblies? What guarantees has it won? Say that its mandate comes up for renewal ten times a year, and there is a monthly re-endorsement of its municipal officers and judges—would that increase its income by as much as one farthing? Would it go to bed each evening more confident that there would be food on the table the next day,

food for its children? Could it even answer that it will not be facing arrest and being dragged off to prison?

I appreciate that on matters not susceptible to normal resolution, or with regard to mediocre interests and trivial incidents, there should be reference to an arbitrator's verdict. Such compromises have the moral consolation of testifying to the presence in men's souls of something loftier than justice—the sentiment of fraternity. But in matters of principle, apropos of the very essence of rights and the direction with which society is to be endowed: apropos of the organization of industrial forces: apropos of my labor, my subsistence, my life: apropos of the very hypothesis of government that we are dealing with—I recognize no conclave: I want to shift directly and individually for myself: universal suffrage strikes me as a real lottery.

### GOVERNMENT AND PEOPLE

(. . .) Let me pass right on to the final hypothesis. Whereby the people, restored to absolute authority and acknowledging itself in its entirety as the despot, would deal with itself accordingly: where, as a result, it would amass all powers, as is only fair, and vest all authority—legislative, executive, judicial and otherwise, if such there be—in itself: where it would make all of the laws, issue all the decrees, ordinances, edicts, writs and judgments: issue all the orders: take to its bosom all its agents and functionaries, from the top of the hierarchy to the bottom: conveying its wishes directly to them without intermediary: overseeing and ensuring that those wishes were implemented, by imposing proportionate responsibility upon everybody: would sit in judgment of all endowments, civil lists, pensions and incentives: would, finally, as *de facto* and *de jure* king, enjoy all the honors and prerogatives of sovereignty—power, money, pleasure, leisure, etc.

(. . .) Regrettably, that set-up, which is, I dare say, generally and in its details, beyond reproach, runs up against an insurmountable difficulty in practice.

Because a government implies a converse term, and if the people as a body, *qua* sovereign, becomes the government, we will search in vain for the governed. The object of government is, let us remind ourselves, not to reduce the divergence of interests to unity—in which respect it acknowledges its utter incompetence—but rather to maintain order in society, in spite of conflict of interests. In other words, the object of government is to make up for absence of economic order and industrial harmony. So should the people, in the interests of its liberty and sovereignty, take charge of the government, it can no longer

concern itself with production, since, by the very nature of things, production and government are two irreconcilable factors, and attempting to marry them together would be tantamount to sowing division everywhere. So, once again, where will the producers be? Where will the governed be? Where the administered? Where the judges? Or the executed?

(. . .) We must move on to the extreme hypothesis, whereby the people joins the government en masse, exercising every authority and spends all of its time in deliberations, voting and implementing, like in an insurrection, of one mind throughout, with nothing above it—not president, not representatives, not commissioners, not the *pays legal* and not the majority: in short, where it alone, as a body, makes the laws and is the sole functionary.

But if the people, thus organized for the exercise of power, effectively no longer has anything above it, let me ask this: what does it have beneath it? In other words, where is government's converse? Where are the farmers, the industrialists, the businessmen, the soldiers? Where are the toilers and the citizens?

Will it be the contention that the people is everything at once, that it produces and legislates simultaneously, that labor and government are conjoined within it? Which is an impossibility. Because since government on the one hand has the divergence of interests as its *raison d'être*, and on the other—no resolution involving authority of majority being admissible—the people alone and without exception is competent to pass laws, then, as the debate attending legislation will be dragged out by the sheer numbers of the law-makers, and since the affairs of State will be inflated as a direct consequence of the numbers of statesmen, there will be no time left over for citizens to attend to their industrial duties: it will take all of their time—and then some—to deal with the business of government. There is no middle ground: one either works or one rules.

(. . .) This, moreover, is how things were done in Athens, where, over a number of centuries, save for a few intervals of tyranny, the people as a body went to the public square to engage in discussions from morning to evening. But the 20,000 citizens of Athens who were sovereign, had 400,000 slaves to do the work for them, whereas the French people has no one in its service and a thousand times as much business to transact as the Athenians. Let me repeat my question: apropos of what will the people-become-legislator-and-prince make laws? On behalf of which interests? To what end? And while it is governing, who is to feed it? (. . .) The people as a body becoming the State,



the State loses all reason to exist, in that there is no people left any more: the governmental equation then adds up to . . . zero.

### AWAY WITH AUTHORITY

Is the principal, crucial idea of this revolution not, in effect—away with authority, whether in the Church, the State, over the land, or over money?

Now, no more authority means that one has never seen and never grasped the compatibility of the interests of the individual with the interests of all, the identity between collective sovereignty and sovereignty of the individual.

No more authority! which is to say no more repayment of debts, the abolition of servitude, the lifting of mortgages, farm rents returned, dues payable to church, courts and State all done away with; interest-free loans, free trade, freedom of association, fixed share prices; guaranteed inexpensive education, work, property and housing; an end to antagonism, to war, to centralization, to government, to priests. Is that not society knocked off its axis, working in reverse, turned upside down?

No more authority! Which means free contract in place of absolutist law; voluntary compromise instead of State arbitration; equitable and reciprocal justice, instead of sovereign distributive justice; rational morality, instead of revealed morality; the balance of forces replacing the balance of powers: economic unity instead of political centralization. Once again, is not that what I will venture to call a complete overhaul, a turn-around, a revolution?

One can get the measure of the gap between these two systems from the difference between their styles.

One of the most solemn moments in the evolution of the authority principle was when the Ten Commandments were handed down. The voice of an angel commands the people prostrate at the foot of Mount Sinai:

Thou shalt adore the Eternal one, and none but Him. Thou shalt swear by Him only.

Thou shalt mark his feast days by idleness and thou shalt pay him His tithe. Thou shalt honor thy father and thy mother.

Thou shalt not kill.

Thou shalt not steal.

Thou shalt not commit fornication. Thou shalt do no wrong.

Thou shalt not be covetous and bear no false witness.

For this is the Eternal's ordinance, and it is the Eternal who has made thee what thou art. The Eternal alone is the only wise and worthy sovereign. The Eternal

punishes and rewards. The Eternal can make thee happy or unhappy.

All legislation has borrowed this style and all, when speaking to man, employ the sovereign formula. Hebrew gives its commands in the future tense, Latin in the imperative form, Greek in the infinitive. The moderns do likewise (. . .) whatever the law, from whatever mouth it emanates, it is sacred once it has been uttered by that fateful trump which is, in our day, the majority.

“Thou shalt not gather together:

Thou shalt not publish:

Thou shalt not read:

Thou shalt respect thy representatives and the functionaries whom the result of the count or the whim of the State will have given thee:

Thou shalt obey the laws which their wisdom will have made for thee:

Thou shalt faithfully pay thy taxes:

And thou shalt love the government, thy lord and thy God, with all thy heart, all thy soul and all thy mind: because the government knows better than thee what thou art, what thou deservest, what is appropriate for thee, and it has the power to punish those who offend against its commandments, as well as to reward, even unto the fourth generation, those whom it favors.”

O personality of man! Can it be that you have been wallowing in such abjection for the past 60 centuries! You claim to be blessed and sacred, and you are only the tireless, cost-free prostitute of your servants, your monks and your henchmen. You know it and it pains you! To be governed is to be watched over, inspected, spied upon, directed, legislated for, regulated, penned up, indoctrinated, preached at, monitored, assessed, censured and commanded by beings who boast neither the entitlement, the expertise or the virtue.

To be governed is to be, at every wheel and turn and every movement, noted, registered, inventoried, priced, stamped, rated, appraised, levied, patented, licensed, authorized, annotated, admonished, thwarted, reformed, overhauled and corrected. It is to be, on the pretext of public usefulness and in the name of the general interest, taxed, exercised, ransomed, exploited, monopolized, brow-beaten, pressured, bamboozled and robbed: then, at the slightest sign of resistance, at the first murmur of complaint, repressed, fined, vilified, irritated, hounded, reprimanded, knocked senseless, disarmed, garroted, imprisoned, shot, mown down, tried, convicted, deported, sacrificed, sold, betrayed and, to cap it all, toyed with, gulled, offended and dishonored. So much for government, so much for its justice, so much for its morality! And to think that there are among us some democrats who claim that government

is a good thing: socialists who, in the name of liberty, equality, and fraternity support this ignominy: proletarians who put themselves forward as candidates for the presidency of the Republic! Such hypocrisy! . . . Revolution is quite another matter. The quest for first causes and final causes has been stricken from economic science as it has also from the natural sciences.

In philosophy, the idea of progress is supplanting the idea of the absolute.

The Revolution is taking over from revelation.

Reason, abetted by experience, discloses the laws of nature and of society to man; then says:

These laws are the laws of inevitability itself. No man had a hand in their making: no one foists them upon you. They have been discovered little by little, and my only purpose is to bear witness to them. If you abide by them, you will be just and good: if you breach them, you will be unjust and mischievous. I have no other incentive to offer you (. . .) You are at liberty to accept or refuse.

If refuse it is, you belong to the company of savages. Withdrawing from the communion of the human race, you become suspect. You have no protection. At the slightest insult, the first person to come along can strike you, without attracting any accusation other than having needlessly used violence on a brute beast.

If, on the other hand, you enter into the compact, you are part of the society of free men. All of your brethren enter into a commitment with you, promising you loyalty, friendship, assistance, service and trade. . . .

Which is what the social contract adds up to.

# PROUDHON AND WORKER

## CANDIDATES (1863–1864)

The texts we are about to present below (the Manifesto of the Sixty, and Proudhon's two letters to the workers) revolve around a tactical electoral issue: Should the ballot box be used as a weapon against Napoleon III's dictatorship, or not? But the controversy goes a lot further back: and is heavy with implications for the future. For one thing it signals the opening of a breach between the working class and the stalwarts of bourgeois democracy—its determination, more or less faltering as yet, to assert itself politically as a “separate” class; then again, it pits, one against the other, two contrasting views of workers' political action: anarchist abstentionism, and socialists' emancipation through the ballot box.

When the imperial regime held general elections on May 31 and June 1, 1863, there had been no consultation of the electorate since 1857. On which occasion, although the support of the peasantry had been secured in the vast majority of provinces, in Paris the victory had nonetheless been a narrow one: the regime won by 110,536 votes as against the 96,299 for the democratic opposition. Five liberal deputies had thus been returned. They included Proudhon's friend, Alfred Darimon. But Proudhon had stayed in the background, and, while the “democratic-socialist” candidate owed his election to the prestige of his mentor, he had not, however, enjoyed his support.

In 1863 Napoleon III had decided to consult the country once more, because what was described as the “authoritarian Empire” was afflicted by aging and venality. The despot also felt a need to revive a sham parliamentary life in the country and to bolster His Majesty's overly fragile opposition. In Paris, the results of the poll were celebrated by democrats who secured a quite considerable majority: taking 153,000 votes in comparison with the Imperial authorities' 82,000. In France as a whole, 35 deputies from the opposition were returned to the legislature.

According to Proudhon, at least half of those 153,000 votes had come from the working class. Yet no working man was elected. Of the nine candidates from the list of victors in Paris—of the democrats, six were journalists or men of letters and three were lawyers. However, a workers' committee had been appointed with worker candidates, including Henri Tolain, an engraver, who

would very shortly figure among the founders of the First International. In a memorable pamphlet entitled *A Few Facts about the Paris Elections*, Tolain offered this explanation: “The loud voice of universal suffrage is all we have with which to make ourselves heard. . . . The people wants to govern itself. . . . What can the people expect . . . if it does not take its affairs into its own hands?” But the worker candidates won only a derisory number of votes (one got 332, another only 11: Tolain had withdrawn his candidacy a fair while before the election). The bourgeois democracy looked upon these candidacies with such contempt that its spokesman, Jules Ferry, in his pamphlet *The Election Contest of 1863*, quite simply passed over them without a mention.

Proudhon adopted tactics that were very much his own, the tactics of active abstention. He was the driving force behind an abstentionist committee whose activity was intense: meetings, handbills, posters, all crowned by a cracking manifesto, and publication, on the eve of the election, of a pamphlet bearing his name and entitled *Sworn Democrats and Refractories*. He was astute enough not to rehearse his anarchistic ideas on the topic and took care not to attack the very principle of universal suffrage “the democratic principle par excellence.” But, he reasoned, under the Empire, universal suffrage could not operate with complete independence, on a number of grounds which he went on to enumerate: the absence of freedom of assembly, of press freedom, and of municipal freedom. Electoral legislation tailored to suit the authorities made a nonsense of the vote. Finally, and above all else, candidates were manipulated into pledging oaths of loyalty to the Emperor.

Against that backdrop, abstention was, as far as the voter was concerned “a culpable gesture of indifference or sterile dignity,” merely “an act of conservation, an appeal to law and entitlement.” It was “an essential faculty of the voter.” “Part of electoral law.” “Merely a declaration by the country to the government that, in this context . . . the voters’ vote means that the head of the Empire renounces this dictatorship and simultaneously calls upon citizens to do their electoral duty and perform a true act of sovereignty.”

In passing, Proudhon was to shoot down recourse to plebiscite on tendentious or deliberately misconstrued issues, and his criticisms would be equally applicable under Gaullism: “Abstention or silent voting . . . are to be obligatory, being the pre-condition, the prime and most sacred of duties, when the *matter put to the vote* is equivocal, insidious, inopportune or unlawful.” And Proudhon concluded:

From the present essay and from the abstention committees . . . it will be apparent that there exists an elite that . . . declines to vote, and which bases its refusal upon the fact that universal suffrage, freedom's instrument and guarantee, would turn against it if the vote's guarantees were less than full and its forms less than sincere.

But this language, which was in danger of seeming a touch aristocratic, went unheeded by the popular electorate. In the Seine department, there were only 4,556 spoiled votes, and, across the country, "passive" abstentions, which had numbered 143,000 in 1857, plummeted to 86,000. However, the 4,556 spoiled votes themselves far outnumbered the few hundreds cast for the worker candidates.

On March 20 and 21, 1864, there were follow-up elections. Once again Tolain placed a workers' candidacy before the electors of Paris—his own—and this time he did not back out. He won only 424 votes. As in the previous year, the worker candidates had been sacrificed to candidates from the bourgeois democracy, who had two deputies returned. By way of backing for Tolain's candidacy, a 60-member workers' committee had drafted a Manifesto. This is the text with which we open and which was to be passed down to posterity as the first public expression of the working class's consciousness.

To begin with, Proudhon was enthusiastic as he read this document. But a second glance diminished his ardor and praises. In his view, this arrival on stage by the "worker plebs" was "at once a great victory and a great failing." He set out his reasoning in a book expressly written for the occasion; published in its unfinished form a little after his death, it was his political testament, *On The Political Capacity of the Working Classes*.

The authors of the *Manifesto*, Proudhon explained there, had not "promoted and proposed the candidacy of one of their number other than on the basis of his worker status." Being a worker, they reckoned that he "represented the working class better than anybody." The significance of this action did not elude the perspicacious Proudhon: "Let me say that this gesture . . . is indicative in the working classes of a hitherto unprecedented revelation, of its cooperative consciousness: proof that half and more of the French nation has stepped on to the political stage, bearing an idea which, sooner or later, must transform society and government from top to toe. . . . A social phenomenon of incomparable transcendence has been made manifest inside society: the arrival in political life of the most numerous and poorest class, hitherto scorned as possessed of no consciousness."

But after paying that tribute, Proudhon nevertheless took issue with the “Sixty.” Not unreasonably, he saw the 1863–1864 elections as a “real low blow,” “a sort of comedy laid on in order to buy time and harness the Revolution,” “the instrument of a political deal.” It was senseless to enter the imperial system. Instead, what was required was a radical breach with the authorities. As for the democratic opposition, he was scathing: their candidates made their stand “on the terrain of imperial legality.” “They represent nothing, mean nothing and know nothing.” The opposition’s policy was “in principle, its professed anti-socialism.” The worker candidates had made the mistake of holding out the olive branch to this opposition and offering it their support.

### PARIS, ONE ELECTION EVENING (JUNE 1, 1863)

Monday, June 1, 1863, around ten in the evening: Paris is in the grip of a muffled agitation, reminiscent of that of July 26, 1830 and February 22, 1848. However unmoved one might be by impressions on the streets, one would have thought oneself on the eve of a battle. On every side, Paris, returning to political life after a 20-year interval, was waking from her slumbers, feeling herself alive, stirred by the breath of revolution.

Ah!—cried those who had set themselves up as leaders of the movement—Paris right then was Monsieur Haussman’s new, monotonous, tiresome city, with its ramrod-straight boulevards and its gigantic hotels and magnificent but deserted quays with its sluggish river bearing only stones and sand to its railway stations which, in replacing the ancient city’s gates, have destroyed its *raison d’être* with her gardens, her new theaters, her new barracks, her tarmac, her legions of street-sweepers and her frightful dustiness. This was the old Paris, whose specter appeared by starlight to booming cries of “Long live liberty!”

Paris then, watchful guardian over the nation’s freedoms, had arisen to the summons of her orators and answered the importuning of the government with the driest of rebuttals. Independent candidates had scored a formidable majority. The democratic list had been returned to a man; the results of the count were known. The administration had been defeated: its men had been rejected by some 153,000 votes to 82,000. The people, responsible for this coup, mulled over its success: the bourgeoisie had been split: one segment had indicated uneasiness, the other allowed its delight to erupt.

—Some coup! said one. What a slap in the face!

—A serious business, added another. Very serious. Paris being with the opposition, the Empire has lost its capital. . . .

( . . . ) Then, on June 1, 1863, there was an eclipse of the moon. The sky was splendid, the evening magnificent. Tender and light, the breeze seemed to share the refreshing, not to say, harmless earthly emotions. The whole of Paris was able to monitor the phases of the phenomenon which, having begun at 56 minutes past nine—just as the polling booths were completing the count—was all over by 16 minutes past one in the morning.

—Thus, opined the wits, is despotism eclipsed by liberty. Democracy has reached out its great hand and a shadow has fallen over the star of December 2: hierophant-like, M. Pelletier, one of those elected and today the parliament's most irritating orator as far as those who read his words or listen to them are concerned, did not fail, in one of his pamphlets, to interpret the threat in this augury.

—More a case, retorted the losers, of the eclipse of Paris's reason. It's a repeat of your fiascoes of 1830 and 1848, and it may well turn out worse for you than in 1830 and 1848!

### MANIFESTO OF SIXTY WORKERS FROM THE SEINE DEPARTMENT (FEBRUARY 17, 1864)

On May 31, 1863, the workers of Paris, more preoccupied with the opposition's victory than with their selfish interests, cast their votes for the list published in the newspapers. Without hesitation, without haggling over their support and prompted by their devotion to liberty, they offered startling and irrefutable evidence of it. And so the opposition's victory was complete, just as had ardently been desired, but it was assuredly more overwhelming than many had dared hope.

A worker candidate was fielded, it is true, but championed with a moderation that everyone was forced to acknowledge. Only secondary and partisan arguments were advanced in his defense, in view of an exceptional situation that afforded these general elections an especial character: his defenders refrained from raising the widespread problem of poverty. It was with a huge store of propaganda and arguments that the proletariat attempted to make its presence felt: the proletariat, that bane of modern society, even as slavery and serfdom were the banes of Antiquity and the Middle Ages. Those who acted thus had foreseen their defeat, but they saw fit to blaze a trail. It seemed



to them that such a candidature was necessary if the profoundly democratic mentality of the great city was to prosper.

In the forthcoming elections, the situation will no longer be the same. By having nine deputies returned, the liberal opposition has been largely gratified in Paris. No matter who they were, selected on the same basis, the newly elected would add nothing to the import of the vote on May 31. Whatever their eloquence, it could scarcely add to the roar emanating today from the slick and sparkling words of the opposition's orators. There is not a single item of the democratic program that we would not be as eager as they to see realized. And let us state once and for all: we employ that word, democracy, in its most radical and clear-cut sense.

But whereas we are in agreement on policy, can the same be said of social economy? The reforms we seek, the institutions we demand and the freedom to found them, are these accepted by all who represent the Liberal Party in the legislative body? That is the rub, the Gordian knot of the situation. One fact offers a peremptory and painful demonstration of the difficulties attending the workers' position. In a country where the Constitution is founded upon universal suffrage, in a land where everyone invokes and advocates the principles of '89, we are compelled to justify worker candidates, to spell out in detail and at some length the hows and the whys, simply in order to ward off, not just unfair charges that we are faint-hearts and out-and-out conservatives, but indeed the fears and misgivings of our friends.

Universal suffrage has marked our coming of age politically, but we have yet to emancipate ourselves socially. In France, a democratic country, that liberty which the Third Estate was able to win with so much vigor and perseverance, must be extended to every citizen. Equality of political rights necessarily implies equality of social rights. It has been repeated time and time again: there are no classes any more: ever since 1789, all Frenchmen are equal before the law.

But we who have no property beyond our arms, we who suffer, on a daily basis, the lawful or arbitrary conditions of capital, we who live under emergency legislation such as the law on combinations and Article 1781 which infringe our rights as well as our dignity, we find it hard to credit that claim.

We who, in a country where we have the right to choose our deputies, *still do not* have the wherewithal to learn to read: we who, being unable to assemble or enter freely into association, are powerless to organize apprenticeship training, and who watch as that priceless tool of industrial progress turns

into a privilege of capital, cannot afford to delude ourselves so.

We whose children often spend their younger days in the degrading and unhealthy factory environment, or as apprentices, which is at present simply a condition bordering upon slavery: we whose women-folk are obliged to quit the home for overly demanding toil at odds with their natures and destructive of the family: we who have no right to come to some arrangement among ourselves for the peaceable defense of our wages, and to make provision against unemployment, we state that the equality written into the law has yet to pass into our mores and yet to be carried into practice. Those who, bereft of education and capital, cannot have recourse to liberty and solidarity to withstand selfish and oppressive demands, inevitably suffer the over-lordship of capital: their interests remain subordinated to other interests.

That interests are not regulated, we know: they elude the law: they can only be reconciled through specific agreements as fluid and changeable as those interests themselves. Unless freedom is afforded to all, such reconciliation is not feasible. We will pursue the acquisition of our rights peaceably and lawfully, but vigorously and with persistence. Our emancipation would soon demonstrate the progress achieved in the mentality of the laboring classes, that countless vegetating multitude dubbed the proletariat, which, having recourse to an apter description, we shall call the wage slaves.

To those who reckon that they see the organization of resistance and strike action in any demand on our part for freedom, we say: you do not know the workers: they pursue a goal much greater and more fecund than that of expending their efforts in day-to-day strife in which the adversaries on both sides would ultimately achieve naught but ruination for some and misery for the rest.

The Third Estate used to say: What is the Third Estate? Nothing! What should it be? Everything! We are not about to say: What is the worker? Nothing! What should he be? Everything! But this we will say: the bourgeoisie, our senior in respect of emancipation, was, in '89, able to swallow up the nobility and eradicate unjust privileges; it is not for us to destroy the rights deservedly enjoyed by the middle classes, but rather to secure for ourselves the same freedom to act. In France, the democratic country par excellence, every political right, every social reform, every instrument of progress cannot remain the prerogative of the few. By the very nature of things, the nation that has an innate sense of equality has an irresistible tendency to make that a universal inheritance. Any instrument of progress that cannot be made

comprehensive, and vulgarized so that it contributes to the common weal, penetrating even to the lowest strata of society, is not completely democratic, in that it represents a privilege. The law should be capacious enough to permit every individual, individually or collectively, to develop his gifts, utilize his resources, his savings and his intelligence, without any term's being set to that other than the next man's liberty and not the next man's interest.

Let no one accuse us of dreaming up *lois agraires*, fanciful equality which would place us all upon a Procrustean bed, with its division, its maximum and its enforced levies, etc. No! It is high time that we had an end of these calumnies peddled by our enemies and swallowed by the uninformed. Freedom of labor, credit, solidarity—those are our dreams. On the day they become real, to the greater glory and prosperity of a country which we hold dear, there will be no bourgeois and no proletarians, no bosses and no workers any more. Every citizen will be equal in rights.

But, we are told, all these reforms you require can be demanded by elected deputies every bit as well as you and better than you: they are the representatives of all and appointed by all.

Well, our answer comes, No! We are not represented, and that is why we broach this question of worker candidates. We know that there is no talk of industrial, commercial, military, journalist candidates, etc., but the phenomenon exists even if the name does not. Does the vast majority of the legislative body not comprise great proprietors, industrialists, businessmen, generals, journalists, etc., who tacitly vote or speak only in offices and then only on issues in which they have a specialist interest?

A very tiny number speaks out on broad issues. To be sure, we think that workers elected should and would champion the broad interests of democracy, but even if they were to confine themselves to championing the sectional interests of the most numerous class, what a specialization that would be! They would supply a want in the legislative body, where manual labor has no representation. We who have in our service none of these things—no fortune, no connections, no public office—are indeed obliged to give our candidates a plain and telling description and to call things by their proper name insofar as we can.

We are not represented, for, in a recent sitting of the legislative body, there was a unanimous expression of sympathy in favor of the working class, but not one voice was raised to articulate, with moderation but with firmness, our aspirations, desires and rights, as we understand them.

We are unrepresented—we who refuse to credit that poverty is the will of God. Charity, a Christian institution, has radically proven and itself acknowledged its powerlessness as a social institution.

No doubt, in the good old days, in the days of divine right, when, being imposed by God, kings and nobles thought themselves the fathers and elder brothers of the people, when happiness and equality were relegated to Heaven, charity had to be a social institution.

In the age of popular sovereignty and universal suffrage, it is no longer such, and can now be nothing more than a private virtue. Alas! The vices and infirmities of human nature will always leave plenty of scope for the exercise of brotherliness: but undeserved misery, the sort that, in the form of sickness, inadequate pay and unemployment, traps the vast majority of well-intentioned working men in a hellish circle from which they strain in vain to break free: THAT misery, let us state emphatically, can be eliminated and will be. How come no one has made that distinction before? We have no wish to be clients or dependents: we wish to become equals: we reject alms: we seek justice.

No, we are not represented, for no one has said that the spirit of antagonism is daily growing weaker among the popular classes. Enlightened by experience, we bear no man hatred, but we do wish to alter things. No one has said that the law on combinations is only humbug these days and that, instead of eradicating the evil, kept it alive by barring every escape route to the man who believes himself oppressed.

No, we are not represented, for, in the matter of trades councils, a queer confusion has taken root in the minds of those who recommended them: according to them, the trade council would be made up of employers and workers, a sort of professional panel, referees charged with deciding, day to day, upon whatever matters may arise. Now what we ask is a council made up exclusively of workers, elected by universal suffrage, a Trades Council along the lines, say, of the Chamber of Commerce, and, in reply, they give us a tribunal.

No, we are not represented, for no one has mentioned the considerable movement afoot among the working classes in the organization of credit. Who is aware that this very day there are 35 mutual credit societies quietly operating in Paris? They bear the seeds of what is to come after: but if they are to germinate fully, they will require the sunshine of liberty.

In principle, few intelligent democrats challenge the legitimacy of our demands, and none of us abjures the right to pursue them for ourselves.

Opportunity, the competence of candidates, the probable obscurity of their

names, in that they would be chosen from among workers practicing their trade at the time of selection (with the specific purpose of clarifying the meaning of their candidature)—these are matters brought up in order to suggest that our scheme is impracticable and that publicity would in any case fail us. For a start, we hold that after 12 years of patient waiting, the opportune time has arrived: we cannot accept the necessity of waiting for the next general elections, which is to say, a further six years. In which case it would have taken 18 years for the time to be ripe for the election of workers—21 years on from 1848! What better constituencies could be chosen than the first and the fifth? The prospects for success must be better there than anywhere else.

The vote on May 31 has resolved the great issue of liberty beyond all challenge in Paris. The country is calm: is it not wise and politic to put to the test today the power of the free institutions which are to smooth the transition from the old society rooted in wage slavery to the society of the future which is to be founded upon common title? Is there not a danger in waiting until moments of crisis, when passions become unduly inflamed by widespread distress?

Would not the success of worker candidates have an immeasurable moral impact? It would prove that our ideas are understood, that our feelings of conciliation are appreciated: and that, at last, the refusal to implement in practice what has been acknowledged as fair in theory has ended.

Could it be true that worker candidates would need to be possessed of those eminent oratorical and publicist gifts that single a man out for the admiration of his fellow-citizens? We think not. It would be enough for them to be able to appeal to justice, by spelling out plainly and clearly the reforms for which we ask. Moreover, would not the votes of their electors afford their words a greater authority than the most illustrious orator could claim? Springing from the ranks of the masses, the import of those elections would be all the more sensational in that those returned would have been the obscurest and most unknown of figures up until then. Finally, the gift of eloquence and universal expertise, have these ever been demanded as necessary qualifications of the deputies appointed hitherto?

In 1848, the election of workers set the seal upon political equality: in 1864 such election would set the seal upon social equality.

Other than by flying in the face of the evidence, one is forced to acknowledge that there is a special class of citizenry in need of direct representation, in that the precincts of the legislative body are the only place where workers could worthily and freely articulate their wishes and stake their claim to the

rights enjoyed by other citizens.

Let us examine the current position without bitterness or prejudice. What does the democratic bourgeoisie want that we did not want along with it equally fervently? Universal suffrage without impediment of any sort? We want that. Freedom of the press, freedom of reunion, governed by a common entitlement? We want that. Complete separation of Church and State, a balanced budget, municipal exemptions? We want all that.

Now then! But for our support, the bourgeoisie would have a hard time securing or retaining these rights, these liberties, which are the very essence of a democratic society.

What do we want more especially than it, or at any rate more sorely, in that we have a greater interest in it? Free and compulsory primary education and freedom of labor.

Education nurtures and reinforces the sense of human dignity, which is to say, awareness of rights and duties. The enlightened man appeals to reason and not to force in the realization of his desires.

Unless we have freedom of labor by way of a counter-balance to freedom of trade, we will witness the emergence of a financial autocracy. The petit bourgeois, like the workers, will soon be nothing more than its servants. Is it not apparent today that credit, far from becoming widely accessible, has instead a tendency to be concentrated into a few hands? And does not the Bank of France offer a glaring example of contradiction of every economic principle? It simultaneously enjoys a monopoly upon the issuance of paper money and a free hand in the unrestricted raising of interest rates.

Without us, let us say again, the bourgeoisie cannot establish anything with security: without its backing, our emancipation may be postponed for a long time yet.

So, let us unite in a common object: the triumph of true democracy.

Sponsored by us and backed by us, worker candidates would be living proof of the serious, enduring unity of democrats without regard to distinctions of class or position. Are we to be left to our own devices? Are we to be compelled to seek, alone, the triumph of our ideas? For everyone's sake, let us hope not.

Let us recapitulate, in order to avoid any misunderstanding: the essentially political import of the worker candidates would be this:

A reinforcement, a complementing of the activity of the liberal opposition. In the most modest terms, it has requested the requisite freedoms. Worker deputies would sue for the requisite economic reforms.

That is an honest summation of the general ideas articulated by the workers in the run-up to the May 31 elections. So, a worker candidate would have a lot of difficulties to overcome before he could run. And might with some justification be accused of being a late-comer. Today the ground is clear and since, as we see it, the necessity for worker candidates has been thrown into even sharper relief by what has happened in the interval, we have no hesitation in breaking new ground in order to fend off the reproach leveled at us in the last elections.

We are airing this matter publicly so that, when the period of canvassing first begins, agreement may be achieved all the more easily and promptly among those who share our view. We say candidly what we are and what we want.

We seek the lime-light of publicity, and we appeal to the newspapers which labor under the monopoly created by the requirement for prior authorization: but it is our conviction that they will do us the honor of affording us their hospitality, thereby indicating that they favor authentic freedom: by affording us the means to communicate our thoughts, even though they may not be in agreement with them.

With all our hearts we yearn for the moment of debate, the election period, the day when the credos of the worker candidates will be in everyone's hands, when they will stand ready to answer every query. We are relying upon the support of those who will be won over when our cause is the cause of equality, indissolubly bound up with liberty—in short, the cause of justice.

(Signed by 60 signatories)

**P.-J. PROUDHON: NO CANDIDATES!  
PROUDHON'S LETTER TO WORKERS**

Passy, March 8, 1864

To workers,

You ask, citizens, what I think of the Manifesto of the Sixty workers which has appeared in the press? Above all, you are eager to know if, after having come out in May against candidatures of every sort, you should abide by that line or, on grounds of circumstance, support the election of a comrade deserving of your sympathies. I had not been expecting, I confess, to be consulted by *anyone* on such a matter. I had thought the election campaign spent, and in retirement, my thoughts focused only upon mitigating its dismal effects insofar as I was able. But since, on grounds that strike me as quite personal,

your confidence in my opinion has felt obliged to, so to speak, put me on the spot, I will not hesitate to answer your question, the more so as my thinking could scarcely be anything other than an interpretation of your own.

To be sure, I was delighted at the awakening of the socialist idea: in the whole of France just then, who more than myself was entitled to rejoice in it? To be sure, I hold, along with you and with the Sixty, that the working class is not represented and is entitled to representation: how could I believe otherwise? Does not workers' representation, today as in 1848, signal socialism's arrival in legislative, political and governmental terms?

We are told that since '89, there have been no more classes: that the notion of worker candidates tends to resurrect them: that, if a working man is acceptable as a candidate, just the way one would accept a sailor, an engineer, a scholar, a journalist, a lawyer, this is because that working man will, like his colleagues, represent society and not a specific class: that, otherwise, the fielding of this working man would be a step backwards, an illiberal, even a dangerous move, by virtue of the misgivings, the alarm, the hostility that it would inspire in the bourgeois class.

Such is the logic of the adversaries of the Manifesto, who do not even realize that they contradict themselves. But, as I see it, it is precisely on account of its specific character, and as the manifestation of one class or caste—for I do not recoil from the word—that worker candidature has value: stripped of that, it would be meaningless.

What! Is it not a fact that, in spite of the Revolution, French society is profoundly split into two classes: one, which lives exclusively by its labors, and whose wages are generally less than 1,250 francs annually, for a family of four, a sum that I take to be the rough average of the national product: another, which lives off something other than its labors, assuming that it does work, and lives off the income from its properties, capital, endowments, pensions, subsidies, shares, salaries, honors and stipends? Is it not a fact that, in terms of the division of wealth and produce, there are still, as once there were, two categories of citizen among us, commonly described as bourgeoisie and plebs, capitalism and wage slavery? But the whole of our political organization, political economy, industrial organization, history, literature and society repose upon that distinction which only bad faith and a foolish hypocrisy seem to deny.

Society's division into two classes—one class of waged workers, another of proprietors-capitalists-entrepreneurs—therefore enjoying indisputable de



facto status, the implications of that ought not to come as a surprise to anyone: it is that there has always been some question as to whether that distinction did not also have a *de jure* existence: whether it fell within the province of nature, compatible with justice: whether it might not be possible to bring it to an end, which means contriving some amalgamation of the classes: in short, whether, by means of improved implementation of the laws of justice and economics, one might not successfully do away with a dismal distinction which every man would wish at heart to see eradicated?

That question, scarcely a new one, is what has been described in our day as the social question: it is the whole and all of socialism.

Well, now! What say the Sixty? They, for their part, are convinced that the social question can be resolved in an affirmative sense: with moderation and firmness, they note that for quite some time, it has been stricken from the agenda, that the time has come to re-table it: to that end, and as a signal or earnest of that resurrection, they propose that one of them stand as a candidate: that, by virtue of his being a working man and precisely because he is a working man, they reckon that he can represent the working class better than anyone else.

And these men are accused of designs upon the re-establishment of castes? Some would have them barred as reactionaries, professing dangerous opinions, from representation of the nation, and their Manifesto has even been denounced as inciting some citizens to hate their fellow-citizens! The press thunders, the supposedly democratic opposition shrieks its displeasure, and there are cries of importunity and recklessness and what not. There are dark hints about the police! With a show of consummate disdain, the question is posed whether the Sixty would claim to know more about their interests and their rights, and about defending them, than Messrs J. Favre, E. Ollivier, Pelletan, J. Simon, etc.<sup>2</sup>

Contemptible.

Thus far at any rate, I am quite in agreement with you, citizens, and with the Sixty, and it is gratifying that not for a single moment did you imagine that I could feel differently than yourselves. Yes, class distinction enjoys a *de facto* existence in our democratic France, and it has yet to be proved entirely that this phenomenon is rooted in entitlement, albeit that there are no grounds for *imputing* it to anyone. Yes, except for 1848, national representation has been the prerogative of one of those classes: and, unless the representatives

drawn from said class make a prompt commitment to effect the fusion sought, justice, common sense and universal suffrage require that the second of those classes be represented like the other, in proportion with its population figures. In mooted that ambition, the Sixty are not in any sense insulting the bourgeoisie, are not threatening it, but are standing up to it like the youngest son to his older siblings.

(. . .) Such language, as candid as it is modest, ought to reassure the faintest of hearts: and the bourgeoisie, the middle class especially, would be ill-advised to be alarmed by it. Whether it knows it or not, its true ally, its savior, is the people. So let it with good grace concede the workers' entitlement to national representation and not, I say again, merely as citizens and despite their worker status, but rather on the basis that they are workers and members of the proletariat.

That said, let me move on to the second point. Whether, in the present circumstances, exercise of the eligibility right is indeed, as far as the working class is concerned, the best way of bringing about the reforms for which it sues, whether such a conclusion on the part of the Manifesto does not conflict with the aim its authors have set themselves, whether it is not at odds with their principles: in short, can socialism, under the current regime, do what it managed to do in 1848 without injury to its dignity and faith? Men of some import in the democracy, whom no one ever suspected of compromise with the enemy, who themselves refrained from voting, nevertheless reckoned it their duty, out of sympathy with the working class and by way of testimony to their distancing themselves from an opposition which was misunderstood, not to oppose the workers' decision and to wish their candidature well. While acknowledging sentiments in which I share, I regret that I can make no such concession, and on this count, I take issue with the Sixty.

Consider this: the imperial government, established by *coup d'état*, identifies as the prime cause of its success its defeat of red socialist democracy, that to this day that is still its *raison d'être*, which it has never overlooked that in its policy, and that there is at present nothing to indicate that it has any inclination nor indeed capacity to change. Under that government, the financial and industrial fiefdom, long incubated over the thirty three years of the Restoration and the July monarchy, has completed its organization and climbed into the saddle. It has supported the Empire, which has rewarded it for its sponsorship. The

big companies have formed their coalition: the middle class, the authentic expression of French genius, has found itself being ground down more and more in the direction of the proletariat.

The Republic, through the introduction of universal suffrage, provided Democracy with a moment of effervescence, but the conservative aristocracy soon recaptured the upper hand, and, come the *coup d'état*, it might be said that power was a foregone conclusion for the side that had best used the reaction against the socialist tendencies. On which basis we may say that, under the regime that has ruled over us since 1852, our ideas, if not our persons, have been, so to speak, placed outside of politics, outside of government, outside of the law. To none but us has access to the periodical press, the preserve of the old parties, been denied. Whereas sometimes a proposition inspired by our principles was put to the authorities, it quickly foundered—I know of what I speak—when rebuffed by contradictory interests.

Confronted with a state of affairs where our destruction is the salvation of society and property, what can we do but accept our reprobation in silence, and, since the government has ventured to impose this draconian condition, separate ourselves radically from it? Entry into its precincts, where we may be sure to find all our enemies, old and new, defectors to the Empire and non-defectors, ministry folk and opposition folk, embracing the prescribed conditions, seeking representation in the legislative body—that would be an absurdity, an act of cowardice! All that we are permitted to do under the existing law is register a protest in great elections, through the negative content of our bulletins. Bear this in mind—that in the system of compression by which democracy is oppressed, it is not such and such a financial measure, such and such an undertaking, such and such an expenditure, such and such an alliance, such and such a treaty, policy or law that we must debate: they have no need of us for that: our opinion is ruled null and void in advance. Such debates are the preserve of the constitutional opposition, friend or foe. For there is room for every view but ours in the Constitution: can you doubt it, after the brouhaha that erupted everywhere after publication of the Manifesto? Now, in order to exercise our separatism, we need neither representatives nor candidates: in legal terms, all we require is a single word, veto, the most vigorous message that universal suffrage can deliver.

*Let us clarify our thought with a few examples:*

May we, by word of mouth, in writing, or through the actions of men authentically ours, pledge fidelity to the 1852 Constitution, to which we see all

our enemies, Legitimists, Orleanists, ex-Republicans, clericals agog to pledge themselves? No, we cannot, for that oath, injurious to our dignity, incompatible with our principles, would imply apostasy on our part, even should we remain, as so many others have after their oath, the personal enemies of the Emperor. The Constitution of '93, by enshrining the sovereignty of the people, swept away the civic oath required under the '91 Constitution to these three terms: Nation, Law and King. Let Napoleon follow that example and then we shall see. Meanwhile, no representatives and no candidates!

There are some who say that the pledge imposed upon deputies is meaningless: that it is not binding upon the maker, provided that, in the act of making it, he understands that his pledge is being made, albeit under the name of the Emperor, to the nation: that, furthermore, the pledge does not imply any support for imperial policy. Finally, that it is not for electors to overcome this scruple, which is a matter of concern to the candidates only. In bygone times, the Jesuits alone possessed the secret of salving consciences: Has that secret now been passed down to the *École Normale*? Such moralists, no matter how high their reputation for virtue may stand, ought to be deemed the most infamous human creatures by the socialist democracy. So, no representatives and no candidates!

Just now, I referred to the periodical press monopoly introduced and especially directed against us. From the outcome of the May elections, we know what it cost us to have had a week's dalliance with it. Do you think that abolishing ministerial authorization would be enough to do away with that monopoly? Then you are well wide of the mark. We want neither hide nor hair of a regime that has been depraving our political morals, misrepresenting ideas and misleading opinion for 12 years now. Authorizing such corruption of the public mind—be it for six months, for a day, or through the election of a socialist deputy—would amount to declaring ourselves accomplices of that corruption and unworthy ever to be heard. So, no representatives and no candidates!

We want no conditions upon the exercise of universal suffrage, and why? Not just because natural population clusters have been subverted by arbitrary constituency boundaries: we leave it to the Imperial government's competitors to bleat while they await their chance to imitate it. Nor is it because of administrative interference either. In meetings summoned to decide the government's fate, those who rail loudest against such interference are careful to say that, in the minister's shoes, they would not refrain from it. Chiefly

because, with a monopoly over a tame press, with centralistic prejudices in the ascendant, with the rarity and inadequacy of summons, with double, triple, quintuple and decuple candidatures and with that absurd principle—of which electioneers are so enamored—that a true representative of France should not be known to his electors: with the mishmash of categories, opinions and interests, things are so combined as to smother the democratic spirit in its corporative and local manifestations, as well as in its national manifestations, with the masses denied a voice and reduced to bleating flocks, never having learned to make their presence felt and to have their say.

To call for the emancipation of the plebs and then to consent, in the plebs' name, to a method of election which is tantamount to rendering it seditious or dumb. What a paradox! So, no representatives and no candidates!

Note, citizens, that in all of this I am sticking to politics alone and deliberately steering clear of economic and social considerations. How many further arguments I could adduce against this candidatures fantasy, which would assuredly not have possessed the people, had we been able in time to explain this proposition, the truth of which you are doubtless starting to discern: that an opposition vote is one thing, a protest vote another and a duly recorded constitutional vote, bearing the stamp of the returning officer another, and a democratic and social vote quite another. In May 1863, the people thought it was voting for itself and as sovereign: it voted only for its bosses and as client. As for the rest, I know that by now you have no illusions left: the worker candidates, if my sources are accurate, say as much themselves. So, what good are representatives! What use are candidates?

Everything that has been done since November 24, 1860, in government and in opposition, indicates a reversion to the regime of 1830, with the sole modification that the title of emperor is to replace that of king, and the Bonaparte dynasty replace that of the Bourbons. Leaving to one side the dynastic issue, with which we need not concern ourselves, can we democrats lend a hand with this about-turn? It would be a betrayal of our past to worship that which we have put to the torch, or put to the torch that which we have worshipped. Now, that is necessarily what must happen if we let ourselves be represented in a legislative body, among an opposition three fourths of which have come around to the idea of a constitutional, bourgeois monarchy. So, *no representatives and no candidates!*

Many among the workers fail to appreciate clearly these deep-seated incompatibilities between the present or forthcoming political regime, into

which they are invited to step, and their democratic social aspirations. This will help them get to grips with the thing:

It is axiomatic that in a country racked by revolutions such as ours is, succeeding governments, although their slogans may change, still close ranks against a third party, and take turns at the duties imposed upon them by this redoubtable inheritance. Now, that is a condition which, should the opportunity arise, we are prohibited from accepting. We—the outlaws of 1848, 1849 and 1852—cannot agree to the undertakings, deals and all the acts of power devised with an eye to our extermination. That would amount to a betrayal of ourselves, and the world should know that. At present, the public debt, consolidated and outstanding, with growth rates at three percent, stands at 14 thousand 600 millions.

So much for the financial expression of charges accrued since 1789 and bequeathed to one after another of our various governments. It is the plainest and most clear-cut product of our political systems, the most splendid bequest to posterity of seventy five years of conservative, bourgeois rule. If need be, we would assume responsibility for that debt up until 24 June 1848: but we are within our rights to repudiate it after that. And since it is unacceptable that the nation should be declared bankrupt, it would be up to the bourgeoisie to pay off the residue. We await its decision. So, citizens, no representatives and no candidates!

In the Manifesto of the Sixty, there is an unfortunate choice of terms. In politics, they profess to be in agreement with the opposition: this is an unduly large concession, inspired by the generous intention of bridging, in part at least, the gulf separating democracy from its representatives, and it must be put down to a slip of the pen. In all sincerity, we can no more be happy with the opposition's politics than with its economic and social ideas: if the latter be mistaken, how could the former be above reproach? The opposition's politics is not the criticisms which parties fling at each other regarding their actions, such as the Mexican expedition, the state of Algeria, the swelling budget, etc.: nor is it the banal demonstrations in favor of freedom, the philanthropic jeremiads, the sighs heaved over Poland, or the more or less explicit support for the trade agreement. On all such matters of pure detail, we should have our reservations about the opposition's criticisms, not just as socialists and communists, but as politicians and democrats.

The opposition's politics is above all its declared anti-socialism, which necessarily places it in the reactionary camp against us. Messrs. Marie and Jules Favre have said as much, in the opening debate, and in a tone never to

be forgotten: "We are no socialists!" At which words the entire Assembly erupted into applause: not a single voice was heard to object. So we are within our rights to say that, on the very principle of their politics, members of the so-called democratic opposition are in agreement with the government: they outdo the government itself in their anti-socialism: how could they fail to become ministers some day?

The opposition's politics is its love for parliamentarism, which will draw it willy-nilly into a bloc with the imperialist majority, under the 1830 arrangement: it is its enthusiasm for centralization and unification that shines through all its speeches, in spite of all its declaiming about municipal freedoms and sycophancy towards Parisians. Remember, a high degree of centralization alone can satisfy high ambitions and you will notice that, should France ever have the misfortune to find opposition personnel summoned to take their turn at overseeing this much-cherished centralization.

The opposition's politics is its constitutional dynastic oath: it is the solidarity with the actions of the government to which it consents, if only by drawing its deputy's stipend; it is the compliments, the praises, the thanksgiving which it mixes with its criticisms, the share it claims of its successes and glories.

The opposition's politics is its conduct in the May 1863 elections. When we saw it, once it had usurped the oversight of the count, trampling suffrage underfoot, fielding everywhere candidates utterly irreconcilable with the spirit of the Revolution, showing itself to be more scheming, more tyrannical, more corruptive than the administration, against which it then strove to focus the public revulsion, so as to whiten its own record. Ah, the elections of May and June 1863, fought by an opposition that posed as puritanical; these elections overturned the result of 1851: have you considered that, citizens?

That is what the opposition's politics is about. And you would send your colleagues to join it? No, no! No representatives and no candidates!

To those who would now take us to task for halting the popular upsurge, and who might still have the courage to flaunt the title of men of action which they awarded themselves nine months ago, let me answer that the inactive, the inert, the slumberers are themselves, whose splendid discipline has served the views of the reaction, and at a single stroke, cost democracy thirty years of civic virtue, sacrifices and propaganda. What, then, has this rigorous action produced?

1. A thunderous declaration from Messrs. Marie and Jules Favre: "We are no socialists!" Yes! Your representatives have disowned, reneged upon

you, as they did in 1848: they declare war on you and you congratulate yourselves upon your actions! Are you waiting until they spit in your face?

2. The lamentable result of the oath. The democracy, led by its new tribunes, fondly imagined that the oath of obedience to Napoleon III, and of fidelity to the 1851 Constitution, could not but be a sublime perjury on the lips of its representatives. It was intoxicated with this notion, and it has sadly deceived itself. Our sworn deputies will no more have the courage to breach their oath than to keep it. Can you see them beating about the bush, sustaining heavy losses, swimming between the waters of treachery and fidelity? Traitors to democracy when in cahoots with the Empire, traitors to the Empire when closeted with democracy. Privy councilors and table companions of His Majesty, are still more honest and less hypocritical. Thanks however to this policy, the Restoration of the Orleanist system, with M. Thiers at the helm, is visibly underway. M. Thiers and his cronies, positing monarchy as, in principle, essential for the organization of power, and declaring themselves to be, by virtue of the very same principle, indifferent as to the dynasty chosen, that being a simple question of personalities according to them, are perfectly at home here. Nothing prevents them from taking the oath, and the more that Napoleon affords them cause to keep it, the more content they are.

Also, since the taking of all these oaths, a matter of such high significance and import for the Orleanists, but which the country can watch democrats do only with disgust, the party of constitutional, parliamentary monarchy has bounced back completely: supported by the weightiest and most enlightened faction of the Bonapartists, it believes that its victory is assured: it has secured over the Republican party the only advantage it has retained since 1852, the advantage of logic and political honesty.

3. The conclusion to this deplorable intrigue? Democracy, the preponderance of which should have been established once and for all by the 1864 poll, momentarily hailed as sovereign following the election of the new incumbents, now no longer matters, pending the advent of new order, except as the instrument of a political re-plastering job, against which our every effort must henceforth be deployed in defending ourselves.



As for ourselves, whom some have dared to label idlers, puritans, stick-in-the-muds and eunuchs, sure in the knowledge that we could not reply, this is what we have done and what we have achieved. Our success has been splendid enough for us not to lose heart:

At first we told ourselves:

In our own right and ante-dating the 1852 constitution, we have the right to vote. We have the right to vote or not to vote.

If we vote, we are free to choose between the administration's candidate and the opposition's candidate, just as we are to protest against each by selecting a candidate of a hue opposed to them both (which is what the authors of the Manifesto propose).

Finally, we have the right to protest against election of any sort, either by depositing blank votes or by voting for some citizen who would not meet all of the criteria for eligibility, who, say, might not have taken the oath, if in our judgment electoral law, as practiced, does not offer sufficient guarantees for universal suffrage, or on any other grounds.

The point, therefore, was to find out what would be the most useful way for us to vote. Those who have argued that the vote must necessarily designate a candidate, that universal suffrage by itself was bereft of meaning, and that it derived all of its value from the choosing of a man—those people have overwhelmed the public, and they have lied.

We have opted then for the protest vote, by means of blank vote or equivalent, and this was the outcome:

Out of 64 departments we have been able to monitor, there were 63,000 protest votes—4,556 of them in Paris: proportionally speaking, that makes around 90,000 for the whole of France.

We would have numbered 100,000 in Paris and a million across the 89 departments, had we been allowed to make our voice heard and explain our thinking.

Those scattered votes were enough to sink several candidates from the so-called democratic opposition. They might have sunk them all, and the government might have been left all alone with its elected deputies, facing a protesting democracy, had the monopoly press not smothered our voice.

Do you believe that those 90,000 voters who, in spite of their enforced silence, in spite of calumny, in spite of regimentation of the people, without

having managed to communicate or reach agreement, managed to stand firm and, by their protest, preserve the inviolability of democracy, are a minority without virtue? Do you think that this party, seemingly weak in numerical terms, lacks energy? There were 20 of us and our call has been heard over the opposition's racket by 90,000 men. Suppose that the 153,000 in the capital, who cast their votes for the newcomers, had registered a protest as we did, do you think that that protest would have had less of an impact than the harangues with which the opposition has regaled us? What have you to say about that now, citizens?

Faced by a veto from 160,000 voters, augmented by some of the 86,000 who purely and simply abstained, would the administration's candidates with their 82,000 votes have been bragging about representing the capital? Would we be less informed as to our financial situation, the European situation and electoral strengths and so many other matters about which the government and its friends are so wont to prattle, simply because we might not have heeded the pleas of a half-dozen lawyers? Would it not be a thousand times better for democracy's honor and its future prospects, had we left the government to debate with its own representatives and to wash its dirty linen at home, as Napoleon I used to say, than to have besmirched our consciences, hitherto unblemished by oath?

Democrats, your line of conduct has been determined for you. Over the past 15 years, a blind reaction has busied itself casting you out of the law, out of the government, out of politics. The situation in which you have been placed is not of your making: it is the handiwork of a conspiracy by the old parties. They are prompted by a single thought, and that thought is incompatible with achievement of that political, economic and social justice, for which you yearn with all your might. A single oath unites them, the symbol of their confederacy, a snare set for the vanity and zeal of democrats. It is scarcely your fault if, hemmed in by their concert, you are condemned to resort to reprisals against them. Which is why I tell you with all of the vigor and all of the sadness my soul can muster: separate yourselves from him who was the first to stand apart, even as the Roman people in another age stood apart from its aristocrats. It is through separation that you will win: no representatives, and no candidates!

What! Having declared yourselves the equals of the bourgeoisie, the repositories of the new thinking, the hope of generations unborn; having displayed the grandeur of your destiny to the world, can you not devise anything better

than to pick up, sub-contracted, those aged bourgeois institutions, the futility and corruption of which have been pointed out to you a hundred times over by the government itself? Your dreams would be of doctrine, the balance of representation and cant! Given the chance to be original, you would act as blatant imitators. That, take it from me, is merely the logical conclusion to the Manifesto of the Sixty: labor democracy declaring by its vote that it is abandoning opposition and that, until better times arrive, is renouncing, not the vote, but having itself represented. Through this manifesto, labor democracy has struck a patrician pose: by electing a representative, you would fall back into the ranks of the liberated. Is there an outstanding man among you? Vote him a civic crown, do not make a prostitute, do not make a candidate of him.

For my own part, I do not think that I need tell you that I abide by my resolutions.

Had I no other grounds for perseverance than remembrance of events in which I have been implicated, things in which I have participated, hopes that I helped arouse, out of respect and in remembrance of so many citizens who have suffered and perished since 1848, so that the people's liberties may succeed, and whom I have encountered inside prison and in exile, I would repudiate all compromise and I would say: no representatives, no candidates!

Fraternal greetings to you, citizens.

P.-J. Proudhon

# PROUDHON AGAINST “COMMUNISM”<sup>1</sup>

*Here, in retrospect, Proudhon attacks the type of State and “communistic” socialism preached by Louis Blanc during the 1848 Revolution from the so-called Luxembourg Commission.<sup>2</sup>*

## COLLECTIVE SOVEREIGNTY

In essence, the Luxembourg system is the same as those of Cabet, R. Owen,<sup>3</sup> the Moravians, Campanella, More, Plato and the earliest Christians: a communist, governmental, dictatorial, authoritarian and doctrinal system. It starts from the premise that the individual is essentially subordinate to the group, that his rights and his very life derive from that alone, that the citizen belongs to the State, the way the child does the family, that he is in the power, the possession, *in manu*, of the State and owes it full submission and obedience.

By virtue of that underlying principle of collective sovereignty and submission of the individual, the Luxembourg school tends in theory and in practice to relate everything to the State—or the community. Work, industry, property, commerce, public education and wealth, as well as law-making, the courts, police, public works, diplomacy and war—they are all turned over to the State for subsequent assignment and distribution, in the name of the community, to every citizen, member of the wider family, in accordance with his aptitudes and needs.

The first movement and first thought of labor democracy, in seeking out its law and offering itself as the antithesis of the bourgeoisie, must have been to throw its maxims back in its face; this is strikingly evident from a first glance at the communist system.

What is the principle underlying the old, artisanal or feudal, post-revolutionary or divine right society? Authority, whether descended from Heaven or deduced from the nation as a whole as Rousseau does. The communists in their turn have spoken and acted thus. They trace everything to the rights of the collective, the sovereignty of the people: their concept of power or of the State is absolutely identical to that of their former masters. Whether it goes by the name of empire, State, monarchy, republic, democracy or community, the thing is self-evidently the same throughout. For followers of that school, the rights of man and the citizen derive from the people’s sovereignty: even liberty itself is an emanation from that. The Luxembourg communists,

the Icarians and all the rest can, with an easy conscience, pledge loyalty to Napoleon III; their profession of faith is, in principle, in agreement with the 1852 Constitution: and is even a lot less.

### “COMMUNISM,” OVERBLOWN STATISM

(. . .) Property was still a concession from the State, the sole natural proprietor of the earth, as the representative of the national community. The communists abide by that—as far as they also are concerned—the individual is indebted for his assets, his faculties, his honors and even his talents, to the State. The difference lay in implementation only. For a reason or out of necessity, the ancient State had loosened its hold: a host of noble or bourgeois families had stepped out of the primitive indivision and they have formed tiny sovereignties within the larger one.

Communism’s object was to reincorporate all such fragments of its inheritance into the State. Under the Luxembourg system, society’s democratic revolution was to be merely a restoration, which is to say, a step backwards.

Thus, like an army which has captured the enemy’s guns, communism merely turned their own artillery against the army of proprietors. The slave has always aped his master (. . .)

### ON ASSOCIATION

When it comes to methodology, quite aside from the public order authority to which it does not yet have access, the Luxembourg party settled upon and preached association. The idea of association is a new one in the world of economics: the divine right states, ancient and modern alike, are the ones that have launched the mightiest associations and supplied the theories for them. Our bourgeois legislation, (the civil code or commercial code) has adopted many of their categories and concepts. What have the Luxembourg theorists added to that? Absolutely nothing. For them, association has very often been merely common ownership of assets and earnings. Occasionally, it has been construed as simple partnership or cooperation, or indeed a collective or share-holder company.

Labor associations have more often been taken to be mighty, numerous companies of workers subsidized, commanded and directed by the State, *which draw* in the bulk of the working class, enjoy a monopoly of works and undertakings, meddling in every industry, all farming, all trade, every office and all ownership, leading to a vacuum in private establishments and under-

takings, and finally overwhelming and crushing every individual initiative, all private property, all life, all liberty and all wealth, precisely as the great limited companies are doing today.

### THE SUPPOSED DICTATORSHIP OF THE MASSES

Thus, in the minds of the Luxembourg men, public ownership was to lead to elimination of all property; association to destroy all private associations, or amalgamate them all into a single one; competition, turned in upon itself, was ultimately to bring about elimination of competition; collective liberty was to gobble up all freedoms, corporative, local and individual alike.

With regard to government, its guarantees and forms, the problem is similarly disposed of. In that, as in association and the rights of man, it was the same old story: the same old formula recurs, albeit in its communist hyperbole. The political system, according to the Luxembourg theory, might be defined in the following terms: a compact democracy, seemingly rooted in dictatorship of the masses, but wherein the masses merely have the opportunity to consolidate universal slavery in accordance with formulas and guide-lines borrowed from the former absolutism:

Indivisibility of power.

Voracious centralization.

Systematic demolition of all individual, corporative and local thought, these being deemed sources of discord.

Inquisitorial policing.

Abolition, or at any rate, curtailment of family, and especially of inheritance.

Universal suffrage, so organized, then, as to serve as a permanent endorsement of this anonymous tyranny, through the preponderance of mediocrities or nonentities, who always enjoy a majority over competent citizens and independent characters who are considered suspect and, of course, are few and far between. The Luxembourg school has proclaimed it loud and clear: it is against the aristocracy of competence.

### ON SPONTANEITY

The important thing to grasp about popular movements is their utter spontaneity. Does the people act in response to incitement or suggestion from without, or rather on the basis of some inspiration, intuition or innate idea? However great the caution with which this feature is spelled out in the study

of revolutions, it will never be enough. Make no mistake, the ideas that have always stirred the masses were hatched earlier in the brain of some thinker. Where ideas, opinions, beliefs and errors are concerned, the masses have never led the way, nor could they even today. In every act of mind the individual is the pioneer: the relation of terms tells us as much.

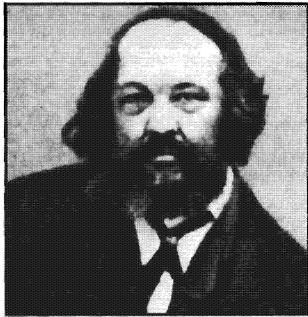
But whereas every thought that arises in the individual has to go on to captivate peoples, not all of the ideas are good and useful. We specifically argue that the most important thing, especially for the philosophical historian, is to observe how the people clings to certain ideas in preference to others, generalizing them, developing them after its fashion and converting them into institutions and customs that live on as traditions until such time as they fall into the hands of legislators and magistrates who will turn them into articles of law and rules for the courts.

### THE REVOLUTION IS NO ONE'S DOING

A social revolution like the '89, which keeps worker democracy before our eyes, is a transformation wrought spontaneously in each and every part of the body politic. It is one system supplanting another, a new agency taking the place of a decrepit body.

But such substitution is not effected in the twinkling of an eye, the way a man changes his clothes or his colors, nor is it commanded by a master with a ready-made theory, or at the dictation of a revelationist.

A genuinely organic revolution, a product of universal life, while it does have its messengers and its executors, is truly the doing of no one.



**MIKHAIL  
BAKUNIN**

**(1814–1876)**





# THE REVOLUTION OF FEBRUARY 1848, AS SEEN BY BAKUNIN<sup>1</sup>

*Mikhail Bakunin, a Russian émigré, rushed to Paris at the time of the February revolution.*

The February revolution broke out. As soon as I discovered that there was fighting underway in Paris, I borrowed a passport from a person of my acquaintance, by way of preparing for any eventuality, and set off for Paris. But the passport proved useless: “The Republic has been proclaimed in Paris”—those were the first words we heard uttered at the border. The news sent a shiver down my spine: I arrived in Valenciennes on foot, the railway line having been destroyed: there were crowds everywhere, shouts of enthusiasm, red flags on every street, in every square and on every public building. I was obliged to make a detour, the railway being impassable in a number of places, and I arrived in Paris on February 26, within three days of the proclamation of the Republic. Even on the way there, I relished it all.

That huge city, the focus of European culture, had suddenly been turned into a savage Caucasus: in every street, virtually everywhere, barricades towered like mountains stretching to the level of the roof-tops: atop these barricades, amid the rubble and broken furniture, like Georgians in their gorges, were workmen in picturesque smocks, blackened with dust and armed to the teeth: fat grocers—faces rendered stupid by fright—peered fearfully from their windows: there was not a single vehicle on the streets or in the boulevards: gone was all the old smugness, all the odious, monocled, wise-cracking dandies and in their place, my noble working men, triumphant, enthused crowds brandishing red flags, singing patriotic anthems and intoxicated by their success.

And amid this unbounded rejoicing, this intoxication, they were all gentle, humane, compassionate, decent, modest, well-mannered, friendly and high-minded to a degree possible only in France and there, only in Paris. Thereafter and for over a week I lived alongside these workers in the barracks in the Rue de Tournon, right next to the Luxembourg Palace; that barracks, previously reserved for the municipal guard, had now, like many another, been turned into a republican stronghold serving as a billet for Causssidière’s

army. I had been invited to move in there by a democrat friend of mine who was in command of a detachment of 500 working men.

Thus I had occasion to see the workers and to study them from morning to evening. Never and nowhere, have I discovered in any other class of society so much high-minded unselfishness, nor so much truly touching integrity, delicacy of manners and light-hearted friendliness married with heroism as among those simple uneducated folk who have always been and will always be worth a thousand times more than their leaders!

Especially striking about them was their profound sensibility to discipline: in their barracks, established order, laws and constraints were out of the question: but would to God that any regular soldier could obey with as much precision, and divine as well the wishes of his officers and maintain order as strictly as these free men: they asked for orders and asked for leadership, eagerly obedient to the merest detail; in their onerous service, lasting whole days at a time, they endured hunger and still their friendliness was undiminished and they were still light-hearted. Had these folk, had these French working-men been able to find a leader worthy of them, capable of understanding them and taking them to his heart, that leader might have accomplished miracles with them.

(. . .) That month spent in Paris . . . was a month of intoxication for the soul. Not only was I intoxicated, but so was everybody else: some from a crazed fear, others from a crazed ecstasy of senseless expectations. I rose at five o'clock or four o'clock in the mornings, went to sleep at two o'clock, was on my feet all day long, attending every assembly, meeting, club, parade, march or demonstration: in short, I drank in the intoxication of the revolutionary atmosphere through every one of my senses and through every pore.

It was a fiesta without beginning and without end: I saw everyone and saw no one, for every individual was subsumed into the same, countless, meandering crowd: I spoke to everybody but could remember neither my own words nor others', for my attention was at every step held by new events and objects, by unforeseen developments.

This widespread feverishness drew a modicum of sustenance and reinforcement from news coming in from other parts of Europe: all one could hear was comments such as the following: "There is fighting in Berlin: the king has fled after having made a speech! There was fighting in Vienna: Metternich has taken to his heels and the republic has been proclaimed there. The whole of Germany is in revolt: the Italians have won in Milan and in Venice:

the Austrians have sustained an embarrassing defeat! The republic has been proclaimed there: the whole of Europe is turning republican. Long live the Republic!”

It looked as if the whole universe had been turned on its head: the incredible was becoming the norm, the impossible possible, and the possible and normal losing all meaning. In short, the state of mind was such that, had someone turned up and announced: “God has just been driven out of Heaven and a Republic proclaimed therein,” everybody would have believed him and no one would have been surprised in the slightest. And the democrats were not the only ones to succumb to this intoxication. Quite the contrary: they were the first to come to their senses again, obliged as they were to set to work to consolidate power that had fallen into their lap against all expectations and as if by miracle.

The conservative party and dynastic opposition, (the latter having become, overnight, more conservative than the conservatives themselves)—in short, all of the men of the old regime—believed even more than the democrats in every seeming miracle and far-fetched development: they had even stopped believing that two plus two make four and Thiers himself had declared: “There is but one option open to us now, namely, to seek oblivion.” That fact alone explains the alacrity and unanimity with which all the provincial towns and every class in France recognized the Republic.

## BAKUNIN, AS SEEN BY JAMES GUILLAUME

*Following his short passage through Paris during the 1848 Revolution, Bakunin, galvanized by the example before his very eyes, shot off to participate in the popular uprising in Dresden (May 3, 1849). As a result of which he was sentenced to death in Saxony and then in Austria in 1850, being eventually handed over by Austria to the Russian government. In his native land, he underwent very lengthy and harsh incarceration. Then, in 1861, he successfully escaped from Siberia and made his way to London. It was after the uprising in Poland against the tsarist empire (1863–1864) and, doubtless, more especially after the conversations that he had with Proudhon—a Proudhon whose death was not far off—in Paris towards the end of 1864, that Bakunin became an anarchist. Consequently, we join James Guillaume's biography of Bakunin at that point only:*

(. . .) When the Polish uprising erupted in 1863, he [Bakunin] attempted to reach the activists leading it: but the organization of a Russian Legion failed, and Lapinski's expedition came to nothing; and Bakunin, who had gone to Stockholm (where his wife joined him) in hope of getting the Swedes to intervene, had to return to London (in October) without having succeeded in any of his ventures. He then traveled to Italy, from where, in mid-1864, he made a second trip to Sweden: he returned via London, where he called again on Marx, and Paris, where he paid another call on Proudhon.

In the wake of the war of 1859 and Garibaldi's heroic expedition in 1860, Italy had just begun a new life: Bakunin stayed in the country until the autumn of 1867, staying first in Florence and then in Naples and its environs. He had devised a plan for a secret international organization of revolutionaries, with an eye to propaganda, and, when the time came, to action, and from 1864 onwards, he managed to recruit a certain number of Italians, French, Scandinavians and Slavs into that secret society, which he dubbed the "International Brotherhood" or the "Alliance of Socialist Revolutionaries."

In Italy, Bakunin and his friends applied themselves in a particular way to combating the Mazzinians,<sup>1</sup> who were authoritarian, religious republicans whose watchword was *Dio e popolo* (God and people). A newspaper, *Liberta e Giustizia*, was launched in Naples: in its columns, Bakunin spelled out his program. In July 1886, he informed Herzen and Ogareff<sup>2</sup> of the existence of the secret society, briefing them on its program, by which his two old friends

were, as he himself admitted, “greatly shocked.” At that point, according to Bakunin, it had supporters in Sweden, Norway, Denmark, England, Belgium, France, Spain and Italy, and also numbered Poles and Russians among its membership.

In 1867, bourgeois democrats from a number of countries, mainly French and Germans, launched the League of Peace and Freedom, and summoned a congress in Geneva that caused a sensation. Bakunin still clung to a few illusions regarding democrats; he attended the congress, where he made a speech, became a member of the League’s central committee, established his home in Switzerland (near Vevey) and, over the ensuing year, strove to steer his fellow committee members towards revolutionary socialism. At the League’s second congress in Berne (September 1868), along with some cronies who belonged to the secret organization founded in London in 1864 . . . he attempted to have the League pass blatantly socialist resolutions, but after a few days’ proceedings, the revolutionary socialists, being in a minority, announced that they were quitting the League (on September 25, 1868), and on the very same day, they launched a new grouping under the name of the International Alliance of Socialist Democracy, with a program drawn up by Bakunin.

That program, encapsulating the conclusions at which its author had arrived at the end of a protracted evolution that had begun in the Germany of 1842, stated, among other things:

The Alliance proclaims itself atheist: it seeks the definitive and complete elimination of classes, and political, economic and social equality for persons of both sexes: it wants the land, the instruments of labor, as well as all other capital, having become the collective property of the whole of society, to be available only for the use of toilers, which is to say, of agricultural and industrial associations. It acknowledges that all the existing political and authoritarian States, being reduced progressively to simple functions in the administration of public services in their respective countries, will have to melt into a worldwide union of free associations, agricultural and industrial alike.

With its establishment, the International Alliance of Socialist Democracy had testified to its desire to be a branch of the International Workingmen’s Association, whose general statutes it accepted.

September 1868 had seen the appearance in Geneva of the first issue of *Narodnoye Dyelo*, a Russian newspaper written by Mikhail Bakunin and Nikolai

Zhukovsky; it published a program entitled "Program of the Russian Socialist Democracy," which was essentially identical to the program that the International Alliance of Socialist Democracy was to adopt a few days later. But the paper had a change of editorial staff from the second issue onwards and came under the control of Nikolai Outine,<sup>3</sup> who gave it a quite different slant.

The International Workingmen's Association had been launched in London on 28 September 1864, but its organization was not finalized and its statutes not adopted until its first congress was held in Geneva between September 3 and 8, 1866.

While passing through London in October 1864, Bakunin, who had not seen Karl Marx since 1848, had had a visit from him; Marx had called on him for the purpose of offering an explanation of the calumny<sup>4</sup> once published by the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* and put back into circulation by some German journalists in 1853. At the time, Mazzini and Herzen had come to the defense of the libeled Bakunin who was incarcerated in a Russian fortress: on that occasion, Marx had stated once again in the English *Morning Advertiser* that he had had no hand in that libel, adding that Bakunin was a friend of his, and he repeated as much to Bakunin.

In the wake of their conversation, Marx had encouraged Bakunin to join the International: but once back in Italy, Bakunin had thought it better to devote himself to the secret organization mentioned earlier; apart from the General Council in London, the International, in its beginnings, represented little more than one group of mutualist workers in Paris, and there was nothing to hint at the importance that it was about to assume. It was only after its second congress in Lausanne (September 1867), after its two court cases in Paris and the great strike in Geneva (1868) that the association attracted serious attention and became a power whose role as a lever of revolutionary action could no longer be ignored. At its third congress in Brussels (September 1868), collectivist ideas were mooted, in competition with cooperativism. In July 1868, Bakunin was inducted as a member of its Geneva branch and, once he had quit the League of Peace and Freedom at its Berne congress, he settled in Geneva in order to be in a position to take an active hand in that city's labor movement.

Immediately propaganda and organizing activity were given a great filip. A trip to Spain by the Italian socialist Fanelli<sup>5</sup> led to the foundation of branches of the International in Madrid and Barcelona. The francophone branches in Switzerland came together into a federation that took the name

of the *Fédération romande* and had a mouthpiece of its own in the newspaper *L'Égalité*, launched in January 1869. The battle was then joined with phony socialists who were hobbling the movement in the Swiss Jura, and this ended with a majority of Jura workers coming over to revolutionary socialism. On several occasions, Bakunin traveled to the Jura to speak on behalf of those fighting against what he termed “reaction wearing the mask of cooperation”: this was the origin of the friendship that he struck up with the militants of that region. In Geneva itself, a dispute between the instinctively revolutionary socialist construction workers and the so-called “manufacturing” watchmakers and jewelers eager to participate in election campaigns, was resolved thanks to Bakunin, who campaigned vigorously from the pages of *L'Égalité* and there, in a series of remarkable articles, he spelled out the program of the “policy of the International,” on the basis of the regrettably ephemeral success of the revolutionary element. The International’s sections in France, Belgium and Spain acted in concert with the francophone Swiss section, and it was anticipated that at the next general congress of the Association, collectivism would be carried by a majority of votes.

The London-based General Council had refused to admit the International Alliance of Socialist Democracy as a branch of the International, on the grounds that the new society represented a second international body and that its presence within the International would have a disorganizing effect. One of the grounds for this decision was Marx’s animosity towards Bakunin, in whom the illustrious German communist believed he saw a “schemer” keen to “turn the International upside down and turn it into a tool in his hands”: but, independently of Marx’s personal feelings, the fact is that the idea of launching a second organization alongside the International was an unhappy one, as Bakunin’s Belgian and Jura friends indicated to him: whereupon he yielded to their persuasion and recognized that the General Council’s decision had been right. As a result, the Alliance’s central bureau, after consultation with the organization’s membership, announced, with their agreement, that it was being disbanded: the local group that had been set up in Geneva became an ordinary branch of the International and was recognized as such by the General Council (July 1869).

At the fourth general congress in Basle (September 6–12, 1869), virtually every one of the International’s delegates came out in favor of collective ownership: but it was apparent that there were two distinct schools of thought among them: some, the Germans, the German-speaking Swiss and



the English were State communists; others, the Belgians, the francophone Swiss, the Spaniards and virtually all of the French were anti-authoritarian communists, or federalists, or anarchists, who called themselves collectivists. Bakunin, of course, belonged to the latter grouping, as did the Belgian De Paepe and the Parisian, Varlin, among others.<sup>6</sup>

(. . .) The secret organization launched in 1864 had been wound up in January 1869, following an internal crisis, but several of the members of it had kept in touch with one another, and their band of friends had been joined by a few new Swiss, Spanish and French recruits, of whom Varlin was one; this free association of men who combined into a revolutionary brotherhood for collective action must, one might think, have afforded greater strength and cohesion to the great movement of which the International was the expression.

In the summer of 1869, a friend of Marx's had reprinted in the Berlin *Zukunft* the old chestnut that "Bakunin was an agent of the Russian government," and Liebknecht<sup>7</sup> had repeated the allegation on a number of occasions. When Liebknecht visited Basle for the congress, Bakunin invited him to explain himself before a panel of honor. There, the Saxon socialist stated that he had never made any allegations about Bakunin but had merely repeated something he had read in the press. The panel agreed unanimously that Liebknecht had acted with culpable frivolousness and forwarded to Bakunin a written statement carrying the signatures of the panel-members; Liebknecht, acknowledging that he had been in error, offered his hand to Bakunin, and, in everyone's presence, the latter burned the panel's statement, lighting his cigarette with it.

After the congress of Basle, Bakunin left Geneva and withdrew to Locarno (Tessin); he had been prompted to do so by considerations of a strictly personal character, one being the need to settle somewhere where the cost of living was cheap and where he would have the peace and quiet to devote himself to the translation work he intended to do on behalf of a St. Petersburg publisher (initially, this consisted of translating the first volume of Marx's *Das Kapital*, which had appeared in 1867). But Bakunin's departure from Geneva unfortunately left the gate open for political schemers who, by associating themselves with the chicanery of a Russian émigré, Nikolai Outine, only too well known for the part he played in the International for us to hang a label on him here, they succeeded within a few months in throwing the Geneva branch of the International into disarray and in gaining the upper hand and taking over the editing of *L'Égalité*.

Marx, blinded completely by his resentment and petty jealousy with regard to Bakunin, had no hesitation in allying himself with Outine and the pseudo-socialist clique of Geneva politicians, men of the "Temple Unique."<sup>8</sup> While, at the same time, in a *Confidential Bulletin* circulated to his friends in Germany (March 28, 1870), he did his best to ruin Bakunin in the eyes of German socialist democrats, by representing him as the agent of a Pan-Slavist party, from which, Marx alleged, he received an annual stipend of 25,000 francs.

The scheming of Outine and his Geneva confederates contrived to provoke a split in the Federation romande: the latter split (April 1871) into two factions, one of which, by common agreement with the Internationalists in France, Belgium and Spain, had come out in favor of the revolutionary policy, stating that "any working class participation in governmental bourgeois politics cannot but result in the consolidation of the existing order of things"; whereas the other faction spoke up for "political intervention and worker candidates." The General Council in London, as well as the Germans and the German Swiss, sided with the latter faction (the Outine and Temple Unique faction), while the French, the Belgians and the Spaniards sided with the other (the Jura faction).

At that point, Bakunin was quite engrossed in Russian matters. As early as the spring of 1869, he had come into contact with Netchayev:<sup>9</sup> at that time he still believed that it might be possible to organize a sweeping peasant uprising in Russia. . . . It was then that he penned, in Russian, the appeal known as *A Few Words to Young Friends in Russia* and the pamphlet *Science and the Revolutionary Cause Today*. Netchayev had returned to Russia, but had had to flee once more following the arrests of almost all his friends and the destruction of his organization, and by January 1870, he was back in Switzerland. He insisted that Bakunin drop his translation of *Das Kapital* in order to devote himself wholly to Russian revolutionary propaganda. . . . In Russian, Bakunin wrote the pamphlet *To the Officers of the Russian Army* and, in French, the pamphlet *The Bears of Berne and the Bear of St. Petersburg*; he also brought out a few editions of a fresh run of *Kolokol*<sup>10</sup> and was tremendously busy for some months; but in the end, he realized that Netchayev was intending to use him as a mere pawn and was resorting to Jesuitical measures in order to secure himself a personal dictatorship. Following a definitive show-down in Geneva in July 1870, he severed all connections with the young revolutionary. His unduly trusting nature had been abused, as had the admiration he had at first felt for Netchayev's maverick vigor. "Needless to say," Bakunin wrote to Ogareff

(August 2, 1870) in the wake of this falling-out, “we made complete fools of ourselves. How Herzen would poke fun at us both, were he here, and how right he would be! Ah, well! There is nothing for it but to swallow this bitter pill which will make us the wiser hereinafter.”

Meanwhile, war had just broken out between Germany and France, and Bakunin monitored its progress with passionate interest and intense absorption. “You are only a Russian,” he wrote to Ogareff on August 11th, “whereas I am an internationalist.” As he saw it, the crushing of France by a feudalistic, militaristic Germany signaled the victory of counter-revolution: and the only way to fend off that defeat was to appeal to the French people to rise up en masse, in order, simultaneously, to beat off the foreign invader and rid itself of home-grown tyrants who kept it in economic and political servitude. To his socialist friends in Lyon he wrote:

The patriotic movement of 1792 is nothing by comparison with the one you must now mount, if you would save France. So arise, friends, to the sound of the Marseillaise, which, today, is once again France’s legitimate anthem, aglow with relevance, the anthem of liberty, the people’s anthem, the anthem of mankind, because France’s cause is again, at last, mankind’s cause. By playing the patriotic card, we will salvage the world’s freedom. Ah, if only I were a young man. I would not be writing letters. I would be in your midst!

A contributor to *Völkstaat* (Liebknecht’s newspaper) had written that the workers of Paris were “indifferent to the present war.” Bakunin was outraged to find them credited with such criminal apathy: he put pen to paper to show them that they could not remain impervious to the German invasion and simply had to defend their freedom against the armed hordes of Prussian despotism:

Ah, were France invaded by an army of proletarians—Germans, English, Belgians, Spaniards, Italians—displaying the colors of revolutionary socialism and proclaiming the final emancipation of labor to the world, I would have been the very first to cry out to France’s workers: “Welcome them with open arms, for they are your brothers, and join forces with them to sweep away the putrefying remnants of the bourgeois world!” But the invasion by which France is dishonored today is an aristocratic, monarchical and military invasion. By staying passive in the face of this invasion, French workers would not only be

betraying their own freedom, but would also be betraying the cause of the proletariat the world over, the sacred cause of revolutionary socialism.

Bakunin's thoughts on the situation and the means by which France and the cause of freedom might be saved were set out by him in a short pamphlet which appeared, uncredited to any author, in September, under the title *Letters to a Frenchman on the Current Crisis*.

On September 9, 1870, Bakunin left Locarno to make his way to Lyon, arriving there on September 15th. A "Committee for the Salvation of France" had been set up and he was its most active and most daring member, immediately making preparations for an attempt at a revolutionary uprising: that movement's program was made public on September 26 through a red poster bearing the signatures of delegates from Lyon; Saint-Etienne, Tarare and Marseilles: although a foreigner; Bakunin had no hesitation in adding his signature to those of his friends, claiming his share of their danger and responsibility. After having announced that "having become impotent, the administrative and governmental machinery of the State has been abolished" and that "the people of France were reverting to complete self-possession," that poster moved that committees for the salvation of France be formed in every federated commune and immediately despatch two delegates from the committee of every departmental capital "to join the revolutionary Convention for the salvation of France." A popular revolt on September 28 left the revolutionaries in possession of the city hall in Lyon: but treachery on the part of General Cluseret and the cowardice of some of those in whom the people had placed its trust aborted this attempt; Bakunin, against whom the procurator of the Republic, Andrieux, had issued an arrest warrant, successfully reached Marseilles, where he went into hiding for a time, while trying to put another revolt together: meanwhile, the French authorities were peddling the rumor that he was a paid agent of Prussia, and that the government of National Defense had proof of this: for its part, Liebknecht's *Volksstaat* carried these lines with regard to the revolt of September 28 and the program set out in the red poster: "The press bureau in Berlin could not have done a better job of furthering Bismarck's purposes!"

On October 24, despairing of France, Bakunin left Marseilles aboard a ship whose skipper was friendly with friends of his, returning to Locarno via Genoa and Milan. On the eve of his departure, he wrote to the Spanish socialist, Sentiñón, who had come to France in hope of participating in the revolutionary upheaval:

The people of France is no longer revolutionary at all. The militarism and bureaucracy, aristocratic arrogance and Protestant Jesuitry of the Prussians, in tender alliance with the knout of my dear sovereign and master, Emperor of all the Russias, are going to prevail on the continent of Europe, for God knows how many decades. Farewell to all our dreams of imminent emancipation!

The revolt that erupted in Marseilles on October 31, seven days after Bakunin left, merely confirmed him in his gloomy assessment: the revolutionary Commune that had set itself up in the city hall when the news came of Bazaine's surrender, was only able to survive for five days and abdicated on November 14 in favor of commissioner Alphonse Gent, Gambetta's envoy.

Back in Locarno where he spent the whole winter in isolation, grappling with material discomfort and black misery, Bakunin wrote, by way of a sequel to his *Letters to a Frenchman*, a review of the new situation in Europe: it appeared in the spring of 1871 under the telling title *The Knouto-Germanic Empire and the Social Revolution*. News of the Parisian uprising on March 18 came as a partial rebuttal of his gloomy prognostications, demonstrating that the Parisian proletariat at least had retained its vigor and spirit of rebellion. But the heroics of the people of Paris were to prove powerless to galvanize an exhausted and defeated France: attempts made in several provincial locations to propagate the communalist movement failed, and the brave Parisian insurgents were overwhelmed by superior numbers. And Bakunin, who had arrived among his friends in the Jura (April 27) so as to be closer to the border with France, had to make his way home to Locarno (June 1) without having had the opportunity to act.

This time, though, he was not disheartened. The Paris Commune, the target of hatred from all of the concerted reactionaries, had lighted a glimmer of hope in the hearts of all victims of exploitation;<sup>11</sup> in the heroic people which had shed its blood in torrents for the emancipation of mankind, the world's proletariat saluted, as Bakunin phrased it, "the modern Satan, the great rebel, beaten but not broken." The Italian patriot Mazzini had added his voice to those cursing Paris and the International; Bakunin wrote an *Internationalist's Answer to Mazzini* that appeared in both Italian and French (August 1871): that essay had a tremendous impact in Italy, and among the youth and workers of that country, it brought about a shift in opinion that, before 1871 was out, had led to the creation of numerous branches of the International. A second pamphlet, Mazzini's *Political Theology and the International* rounded off

the task begun: and Bakunin, who, by despatching Fanelli to Spain in 1868, had been godfather to the International in Spain, found himself, as a result of his polemic with Mazzini in 1871, godfather to the Italian International that was to throw itself with so much fervor into the fight, not just against the bourgeoisie's rule over the proletariat, but also against the efforts of men who, at that point, were bent upon enshrining the authority principle in the International Workingmen's Association.

The split inside the Federation romande, which might have been resolved amicably, had the General Council in London so desired, and had its agent, Outine, been less treacherous, had worsened and gone beyond remedy now. In August 1870, Bakunin and three of his friends had been expelled from the Geneva branch for having indicated their support for the Jurassians. In the immediate wake of the war of 1870–1871, agents of Marx arrived in Geneva to reopen old sores: the membership of the Alliance branch thought that they were offering proof of their peaceable intent by announcing that their branch was being wound up, but the Marx-Outine camp did not disarm: a new branch, the so-called revolutionary socialist propaganda and action chapter, launched in Geneva by refugees from the Commune and which the erstwhile members of the Alliance branch had joined, was refused admission by the General Council. Instead of a general congress of the International, the General Council, led by Marx and his friend Engels, summoned a secret conference in London in September 1871: it was comprised almost exclusively of Marx loyalists with whom the latter had arrived at decisions that did away with the autonomy of the International's branches and federations, awarding the General Council an authority that flew in the face of the Association's fundamental statutes: at the same time, the conference sought to organize, under General Council auspices, what it termed "the working class's political action."

As a matter of urgency, the International, a wide-ranging federation of groupings organized for battle on economic terms against capitalist exploitation, had to be spared the overlordship of a tiny coterie of Marxist and Blanquist sectarians. The Jura sections, in concert with the Geneva-based propaganda branch, came together in Sonvilier on November 12, 1871 into a Jura Federation, and issued a circular to all other federations of the International, inviting them to join with it in resisting the trespasses of the General Council and in vigorously reasserting their autonomy.

"The society to come," the circular read, "should be nothing other than the universalization of the organization with which the International will

have endowed itself. So we should take care to assimilate that organization as closely as possibly to our ideal. How could one expect an egalitarian and free society to emerge from an authoritarian organization? That would be an impossibility. It is incumbent upon the International, being the future human society in embryo, to stand here and now as a faithful reflection of our principles of liberty and federation and to eschew from its ranks any principle tending towards authority and dictatorship.”

Bakunin gave an enthusiastic welcome to the Sonvilier circular and threw himself wholeheartedly into spreading its principles around the Italian sections. Spain, Belgium and most of the branches reorganized in France in defiance of the Versailles backlash, as secret chapters, and most of the branches in the United States took the same line as the Jura Federation: and the thwarting of the attempt by Marx and his allies to establish their domination over the International was soon assured. The first half of 1872 was marked by a “Confidential Circular” from the General Council; it was written by Marx and published in a pamphlet entitled *The Alleged Splits in the International*. In it, the main militants of the autonomist or federalist camp were personally attacked and libeled, and the protests that had erupted on all sides against certain actions of the General Council were represented as the products of intrigues mounted by members of the late International Alliance of Socialist Democracy. These, under the direction of the supposed “mysterious pope of Locarno,” were alleged to be working to destroy the International. Bakunin summed up this circular as it deserved when he wrote to friends: “The sword of Damocles with which we have for so long been threatened has just fallen on our heads. It turns out to be not so much a sword as Mr. Marx’s usual weapon, a pile of rubbish.”

Bakunin spent the summer and autumn of 1872 in Zurich, where (in August), at his instigation, a Slav branch was launched that was made up almost exclusively of Russian and Serbian male and female students: it affiliated to the International’s Jura Federation. From April onwards, he was in touch from Locarno with a number of young Russians living in Switzerland and had organized them into a secret action and propaganda group. . . . Friction with Petr Lavrov<sup>12</sup> and differences of opinion among a few members were to lead to the winding up of the Slav section in Zurich in 1873.

Meanwhile, the General Council had decided to summon a general congress for September 2, 1872: but as the venue for the congress, it selected The Hague, the better to be able to field, from London, large numbers of delegates

equipped with courtesy or fictitious mandates, all of them committed to the Council's policy, and to make access to the congress all the more difficult for delegates from more remote federations and impossible for Bakunin. The newly constituted Italian federation refrained from sending delegates: the Spanish federation sent four, the Jura Federation two, the Belgian Federation seven, the Dutch Federation four, the English Federation five: those twenty one delegates, the only ones truly representative of the International, formed the core of the minority. The majority, numbering forty men, who in fact represented no one but themselves, had made up its mind in advance to do all that might be asked of it by the coterie of which Marx and Engels were the leaders. The only move by the congress of The Hague with which we need concern ourselves here was the expulsion of Bakunin, a decision made on the last day (September 7th), by which time two thirds of the delegates had left, by twenty seven votes in favor with seven against and eight abstentions. The case made by Marx and his supporters in requesting, after a derisory sham inquest held *in camera*, that Bakunin be expelled, rested upon the following two arguments:

That proof exists, in the form of draft statutes and letters signed Bakunin, that that citizen tried and perhaps was successful in founding in Europe an organization by the name of the Alliance, with statutes wholly different in social and political viewpoint from those of the International Workingmen's Association: that citizen Bakunin has had recourse to fraudulent procedures designed to appropriate to himself all or part of someone else's fortune, which amounts to embezzlement: that, furthermore, he or his agents have had recourse to intimidation in order to evade honoring their commitments.

It was that latter part of the marxist indictment, with its allusion to the advance of 300 rubles Bakunin had received for the translation of *Das Kapital*, and to the letter written by Netchayev to the publisher Poliakov, that I described earlier as an attempted moral assassination.

A protest at such infamy was immediately made public by a group of Russian émigrés: here are the essential passages from it:

Geneva and Zurich, October 4, 1872—At our friend Mikhail Bakunin, they have dared to hurl the charge of embezzlement and blackmail. We do not feel it necessary or timely here to enter into discussion of the alleged facts upon



which they felt that the curious allegation made against our countryman and friend might be made to rest. Those facts are well known to us, known even in the tiniest details, and we will make it our duty to present them in their true light just as soon as we are allowed to do so. At the moment we are precluded from doing so by the unfortunate circumstances of another countryman who is no friend of ours, but whose harassment at the hands of the Russian government even now ties our hands.<sup>13</sup> Mr. Marx, whose adroitness we have no wish in any event to dispute, has miscalculated badly on this occasion at least. Decent men in every land will doubtless feel nothing but outrage and disgust in the face of such crude intrigues and such a flagrant breach of the most elementary principles of justice. As for Russia, we can assure Mr. Marx that all his maneuvers will be forever wasted: Bakunin is held in too high a regard there and is too well-known for this calumny to touch him. . . . (This was followed by eight signatures).

In the wake of the congress in The Hague, another international congress met in Saint-Imier (Swiss Jura) on September 15: present were delegates from the Italian, Spanish and Jura federations, plus representatives from the French and American sections. This congress unanimously declared that it “utterly rejects all of the resolutions of the congress of The Hague, and does not in any way recognize the powers of the incoming General Council appointed by that.” That General Council had been relocated to New York. The Italian Federation had endorsed the Saint-Imier resolutions in advance, by way of the votes it passed at the Rimini conference on August 4: the Jura Federation endorsed them at a special congress held on the very same date, September 15. Most of the French branches wasted no time in sending their whole-hearted endorsements: the Spanish Federation and the Belgian Federation in turn confirmed these resolutions in their congresses held in Cordoba and Brussels during Christmas week of 1872; the American Federation did likewise at a session of its Federal Council (New York, Spring Street) on 19 January 1873, as did the English Federation, which included two old friends of Marx, Eccarius<sup>14</sup> and Jung, whom his conduct had prompted to part company with him,<sup>15</sup> in its congress on January 26, 1873. The New York-based General Council, seeking to exercise the powers vested in it by the congress in The Hague, announced on January 5, 1873 that the Jura Federation was being “suspended,” having been found to be intractable: the only result of which action was that the Dutch Federation which had initially intended to remain

neutral, shrugged off its reservations and joined seven other federations of the International in declaring on February 14, 1873 that it would not recognize the suspension of the Jura Federation.

Publication in the latter part of 1873 by Marx and his tiny band of loyalists of a pamphlet by the name of *The Alliance of Socialist Democracy and the International Workingmen's Association*, riddled with the crudest misrepresentations of the facts, merely inspired disgust in those who deplored the dismal outpouring of blind hatred.

September 1, 1873 saw the inauguration in Geneva of the sixth general congress of the International: the federations of Belgium, Holland, Italy, Spain, France, England and the Swiss Jura were represented at it. The Lassallean socialists from Berlin had sent a sympathy telegram signed by Hasenclever and Hasselmann. The congress set to work to overhaul the statutes of the International: it declared that the General Council was being done away with, and it turned the International into a free federation which no longer had any directing authority at its head:

“The Federations and Sections making up the Association,” stated (Article 3 of) the revised statutes, “retain their complete autonomy, which is to say, the right to organize themselves as they deem fit, to run their own affairs without outside interference and to determine for themselves the path they mean to follow in order to arrive at the emancipation of labor.”

Bakunin was worn out by a long life of struggles: imprisonment had aged him prematurely and his health was seriously undermined; his yearning now was for rest and retirement. When he saw the International reorganized on the basis of the victory of the principle of free federation, he reckoned that the time had come when he might take his leave of his colleagues, and to the members of the Jura Federation he addressed a letter (published on October 2, 1873) requesting that they accept his resignation as a member of the Jura Federation and of the International. He added:

I no longer feel that I have the strength required for the struggle: consequently, I could only be a burden upon the proletariat's camp and not a help. I therefore withdraw, dear comrades, full of gratitude to you and sympathy for your great and blessed cause, the cause of humanity. I shall continue to follow your every move with a brotherly concern, and I will greet every one of your new triumphs with joy. I will be yours until death.

He had only three years left to live.

His friend, the Italian revolutionary Carlo Cafiero<sup>16</sup> offered him the hospitality of a villa that he had just bought near Locarno. Bakunin lived there until mid-1874, wholly absorbed, it appears, by this new lifestyle, in which he at last discovered peace, security and relative comfort. Yet he had not stopped thinking of himself as a soldier of the Revolution: when his Italian friends had laid the groundwork for an insurrection, he traveled to Bologna (July 1874) to participate in it, but the revolt, being poorly coordinated, came to nothing and Bakunin was obliged to return to Switzerland in disguise.

(. . .) By 1875, Bakunin was only a shadow of his former self. In June 1876, in hope of finding some relief from his afflictions, he left Lugano for Berne: on arrival there on June 14, he told his friend, Dr. Adolf Vogt: "I have come here for you to get me back on my feet again or to die. . . ." He died at noon on July 1.

# WHOM AM I?¹

I am neither a scientist, nor a philosopher nor even a professional writer. I have written very little in my life-time, and have only ever done so in self-defense, so to speak, and then only when heartfelt conviction obliged me to overcome my instinctive repugnance towards any public display of the inner me.

Who am I then, and what is it that now impels me to publish this work? I am a zealous quester after truth and a no less passionate foe of the malignant fictions which the party of order, that official, privileged representative of interest in every past and present religious, metaphysical, political, juridical, economic and social turpitude, seeks to utilize to this day in the brutalization and enslavement of the world.

I am a fanatical lover of liberty, regarding it as the only setting amid which men's intellect, dignity and happiness can increase and grow: not the quite formal liberty doled out, measured and regulated by the State, that ageless lie that in reality never stands for anything other than the privilege of the few, based upon the enslavement of the whole world: not the individualistic, selfish, petty and fictitious liberty peddled by the school of J.-J. Rousseau, as well as by all those other schools of bourgeois liberalism, which look upon so-called universal rights, as represented by the State, as a limit upon the rights of the individual, which necessarily and always results in the rights of the individual being whittled away to nothing.

No, I mean the only liberty truly deserving of the name, the liberty that comprises of the unrestricted expansion of all of the material, intellectual and moral potentialities existing in every person in latent form: the liberty that acknowledges no other restrictions than those laid out for us by the laws of our own natures: so that, strictly speaking, there are no restrictions, because those laws are not foisted upon us by any external law-maker living either alongside or above us: they are, rather, immanent, and inherent within us, representing the very foundations of our being, material, intellectual and moral alike: instead of finding them curtailments, we should look upon them as the actual conditions and effective grounding of our liberty.

I mean that liberty of every individual which, far from stopping in front of the liberty of one's neighbor as in front of a boundary-marker, instead discovers in it an endorsement of itself and its extension into infinity: the freedom of the individual uncircumscribed by the freedom of all, freedom in solidarity,

freedom in equality: freedom triumphant over brute force and the authority principle which was never anything other than the idealized expression of that force: liberty which, having once toppled all heavenly and earthly idols, will lay the groundwork for and organize a new world, the world of solidary humanity, upon the ruins of all Churches and all States.

I am a staunch advocate of economic and social equality, because I know that, outside of such equality, liberty, justice, human dignity, morality and the welfare of individuals as well as the prosperity of nations will never be anything other than so many lies. But, while I am a supporter of liberty, that primary condition of humanity, my reckoning is that equality should be established in the world by means of the spontaneous organization of labor and of collective ownership of producers' associations freely organized and federated into communes, and, through the equally spontaneous federation of those communes—but not by means of State supervision from above.

This is the point which is the main bone of contention between the revolutionary socialists or collectivists and the authoritarian communists who argue in favor of absolute initiative on the part of the State. Their goals are the same: both parties wish to see the creation of a new social order rooted exclusively in the organization of collective endeavor, inescapably incumbent upon each and every body in consequence of the force of things, in equal economic circumstances for all and in collective appropriation of the instruments of labor.

Except that communists imagine that they can bring this about through development and organization of the political power of the working classes and principally of the urban proletariat, abetted by bourgeois radicalism, whereas revolutionary socialists, enemies to any and all equivocal connivance and alliance, take the contrary view that they can only achieve that goal through the building-up and organization, not of the political, but rather of the social and thus anti-political power of the laboring masses of town and country alike, including all men of goodwill from the upper classes who, breaking with their entire past, might frankly be willing to join hands with them and embrace their program in its entirety.

From this derive two different methods. The communists believe they have a duty to organize the work force in order to take over the political power of States. The revolutionary socialists organize with an eye to the destruction, or, if one would prefer a more polite expression, the liquidation of States. The communists are supporters of the principle and practice of authority,

whereas revolutionary socialists place their trust exclusively in liberty. One and all are equally supporters of science which is bound to kill off superstition and supplant faith, but the former would like to impose it: the others will strive to disseminate it, so that human groups, once won over, may organize themselves and federate spontaneously and freely from the bottom up, on their own initiative and in accordance with their real interests, but never according to some pre-ordained plan foisted upon the ignorant masses by a handful of superior intellects.

The revolutionary socialists reckon that there is a lot more practicality and wit in the instinctive aspirations and actual needs of the popular masses than in the profound intelligence of all these doctors and teachers of humanity who still seek to put their shoulders to the wheel of so many failed attempts to bring them happiness. Revolutionary socialists, on the other hand, think humanity has let itself be governed for a long time, indeed, for too long a time, and that the source of its afflictions resides, not in this or that form of government, but in the principle and in the very practice of any government whatever.

There at last is the contradiction, now become historic, that exists between the communism scientifically developed by the German school and in part embraced by the American and English socialists, on the one hand, and Proudhonism, extensively expanded upon and taken to its logical consequences, on the other, as embraced by the proletariat of the Latin countries.<sup>2</sup>

# GOD AND THE STATE

## THE INDIVIDUAL, SOCIETY AND LIBERTY

(. . .) Starting from the condition of gorilla, it is only with very great difficulty that man attains consciousness of his humanity and appreciation of his liberty. At first, neither that consciousness nor that liberty are accessible to him: he is born a brute beast and slave and becomes human and progressively emancipated only in the context of a society which necessarily predates the inception of his reason, speech and will: and this he can only do through the collective endeavors of all past and present members of that society which is, in consequence, the basis and natural point of departure of his human existence. It follows from that that man does not attain his individual freedom or personality unless these are complemented by those of all of the individuals around him, and then thanks only to the toil and collective might of society, outside of which he would remain, of all the savage beasts existing upon earth, unquestionably the most stupid and most miserable. In the materialists' interpretation, which is the only natural and logical one, society, far from diminishing and curtailing it, is instead the creator of the liberty of individual human beings. It is the root, the tree, and liberty is its fruit. Consequently, every man ought to look for his liberty, not to the beginning but rather to the end of history, and we may say that the real and effectual emancipation of every individual human being is the true and great aim, the ultimate goal of history.

## LIBERTY AND SELF

(. . .) The materialist, realist and collectivist definition of liberty (. . .) is this: man only becomes man and achieves consciousness only to the extent that he realizes his humanity within society and then only through the collective endeavors of the society as a whole: he is released from the yoke of external nature only through that collective or social toil which alone has the capacity to turn the face of the earth into a haven favoring humanity's development: and without such material emancipation there can be no intellectual and moral emancipation for anyone. He cannot free himself from the yoke of his own nature, that is to say, he cannot subordinate his own body's instincts and movements to the instructions of his increasingly developed mind, except through

education and training: but both of these are eminently and exclusively social things; because, but for society, man would have stayed forever a wild beast or a saint, which amounts to pretty much the same thing. In the end, the isolated man cannot attain to consciousness of his liberty. Being free, in the case of man, means being acknowledged, deemed and treated as such by another man, by all of the men surrounding him. So freedom is not a phenomenon of isolation, but of mutual contemplation, not a factor for exclusion but rather a factor for liaison, the freedom of every individual being nothing more than the mirror image of his humanity or his human rights in the consciousness of all free men, his brothers, his equals.

I cannot claim and feel myself free except in the presence of and with regard to other men.

(. . .) I am truly free only when all human beings around me, men and women alike, are equally free. Far from being a limitation or negation of my freedom, the freedom of my neighbor is instead its precondition and confirmation. I only become truly free through the freedom of others, so that the greater the numbers of free men around me, and the more extensive and comprehensive their freedom, the more extensive and profound my freedom becomes. Conversely, it is the enslavement of men that opposes a barrier to my freedom, or, (and it amounts to the same thing), it is their brutishness that is a negation of my humanness because, to repeat myself, I cannot claim to be truly free myself except when my freedom, or—and this comes to the same thing—my human dignity and human rights, which consist of withholding obedience from any other man and determining my actions solely in conformity with my own beliefs, mirrored by the equally free consciousness of everyone, are reflected back to me by universal endorsement. Thus confirmed by everyone's freedom, my own freedom reaches out into infinity.

## STATE AND GOVERNMENT

(. . .) I have no hesitation in saying that the State is an evil, albeit a historically necessary evil, as necessary in the past as its utter extinction will sooner or later prove to be, as necessary as were men's primitive brutishness and theological meanderings. Historically, in every land it was born of the marriage of violence, rapine and pillage—in short, of war and conquest—with the gods successively invented by nations' theological fantasies. From its inception, it has been and remains to this day a divine sanction upon brute force and triumphant iniquity.



(. . .) Revolt against the State is a much easier undertaking, because there is in the very nature of the State something that is an incitement to revolt. The State is authority, force, the display of and fascination with force. It does not wheedle and does not seek converts: and every time that it dabbles in these, it does so with very bad grace: for persuasion is not in its nature which is, rather, to impose and compel. To what lengths it goes to conceal its nature as the lawful trespasser against men's wills, as the standing negation of their freedom. Even when it serves the good, it does it disservice and spoils it, precisely because it commands good, and any command provokes and inspires freedom to righteous revolt: and because the good, once it is commanded, becomes, from the vantage point of true morality, human (though not, of course, divine) morality, and in terms of human respect and liberty, the bad.

(. . .) Exploitation and government, the first affording the means whereby to govern, and representing the pre-requisite as well as the object of all government, which, in turn, guarantees and legalizes the power to exploit, are the two indivisible terms of all that goes by the name of politics. Since the beginning of history, they have indeed constituted the stuff of the life of States, theocratic, monarchical, aristocratic and even democratic. Previously and up until the great Revolution at the end of the 18th century, the intimacy between them had been disguised by the fictions of religion, loyalty and chivalry: but ever since the rough hand of the bourgeoisie tore away all the veils, which had in any case become fairly transparent, and ever since its blast of revolution scattered all of the empty conceits under cover of which Church and State, theocracy, monarchy and aristocracy had for so long managed, undisturbed, to perpetrate their historical vileness; ever since the bourgeoisie, wearying of being the anvil, took its turn at being the hammer; ever since it ushered in the modern State—in short, that necessary connection has turned into a revealed truth, indeed, an incontrovertible truth as far as everyone is concerned.

Exploitation is the visible body and government the soul of bourgeois rule. And as we have just seen, the one and the other in such intimacy, are, in theoretical as well as practical terms, the necessary and faithful representation of metaphysical idealism, the inescapable consequence of that bourgeois doctrine that looks outside of social solidarity for the liberty and morality of the individual. That teaching results in exploitative government by a tiny number of the fortunate or elect, in exploitative slavery for the greater number and, for all and sundry, in negation of all morality and all liberty.

# THE INTERNATIONAL REVOLUTIONARY SOCIETY OR BROTHERHOOD (1865)

The texts which follow are at once the least well-known and maybe the most important of Bakunin's anarchist writings. They do not feature in the six volumes of his *Oeuvres*, publication of which was undertaken by Bakunin's disciple James Guillaume between 1895 and 1913. They have not thus far been collated for the *Archives Bakounine* currently being published in the Netherlands and are not to be found in the monumental *Life of Bakunin*, hand-written in German, by Max Nettlau,<sup>1</sup> a work of which only a few rare autographed copies are to be found in the world's chief libraries. They are translated here from the language in which they were first written: French.

They represent a number of unconnected documents. As a result of which there is some duplication in their contents. But we have not seen fit to edit them insofar as their ideological passages are concerned at any rate, nor to attempt to revamp the order in which they are written. That would have been tantamount to impairment of the rich and powerful delivery of Bakunin's train of thought. One of these texts is entitled *Revolutionary Catechism*. It should not be confused with the Rules by which the Revolutionary *ought to abide* (more widely, and incorrectly, known under the title *Revolutionary Catechism*) wherein it is argued that "the end justifies the means." Bakunin's contribution to that amoral "catechism" dating from 1869 has, in any event, been challenged on the basis of the available evidence by the editor of the *Archives Bakounine*, Arthur Lehning.

The texts which we offer here were drawn up by Bakunin while in Italy in 1865. They represent the statutes and program of his International Revolutionary Brotherhood (or Society). This organization purported to be made up of a "worldwide family" and "national families." Its membership was divided into two categories: the "active brethren" and the "honorary brethren," in imitation of the practices of the Carbonari and the freemasons. However, it appears that the organization in question remained largely at the blueprint stage. As Arthur Lehning has pointed out, such programs and statutes mirror Bakunin's evolving thoughts, rather than "the operation of an organization," with which A. Romano agrees when he asserts that what was, in fact, at stake was "a secret pact between four or five friends: a spectral alliance."<sup>2</sup>

The handful of men who joined Bakunin in Italy in launching his “Brotherhood” were all, like Giuseppe Fanelli, former disciples of the republican Giuseppe Mazzini, from whom they had acquired their taste for and familiarity with secret societies. They had parted company with their mentor because they had concluded that his deism and his concept of a purely “political” revolution (which is to say, one bourgeois and bereft of social content) were obsolete.

The novelty in the “Brotherhood” program was not simply its socialist, internationalist content and its affirmation of the “right of secession,” which was to be reiterated by Lenin, but also its libertarian provenance. As H.E. Kaminski has written, “issuing the watchwords of anarchy, it represents a counter to Marx’s and Engels’s *Communist Manifesto*, to which it is inferior in terms of its scientific reasoning, but of which it is the equal in terms of the fervor of its revolutionary enthusiasm.” It is “the spiritual foundation of the whole anarchist movement.”<sup>3</sup>

In the pages which follow there is a contradiction, apparently so at any rate. Sometimes Bakunin calls categorically for the “destruction of States”: “The State,” he avers, “must be destroyed root and branch,” etc. but sometimes he sneaks the term “State” back into his line of argument. In which case he defines it as “the central unity of the country,” as a federal agency. Nevertheless he continues to vent his spleen on “the nanny, transcendent, centralized State” and to denounce “the despotically centralistic pressures of the State.” Which means that in Bakunin’s view, there were States and States. Moreover, this same ambiguity is to be found in the writings of Proudhon, from whom Bakunin drank so deeply. Indictment of the State was the essential theme of Proudhonian thought. And yet the later Proudhon, the author of *The Federal Principle* (1863), a book written just two years before Bakunin’s “Program,” also unashamedly uses the word “State” in the same federalistic, anti-centralistic sense with which Bakunin invests the term.

### THE PROGRAM OF THE BROTHERHOOD

The International Revolutionary Society is to comprise two different organizations: the international family proper, and the national families: these latter must be everywhere organized in such a way as to remain always subject to the absolute leadership of the international family.

## THE INTERNATIONAL FAMILY

Composed exclusively of international brethren, active and honorary alike, it is to be the keystone upon which our entire great revolutionary endeavor will depend. The success of the latter will thus hinge chiefly upon astute selection of the international brethren.

In addition to the essential qualities which go to make up the serious revolutionary character of integrity, like bona fides, courage, prudence, discretion, constancy, fortitude, determination, boundless commitment, lack of vanity and selfish ambition, intelligence, practicality, the candidate must also have taken into his heart, will and mind all of the underlying principles of our *Revolutionary Catechism*.

He must be an atheist and join with us in demanding for this earth and for man that which religions have displaced into the heavens and made an attribute of their gods—truth, liberty, justice, happiness and goodness. He must acknowledge that, independent of all theology and divine metaphysics, morality has no other source than the group consciousness of men.

He must be, as we are, the enemy of the authority principle, every application and consequence of which he must despise, whether it be in the world of the mind and morality, or in the world of politics, economics and society.

He must love liberty and justice above all else and recognize, with us, that any political and social organization, founded upon the negation or merely upon some curtailment of this absolute principle of liberty, must, of necessity, lead to iniquity or disorder and that only rational and equitable social organization compatible with human dignity and human happiness is qualified to be that which will have liberty as its fundament, ethos, sole law and ultimate aim.

He must understand that there is no liberty in the absence of equality, and that attainment of the widest liberty amid the most perfect (*de jure* and *de facto*) political, economic and social equality, conjoined, is justice.

He must be a federalist, as we are, within and without his homeland. He must appreciate that the advent of liberty is incompatible with the existence of States. It follows that he must seek the destruction of all States and, at the same time, that of all religious, political and social institutions: such as established Churches, standing armies, centralized powers, bureaucracy, governments, unitary parliaments, universities and State banks, as well as aristocratic and bourgeois monopolies. So that out of the ruins of all this the free human society may arise at last, no longer organized, as is the case at present, from

the top down and from center to periphery, by dint of a compelled unity and concentration, but rather starting from the free individual and the free association and autonomous commune, from the bottom up, and from the periphery to the center, by dint of free federation.

He must espouse, in theory as well as in practice and in the fullness of its implications, this principle: every individual, every association, every commune, every province, every region, every nation enjoys an absolute right of self-determination, to enter or not to enter into association, to enter into alliance with whomsoever they may wish, and to break off alliances without regard to supposed historic rights or the convenience of their neighbors: and he must be staunch in his belief that only when they are formed through the omnipotence of their inherent, natural attractions and needs, all enjoying the cachet of liberty, will these new federations of communes, provinces, regions and nations become truly strong, fruitful and indissoluble.

Consequently, he must simplify the so-called nationality principle, an ambiguous principle replete with hypocrisy and snares, the principle of the ambitious State of history, to arrive at the much greater, much simpler and only legitimate principle of liberty: every individual or collective body, being free or being entitled to be free, is entitled to be itself and nobody has the right to foist upon it his own dress, customs, language, views and laws: everyone should be absolutely free in his home. Which is what national rights, honestly understood, boil down to. Anything that goes beyond that point is not a confirmation of one's own national liberty, but rather a denial of the national liberty of one's neighbor. The candidate, then, ought to despise, as we do, all those narrow, ridiculous, freedom-killing and thus criminal notions of greatness, ambition and national glory, which are fit only for monarchy or oligarchy, and, today, suit the grande bourgeoisie, in that they assist it in deceiving peoples and in pitting them, one against another, the better to enslave them.

In his heart, patriotism, henceforth occupying a secondary place, must yield to love of justice and of liberty, and if need be, should his own homeland have the misfortune to depart from these, he will never hesitate to side against it: which he will do without undue discomfort, if he is truly convinced, as he ought to be, that there is no prosperity and political greatness for any country except through justice and liberty.

Finally he must be convinced that his country's prosperity and happiness, far from being in contradiction with those of every other country, instead

require them for their own sake, that there is, between the destinies of all nations, a conclusively all-powerful solidarity, gradually turning the narrow and, in most cases, unjust sentiment of patriotism into a more comprehensive, more generous and more rational love of humanity, which will, in the end, establish a universal and world-wide federation of all nations.

He must be socialist in the fullest sense of the word as used in our revolutionary catechism and, with us, he must recognize it as legitimate and just, call for it with all his heart and stand ready to lend his every assistance to the triumph of an organization of society wherein every individual human being born, male or female, is afforded equal means of maintenance, education and training during his infancy and adolescence, and later, upon reaching the age of majority, is afforded those external facilities, that is, the same political, economic and social means to create his own well-being, by applying to work the various gifts and aptitudes with which nature will have endowed him and which equal instruction for all will have nurtured in him.

He must understand that, just the way that inheritance of misfortune which it cannot be denied, alas! is all too often nature's way, is everywhere rejected by the principle of justice, so, following the same logic of fairness, the inheritance of good fortune must also be rejected, since the dead, being no longer in existence, cannot write prescriptions for the living, and that, in short, equality of the economic, social and political circumstances from which every individual starts—the absolute prerequisite for the liberty of us all—is incompatible with hereditary ownership and with the rights of inheritance.

He must be persuaded that, labor being the sole producer of social assets, anyone enjoying these without working is an exploiter of another man's labors, a thief, and, work being an essential underpinning of human dignity, the only means by which man actually conquers and creates his freedom, all political and social rights must henceforth be extended to workers only.

He must acknowledge that the land, nature's free gift to one and all, cannot and ought not to be owned by anyone. But that its fruits, being the products of labor, ought to go solely to those who cultivate it with their own hands.

He must be convinced, as we are, that woman, different from man but not inferior to him, intelligent, hard-working and free as he is, should be declared his equal in all political and social rights: that in the free society, religious and civil marriage should be replaced by free marriage, and that the upkeep, education and training of all children should be a matter for everyone, a charge upon society, although the latter, while protecting them against either the

stupidity, negligence or malice of their parents, need not remove them from these, children belonging neither to society nor to their parents but rather to their future liberty, and the authority of society should have no other aim, no other task with regard to them than to deliver to them and prepare them for a rational, manly education, founded exclusively upon justice, human respect and the cultivation of labor.

He must be revolutionary. He must understand that such a complete and radical transformation of society, necessarily entailing the ruination of all privileges, all monopolies and all established powers, will not, of course, be feasible by peaceful means: that, on those same grounds, it will have ranged against it all of the mighty, all of the rich and, on its side, in every country, only the people, plus that intelligent and truly noble segment of the youth which, though part of the privileged classes by birth, embraces the people's cause on the foot of its unselfish beliefs and fervent aspirations.

He must understand that that revolution, the sole and supreme objective of which will be the effective political, economic and social emancipation of the people, doubtless helped and organized by that youth, can, in the final analysis, be effected only by the people: that, all other religious, national or political matters having been utterly exhausted by history, there remains today but one question into which all others are subsumed and which is henceforth the only one with the capacity to set peoples in motion: the social question: that any so-called revolution, whether a revolution of national independence such as the recent Polish rising, or the one preached today by Mazzini, or exclusively political, constitutional, monarchist or even republican, such as the recent abortive revolt of the progressives in Spain—that any such revolution, being made outside of the people and thereby precluded from success unless it relies upon some privileged class representing no one's interests but its own, must, of necessity, be mounted against the people and will be a retrograde, noxious, counter-revolutionary movement.

Disdaining therefore and regarding as an inevitable mistake or brazen deception any secondary movement not having as its immediate and direct object political and social emancipation of the laboring classes, which is to say, the people, inimical to all compromise and reconciliation which from now on are impossible, and to any lying connivance with those who, by virtue of their interests, are the natural enemies of the people, he must see no salvation for his country and for the entire world other than in social revolution.

At the same time he has to appreciate that this revolution, cosmopolitan by its very essence, even as justice and liberty are too, cannot succeed unless, sweeping like a worldwide conflagration across all of the narrow boundaries of nations and felling States in its path, it encompasses the whole of Europe for a start and then the world. He must understand that the social revolution will, of necessity, turn into a Europe—and world-wide revolution.

That the world will necessarily split into two camps, the camp of the new life and that of the old privileges, and between these two opposing camps, formed, as in the days of the wars of religion, not now by a rallying of nations, but by a community of ideas and interests, there will necessarily ignite a war of extermination, without quarter or truce; that the social revolution, contrary in its very essence to the hypocritical policy of non-intervention which suits only the moribund and the impotent, will not, for the sake of its well-being and self-preservation, unable to survive unless it spreads, put up its sword before it has destroyed every State and every one of the old religious, political and economic institutions in Europe and across the whole civilized world.

That this will not be a war of conquest, but a war of emancipation, of forcible emancipation on occasion it is true, but always and for all that salutary in that its sole object and outcome will be the destruction of States and their age-old foundations, which, with the blessings of religion, have ever been the well-springs of all slavishness.

That the social revolution, once well ablaze in one place, will find fervent and formidable allies among the popular masses everywhere, even in the seemingly most hostile lands: these, just as soon as they grasp and gain palpable sense of its activity and its object, will not be able to do otherwise than throw in their lot with it everywhere: that, as a result, it will be necessary to pick for its initiation a suitable setting where it can withstand, unaided, the first onslaught of the reaction, after which, spreading beyond, it cannot fail but to succeed against all the wrath of its enemies, by federalizing and uniting into one formidable revolutionary alliance all of the countries which it will have drawn into its orbit.

That the elements of social revolution are even now sufficiently widely spread in all of the countries of Europe and that it is simply a question of collating and concentrating them in order to turn them into an effective power: that such should be the task of serious revolutionaries from every land brought together into an association both public and secret, with the dual objective of widening the revolutionary terrain and at the same time of laying preparations for an identical and simultaneous revolt in every one of the countries where



revolt will be feasible initially, through a secret understanding between the most intelligent revolutionaries of those countries.

It is not sufficient that our candidate should understand all that. He must have a passion for revolution in his breast: he must be so enamored of liberty and of justice that he is seriously willing to make his contribution to their success, to the extent of making it a duty that he sacrifice to them his rest, his well-being, his vanity, his personal ambition and often his private interests.

He must be convinced that there is no better way to serve them than by participating in our endeavors, and he must know that, in taking his place among our number, he will be contracting with us the very same solemn commitment that we all make towards him too. He must have familiarized himself with our revolutionary catechism, all our rules and laws and pledge to abide by them at all times with scrupulous observance.

He must understand that an association with a revolutionary purpose must necessarily take the form of a secret society, and every secret society, for the sake of the cause it serves and for effectiveness of action, as well as in the interests of the security of every one of its members, has to be subject to strict discipline, which is in any case merely the distillation and pure product of the reciprocal commitment made by all of the membership to one another, and that, as a result, it is a point of honor and a duty that each of them should abide by it.

Moreover, whatever the differences in the capabilities of the international brethren, we will only ever suffer one master: our principle—and only one will—our laws, which we have all helped to frame, or which we have at least all consecrated equally by our free assent. While bowing respectfully before a man's past services and cognizant of the great usefulness which might be afforded to us by some by virtue of their wealth, others by their learning and still others by their lofty position and public, literary, political or social influence, then, far from seeking them out on account of these attributes, but rather deeming these to be grounds for diffidence, in that all men might bring into our ranks either the habit or the pretension to authority, or the legacy of their past, whereas we cannot countenance either the pretension, the authority or the legacy, always looking ahead and never backwards, and recognizing no merit or entitlement in any except the one who will most actively and determinedly serve our association.

The candidate will appreciate that none should enter into that [association] except to serve it and that, as a result, it is entitled to expect some positive

usefulness of each of its members—absence of such usefulness, once duly registered and proven, resulting in exclusion.

In becoming one of our number, the new brother will have to make a solemn commitment to look upon his duty to this society as his primary duty, relegating to second position his duty to each member of the society, his brother. Those two duties must henceforth prevail, if not in his heart, then at least in his will, over all others.

#### ESSENTIAL POINTS OF THE NATIONAL CATECHISMS

The national catechisms of the different countries may thus vary upon all secondary points.

But there are essential and fundamental points which will have to be equally binding upon the national organizations in every country and which will, in consequence, have to furnish the common basis for all national catechisms. Those points are:

An isolated national revolution simply cannot succeed and so there is a need for an alliance and revolutionary federation between all peoples seeking liberty.

The impossibility of any such federation or alliance in the absence of a common program that satisfies the rights and legitimate needs of all nations equally and which, without regard to so-called historic rights, or for what is termed the necessity or welfare of States, or for national glories, nor for any other vain or ambitious pretense to predominance and strength, all things that a people ought to be capable of rejecting if it wishes to be truly free, will have equal liberty for all and justice alone as its sole principle and basis.

Such a program is incompatible, and liberty, equality, justice, cheap government, real welfare and emancipation for the laboring classes are incompatible with the existence of centralistic, military and bureaucratic States. It is absolutely essential that all of the States presently in existence in Europe (excepting Switzerland) be destroyed, as is root-and-branch demolition of all the political, military, administrative, judicial and financial institutions that today make up the life and power of States.

Abolition of all connections and all established or State-subsidized churches, confiscation of all transferable and non-transferable assets of churches for the benefit of the provinces and communes, with this provision, that once all religion has become absolutely free and a matter exclusively for the personal

conscience of the individual, the upkeep of each faith, whatever it may be, will thereafter be a matter for its faithful alone.

It is absolutely necessary that any country aiming to belong to this free federation of peoples should replace centralistic, bureaucratic and military organization at home with a federal organization rooted solely in the absolute liberty and autonomy of regions, provinces, communes, associations and individuals, with elective officials answerable to the people, and with arming of the nation, an organization that will no longer operate, as it does today, from the top down and from center to periphery, according to the unity principle, but rather from the bottom up, from periphery to center, in accordance with the principle of free federation, on the basis of free individuals who will form the associations and autonomous communes; of autonomous communes that will form autonomous provinces; of provinces that will make up regions, and of regions that, federating freely with one another, will form countries, which will in turn sooner or later make up the universal and world-wide federation.

There is a need for recognition of the absolute rights of secession enjoyed by every country, every region, every province, every commune, every association, as well as every individual, with this belief, that, once the right of secession has been recognized, *de facto* secessions will become impossible, because with national units having ceased to be the products of violence and historical falsehood, they will be formed freely on the basis of the inherent needs and affinities of their parts. Political liberty is not feasible without political equality. And the latter is impossible without economic and social equality.

There is a need for social revolution.

The extent and scope of that revolution will vary to a greater or lesser degree in every country, according to political and social circumstances and the measure of revolutionary development in each. However, in every country, certain principles will have to be proclaimed which alone have the capacity to interest the masses of the people and galvanize them, regardless of what their level of civilization may be. Those principles are the following:

The land belongs to everyone. But usufruct of it will belong only to those who till it with their own hands. Rents upon land are to be abolished.

All social wealth being produced only by labor, anyone enjoying it without working is a thief. Political rights should be reserved for honest folk only and will be available only to toilers.

Without spoliation of any sort, but through the unaided efforts and economic powers of the workers' associations, capital and the instruments of labor will pass into the possession of those who will apply them to the production of wealth through their own labors.

Every man should be the son of his endeavors and justice will not be done until such time as society is so organized that everyone will be entitled by birth to the same resources for upkeep, education and training and, at a later stage, the same external facilities for creating his own well-being through his own labors.

Insofar as this may be feasible in each country, marriage should be freed from the oversight of society and women afforded equality of rights with men.

No revolution could succeed in any country today unless it was simultaneously a political and a social revolution. Any exclusively political revolution, be it national and directed solely against foreign domination, or domestic and constitutional, or even should it have a republic as its objective, will, insofar as it consequently does not have immediate, effective, political and economic emancipation of the people as its primary objective, prove to be an illusory, phony, impossible, noxious, retrograde and counter-revolutionary revolution.

The revolution should not only be made for the people's sake: it should also be made by the people and can never succeed unless it implicates all of the rural as well as the urban masses.

Thus centralized by the idea and by the sameness of a program common to all countries: centralized by a secret organization that will not only mobilize all the parts of a country, but indeed many, if not all countries, according to a single action plan: centralized also by the synchronization of revolutionary upheavals in many rural and urban areas, the revolution will have to assume and thereafter retain a local character, in the sense that that it will not have to start from a huge concentration in one location of all of a country's revolutionary forces, nor ever take the Romanesque and bourgeois character of a quasi-revolutionary expedition, but igniting simultaneously all around a country, will take the form of a real popular revolution, in which women, the old and children will likewise take part and which will be invincible for that very reason.

That revolution may well be bloody and vengeful in its early days, when the people's justice will be enforced. But it will not long remain thus, and will never

develop into systematic, cold-blooded terrorism. It will wage war on positions and things much more than on men, confident that things and the privileged, anti-social positions which they generate and which are much more powerful than individuals, constitute both the character and the strength of its enemies.

Thus, it will open with the universal destruction of all institutions and all establishments, churches, parliaments, courts, administrations, armies, banks, universities, etc. which constitute the very existence of the State. The State must be demolished root and branch and declared bankrupt, not merely in financial terms but in terms political, bureaucratic, military, judicial and of policing. But having gone bankrupt, having indeed gone out of existence, and having no means of meeting its debts, the State will no longer be in a position to compel anyone to pay his. That matter will of course be left to the individual conscience. At the same time, in communes and towns, everything that formerly belonged to the State will be confiscated for the benefit of the revolution: the assets of all reactionaries will also be seized and all legal papers consigned to the flames—whether they be trial papers, property deeds or debt records—and the whole paper mountain of civil, criminal, judicial or official records which may have escaped destruction will be declared null and void, and every individual left with his possessions untouched. Thus will the social revolution will be made, and, once revolution's foes have been stripped of all means of harming it, there will be no further need to proceed against them with bloody measures that are all the more offensive because they unfailingly invite a violent backlash, sooner or later.

While it will be carried out locally everywhere, the revolution will of necessity assume a federalist format. Immediately after established government has been overthrown, communes will have to reorganize themselves along revolutionary lines, and endow themselves with leaders, an administration and revolutionary courts founded upon universal suffrage and upon effective accountability of all officials before the people. In order to defend the revolution, their volunteers will at the same time form a communal militia. But no commune can defend itself in isolation. So it will be necessary for each of them to radiate revolution outwards, to raise all of its neighboring communes in revolt to the extent that they will rise up, and to federate with them for common defense. Between themselves they will of necessity enter into a federal pact founded simultaneously upon solidarity of all and autonomy of each. That pact will serve as a provincial charter. For the governance of common affairs, a government<sup>t</sup> and provincial assembly or parliament will

of necessity be formed. The same revolutionary requirements induce the autonomous provinces to federate into regions, regions into national federations, nations into international federations. And order and unity, destroyed as the products of violence and despotism, will sprout again from the very bosom of liberty. There is a need for conspiracy and for a strong secret organization, revolving around an international focal point, to lay the groundwork for that revolution.

## AN INTERNATIONALIST FEDERALISM

*As was mentioned by James Guillaume, Bakunin had tried, unsuccessfully, to get the following text adopted by the Berne congress (September 1868) of the League of Peace and Freedom, a coalition of liberal, humanitarian bourgeois inclinations, of which he was himself a member: in it, there are a number of ideas earlier expounded in the program of the Revolutionary Federation above. This text, even more plainly than the former, is Proudhonian in inspiration, insofar as it makes the case for the federal principle as well as criticizing the nationality principle so dear to Napoleon III (whom Bakunin still supported at the time that he had rushed to the assistance of the Polish Uprising of 1863).*

We are in the happy position of being able to announce that this principle [the federal principle] has been unanimously acclaimed by the Geneva congress. Switzerland herself, which in any event implements it today with such felicity, has indicated her unreserved support for it and embraced it and every one of its implications. Unfortunately, in the congress resolutions, that principle has been very badly phrased and is mentioned only in passing, first of all apropos of the League which we must establish, and further on, apropos of the newspaper that we are to issue under the title of the *United States of Europe*, whereas, in our view, it ought to have had pride of place in our statement of principles.

This is a most irksome oversight which we must waste no time in remedying. In accordance with the unanimous feeling of the Geneva congress, we must proclaim:

1. That if liberty, justice and peace are to prevail in relations between nations in Europe, if civil war between the different peoples who make up the European family is to be rendered impossible, there is but one thing for it: to establish the United States of Europe.

2. That the States of Europe will never be able to be formed with the States as presently constituted, given the monstrous disparity that obtains between their respective strengths.

3. That the example of the now defunct German Confederation has demonstrated beyond controversy that a confederation of monarchies is a joke: that it is powerless to guarantee the populace either peace or freedom.

4. That no centralized, bureaucratic and therefore even military State, even should it call itself a republic, will be able seriously and sincerely to

enter an international confederation. By virtue of its make-up, which will always represent a blatant or disguised negation of freedom at home, it would necessarily represent a standing declaration of war, a menace to the existence of its neighbor countries. Founded, in essence, upon an ultimate act of violence—conquest—or as it is described in private life, robbery with violence, an act blessed by the Church of some religion, consecrated by the passage of time and thereby transformed into historic right, and relying upon that divine consecration of triumphant violence as if it were some exclusive, supreme title, every centralist State thereby stands as an utter negation of the rights of all other States, its recognition of them, in treaties that it concludes with them, only ever being prompted by political interest or by powerlessness.

5. That all members of the League ought in consequence to bend their every effort to reconstituting their respective homelands, so as to substitute for the old organization there, founded, from the top down, upon violence and the authority principle, a new organization with no other basis than the interests, needs and natural affinities of populations, and no principle beyond the free federation of individuals into communes, of communes into provinces, of provinces into nations and, finally, of the latter into, first, the United States of Europe and, later, of the whole wide world.

6. Consequently, absolute repudiation of everything going by the name of the historic right of States: all matters bearing upon natural, political, strategic or commercial borders will have to be regarded henceforth as belonging to ancient history and rejected vigorously by all adherents of the League.

7. Recognition of the absolute entitlement of every nation, large or small, of every people, weak or strong, of every province, every commune, to complete autonomy, provided that its domestic constitution is not a threat and a danger to the autonomy and liberty of neighboring countries.

8. The mere fact that a country makes up part of a State, even should it have freely decided to join it, in no way implies that it is under any obligation to remain attached to it forever. No perpetual obligation could be countenanced by human justice, which is the only one that can claim any authority among us, and we will never recognize any rights or duties other than those founded upon freedom. The right to free assembly and equal freedom to secede is the prime and most important of all political rights: without which confederation would be nothing more than centralization in disguise.

9. From all of the foregoing it follows that the League must openly shun any alliance of such and such a national faction of the European democracy



with monarchist States, even should that alliance be designed to win back the independence or freedom of an oppressed country: such an alliance, which could not but lead to disappointments, would at one and the same time be a betrayal of the revolution.

10. Instead, the League, precisely because it is the League of Peace and because it is persuaded that peace can only be achieved and founded upon the closest and completest fellowship of peoples in a context of justice and freedom, must loudly proclaim its sympathies for any national uprising against any oppression, be it foreign or native, provided that that uprising be mounted in the name of our principles and in the political and economic interests alike of the popular masses, though not with any intent to found a mighty State.

11. The League will wage war without quarter against anything going by the names of States' glory, greatness and power. In place of all these false and malignant idols to which millions of human victims are sacrificed, we will offer the glories of the human intellect as manifested in science and of a universal; prosperity founded upon labor, justice and liberty.

12. The League is to acknowledge nationality as a natural phenomenon, with an incontestable right to exist and freely develop, though not as a principle, every principle being required to display the characteristic of universality, and nationality being, instead, an exclusive and distinct phenomenon. The so-called nationality principle, as posited in our day by the governments of France, Russia and Prussia, and also by many German, Polish, Italian and Hungarian patriots, is merely a by-product which the reaction uses as a counter to the spirit of revolution: at bottom eminently aristocratic, even to the extent of scorning the dialects of illiterate populations, implicitly refuting the freedom of provinces and the effective autonomy of communes, and backed in every country, not by the masses of the people, whose real interests it systematically sacrifices to a supposed public good, which is never anything other than the benefit of the privileged classes, this principle articulates nothing except the alleged historic rights and the ambition of States. The right of nationality can therefore only ever be regarded by the League as a natural consequence of the supreme principle of liberty, ceasing to be a right the moment that it makes a stand against liberty, or even outside of liberty.

13. Unity is the goal towards which mankind strives irresistibly. But it turns lethal and destructive of the intelligence, dignity and prosperity of individuals and peoples, every time that it takes shape outside of a context of liberty, be it through violence, or under the authority of some theological,

metaphysical, political or even economic notion. The patriotism that strives for unity outside of freedom is an evil patriotism, always noxious to the people's interests and the real interests of the country which it purports to exalt and serve, a friend, albeit often against its will, to the reaction—enemy of the revolution, which is to say of the emancipation of nations and of men. The League can recognize but one unity: the unity freely constituted through federation of autonomous parts into the whole, in such a way that the latter, no longer the graveyard where all local prosperities are forcibly interred, becomes instead the confirmation and well-spring of all these autonomies and all these prosperities. The League will thus vigorously attack any religious, political, economic and social organization that is not utterly imbued with this great principle of freedom: in the absence of which there is no intellect, no justice, no prosperity and no humanity.

## CHURCH AND STATE

*At this point we insert a philosophical-political text targeting the Church as the accomplice of the State, the purpose being to play up the diversity of Bakunin's thinking. The text dates from 1871 and is in fact a sequel to the text we reproduce in this book of the anthology as THE PARIS COMMUNE. Like the title of that text, the title "Church and State" is of our own devising. The pamphlet from which they have both been lifted was in fact titled THE PARIS COMMUNE AND THE IDEA OF THE STATE. There is good reason for splitting that pamphlet into two parts as we have done: it is very often the case that Bakunin throws himself headlong at a topic and then, at some point in his essay, veers abruptly in order to tackle a quite distantly related or different matter, with precisely the same impetuosity. Which is precisely what happened when he came to write that pamphlet. Hence, the liberty that we have taken with his text.*

They say that reconciliation and universal fellowship of the interests of individuals and of society can never in fact be achieved, because those interests, being contradictory, are unlikely to counter-balance one another or even to reach accommodation. To such an objection, let me answer that whereas, up to the present, those interests have never been reconciled anywhere, this was because of the State, which has sacrificed the majority's interests for the sake of a privileged minority. Which is why this notorious incompatibility and this strife between personal interests and society's interests are nothing but trickery and a political lie, sprung from the theological lie that concocted the doctrine of original sin in order to bring man into dishonor and destroy whatever consciousness of his own self-worth he may have had.

That very same counterfeit notion of antagonistic interests was also incubated by the dreams of metaphysics which, as we know, is a close cousin of theology. Ignoring the sociability of human nature, metaphysics looked upon society as a mechanical and purely artificial aggregation of individuals, suddenly combining, under some formal or secret treaty, arrived at freely or under the influence of some superior force. Before combining into society, these individuals, endowed with a sort of immortal soul, enjoyed undiluted liberty.

But whereas the metaphysicians, especially the ones that believe in the immortality of the soul, assert that men are, outside of society, free beings, the inevitable conclusion from that is that men can only combine into society on condition that they forswear their freedom, their native independence and

sacrifice their interests, personal interests to begin with, and then their local ones. The imperviousness of such renunciation and sacrifice of itself must be, ipso facto, all the greater according to the increase in society's numbers and the complexity of its organization. In which case, the State is the expression of all these individual sacrifices. Enjoying such an abstract, and at the same time violent, existence, it carries on, needless to say, making greater and greater trespasses against individual liberty, in the name of the lie that goes under the name of "the public good," although, self-evidently, it represents only the interest of the ruling class. In this manner, the State appears to us an inevitable negation and annulment of all liberty and every interest, whether personal or general.

It can be seen here that in metaphysical and theological systems everything is connected and self-explanatory. Which is why the logical defenders of these systems may and indeed should, with an easy conscience, carry on exploiting the masses of the people through Church and State. Lining their own pockets and indulging their every sordid whim, they can at the same time take consolation from the thought that their labors are for the glory of God, the victory of civilization and the eternal happiness of the proletariat.

But we who believe neither in God nor in the immortality of the soul, nor in free will proper, we contend that liberty ought to be understood in its completest and widest sense as the goal of humanity's historical progress. By some queer, albeit logical paradox, our idealist adversaries from theology and metaphysics make the idea of freedom the foundation and basis of their theories, only to arrive at the blunt conclusion that men's enslavement is indispensable. We, materialists in matters of theory, tend in practice to devise and render durable a rational and high-minded idealism. Our enemies, godly and transcendental idealists, lapse into a practical, bloody, squalid materialism, in the name of the same reasoning, according to which every development is a negation of the founding principle. It is our conviction that the entire wealth of man's intellectual, moral and material development, as well as his apparent independence, that all of it is the product of living in society.

Outside of society, man would not only not be free, but would not even have become truly man, which is to say a being possessed of self-awareness, sentient, thoughtful and with the gift of speech. Only the conjunction of intellect and collective endeavor could have compelled man to quit the savage and brutish condition which was his pristine nature, indeed his starting point for subsequent development. We are profoundly convinced of this truth—that

men's entire lives, interests, tendencies, needs, illusions, even follies, as well as their violence, injustices and their every action, which may have the appearance of volition, merely represent the consequence of the inescapable forces at work in life in society. People cannot countenance the notion of independence from one another, without turning their backs on the reciprocal influence of the interweave of manifestations of external nature.

Within nature herself, that marvelous warp and weft of phenomena is certainly not achieved without tension. Quite the opposite. The harmony of natural forces emerges only as the authentic product of that continual tension that is the very essence of life and movement. In nature as in society, order in the absence of struggle amounts to death.

If order is natural and feasible in the universe, that is only because that universe does not function according to some preconceived system imposed by an over-arching will. The theological supposition of divine ordinance leads to a self-evident absurdity and to negation, not just of all order, but of nature itself. Natural laws are only real insofar as they are inherent in nature, which is to say, insofar as they are not ordained by any authority. Those laws are merely manifestations or fluid modalities of the development of things and of combinations of these greatly varied, ephemeral but real phenomena. Taken all together, they constitute what we call "nature." The human intellect and science took note of these phenomena, examining them experimentally, then codified them into a system and called them laws. But nature herself is above laws. She operates unconsciously, being herself a representation of the infinite variety of phenomena, inexorably manifesting themselves and repeating themselves. Which is why, thanks to such inexorability of action, universal order can exist and, in effect, does exist.

Such order also appears in human society, which, apparently, evolves in a so-called anti-natural fashion, but which in fact is subject to the natural, inevitable progress of phenomena. Except that man's superiority over other animals and his capacity for thought introduce a special (and, let it be said, quite natural in this sense, that like every living thing, man represents the material product of the marriage and operation of phenomena) ingredient into its development. That special ingredient is reason, which is to say that capacity for generalization and abstraction, thanks to which man can project himself mentally, scrutinizing and observing himself, as if he were some remote and alien phenomenon. Setting himself equally above himself as above his surroundings, he comes to the extremity of perfect abstraction, the stage

of utter nothingness. That outer limit of the highest abstraction of thought, that utter nothingness, is God.

Such is the meaning and the historical foundation of all theological doctrine. Failing to comprehend the nature and material causes of their own thoughts, not cognizant even of the conditions or natural laws particular to them, the first men to live in society could assuredly not have suspected that their absolute notions were merely products of their capacity for conceiving abstract ideas. Which is why they took the view that those ideas, derived from nature, were real phenomena before which nature itself would cease to count for anything. Whereupon they set about worshipping their fictional creations, their impossible notions of the absolute, and rendering every honor to them. But somehow a way had to be devised to make the abstract notion of nothingness or Godhead sensible. To that end, they inflated the concept of divinity and also endowed it with every good and bad quality and attribute which they had only ever encountered in nature and in society.

So much for the origin and historical development of all religions, starting with fetishism and ending with Christianity.

It is scarcely our intention to embark here upon a history of religious, theological and metaphysical absurdities, much less speak of the successive deployment of all of the divine incarnations and visions spawned by centuries of barbarism. It is common knowledge that superstition has always given rise to frightful misfortunes and compelled the spilling of rivers of blood and tears. Let us say only that all of these revolting vagaries of poor humankind were historical phenomena inevitable in the course of the normal growth and evolution of social organisms. Such vagaries spawned in society the fatal notion, enthroned in men's imaginations, that the universe was supposedly governed by a supernatural force and will. Century followed century and societies grew so accustomed to that idea that in the end they murdered within themselves any striving after a more far-reaching progress, and any capacity to achieve it.

The ambition, first, of a few individuals and then of a few social classes enshrined slavery and conquest as living precepts and more than anything else they planted the terrifying idea of divinity. After which, any society was impossible unless it boasted these two institutions as its foundations: Church and State. These two social scourges are defended by all doctrinarians.

These institutions had scarcely arrived in the world before two castes were suddenly organized: that of the priests and that of the aristocrats, who,

losing no time, took care to inculcate deeply into the enslaved populace the indispensability, usefulness and healthiness of Church and State.

The object of all this was to swap brutish slavery for a lawful slavery, ordained and consecrated by the will of the supreme being.

But did the priests and aristocrats honestly believe in the institutions that they supported with all their might and with particular advantage for themselves? Were they simply liars and deceivers? No. My belief is that they were, at one and the same time, believers and impostors.

They too were believers because they shared, naturally and inevitably, in the vicissitudes of the masses, and it was only later, at the time of the demise of the ancient world, that they turned skeptics and shameless deceivers. There is another basis on which we may regard the founders of States as honest folk. Man always readily believes in whatever he wants and whatever does not run counter to his own interests. It matters not if he is intelligent and well-educated: out of self-regard and a desire to live alongside his neighbors and enjoy their respect, he will always have faith in whatever he finds agreeable and serviceable. I am convinced that, say, Thiers and the Versailles government strove at all costs to persuade themselves that by killing a few thousand men, women and children in Paris, they were saving France.

But while the priests, augurs, aristocrats and bourgeois, in ancient and in recent times, might well have been sincere believers, they were nonetheless scyophants. Indeed, it is unthinkable that they should have credited every one of the absurdities which go to make up faith and politics. I will not so much as mention the days when, as Cicero has it, “two augurs could not look at each other without laughing.” Even in the days of ignorance and widespread superstition, it is hard to imagine the inventors of miracles, day in and day out, having believed in the authenticity of those miracles. The same may be said of politics, which can be encapsulated under the following axiom: “The people must be subjugated and fleeced in such a fashion that it does not complain too loudly about its fate, that it does not forget to submit and that it has not the time to turn its mind to resistance and rebellion.”

How then, after that, could we imagine that folk who have turned politics into a profession and are conversant with its object, which is to say, injustice, violence, falsehood, treachery, murder—massive and individual—can have any honest belief in the art of politics and in the wisdom of the State as provider of social happiness? For all their cruelty, they cannot have grown silly to that degree. Church and State have ever been the great schools of vice.

History attests to their crimes: in every place and at all times, the priest and the statesman have knowingly, systematically, implacably and blood-thirstily acted as the executioners of peoples.

But even so, how can we reconcile two seemingly so incompatible things: deceivers and deceived, liars and believers? That may appear logically a thing hard to do: in fact, however, which is to say in practical life, those qualities are very frequently found side by side.

The vast majority of people live in contradiction with themselves, amid continual misunderstandings: generally, they fail to recognize this, until some extraordinary occurrence shakes them out of their customary sloth and forces them to cast an eye over themselves and around themselves.

In politics and in religion alike, men are merely tools in the hands of exploiters. But the robbers and the robbed, the oppressors and the oppressed live side by side with each other, governed by a handful of individuals who are to be regarded as the real exploiters. These are the very same people, free of all political and religious prejudices, who are deliberate in their mistreatment and oppression. In the 17th and 18th centuries, up until the great Revolution erupted, as well as in our own day, they commanded in Europe and did pretty much as they pleased. We have to believe that their dominance will not endure for long.

While the main leaders are well aware of what they are doing in deceiving peoples and leading them to perdition, their henchmen, or the creatures of Church and State, zealously apply themselves to upholding the sanctity and integrity of those odious institutions. While the Church, according to what the priests and most statesmen have to say, is so necessary for the salvation of the soul, the State, in its turn, is equally necessary for the preservation of peace, order and justice, and doctrinarians of every persuasion declaim: "Without Church and without government, there is neither civilization nor progress."

It is not for us to expound upon the problem of eternal salvation, because we do not believe in the soul's immortality. It is our conviction that the Church is the thing most harmful for humanity, for truth and for progress. And could it be otherwise? Is it not to the Church that falls the charge of perverting younger generations, women especially? Is it not the Church which, by its dogma, its idiocy and its ignominy, tends to do logical reasoning and science to death? Is it not an affront to man's dignity, warping his notion of rights and of justice? Does it not mortify all that lives, does it not squander liberty,



is it not the one that preaches eternal slavery of the masses, to the advantage of tyrants and exploiters? Is it not that implacable Church which tends to perpetuate the reign of darkness, ignorance, misery and crime?

Unless our century's progress is a misleading dream, we must have done with the Church.

# PROGRAM AND OBJECT OF THE SECRET REVOLUTIONARY ORGANIZATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL BRETHERN (1868)

*The following is the program, dating, without doubt, from autumn 1868, of the second of the secret brotherhoods which Bakunin had just launched at that time. It was the clandestine accompaniment to his International Alliance of Socialist Democracy, the latter being an organization which was public and which applied for admission into the International en bloc. In this text, attention will be drawn to Bakunin's condemnation of—not revolutionary constraint—but violence and terror when these are not useful, when they attack men rather than things and when they are, in effect, a distraction for those who dream of bloody revolution against men because of their own reluctance to contemplate a radical revolution against things. Bakunin had come to these conclusions in the light of study of the Terror of 1794 (more so than the Terror of 1793). On another count too, this program merits attention: in it Bakunin declares war on "authoritarian" revolutionaries. The guess is that even then the frictions between him and Marx were in the hatching.*

The Association of the International Brethren seeks simultaneously universal, social, philosophical, economic and political revolution, so that of the present order of things, rooted in property, exploitation, domination and the authority principle—be it religious or metaphysical and bourgeois-doctrinarian, or indeed revolutionary in the Jacobin sense—not a stone upon a stone should be left standing in the whole of Europe to start with and then in the remainder of the world. To a cry of peace to the toilers and liberty to the oppressed, and of death to rulers, exploiters and overseers of all sorts, it is our desire that all States and all churches be destroyed along with all their religious, political, juridical, financial, police, university, economic and social institutions and laws, so that all these millions of impoverished, duped, enslaved, tormented and exploited human beings, once delivered of all their formal and informal directors and benefactors, collective and individual, will at last know complete freedom.

Persuaded that individual and social evil reside much less in individuals than in the manner in which things and social positions are organized, we

will be humane as much out of a sense of justice as out of considerations of serviceability, and we will ruthlessly destroy positions and things so that we may spare men without the Revolution's being put in jeopardy. We refute free will and society's entitlement to impose punishment. Taken in its most humane and widest sense, justice itself is merely a—so to speak, negative and transitional—idea: it poses the social question but fails to think it through, merely indicating the only possible route to human emancipation, which is to say, to the humanization of society through liberty in a setting of equality: a positive solution can only be provided by society's being organized along increasingly rational lines. That much craved solution, the ideal of us all, is liberty, morality, intelligence and well-being for all, through fellowship of all, through brotherhood of man.

Every individual human being is the involuntary product of a natural and social context into which he is born, in which he has grown up and to whose influence he continues to be susceptible. The three major causes of all human immorality are: inequality, political, economic or social alike; the ignorance which is its natural product, and the necessary consequence of them both: slavery.

The organization of society being always and everywhere the sole cause of the crimes committed by men, it is evidently hypocritical or nonsensical for society to punish criminals, every punishment being based upon a presumption of culpability and criminals being at no time culpable. The theory of culpability and punishment is an outgrowth of theology, which is to say, the marriage of absurdity with religious hypocrisy. The only right which can be afforded to society in its present transitional phase, is the natural right to murder the criminals of its own making, in the interests of its own self-defense, and not the right to sit in judgment of or to condemn them. That right will not even be a right in the strict sense of the word: it will, rather, be a natural phenomenon, baneful but inevitable, the emblem and product of the impotence and doltishness of the existing society: and the more that society manages to avoid recourse to it, the nearer will it be to its effectual emancipation. All revolutionaries, the oppressed, the suffering, the victims of the way in which society is presently organized and whose hearts are naturally filled with vengeance and hatred should bear it well in mind that kings, oppressors, and exploiters of all sorts are as blameworthy as the criminals produced by the masses of the populace: they are malefactors but not culpable, since they too, like ordinary criminals, are the involuntary products of society's cur-

rent organization. There will be no need to marvel if, at the start, the risen people should kill many of them. That may well be an inevitable misfortune, as meaningless as storm damage.

But such a natural phenomenon will be neither moral nor useful. On that score, history is brimful of lessons: the horrifying guillotine of 1793, which could scarcely be accused of slothfulness nor of sluggishness, failed to eradicate the nobility of France as a class. The aristocracy, while not completely destroyed by it, was at least profoundly shaken, not by the guillotine, but by the confiscation and sale of its assets. And as a general rule it may be said that political blood baths have never killed off parties: above all, they have shown themselves to be powerless against the privileged classes, such is the extent to which power resides not so much in men as in the positions awarded to men of privilege by the organization of things, which is to say, the institution of the State and its implications as well as its natural basis, private ownership.

Thus, in the mounting of a radical revolution, one has to attack positions and things, destroy property and the State, in which case there will be no need to destroy men and to condemn oneself to the unfailing, inevitable backlash that never has failed—and never will—to trigger a slaughter of men in every society.

But if men are to be afforded the right to be human, without any dangers thereby being posed to the government, we must be ruthless with positions and things: everything will have to be demolished, primarily and above all, property and its inevitable corollary, the State. Therein lies the secret of Revolution.

Small wonder that the Jacobins and Blanquists should have become socialists more out of necessity than out of conviction: for them, socialism is a means, not the end of the Revolution, in that they want dictatorship, which is to say, centralization of the State and the State will, as a matter of logical and inevitable necessity, lead them towards the reconstitution of property. So, as we say, it is only too natural that, having no wish to make a radical revolution against things, they dream of a bloody revolution against men. But that bloody revolution, based upon the erection of a mightily centralized revolutionary State, would inevitably result, as we shall prove at greater length anon, in the military dictatorship of a new master. So, victory for the Jacobins or the Blanquists would spell the death of the Revolution.

We are the natural enemies of these revolutionaries—the would-be dictators, regulators and overseers of the revolution—who, even before the

monarchist, aristocratic and bourgeois States of the present are dismantled, dream of the creation of new revolutionary States, every whit as centralistic as, and more despotic than the States in existence today, with their ingrained familiarity with order created by some authority from the top down and such a huge aversion to what strikes them as disorder and which is nothing more than the free and natural expression of the people's life: well ahead of a good and salutary disorder, they dream of its being curtailed and muzzled through the action of some authority that will be revolutionary in name only, but which will in effect be nothing but a fresh backlash in that it will amount to a further sentence upon the masses of the people, governed by decrees, to government by decree, to obedience and immobility and death, that is, to enslavement and exploitation at the hands of a new quasi-revolutionary aristocracy.

We understand the revolution to imply the unleashing of what are termed today evil passions, and the destruction of what is described in the same language as "public order."

Unafraid, we invoke anarchy, being convinced that out of such anarchy, which is to say, the comprehensive display of the people's life off the leash, must come liberty, equality, justice, the new order and the Revolution's very strength in the face of reaction. That new life, the people's revolution, will doubtless not be long in taking shape, but it will arrange its revolutionary organization from the bottom up and from the periphery to the center, in keeping with the principle of liberty, and not from the top down and from the center to the periphery, after the fashion of every authority, for it matters little to us whether that authority calls itself Church, Monarchy, constitutional State, bourgeois Republic or even revolutionary dictatorship. We despise them all and reject them all equally, as infallible sources of exploitation and despotism.

The revolution as we understand it will, from day one, set about the root and branch and complete destruction of the State and of all State institutions. The natural and necessary upshot of that destruction will be:

The bankruptcy of the State.

A cessation of recovery of private debts through State intervention, with every debtor being afforded the right to pay his own, should he so desire.

An end to payment of all taxes or levies upon any contributions, direct or indirect. Dissolution of the army, magistracy, bureaucracy, police and clergy.

Abolition of formal courts, suspension of everything described juridically as right, and of the exercise of those laws.

In consequence, the abolition and burning of all property deeds, records of inheritance, sale or gift, of all trial records, and, in short, of the whole mountain of judicial and civil papers. Everywhere and in everything the fact of revolution will supersede State-created and -guaranteed rights.

All productive capital and instruments of labor are to be confiscated for the benefit of toilers' associations, which will have to put them to use in collective production.

Seizure of all Church and State properties as well as precious metals from individuals for the benefit of the federated Alliance of all labor associations, which Alliance will constitute the Commune. In return for confiscated assets, the Commune will issue every person thus divested with their essential needs, and later they will be free to earn more by dint of their own effort, if they can and if they so desire.

As regards organization of the Commune, there will be a federation of standing barricades and a Revolutionary Communal Council will operate on the basis of one or two delegates from each barricade, one per street or per district, these deputies being invested with binding mandates and accountable and revocable at all times. Thus organized, the Communal Council will be able to choose separate executive committees from among its membership for each branch of the Commune's revolutionary administration.

The capital is to declare itself in rebellion and organize itself as a Commune which, having once destroyed the authoritarian nanny State, which it was entitled to do in that it was its slave as was every other locality, will abjure its right or rather any pretension to govern or overrule the provinces.

An appeal will be issued to all provinces, communes and associations, inviting them to follow the example set by the capital, to reorganize along revolutionary lines for a start, and to then delegate deputies to an agreed place of assembly (all of those deputies invested with binding mandates and accountable and subject to recall), in order to found the federation of insurgent associations, communes and provinces in furtherance of the same principles and to organize a revolutionary force with the capability of defeating the reaction. Not official revolutionary commissioners in any sort of sashes, but rather revolutionary propagandists are to be despatched into all of the provinces and communes and particularly among the peasants, who cannot be revolutionized by principles, nor by the decrees of any dictatorship, but only

by the act of revolution itself, that is to say, by the consequences that will inevitably ensue in every commune from complete cessation of the legal and official existence of the State.

The nation State is to be abolished, in this sense, that every foreign country, province, commune, association or indeed isolated individual which might have rebelled in furtherance of the same principles are to be received into the revolutionary federation without regard to the current borders of States, even should they belong to different political or national set-ups, and those provinces, communes, associations or individuals which will have sided with the Reaction are to be excluded from it. Thus it is through the very act of extrapolation and organization of the Revolution with an eye to the mutual defenses of insurgent areas that the universality of the Revolution, founded upon the abolition of borders and upon the ruins of States, will emerge triumphant.

Henceforth, there can be no successful political or national revolution that does not translate as social revolution, and no national revolution that does not turn into universal revolution, precisely because of its radically socialist character and destruction of the State.

Since it is the people which must make the revolution everywhere, and since the ultimate direction of it must at all times be vested in the people organized into a free federation of agricultural and industrial associations, the new revolutionary State—being organized from the bottom up through revolutionary delegation and embracing all countries that have revolted in the name of the same principles, without regard to the old borders or for differences of nationality—will have as its object the administration of public services and not the governance of peoples. It will represent the new fatherland, the alliance of the world revolution against all reactionaries combined.

That organization precludes any notion of dictatorship and supervisory leadership authority. But if that revolutionary alliance is to be established and if the revolution is to get the better of the reaction, then, amid the popular anarchy that is to represent the very life-blood and energy of the revolution, an agency must be found to articulate this singularity of thought and of revolutionary action. That agency should be the secret worldwide association of the International Brethren.

That association starts from the basis that revolutions are never made by individuals, nor even by secret societies. They are, so to speak, self-made, produced by the logic of things, by the trend of events and actions. They are

a long time hatching in the deepest recesses of the popular masses' instinctive consciousness, and then they explode, often seeming to have been detonated by trivialities. All that a well-organized society can do is, first, to play midwife to the revolution by spreading amongst the masses ideas appropriate to the masses' instincts, and to organize, not the Revolution's army—for the people must at all times be the army—but a sort of revolutionary general staff made up of committed, energetic and intelligent individuals who are above all else true friends of the people and not presumptuous braggarts, with a capacity for acting as intermediaries between the revolutionary idea and the people's instincts.

The numbers of such individuals, then, need not be huge. A hundred tightly and seriously allied revolutionaries will suffice for the whole of Europe. Two or three hundred revolutionaries will be enough to organize the largest of countries.

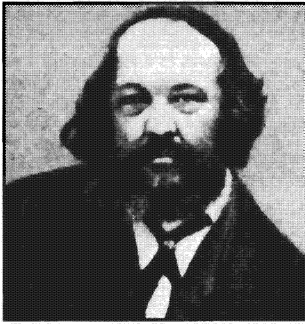




NO GODS, NO MASTERS

VOLUME 2





**MIKHAIL  
BAKUNIN**  
(1814–1876)



## CONTROVERSY WITH MARX

*In the preceding text, references to the political thinking of the “marxians” are still veiled and no one is mentioned by name. Relations between Bakunin and Marx within the First International only really turned sour after 1870 when Marx who had at first and very advisedly let the workers have their say, abandoned his role as advisor and hidden mastermind behind the International in an attempt brazenly to harness the organization for the benefit of his “authoritarian” and “anti-anarchist”<sup>1</sup> school of political thought. It was from that point that he came into open conflict with the libertarian socialists grouped around Bakunin. The strife between them led to a split in the International at the congress in The Hague in 1872, a split deliberately contrived by Marx, who saw to it that the Bakuninists were condemned without right of appeal and expelled.*

### I. THE EXCOMMUNICATION OF THE HAGUE<sup>2</sup>

*Letter to the Brussels newspaper La Liberté.*

*October 5, 1872, Zurich*

Dear Editors,

Having published the sentence of excommunication which the marxian congress in The Hague has just passed on me, you will assuredly see the justice of carrying my reply. Here it is.

The triumph of Mr. Marx and his cronies has been complete. Assured of a majority which they had been long in building and orchestrated with much skill and care, if not with much regard for the principles of morality, truth and justice which are so readily encountered in their speeches and so rarely in their deeds, the marxians have cast aside their mask and, as behooves men enamored of power, as ever in the name of that sovereignty of the people which is henceforth to serve as stepping stone for all pretenders to governance of the masses, they have daringly proclaimed the enslavement of the people of the International.

Were the International less lively, had it been founded, as they imagine, only upon the organization of directing centers, and not upon the real solidarity of the effective interests and aspirations of the proletariat of every country in the civilized world, upon the spontaneous and free federalization of workers' sections and federations, independently of any government tutelage, the decrees

emanating from this noxious congress in The Hague, the all too complaisant and loyal embodiment of marxian theories and marxian practices, would have been sufficient to do it to death. They would have rendered ridiculous as well as odious that magnificent association, in the founding of which, I am pleased to record, Mr. Marx had played a part as intelligent as it was vigorous.

A State, a government, a universal dictatorship! The dream of a Gregory VII, a Boniface VIII, a Charles V and a Napoleon, resurrected in novel forms, but still with the same pretensions, in the camp of the socialist democracy! Can there conceivably be anything more ludicrous, but also more repugnant?

To allege that a group of individuals, even should they be the most intelligent and most well-meaning of individuals, will have the capacity to perform as the brains, the soul, the directing, unifying will of the revolutionary movement and the economic organization of the world's proletariat, is such an affront to common sense and historical experience, that one wonders, in amazement, how a fellow as intelligent as Mr. Marx could have come up with it.

The popes at least could plead the absolute truth which they claimed to hold in their hands through the grace of the Holy Spirit and in which they were required to believe. Mr. Marx cannot enter that plea, and I will not do him the injury of supposing that he imagines that he has scientifically devised something approaching absolute truth. But, as soon as the absolute is ruled out, there can be no infallible dogma where the International is concerned, not by reason of political theory nor by virtue of formal economics, and our congresses ought never to lay claim to the role of ecumenical councils enunciating principles binding upon all members and believers.

There is but one law truly binding upon all affiliates, individuals, sections and federations of the International, of which that law constitutes the only true basis. It is, in its fullest sense, in all of its implications and applications, the international solidarity of workers of all trades and all lands in their economic struggle against the exploiters of labor. It is exclusively in the actual organization of that solidarity, through spontaneous action of the toiling masses and through absolutely free federation (all the mightier for its being free) of the toiling masses of every language and nation, and not in the unification of them through decrees and under the baton of any government, that the real and living unity of the International resides.

Who can doubt but that out of this broader and broader organization of the militant solidarity of the proletariat versus bourgeois exploitation, the proletariat's political struggle against the bourgeoisie should emerge and indeed

emerges? The marxians and we are at one on this score. But immediately there arises the matter which so profoundly separates us from the marxians.

Our reckoning is that the, necessarily revolutionary, politics of the proletariat should have as its sole and immediate object the destruction of States. We cannot understand how there can be talk of international solidarity when there is this desire to preserve States, unless the reference is to the universal State, which is to say, universal slavery. Like the great emperors and popes, the State, by its very nature, is a breach in that solidarity and thus a standing cause of war. Nor can we comprehend talk of freedom of the proletariat or true deliverance of the masses within the State and by the State. State signifies domination, and all domination implies subjection of the masses, and as a result, their exploitation to the advantage of some governing minority.

Not even as revolutionary transition will we countenance national Conventions, nor Constituent Assemblies, nor provisional governments, nor so-called revolutionary dictatorships: because we are persuaded that revolution is sincere, honest and real only among the masses and that, whenever it is concentrated in the hands of a few governing individuals, it inevitably and immediately turns into reaction. Such is our belief, but this is not the time to expand upon it. The marxians subscribe to quite contrary ideas. As befits good Germans, they worship the power of the State, and of necessity also the prophets of political and social discipline, the champions of order established from the top down, always in the name of universal suffrage and sovereignty of the masses, who are marked down for the privilege and honor of obeying leaders, elected masters. The marxians acknowledge no other emancipation than the one they expect from their so-called people's State (*Volksstaat*). They have so little enmity for patriotism that their International even flies, all too often, the colors of Pan-Germanism. Between Bismarck's politics and marxian politics there is doubtless a very palpable difference, but between the marxians and us there is a yawning gulf. They are governmentals and we are anarchists, come what may.

Such are the two main tendencies which have the International at present divided into two camps. On the one side, there is only, strictly speaking, Germany: on the other, there are, to varying degrees, Italy, Spain, the Swiss Jura, much of France, Belgium, Holland, and, in the very near future, the Slav peoples. These two tendencies clashed at the congress in The Hague and, thanks to Mr. Marx's great deftness, thanks to the quite contrived organization of its latest congress, the Germanic tendency has carried the day.



Does that mean that the awful issue has been resolved? It has not even been properly discussed: the majority, voting like a well-drilled regiment, has overwhelmed any discussion with its vote. So the contradiction remains, as acute and menacing as ever, and Mr. Marx himself, for all of the intoxications of success, doubtless does not delude himself that he can have rid himself of it so slickly. And even if he had entertained such a mad hope for a moment, the closing of ranks by the Jura, Spanish, Belgian and Dutch delegates (not to mention Italy which did not even deign to send its delegates to this congress, which was all too blatantly rigged), a protest so moderate in form but essentially all the more energetic and telling, must have quickly disabused him.

Obviously, this protest is merely a very weak foretaste of the formidable opposition which is going to erupt in every country authentically imbued with the principle and passion of social revolution. And this whole storm will have been whipped up by the marxians' very unfortunate obsession with making the political question a fundamental, a binding principle of the International.

Indeed, between the two tendencies indicated above, no conciliation is feasible today. Only the practice of social revolution, great new historical experiences, the logic of events can bring them around, sooner or later, to a common solution: and, strong in our belief in the validity of our principle, we hope that the Germans themselves, the workers of Germany, not their leaders, will then end by joining with us to tear down these people's prisons called States and to condemn politics, which is in fact nothing more than the art of dominating and fleecing the masses.

But, for today, what can we do? Resolution and reconciliation being impossible today on the political terrain, we must show mutual tolerance and afford each country the unchallengeable right to follow whatever political inclinations it may choose or which seem to it best suited to its particular circumstances. Excluding, in consequence, all political matters from the binding platform of the International, we must look exclusively to the terrain of economic solidarity for the unity of that great association. That solidarity unites us, whereas political questions necessarily divide us.

It is certain that neither the Italians, the Spanish, the Jurassians, the French, the Belgians, the Dutch nor the Slav peoples, those historic foes of Pan-Germanism, nor indeed the proletariat of England or America,<sup>3</sup> will ever bow to the political tendencies foisted upon the proletariat of Germany by the ambition of its leaders. But supposing even that, in consequence of this disobedience, the incoming General Council<sup>4</sup> slaps an interdict upon all these countries and that some

new ecumenical council of the marxians excommunicates them and declares them excluded from the body of the International, will the economic solidarity which necessarily, naturally and in fact is obtained between the proletariat of all these countries and Germany's have diminished any?

If the workers of Germany mount a strike, if they rebel against the economic tyranny of their bosses, or if they revolt against the political tyranny of a government which is the natural protector of capitalists and other exploiters of the people's labors, will the proletariat of all the countries excommunicated by the marxians stand idly by and gaze upon this struggle with indifference? No. It will give all of its meager funds and, what is more, will offer all of its blood to its brethren in Germany, without asking them in advance the character of the political system to which they believe they have to look for their deliverance.

Therein resides the true unity of the International: it resides in the shared aspirations and spontaneous movement of the popular masses of every land, and not in any government, nor in a uniform political theory imposed upon those masses by a general congress.

This is so self-evident that one would have to be blinded by the lust for power not to grasp it.

I can imagine, perhaps, crowned or uncrowned despots having possibly dreamt of ruling the world, but what am I to say of a friend of the proletariat, a revolutionary who purports actually to be desirous of the emancipation of the masses, who, by posing as the director and ultimate arbiter of all revolutionary movements which may erupt in various countries, ventures to dream of the proletariat of all those countries being made subject to a single thought, conceived in his own head?

I account Mr. Marx a very serious revolutionary, if not always a very honest one, and believe that he really does seek the revolt of the masses; and I wonder how he contrives not to see that establishment of a universal dictatorship, be it collective or individual, of a dictatorship that would serve, so to speak, as the chief engineer of world revolution, regulating and steering the insurgency of the masses in every land the way one can steer a machine, that establishment of such a dictatorship would, by itself alone, be enough to kill the revolution, and stymie and miscarry all popular movements. Which is the man, which the group of individuals, however gifted their minds, who would dare flatter themselves that they could even encompass and comprehend the infinite multitude of diverse interests, tendencies and actions in every country,

every province, every locality, every trade, the vast array of which, united, but not made uniform, by a great shared aspiration and by a few fundamental principles which have already penetrated the consciousness of the masses, will constitute the coming social revolution?

And what is one to think of an international congress which, in the so-called interest of that revolution, foists upon the proletariat of the entire civilized world a government endowed with dictatorial powers, with inquisitorial and pontifical right to suspend regional federations, and ban whole nations in the name of a so-called official principle that is nothing more than Mr. Marx's own brainchild, transformed by the vote of a rigged majority into an absolute truth? What to think of a congress which, in order, no doubt, to make its folly still more apparent, banishes this dictatorial government to America, after having packed it with probably very honest but obscure fellows, sufficiently ignorant and utterly unknown to itself? Our bourgeois enemies would be right, therefore, when they poke fun at our congresses and when they argue that the International Working Men's Association opposes old tyrannies only in order to establish a new one, and that, in order to replace existing absurdities worthily, it seeks to create another!

## 2. STATISM AND ANARCHY

*The International Institute for Social History in Amsterdam has kindly allowed us to reprint the following extract from STATISM AND ANARCHY, a work published in Russian in 1873 and never since translated into French: it constitutes Tome III of the ARCHIVES BAKOUNINE published on behalf of the Institute in Amsterdam by E. J. Brill of Leyden (Netherlands). The translation into French is by Marcel Body.*

On several occasions already we have expressed a very acute aversion to the theory of Lassalle and Marx which urges the workers, if not as a supreme ideal, then at least as their essential short-term objective, to establish a "people's State," which, as they themselves have explained, would be nothing but "the proletariat organized as ruling class." If the proletariat becomes the ruling class, over whom, may one ask, is it to rule? The fact remains that there will still be a class subject to that new ruling class, this new State, be it only, say, the rural rabble who, as we know, are not in good odor with the marxians, and who, occupying the nethermost regions of civilization, will probably be guided by the proletariat of town and workshop: or indeed, if we consider the question in an ethnic light—say, in the Germans' case, the question of the

Slavs—the latter will, on the same grounds, be in the same slavish subjection to the victorious German proletariat as that proletariat is with regard to its bourgeoisie.

Whoever says State necessarily says domination, and, consequently, slavery: a State without slavery, open or concealed, is inconceivable: that is why we are enemies of the State.

What is the meaning of “the proletariat organized as ruling class”? Does it mean that the proletariat in its entirety is to direct public affairs? There are around forty million Germans. Can those forty millions share in government and the entire people govern, in which case there will be no governed? In which case there will be no State: but, if there is one, there will be governed, there will be slaves.

In the marxian theory, this dilemma is dispatched very straight-forwardly. By popular government the marxians mean government of the people by means of a small number of representatives elected through universal suffrage. Election by the nation as a whole of so-called people’s representatives and State leaders, which is the latest device of the marxians as well as of the democratic school of thought, is a lie that shrouds the despotism of the leading minority, a lie all the more dangerous because it is peddled as expressing the supposed will of the people.

Thus, no matter the angle from which we examine this matter, we are led to the same execrable result: government of the vast majority of the masses of the people by a privileged minority. But this minority, the marxians argue, will be made up of workers. Yes, to be sure, of former workers who, as soon as they become the people’s governors and representatives, will stop being workers and will begin to look down upon the proletarian world from the heights of the State: they will then represent, not the people, but themselves and their ambitions to govern it. Anyone who queries that does not know human nature.

On the other hand, these elected representatives are going to be sincere socialists, and erudite ones to boot. The terms scientific socialist, scientific socialism, which are forever cropping up in the writings of the Lassalleans and marxians, themselves prove that the phony people’s State is going to be nothing more than despotic government of the proletarian masses by a new, very tiny aristocracy of actual or alleged savants. The people, not being erudite, is to be spared the cares of government entirely and incorporated wholly into the herd of the governed. Some deliverance!

The marxians are alive to this paradox and, while conceding that government by savant, the most oppressive, most vexatious, most contemptible form of government possible, is going to be, for all its democratic forms, an outright dictatorship, take consolation from the thought that dictatorship is going to be temporary and short-lived. They contend that its sole concern and only object will be to enlighten the people and raise it, economically and politically alike, to a level where all government will promptly become redundant: and the State, once divested of its political character, which is to say, its authoritarianism, will automatically be transformed into a totally free organization of economic interests and communes.

There is a glaring paradox in all this. If their State is indeed a “people’s State,” on what grounds would it be abolished? And if, on the other hand, its abolition is necessary for real emancipation of the people, how could it be described as a “people’s State”? In debate with them, we have drawn from them an acknowledgment that free organization of the toiling masses, freedom or anarchy, which is to say, organization from the bottom up, is the ultimate objective of social evolution and that any State, their “people’s State” included, is a yoke, which means that, on the one hand, it fosters despotism and, on the other, slavery.

According to them, this statist yoke, this dictatorship is a necessary transitional phase on the way to complete emancipation of the people: anarchy or liberty being the goal, the State or dictatorship the means. So, in order to liberate the popular masses, we are to start by enslaving them.

For the time being, our polemic has stalled on this contradiction. The marxians argue that only dictatorship—theirs, of course—can establish the people’s freedom: to which we reply that no dictatorship can have any aim other than lasting as long as it can and that it is only capable of fomenting slavery in the people which endures it and of schooling the latter in slavery: freedom can be conjured only by freedom, that is to say, by uprising by the entire people and by free organization of the toiling masses from the bottom up.

(. . .) While the socio-political theory of the anti-authoritarian socialists or anarchists leads them without fail to break utterly with all government, with all forms of bourgeois politics, and leaves them no option save social revolution, the contrary theory, the theory of the authoritarian communists and scientific authoritarianism lures and seduces its supporters, under the pretext of tactics, into endless compromises with governments and the various bourgeois political parties—which is to say, shoves them straight into the camp of the reaction.

(. . .) The crucial point in this program is the (supposed) emancipation of the proletariat by the sole and exclusive means of the State. But for that to happen, the State has to agree to act as emancipator of the proletariat by loosening the yoke of bourgeois capital. How, then, is the State to be brought to this determination? There can be only two ways of bringing that to pass: the proletariat makes revolution in order to take possession of the State, the heroic course. Once it has taken over the State, it should, as we see it, destroy it immediately for it is the age-old prison of the proletarian masses: now, according to Mr. Marx's theory, the people not only should not destroy the State but should instead reinforce it, make it even mightier and place it, in this new form, at the disposal of its benefactors, tutors and educators, the leaders of the Communist Party—in short, at the disposal of Mr. Marx and his friends who will promptly set about liberating it after their fashion.

They are to take over the reins of government, because the ignorant people stands in need of proper tutelage: they will set up a single State Bank which is to concentrate into its hands the totality of commerce, industry, agriculture and even scientific output, while the mass of the people is to be divided into two armies: the industrial and the agricultural, under the direct command of State engineers who will make up a new, privileged erudite-political caste.

See what a role purpose the German communist school reserves for the people!

## BAKUNIN AND MARX ON THE COMMUNE

Here are two splendid texts, one from Bakunin and the other from Marx, on the Paris Commune. They were both written in the wake of the defeat of the Commune (May 1871). Both expound a theme which they both deduced from the experience of the Commune, the first ever proletarian revolution: the theme of abolition of the State.

Bakunin's text contains nothing to startle. It is in fact quite consistent with the line he adopted in his earlier writings. In it one finds the distillation of libertarian socialism.

By contrast, there is more to surprise in the Address drafted by Marx on behalf of the General Council of the workers' International, to which marxians and Bakuninists alike belonged at the time. In fact, it is the product of the author's attempt to reconcile the two currents inside the International.

For that reason, it differs noticeably from Marx's writings of before and after 1871, and compares exceptionally well to Bakunin's writings. With hindsight, we can look upon it as one of the few bridges established between marxism and anarchism, as one of the very few attempts at a synthesis of "authoritarian" with libertarian thought.

In the Address, better known under the name *The Civil War in France*, Marx overhauled certain passages of the 1848 *Communist Manifesto*. Marx and Engels, the authors of that illustrious document, had set out therein their idea of proletarian revolution in stages. Stage one would be the capture of political power, thanks to which, "little by little," the means of production, the means of transportation and credit would be centralized in the hands of the State.

Only at the end of a protracted evolution, once class conflicts would have vanished and public authority been rid of its political character, would the whole of production be concentrated, not in State hands now, but in the hands of "associated individuals": in this libertarian style of association, the unfettered development of each would be the precondition for the free development of all.

Bakunin who, unlike the French socialists, had been conversant with the *Communist Manifesto*, in the German original since 1848, had not missed an opportunity to criticize this splitting of the revolution into two stages, the first of which would still be emphatically statist. He had criticized it in these terms: "Having become the sole proprietor (...) the State is also to be the sole

capitalist, banker, sponsor, organizer and director of the whole of the nation's labors and distributor of its products. Such is the ideal, the underlying principle of modern communism."<sup>1</sup> And, elsewhere: "This revolution will consist of the expropriation, creeping or violent, of the current proprietors and capitalists, and of appropriation of all land and all capital by the State which, in order to be able to perform its great economic as well as political mission, will, of necessity, have to be very powerful and very tightly concentrated. The State is to administer and direct cultivation of the land through its appointed engineers commanding armies of rural workers organized and disciplined for such cultivation. At the same time, upon the ruins of all the existing banks, it will found a single bank that is a sleeping partner in all labor and the whole commerce of the nation."<sup>2</sup>

And again: "In Mr. Marx's people's State, we are told, there is to be no privileged class. Everyone is to be equal, not just before the law and politically, but in economic terms too. That, at least, is the promise, although I very much doubt that, given the manner in which it is tackled and the course intended, the promise can ever be honored. Thus, there is to be no privileged class any more, but an exceedingly complicated government, which will not be content to govern and administer the masses politically, as all of today's governments do, but which will also see to economic administration, amassing in its hands the production and fair distribution of wealth, cultivation of the soil, the establishment and expansion of factories, the organization and direction of trade and, finally, the investment of capital in production, by the sole banker, the State."<sup>3</sup>

Under the lash of Bakunin's criticisms, Marx and Engels felt a need to amend their overly statist thinking of 1848. Thus, in a foreword (dated June 24, 1872) to a new edition of the *Manifesto*, they conceded that "in many respects," they would now "rephrase" the passage in question from the 1848 text. And, remarkably, they cited in support of any such redrafting "the practical experiences, first of the February [1848] revolution, then, to a much greater extent, of the Paris Commune, when, for the first time, the proletariat held political power in its hands over a two month period." And concluded: "All of which means that, in places, this program is no longer up to the minute. The Commune in particular has supplied proof that the working class cannot rest content with taking possession of the existing machinery of the State in order to place it in the service of its own aims." The 1871 Address also announces that the Commune is "discovered at last,



the political formula whereby the economic emancipation of labor can be brought about.”

In his *Life of Karl Marx*, Franz Mehring, an undisputed marxist, has himself stressed that the 1871 Address feting the Paris Commune was, on this score, somewhat of an amendment to the *Manifesto*, where elimination of the State had indeed been considered, but only as a long-term process. Later, though, Mehring assures us, after the death of Marx, Engels, by then grappling with anarchist tendencies, had jettisoned the amendment in question and reverted to the old ideas in the *Manifesto*.<sup>4</sup>

The fact remains that the rather abrupt “about-turn” by the author of the 1871 Address must have aroused skepticism from Bakunin. Speaking of the Commune, he wrote: “So formidable was its impact everywhere that the marxians themselves, all of whose ideas had been overthrown by that insurrection, found themselves obliged to doff their hat to it. They went further: flying in the face of simple logic and their true feelings, they proclaimed that its program and its aim were theirs. It was a truly absurd travesty, but a necessary one. They had been forced into it, on pain of finding themselves cast aside and deserted by everybody, such was the extent of the passion aroused by that revolution in all and sundry.”<sup>5</sup>

And Bakunin observed: “It appears that at the congress in The Hague [September 1872], Mr. Engels, taking fright at the despicable impression produced by the reading of a few pages from that *Manifesto*, had wasted no time in declaring that it was a superseded document, a theory which they [Marx and Engels] had since abandoned. If he said that, he was less than honest, for, on the very eve of that same congress, the marxians had striven to disseminate that document throughout every country.”<sup>6</sup>

As for James Guillaume, Bakunin’s disciple from the Jura, he reacted in similar terms to a reading of the 1871 Address: “This is an astonishing statement of principles, where Marx appears to have jettisoned his own program in order to come over to federalist ideas. Does that mean a real conversion by the author of *Das Kapital*, or at least a temporary seduction to which he succumbed under the pressure of events? Or was it a ploy on his behalf, designed to reap, through apparent support for the Commune’s program, the benefits of the prestige attaching to its name?”<sup>7</sup>

In our own day, Arthur Lehning, to whom we are indebted for the erudite edition of *Archives Bakounine* currently being published, has stressed the contradiction between the ideas in the Address and all of Marx’s other writings:

“It is an irony of history that at the very moment when the struggle between the authoritarian and the anti-authoritarian tendencies was reaching its peak [inside the First International], Marx, reeling from the tremendous impact of the revolutionary uprising of the Parisian proletariat, articulated the ideas of that Revolution, the very opposite of the ideas for which he stood, and in such a way that they might almost be described as the program of the anti-authoritarian tendency against which he fought [inside the International] with tooth and nail (...) There is no doubt that the brilliant Address of the General Council (...) does not fit in at all with the elaboration of the system of ‘scientific socialism’. *The Civil War* is, to the utmost degree, non-Marxist. (...) The Paris Commune had nothing in common with Marx’s State socialism, but was rather more in tune with Proudhon’s ideas and Bakunin’s federalist theories. (. . .) The essential principle of the Commune, according to Marx, was that political centralization of the State had to be replaced by self-government of the producers, by a federation of autonomous communes to which had to be afforded. (...) The initiative hitherto devolved to the State.

“*The Civil War* fully contradicts the other marxist writings where the withering away of the State is concerned. The Paris Commune did not centralize the means of production into State hands. The goal of the Paris Commune was not to let the State ‘wither away’ but rather to banish it immediately (...) The annihilation of the State was now not the inevitable conclusion to a dialectical historical process, of a higher stage of society, itself shaped by a higher form of production.

“The Paris Commune obliterated the State, without fulfilling a single one of the conditions which Marx had previously stipulated as prefacing its abrogation (...) The Commune’s defeat of the bourgeois State had not been designed to install another State in its place. (...) Its aim was not to found some new State machinery, but rather to replace the State by organizing society on economic and federalist foundations (...) In *The Civil War* [the Address], there is no mention of ‘withering away’, but rather of immediate and utter extirpation of the State.”<sup>8</sup>

Likewise, the marxologist Maximilien Rubel has conceded: “There is no denying that the idea which Marx framed of the conquest and suppression of the State by the proletariat found its definitive shape in his Address on the Paris

Commune and that as such it differs from the idea offered to us in the *Communist Manifesto*.”<sup>9</sup>

But there is nevertheless disagreement between the two scholars: Lehning, who, rightly or wrongly, regards Marx as an “authoritarian,” alleges that the Address is a “foreign body” in marxist socialism, whereas Rubel, on the other hand, eager to discover a “libertarian” in Marx, contends that marxian thought found in the Address its “definitive form.”

The fact remains, though, that in the striving today to work out some synthesis between anarchism and marxism, the Address of 1871 has to be regarded as a starting-point, a *prima facie* demonstration that it is feasible to reconcile fruitfully the two strands of thought, the authoritarian and the libertarian.

### BAKUNIN: THE PARIS COMMUNE<sup>1</sup>

(. . .) *In the Paris Commune, revolutionary socialism has just essayed its first spectacular, practical venture.*

I am a supporter of the Paris Commune which, though it has been massacred and smothered in blood by the henchmen of monarchist and clerical reaction, is all the livelier and more potent in the imaginations and hearts of Europe’s proletariat: I am a supporter of it because it was a well articulated and daring rebuttal of the State.

It is an historical fact of immense implications that this rebuttal of the State should have manifested itself specifically in France, which has hitherto been par excellence the home of political centralization, and that Paris specifically, the center and historical creator of this great French civilization, should have been the one to take the initiative in this.

Paris, yielding up her crown and enthusiastically announcing that she was stepping down in order to bring liberty and life to France, Europe and the world at large;

Paris, reaffirming her historical powers of initiative by pointing out to all enslaved peoples (and which popular masses are not slaves?) the only path to emancipation and salvation;

Paris, dealing a death blow to the political traditions of bourgeois radicalism and affording revolutionary socialism a substantial basis;

Paris, earning once again the curses of every reactionary in France and in Europe;

Paris, burying herself in her ruins in order to signify a solemn repudiation of the triumphant reaction; redeeming, through her own misfortune, the honor and prospects of France; and proving to a comforted humanity that, while life, intelligence and moral firmness may have deserted the upper classes, they thrive in the fullness of their powers in the proletariat;

Paris, ushering in the new age, the age of definitive and comprehensive liberation of the masses of the people and their solidarity which henceforth will be quite substantial, criss-crossing and over-riding the borders of States;

Paris, doing patriotism to death and founding the religion of humanity upon her ruins;

Paris, proclaiming herself humanitarian and atheist, and substituting the great realities of social life and faith in science for fictitious gods: the principles of liberty, justice, equality and fraternity, those timeless foundations of all human morality, for religious, political and juridical morals;

Paris, heroic, rational and faithful, confirming her vigorous belief in the destinies of humanity, through her glorious demise and death, bequeathing it much more vigorous and lively to succeeding generations;

Paris, drowned in the blood of her most selfless children, is mankind crucified by the concerted international reaction in Europe, under the aegis of all the Christian churches and of the high priest of iniquity, the Pope: but the coming international, solidarity revolution of peoples will be Paris's resurrection.

Such is the true meaning, and such the beneficent, incalculable implications of the Paris Commune's two month life span and its never-to-be-forgotten collapse.

The Paris Commune was too short-lived, and in its inner development, it was unduly hobbled by the deadly battle which it was obliged to wage against the Versailles reaction, for it to be able to—I will not say apply, but elaborate in theory—its socialist program. Also, and this has to be recognized, most of the members of the Commune were not, strictly, socialists and if they showed themselves to be such, this was because they were hopelessly carried away by the irresistible force of circumstances, by the nature of their environment, by the demands of their position, rather than by heartfelt conviction. In the Commune, the socialists, at the head of whom stood, of course, our friend Varlin, were but a very tiny minority; at most they numbered 14 or 15 members. Jacobins accounted for the remainder.

But, let us be clear about this, there are Jacobins and Jacobins. There are Jacobin lawyers and doctrinarians, like Mr. Gambetta, whose positivist,

pompous, despotic and formalistic republicanism, having abjured the old revolutionary faith and retained nothing of Jacobinism save the cult of unity and authority, has delivered the people's France to the Prussians, and later to the home-grown reaction: and there are staunchly revolutionary Jacobins, heroes, the last honest representatives of the democratic faith of 1793, capable of sacrificing both their beloved unity and their cherished authority to the requirements of the Revolution, rather than accommodate their consciences to the insolence of the reaction.

These magnanimous Jacobins, at whose head stands Delescluze of course, a great soul and a great character, seek the success of the Revolution above all else: and as there is no revolution without the masses of the people, and since those masses today are eminently endowed with the socialist instinct and cannot mount any revolution other than an economic and social revolution, the authentic Jacobins, surrendering ever more to the logic of the revolutionary movement, must finish up becoming reluctant socialists.

Such indeed was the situation of those Jacobins who belonged to the Paris Commune. Delescluze and many another with him put their signatures to programs and proclamations, the general tenor and promises of which were positively socialistic. But since, for all their bona fides and good intentions, they were only socialists a lot more superficially enthused than converted in their heart of hearts, and as they had not had the time nor the ability indeed to overcome and banish from their minds a host of bourgeois prejudices which were at odds with their new-found socialism, it is understandable that, stymied by that inner turmoil, they were never able to move beyond generalizations nor take one of those decisive steps that might forever have severed their fellowship and all their connections with the bourgeois world.

This was a great misfortune for the Commune and for themselves: they were paralyzed by it and they paralyzed the Commune: but this cannot be counted against them as a fault. Men are not transformed overnight, and cannot change either their nature or their ways at a whim. They proved their sincerity by going to their deaths for the Commune's sake. Who will dare require more of them?

They are all the more deserving of forgiveness in that the people of Paris itself, under whose influence they thought and acted, were a lot more instinctively socialist than socialists by belief or through considered reflection. Their every aspiration is comprehensively and exclusively socialist: but their ideas, or rather, the traditional expressions thereof cannot pretend to such loftiness.

In the proletariat of France's larger towns and even in that of Paris, a lot of Jacobin prejudices, a lot of dictatorial and governmental idioms survive. The cult of authority, the necessary outcome of religious education, that historical source of all of the people's misfortunes, depravities and slavishness, has yet to be banished utterly from its heart. This is so true that even the people's most intelligent sons, the sincerest socialists, have yet to be delivered entirely from it. Root around in their consciences and you will find the Jacobin, and governmentalism, lurking in some dark recess, much shrunken, it is true, but not quite dead.

Also, the circumstances of the tiny number of convinced socialists who were part of the Commune were exceedingly difficult. Not feeling that they had sufficient support from the great bulk of the Parisian populace, for the International Association's organization, which was in any case very flawed, numbered only a few thousand individuals, they had to wage a daily battle against the Jacobin majority. And in what a setting at that! They had to find work and bread for some hundreds of thousands of workers, they had to organize and arm them and they had to monitor reactionary activity in a sprawling city like Paris, which was under siege, famished and prey to every filthy trick by the reactionaries who had successfully ensconced themselves in Versailles, with the permission and under the aegis of the Prussians. They had to counter with a revolutionary government and fight the government and army of Versailles, that is to say, in order to combat the monarchist and clerical backlash, they were obliged to set aside and sacrifice the basic premises of revolutionary socialism and organize themselves into a Jacobin counter.

Was it not only to be expected that, in such circumstances, the Jacobins, who were the stronger, in that they represented the majority of the Commune and who also possessed to an infinitely greater extent the political instinct, tradition and practice of governmental organization, should have enjoyed immeasurable advantages over the socialists? The astonishing thing is that they did not make a lot more capital out of it than they did, that they failed to invest the Paris uprising with an exclusively Jacobin character, and that they allowed themselves, instead, to be swept into a social revolution.

I know that many socialists, very conscientious about their theory, take our Paris friends to task for not having been socialist enough in their revolutionary practice, while all of the yaps of the bourgeois press, on the other hand, charge them with having abided only too faithfully by socialism's program. For the moment, let us leave the sordid complainants of that press to one

side: let me point out to the inflexible theoreticians of emancipation of the proletariat that they are not being fair to our friends from Paris: for, between the finest theories and their implementation, there is a huge distance which cannot be bridged in just a few days. Anyone who had the good fortune to be acquainted with Varlin, say, to name only the one of whose death we can be sure, knows how impassioned, thought through and deep-seated were his and his friends' socialist convictions. These were men whose burning zeal, commitment and bona fides could never have been called into question by anyone who had dealings with them.

But precisely because they were men of good faith, they were full of self-doubt in the face of the immense undertaking to which they had devoted their thoughts and their lives: they were so disparaging of themselves! Also it was their conviction that in the social Revolution, which on this score as on every other is the diametrical opposite of political Revolution, the actions of individuals counted for virtually nothing and that the spontaneous action of the masses had to be everything. All that individuals could do was articulate, clarify and disseminate ideas mirroring the people's instinct, and, in addition, contribute through their unceasing efforts to revolutionary organization of the natural might of the masses, but no more than that: everything else ought to and can only be achieved by the people itself. Otherwise the upshot would be political dictatorship, that is, reconstitution of the State, privilege, inequality, all of the State's oppressions, and, by a roundabout but logical route, restoration of the political, social and economic enslavement of the masses of the people.

Varlin and all his friends, like all honest socialists, and, broadly speaking, like all toilers born and raised among the people, were very much subscribers to this perfectly legitimate prejudice against initiative continually emanating from the same individuals, against rule exercised by higher-ups, and, being above all else fair-minded, they trained this suspicion as much upon themselves as everyone else.

Contrary to the authoritarian communists' notion—a quite wrong-headed notion as I see it—that a social Revolution can be ordained and organized either by a dictatorship or by a constituent assembly issuing from a political revolution, our friends, the socialists of Paris, reckoned that only through ongoing spontaneous action of the masses, groups and associations of the people could it be mounted and prosecuted to its fullest extent.

Our friends from Paris were a thousand times right. For, in effect, what

head, however inspired, or if one prefers to talk about a collective dictatorship, even one made up of several hundreds of individuals endowed with outstanding gifts, what brains are mighty enough and massive enough to encompass the infinite multiplicity and diversity of substantive interests, aspirations, wishes and needs, the sum of which represents the collective will of a people, and mighty and massive enough to devise a social organization capable of satisfying them all? That origination will never be anything other than a Procrustean bed upon which the more or less pronounced violence of the State will compel society to stretch out.

Which is what has always happened hitherto, and it is precisely this ancient system of organization through force to which the social Revolution must put paid by restoring their full liberty to the masses, groups, communes, associations and indeed individuals, by destroying, for once and for all, the historic cause of all violence, the might and very existence of the State which, when its downfall comes, must necessarily bring down with it all of the iniquities of juridical law along with all the lies of several cults, such law and such cults never having been anything other than the necessary consequence, in ideas as well as in substance, of all of the violence represented, guaranteed and fostered by the State.

It is self-evident that liberty is not about to be restored to humanity, and that the substantial interests of society, of the groups and of all the local organizations as well as all of the individuals who make up society, will not really be gratified until States are no more. Obviously, all the so-called general interests of society which the State is supposed to represent, and which in point of fact are nothing but the general and standing negation of the positive interests of the regions, communes, associations and the greater number of individuals subjected to the State, add up to an abstraction, a figment, a falsehood, and the State is like one huge butchery and like a vast cemetery where, in the shade and under the pretext of that abstraction, all of the real interests, all of the vital forces of the land come along generously and blithely to let themselves be hacked up and buried: and since no abstraction ever exists of itself or for itself, as it has neither legs to walk on, nor arms to create, nor stomach to digest the stream of victims fed to it, then plainly, just as the religious or celestial abstraction, God, in reality stands for the very positive, very substantial interests of a privileged caste, the clergy, its earthly counterpart, so that political abstraction, the State, stands for the no less positive and substantial interests of the class which is today the main, if not exclusive, exploiter class, and which,



moreover, tends to assimilate all others—the bourgeoisie.

And just as the clergy is always divided and is today inclined to split even further into a very powerful, very wealthy minority and a very subordinate, passably impoverished majority, so the bourgeoisie and its several social and political organizations in industry, agriculture, banking and commerce, as well as in every administrative function of the State, financial, legal, academic, police and military, tends to divide further with every passing day into a truly dominant oligarchy and a countless mass of more or less vain and demeaned creatures, their lives a perpetual illusion, inevitably and increasingly driven down into the proletariat by an invisible force, the force of the current economic development, and reduced to serving as the blind instruments of that omnipotent oligarchy.

Abolition of Church and State must be the essential precondition for the real liberation of society: only after that can it and should it be organized differently, though not from the top down and in accordance with some ideal scheme devised by a few sages or savants, or indeed by means of decrees issuing from some dictatorial force or even national assembly elected by universal suffrage. Such an arrangement, as I have said before, would inevitably lead to creation of a new State, and, consequently, to formation of a governmental aristocracy, which is to say, a whole class of people having nothing in common with the mass of the people and, assuredly, that class would embark again upon the exploitation and subjection of it, on the pretext of the common good or in order to save the State.

The future organization of society must proceed from the bottom up only, through free association or federation of the workers, into their associations to begin with, then into communes, regions, nations and, finally, into a great international and universal federation. Only then will the true and enlivening order of freedom and general happiness come about—that order which, far from denying it, instead affirms and reconciles the interests of individuals and those of society.

### **KARL MARX: THE PARIS COMMUNE<sup>1</sup>**

The cry of “Social Republic!” to which the Parisian proletariat had launched the February revolution represented little more than a vague longing for a Republic that would not just abolish the monarchist form of class rule, but class rule per se. The Commune was the positive embodiment of that Republic.

Paris, the central seat of the former government power, and at the same

time, the French working class's social stronghold, had taken up arms against the attempt by Thiers and his Rurals to restore and perpetuate the former governmental power bequeathed them by the Empire.

Paris was able to resist because, on account of the siege, it had got rid of the army and replaced it by a National Guard, the bulk of which was made up of workers. It was now a matter of turning this *de facto* state into a durable institution. The Commune's first decree, therefore, abolished the standing army and replaced it with a people in arms.

The Commune was made up of municipal councilors, elected by universal suffrage in the various arrondissements of the city. These were at all times answerable and subject to recall.<sup>2</sup> Most of its members were, naturally, workers or acknowledged representatives of the working class. The Commune was not to be a parliamentary body, but an active body, executive and legislature in one. Instead of carrying on as the instrument of the central government, the police were immediately stripped of their political powers and turned into an instrument of the Commune, accountable and revocable at any moment. The same was true of officials from all other branches of the administration. From Commune members down to the bottom of the scale, public service had to be repaid with a workman's wage. The traditional back-handers and commissions of high State dignitaries vanished along with those dignitaries themselves. The public services ceased to be the private preserves of the central government's henchmen. Not merely the city administration, but the whole of the initiative hitherto exercised by the State was transferred back into Commune hands.

With the standing army and the police, those material instruments of central government power, done away with, the Commune turned to the task of smashing the spiritual instrument of oppression, the priestly power: it decreed Church and State separated and all churches expropriated insofar as they constituted proprietorial bodies. Priests were despatched to the peaceful retreat of private life, there to live upon alms from the faithful, like their predecessors, the apostles. Every single educational establishment was thrown open to the people free of charge and simultaneously released from all Church or State interference. Thus, not only was education made accessible to all, but science itself was freed from shackles which class prejudices and governmental power had placed on it.

Court officials were stripped of that sham independence which had served only to disguise their squalid submission to every succeeding government, to

which, one by one, they had pledged their loyalty, only to break it thereafter. Like every other public official, magistrates and judges were to be electable, accountable and revocable.

The Paris Commune of course was to have set the pattern for every great industrial center in France. Once Commune rule had been established in Paris and other secondary sites, the former central government would have had to yield in the provinces also to the self-government of the producers. In a short outline of national organization which the Commune was denied the time to develop, it is explicitly stated that the Commune was to be the political model even for the tiniest rural hamlet, and that in country areas the standing army was to be replaced by a people's militia with an extremely brief term of service. The rural communes in each department were to administer their shared affairs through a delegates' assembly in the departmental capital, and these departmental assemblies would in turn send deputies to the national delegation in Paris: delegates would be subject to recall at any moment and bound by the imperative mandate issued by their electors. Those few but significant duties retained by the central government would not be abolished, as has falsely and deliberately been claimed, but would be performed by communal officials, which is to say by officials strictly accountable.

There was to be no injury done the unity of the nation; instead it would be orchestrated by means of the communal Constitution; it would be made a reality through destruction of the State power which purported to be the embodiment of that nationhood, but which sought to remain independent of the nation itself, and superior to it, when it was really only a parasitical excrescence. While it was important that the purely repressive organs of the former governmental authority be lopped off, its legitimate functions were to be wrested from an authority that claimed a pre-eminence over society itself and awarded to accountable servants of society. Instead of deciding once every three or six years which member of the ruling class was to "represent" and trample the people underfoot inside Parliament, universal suffrage was to serve the people, organized into communes, the way individual suffrage serves any other employer on the look-out for workers and staff to run his business. And it is a commonplace that societies, like individuals, when it comes to genuine matters, generally manage to place everyone properly and, in the event of a mistake's being made, manage to make prompt amends.

Then again, nothing could have been more alien to the spirit of the Commune than the replacement of universal suffrage by some hierarchical

investiture. Broadly speaking, it is the fate of entirely novel historical formations to be mistaken for the counter to older, even extinct forms, of social life, to which they may bear a certain resemblance. Thus, in this new Commune which shattered the power of the modern State, some have been intent upon seeing an evocation of the medieval communes, which to begin with, prefigured that State power and then became its foundation.<sup>3</sup>

The communal Constitution has mistakenly been interpreted as an attempt to break down into a federation of small States, (as Montesquieu and the Girondins dreamed about), that unity of great nations which, although originally engendered by violence, has now grown into a potent factor in social production.

The antagonism between the Commune and State power has wrongly been seen as an overblown form of the age-old struggle against over-centralization. Particular historical circumstances may, in other countries, have thwarted the classical development of the bourgeois form of government, as has happened in France, and, as in England, may have allowed the huge central organs of the State to ramify through corrupt *vestries*,<sup>4</sup> jobbing municipal councilors and ferocious welfare board administrators in the towns, and, in the counties, effectively hereditary justices of the peace.

The communal Constitution would have restored to the body of society all of the resources hitherto gobbled up by the parasitical State which feeds upon society and hobbles its freedom of movement. By virtue of that fact alone, it would have been the launching pad for France's regeneration.

(. . .) Implicit as a self-evident fact in the very existence of the Commune was municipal freedom: but henceforth it was no impediment to State power, which had been done away with. Only the mind of a Bismarck (...) could have come up with the idea of ascribing to the Paris Commune aspirations to that lampoon of the old French municipal organization from 1791 represented by Prussian municipal government, which degrades administration in the towns until these are mere secondary cogs in the Prussian State's police apparatus.

The Commune made a reality of that watchword of all bourgeois revolutions, cheap government, by abolishing these two great drains upon expenditure: the standing army and State officials. Its very existence supposed non-existence of the monarchy which, in Europe at any rate, is the usual burden and indispensable mask of class rule. It supplied the Republic with the basis of genuinely democratic institutions. But its ultimate objective was neither "cheap government" nor the "real Republic": these were merely its

corollaries.

The multiplicity of constructions placed upon the Commune, and the multiplicity of interests making claims upon it demonstrate that it was a political form with every potential for expansion, whereas every form of government up to then had placed the emphasis on repression. And therein lies its true secret: it was essentially a working class government, the outcome of the producers' class struggle against the appropriating class, the political formula—at last discovered—which made economic emancipation of labor become feasible.

## ON WORKER SELF-MANAGEMENT

### I. ON COOPERATION<sup>1</sup>

(. . .) What is the International's aim? It is, is it not?, emancipation of the working class through solidary action of the workers of all countries. And what is the aim of bourgeois cooperation? The wresting of a small number of workers out of the common poverty, in order to turn them into bourgeois, to the detriment of the greater number.

(. . .) Let us suppose that a thousand men are exploited and oppressed by ten. What would one think if there were twenty, thirty or more in that thousand who said to themselves: "We are weary of being victims: but since, on the other hand, it is absurd to hope for everybody's salvation, as the prosperity of the small number absolutely requires sacrifice of the greater number, let us abandon our colleagues to their fate, and thinking of ourselves only, in order to become happy, let us in our turn become bourgeois, become exploiters?"

That would be treachery, would it not?

(. . .) Many of them are very well-meaning, not deceivers but deceived. Not knowing, not having ever seen or imagined any practice other than bourgeois practice, lots of them reckon that it would be legitimate warfare to resort to that same practice in order to combat the bourgeoisie. They are naive enough to believe that what murders labor may emancipate it, and that they, as well as the bourgeoisie itself, might deploy against the latter, the weapon by means of which the bourgeoisie grinds them down.

This is a great mistake. These ingenuous folk fail to appreciate the immense superiority afforded the bourgeoisie over the proletariat by monopoly of wealth, science and age-old practice, as well as the overt or covert but always active support of States and the whole organization of contemporary society. It would, thus, be a too unequal struggle for one to have any reasonable expectation of success in such conditions. Bourgeois weapons, being none other than unrestrained competition, the warfare of each against all, prosperity won at the cost of ruination to others, these weapons, these methods can

serve only the bourgeoisie and would of necessity put paid to solidarity, the proletariat's only strength.

(. . .) We too seek cooperation: we are even convinced that cooperation in every branch of labor and science is going to be the prevailing form of social organization in the future. But at the same time, we know that it cannot prosper, develop fully and freely and encompass the whole of human industry, unless its foundation is equality, when all capital, all the instruments of labor, including the land, will have been handed back to labor as collective property.

So we look upon that requirement above all, and organization of the international power of the workers of every land as the main goal of our great association.

That accepted, far from being adversaries of cooperative undertakings at present, we regard them as in many respects necessities. At first, and this in our view for the moment is their chief advantage, they accustom the workers to organizing, conducting and running their affairs for themselves, without interference, whether from bourgeois capital or from bourgeois management.

It is to be wished that, when the time for social liquidation comes, every country and every locality should boast lots of cooperative associations which, if they are well-organized, and above all rooted in the principles of solidarity and collectivity and not in bourgeois exclusivism, will carry society from its current state through to a state of equality and justice without unduly great traumas.

But if they are to be able to perform that task, the International Association must stand over only those cooperative associations built upon its principles.

## II. WORKER ASSOCIATION AND COLLECTIVE OWNERSHIP<sup>2</sup>

The State, which has never had any task other than to regularize, sanction and—with the blessing of the Church—protect the rule of the privileged classes and exploitation of the people's labor for the benefit of the rich, must be abolished. Consequently, this requires: that society be reorganized from the bottom up through the free formation and free federation of worker associations, industrial, agricultural, scientific and artistic alike, with the worker becoming at once artist and scientist, and artists and scientists also becoming manual workers, free associations and federations founded upon collective ownership of the land, capital, raw materials and the instruments of labor, which is to say, all large-scale property servicing production, leaving to private and hereditary possession only those items that are actually for personal use (. . .)



# DIRECT ACTION AND LIBERTARIAN CONSTRUCTION FORESHADOWED





# DIRECT ACTION AND LIBERTARIAN CONSTRUCTION FORESHADOWED

*With Bakunin's disciples and successors James Guillaume, César de Paepe, the Jurassians and Peter Kropotkin, we enter a phase of systematic exposition, of blueprints for an anarchist society.*

*Distilling and carrying on the work of its pioneers, anarchism now gets its second wind, so to speak. It strives to articulate in detail and with as much precision as possible the lineaments of the future organization of society, in the event of successful proletarian revolution: this is speculation in which Marx and his so-called "scientific socialist" school most often declined to indulge, haunted as they were by the obsession with putting distance between themselves and so-called "utopian" socialism.*

*Here, to be sure, the reader will find less literary panache and inspiration than in earlier writers. But those of us in the latter half of the 20th century who find ourselves with our backs to the wall of socialist achievement may delve into the social planning which appears below, not for the explosive eruption of ideas which we find in the speculations of the founding fathers, but for the, perhaps less stirring, solid and concrete matter. Having been largely put to good use by the French and Spanish anarcho-syndicalists of the first half of the 20th century, it may well, in this, the second half of that century, assist us in remaking the world.*

*For openers and by way of a foreword to what is to follow, here are some extracts from a report placed before the Basle congress of the First International on November 11, 1869, by the cabinetmaker Jean-Louis Pindy, delegate from the Paris Construction Workers' Trade Union. Pindy is the forerunner of several authors of social speculations featured in this volume. First, in fact, he outlines the prospects for dual federation—a federation of communes alongside a federation of trade unions with abolition of government and wage slavery as its corollary.*

(. . .) We anticipate the workers organizing in two ways: first, a local grouping which allows the workers in the same area to liaise on a day-to-day basis: then, a linking up of various localities, fields, regions, etc.

The first mode: This grouping is in keeping with the political relations of the existing society which it replaces to advantage: thus far, it has been the approach adopted by the International Working Men's Association. Implicit in this state of affairs, where mutual societies are concerned, is federation of the local societies, helping one another out by means of money loans, organizing meetings to discuss social issues and, in concert, taking steps of mutual interest.

But as industry expands, another style of organization alongside the former becomes necessary. In every country, the workers sense that their interests are interlinked, and that they are being ground down one by one. For another thing, the future requires an organization that reaches beyond the precincts of the towns and, ignoring frontiers, establishes a sweeping reallocation of work around the globe: for this dual purpose, trades societies must be organized internationally: each trades body should maintain an exchange of correspondence and information within the country and with other countries (. . .) This sort of association becomes a factor for de-centralization, for no longer is it a matter of founding within each country a center common to all industries, but each one of them will be centered upon the locality where it is most developed: for example, in the case of France, while the colliers will be federated around Saint-Etienne, the silk workers will be federated around Lyon and the luxury industries around Paris. Once these two types of association have been established, labor organizes for present and future by doing away with wage slavery (. . .)

Association of the different corporations on the basis of town or country (. . .) leads to the commune of the future, just as the other mode of organization leads to the labor representation of the future. Government is replaced by the assembled councils of the trades bodies, and by a committee of their respective delegates, overseeing the labor relations which are to take the place of politics.

(. . .) We propose the following resolution:

“Congress is of the view that all workers should actively engage in the creation of strike funds in the various trades bodies.

“As these societies take shape, it invites sections, federal groups and central councils to keep societies from the same corporation informed, so that they may proceed to formation of national associations of trades bodies.

“Such federations are to have charge of gathering all information regarding their respective industry, overseeing the steps to be taken in concert, regulating strikes and working actively towards their success, until such time as wage slavery may be replaced by the federation of free producers.”

# THE DEBATE

## BETWEEN CÉSAR DE PAEPE (1842–1890)

### AND ADHÉMAR SCHWITZGUÉBEL (1844–1895)

CÉSAR DE PAEPE BY MIKLOS MOLNAR<sup>1</sup>

Without question, the most prominent of the Belgian delegates to the First International was César de Paepe. Born in 1842 and dying in 1890, de Paepe was a witness to the grandeur and decline and then the resurgence of the Belgian labor movement. Son of a Belgian State official, de Paepe trained for a career in the law, but his father's sudden death compelled him to abandon his studies. He became a typographer under Desiré Brismee and promptly the latter's colleague in the free thought movement. He joined the *Société des Solidaires* (Fellowship Society) before joining with some new friends who included Voglet and Steens to launch the *Le Peuple* (People) society in 1861: this was a militant democratic association from which the Belgian section of the International Working Men's Association was to emerge four years later. From then on, up until his death, de Paepe, who had in the interim resumed his studies and qualified as a doctor, was in the forefront of the Belgian labor movement. We cannot rehearse every one of the phases of his busy life.<sup>2</sup> Let us note only that he was delegated to virtually every congress of the International where his addresses and speeches were among the most noteworthy.

Categorizing his ideology and political stance would be an even more daunting task than describing his life. Free-thinker, federalist, Proudhonist, collectivist, communist, anarchist, social democrat? What in fact was he? But what was the Belgian labor movement of his day, this "motley socialism, both mutualist and marxist, that goes under the name of collectivism"—to borrow Elie Halevy's felicitous but necessarily incomplete phrase?<sup>3</sup>

It strikes us that the two questions are really the same and that they cannot be answered on the sole basis of the classifications of "marxism," Proudhonist mutualism or anarchism in the Bakuninist sense. For de Paepe's thinking and that of his colleagues was, as well as being influenced by the great schools of thought emanating from Germany and France, tainted with the theories of Belgian thinkers like Potter and Colins,<sup>4</sup> and by workers' traditions going back

to the days of the guilds. To be sure, de Paepe had periods when he was more or less Proudhonist and anarchist, but he also came under the sway of Marx's thought. But, reading his writings and speeches, we get the impression that, while inclining sometimes towards the one and sometimes towards the other tendency within the internationalist movement, de Paepe never wandered far from that Belgian collectivism which sought to reconcile the idea of collective ownership and the idea of freedom of the individual. In his questing after a system founded upon social justice and political liberty, de Paepe—or so we believe, at least—never made a definitive choice with regard to the proper means of bringing about this goal. The advocates of centralization often criticized his federalism, while anarchists took him to task for certain “statist” features of his system.

Likewise, de Paepe's attitude with regard to the choice between abstention or political activity was never categorical. Undecided at the time of the London Conference (September 1871), he turned “abstentionist” for a few years only to end up joining the Belgian socialist ‘Youth’ who prefaced the creation of the Belgian Workers' Party (POB) of 1885.

Let us note further that de Paepe's extremely conciliatory nature afforded him great suppleness when it came to taking a stand. A tolerant free spirit, he sought to pursue discussions through to a philosophical level which might facilitate an understanding which was not feasible in a climate of controversy.

## **ON THE ORGANIZATION OF PUBLIC SERVICES IN THE SOCIETY OF THE FUTURE<sup>1</sup>**

Let us take as our starting point the present state of affairs, the public services as they currently are: then, let us strike from those services whichever of them a new social organization appears to make redundant; let us look at which public services the new requirements will necessitate, and those which, starting right now, are a palpably felt necessity: then let us ask to whom the performance of these various public services naturally and rationally falls. At which point, we are impelled to cast a glance over the overall economic trend, and ask ourselves if the thoroughgoing changes which that trend imposes or is going to impose upon certain industries, turn or are about to turn those industries into veritable public services: finally, we end by looking into how and in what manner public services in general ought to be performed in the future.

### **MANAGEMENT BY WORKERS' COMPANIES?**

By whom ought the various public services to be organized and performed?

Here we find two great currents of thought, two downright antagonistic schools. As a general rule, one of these schools tends to abandon public services to the private enterprise of individuals or spontaneously formed companies, and thereby divests them, in a way, of their character as public services in order to turn them into private undertakings: so much for the *laissez-faire* school. The other, as a general rule, tends to place the public services under the direction of the State, the province (department or canton), or commune: this is the interventionist school. True, to begin with at any rate, the concession of the railways, mines, etc., to workers' companies would not display the same characteristic of runaway exploitation which has come to typify the financial concerns which presently hold the concession on these great public services. But let us not forget that the modern capitalist aristocracy too emerged from the third estate: let us not forget that, before they became what they are today, the great financial barons (or if not them, at least their fathers or grandfathers) were workers, but workers placed in a situation of privilege. Thanks to the unceasing improvements to

mechanical agents, thanks to new industrial applications for the discoveries of science, thanks to reduction of running costs and the accumulation of capital which would follow from this expansion in mechanization and application of all sorts of scientific discoveries, it would not be long before these workers' companies, owners of the enormously improved plants and enjoying a natural or artificial monopoly which society has left open to them, would dominate the whole economy, like their elder brothers, the finance companies.

Doubtless we will be told that concessions are granted only upon certain stipulations, and that the workers' companies, in accepting the concession, would be bound by contract. But the capitalists' companies to which the State has conceded collieries, railroad lines, etc., are bound by contract too: is that any impediment to their handing out fat dividends to their share-holders or plundering public assets as brazenly as you like? From the moment that the companies to which you grant any monopoly become owners of their work plant, where is the contract that is going to prevent them from improving that plant, reducing overheads, not replacing staff who die, and finally amassing capital—in short, from becoming a new privileged class? At best we should, in those circumstances, have the grim pleasure of substituting a worker aristocracy for a bourgeois aristocracy, even as our forebears substituted a bourgeois aristocracy for the old high-born aristocracy.

We will be told that the plant need not necessarily be the property of the company; that it can be supplied to the company by the greater social collective, and remain the inalienable property of the latter; whereupon the improvements resulting from the progress of civilization would bring benefit to the society as a whole: we grant that, but then these companies would no longer really be concessionary companies, but would be associate entrepreneurs simply bound to perform certain public services on behalf of society, as represented by the commune, province, canton or State, etc.

### STATE MANAGEMENT?

Then again, among those who favor the transfer of all public services, or at any rate the most important of them, into the hands of public agencies and notably of the State, a fair number support that arrangement only on condition that the State be republican and democratically constituted, founded upon direct legislation or at least upon universal suffrage, and that it respect all political liberties: they would not favor it under a despotic or even merely monarchist regime. Not without reason, and for purely political reasons, they are afraid to

bolster despotism's power even further, and as a result, they seek, momentarily, to leave completely to private industry a whole range of public services, such as education, insurance, the railroads, etc., which, from the economic point of view would better be entrusted to State care.

(. . .) Starting from the notion of the State as communicated to us by the history of every country, which is to say, from the despotic State, from the State which has everywhere to date been nothing more than the organized domination of a single family, huge caste or class over the multitude which is reduced to a state of legal and economic slavery, a great number of socialists have cried out: War on the State! They do not want to hear talk about the State in any form, no matter how interpreted. They declare very plainly that they seek the absolute destruction of the State, of all States: and the more logical among them, perceiving rightly that the commune is, in the final analysis, merely a mini-State, a State with a tinier territory, whose functions are performed on a smaller scale than ordinary States, declare that they want no more to do with the commune State than with the State proper. Upon their standard they have daubed the device: An-archy! Not "anarchy" in the sense of disorder, since, on the contrary, they believe in the possibility of arriving at true order through spontaneous organization of economic forces, but An-archy, in the sense in which Proudhon intended it, that is, absence of power, absence of authority, and in their minds, in the sense of abolition of the State, the terms authority and power being in their view absolute synonyms for the word State.

But alongside this traditional historical notion of the State, which, in fact, has thus far never been anything other than authority, power, and, further, despotism, (and the worst of despotisms at that, since it has always been exercised by an idle minority over the toiling majority), these socialists have taken account of a true fact and one that will become increasingly true, a fact that is one of the greatest economic phenomena of modern times: they have seen, in the chief branches of modern production, large industry increasingly replacing small-scale industry, centralization of capital, more and more massive application of collective effort and division of labor, the incessant introduction of mighty steam-driven machinery powering a host of tools and machines, tools hitherto isolated, now requiring that huge masses of workers be gathered into enormous factories, and that all of this cannot but add day by day to the domain of big industry. They have seen that in this great modern production, the isolated worker or artisan gives way to collective labor force, to workers' collectives; they have seen that these workers' collectives, faced with the al-



lied capitalists whose interests are diametrically and openly opposed to their own, had of necessity to form themselves into resistance groups, into trades unions, and indeed implicate the workers of small industries in this movement: that association by trades must spread, and their conclusion is that such spontaneous organization of the working class had to furnish the basis for a new social grouping not unlike the spontaneous banding together into bourgeois communes in the Middle Ages: community of interests inevitably impelling trades bodies to spread in order to support one another, out of this grows a whole range of federations—at first local, then regional, then international. What is more, not content with these theoretical observations, they have embarked upon practice: like the English workers, they have founded trade unions, they have federated with one another, and they have, quite rightly, sought to found the International Association upon this federative economic basis. Thus they have embraced this grouping of workers' bodies which is rooted in the depths of modern economic life as a counter to the more or less artificial and obsolete grouping into purely political Communes and States, and predicted the imminent demise of these latter.

So far so good. But we wonder whether the workers' bodies, the associated trades bodies of the same locality, whether this Commune of proletarians, in short, on the day that it replaces today's official Commune or bourgeois Commune, will not act just like the latter vis-à-vis certain public services whose survival is essential to the life of society? We wonder whether, in the new Commune, there will be no need for security, a civil state, maintenance of roads and public squares, street lighting, drinking water in the houses, sewer maintenance, and a whole host of public services that we listed at the start of this work? Would there not be a need for workers' groups, the Commune's trades bodies, to select from among their number delegates to each of the public services, delegates charged with operating these various services, unless these groups prefer instead to act as a bloc in appointing a delegation to share management of these various services? In either instance, does that not saddle us with a local public service administration, a communal administration?

But all public services cannot be handled by a purely local administration, since many of them, and the most important of them at that, are by their very natures fated to operate over a territory larger than that of the Commune: is one Commune about to run the railways, maintain the highways, dam the rivers, channel the streams, see to delivery of mail and the despatching of telegrams to other localities, etc.? Obviously not! So Communes have to come

to some arrangement, organize themselves into a Federation of Communes and choose a delegation to look after public services. Whether that delegation be appointed with a general remit to run all great regional public services, or with a special remit applicable to a particular service, matters not: in any event these delegates have to be in direct and ongoing contact with one another, so they still represent a regional or national public administration, the name having no bearing upon the thing. To start with, is it not more than likely that, for want of bases other than traditions and language, these regions or nations would broadly correspond to the present nationalities, or, at least, to the chief great divisions of those nationalities, say, in the case of Great Britain, England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland? or, in the case of Switzerland, germanophone Switzerland and francophone Switzerland? or, in the Belgian case, Wallonie and Flanders (unless the latter, on account of especial affinities, linguistic, let us say, should rejoin Holland)?

And what is that regional or national Federation of communes going to be, in essence, other than a State? Yes, a State, for we should call things by their name. Except that this will be a federative State, a State formed from the bottom up. A State having at bottom, at its origins, an economic association, the grouping of trades bodies making up the Commune, and, in addition, having, no doubt, alongside its great public services administration directly emanating from the federated Communes, a Labor Chamber emanating directly from the general unions (in England they call them *amalgamated unions*) made up of local unions from the same trade federated at regional level.

### “AN AN-ARCHIC STATE”

The State is a machine; it is the instrument of the great public services. Like any other machine, this one too is essential for large-scale modern production and for substantial traffic in the products resulting from the same: like any other machine, the latter too has been murderous for the workers and has thus far always worked for the exclusive benefit of privileged classes. If there is to be an end of that, the workers must take over that machine. But in taking it over, let us check whether the State machine does not stand in need of important modifications so that it cannot injure anyone: let us check whether certain gears which bourgeois exploitation had overloaded do not need removing and others, which bourgeois carelessness had neglected, added: let us see indeed if it does not need to be established upon wholly new foundations. With those reservations, we can say: workers, the machine belongs to us, the State belongs to us.

Not that the word an-archy frightens us. On the contrary, the horror which an-archy strikes into the bourgeois class (a horror which seems to us to be a lot more in vogue among them than felt by the workers) means that it brings a smile to our lips and that we should be very sorry to drop the word. With the permission of our anarchist friends, therefore, we will not exactly reject the word, although strictly speaking, it may not mean the same thing to us as it does to them. After all, the State, as we think of it and as we wish it to be, is not exactly an authority, a governmental system, something imposed upon the people by force or by guile, in short, an “*archy*,” to use the Greek term. Is there anything very authoritarian about expressions like State postal service, State railway, State-sponsored clearance of scrubland, etc.? We have no difficulty conceiving of a non-authoritarian State (we were going to say an an-archic State, but we desisted, because many of our readers would have regarded juxtaposition of those two terms as some sort of swearword). In fact, real authority certainly does not consist of the act of carrying out decisions taken, or implementing laws passed, or running public services in accordance with the law, but rather of the act of laying down and imposing law. Now, legislation may very well not be the handiwork of the State and may lie outside of its remit, either because laws are passed directly in the Communes or at some other level, or, because of the rounded education given to all and the single-mindedness resulting from that, society’s laws one day become so self-evident to the spirit that they are no more in need of being passed than are the laws of astronomy, physics or chemistry.

And so, to the Commune fall the merely local and communal public services under the purview of the local administration appointed by the trades bodies of the area and operating under the supervision of all local inhabitants. To the State fall the more widespread regional or national public services, under the management of a regional administration appointed by the Federation of Communes and operating under the gaze of the regional Chamber of Labor. Is that all? No; there are and increasingly there will be public services which, by their very nature, are international or inter-regional (the actual names matter very little here). To cater for these there will have to be an international, and, we should say, voluntary federation that is universal, humanitarian or planetary, while conceding that, given the backwardness of the State among certain peoples, it will take quite some time before the reality can live up to these epithets. We need not indicate how this, the supreme constitution of humanity, would also need one or more agencies to run its universal public

services: it would doubtless operate on the same basis as the ones we have mentioned with regard to the constitution of the State, and it too would doubtless have its international chamber of trades, made up of the mandataries of the international labor federations, some of which are even now starting to take shape at the instigation of the English trade unions.

### COMMUNISM AND “ANARCHY”

But, we will, perhaps, be told (. . .) shouldn't (. . .) all branches of production be regarded as destined to be organized as public services? Can you not see that that would mean a descent into the most frightful communism!?

It is an astonishing thing, the power to frighten which lurks in certain words, when the idea which they articulate roams far and wide and is perfectly acceptable as long it is dressed up under some other name. This is the case with the word *an-archy*, which raises the hackles of our bourgeois, whereas the idea of indefinite whittling away of governmental functions and ultimately the abolition of government is the last word among the laissez-faire economists favored by these brave bourgeois! And it is the case with the idea of the State and State intervention in industrial affairs, where another type of person is concerned, who lumps together the official economists and the anti-State socialists, along with a central administration: the State, in short, is something which could very well have been managed without until the recent advent of large-scale modern production, but which has become and is increasingly becoming a social necessity in the face of large-scale output and large-scale traffic, as the usual organ of economic centralization, the usual manager of large industries which supply the raw materials for production and the great transport fleets to carry products to the consumer. So necessary is it that, without such economic centralization in the State's hands, economic forces would centralize anyhow in the hands of mighty companies which are out and out oligarchical States. The term communism has had the singular distinction of having been repudiated by socialists as a calumny, having been envisaged by economists as the last word in utopias, and in the bourgeoisie's eyes, it appears as a theory consecrating ongoing theft and promiscuity, in short, the worst of blights.

As for ourselves, who are not frightened by the word “State,” which some find so scary, any more than we are frightened by the word “an-archy” which others find so horrifying, why should we take fright at the word “communism”? Even supposing that this word has no clearly defined meaning and

does not convey a perfectly rational idea, it ought to be less of a fright to us than any other word: for communism, as envisioned in the past, has always been the form, sentimental or mystical maybe, but the vigorous and radical form to which the disinherited classes and their agitators, from Spartacus to Babeuf, have had recourse in order to articulate their age-old claims, and earn a hearing for their unceasing protests against misery and social iniquity. But the word communism also has a more precise meaning, in that it represents a genuinely scientific idea. Communism means common ownership, public ownership, social ownership.

### BOURGEOIS STATE AND WORKER STATE

(. . .) We have seen that the State shoots us down, passes sentence upon us, imprisons us and shoots us once again, and we wish to divest the State of its judges, its jailers and its fusiliers. With our very own eyes we have seen that the State, even the present, bourgeois State, whenever it sought to produce on its own account instead of leaving production to companies of capitalists who have no aim other than to enrich themselves, produced a higher quality of product at cheaper cost than those companies: the State railways in Belgium and the postal service and the construction of seaports are all testimony to that. But what we have not seen, and what we or our offspring will see, is the workers' State, the State based on the banding together of free workers' Communes, assuming control once and for all of every large-scale social undertaking (. . .)

But what do we care for the anathemas pronounced against us from the official chairs of orthodox political economy? (. . .) What touches us a lot more closely is the instinctive repugnance felt towards any function entrusted to the State, any State intervention, by socialists who march side by side with us on every other score: between them and us, we believe, there is quite simply a great misunderstanding: perhaps the word State is the only point separating us from them: were that the case, we should willingly set the word aside, while declaring that we are retaining and even extending the thing, albeit under the more agreeable cover of some other designation: public administration, delegation from the federated Communes, etc.

But besides those who take us to task over the role we credit to the State, there are also those who will repudiate the role we attribute to the Commune. For Jacobins of every hue, the State is the great Everything, the god Pan, in which everyone has to live and move. For them, the State is not only a particular organ doubtless enjoying great importance and a lofty destiny, but is

the whole body of society. These people cannot understand that one can enter life without a ticket of admission from the State, or that one can quit this world without a State passport: nor will they forgive us for having stripped the State of all its luster, all its splendor, its gleaming raiment, its splendid red and black robes, in order to dress it up in a miner's shirt or engine driver's jerkin: no more generals of the Republic, no more procurators of the Republic! But yet again, is this too the abomination of desolation?

Can you not see that making the Commune the lynch-pin of social organization is ridiculous? The Commune is merely a territorial sub-division of the department, just as the latter is a mere subdivision of the State: it is for the latter to appoint prefect and mayor, governor and burgermeister. Such is the will of the Republic, one and indivisible!

As for your autonomous Commune which, instead of being content to receive life from the State, claims instead that the State should emanate from it! As for your social Commune which seeks to turn the State into a mechanism of socialism, that is only an old incendiary whose exploits are known to us and whom we have butchered thrice already to cries of *Vive la Republique!*—in '93 with the guillotine, in June 1848 by fusillade, in May 1871 with grapeshot! Very well then, sirs, you great citizens of the Mountain! We concede that your thunderbolts may be a touch more terrible than those of your momentary allies, the high priests of the orthodox economic sect who make do with affording your exploits the approval of their science: in the name of freedom of labor, let the chasspot do its work, let the grapeshot do its work and let bullets puncture the flanks of the proletarian. . . . But, sirs, it is precisely because we are no longer willing to let ourselves be condemned, imprisoned, mown down or guillotined that we want no more of your judges, your henchmen and your executioners.

Instead of the Jacobin notion of the all-powerful State, we offer the idea of the liberated Commune, itself appointing all its administrators, with no exceptions: shifting for itself in respect of laws, justice and police. The liberal conception of the gendarme-State we counter with the notion of the State disarmed, but charged with educating the young and centralizing the great joint undertakings. The Commune becomes essentially the organ of political functions or what are described as such: law, justice, security, the guaranteeing of contracts, the protection of the incapable, civic society, but at the same time it is the organ of all local public services. The State in essence becomes the organ of scientific unity and of the great joint undertakings necessary to society.



ADHÉMAR SCHWITZGUÉBEL'S REPLY TO CÉSAR DE PAEPE<sup>1</sup>

## THE QUESTION OF PUBLIC SERVICES BEFORE THE INTERNATIONAL

*Adhémar Schwitzguébel (1844–1895), an ornamental engraver from the Swiss Jura and friend of James Guillaume, was one of the most active militants of the International's Jura Federation. In 1908 in Paris, James Guillaume published QUELQUES ÉCRITS by Schwitzguébel, from which the following text has been lifted. From a strictly anarchist viewpoint, it replies to César de Paepe's report.*

(...) In the light of what has been said already regarding the public services, it is manifest that two great schools of thought concerning reorganization of society are going to share the socialist world between them: the one inclines towards the workers' State, the other towards the Federation of communes.

Some are of the persuasion that, at the bottom of this great debate, it is simply a question of differing expressions of the same idea. But discussions regarding public services cannot leave any doubts on that score: we are dealing with two quite different things. That is what we shall strive to demonstrate. We shall examine the public services question from the viewpoint of

the workers' State and from the viewpoint of the Federation of communes, and we shall conclude by setting it in the context of history and of the social Revolution.

### THE "WORKERS' STATE" RESEMBLES THE PRESENT STATE

What is the idea underpinning modern States and by invoking which needs do supporters of the State justify its existence? The fact is that in all dealings between people, there are purely private dealings, but there are also essential relations of concern to one and all: hence the necessity for a public order, by means of which normal pursuit of public and general dealings between men can be guaranteed. Ponder well the Brussels memorandum, and you will find that the notion of the workers' State, by which it is informed, is, fundamentally, absolutely analogous with that of the current State.

Here come the objections: reorganized, directed and administered by the working classes, the State will have lost the oppressive, exploitative nature which it currently displays in the bourgeoisie's hands: instead of the political, judicial, police and military organization which it is at present, it is to be an economic agency, regulator of public services organized in accordance with social needs and the appliance of the sciences.

But let us take stock of the functioning of such a State. Lawful political action or the social Revolution have placed the running of the Commune and State in working class hands. What the laboring classes seek—emancipation of labor from all rule and all exploitation by capital—they can effect. The instrument of labor must become collective property, production must be organized, intercourse proceed, trade assist intercourse, and the present ignorance must be replaced by scientific and humane science and education: the existence of individuals and of society must be assured by hygienic conditions; public security must take the place of the current antagonism, the criminal interplay of hateful passions and brutal rivalries. The proletariat, having become dictator through the State, ordains collective ownership and organizes this for the benefit either of the Commune or of the State; it lays down the conditions upon use of the instruments of labor, in order to safeguard the interests of production, those of the producer groups, those of the Communes and of the State: then it prescribes the operation of exchange of produce, orchestrating and developing the means of intercourse: devises a program for training and education of the young, entrusting its implementation either to the Commune or to the State; it establishes a communal and general health service:



and takes whatever steps may be necessary to guarantee public security in the Communes and in the State.

Thus, everything connected with social organization, the proletariat should first distinguish between what falls within the realm of private initiative and what falls within the realm of public initiative, what is private service and what is public service, what falls within the remit of the Commune and what behooves the State. Precisely as is standard practice today.

This task of distinguishing and disentangling the private from the public, of organizing everything public, everything falling under the remit of the Commune and the State, cannot be handled by the proletariat directly as a body. Its opinion, its general will is broken down and analyzed, and to that end, they have to be embodied by representatives who will take to the floor of parliament to put the case for their constituents. As is the practice today.

#### THE "WORKERS' STATE" IS NO SOLUTION

How will these workers' parliaments be constituted? By no other method than the famed universal suffrage. So there will still be a minority to whom the majority will lay down the law, or vice versa; for, given that the State is acknowledged as a necessary safeguard for public interests, the State's law will be binding upon everyone, and any who seek to evade it are to be treated as criminals. Here we find this workers' State, which was to have been organized to serve society's economic interests, rushing headlong into legislation, jurisdiction, policing, the army, formal schooling and the established church. The moment there is State law on the one hand, and on the other a diversity of interests to be satisfied, it is inevitable that there should be a majority or minority hostile to that law. If the State does not have the power to see to implementation of that law, it will not be observed and the action of the State will be scorned and nullified. So, reason of State requires formation of a power with the capacity to eradicate any attempted rebellion against the State's constitution and laws. A whole judiciary to punish trespass against the basis, the order, the laws of the State: a police to oversee observance of the laws; an army to crush rebellion should any erupt, and to protect the State against trespass by other States—such are the necessary consequences of the underlying principle of the existence of the State.

If these public services, as they have hitherto been termed, are essential to the material existence of the State, formal schooling and the established Church are just as essential to its moral existence. The intellect has to accept

such absolute domination by the State as the most natural thing in the world: so the whole of public education, by school and Church, is founded upon absolute respect for anything having to do with the State. And in the workers' State, which is credited with the essential characteristic of acting as economic regulator, the whole organization of property, production, exchange and intercourse will, in the hands of the majority or the minority which is to run things, be a weapon of domination every whit as powerful as the political, judicial, police and military functions performed by the bourgeois in power today. More so than the bourgeois, the workers, as masters of the State, will show no mercy to any trespass against their State, because they will believe that they have attained the ultimate ideal.

Thus, it does not seem to us that, the matter of social reorganization, the workers' State represents a solution consonant with the interests of humanity; the latter would not know emancipation, because the instrument of labor, the organization of labor, and certain public services would fall within the remit of the State or of the Commune; each individual would assuredly have greater guarantees of equitable allocation of the fruits of production, the blessings of improved training and education, the delights of social life than under the present state of affairs, but complete autonomy of the person and of the group would not be forthcoming, and if man is to know emancipation, he must be emancipated as worker and as individual.

(. . .) To broach the question of social reorganization in the terms of the formula offered for the consideration of the Brussels Congress, is, inevitably, to distract minds from the real terms of the question, and to make of the workers' State a foregone conclusion.

#### TWO NEW PRINCIPLES: COLLECTIVISM AND FEDERALISM

(. . .) Two principles, of immeasurable historical import, have emerged from the debates and internal squabbling which caused upset within our Association: the principle of collective ownership, as the economic basis of the new organization of society, and the principle of autonomy and federation, as the basis upon which human individuals and collectivities are banded together. To discover what the new organization of society might be, why not, instead of deliberating upon the necessary consequences of implementation of the two forenamed principles, muse upon what might be private service and what might become public service, and by whom and in what manner such public services might be performed? Resorting to rational argument, one might have

been forced to say: we are confronted by a need to turn individual ownership into collective ownership: which is the most practical way of bringing about this change? It is the workers assuming direct control of the instruments of labor, which they employ to the advantage of the bourgeois and which they ought henceforth to turn to their own advantage. That revolutionary measure, practically superior to all decrees from dictatorial assemblies which might feel themselves qualified to direct the Revolution or the wholesale emancipation of the working classes: and spontaneous action of the masses of the populace, whence alone this may spring, is, right from the first acts of the Revolution, the practical assertion of the principle of autonomy and federation which becomes the basis of all social combination. Along with the bourgeoisie's economic privileges, all State institutions by means of which the bourgeoisie sustains its privileges will have foundered in that revolutionary storm.

Now let us examine the implications of such a Revolution for the reorganization of society. In any locality, the various trades bodies are masters of the situation: in such and such an industry, the implements employed are of minimal value: in another, they are of considerable value and a wider usefulness: if the group of producers employed in that industry are to be proprietors of the implements used, ownership of them may lead to a monopoly for one group of workers, to the detriment of other groups. The revolutionary necessities which have driven laboring groups into concerted action also commend to them federation agreements by means of which they mutually guarantee the gains of the Revolution: of necessity, these agreements will be communal, regional and international, and will enshrine sufficient assurances that no group may arrogate the benefits of the Revolution to itself alone. Thus, it seems to us that collective ownership ought to be at first communal, then regional, even international, according to the more or less general development and importance of such and such a branch of human activity, such and such a natural resource, such and such instruments of labor built up by preceding labor.

As to the constitution of groups of producers, the spontaneity of the revolutionary interests to which they owe their gestation is to be the starting point for their organization, and for the spread of their organization, with an eye to reorganizing society. Banded together freely for revolutionary action, the workers will stick to such free association when it comes to organization of production, exchange, commerce, training and education, health, and security: and just as, in revolutionary strife, the hostile attitude of one individual within

such and such a group, of one group within such and such a commune, one commune within a region, one region in an international context, has failed to stall the onward progress of Revolution, so isolation, when it comes to expansion of the gains of the Revolution, will not be capable of halting the onward progress of the toiling masses operating without let or hindrance.

#### THE STATE REPLACED BY THE FEDERATION OF COMMUNES

Let careful note be taken of the essential difference between the workers' State and the Federation of Communes. The State determines what constitutes public service and how that public service is to be organized: there we have human activity regimented. In the Federation of Communes, today the shoe mender works at home, in one room: tomorrow, thanks to the appliance of some discovery, shoe production can be multiplied a hundred-fold and simplified at the same time: shoe-menders will therefore band together, federate with one another and set up their workshops, their manufactories and thereby involve themselves in orchestrated activity. The same is true of every branch of human activity: that which is restricted organizes in a restricted way; that which is comprehensive, organizes in a comprehensive way, at the levels of group, commune and federation alike. This is experience, day-to-day practice placed in the service of human liberty and human activity.

In the context of such organization, what becomes of the public services of the present State, its legislation, its jurisdiction, its police, its army, its official schooling and official Church? The free contract replaces law: if there are disputes, these are judged by arbitration panels within the groups where the disputes originate: and as far as repressive measures are concerned, these now have no reason to exist in a society founded upon free organization—such and such a group's organization and action being incapable of harming me in any way, if there is parity of esteem for the organization and action of the group of which I am a member, in that such organization and action is hard to disentangle from the interests of emancipated humanity, once the Social Revolution has swept away all of the practical implications of bourgeoisism. A security service may well still have a temporary usefulness but it cannot survive as an institution with the general, indispensable, irksome and oppressive remit which it enjoys under the present arrangement.

## THE GREAT CURRENTS OF THE SOCIAL REVOLUTION

There is no denying that, in terms of practicalities, the matter will be resolved according to the measure of socialist development in the laboring masses in each country, and in accordance also with the more or less decisive first steps of the Social Revolution. Today only the ignorant and people of bad faith dare argue that solution of the social question can be sought by means other than Revolution. We are pleased to record that our friends from Germany, in spite of the lawful character of their current socialist agitation, are in agreement with us upon this point. But the Revolution may come to pass in two ways: it may have as its immediate objective and also as the basis for its action, the working classes' conquest of political power within the State as it stands and conversion of that bourgeois State into a workers' State: then again, it may have as its immediate objective and as the basis of its action, destruction of every State and spontaneous, federative combination of all of the proletariat's revolutionary forces. While revolutionary action can vary from country to country, it is also liable to variation in the communes of the same country: here the Commune retains an authoritarian, governmental character, an aspect even of bourgeois-ism: elsewhere, there will be a clean sweep. If due account is taken of the current circumstances of the peoples of the different civilized States, and of the varying views still current on such matters, it will be understood that it is inevitable that the Revolution will be subject to extreme variation. Doubtless we shall see every socialist theory, communism, collectivism and mutualism, being implemented to a more or less restricted or comprehensive extent, according to whatever great currents the Revolution is to follow.

How could it be otherwise when today we see a great country like Germany clinging to the notion of the workers' State, and others, like Italy and Spain, clinging to the notion of a Federation of Communes? This diversity of revolutionary tendencies has given the bourgeoisie grounds for accusing socialism of impotence. With a modicum of foresight, however, it is easy to appreciate that, while there may be differences regarding the terms of a new organization of society, the working classes are more and more united on working to bring down the bourgeois edifice. And such difference cannot be a source of impotence: rather, it is a source of strength, in this sense—that workers' groups, implementing their own views and respecting the views of other groups, will, all of them, have all the more interest in the Revolution's succeeding.

In what respect will it halt the proletariat's revolutionary march, if the Germans make a reality of the workers' State, while the Italians, Spaniards and French make a reality of the Federation of Communes? And indeed if, in France, certain communes hold on to individual ownership while collective ownership prevails elsewhere?

#### THE FEDERATION OF COMMUNES WILL CARRY THE DAY

These reservations aside, it is nonetheless our firm belief that the organization best suited to serving the interests of humanity will eventually prevail everywhere, and that the first stirrings of revolution will prove crucial for subsequent development of the phases of the Revolution. We would even take this conviction so far as to declare that it is the Federation of Communes that will emerge from the Social Revolution with the greatest power.

This Federation of Communes has been taken to task for being an obstacle to achievement of a broad agreement, a complete union of the workers, and for not offering the same potential for action as a State, when it comes to revolutionary action.

But how are the workers' groups, freely federated within the International, to practice solidarity, accommodate one another and reach agreement? The fact is that the economic situation itself compels them to practice solidarity. What form will that take, once their action is no longer opposed by all of the hindrances the current order has to offer?

How comes it that the International grows in potential for action as long as it is a Federation, while it comes apart as soon as its General Council seeks to turn it into a State? It is because workers have a hatred of authority, and want to be free, and will only achieve that through practice of broad, comprehensive liberty.

Yes, our Association is proof of the promise of the principle of autonomy and free federation: and it is through implementation of that principle that humanity will be able to stride towards fresh conquests in order to guarantee moral and material well-being to all.





**JAMES  
GUILLAUME**  
(1844–1916)





**JAMES GUILLAUME<sup>1</sup>**

James Guillaume was born on February 16, 1844, in London. His father, a Swiss from Neuchâtel, was a naturalized Englishman: his mother was French. His father's family lived in Fleurier in the Val-de-Travers. There, around 1815, his grandfather had founded a clock-making firm with a branch in London. He was a republican and had had to flee to the canton of Vaud in the wake of the disturbances in 1831. James Guillaume's father arrived in London at the age of twenty, a skilled clock-maker even by that date, to replace his uncle as branch manager. He was not an ordinary man and culture held rather more fascination for him than the watch business. Not content with mastering German and Spanish during his leisure hours, he also studied the natural sciences, in which he had an especial interest, as well as philosophy. In 1843, he married a young and highly cultivated woman who came from a family of musicians.

In 1848, after a Republic was proclaimed in Neuchâtel, James Guillaume's father, himself an enthusiastic republican, returned to Switzerland. He was soon appointed a judge, then prefect of the Val-de-Travers, and from then on concentrated exclusively upon public life. Elected State Councilor in 1853, he returned again and again over a period of thirty-five years.

James Guillaume was four years old then when he arrived in Switzerland. At the age of nine-and-a-half years, he entered grammar school, at the age of sixteen years, he matriculated into what is today called the academy, and stayed there until 1862. A somewhat undisciplined student, he was often in hot water with the school authorities who were royalist and religious. But whereas during the year he had blotted his copybook with his willful attitudes, he made up the lost ground in the examinations, always coming first. The important thing about his school career is not what he did in class—he did not listen to his teachers, having no confidence in them—but that he was determined to learn on his own and what was going on inside his head. He read every volume in his father's library, being enthused by the Ancient world, the French Revolution, philosophy and especially Spinoza and poetry ranging from Homer and Shakespeare through to Goethe and Byron, and was stirred by Rabelais, Molière and Voltaire.

He was also much occupied by the natural sciences, astronomy, geology and entomology. He felt himself to be a poet and musician: he penned thousands of lyric verses, wrote plays and novels, and started work on an opera and an oratorio. Politics was another interest. In Neuchâtel, the strife between republican and royalist was bitter. From that time on, Guillaume was fascinated by the history of the Revolution, and his heroes were drawn from among the Montagnards: Marat (himself a native of Neuchâtel), Robespierre and Saint-Just.

In September 1862, Guillaume traveled up to Zurich; he was to read philosophy, complete his education, and train as a teacher of Classics. He enrolled at the philological and pedagogical institute run by Köchly. Köchly and the aesthetician Vischer were the only teachers he ever had whom the young anti-authoritarian took seriously, and how! In Zurich, Guillaume familiarized himself with the German mind, its poets and philosophers. He also immersed himself in Greek literature. It was in Zurich that he began a translation of novelist Gottfried Keller's *The Folk from Sedlwylla*. Though Swiss, Keller was a superb writer of German. Guillaume was the first person ever to render Keller into French and his book appeared in 1864. As yet, socialism was virtually non-existent as far as he was concerned. When a slightly younger colleague confided that he had an enthusiastic admiration for Proudhon, Guillaume's reply was that Proudhon was a sophist.

In the spring of 1864, Guillaume was obliged to return to Neuchâtel. Much to his regret, he had to abandon his plans to make a study visit to Paris. As the year ended, he sat the examination for a teaching position in a trades school and was posted to the Collège de Locle. (. . .) Bear in mind that he was not yet a socialist and that his life thus far had been spent amid studies and books. Now here he was transplanted into the world of laboring folk. He observed and his heart rebelled and his mind was incensed. He had a passion for truth, which ignited his passion for justice. He was struck by the futility of his classical education, and shrugged his shoulders as his mind wandered to his old plans for the future. Though a poet, he abjured song, as he now gave ear to the cries of living poetry. A historian, he wondered whether the Revolution was over, or indeed whether it had yet begun. To make his life worth the living, he meant to devote it to accessible education for the populace: for a start, he laid on evening classes for apprentices. He carried on reading all sorts of writers: Feuerbach, Darwin, Fourier, Louis Blanc, Proudhon. And, little by little, new ideas took shape inside his head. Erudite and philosophical,

he had hitherto found equality conceivable only as Robespierre and Louis Blanc had conceived of it: since man had a soul, it followed that all souls were equal. But how was equality to be squared with Darwinism, with descent from animals, with the struggle for survival? And what became of morality if there was no free will? He was tortured by such questions for a long time: when, in the end, he bowed to negation of metaphysical free will, it left him calm and with solid ground underfoot.

His thinking lacked focus, however; and the socialist had not yet taken shape in the heart of the teacher and metaphysician. The French cooperative movement spilled over into Switzerland, and it was this that was to ignite the interest of the evening classes. In 1865, a section of the International was set up in La Chaux-de-Fonds: a people which had begun to help itself deserved a helping hand. It only remained for him to discover its living embodiment, commitment and patience, life and death sacrifice: such was the image which Guillaume admired and cherished in Constant Meuron, veteran of the Neuchâtel riots, a revolutionary and republican who had never known anything other than revolution and republic.

From then on, Guillaume was molded; he was eager to act and knew why to act. As to the how, he still dithered a little. He thought of becoming a village schoolmaster so as to get closer to the people; then of becoming a compositor, just as Constant de Meuron had turned his hand to the guilloche craft. He was talked out of both ideas after it was shown him that if he stepped down a class, he would lose virtually all of the useful influence he might wield.

In the autumn of 1866, Constant de Meuron and James Guillaume founded the Le Locle section of the International and Guillaume traveled to the Geneva Congress.

Thus far he had been committed to general education of the workers most often by means of history lectures (which later found their way into print) but also by means of dabbling in organizing cooperative credit and consumer cooperatives. He also played an active part in the political and parliamentary movement, but, like most of the Jura's Internationalists, he soon came to the conclusion that the working class had nothing to gain from that. The International's Congress in Lausanne and the Congress in Geneva of the League of Peace and Freedom, both held in 1867, modified Guillaume's thinking profoundly; in fact it was there that he came into contact with revolutionaries from all over Europe and there that he was converted to universal social revolution.

It was at this stage in his development that he made Bakunin's acquaintance in 1869 at the launching of the francophone *Fédération Romande*. Their outlooks were quite compatible: the dream of a Stateless society where there would be no more government or constitution, where all men might be free and equal was something which had evolved from inside Guillaume and from external experience, before he ever met Bakunin. Yet, for each one of them, making the acquaintance of the other was a real event:

Guillaume wrote—"To Bakunin, I owe this, morally speaking: previously, I was a Stoicist, preoccupied with the moral development of my personality, straining to live my life in accordance with an ideal: under Bakunin's influence, I abjured that personal, individual quest and I concluded that it was better that the straining towards moral perfection should give way to something more humane, more social: renunciation of purely individual action, and a resolve to commit myself to collective action, looking to the collective consciousness of men acting in close concert in order to toil at a common undertaking of propaganda and revolution for the basis and guarantee of morality."

That he threw himself into this, we know. From 1866 to 1878, Guillaume lived only for the International. In 1868 he married Elise Golay. Let us respectfully salute the memory of the valiant young girl who placed her hand in that of the agitator and victim of persecution. From 1869 on, in fact, Guillaume was obliged to give up his teaching post in Le Locle, having clashed with the education authorities over his revolutionary activity. He became a compositor and stuck at that until 1872. To tell his story between 1866 and 1878 is to rehearse the story of the International: that is why his memoirs do just that. He was one of the most enthusiastic orators of that left, formed at the Congress of Basle, and which took shape as the authoritarians and anti-authoritarians parted company at the famous Congress in The Hague. When it comes to the development of Guillaume's ideas, then, setting on one side his personal capabilities, both intellectual and moral, one cannot overstate the importance of the happiness he derived from living and operating among a working class whose spiritual activity was out of the ordinary. It is hard to distinguish what Guillaume gave his comrades from what he received from them. The Jura militants of that day truly were welded into one huge confession: they felt in common, thought in common and operated in common. They had no leaders and no led: only men of greater or lesser resolution and initiative, naturally gifted to a greater or lesser extent. But it would be a vain undertaking to try to establish where the work of one begins and where the work of another ends.

In this way, Guillaume became the intellectual emanation of a collective (. . .) There, in the Jura, the watch-makers and Guillaume together produced ideas which a later generation would rediscover and rename as revolutionary syndicalism.

From 1870 onwards, one can discern a clear opposition in western Switzerland between the two tendencies today described as social democratic and revolutionary syndicalist. The first falling-out came in 1870, at the Congress of the Fédération Romande in La Chaux-de-Fonds: what was to occur on a larger scale in 1912 was seen there in microcosm. Guillaume was then editor of the organ of the “collectivists” (revolutionary syndicalists), *La Solidarité*, which survived until after the Commune and the crisis which then assailed the Jurassians. Later, he was editor of the *Bulletin*, which replaced *La Solidarité*.

After the slaughter of the Commune, the conflict between authoritarian and anti-authoritarian inside the International grew more acute than ever. Marx attacked the anti-authoritarians and especially the Jurassians, at the London Conference. The upshot was that all anti-authoritarian elements were drawn together into even closer association, and hostilities worsened. We know that Bakunin and Guillaume were expelled from the International at the Congress in The Hague in 1872, when Marx and his colleagues reckoned that they had rid themselves of the anti-authoritarians’ leading lights. This is not the place to go into the methods to which Marx resorted in order to encompass this end: the details of that can be found in Guillaume’s *L’Internationale*.<sup>2</sup>

Even prior to The Hague, Guillaume had been to the fore, but, after that Congress, it becomes quite impossible to understand the subsequent development of the International without him.

The opposition facing Marx was a very motley crew; and if that opposition was to be focused and maintained, there was a need for an open mind capable of taking cognizance of lots of diverse personalities, if a concerted effort was to be feasible. Such was the role which Guillaume understood and performed so marvelously. The rarest of gifts in men, that, on the one hand, they should have clear, firm ideas of their own, and, on the other, that they should be able to accommodate themselves to the ideas of men differing from them and give them their due, was what set Guillaume apart. This is why he was so active in the intellectual strife within the International. Indeed, in everything he says and writes, one can sense an outstanding moral presence, equally free of fanaticism and of eclecticism.

(. . .) After 1870, the International was to perish under the pressure of economic and political developments, in spite of all its militants' efforts. The European workers' movement lost its self-consciousness and broke up into national movements. As in the rest of Europe, the spirit of revolt waned in the Jura too. The *Bulletin* edited by Guillaume as the organ of the Jura Federation and, for a few years at any rate, mouthpiece of the anti-authoritarian International, was forced to cease publication in 1878.

## IDEAS ON SOCIAL ORGANIZATION (1876)

### I. FOREWORD

Implementation of the ideas set out in the pages about to be read can only be achieved by means of a revolutionary movement.

It is not in one day that waters rise to the point where they can breach the dam holding them back: the waters rise slowly and by degrees: but once they have reached the desired level, the collapse is sudden, and the dam crumbles in the blinking of an eye.

There are, thus, two phenomena in succession, of which the second is the necessary consequence of the first: first, the slow conversion of ideas, needs and methods of action within the society; then, when the moment comes when this conversion is far enough advanced to be translated entirely into deeds, comes the abrupt and decisive crisis, the revolution, which is merely the culmination of a protracted evolution, the sudden manifestation of a change a long time in the hatching and become inevitable.

It will not occur to any serious-minded person to signal in advance the ways and means whereby the revolution, that indispensable overture to the overhauling of society, must be carried out. A revolution is a natural phenomenon, not the act of one or of several individual wills; it does not operate in accordance with any pre-determined scheme, but comes about through the uncontrollable impulse of necessities which no one may command.

So do not look to us for an outline revolutionary plan of campaign: we leave such childishness to those who still believe in the possibility and efficacy of a personal dictatorship in encompassing the work of human emancipation.

We shall confine ourselves to stating briefly the character which we should like to see the revolution have, if we are to avert its relapsing into the aberrations of the past. That character has to be above all else negative and destructive. It is not a matter of improving certain institutions from the past so as to adapt them to a new society, but rather of suppressing them. Thus, radical suppression of government, the army, the courts, the Church, the school, banking, and everything connected with them. At the same time, there is a positive side to

\* Chapter headings added by D. Guérin



the revolution: it is the workers' assumption of ownership of the instruments of labor and of all capital.

We ought to explain how we envisage this assumption of ownership. First, let us speak of the land and the peasants.

In several countries, but particularly in France, the bourgeois and the clergy have long sought to gull and frighten peasants by telling them that the revolution aimed to take away their lands.

This is a foul lie by the enemies of the people. The Revolution seeks the very opposite: it aims to wrest the land from the bourgeois, the nobles and the clergy, in order to bestow it upon those among the peasants who have none.

If a tract belongs to a peasant, and that peasant works it himself, the revolution will not touch it. On the contrary, it will guarantee him free possession of it, and will release him from all charges weighing upon it. The land that paid a levy to the exchequer, and which was burdened by heavy mortgages, the revolution will emancipate just as it emancipates the worker: no more levies, no more mortgages; the land becomes free again, as does the man.

As for the lands of the bourgeois, the nobles and the clergy and the lands which the rural poor have tilled to this day for their masters, the revolution will wrest these back from those who stole them and restore them to their rightful owners, to those who cultivate them.

What will the revolution do in order to seize the land from the bourgeoisie, the exploiters and give it to the peasants?

To date, whenever the bourgeois made a political revolution, whenever they mounted one of these movements of which the sole upshot was that the people had a change of masters, they were wont to issue decrees and proclaim the wishes of the new government to the country: the decree was posted up in the communes, and the prefect, the courts, the mayor and the gendarmes saw to its implementation.

The authentically popular revolution will not be following that example: it will not draft decrees, will not require the services of the police and of the government administration. Not with decrees, with words written upon paper, does it seek to emancipate the people, but with deeds.

## II. THE PEASANTS

In this chapter we shall be examining the manner in which the peasants must organize themselves in order to extract maximum possible profit from their

instrument of labor, the soil.

In the wake of the Revolution, here is the position in which the peasants will find themselves: some, who already had been small proprietors, retain the parcel of land which they carry on cultivating unaided, along with their family. Others, and these are the greater number, who were tenants of some big landlord, or mere waged laborers of some farmer, will have joined forces to seize a huge tract of land, and should cultivate it in common.

Which of these two arrangements is the better?

It is not a matter here of theorizing, but of taking the facts as our point of departure and establishing what is practicable immediately.

Approaching it from that angle, let us say for a start that the essential thing, the thing for which the Revolution has been made, has been achieved: the land has become the property of him who works it, the peasant no longer toils in order to profit an exploiter who lives off his sweat.

This great gain made, the rest is of secondary importance: the peasants may, should they so desire, divide the land into individual lots and assign one lot to each worker, or they may instead take the land under common ownership and band together to work it. However, although it may be secondary by comparison with the essential fact, the emancipation of the peasant, this matter of the best way to approach cultivation and ownership of the soil is also deserving of attentive scrutiny.

In a region which, prior to the Revolution, would have been peopled by peasant small-holders; where the nature of the soil is not such as to favor large holdings; where agriculture still clings to methods from the days of the patriarchs or where use of machinery is unknown or not widespread—in a region like that, it will be natural that the peasants should cling to the form of property to which they are accustomed. Each of them will carry on working his holding as he did in the past, with this sole difference, that his erstwhile servants (if he had any) will have become his colleagues and will share with him the fruits extracted from the land by their common effort.

Yet, the probability is that after a little while, these peasants who stayed small-holders will see the advantage to themselves of amending their traditional working arrangement. To start with, they will combine in order to set up a communal agency charged with sale or exchange of their produce: then that initial combination will lead them to essay others not along the same lines. They will act in common to acquire various machines designed to facilitate their labors; they will assist one another in performance of certain tasks better

performed when carried out quickly by a large number of hands, and they will doubtless end up imitating their brethren, the workers of industry and those from the large holdings, by deciding to pool their lands and form an agricultural association. But they will cling to the old routine for some years, and even though a whole generation may elapse in certain communes before the peasants resolve to adopt the collective ownership format, that delay will not pose any serious inconvenience; would that not be an end of the rural proletariat, and even within the communes clinging to the past, would there be anything other than a population of free workers living amid plenty and peace?

On the other hand, where big estates, and vast holdings account for a considerable number of workers, whose concerted and combined efforts are necessary for the soil to be worked, collective ownership prevails unaided. We will see the territory of an entire commune, sometimes even of several communes, composing only one agricultural venture, where the methods of large-scale farming will be followed. In these huge, farm-workers' communities, there will be no attempt, as the small peasant strives today upon his little parcel of land, to extract a host of different products from the same soil; we will not see, side by side, within the compass of a single hectare of land, a little stand of wheat, a little stand of potatoes, another of vines, another of forage, another of fruit trees, etc. By virtue of its external configuration, its exposure and its chemical composition, every soil has a special disposition for one variety of produce: thus, there will be no sowing of wheat on land suited to vines, no attempt to wrest potatoes from soil that would be better employed as pasture. Should it have land of just one sort, the agricultural community will engage only in the cultivation of one sort of produce, in the knowledge that cultivation on a large scale brings much more considerable results with less labor, and it will opt to secure the produce it needs through exchange, rather than produce only a small crop of inferior quality from soil not suited to the purpose.

The internal organization of an agricultural community is not necessarily going to be the same everywhere: there may be a rather wide variety according to the preferences of the combined workers; provided that they abide by the principles of equality and justice, they need consider only convenience and usefulness in this connection.

The management of the community may be conferred upon either a single individual, or upon a panel of several members elected by all of the membership: it will even be feasible for various administrative functions to be separated, each one entrusted to a special commission. The length of the

working day will be fixed, not by some general law applicable nation-wide, but by decision of the community itself: the only thing is that, as the community is to be in contact with all of the agricultural workers of the region, it has to be accepted as likely that an agreement will be reached among all the workers upon the adoption of a standard practice on this score. The products of labor belong to the community and from it each member receives, either in kind (subsistence, clothing, etc.) or in exchange currency, remuneration for the labor performed by him. In some associations, such remuneration will be in proportion to hours worked; elsewhere, it will reflect both hours worked and the nature of duties performed; still other arrangements may be tried and put into practice.

This matter of distribution becomes quite a secondary issue, once the question of ownership has been settled and there are no capitalists left to batten upon the labor of the masses. We reckon, however, that the principle to which we should seek to approximate as closely as possible is this: FROM EACH ACCORDING TO ABILITY, TO EACH ACCORDING TO NEEDS. Once—thanks to mechanical methods and the advances of industrial and agricultural science—production has been so increased that it far outstrips the needs of society—and that result will be achieved within a few years of the Revolution—once we are at that point, shall we say, there will be an end of scrupulous measuring of the portion due each worker: each of them will be able to dip into the abundant social reserve, to meet all of his requirements, without fear of ever exhausting it, and the moral sentiment which will have grown up among free and equal workers will prevent abuse and waste. In the interim, it is for each community to determine for itself during the transitional period, the method which it considers most appropriate for distributing produce among its members.

### III. THE INDUSTRIAL WORKERS

As with the peasants, there are several categories to be distinguished among the workers of industry. For a start, there are trades in which tools are virtually insignificant, where the division of labor is non-existent or just barely exists, and where, as a result, the individual worker can produce every bit as well as he would were he to work in concert. The professions of tailor, cobbler, etc., for example, fit that bill.<sup>1</sup>

Then there are the trades requiring cooperation of several workers, recourse to what is described as collective power, and which are generally

followed in a workshop or chapel: the printworkers, cabinet-makers and masons are examples.

Finally, there is a third category of industry, where division of labor is taken much further, where production takes place on a mammoth scale and requires use of mighty machines and access to considerable capital. Examples are weaving, the metal-working plants, collieries, etc.

In the case of workers belonging to the first category, collective labor is not a necessity: and it will doubtless happen that in many cases, the tailor or cobbler may prefer to go on working alone out of his little shop. This is quite a natural thing, especially as in the smaller communes, there may be perhaps only a single worker belonging to each of these trades. Yet, and while not wishing to trespass in the least against the independence of the individual, our reckoning is that, where feasible, working in common is better: in the company of his equals, the worker has the incentive of emulation: he produces more, and plies his trade with more heart: in addition, working in common facilitates more useful monitoring of the whole by the individual, and of the individual by the whole.

As for the workers of the two other categories, obviously combination is forced upon them by the very nature of their toil: and as their instruments of labor are no longer simple tools for personal use only, but rather machines or tools, the use of which requires collaboration of several workers, ownership of that equipment cannot be other than collective.

Every workshop, every factory will therefore represent a workers' association which will remain at liberty to administer itself howsoever it may see fit, as long as the rights of the individual are safeguarded and the principles of equality and justice put into practice. In the preceding chapter, apropos of the agricultural workers' associations or communities, we offered, with regard to management, duration of working hours and distribution of produce, observations which are of course equally applicable to workers in industry, and which, as a result, we need not repeat. We have just said that, wheresoever we have an industry requiring somewhat complicated equipment and working in common, there had to be common ownership of the instruments of labor. But there is something that needs to be determined: is that common property to belong exclusively to the workshop where it operates, or should it instead be the property of the whole body of the workers of this or that industry?

Our view is that the latter of these solutions is the right one. When, for instance, come the Revolution, the printworkers of the city of Rome assume possession of all of that city's printworks, they ought immediately to meet

in general assembly, there to declare that the range of printworks in Rome constitutes the common property of all Rome's printworkers. Then, as soon as possible, they ought to take another step, and show solidarity with the printworkers of the other towns in Italy: the outcome of this solidarity agreement will be the establishment of every printing works in Italy as collective property of the federation of Italian printworkers. Through this communalization, the printworkers right across Italy will be able to go and work in any of the towns in the country, and be assured of finding there the instruments of labor of which they will be entitled to avail.

But whereas, in our view, ownership of the instruments of labor ought to be vested in the corporation, we do not mean to say that, above the teams of workers making up the workshops, there is to be a sort of industrial government empowered to dispose of the instruments of labor as it deems fit. No: the workers of the various workshops do not at all abandon the instruments of labor captured by them to the care of a higher power called the corporation. What they do is this: under certain conditions, they mutually guarantee one another usufruct of the instrument of labor of which they have gained possession, and, by affording their colleagues from other workshops a joint share in that power, they receive, in return, a joint share in the ownership of the instruments of labor in the care of the colleagues with whom they have entered into the solidarity agreement.

#### IV. THE COMMUNE

The commune comprises the body of workers resident in the same locality. Taking as our model the commune, such as it exists in the vast majority of cases, and overlooking the exceptions, let us define the commune—as the local federation of producers' groups.

This local federation or commune is established with a view to furnishing certain services which are not the sole preserve of one corporation or another, but which affect them all, and which, for that very reason, are known as public services.

Communal public services can be summarized under the following headings:

##### A. PUBLIC WORKS<sup>2</sup>

All homes are the property of the commune.

Once the Revolution has been made, everyone carries on, temporarily, living in the same lodgings as before, with the exception of those families

who were consigned to unhealthy or much too inadequate homes, and who are to be lodged immediately, through the good offices of the commune, in vacant apartments of homes previously the property of the rich.

The construction of new homes, containing healthy, spacious and comfortable lodgings, by way of replacement for the squalid hovels in the old popular districts, will be one of the prime tasks of the liberated society. The commune will turn its attention to this immediately, and in so doing, it will not only be able to supply work to the masons', carpenters', locksmiths' and roofers' corporations, etc., but will also readily find useful occupation for that mass of folk who, living a life of idleness prior to the Revolution, have no trade; these can be employed as laborers on the huge building and excavation sites which will then open all over the liberated region, particularly in the towns.

These new lodgings are to be erected at everyone's expense—which means that, in return for labor performed by the various construction trades, the latter will receive from the commune the exchange bonds needed for them to be able largely to subsidize the upkeep of all their members. And since the housing will have been erected at the expense of all, it will have to be accessible to all which is to say that access to it will be free of charge, and that no one will be required to pay a levy or rent in return for the apartment he is to occupy.

Accommodations being free of charge, it seems that serious disagreements may arise from that, because no one will be willing to hold on to poor lodgings and everybody will be squabbling over the best ones. But we think that it would be wrong to think that serious problems would arise on that score, and here is the reason why. First, we ought to say that unwillingness to live in poor accommodations and yearning for better is assuredly a very legitimate desire: and it is precisely that desire, that we shall see arise very forcefully, which affords us an assurance that there will be vigorous steps taken everywhere to satisfy it, through the building of new homes. But until such time as they have been built, we will indeed have to be patient and make do with existing stock: as we have said, the commune will have taken care to meet the most pressing needs by lodging the poorest families in the airy mansions of the rich: and, as for the remainder of the population, we believe that revolutionary enthusiasm will have engendered a feeling of unselfishness and self-denial which will ensure that everyone will be happy to bear, for a little while yet, the discomforts of unsuitable accommodations, and that it will not occur to anyone to take issue with a more fortunate neighbor who may, temporarily, have more agreeable accommodations.

After a short while, thanks to the vigor with which the builders, under the stimu-

lus of widespread demand, will work, accommodations will become so plentiful, that every demand can be met: everybody will merely have to choose, in sure and certain knowledge that accommodation to his taste will be forthcoming.

What we say here is not at all as fanciful or wondrous as it might appear to those whose gaze has never looked beyond the horizon of bourgeois society: instead, it could not be simpler or more natural, so natural that it would be impossible for things to happen otherwise. In effect, with what ought the legions of masons and other construction workers to busy themselves, other than endlessly building comfortable accommodations truly worthy of occupation by the members of a civilized society? Will they need to build for years on end, before every family has its own? No. It will be a short-lived endeavor. And once they have finished, are they to fold their arms? No, of course not: they will carry on working: they will improve and refurbish existing stock, and gradually we will see the dismal districts, the narrow lanes, the unfit housing in our present towns disappearing: in their place will be erected mansions accommodating workers restored to their manhood.

#### B. EXCHANGE

In the new society, there will be no more commerce, in the sense attached to that term today.

Every commune will establish an exchange agency, the workings of which we are about to explain as clearly as possible.

The workers' associations, as well as individual producers (in the sectors where individual production may continue) will deposit their products with the exchange agency. The value of these various products will have been fixed in advance by agreement between the regional trades federations and the various communes, on the basis of information which statistics will afford. The exchange agency will issue producers with exchange vouchers to the value of their products: these exchange vouchers will be acceptable currency throughout the whole territory of the Federation of communes.

Among the products thus deposited with the exchange agency, some are destined for use in the commune itself, and others for export to other communes, and thus for, barter against other products.

The former among these products will be shipped to the different communal bazaars, for the establishment of which temporary recourse will have been had to the most convenient of the shops and stores of the former merchants.



Of these bazaars, some will be given over to foodstuffs, others to clothing, others to household goods, etc.

Products destined for export are to remain in the general stores, until such time as they are despatched to communes which are in need of them.

Here let us pre-empt one objection. We may perhaps be told: by means of exchange vouchers, the exchange agency in every commune issues the producers with a token of the value of their produce, and that before it has any assurance of those same products "moving." Should the products not "move," where would that leave the exchange agency? Might it not risk incurring losses, and is not the sort of operation entrusted to it high risk?

Our answer to that is that every exchange agency is confident in advance that the products it receives will "move," so that there cannot be any problem with its promptly issuing producers with their value in the form of exchange vouchers.

There will be certain categories of workers who will find it materially impossible to bring their products into the exchange agency: construction workers are one such example. But the exchange agency will nonetheless serve them as an intermediary: they will register there the various works they will have completed, the value of which will at all times have been agreed beforehand, and the agency will issue them with exchange vouchers to that value. The same will be true of the various workers employed in the commune's administrative services: their work takes the form, not of manufactured products, but of services rendered; these services will have been costed in advance and the exchange agency will issue them with the value of them.

The exchange agency's function is not just to receive products brought to it by the commune's workers: it liaises with other communes, and brings in products which the commune is forced to secure from outside, either to supplement their diet, or as raw materials, fuel, manufactured products, etc.

Such products drawn from outside are displayed in the communal stores, alongside local produce.

Consumers arrive at these various stores, brandishing their exchange vouchers, which may be split up into coupons of differing values: and there, on the basis of a standard tariff, they obtain all of the consumer items they may need.

So far, the account we have offered of the operations of the exchange agency does not differ in any essential from current commercial practice: in fact, those operations are nothing more than purchase and sale transactions: the agency buys produce from the producers and sells consumers consumer

items. But we reckon that after a while, the exchange agencies' practices may be amended without any drawback, and that gradually a new arrangement will supplant the old: exchange proper will fade away and make room for distribution pure and simple.

Here is what we mean by that:

As long as a product is in short supply, and is found in the communal stores only in quantities smaller than the consumers could cope with, then one is obliged to introduce a measure of rationing into distribution of the item: and the easiest way to enforce rationing on consumers is to sell them the item, which is to say, to make it available only to those who will offer a certain price in return. But once, thanks to the prodigious expansion of production which will inevitably ensue as soon as work is organized along rational lines—once, shall we say, thanks to that expansion, this or that class of product far exceeds what the population could consume, then it will no longer be necessary to ration consumers; the sale transaction, which was a sort of brake upon immoderate consumption, can be dispensed with: the communal agencies will no longer sell products to consumers, but will distribute to them in accordance with the requirements claimed by the latter.

This substitution of distribution for exchange can be effected shortly in respect of all basic necessities: for the initial efforts of the producers' associations will be focused above all upon plentiful production of those items. Soon, other items, which today are still hard to come by and expensive, and are, as a result, regarded as luxury items, can, in their turn, go into large-scale production, and thus enter the realm of distribution, which is to say, of widespread consumption. On the other hand, other items, few in number and of little importance (say, pearls, diamonds, certain metals) can never become commonplace, because nature itself limits availability; but as the high repute they enjoy today will no longer be attributed to them, they will scarcely be sought after, other than by scientific associations eager to deposit them in natural history museums or to use them in the manufacture of certain instruments.

### C. FOODSTUFFS

The provision of foodstuffs is, in a way, only ancillary to the exchange facility. Indeed, what we have just been saying about the exchange agency is applicable to all products, including products specially destined for use as foodstuffs. However, we deem it useful to add, in a special paragraph, some more detailed explanation of arrangements to be made regarding distribution of the chief

food products. Today, the bakery, butchery, wine trade and colonial produce trade are at the mercy of private industry and speculators, who, through all sorts of frauds, seek to enrich themselves at the consumer's expense. The new society will have to remedy this state of affairs immediately, and that remedy will consist of elevating to the status of communal public service anything having to do with distribution of essential foodstuffs.

Let careful note be taken here: this does not mean that the commune commandeers certain branches of production. No: production proper remains in the hands of the producers' associations. But in the case, say, of bread, of what does production comprise? Of nothing except the growing of the wheat. The farmer sows and harvests the grain, and delivers it to the communal exchange: at which point the function of the producer is at an end. Grinding that grain into flour, turning the flour into bread no longer have anything to do with production; it is work comparable with the work performed by the various employees of the communal stores, work designed to make a food product, wheat, accessible to the consumers. The same goes for beef, etc.

So we can see: from the point of view of principle, there cannot be anything more logical than reincorporating the bakery, butchery, wine trade, etc., into the remit of the commune.

As a result, wheat, once it reaches the commune's shops, is to be ground into flour in a communal mill (it goes without saying that several communes may share the same mill): the flour is to be turned into bread in communal bakeries, and the bread will be issued to consumers by the commune. The same will be true in the case of meat: animals will be slaughtered in the communal abattoirs and butchered in the communal butcheries. Wines will be stored in the communal cellars and issued to consumers by specialist staff. Finally, other food crops will, according to whether they are for more or less immediate consumption, be stored in the commune stores or displayed in the markets, where consumers may come in search of them.

It is primarily with regard to this category of products, bread, meat, wine, etc., that every effort will be made to supplant the exchange arrangement with the distribution arrangement as quickly as possible. Once everyone can be assured of plentiful food supply, progress in the sciences, industrial arts and civilization in general will make giant strides.

#### D. STATISTICS

The communal statistical commission will have charge of collating all statistical information affecting the commune.

The various production associations or bodies will keep it constantly up to date with the size of their membership and with changes to their personnel, in such a way that instantaneous information may be available regarding the numbers employed in various branches of production.

Through the good offices of the exchange agency, the statistical commission will secure the most comprehensive data regarding production figures and consumption figures.

It will be through the statistics thus collected from all of the communes in a region, that it will be possible to strike a scientific balance between production and consumption: by working to such information, it will be possible to add to the numbers employed in branches where production was inadequate, and to re-deploy in those where productivity is excessive. It will also be thanks to them that we will be able to determine—granted not absolutely, but with sufficient practical accuracy—the relative worth of various products, which will serve as the basis for the exchange agencies' tariffs.

But that is not all: the statistical commission will still have to perform the tasks currently within the remit of the civil state; it will register births and deaths. We will not say marriages, because, in a free society, the willing union of man and woman will no longer be a formal act, but rather a purely private act in need of no public sanction.

Lots of other things fall within the statistical remit: diseases, meteorological observations, in short, everything which, happening on a regular basis, is susceptible to registration and calculation, and from the statistical analysis of which some information, and occasionally even some scientific law may be deduced.

#### E. HYGIENE

Under the general heading of hygiene we have classed sundry public services the good operation of which is crucial to the maintenance of community health.

Pride of place has to go, of course, to the medical service, which will be made accessible by the commune free of charge to all of its members. Doctors will no longer be industrialists aiming to extract the fattest possible profit

from their sick; they are to be employees of the commune, and paid by it, and their care is to be available to all who ask for it.

But the medical service is only the curative side of that sphere of activity and human knowledge concerned with health: it is not enough to cure illnesses, they should also be prevented. That is the function of hygiene properly so called.

We might go on to cite still other matters which should hold the attention and fall within the remit of the hygiene commission, but what little we have just said must by now be enough to give some idea of the nature of its functions and their importance.

#### F. SECURITY

This service takes in measures necessary in order to guarantee the personal security of every inhabitant of the commune, as well as protect buildings, produce, etc., against any depredation and misadventure.

It is unlikely that there will still be instances of theft and banditry in a society where everyone will be able to live freely upon the fruits of his labor, and will find all of his requirements met in full. Material well-being as well as the intellectual and moral uplift that will result from the truly humane training afforded to all, will in any case make much rarer the sort of crimes that are the products of debauchery, anger, brutality or other vices.

Nevertheless, the taking of precautions in order to preserve the security of persons will not be a useless exercise. This service, which might—had the term not an excessively erroneous implication—be described as the commune's police, will not be entrusted, as it is today, to a specialist corps; every inhabitant will be liable to participate in it, and to take turns in the various security positions which the commune will have established.

Here no doubt, there will be speculation as to the treatment to be meted out in an egalitarian society to someone guilty of murder or other violent offenses. Obviously, a murderer cannot be allowed to go blithely on his way, on the pretext of respecting the rights of the individual and rebutting authority, nor can we wait for some friend of the victim to claim a life for a life. He will have to be denied his freedom and kept in a special establishment until such time as he can be returned safely to society. How ought he to be treated during his captivity? And in accordance with which principles will its duration be determined? These are delicate matters, upon which opinions are still divided. We shall have to trust to trial and error for a resolution

of them: but even now we know that, thanks to the transformation which education will work upon character, crime will become very rare: criminals being now only aberrations, they are to be regarded as sick and demented; the issue of crime, which today occupies so many judges, lawyers and jailers, will diminish in social significance and become a simple entry under the philosophy of medicine.

#### G. THE CHILD IS NO ONE'S PROPERTY<sup>3</sup>

The first point to be considered is the question of the upkeep of children. Today, it is the parents who are charged with seeing to the nourishment and education of their children; this practice is the result of a bad practice which looks upon the child as parental property. The child is no one's property, but belongs to itself; and for the duration of the period when he is still incapable of looking to his own protection, and when, as a result, he may be exposed to exploitation, it is up to society to protect him and guarantee his unhindered development. It is up to society, too, to see to his upkeep: by subsidizing his consumption and the sundry costs incurred by his education, society is simply advancing him money which the child will reimburse through his labor once he becomes a producer.

Thus, it is society, and not parents, that should look to the upkeep of the child. That general principle accepted, we believe that we should refrain from prescribing in any precise and detailed way the form in which it should be implemented; we should be risking a lapse into utopianism; we must give freedom a chance and await whatever experience has to teach. Let us say only that with regard to the child, society is represented by the commune and each commune will have to decide upon the arrangement it deems best with regard to the upkeep of its children: in some places, preference will be given to the common life, elsewhere the children will be left to their mothers, up to a certain age at any rate, etc.

But this is only one facet of the question. The commune feeds, clothes and houses its children: who is to teach them, who will make men and producers of them? And according to which scheme will their education be administered?

To such questions our answer will be: children's education should be rounded, which is to say that it should develop simultaneously all bodily faculties and all intellectual ones, so as to turn the child into a rounded adult. This

education should not be entrusted to a special teacher caste: everyone who has a science, an art or a trade to offer can and should be invited to impart it.

Two levels are to be distinguished in education: one when the child, between the ages of five and twelve years, has not yet attained the age to study the sciences, and when essentially it is a question of developing his physical attributes, and a second level when the child, aged between twelve and sixteen years, should be introduced to the several branches of human knowledge, while also learning the practice of one or several branches of production.

At the first level, as we have said, essentially it will be a matter of developing the child's physical faculties, strengthening the body and exercising the senses. Today, the task of exercising the vision, training the ear or developing manual dexterity is left to chance; by contrast, rational education will, by means of special exercises, set about making the eye and the ear as powerful as they have the potential to be; and, as for the hands, great care will be taken not to accustom children to being right-handed only: an effort will be made to make them as dextrous with the one hand as with the other.

At the same time as the senses are being exercised, and bodily vigor boosted by means of clever gymnastics, a start will be made on the cultivation of the mind, but in a quite spontaneous way: the child's head will be filled automatically by a number of scientific facts.

Personal observation, experience, conversations between children, or with the individuals charged with supervising their instruction will be the only lessons they will receive during this stage.

The school governed arbitrarily by a pedagogue, where the pupils sigh for freedom and outdoor games, is to be done away with. In their assemblies, the children will be completely free: they themselves will organize their games, their get-togethers and will establish a panel to oversee their work and arbitrators to resolve their squabbles, etc. In this way, they will grow used to public life, accountability, mutuality; the teacher whom they will have chosen of their own free will to deliver their education will no longer be a despised tyrant but rather a friend to whom they will listen with pleasure.

At the second level, the children, upon reaching the age of twelve or thirteen years, will, in a methodical way, study, one after another, the chief branches of human learning. Instruction will not be entrusted to the care of men who will make it their sole occupation: the teachers of this or that science will simultaneously be producers who will spend part of their time on manual labor: and every branch will number, not one, but a very great number of men in the commune who are

possessed of a science and disposed to teach it. What is more, joint reading of good textbooks, and the discussions which will follow such reading will do much to reduce the importance currently attached to the personality of the teacher.

At the same time as the child is developing his body and absorbing the sciences, he will serve his apprenticeship as a producer. In first level education, the need to amend or modify play materials will have initiated the child into the handling of the major tools. At the second level, he will visit a variety of workshops, and soon, he will choose one or several specializations for himself. His instructors will be the producers themselves: in every workshop, there will be pupils and a part of every worker's time will be devoted to demonstrating working procedures to them. To this practical instruction, a few theoretical lessons will be added.

In this way, upon reaching the age of sixteen or seventeen years, the young man will have sampled the whole range of human knowledge and will be equipped to proceed alone to further studies, should he so wish; in addition, he will have learned a trade, whereupon he will enter the ranks of the useful producers, in such a way that, through his labor, he is able to repay to society the debt he owes it for his education.

It remains for us to say something about the child's relations with his family.

There are people who contend that a social organization formula that makes the child's upkeep incumbent upon society, is nothing short of "destruction of the family." That is a meaningless expression: as long as it requires the co-operation of two individuals of opposite sex to procreate a new-born child, there will be fathers and mothers, and the natural bond of kinship between the child and those to whom he owes his existence cannot be stricken from social relations.

The character alone of this bond must necessarily undergo change. In ancient times, the father was absolute master of the child, enjoying the right of life or death over it: in modern times, the paternal authority has been limited by certain restrictions, so what could be more natural if, in a free and egalitarian society, what remains of that authority should be completely eclipsed and give way to relations of unalloyed affection?

We are not claiming, of course, that the child should be treated like an adult, that all of its tantrums command respect and that whenever its childish wishes conflict with the rules established by science and common sense, the child should not be taught to yield. On the contrary, we are saying that the child is in need of direction; but in its early years, that direction should not



be vested exclusively in its parents, who are often incompetent and generally abuse the power vested in them. The object of the education received by the child being to equip it as quickly as possible for self-direction by comprehensive development of all its faculties, then obviously no narrowly authoritarian tendency is compatible with such a system of education. But because the relations of father and son will no longer be those of master and slave, but rather those of teacher and pupil, of older friend and younger one, is it conceivable that the mutual affection of parent and child should suffer by that? Is the opposite not the case when we will have an end of these enmities and frictions of which today's family has so many examples to offer, and which are almost always caused by the tyranny the father wields over his children?

So, let no one come along and say that the liberated, regenerated society is going to destroy the family. On the contrary, it will teach the father, mother, and child mutual love, mutual regard and respect for their mutual rights: and at the same time, above and beyond the family affections which encompass only a narrow circle and which sour if they remain exclusive, it will infuse hearts with a loftier, nobler love, love for the whole family of man.

### A FEDERATIVE NETWORK

Departing now from the narrow ground of the commune or local federation of producers' groups, let us take a look at social organization as it is complemented, on the one hand, by establishment of regional corporative federations embracing all workers' groups belonging to the same branch of production: and, on the other, by establishment of a Federation of communes.

(. . .) We have already indicated briefly what a corporative federation is. Within the bosom of the present society, there are organizations bringing all of the workers in a trade within the compass of the same association: the federation of typographical workers is one example. But these organizations are only a very flawed foretaste of what the corporative federation should be in the society to come. The latter will be made up of all producer groups belonging to the same branch of labor; they band together, not, now, to protect their wages against the rapaciousness of the bosses, but primarily in order to assure one another of use of the instruments of labor in the possession of each of their groups and which, by mutual agreement, are to become collective property of the corporative federation as a whole; furthermore, by federating one with another, the groups are empowered to exercise a constant watching brief on production, and, as a result, to add to or subtract from the intensity

thereof, in reflection of the needs manifested by society as a whole.

Establishment of the corporative federation will be effected extremely simply. In the wake of the Revolution, the producer groups belonging to the same industry will be alive to the need to send delegates to one another, from one town to another, for fact-finding purposes and in order to reach accommodations. Out of such partial conferencing will emerge the summoning of a general congress of the corporation's delegates to some central venue. That congress will lay the groundwork of the federative contract, which will then be put to all of the groups of the corporation for approval. A standing bureau, elected by the corporative congress and answerable to it, will be designed to act as intermediary between the groups making up the federation, as well as between the federation per se and other corporative federations.

Once all branches of production, including those affecting agricultural production, are organized along such lines, a vast federative web, taking in every producer and thus also every consumer, will cover the country, and statistics regarding production and consumption, centralized by the bureau of the various corporative federations, will make it possible to determine in a rational way the number of hours in the normal working day, the cost price of products and their exchange value, as well as how many of these products have to be made in order to meet consumer demands.

People accustomed to the empty bombast of certain alleged democrats may perhaps ask whether the workers' groups should not be called upon to take a direct hand, through a vote by all members of the corporative federation, in the settlement of these various details: And when we respond negatively, they will protest at what they will term the authority of the bureau, empowered to decide matters of such gravity for themselves and to take decisions of the highest importance. Our response will be that the task with which the standing bureau of each federation will have been charged has nothing to do with the wielding of any authority: in fact, it is simply a matter of collecting and collating information supplied by the producer groups: and once this information has been gathered and made public, of deducing the necessary implications it holds for working hours, the cost price of products, etc. That is a simple arithmetical calculation, which cannot be done in two different ways or produce two different results: there is but one result possible from it; that result can be checked out by every person for himself, because everyone will have the data before him, and the standing bureau is simply charged with registering it and publishing it for all to see. Even today, the postal administration, say, performs a service

rather analogous with the one to be entrusted to the corporative federations' bureau, and it would not occur to anyone to complain of abuse of authority just because the post office should decide, without reference to universal suffrage, how letters are to be classified and grouped into packets for delivery to their destination as speedily and economically as practicable.

Let us add that the producer groups making up a federation will take a hand in the bureau's doings in a manner a lot more effective and direct than mere voting: in fact, it is they who will supply the information, all the statistical data that the bureau merely collates, so that the bureau is only the passive go-between by means of which groups communicate with one another and publicly register the results of their own activities.

The vote is a suitable means of settling matters that cannot be resolved on a scientific basis, and which ought to be left to the whim of the balance of numbers, but in matters liable to precise scientific resolution, there is no need for a vote; truth is not balloted, it is simply registered and then overwhelms everybody by virtue of its obviousness.

But thus far we have shown only one of the facets of extra-communal organization: and alongside the corporative federations the Federation of communes should be established.

### NO SOCIALISM IN ONE COUNTRY

The Revolution cannot be confined to a single country; on pain of death, it is obliged to subsume into its movement, if not the whole world, then at least a considerable portion of the civilized countries. Indeed, today no country can be sufficient unto itself: international relations are a necessity of production and consumption, and they could not be severed. Should the neighboring States around a country in revolution manage to impose an impregnable blockade, the Revolution, being isolated, would be doomed to perish. Thus, as we are speculating on the hypothesis of the Revolution succeeding in a given country, we must suppose that most of the countries of Europe will have made their revolution at the same time.

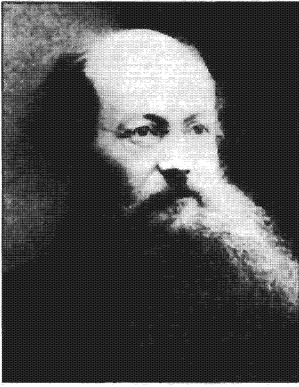
It is not essential that the new social organization installed by the Revolution, in every land where the proletariat will have overthrown the rule of the bourgeoisie, should be the same in every particular. Given the differences of opinion which have thus far surfaced between the socialists of the Germanic countries (Germany, England) and those of the Latin and Slav countries (Italy, Spain, France, Russia), the likelihood is that the social organization adopted

by the German revolutionaries, say, will differ on more than one count from the organization espoused by the Italian or French revolutionaries. But such differences have no bearing upon international relations; the basic principles being the same in both cases, relations of friendship and solidarity cannot but be established between the emancipated peoples of the various countries.

It goes without saying that the artificial frontiers created by existing governments will collapse before the Revolution. Communes will band together freely according to their economic interests, linguistic affinities and geographical situation. And in certain countries, like Italy or Spain, which are too huge to form only one agglomeration of communes, and which nature herself has split into several distinct regions, there will doubtless be, not one, but several Federations of communes set up. Which will not signify a breach in unity, a reversion to the old atomization into small, hostile, isolated political States; their interests will be all of a piece and they will enter into a pact of unity with one another, and this voluntary union, rooted in genuine usefulness, in a community of aims and needs, in ongoing exchange of good offices, will be tight and solid in a way quite different from the sham unity of political centralization established by violence and with no *raison d'être* other than exploitation of the country for the benefit of one privileged class.

The compact of unity will not be established only between the Federations of communes within the same country: the old political frontiers having become redundant, all of the Federations of communes, by and by, will enter into this fraternal alliance, and, once the principles of the Revolution have carried all before them in the whole of Europe, the great dream of the fraternity of peoples, achievable only by Social Revolution, will have become a reality.





**PETER  
KROPOTKIN**  
(1842–1921)



## PETER KROPOTKIN

His youth, education, days as an officer and as an explorer in Siberia, his life of science and toil in Petrograd, in short, his life from (December 9) 1842 up until the end of the 1860s is all there in his *Memoirs*.<sup>1</sup> From very early on, he was a tireless worker and researcher, and even in an oppressed and backward Russia, he found things to occupy and utterly enthral him. He got wind of the current of opposition which, under a thousand guises and countless nuances, was the constant companion of omnipotent absolutism, fighting it and monitoring it unremittingly, and never setting aside its weapons; he quickly came to know real science and to become a passionate lover thereof his whole life long, and he was also impressed by what might be termed the grandeur, richness and promise of Siberian Russia. Those were propitious times, for, between the ages of fifteen and twenty five, he witnessed the great liberal and radical awakening that came in the wake of Nicholas I's death; he saw natural science attain its apogee through the great works of Darwin and other contemporaries, and his travels in Siberia greatly widened his horizons.

(. . .) We know that at one point he turned his back on a life of science, just as he had earlier turned away from a military career and a life at court—and committed himself with that same intensity which marked his every action, to the cause of the people. He entered the Russian revolutionary movement and there, from the outset, belonged to the select group of authentic revolutionaries.

(. . .) In the spring of 1872, he traveled to Switzerland, where, in Zurich, he first immersed himself in mountainous socialist literature, the sort of stuff which never made it into Russia. On account of the fact that his brother who was already in Switzerland held to the very moderate views (especially in practical matters) of Lavrov and other like-minded connections, he was forewarned against Bakunin, whom he did not go to see; then again, on reaching Neuchâtel and the home of James Guillaume, the latter had been forewarned about Kropotkin, so that there was no rapprochement with the anarchists towards whom he could feel himself being drawn, nevertheless.

When he asked Guillaume whether he ought to stay in Switzerland, the latter advised him to return to Russia. He did in fact go back, and threw himself



more whole-heartedly than ever into revolutionary work. He paid the price for this: dressed as a workman, he would give talks to secret workers' groups and this resulted in his being arrested. Whereupon his less public activity was uncovered, his organizing work and correspondence, as well as the boldly revolutionary scheme he had drawn up for reorganizing Russian propaganda in all of its forms. He had another scheme too, to travel into Southern Russia where the circles were rather more radical, and to broach the idea of agrarian terror. He correctly saw that the moderate party was surreptitiously frustrating his efforts. In the end, he was wrested away from this frantic activity (for his propaganda activity always went hand in hand with science and his work) by his arrest and after fleeing (. . .) he arrived in Scotland in 1876 and made his way to London.

But what was he going to do in London, where the socialist movement had been well and truly extinct for some years by that time? After a short trip to Switzerland, he made another trip, there to remain this time. Finally, he realized his dream of 1872, to live in the Swiss Jura, where the intelligent, independent workers had done so much to sustain and spread anti-authoritarian ideas in the International. Certain events had brought him closer to James Guillaume, although their differing characters never allowed them to share any real intimacy and friendship. But James Guillaume was by then deferring somewhat to more restless though less consistent minds like Paul Brousse,<sup>2</sup> who was an anarchist in those days, and with whom Kropotkin got along more easily.

In the course of this work on behalf of the International, he worked for the Jura and for Spain, yet still found the time to draft their first anarchist program for German workers in Switzerland. Similarly, Paul Brousse drafted and wrote (for translation) for the first German anarchist newspaper of that time which was published out of Berne. And in Guillaume's absence, he even edited the *Bulletin jurassien* and passed the first article calling for "propaganda by deed" (in as many words, too), an article penned by Paul Brousse.

A congress happened to take him to Belgium, to Verviers (in September 1877), but, in order to avoid harassment, he traveled to Paris, there to embark upon his research into the French Revolution. He made a trip to Spain (summer 1878), to Barcelona and Madrid, and managed to smooth over a disagreement that divided Morago's terrorist group (Madrid) and Viñas's revolutionary syndicalist group (Barcelona): in point of fact, both these groups were anarchist.

Paris at that time was none too hospitable towards anarchist Internationalists and he soon moved to Geneva.

It was there that, at the beginning of 1879, his favorite offspring, *Le Révolté*, was launched (on February 22) (. . .) There it was that he published that long series of articles, which might have appeared disconnected, in that they mirrored developments of the time, but which lent themselves so well to being collected into pamphlets published and translated times beyond number, before publication in book form as *Paroles d'un Révolté*, because the entire series had been thought out and written in accordance with a pre-arranged scheme.

For a time to follow, Kropotkin's life was an eventful one. He was deported from Switzerland over an article which had been written by Cafiero. He spent another very bleak period in London, where he also attended the London International Revolutionary Congress (in 1881). He was reduced to living in Thonon, in Savoy, unable to re-enter Switzerland and increasingly threatened on the French side where the vigor of anarchist propaganda in Paris and Lyon had triggered an urge to strike at its very heart through its most committed propagandists. Kropotkin too was caught up in this dragnet and was arraigned in the despicable trial in Lyon—the anarchists' declaration, drafted by him, is worth re-reading—and Clairvaux prison and, I think, the very same cell as the aged Blanqui, became his last fixed abode in France. Freed after several years under an amnesty at the start of 1886, he was able to stay only a short time in Paris, and for the next thirty years, he was to dwell in England, only to return to Russia in the spring of 1917, under Kerensky.

In England, where he spent six years in Harrow-on-the-Hill, a considerable distance from London, he moved house (to Bromley, Kent) to get a little closer and moved again before moving away once and for all (to Brighton), leading a studious life of tedious work, a life without apparent incident, but he managed to find a number of outlets for his activity, which are worth looking at.

In terms of propaganda, there was still *La Révolté*—in which the series of informative articles collected under the title *The Conquest of Bread* was published: later, there was *Les Temps nouveaux*. Soon there would be the English monthly *Freedom*, from October 1886 on.

But there was another route by which he could develop his ideas. For years he had been writing about Russia, her revolution and her prisons, etc., in the Newcastle *Chronicle*, penning letters to the *Times* and highly fastidious articles in *Nineteenth Century*. Thus, the latter great review also carried articles setting out anarchist ideas. *The Scientific Basis of Anarchy* and *Anarchy to Come*

saw publication there in 1887. Then, from 1888 to 1890, Kropotkin turned his attention to economic issues in articles which were to make up *Fields, Factories and Workshops* (Paris, 1910). Thereafter, he identified anarchy in nature—not the savage anarchy of the struggle for survival, but the altruistic anarchy and solidarity of mutual aid (articles from 1890 to 1896 and 1910), out of which came his book *Mutual Aid* (Paris, 1906). He concluded this topic with a few articles challenging Darwinism (1910 and 1912), before tackling his last great theme, ethics, in articles during 1904 and 1905, of the follow-up to which I know nothing,<sup>3</sup> if indeed it has appeared. I do know however that this very daunting work was interrupted by his research into the French Revolution of 1793 and the Russian Revolution of 1905, as well as by his frequent illnesses, countless other ventures and, above all, by the restrictions of all sorts imposed upon him by a weakness that increased with his years.

Two trips to the United States and Canada gave a boost to his memoir, *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* (1902), written for an American magazine, and to published lectures like *Ideals and Realities in Russian Literature* (1905).

The Russian Revolution of 1905 gave final shape to his studies of the French Revolution, which had already been condensed in smaller publications and in the hefty tome *The Great French Revolution* published, at last, in 1909.

His historical works, scientific works and marxist polemics focused his interest upon the beginnings of socialism and the history of anarchist ideas. A tremendous entry in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* and the book *Modern Science and Anarchy* (Paris, 1913) testify to that.

## THE ANARCHIST IDEA<sup>1</sup>

1. Scrupulous examination of the current economic and political situation, leads us to the conviction that Europe is striding rapidly in the direction of a revolution: that this revolution will not be confined to just one country, but, erupting everywhere, will spread, as in 1848, to neighboring countries and will inflame more or less the whole of Europe: and that, while assuming different characters among different peoples, according to the historical stage they are passing through and according to local circumstances, it will nevertheless have this overall distinguishing feature: it will not be merely political, but will also and above all be an economic revolution.

2. The economic revolution may assume a variety of characters and differing degrees of intensity among different peoples. But the important thing is, regardless of what its character may be, that the socialists of every country, capitalizing upon the disorganization of powers in time of revolution, should bend their every effort to achieving, on a large scale, a change in the property system, through plain and simple expropriation of the present owners of large landed estates, the instruments of labor and all sorts of capital, and through all such capital being taken over by the cultivators, the workers' organizations and the agricultural and municipal communes.

The act of expropriation should be carried out by the workers of town and countryside themselves. It would be a profound error to wait for any government to do it: for history teaches us that governments, even when they have emerged from the revolution, have never done anything other than give legal sanction to accomplished revolutionary facts, and indeed, that the people had to wage a protracted battle with these governments in order to wrest from them assent for the revolutionary measures for which it had been calling loudly over periods of restlessness. Moreover, a measure of that importance would remain a dead letter unless it had been freely implemented in every commune, in every stretch of territory, by the interested parties themselves.

3. The expropriation of social capital and the taking of it into common ownership should be carried out wheresoever such action is feasible and as soon as the opportunity presents itself, without inquiring into whether the whole or most of Europe or of such and such a country is ready to embrace the ideas of collectivism. The drawbacks which would ensue from partial realization of collectivism will largely be made up for by its advantages. The deed

having been done in a given locality, that itself will become the most potent method for propagating the idea and the mightiest engine for mobilization of the localities where the worker, little disposed to embrace these collectivist notions, might yet hesitate to proceed with expropriation. Moreover, it would be tedious to go into a discussion of whether it may or may not be necessary to wait until the ideas of collectivism have been accepted by the majority before putting them into practice, for it is certain, that unless they set themselves up as a government which would shoot the people down, the doctrinarian socialists will not prevent expropriation from proceeding in those localities most advanced in terms of their socialist education, even should the great mass of the country remain in a condition of inertia.

4. Once expropriation has been carried through, and the capitalists' power to resist has been smashed, then, after a period of groping, there will necessarily arise a new system of organizing production and exchange, on a restricted scale to begin with, but later more comprehensive, and that system will be a lot more attuned to popular aspirations and the requirements of coexistence and mutual relations than any theory, however splendid, devised either by the thinking and imagination of reformers or by the deliberations of some legislative body. However, we believe that we are not mistaken in predicting right now that, in francophone Switzerland at least, the foundations of the new organization will be the free federation of producers' groups and the free federation of Communes and groups of independent Communes.

5. Should the revolution set to work immediately upon expropriation, it will derive from it an inner strength that will enable it to withstand both the attempts to form a government that would seek to strangle it and any onslaughts which might emanate from without. But, even should the revolution have been beaten, or if expropriation has failed to spread to the extent we anticipated, a popular uprising launched on that basis would do humanity the immense service of accelerating the advent of the social revolution. While contributing (like all revolutions) a measure of immediate improvement to the lot of the proletariat, even if defeated, it would render impossible thereafter any other uprising that would not have expropriation of the few for the benefit of the many as its point of departure. A further explosion would thus of necessity lead to an end of capitalist exploitation, and, with the departure of that, to economic and political equality, work for all, solidarity and liberty.

6. If the revolution is to bear all of the fruits which the proletariat is entitled to expect of it after centuries of unceasing struggles and holocausts of

victims sacrificed, then the period of revolution must last for several years, so that the propagation of new ideas should not be confined solely to the great intellectual centers, but should reach even into the most isolated hamlets in order to shake the inertia which is necessarily evident in the masses prior to their turning towards a fundamental reorganization of society, so that, at long last, the new ideas should have the time to be developed further, as the true advancement of humanity requires.

So, far from seeking to establish immediately and in place of the authorities overthrown, some new authority which, having been born in the initial stages of the revolution, when the new thinking is only just beginning to stir, would of necessity be essentially conservative: far from aiming to create an authority which, representing phase one of the revolution, could not help but hobble the free development of subsequent phases, and which would inevitably tend to immobilize and circumscribe, socialists have a duty to thwart the creation of any new government and instead to arouse those popular forces destructive of the old regime and at the same time generative of the new organization of society.

7. This being our conception of the coming revolution and the goal we intend to achieve, it follows that during the preparatory period through which we are passing today, we ought to concentrate all of our efforts upon widespread propaganda on behalf of the idea of expropriation and of collectivism. Instead of consigning these principles to some corner of our minds, and proceeding to talk to the people of nothing but the business of so-called politics (which would amount to an attempt to lay the mental groundwork for an eminently political revolution, palpably neglecting its economic aspect, the only one capable of investing it with sufficient strength), we ought instead, always and in every circumstance, to spell out those principles at length, demonstrating their practical implications and proving their necessity; we ought to make every effort to prepare the popular mind to embrace these ideas, which, odd though they may seem at first glance to those filled with politico-economic prejudices, readily become incontrovertible truth for those who discuss them in good faith, a truth which science is today beginning to grasp, a truth often acknowledged by the very people who publicly resist it.

Working along these lines, without letting ourselves be dazzled by the momentary and often contrived success of the political parties, we work at infusing the masses with our ideas: all undetectably, we are effecting a shift of opinion in the direction of our ideas; we bring together the men we need

to propagate these ideas on a wide scale during the period of effervescence towards which we are striding; and we know from the experience of human history that it is precisely in periods of effervescence, when dissemination and transformation of ideas takes place at a rate unknown in periods of transition, that the principles of expropriation and collectivism can spread like wildfire and inspire the broad masses of the people to put these principles into practice.

8. If the revolutionary period is to last for a number of years and if it is to bear fruit, it is absolutely necessary that the coming revolution should not be restricted to the larger towns only: the uprising aimed at expropriation must take place primarily in the countryside. So there is a need to set about preparing the ground in the countryside right now and not rely upon the revolutionary *élan* which might, in a period of effervescence, radiate from the towns into the villages.

As a temporary stratagem and as an experiment, the Jura sections ought to make it their duty to undertake, in villages adjacent to the towns, ongoing propaganda in favor of expropriation of the land by the rural communes. As there have been experiments along these lines already, we are in a position to state that they have borne more fruit than had been expected at the outset. Trial and error will show the best way to proceed, and how this propaganda might be extended. Difficult though things might be to begin with, a start should be made without further delay. Furthermore, we could not recommend too highly that a study be made of the peasants' uprisings in Italy and the revolutionary propaganda currently being conducted in the villages of Spain.

9. While urging that our efforts be concentrated upon widespread propagation, in all its forms, of the ideas of expropriation, we do not mean to say that we should miss opportunities to agitate on all matters pertinent to the life of the country and going on around us. On the contrary: we think that socialists ought to avail of every opportunity that arises to launch economic agitation, and it is our conviction that every agitation launched upon the terrain of the struggle of the exploited against the exploiters, however narrowly circumscribed its initial theater of action, the aims it pursues and the ideas it advances, can prove ground for socialist agitation, unless it falls into the clutches of ambitious schemers.

So it would be a good idea for sections not to scorn the various issues agitating the workers of the district for the sole reason that these matters have but very little to do with socialism. On the contrary, by taking a hand in

all these issues, and by capitalizing upon the interest which these arouse, we might work to broaden the scope of the agitation, and, while sticking to the practicalities of the matter, seek to broaden theoretical notions and awaken the spirit of independence and revolt in those taking an interest in the resultant agitation. Such participation is all the more necessary in that it offers the only way of combating the wrong-headed opinions peddled on every such occasion by the bourgeoisie, and of preventing the workers' agitation from going down a road absolutely contrary to the workers' interests, as a result of activities carried out by ambitious persons.

10. As anarchists' efforts ought to be directed at undermining the State in all its parts, we cannot see the usefulness of our setting ourselves up as a political party which would strive to ensconce itself in the ramifications of government, in the hope of one day claiming its share of the inheritance of the present governmentalism. We believe that the best way of shaking this edifice would be to escalate the economic struggle. But we believe too that it would also be a good idea to have an eye out at all times for the acts and feats of those who govern us, to study diligently those political issues which interest the laboring people, and to let slip no favorable opportunity to point up the incompetence, hypocrisy and class self-interest of existing governments, as well as the vicious and noxious character of governmental rule. Let us wage war on the State and its representatives, not so as to take a seat in its deliberations, as the political parties do, but in order to undermine the force they oppose to the worker's aspirations and in order to hasten their inevitable downfall.

11. Convinced that the mode of combination that will become a reality in the near future (in francophone Swiss territory at any rate) will be the Commune, independent of the State, abolishing the representative system from within its ranks and effecting expropriation of raw materials, instruments of labor and capital for the benefit of the community, we hold that there is a need for serious study of the collectivist Commune and discussion of the part which anarchists may play in the struggle currently incubating on the political and economic terrain, between the Communes and the State.



## THE 1880 CONGRESS OF THE JURA FEDERATION

The next year, 1880, saw a congress of the Jura Federation meet in Chaux-de-Fonds, in the Swiss Jura. Ever since the split in the workers' International at The Hague in 1872, the Jura Federation had acted as the spokesman for the "anti-authoritarian" libertarian socialism inherited from Mikhail Bakunin. Below the reader will find:

- 1) Lengthy excerpts from the minutes of the congress carried in the October 17, 1880 edition of the newspaper *Le Révolté*, and, in particular, Kropotkin's contribution.
- 2) Extracts from the memorandum (or "program") submitted to the congress by the Workers' Federation of the Courtelary District.<sup>1</sup>
- 3) Finally, the report submitted to the congress by the Italian Carlo Cafiero, on the subject of "Anarchy and Communism."

These texts allow us to distinguish two divergent schools of thought within the Jura Federation: one, represented by Kropotkin, Cafiero, etc., openly professed libertarian communism. The other, more cautious and less ambitious, whose spokesman was Adhémar Schwitzguébel, still clung to use of the term collectivism.<sup>2</sup>

What was the difference between these two tendencies?

In theory, collectivism merely wanted to see the means of production taken into common ownership and it left the workers' associations free to determine how the products of labor might be distributed, a faculty which in fact boiled down to remuneration for labor being a function of work performed. Libertarian communism, on the other hand, aimed to take into common ownership not just the means of production, but also consumer goods, and to distribute products thereafter in abundant supply on the market, free of charge, in accordance with the formula: "To each according to his needs." This was what James Guillaume had suggested back in 1874. (See above)

The objections to communism of the supporters of collectivism were primarily on grounds of opportunity. As Adhémar Schwitzguébel, who professed

to be an anarchist-communist himself, said: "Thus far, the communist idea has been misunderstood among the populace where there is still a belief that it is a system devoid of all liberty."

Objections from the supporters of libertarian communism inimical to the word collectivism also derived from the fact that in 1880, the latter term had lost the sense which had commonly been given to it in the First International. Reformists no longer understood collectivism to mean taking of the instruments of labor into common ownership in a revolutionary and general way, but rather an evolutionary, parliamentary socialism.

### MINUTES OF THE JURA FEDERATION CONGRESS (1880) (EXTRACTS)<sup>1</sup>

(. . .) The congress was held in Chaux-de-Fonds on October 9 and 10, 1880.

Comrade Kropotkin reports, having attended a meeting of the Geneva section, that the latter held that the program was much too long to be made effective use of in popular propaganda.

Moving on then to discussion of the program, he says that for some time past socialism has been in fashion, and even where one might least expect to hear it, people have been heard to say: "We too are socialists!" We also have socialists of every hue, red and pink, blue and green, white and even black. All who acknowledge the necessity of some modification to the relations between capitalists and workers, however anodyne, have staked a claim to the description socialists.

We need not concern ourselves about those who claim to be socialists with the specific object of hobbling socialism's development. Let us leave those to the side for one moment. But if we were to examine all the other schools of socialism—reformist, statist, democratic, etc.—and if we were to compare them against anarchist socialism, we very readily perceive one idea constituting a clearly defined difference between these various schools and us. Namely, our conception of the work which the revolution is due to carry out.

Among all the evolutionary socialists and even among some revolutionary socialists, there is one common notion. They do not believe in an imminent great revolution, or indeed, if they do, they are persuaded that that revolution is not going to be a socialist revolution: "Come the next upheaval," they say, "the people is not going to be ready yet to carry out a serious revolution in the system of ownership: that is why the point is to first carry out a political

revolution that will offer every opportunity for preparing minds for a social revolution." If they are to be believed, it would therefore only come when our great-grandchildren are graybeards. Examine the writings of socialists of every persuasion and you will find that at bottom, they are dominated by this idea, regardless of the language they may use to disguise the fact.

We could not protest too loudly against this idea, whereby faint-hearts strive in advance to set a term to the implications of the coming revolution. It is our firm conviction that expropriation will be the goal and driving force behind the next European conflict, and we ought to bend our every effort to ensuring that that expropriation becomes an accomplished fact following the battle which we can all sense drawing near. It is expropriation, carried out by the people and followed by the tremendous shift in thinking which it will bring in its wake, which alone can invest the coming revolution with the requisite power to overcome the obstacles being erected in its path. It is expropriation that will have to serve as the point of departure for a new era of social development. And even should the efforts of our enemies, abetted in this by men who would even now tell the people "So far and no further!" succeed in defeating us, the very fact that we had made the attempt to take the whole of social capital and the products of labor into common ownership, albeit only within a restricted space, would be a salutary example presaging the ultimate success of the following revolution.

Expropriation, carried out by the people, once an uprising has thrown the power of the bourgeoisie into disarray: immediate seizure by producer groups of the whole of social capital: that is how we shall act come the next revolution, and it is primarily upon this point that we take issue with those schools of socialism which, at bottom, having no confidence in the people, seek to make the forthcoming revolution a mere change in the form of government, some of them, under the pretext of establishing the freedoms necessary for the socialist idea to prosper, and others of them, under the pretext of carrying out expropriation gradually, in piecemeal fashion, once they, the governments, judge that the right time has arrived.

If the Federation embraces the idea put forward by the Geneva section, that a summary of our program be published, might it not be a good idea for that summary to make more plain and explicit this essential difference between *our party* and the evolutionary schools?

Comrade Kropotkin further observes that use of the word collectivism in the program might be open to misinterpretation.

When that term was introduced into the International, it was invested with a meaning quite different from the one suggested by it today. With due consideration for the prejudices then existing in France against communism, which was understood to signify a monastic order walled up in a convent or barracks, the International opted for the word collectivism.

It also said that it wanted social capital to be taken into common ownership and groups to be completely free to introduce whatever system for distributing the products of labor they may regard as best suited to the circumstances. Today, an attempt is underway to imply that the word collectivism means something else: according to evolutionists, it means, not the taking of the instruments of labor into common ownership, but rather individual enjoyment of products. Others go further still and seek to restrict even the social capital which would have to be taken into common ownership: supposedly, this would extend only to land, mines, forests and means of communication. Furthermore, collectivists of this stripe would be ready to defend it at gunpoint against those who would presume to lay hands upon it in order to turn it into collective property.

It is high time that there was an end of this misunderstanding, and there is only one way of achieving that: by jettisoning the word collectivism and declaring openly that we are communists, pointing up the difference existing between our conception of anarchist communism and the one peddled by the mystical and authoritarian schools of communism prior to 1848. That would be a better expression of our ideal, and our propaganda could not but be strengthened by it. It will benefit from the fillip afforded by the idea of communism, a boost that the idea of collectivism will never afford.

Comrade Elisée Reclus<sup>2</sup> supports comrade Kropotkin's remarks. In spite of all the explanations offered by the non-communist collectivists, he finds it impossible to comprehend how their organization of society would work. If the large plant, which is to say the land, and if all the secondary factories upon it are taken into common ownership, if work is performed by everyone, and the quantity and quality of products are due precisely to concerted endeavor, to whom might these legitimately belong, other than to the united body of workers? What rule is to serve as a guide for the distributive bookkeepers and help them determine the portion of the manna generated by the toil of mankind as a whole, preceding generations included, which is due to each person? Such distribution, effected at random or whimsically, cannot have

any outcome other than the sowing of the seed of disagreements, strife and death in the collectivist society.

What is true and what is just is that products owed to the labor of all should be the property of all, and each person should be free to avail of his portion in order to consume it as he sees fit, with no regulation other than that emanating from the solidarity of interests and the mutual respect between associates. Moreover, it would be absurd to fear shortage, since the enormous loss of products caused by the current wastage of trade and private appropriation would have ceased at last. Fear is always a bad counselor. Let us have no fear about describing ourselves as communists, as in fact we are. Popular opinion has a logic to it: the collectivists have done well and universal common sense has grasped that appropriation of the land and of factories necessarily leads on to common ownership of products.

Comrade Reclus would also like to see congress express reservations regarding the paragraph in the Courtelary memorandum which relates to the Commune. No doubt local conditions are a very significant factor, and most of the groups will be established within the confines of existing communes: but it should be borne in mind that combination of revolutionary forces proceeds freely, outside of any communal organization. Up to now, communes have been only tiny States, and even the Paris Commune, insurrectionary below, was governmental at the top and retained the whole hierarchy of officials and employees. We are no more communalists than we are Statists: we are anarchists, remember, and we offer the best proof of that in our gathering today. We truly do hope to have a hand, however slight, in the revolutionary endeavor, and, whether we hail from Le Vallon, Geneva, Lausanne, France or Naples, we feel no attachment to any particular commune, nor to any State. The International does not recognize these borders.

Comrade Schwitzguébel declares himself an anarchist communist: if he accepts the program as just presented, which is to say, with collectivist ideas predominating, this is because he sees the populace as being rather more hostile than favorable to these ideas and because the drafting of a candidly communist program could only exacerbate that hostility; he remarks that there is a matter of appropriateness, so to speak, which needs to be investigated carefully. Thus far, the communist idea has been poorly understood among the populace where it is still believed to be a system devoid of all liberty. By his reckoning, there is a great preparatory work to be done to induce the populace to embrace communism.

Comrade Herzig, delegate from Geneva, finds that the program just outlined ascribes too many powers to the Commune and appears to want to replace the authority of the State, to which we stand opposed, by a new formula, that of the Commune—which would amount only to the decentralization of authority. Whereas it is true, as the program states, that the coming popular revolutions have their seat in the Commune and have the autonomy of the latter as their objective, we should not, for that reason, look to this new conception of Revolution for our way ahead, nor seek to get the upper hand in events: our duty is to see that new ideas utterly contrary to any principle of authority blossom in men's minds.

The program is open to the interpretation that political struggles should be conducted on a communal footing. We contest this view even when it might be proven that such struggles would help bring down the State, for, in order to launch them, we should necessarily have to walk the path of legality, which would be contrary to our principles and would imply their abandonment.

Comrade Cafiero, speaking of the revolutionary program, ventured to speak about communism (. . .) <sup>3</sup>

Comrade Pindy observes that not only can the idea of communism earn acceptance by the French worker, but communist sentiment is innate in him: if he styles himself at the moment a collectivist, this is on account of ridiculous stories that have been told ever since 1848 about the communism of that vintage. While the word communism is repugnant to him, he is nevertheless ready, in any circumstance, to practice the thing. Pindy himself has practiced it instinctively, but, in spite of that, to this day he holds that the word, but only the word, is repugnant to the French revolutionary workers. Then again, he declares that in order to expose the existing progressive pseudo-socialists, there is a case for explaining the true meaning of words, and for calling things by their proper name.

He has an idea that our program will achieve that aim.

Congress passes the following resolution which is to be appended to the program:

Having listened to a reading of the memorandum published by the workers' federation of the Courtelary district, Congress recommends that publication to all socialists and all persons interested in social issues.

Congress declares, however, that two points in the program could have been expressed more plainly.

The ideas set out regarding the Commune are open to the interpretation that it is a matter of replacing the current form of State with a more restricted form, to wit, the Commune. We seek the elimination of every form of State, general or restricted, and the Commune is, as far as we are concerned, only the synthetic expression of the organic form of free human associations.

The idea of collectivism has given rise to mistaken interpretations which must be swept away. We want collectivism with all its logical consequences, not just from the point of view of collective appropriation of the means of production, but also from the point of view of enjoyment and collective consumption of products. Anarchist communism thus is going to be the necessary and inevitable consequence of the social revolution and the expression of the new civilization that this revolution is to usher in.

We express our wish that scrutiny of this important matter may be resumed, taking as the basis of proof, application of these theories in a specific Commune, with due account taken of all of the constituent parts of that Commune, either as assets or difficulties in the implementation thereof.

Congress wishes to see, in the interests of workers' propaganda, publication of a pamphlet summarizing the memorandum presented by the socialist workers' Federation of the Courtelary district.

### MEMORANDUM SUBMITTED TO THE 1880 JURA CONGRESS BY THE COURTELARY DISTRICT WORKERS' FEDERATION

*This program, a quite remarkable document, requires a short introductory note, in which we ought to underline a few points deserving of our attention.*

*For a start, it was drawn up by working men. It opens with the words "For us manual workers . . ." This was the decorative engraver Adhémar Schwitzguébel, writing on behalf of his comrades. These were workers who knew what they wanted. They bluntly spell out their views to the authoritarian socialists who flattered themselves that they would be taking power "in order to turn the present State into a communist State." And did not beat about the bush when they answered them thus: "We cannot share this outlook." And they expressly condemn the obstacle to progress represented, as they saw it, by the State, in a vivid phrase, inspired by the countryside in which they lived and labored: "Human society strides out, but the State is always a crock."*

*Yet these libertarians, supporters of the masses' spontaneity, had no worries about the activist minorities whom they regarded as indispensable in the steering of the social*

revolution: “Intervention (. . .) of the party possessed of a theoretical understanding of this revolution is a no less significant factor.”

But, at the same time, the dangers of the successful revolution’s being captured by leaders thrown up from within its own ranks did not escape them. They labored the necessity of acting in such a way that it “does not revert to operating to the advantage of the governing classes.”

As good disciples of Bakunin and James Guillaume, but still ahead of their times, in that the anarchists of 1880 had not yet become syndicalists, they advocated a federation of trades bodies and sought a synthesis between commune and syndicate. They speculated: will the post-revolutionary commune be run by a general assembly of all its inhabitants or by local delegates from the various trades bodies? But, workers as they were, their penchant was rather towards the latter solution: it would be the local federation of trades bodies that would found the commune of the future.

Thus, problems which, in hard and fast form, confronted the Spanish libertarian communists, during the 1936 revolution, (See Volume III) had already been broached as long ago as 1880 by the manual workers of the Courtelary district.

Likewise, they anticipated one of the underlying principles of worker self-management: “In order to avert a relapse into the errant ways of centralized, bureaucratic administrations,” it struck them that the commune locally, as well as the big public services nationally and internationally, ought not to be run by one single administration, but rather by different commissions, specializing in each sphere of activity. It is a structure which has prevailed in a number of self-managing communities in our own day.

### THE PROGRAM (EXTRACTS)

“( . . .) For us manual workers, our task is dictated by the circumstances in which the laboring populations exist. Ours will be more of an indicative than a completed work. We shall set out that which we know; we shall voice our aspirations; we shall determine our demands; we shall conclude with the logic of popular common sense.

(. . .) In attacking the very foundations of bourgeois society, the social revolution will, by succeeding, consecrate fresh foundations for the development of human society. The work of peaceable progress, of successive piecemeal reforms will continue after the social revolution, as was the case with all of the great revolutions which have transformed the existential conditions of human societies.

That revolution is not just a theoretical construct: it is in the nature of things and is a development upon the existing situation that will bring it to pass. How-



ever, while the situation is the main element acting as the lever of revolution, the more or less intelligent and timely intervention of the party possessed of a theoretical understanding of that revolution is a no less significant factor. From that arises the need, not to wait for revolution to fall from out the skies, but to make preparations for it insofar as may be possible, to act in such a way that it does not revert to operating to the advantage of the governing classes.

(. . .) We find ourselves confronted by two very pronounced general trends. Some advocate the working classes' participation in current politics and their conquest of political power in the State. Others, on the other hand, call for abstention from political activity within the State.

It was differing theoretical notions of the political forms of the new society that founded the two schools, one of which stands for authoritarian socialism, and the other, anarchist socialism.

Unable to conceive of any form of politics other than the all-powerful, centralized State governed by an elective power, authoritarian socialism hopes to carry out the revolution in the system of ownership by taking over power in the State in order to turn the present State into a communist State.

We cannot share this outlook. The economic revolution sought by socialists is too profound a revolution for it to be able to be effected at the orders of some central power, whatever its strength and revolutionary vim. Decried, it would remain a dead letter unless carried through by the people itself, right across the land. And even were the communist State to achieve a momentary existence, it would necessarily carry inside itself the seeds of destruction, because it would have resolved only one part of the social question, economic reform.

The whole question of attainment of human freedom—in its broadest sense—remains, because the State, by the very nature of its make-up and its manifestations, does not emancipate the human being but gobbles him up: the communist State, even more than the bourgeois State, would reduce the individual to a cipher and rule through force. As we see it, solution of the social question comprises, not just the most comprehensive possible achievement of material well-being for the benefit of, but also the achievement of the broadest measure of liberty for each and for all. It is on these grounds that we are not supporters of the communist State, and, as a result, we are the foes of a policy which is the logical avenue to such a State.

(. . .) Human society strides out, but the State is a always a crock.

Scrutiny of the contemporary situation furnishes startling proof of what we contend.

The statist socialist party, in order to operate politically on lawful terrain, had, unfortunately, but one option: to pocket its communist program and espouse a short-term practical program, on which basis it hoped to rally the masses: from the programs put forward by the democratic bourgeoisie, it borrows the salient points, affording them a socialist hue and thus have arisen the differing short-term policy programs of the lawful socialist party.

The bourgeois State would not countenance struggle even on this lawful terrain and the only country in Europe where this legal socialism was a power to be reckoned with, Germany, offers us the spectacle of a backlash right down the line: the retreat of the socialist party and its disorganization are the upshot of a whole protracted and powerful campaign.<sup>1</sup>

This statist political tactic thus does not strike us as the correct one. Let us take a look at the abstentionist approach. The anarchists, in broadening the social question and introducing into it, besides changes in ownership, the destruction of the State, were logically consistent in saying: since we seek destruction of the State, then, far from seeking to capture it in order to modify and transform it, we should instead be trying to create a vacuum around it, in order to undermine it with all the moral and material forces capable of making their contribution to this effort. Such are the origins of the contemporary abstentionist current. Unfortunately, common sense and theoretical logic rarely square with reality. While it is absolutely true, theoretically, that on the day the popular masses would refuse to appoint legislators, governments and State administrators, rejecting constitutions and laws and declining to pay taxes or perform military service, the State would have had its day in History, it is also no less true, on the other hand, that, in terms of practicality, most human beings are attached to something or other in the present society and in the State. It is through this practical bond, which is often trivial, that the whole system survives, sustained by the masses in spite of their discontent.

The State levies taxes and everybody aspires to pay less; it concerns itself with law enforcement and everybody wants proper justice at less cost; the State concerns itself with schools and parents seek good education for their children, at no cost to themselves; it concerns itself with the Church, and some want a liberal Church, some an orthodox or ultra-montane Church, while still others want the State to leave them free to follow no Church; the State concerns itself with policing, and everybody looks to it to guarantee his personal safety; it

has a military organization, and many take it upon themselves to be soldiers, some as a career, some in a militia capacity; the State concerns itself with the roads, forests and water supply, and all these services have to satisfy the interests of the public; the State awards the right to appoint the government, the administrations, the law-makers, to vote institutions and laws and budgets and everybody takes pride in being a citizen-elector.

What with every individual caught up in one or several of these matters of practical detail, you have the entire mass hitched up to the system. Very few dare think and say that general services could as readily be provided directly by human society itself, freely organized.

(. . .) Three essential factors give us the authority to say that it is in the Commune that the social revolution will be at home. The old Jacobin revolutionary tradition has had its day, and, since the Paris Commune, a new revolutionary tradition has been building up around the idea of communal autonomy and federation. More and more, opinion is leaning towards this new political format, as the excesses of centralization are felt to be more of a burden by the populace everywhere; the development of the material situation as well as new currents of opinion lead on to the Commune and the federation of communes. Add to these general considerations the necessary consequences of our party's preparatory efforts, and we can assert that the people's insurrection will be hatched in the Commune.

Thus we ought to turn our attention to short-term revolutionary measures in the Commune.

The bourgeoisie's power over the popular masses springs from economic privileges, political domination and the enshrining of such privileges in the laws. So we must strike at the wellsprings of bourgeois power, as well as at its various manifestations.

The following measures strike us as essential to the welfare of the revolution, every bit as much as armed struggle against its enemies:

The insurgents must confiscate social capital, landed estates, mines, housing, religious and public buildings, instruments of labor, raw materials, precious metals, gems and precious stones and manufactured products:

All political, administrative and judicial authorities are to be deposed:

All legal intervention in the payment of collective or private debts and in the transmission of inheritance shall be abolished:

All taxes shall be abolished:

The army and police shall be stood down:

All documentation recording rents, ownership, mortgages, financial values and concessions shall be put to the torch.

These, it seems to us, must be the destructive measures.—What should the organizational measures of the revolution be?

Immediate and spontaneous establishment of trades bodies: provisional assumption by these of that portion of social capital proper to the functioning of their specialized area of production: local federation of a trades bodies and labor organization:

Establishment of neighborhood groups and federation of same in order to ensure short-term supply of subsistence:

Organization of the insurgent forces:

Establishment of commissions, on the basis of delegations from the groups, each with a specialization in running the affairs of the revolutionary Commune: a security commission against the revolution's enemies, a revolutionary strength commission, a commission to oversee social capital, a labor commission, a subsistence commission, a traffic service commission, a hygiene commission and an educational commission:

Establishment of external action commissions to work on the federation of all of the revolutionary forces of the insurgent Communes: to inspire, through revolutionary propaganda, insurrection in every Commune and region, and enforcement, on as wide a scale as possible, of measures appropriate to the destruction of the present order of things and to the well-being of the revolution:

Federation of Communes and organization of the masses, with an eye to the revolution's enduring until such time as all reactionary activity has been completely eradicated.

Collectivism strikes us (. . .) as the general form of a new society, but we shall strive with all our might to ensure that its organization and operation are free.

(. . .) Once trades bodies have been established, the next step is to organize local life. The organ of this local life is to be the federation of trades bodies and it is this local federation which is to constitute the future Commune. Will it be a general assembly of all inhabitants, or delegates from the trades bodies prior to referral to their particular assemblies, who will draw up the Commune's contract? It seems puerile to us to stipulate preference for one arrangement or the other: the two arrangements no doubt will apply, according to the traditions and particular importance of the Communes. We reckon it may be useful to say

here that, broadly speaking, the more or less democratic practice of universal suffrage will increasingly pale in significance in a scientifically organized society, which is to say, one where hard facts and not meaningless artificial formulas will provide the basis for the whole life of society.

What are to be the powers of the Commune? Upkeep of all social wealth; monitoring usage of various capital elements—sub-soil, land, buildings, tools and raw materials—by the trades bodies; oversight of labor organization, insofar as general interests are concerned; organizing exchange and, eventually, distribution and consumption of products; maintenance of highways, buildings, thoroughfares and public gardens; organizing insurance against all accidents; health service; security service; local statistics; organizing the maintenance, training and education of children; sponsoring the arts, sciences, discoveries and applications.

We also want this local life in these different spheres of activity to be free, like the organization of a trade; free organization of individuals, groups and neighborhoods alike, to meet the various local services we have just enumerated.

In order to avert a relapse into the errant ways of centralized, bureaucratic administrations, we think that the Commune's general interests should not be handled by one single local administration, but rather by different commissions specializing in each sphere of activity and constituted directly by the interested organizers of that local service. This procedure would divest the local administrations of their governmental character and would preserve the principle of autonomy in all of its integrity, while organizing local interests for the best.

(. . .) In the administration [of the] various overall [public] services, the principle of specialization shall apply as it does in communal administration, and we shall thereby avoid providing grounds for the criticism which has been made of anarchist socialism, that, in the organization of the general interests, it falls back upon a new form of State.

## ANARCHY AND COMMUNISM

### CARLO CAFIERO'S REPORT TO THE JURA FEDERATION

At the congress held in Paris by the Center region, one speaker, who stood out on account of his vitriol against the anarchists, stated: "Communism and anarchy are a shrieking mismatch."

Another speaker who also spoke out against the anarchists, albeit less vehemently, called out, while speaking of economic equality: "How can liberty be violated when equality exists?"

Well now! I hold both these speakers to have been mistaken.

It is perfectly possible to have economic equality without the slightest liberty. Certain religious communities are living proof of that, since the most complete equality obtains there, alongside despotism. Complete equality, in that the leader wears the same garb and eats at the same table as the others: only his right to command, sets him apart from them. And the supporters of the "people's State"? If they were not to run up against all sorts of obstacles, I am sure that they would eventually achieve perfect equality, but at the same time, also the most perfect despotism, for, let us not forget, the despotism of the present State would be magnified by the economic despotism of all of the capital which would have passed into State hands, and the whole thing would be multiplied by all of the centralization necessary to this new State. And it is for that reason that we anarchists, friends of freedom, propose to fight it to the bitter end.

Thus, contrary to what has been said, we are perfectly right to fear for liberty, even should equality exist: whereas there cannot be any fear for equality where true liberty, which is to say, anarchy, exists.

Finally, far from being a shrieking mismatch, anarchy and communism would shriek if they were not to be harnessed together, for these two terms, synonyms for liberty and equality are the two necessary and indivisible terms of the revolution.

Our revolutionary ideal is very simple, as may be seen: like that of our predecessors, it is made up of these two terms: liberty and equality. Except that there is one slight difference.

Learning from the travesties which all sorts of reactionaries have always made of liberty and equality, we have been careful to set alongside these two terms an expression of their exact value. These two precious currencies have been counterfeited so often that we must at last know and assay their precise value.

So, alongside these two terms, liberty and equality, let us place two equivalents whose plain meaning cannot give rise to equivocation, and let us state: "We want liberty, which is to say, anarchy, and equality, which is to say, communism."

Anarchy today is the attack, the war upon all authority, all power, every State. In the society to come, anarchy will be the veto, the prevention of the

re-establishment of any authority, any power, any State; full and complete freedom for the individual who, freely and driven by his needs alone, his tastes and his sympathies, bands together with other individuals into a group or association; freedom of development for the association which federates with others within the commune or neighborhood; freedom of development for communes which federate within the region and so on; the regions within the nation; the nations within humankind.

Communism, the matter with which we are most especially concerned today, is the second point in our revolutionary ideal.

Communism, currently, is still attack; it is not the destruction of authority but is the taking into possession of all of the wealth existing worldwide, on behalf of the whole of humanity. In the society to come, communism will be the enjoyment by all men of all existing wealth, in accordance with the principle: FROM EACH ACCORDING TO ABILITY, TO EACH ACCORDING TO NEEDS, which is to say, FROM EACH AND TO EACH ACCORDING TO WISH.

It should be pointed out, and this is primarily an answer to our adversaries, the authoritarian or statist communists, that the appropriation and enjoyment of all existing wealth should, as we see it, be the doing of the people itself. The people, mankind, not being individually capable of seizing the wealth and holding it in their two hands, some have sought to conclude from that, it is true, that for that reason we have to raise up an entire class of leaders, representatives and depositories of the common wealth. But this is an opinion we do not share. No intermediaries, no representatives who always end up representing no one but themselves, no one to moderate equality, no more moderators of liberty, no new government, no new State, even should it style itself popular or democratic, revolutionary or provisional.

The common wealth being scattered right across the planet, while belonging by right to the whole of humanity, those who happen to be within reach of that wealth and in a position to make use of it will utilize it in common. The folk from a given country will use the land, the machines, the workshops, the houses, etc., of that country and they will all make common use of them. As part of humanity, they will exercise here, in fact and directly, their rights over a portion of mankind's wealth. But should an inhabitant of Peking visit this country, he would enjoy the same rights as *the rest: in common* with the others, he would enjoy all of the wealth of the country, just as he would have in Peking.

So the speaker who denounced anarchists as wanting to vest ownership in the corporations was well wide of the mark. A fine kettle of fish it would be to destroy the State only to replace it with a host of tiny States, to slay the single-headed monster only to make way for the thousand-headed monster!

No: as we have said and will never cease repeating: no go-betweens, no courtiers and no obliging servitors who always wind up as the real masters: we want all existing wealth to be taken over directly by the people itself, want it to be held in its powerful hands, and want the people to decide for itself the best way of putting it to use, either for production or consumption.

Yes, communism is feasible. Each person can very well be left to avail at will of what he needs, since there will be enough for everyone. There will no longer be any need to require more labor than the individual is willing to give, because there will still be a sufficiency of products for the next day.

And it is thanks to this abundance that labor will lose the ignoble character of slavishness, leaving it solely the charms of a moral and physical need, like the need to study and live alongside nature.

This is not at all to argue that communism is possible: we can affirm its necessity. Not only can one be a communist, but one has to be one, on pain of falling short of the goal of revolution.

Indeed, once the instruments of labor and raw materials have been taken into common ownership, if we were to cling to private appropriation of the products of labor, we should find ourselves obliged to retain money, the root of more or less sizable accumulation of wealth, according to the greater or lesser merits, or rather, greater or lesser shrewdness of the individual. In which case equality would have vanished, since anyone who contrived possession of more wealth would already, by virtue of that very fact, have raised himself above the level of the others. It would require just one more step to be taken for counter-revolutionaries to introduce rights of inheritance. And in fact, I have heard one socialist of repute, a self-styled revolutionary, who argued in favor of individual ownership of products, eventually declare that he could see nothing wrong with society's countenancing transmission of these products by way of inheritance: according to him, the matter was of no consequence. For those of us who are intimately acquainted with where the accumulation of wealth and its transmission through inheritance has taken society, there is no room for doubt on this score.

But individual claim upon products would not only restore the inequality between men: it would also restore inequality between the various types



of work. We should see the immediate re-emergence of “clean” and “dirty” work, “uplifting” and “degrading” work and the former would be performed by the wealthier, leaving the latter as the lot of the poorest. In which case it would no longer be vocation and personal taste that would decide a man to pursue such and such an activity rather than another: it would be interest, the expectation of earning more in such and such a profession. This would lead to a renaissance of idleness and diligence, merit and demerit, good and evil, vice and virtue, and consequently, of “reward” on the one hand, and of “punishment” on the other, along with law, judge, underling and prison.

There are socialists who persist in arguing the notion of individual ownership of the products of labor, on the basis of a sense of fairness.

Curious delusion! With collective labor, which foists upon us the necessity of large-scale production and widespread mechanization, with modern industry’s ever-increasing tendency to avail of the labor of preceding generations, how could we determine which morsel is the product of one man’s labor and which the product of another’s? It is utterly impossible and our adversaries acknowledge this so readily themselves that they wind up saying;—“Well then! Let us take time worked as the basis for distribution.” But at the same time they themselves confess that this would be unfair, since three hours of Peter’s work can often be worth five hours of Paul’s.

There was a time when we used to describe ourselves as “collectivists,” in that that was the word distinguishing us from the individualists and authoritarian communists, but, basically, we were quite simply anti-authoritarian communists, and by calling ourselves “collectivists,” we sought to use that name to express our idea that everything should be held in common, with no differentiation being made between the instruments and materials of labor and the products of collective labor.

But one fine day we witnessed the emergence of yet another stripe of socialists who, reviving the errant ways of the past, began to philosophize, and draw distinctions and make differentiations on this score, and finally ended up as apostles of the following thesis:

“There are”—they say—“use values and production values. Use values are those which we employ to meet our personal needs: they are the house where we live, the provisions we eat, the clothes, the books, etc., whereas production values are those of which we make use for production purposes: the workshop, the hangar, the byre, shops, machines and all sorts of instruments of labor, the land, raw materials, etc. The former values which serve

to meet the individual's needs"—they say—"ought to be in individual hands, while the latter, the ones which serve us all for production, should be held collectively."

Such was the new economic theory devised, or rather, revived, to order.

But let me ask you, you who award the lovely title of production value to the coal which fuels the machine, the oil that lubricates it, the oil that illuminates its operations, why do you withhold that description from the bread and the meat upon which I feed, the oil with which I dress my salad, the gas that illuminates my work, and everything that serves to sustain and keep going that most perfect of all machines, the father of all machines: man?

Would you class among production values the meadow and the byre which shelters the oxen and horses and yet exclude the homes and gardens which serve the noblest of all animals: man?

Where is your logic in that?

Moreover, you who have made yourselves apostles of this theory, are perfectly well aware that this demarcation does not exist in reality, and that, if it is hard to trace today, it will vanish utterly on the day when we are all producers as well as consumers.

So, as we can see, it was not that theory that could have given fresh strength to advocates of individual ownership of the products of labor. This theory achieved only one thing: it gave away the game of these few socialists who sought to blunt the thrust of the revolutionary idea; it has opened our eyes and shown us the necessity of declaring ourselves quite bluntly communists.

But finally let us tackle the one and only serious objection that our adversaries have put forward against communism. They all agree that we are inevitably moving towards communism, but they note that we are just at the beginning of this and, products being in insufficient supply, rationing and sharing will have to be introduced, and the best way to share out the products of labor would be one based upon the amount of labor performed by each individual.

To which we reply that in the society to come, even when rationing might be required of us, we should remain communists; which is to say that rationing should be based, not upon deserts, but upon needs.

Take a family, that model of communism on a small scale, an authoritarian rather than a libertarian communism, it is true, though, in our example, that changes nothing.

Inside the family, the father brings in, say, a hundred sous a day, the eldest son three francs, a younger son forty sous, and the youngest of all just twenty sous

per day. They all bring the money to the mother who holds the purse-strings and feeds them all. They all contribute varying sums, but at dinner, each one helps himself as he likes and according to appetite; there is no rationing. But bad times come, and straitened circumstances force the mother to cease leaving the distribution of dinner to individual preference and appetite. Rationing has to be introduced, and either at the instigation of the mother, or by everyone's tacit agreement, the portions are reduced. But lo! this rationing is not done in accordance with deserts, for it is the youngest son and the child especially who receive the larger part, and as for the choicest cut, that is reserved for the old lady who brings in nothing at all. Even in times of scarcity, this principle of rationing according to needs is observed in the family. Would it be otherwise in the great family of mankind in the future?

(. . .) One cannot be an anarchist without being a communist. Indeed, the slightest hint of limitation carries with it the seeds of authoritarianism. It could not show itself without promptly spawning law, judge and gendarme. We have to be communists, because the people, which does not understand the collectivists' sophisms, has a perfect grasp of communism, as friends Reclus and Kropotkin have already indicated. We must be communists, because we are anarchists, because anarchy and communism are the two essential terms of the revolution.

PETER KROPOTKIN

## **DECLARATION OF THE ANARCHISTS ARRAIGNED BEFORE THE CRIMINAL COURT IN LYON (JANUARY 19, 1883)**

What anarchy is and what anarchists are, we are about to say.

Anarchists, gentlemen, are citizens who, in an age when freedom of opinions is being preached on every side, have deemed it incumbent upon them to recommend unrestrained freedom.

Yes, gentlemen, around the world, we are a few thousand, a few million workers who demand absolute freedom, nothing but freedom, freedom entire!

We want freedom, which is to say, we claim for every human being the right and wherewithal to do whatsoever he may please, and not to do what does not please them: to have all of their needs met in full, with no limit other than natural impracticability and the equally valid needs of his neighbors.

We want freedom and we hold its existence to be incompatible with the existence of any power, whatever may be its origins and format, whether it be elected or imposed, monarchist or republican, whether it draws its inspiration from divine right or popular right, from the Blessed Blister or universal suffrage.

Because history is there to teach us that all governments resemble one another and are much of a muchness. The best ones are the worst. The greater the hypocrisy in some, the greater the cynicism in others! At bottom, always the same procedures, always the same intolerance. Not even the seemingly most liberal among them does not hold in reserve, beneath the dust of its legislated arsenals, some splendid little law on the International, for use against irksome opponents.

In other words, in the eyes of anarchists, the evil resides, not in this form of government as against some other. But in the very idea of government as such, in the authority principle.

In short, our ideal is to see the substitution for administrative and legal

oversight and imposed discipline, in human relations, of the free contract, constantly liable to review and dissolution.

Anarchists thus intend to teach the people to do without government just as it is beginning to learn to do without God.

It will learn to do without property-owners, too. Indeed, the worst of tyrants is not the one who throws you into a dungeon, but the one who keeps you hungry: not the one who takes you by the throat, but the one who seizes you by the belly.

No liberty without equality! No liberty in a society wherein capital is a monopoly in the hands of a minority that shrinks with every passing day and where nothing is shared equally, not even public education, even though this is paid for out of everyone's pocket.

We hold that capital, the common inheritance of humanity, in that it is the fruit of the collaboration of past generations and present generations, ought to be accessible to all, so that none may be excluded: and so that no one, on the other hand, may lay claim to a fragment at the expense of everyone else. In short, what we want is equality: *de facto* equality by way of a corollary to, or rather, essential precondition for liberty. FROM EACH ACCORDING TO ABILITIES, TO EACH ACCORDING TO NEEDS: that is what we truly and earnestly yearn for: that is what shall be, since there is no prescription that may prevail over demands that are both legitimate and necessary. That is why we are marked down for every calumny.

Rascals that we are, we demand bread for all, work for all: and independence and justice for all, too!

PETER KROPOTKIN

## PAROLES D'UN RÉVOLTÉ<sup>1</sup> (1885)

### THE DECOMPOSITION OF STATES

When, following the collapse of medieval institutions, the incipient States put in an appearance in Europe and consolidated and expanded through conquest, guile and murder—they did not, as yet, meddle in other than a tiny range of human affairs.

Today, the State has come to meddle in every aspect of our lives. From cradle to grave, it smothers us in its embrace. Sometimes as central State, sometimes as provincial- or model-State, occasionally as commune-State, it dogs our every step, looming at every street corner, overwhelming us, gripping us, plaguing us.

It legislates our every action. It constructs mountains of laws and ordinances in which even the most cunning lawyer can no longer keep his bearings. Daily it creates further ramifications which it clumsily fits to the patched-up old mechanism, and manages to construct a machine so complicated, so hybridised, so obstructive, that it disgusts even those charged with operating it.

It creates an army of employees, of tight-fisted spiders who know nothing of the world save what they can see through the murky windows of their offices, or from their absurdly scrawled paperwork, a dismal band with but one religion, the religion of money, and but one preoccupation, clinging on to some party, be it black, purple or white, provided it guarantees maximum promotion for minimum exertion.

The results are only too familiar to us. Is there a single branch of State activity that does not disgust those unfortunate enough to have dealings with it? A single branch in which the State, after centuries of existence and patching-up, has not furnished proof of utter incompetence?

## FROM THE MEDIEVAL COMMUNE TO THE MODERN COMMUNE

*The text which follows is one of Kropotkin's most important ones, one that has also exercised the greatest influence, notably over Spanish libertarian communism. But it has not always been properly understood. Too many Spanish anarchists saw Kropotkin as having sought to revive the communes of the Middle Ages, and they were quick to identify this supposed reversion to the past with the tradition, still lively in the countryside in their own homeland, of the primitive, particularist and free peasant community.*

*In fact, such a construction placed upon Kropotkin's remarks is, in part at least, mistaken. Indeed, the author never tires of insisting, as indeed Marx does in *The Civil War in France*, upon the essential differences he detects between the commune of the past and that of the future. In our age of railways, telegraphs and scientific advances, the commune will, he argued, have a very different aspect from the one it had in the twelfth century. It will not be designed to replace the local lord, but rather, the State. It will not confine itself to being communalist, but will be communist. Far from having a tendency to "retreat within its walls," it will seek "to spread, to become universal." And Kropotkin is categorical in stating that, in our day, "a tiny commune could not survive a week": it will be confronted by an overwhelming need to contract alliances and to federate.*

*But it is here that the thinking of the anarchist theoretician is at its most elastic and accommodates the idealistic and parochial constructions which his future Spanish disciples thought themselves entitled, much later on, to place upon it.*

*In Kropotkin's estimation, every commune is not part of just one federation of communes, which cherishes liberty above all else, but of all manner of federative links which overlap, interweave and superimpose themselves one upon another, an attractive prospect, to be sure, and an intoxicating one for anyone who prizes liberty above all else, provided that it proves to be compatible with planning along modern lines.*

*In the same way, Kropotkin is attractive when he moves on from the communes proper, which is to say, the local communes, to the affinity groups which can no longer be tied to a given territory and whose members would be "scattered over a thousand cities and villages," and where, after the fashion of Charles Fourier, "a given individual will find his needs met only by banding together with other individuals sharing the same tastes."*

*Here there is a direct line of descent between Kropotkin and those Spanish libertar-*

ian communists who, at their congress in Zaragoza in May 1936, were to wallow in nostalgia for a golden age, for the “free commune” and support for the parochial focus upon the patria chica, and, on the very eve of an imminent social revolution, dwelt, with undue emphasis, upon the affinity groups of nudists and naturists, “refractory to industrialization.”

*It has been stated elsewhere that these naïve and idealistic notions, invoking Kropotkin, would be vigorously resisted by one eminent Spanish anarcho-syndicalist economist, Diego Abad de Santillan.<sup>1</sup> In the view of the latter, “free communes” could not be viable, from the economic point of view. “Our ideal”—he explained—“is the commune combined, federated and integrated into the overall economy of the country and of other countries in revolution (...) A socialized, directed and planned economy is imperative and fits in with the evolution of the modern economic world.”*

When we say that the social revolution ought to proceed through liberation of the Communes, and that it will be the Communes, utterly independent and released from the oversight of the State, which will, alone, be able to provide the requisite context for revolution and the wherewithal for its accomplishment, we are taken to task for trying to resuscitate a form of society long since overtaken and which has had its day. “But the Commune”—we are told—“is a relic from another age! By trying to tear down the State and replace it with free Communes, you have turned your gaze upon the past and would transport us back to the high middle ages, re-igniting the ancient quarrels between them and destroying the national unity so dearly won over the course of history!”

Well now, let us examine this criticism.

First, let us note that any comparison with the past has only a relative value. If, indeed, the Commune we seek was really only a reversion to the medieval Commune, would we not have to concede that today’s Commune could scarcely assume the same shape it took seven centuries ago? Now, is it not obvious that, being established in our day, in our age of railways, telegraphs, cosmopolitan science and the quest for pure truth, the Commune would be organized along lines so very different from those which characterized it in the twelfth century that we should be confronted with a quite novel phenomenon, situated in new conditions and necessarily entailing absolutely differing consequences?

Furthermore, our adversaries, the champions of the State, in its various guises, ought to keep it in mind that we might make the very same objection to them.



We too could say to them, and with considerably more reason, that it is they who have their gaze fixed upon the past, since the State is a formation every bit as old as the Commune. With this single difference: while the State in history stands for the negation of all liberty, for absolutism and arbitrariness, for the ruination of its subjects, for the scaffold and for torture, it is precisely in the liberation of the Communes and in the revolts of peoples and Communes against States that we discover the finest pages that History has to offer. To be sure, if we were to be transported into the past, it would not be back to a Louis XI or a Louis XV, or to a Catherine II, that we should look: it would, rather, be to the communes or republics of Amalfi and Florence, to those of Toulouse and Laon, Liege and Courtray, Augsburg and Nuremburg, Pskov and Novgorod.

So it is not a matter of bandying words and sophisms: what counts is that we should study, closely analyze and not imitate [those] who are content to tell us: “But the Commune, that is the Middle Ages! And damned as a result!”—“The State represents a past record of misdeeds”—we would reply—“So it is all the more damnable!”

Between the medieval Commune and any that might be established today, and probably will be established soon, there will be lots of essential differences: a whole abyss opened up by six or seven centuries of human development and hard experience. Let us take a look at the main ones.

What was the essential object of this “conspiracy” or “confederacy” into which the bourgeois of a given city entered in the twelfth century? The object was to break free of the seigneur. The inhabitants, merchants and artisans, came together and pledged not to allow “anyone at all to do wrong to one of them and treat him thereafter as a serf”: it was against its former masters that the Commune rose up in arms. “Commune”—says one twelfth century writer quoted by Augustin Thierry—“is a new and despicable word, and this is what is meant by the term: persons liable to tallage now deliver only once a year to their seigneur the rent which they owe him. If they commit any crime, they can be quit of it through payment of a legally prescribed fine: and, as for the levies in money customarily inflicted upon serfs, they are wholly exempt from those.”

So it was very much against the seigneur that the medieval Commune revolted. It is from the State that today’s Commune will seek liberation. This is a crucial difference, since, remember, it was the State, represented by the

king, which, later, noticing how the Communes sought to register their independence from their Lord, sent in his armies to “chastise,” as the chronicle has it, “the presumption of these idlers who, by reason of the Commune, made a show of rebellion and defiance of the Crown.”

Tomorrow’s Commune will appreciate that it cannot any longer acknowledge any superior: that, above it, there cannot be anything, save the interests of the Federation, freely embraced by itself in concert with other Communes. It knows that there can be no halfway house: either the Commune is to be absolutely free to endow itself with whatever institutions it wishes and introduce all reforms and revolutions it may deem necessary, or else it will remain what it has been to date, a mere subsidiary of the State, chained in its every movement, forever on the brink of conflict with the State and certain of succumbing in any ensuing struggle. It knows that it must smash the State and replace it with the Federation, and it will act accordingly. More than that, it will have the wherewithal so to do. Today, it is no longer just small towns which are hoisting the flag of communal insurrection. It is Paris, Lyon, Marseilles, Cartagena, and soon every great city will unfurl the same flag. And that, if ever there was one, is an essential difference.

In liberating itself from its Seigneur, was the medieval Commune also breaking free of the wealthy bourgeois who, through sale of merchandise and capital, had amassed personal fortunes inside the city? Not at all! Once it had torn down the towers of its seigneur, the town dweller soon watched the rise within the Commune itself of the citadels of rich merchants determined to bring him to heel, and the domestic history of the medieval Communes is the history of a bitter struggle between rich and poor, a struggle which, inevitably, ended with intervention by the king. With aristocracy expanding more and more within the very bosom of the Commune, the populace, now fallen, with regard to the wealthy seigneur from the upper city, into a servitude which had previously been his status with regard to the lord outside, realized that the Commune was no longer worth defending: it deserted the ramparts which he had erected in order to win his freedom and which, as a result of individualist rule, had become the boulevards of a new serfdom. With nothing to lose, it left the rich merchants to look to their own defenses, and the latter were defeated; unsexed by luxury and vice, enjoying no support from the people, they were soon compelled to yield to the injunctions of the king’s heralds and handed over the keys to their cities. In other communes, it

was the rich themselves who opened the gates of their towns to the imperial, royal or ducal armies, in order to forestall the popular vengeance hanging over their heads.

But will the primary concern of the nineteenth century Commune not be to put paid to such social inequalities? To seize all the social capital amassed within its borders and make it available to those who wish to deploy it for production and to add to the general well-being? Will its first thought not be to smash the power of capital and banish forever any chance that aristocracy, which brought about the downfall of the medieval Communes, might raise its head? Will it mistake bishop and monk for allies? Finally, is it going to imitate ancestors who looked to the Commune for nothing more than the creation of a State within the State? Who, abolishing the power of the seigneur or king, could think of nothing better to do than reconstitute the very same power, down to the finest detail, forgetting that that power, though confined within the town walls, nevertheless retained all of the vices of its paragon? Are the proletarians of our century about to imitate those Florentines who, while abolishing titles of nobility or forcing them to be worn as a badge of disgrace, simultaneously allowed a new aristocracy, an aristocracy of the fat purse, to be created? Finally, will they do as those artisans did who, upon arriving at the town hall, piously imitated their predecessors and re-established that whole hierarchy of powers which they had so recently overthrown? Will they change only the personnel, and leave the institutions untouched?

Certainly not. The nineteenth-century Commune, learning from experience, will do better. It will be a commune in more than just name. It will be, not just communalist, but communist: revolutionary in its policy, it will be revolutionary in matters of production and exchange, too. It will not do away with the State only to restore it, and lots of communes will know how to teach by example, abolishing government by proxy, and fighting, shy of commending their sovereignty to the happenstance of the polling booth.

Once it had shaken off the yoke of its seigneur, did the medieval commune seek to hit him in the source of his power? Did it try to rally to the assistance of the agricultural population which surrounded it and, equipped with weaponry which rural serfs did not have, place these weapons in the service of the *wretches upon whom it looked proudly down from atop its walls*? Far from it! Guided by a purely selfish sentiment, the medieval Commune retreated within its walls. On how many occasions did it not jealously close its gates

and raise its drawbridges against the slaves who flocked in search of refuge, and let them be butchered by the seigneur, as it looked on, within arquebus range? Proud of its liberties, it did not think to extend them to those groaning outside. It was at this price, at the price of preserving its neighbors' serfdom, that many a commune earned its independence. Then again, was it not also in the interests of the great bourgeois of the commune to see the serfs from the plains stay bound to the land, ignorant of industry and commerce, and still obliged to look to the town for their supplies of iron, metals and industrial products? And whenever the artisan thought to stretch his hand beyond the walls separating him from the serfs, what could he avail against the wishes of the bourgeois who had the upper hand, a monopoly upon the arts of war and hardened mercenaries in his hire?

Now what a difference: would the victorious Paris Commune have made do with endowing itself with more or less free municipal institutions? The Parisian proletariat smashing its chains would have signaled social revolution, first in Paris and then in the rural communes. The Paris Commune, even as it was fighting desperately for its survival, nevertheless told the peasant: Seize the land, all of it! It would not have confined itself to words, and, if need be, its valiant sons would have carried their weapons to far-flung villages to assist the peasant with his revolution: to drive out the land-thieves, and seize it in order to place it at the disposal of all who wish and have the expertise to harvest its bounty. The medieval Commune sought to retreat inside its walls: the nineteenth-century one seeks to range far and wide, to become universal. It has replaced communal privilege with human solidarity.

The medieval commune could ensconce itself within its walls and, to some extent, cut itself off from its neighbors. Whenever it entered into dealings with other communes, those dealings were most often confined to a treaty in defense of city rights against the seigneur, or a solidarity agreement for the mutual protection of commune citizens on long journeys. And when authentic leagues were formed between towns, as in Lombardy, Spain and Belgium, these leagues being far from homogeneous, and too fragile because of the diversity of privileges, promptly fragmented into isolated groups or succumbed under the onslaught of neighboring States.

What a difference with the groups that would be formed today! A tiny Commune could not survive a week without being compelled by circumstance to establish consistent relations with industrial, commercial and artistic centers,

etc., and these centers in turn, would be sensible of the need to throw their gates wide open to inhabitants of neighboring villages, adjacent communes and distant cities.

Were a given large town to proclaim the Commune tomorrow, abolish individual ownership within its borders and introduce fully-fledged communism, which is to say, collective enjoyment of social capital, the instruments of labor and the products of the labor performed, and, provided that the town was not surrounded by enemy armies, within days, convoys of carts would be pouring into the market place and suppliers despatching cargoes of raw materials from far-off ports: the products of the city's industry, once the needs of the urban population had been met, would go off to the four corners of the globe in search of buyers: outsiders would flood in, and everyone, peasants, citizens of neighboring towns, foreigners would carry home tales of the marvelous life of the free city where everyone was working, where there were neither poor nor oppressed any more, where everybody enjoyed the fruits of their labor, without anyone claiming the lion's share. Isolation need not be feared: if communists in the United States have a grievance in their community, it does not relate to isolation, but rather to the intrusion of the surrounding bourgeois world into their communal affairs.

The fact that today commerce and trade, overruling the limitations of borders, have also torn down the walls of the ancient cities. They have already established the cohesiveness which was missing in the middle ages. All the inhabited areas of western Europe are so intimately bound up one with another that isolation has become an impossibility for any of them: there is no village perched so high upon a mountain crest that it does not have its industrial and commercial center, towards which it gravitates, and with which it can no longer sever its connections.

The development of the big industrial hubs has done more.

Even in our own day, the parochial mentality could arouse a lot of frictions between two adjacent communes, prevent their allying with one another and even ignite fratricidal strife. But whereas such frictions may indeed preclude direct federation of these two communes, that federation will proceed through the good offices of the larger centers. Today, two tiny adjoining municipalities often have nothing to bring them really close: what few dealings they have would be more likely to generate friction than establish ties of solidarity. But both already have a shared hub with which they are frequently in contact

and without which they cannot survive, and whatever their parish rivalries, they will be compelled to unite through the good offices of the larger town whence they obtain their provisions or whither they bring their produce: each of them will be part of the same federation, in order to sustain their dealings with that higher instance and in order to cluster about it.

And yet this hub could not itself acquire an irksome ascendancy over the surrounding communes. Thanks to the infinite variety of the needs of industry and commerce, all population centers already have several centers to which they are bound, and as their needs develop, they will form attachments to other centers capable of meeting these new needs. So various are our needs and so rapidly do they sprout that, soon, one federation will no longer suffice to meet them all. So, the Commune will sense a need to contract other alliances and enter into another federation. Member of one group for the purposes of securing its food requirements, the Commune will have to belong to a second one in order to obtain other items it needs, say, metals, and then a third and fourth group for its cloth and craft goods. Pick up an economic atlas of any country at all, and you will see that economic frontiers do not exist: the areas where various products are produced and exchanged mutually overlap, interlinking and criss-crossing. Similarly, the federations of communes, if they continue to expand freely, would soon interweave, criss-cross and overlap, thereby forming a compact "one and indivisible" network quite different from these statist combinations which are merely juxtaposed, just as the rods of the fasces are grouped around the lictor's axe.

Thus, let us repeat, those who come along and tell us that the Communes, once rid of State oversight, are going to clash and destroy one another in internecine warfare, overlook one thing: the intimate bonds already existing between various localities, thanks to the industrial and commercial hubs, thanks to the numbers of such hubs, thanks to unbroken dealings. They fail to appreciate what the middle ages were, with their closed cities and caravans lumbering slowly along difficult roads overlooked by robber-barons; they overlook the flows of men, goods, mail, telegrams, ideas and affections hurtling between our cities like the waters of rivers which never run dry; they have no clear picture of the difference between the two eras they seek to compare one with the other.

Also, do we not have the example of history to prove to us that the instinct to federate has already grown into one of mankind's most urgent needs? The State need only fall into disarray some day for some reason or another, and the

machinery of oppression falter in its operations and free alliances will sprout all unprompted. Let us remember the spontaneous federations of the armed bourgeoisie during the Great Revolution. Remember the federations that sprang up spontaneously in Spain and salvaged that country's independence when the State was rattled to its very foundations by Napoleon's conquering armies. As soon as the State is no longer in a position to impose enforced union, union sprouts by itself, in accordance with natural needs. Overthrow the State and the federated society will sprout from its ruins, truly one, truly indivisible, but free and expanding in solidarity by virtue of that very freedom.

But there is something else. For the medieval bourgeois, the Commune was an isolated State plainly separated from the rest by its borders. For us, the "Commune" is no longer a territorial agglomeration, but is instead a generic term, synonymous with a combination of equals acknowledging neither borders nor walls. The social Commune will very quickly cease to be a clearly defined whole. Each group from the Commune will of necessity be drawn towards other similar groups from other Communes; they will band together and federate with them through ties at least as solid as those binding them to their fellow townsmen and will constitute a Commune of interests whose members will be scattered across a thousand towns and villages. Such an individual will only find his needs met when he bands together with other individuals of similar tastes and resident in a hundred other communes.

Even today free societies are starting to cover the whole vast expanse of human activity. No longer is it just to satisfy his scientific, literary or artistic interests that the man of leisure sets up societies. And it is not just to prosecute the class struggle that one combines.

One would be hard put to discover a single one of the many and varied manifestations of human activity not already represented by freely constituted societies and their numbers are forever expanding as they daily intrude into new spheres of activity, even those hitherto regarded as the State's special preserve. Literature, the arts, the sciences, education, commerce, industry, trade, entertainments, health, museums, long-distance undertakings, polar expeditions, even territorial defenses, help for the wounded, defense against aggression and the courts themselves—on every side we see private initiative *at work in the shape of free societies*. This is the characteristic tendency and feature of the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Left unhindered and to itself, and with vast new scope for development, this tendency will serve as the basis for the society of the future. It is through free combinations that the social Commune will be organized and these very same combinations will tear down walls and frontiers. There will be millions of communes, no longer territorial, but reaching out a hand across rivers, mountain ranges and oceans, to unite individuals scattered around the four corners of the globe and the people into one single family of equals.



## REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT

### PART I

That existing governments ought to be abolished, so that liberty, equality and fraternity may no longer be empty words but become living realities: that all forms of government tried to date have been only so many forms of oppression and ought to be replaced by some new form of association: upon that, everyone with a brain and of a temperament at all revolutionary is agreed. To tell the truth, one does not even have to be very innovative to arrive at this conclusion: the vices of existing governments and impossibility of reforming them are too striking not to leap to the eyes of every reasonable onlooker. And as for overthrowing governments, it is common knowledge that at certain times this is encompassed without undue difficulty. There are times when governments collapse virtually unassisted, like a house of cards, under the breath of a rebellious people. This we saw in 1848 and in 1870: and we shall see it anon.

Overthrowing a government is everything as far as a bourgeois revolutionary is concerned. For us, it marks only the beginning of the social revolution. Once the machinery of State has been derailed, the hierarchy of officials thrown into disarray and no longer knowing in what direction to go, soldiers having lost confidence in their officers, in short, the army of capital's defenders once routed, then there looms before us the mammoth undertaking of demolishing the institutions which serve to perpetuate economic and political slavery. What are revolutionaries to do, once they have the opportunity to act freely?

To that question, the anarchists alone answer: "No government, anarchy!" All the others say: "A revolutionary government!" They differ only upon the form to be given to this government elected by universal suffrage in the State or in the Commune: the rest come down in favor of revolutionary dictatorship.

A "revolutionary government!" Those two words have a very curious ring to them in the ears of those who understand what social revolution

ought to signify and what government signifies. The two words are mutually contradictory, mutually destructive. We have indeed seen despotic governments—it is the essence of every government that it is for reaction and against revolution and that it should have a natural tendency towards despotism: but a revolutionary government has never yet been seen, and with good reason. Because revolution, synonymous with “disorder,” the toppling and overthrow of age-old institutions within the space of a few days, with violent demolition of established forms of property, with the destruction of caste, with the rapid change of received thinking on morality, or rather, on the hypocrisy which stands in its place, with individual liberty and spontaneous action, is the precise opposite, the negation of government, the latter being synonymous with the “established order,” conservatism, maintenance of existing institutions, and negation of individual initiative and individual action. And yet we continually hear talk of this white blackbird, as if a “revolutionary government” was the most straightforward thing in the world, as commonplace and as familiar to everyone as royalty, empire or papacy!

That bourgeois so-called revolutionaries should peddle this notion is understandable. We know what they understand by Revolution. It is quite simply a fresh coat of plaster upon the bourgeois republic: it is the assumption by so-called republicans, of the well-paid posts currently the preserve of Bonapartists or royalists. At most, it is the divorce of Church and State, replaced by the concubinage of them both, confiscation of clerical assets for the benefit of the State and primarily of the future administrators of those assets, and perhaps, additionally, a referendum or some such device. But that revolutionary socialists should act as apostles of this notion, we cannot comprehend except by one or the other of two suppositions: either those who embrace it are imbued with bourgeois prejudices, which they have derived, unwittingly, from literature and especially history written by bourgeois for bourgeois consumption, and, being still pervaded with the spirit of slavishness, the product of centuries of slavery, they cannot even imagine themselves free; or else they want no part of this Revolution whose name is forever upon their lips: they would be content with a mere plastering job upon existing institutions, provided that it carried them to power, even though they would have to wait to see what had to be done to pacify “the beast,” which is to say, the people. Their only gripe with those in government today is that they covet their places. With these, we need not bandy words. So we shall address only those whose mistakes are honest ones.

Let us open with the first of the two forms of “revolutionary government” proposed—elected government.

Royal or other authority having been overthrown, and the army of capital’s defenders routed, ferment and discussion of public affairs and the urge to move forward are everywhere. New ideas crop up, the need for serious change understood: we must act and ruthlessly embark upon the task of demolition, so as to clear the way for the new life. But what would they have us do? Summon the people to elections, to elect a government without delay, to entrust to it the task which each and every one of us ought to be carrying out on our own initiative!

This is what Paris did after March 18, 1871. “I shall never forget”—a friend told us—“those splendid moments of deliverance. I had climbed down from my garret in the Latin Quarter to join that huge, open-air club which filled the boulevards from one end of Paris to the other. Everyone was debating public affairs; every personal preoccupation had been forgotten; buying and selling no longer came into it; everyone was ready to hurl himself body and soul into the future. Even some bourgeois, carried away by the universal enthusiasm, were happy to see the new world ushered in. “If it takes a social revolution, so be it! Let’s hold everything in common: we are ready!” The elements of Revolution were present: it only remained now to set them in motion. Returning that evening to my room, I said to myself: “How fine humanity is! It is unknown and has always been slandered!” Then came the elections, the members of the Commune were appointed, and little by little the power of commitment, the enthusiasm for action faded. Everybody returned to his customary routine, saying: “Now we have an honest government, let it get on with it.” We know what ensued.

Instead of shifting for itself, instead of striding ahead, instead of throwing itself boldly in the direction of a new order of things, the people, trusting to its governors, handed the care of taking the initiative over to them. That is the first, the fatal consequence of elections. So what will they do, these governors invested with the confidence of everyone?

Never were elections more free than the March 1871 elections. Even the Commune’s adversaries have acknowledged that. The great mass of electors was never more imbued with the urge to hoist into power the best men, men of the future, revolutionaries. And it did just that. All revolutionaries of note were returned by formidable majorities: Jacobins, Blanquists, Internationalists,

all three revolutionary factions were represented on the Council of the Commune. The election could not have returned a finer government.

The upshot of it all we know. Ensnared in the City Hall, charged with following procedures laid down by preceding governments, these fervent revolutionaries, these reformers found themselves stricken by incompetence and sterility. For all their goodwill and courage, they were not even able to organize Paris's defenses. It is true that the blame for this is today being heaped upon the men, the individuals: but it was not the personnel that lay at the root of this failure, it was the system they followed.

Indeed, when it is free, universal suffrage can, at best, result in an assembly representative of the mean of the opinions current among the masses at that point: and, at the start of the revolution, that mean has, generally, only a vague, the vaguest of notions of the task facing it, and no grasp of the manner in which it must be tackled. Ah, if only the bulk of the nation, of the Commune could agree, before the upheaval, upon what needs doing as soon as the government has been brought down! If that dream of the desk-bound utopians could but be realized, we would never even have had bloody revolutions: the wishes of the bulk of the nation having been stated, the remainder would have bowed to them with good grace. But that is not how things work. The revolution erupts well before any broad agreement can be arrived at, and those who have a clear notion of what needs doing on the morrow of the uprising are, at that point, only a tiny minority. The vast majority of the people still has only a vague notion of the goal it would like to achieve, and no great knowledge of how to march towards that goal, no great confidence in the route to take. Only once the change gets underway will the practical solution be found and clarified: and it will be a product of the revolution itself, a product of the people in action—or else it will amount to nothing, as the brains of a few individuals absolutely cannot devise solutions which can only be thrown up by the life of the people.

This is the situation mirrored by the body elected through the ballot box, even should it not display all the vices inherent in representative government generally. Those few men who stand for the revolutionary idea of the age find themselves swamped by representatives of past schools of revolution or of the established order. These men, who would be so sorely needed among the people, most especially in such times of revolution, for the widespread dissemination of their ideas and mobilizing the masses and demolishing the institutions of the past, are riveted there inside a room, debating endlessly

in hope of wresting a few concessions from the moderates and to talk their enemies around, whereas there is but one way of changing their thinking, which is by getting on with practical efforts. The government turns into the parliament, with all of the vices of bourgeois parliaments. Far from being a “revolutionary” government, it turns into the biggest obstacle to revolution and, unless it wishes to go on marking time, the people finds itself forced to dismiss it and to stand down men whom it was acclaiming as its chosen ones only the day before. But that is no longer an easy undertaking. The new government, which has wasted no time in organizing a whole new administrative network in order to extend its writ and enforce obedience, has no intention of going so quietly. Keen to maintain its power, it clings to it with all the vigor of an institution which has not yet had time to lapse into the decomposition of old age. It is determined to return blow for blow: and there is only one way to dislodge it—by taking up arms and making revolution all over again, in order to dismiss those in whom it had once placed all its hopes.

And then what we have is the revolution divided against itself! Having wasted precious time on procrastination, it watches as its strength is sapped by internecine splits between friends of the young government and those who have grasped the necessity of doing away with it! All because of failure to realize that a new life requires new formulas: that one does not carry out a revolution by clinging to the old formulas! All because of failure to appreciate that revolution and government are incompatible, the failure to discern that one of them, however presented, is still the negation of the other, and that there is no revolution unless there is anarchy.

## PART II

The same holds for that other form of “revolutionary government” recommended to us, revolutionary dictatorship.

The dangers to which the Revolution is exposed if it allows itself to be bridled by an elected government are so apparent that a whole school of revolutionaries has turned its back upon that idea completely. They realize that a risen people cannot, through the ballot box, saddle itself with a government that represents only the past and is only a ball and chain around the people’s ankles, especially when there is this great economic, political and moral *regeneration* to be carried out, which we call Social Revolution. Thus they wash their hands of the idea of a “lawful” government, for the duration of a revolt against legality at any rate, and they call instead for “revolutionary

dictatorship.” They say: “The party which overthrows the government will forcibly supplant it. It will assume power and act in a revolutionary way. It will take the requisite steps to ensure the rising’s success: it will tear down the old institutions: it will see to territorial defense. For those unwilling to recognize its authority, there will be the guillotine; and those, be they people or bourgeois, who refuse to carry out the orders it will issue to set the revolution’s course, will face the guillotine too!” So argue the budding Robespierres, those who have taken heed of nothing in the great epic of last century except its days of decline, the ones who have learned nothing save the speechifying of the procurators of the Republic.

As far as we anarchists are concerned, dictatorship of a single individual or party—which boils down to the same thing—stands forever condemned. We know that a social revolution is not steered by the mind of just one man or one group. That revolution and government are incompatible, we know: the one must do the other to death, and the name under which government may go—dictatorship, monarchy or parliament—is of little account. We know that the secret of our party’s strength and truth resides in its quintessential maxim: “Nothing good or durable is achieved except by the free initiative of the people, and all power tends to do that to death!” That is why the best of us, were their ideas no longer required to undergo the people’s acid test prior to implementation, and if they were to become masters of that redoubtable mechanism, government, which empowers them to act upon a whim, would, within the week, deserve to be cut down. We know where all dictatorship, even the most well-meaning one, leads—to the death of revolution. And finally we know that this notion of dictatorship is still only a blighted by-product of that governmental fetishism which, like religious fetishism, has always perpetuated slavery.

But it is not to the anarchists that we are addressing ourselves today. We are speaking to those among the governmentalist revolutionaries who, misled by the prejudices of their education, are honestly mistaken and ask nothing better than to talk. So it is to these that we shall address ourselves, in their own idiom.

And, first, one general observation. Those who peddle dictatorship generally fail to realize that, by sustaining that prejudice, they are merely preparing the ground for those who will later cut their throats. There is, though, one phrase by Robespierre which his admirers would do well to remember. He never reneged upon the principle of dictatorship, but . . . “Heaven forfend!”

he snapped at Mandar when the latter broached the matter with him, "Brissot would be a dictator!" Yes, Brissot, that cunning Girondin, ferocious enemy of the people's egalitarian tendencies, rabid champion of property (which he had once upon a time characterized as theft), Brissot, who would blithely have locked up the Abbaye Hebert, Marat, and all moderate Jacobins.

But those words were spoken in 1792! By which time France had been three years already in revolution! In fact, the monarchy was no more: it only remained to deliver the *coup de grace*; in fact, the feudal system had been swept away. And yet, even at that point, when the revolution was surging freely ahead, there was this counter-revolutionary, Brissot, standing every chance of being acclaimed dictator! And earlier, in 1789? It was Mirabeau who might have been hoisted into power. The man who offered his eloquence to the king for hire, this was the man who might have been hoisted into power at that point, had the risen people not imposed its sovereignty at pike-point, and had they not forged ahead through the *faits accomplis* of the Jacquerie, exposing the insubstantiality of any constituted authority in Paris or in the departments.

But the governmental prejudice so blinkers those who talk about dictatorship that they prefer to pave the way for the dictatorship of some new Brissot or Napoleon, rather than turn away from the idea of awarding a new master to men breaking free of their chains!

The secret societies from the time of the Restoration and Louis-Philippe have made a mighty contribution to the survival of the prejudice of dictatorship. Backed by the workers, the bourgeois republicans of the time mounted a long succession of conspiracies aiming at the overthrow of monarchy and proclamation of the Republic. Not cognizant of the profound changes which were needed in France, even if a bourgeois republican regime was to be established, they deluded themselves that through a far-reaching conspiracy they could some day topple the monarchy, seize power and proclaim the Republic. Over a period of almost thirty years, these secret societies toiled unceasingly, with unbounded commitment and heroic perseverance and courage. If the Republic emerged quite naturally from the February 1848 insurrection, this was thanks to these societies, thanks to the propaganda by deed which they had mounted over those thirty years. But for their noble efforts, the Republic would even now be impossible.

Thus, their goal was to seize power themselves and set themselves up as a republican dictatorship. But, with good reason, they never managed that. As ever, thanks to the ineluctable force of circumstance, it was not a conspiracy

that brought down the monarchy. The conspirators had prepared the ground for its downfall. They had disseminated the republican idea far and near: their martyrs had made it the popular ideal. But the final push, the one that brought down the bourgeoisie's king once and for all, was a lot broader and a lot stronger than any secret society might mount: it emanated from the mass of the people.

The outcome, we know. The party which had paved the way for the downfall of monarchy found itself excluded from events in City Hall. Others, too cautious to tread the paths of conspiracy, but likewise better known and more moderate, bided their time until they could seize power and occupy the position which the plotters intended to capture to the sound of cannon. The journalists, lawyers and good orators who worked on their good reputations while the real republicans were forging themselves weapons or perishing in dungeons, captured power. Some, being famous already, were acclaimed by the rubbernecks: others pushed themselves forward and were acceptable because their names stood for nothing, other than a program of accommodation to everyone.

Let no one tell us that the party of action is lacking in practical acumen: and that others can outdo them. No, a thousand times, no! As much as the movements of the heavens, it is a law that the party of action is excluded while schemers and prattlers take power. The latter are more familiar to the broad masses which mount the final push. They poll more votes, for, with or without news-sheets, and whether by acclamation or through the ballot box, there is, essentially, always a sort of unspoken choice made at that point by acclamation. They are acclaimed by all and sundry, especially by the revolution's enemies who prefer to push nonentities to the fore, and acclamation thus acknowledges as leaders persons who, deep down, are inimical to the movement or indifferent to it.

The man<sup>1</sup> who, more than anyone else, was the embodiment of this system of conspiracy, the man who paid with a life behind bars for his commitment to that system, just before he died uttered these words which amount to a complete program: NEITHER GOD NOR MASTER!

### PART III

The illusion that government can be overthrown by a secret society, and that that society can install itself in its place, is a mistake made by every revolutionary organization thrown up by the republican bourgeoisie since 1820. But there is evidence aplenty to expose this error. What commitment, what



selflessness, what perseverance have we not seen deployed by the republican secret societies of Young Italy, and indeed all the enormous endeavor, all of the sacrifices made by Italian youth—alongside which even those of Russian revolutionary youth pale—all of the corpses heaped in the dungeons of Austrian fortresses and victims of the executioner's blade and bullets, yet the beneficiaries of all that are the schemers from the bourgeoisie and the monarchy. Rarely in history does one come across a secret society which has, with such meager resources, produced results as tremendous as those achieved by Russian youth, or displayed a vigor and an activity as potent as the Executive Committee. It has rattled tsarism, that colossus which had seemed invulnerable: and it has rendered autocratic government, hereafter, an impossibility in Russia. And yet, how ingenuous they are who imagine that the Executive Committee is to become the master of power on the day that Alexander III's crown rolls in the mire. Others, the prudent ones who labored to make their names while revolutionaries were laboring in the mines or perishing in Siberia, others, schemers, prattlers, lawyers, hacks who, from time to time, shed a speedily wiped tear before the tomb of the heroes and who posed as the people's friends—they are the ones who will step forward to take up the place vacated by the government and cry Halt! to the "unknowns" who will have done the spade-work of the revolution.

This is inevitable and ineluctable, and it cannot be otherwise. For it is not the secret societies, nor indeed the revolutionary organizations which will deliver the *coup de grâce* against governments. Their task, their historical mission is to educate minds to their revolution. And once minds have been cultivated, then, abetted by external circumstances, the final push comes, not from the pioneer group, but from the masses left outside of the structures of society. On August 31 (1870), Paris turned a deaf ear to Blanqui's appeals. Four days later, he proclaimed the downfall of the government: but by then, it was no longer the Blanquists who were the cutting edge of the rising, it was the people, the millions, who deposed the *décembriseur*<sup>2</sup> and feted the *farceurs* whose names have echoed in their ears for two years. When revolution is ready to erupt, when the scent of upheaval is in the air, when success has already become assured, then a thousand newcomers, over whom secret organization has never exercised any direct influence, rally to the movement, like vultures flocking to the battle-field for their share of the remains of the fallen. These help in the mounting of the final push, and it is not from the ranks of honest, incorrigible conspirators, but rather from among the prat-

ting nonsense-talkers that they will draw their leaders, so imbued are they with the notion that a leader is necessary. The conspirators who cling to the prejudice of dictatorship are thus, unwittingly, laboring to hoist their own enemies into power.

But, if what we have just said holds true for revolutions or rather political riots, it is even more true of the revolution we want, the Social Revolution. Allowing some government to establish itself, some strong power which commands obedience, is tantamount to stunting the progress of the revolution from the outset. The good which government might do is negligible and the harm immeasurable.

Indeed, what is it about and what do we take Revolution to mean? Not a straightforward change of government personnel. Rather, assumption by the people of ownership of the whole of society's wealth. Abolition of all of the powers which have never ceased from hindering the development of humanity. But can this immense economic revolution be carried through by means of decrees emanating from a government? Last century, we saw the Polish revolutionary dictator Kosciuszko<sup>3</sup> order the abolition of personal serfdom: serfdom persisted for eighty years after that decree.<sup>4</sup> We saw the Convention, the all-powerful Convention, the terrible Convention, as its admirers call it, order that all the common lands recovered from the seigneurs be shared out on an individual basis. Like so many others, that order remained a dead letter, because, for it to be put into effect, it would have taken the rural proletariat to mount a completely new revolution, and revolutions are not made by decree. For the people's assumption of ownership of social wealth to become an accomplished fact, the people must have room to work and shrug off the servitude to which it is only too accustomed, and be given its head and proceed without awaiting orders from anyone. Now, it is precisely that which dictatorship—however well-meaning—will prevent, and, at the same time, it will be powerless to advance the revolution by one iota.

But while government, even an ideal revolutionary government, does not generate any new strength and represents no asset in the work of demolition we have to carry out, then all the less should we depend upon it for the task of reorganization which is to follow that demolition. The economic change that the social Revolution will bring will be so immense and far-reaching and will have to work such a change in all relationships currently based upon property and exchange that it will not be feasible for one individual or several to devise the social forms which must take shape in the society of the future.

The devising of new social forms can only be the collective undertaking of the masses. It will require the flexibility of the collective intelligence of the country to meet the tremendous diversity of conditions and needs which will sprout on the day that individual ownership will be done way with. Any external authority cannot be anything other than an impediment, an obstacle to this organizational undertaking which has to be carried out, and, from the outset, a source of discord and hatred.

But it is high time that the oft-rebutted illusion of revolutionary government, which has so often cost us so dear, was jettisoned. It is time to tell ourselves once and for all and take to heart the political adage that a government cannot be revolutionary. The Convention is invoked: but let us not forget that the few mildly revolutionary measures taken by the Convention placed the seal upon acts carried out by the people which was at that point marching ahead, ignoring all government. As Victor Hugo said in his vivid style, Danton pushed Robespierre, Marat monitored and pushed Danton, and Marat himself was pushed by Cimourdain,<sup>5</sup> that embodiment of the clubs of the “enragés” and rebels. Like every government before and after it, the Convention was merely a ball and chain about the people’s ankles.

The lessons of history here are so conclusive: the impossibility of revolutionary government and the poisonousness of what goes under that name are so self-evident that it would be hard to account for the passion with which a certain self-styled socialist school clings to the idea of government. But there is a very straightforward explanation. Socialists though they profess to be, exponents of this school have a view that differs very greatly from our own of the revolution we are called upon to carry out. For them as for all bourgeois radicals, the social revolution is rather a distant prospect not to be contemplated today. Though they dare not say it, what they have in mind, in their heart of hearts, is something quite different. What they have in mind is the installation of a government similar to the one in Switzerland or in the United States, with a few attempts to take into State care what they ingeniously describe as “public services.” This is something akin to Bismarck’s ideal or the ideal of the tailor who has been elected to the presidency of the United States. It is a ready-made compromise between the socialist aspirations of the masses and the appetites of the bourgeois. They would like comprehensive expropriation, but have *not* the courage to attempt it and put it off until next century, and, even before battle is joined, they are locked in negotiations with the enemy.

For those of us who understand that the time to strike a mortal blow against

the bourgeoisie is drawing near: that the time is not far off when the people can lay hands upon the whole wealth of society and reduce the exploiter class to powerlessness: for us, as I say, there can be no hesitation. We shall throw ourselves into the social revolution body and soul, and since any government in our path, regardless of the hat it may be wearing, represents an obstacle, we shall render the ambitious *hors de combat* and sweep them aside the moment they venture to reach for the reins of our fortunes.

Enough of governments. Make way for the people, for anarchy!

## **ANARCHY: ITS PHILOSOPHY, ITS IDEAL (1896) [EXTRACTS]**

That a society restored to possession of all of the accumulated wealth within it, can largely provide everyone with a guarantee of plenty, in return for four or five hours of effective, manual toil at production each day, all who have reflected upon the matter are unanimously agreed with us. If, from birth, everyone was taught the provenance of the bread he eats, the home he inhabits, the book he reads and so on, and if everyone was used to complementing brain-work with manual labor, in some sphere of manual production, society might readily accomplish this task, without even reckoning upon the streamlining of production which the more or less near future may hold for us.

Indeed, one need only reflect a moment upon the unprecedented, unimaginable squandering of human resources which takes place today, to realize what productivity a civilized society is capable of, with such a tiny measure of work by everyone and such grand enterprises as it might undertake which are presently out of the question. Unfortunately, the metaphysics that goes by the name of political economy has never concerned itself with that which ought to be its very essence, the economics of forces.

As to the potential wealth of a communist society, equipped as we are equipped, there can no longer be any doubt. Where doubts arise, is when we come to investigate whether such a society could exist without man's being subject in his every action to State control: whether, in order to achieve well-being, European societies need not sacrifice that tiny morsel of personal freedom which they have gleaned over the century, at the cost of so many sacrifices.

One socialist faction argues that such an outcome cannot be achieved without sacrifice of freedom upon the altar of the State. Another faction, to which we belong, argues instead that only through abolition of the State, through achievement of wholesale freedom of the individual, through free agreement, utterly free association and federation, can we arrive at communism, common ownership of our inheritance and common production of all wealth.

This is the issue taking precedence over every other at the moment and

which socialism has to resolve, unless it wants to see all its efforts compromised and all its further development stymied.

If every socialist casts his mind back, he will doubtless call to mind the host of prejudices which sprang up in him when first he ventured to think that abolition of the capitalist system and private ownership of land and capital had become an historical necessity.

The same thing is underway today in him who hears tell for the first time of abolition of the State, its laws, its whole system of management, governmentalism and centralization likewise becoming a historical necessity: and that the abolition of the one is materially impossible without abolition of the other. Our entire education, provided, remember, by Church and State, in the interests of them both, bristles at the very idea.

Is it any the less correct, though? And in the slaughter of prejudices which we have already carried out for our emancipation's sake, must the State prejudice survive?

The working man, if he remains waged, would remain a slave of the one to whom he would be obliged to sell his strength, whether the purchaser be an individual or the State.

In the popular mind, among the thousands of opinions that float across the human mind, there is also a feeling that, if the State were to step into the employer's shoes as purchaser and overseer of the labor force, that would still be a hateful tyranny. The man of the people does not think in abstract terms, but rather in concrete terms, and this is why he feels that the abstraction "State" would, as far as he can see, take the form of numerous officials drawn from among his colleagues in the factory or workshop, and he knows where he stands with regard to their virtues: excellent comrades today, tomorrow they would turn into unbearable task-masters. And he looks around for that arrangement of society which does away with current ills without conjuring new ones into existence.

This is why collectivism has never captured the enthusiasm of the masses who always turn back to communism, but to a communism increasingly purged of the theocracy and Jacobin authoritarianism of the '40s, to a free, anarchist communism.

Let me go further. In continually spelling out my thoughts on what we have seen in the European social movement over the past quarter of a century, I cannot resist the belief that modern socialism is ineluctably fated to take a step forward in the direction of libertarian communism.

# KROPOTKIN IN THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION

*Although the anarchists' part in the Russian revolution will be dealt with in the second book of this anthology, we have to depart here from the chronological approach. In fact, in order not to split up Kropotkin's various writings, we have opted to skip a number of years and turn now to the important writings of the "anarchist prince," from the time that he returned to the land of his birth after the October revolution of 1917.*

## LETTER TO GEORG BRANDES<sup>2</sup> (1919)

Dearest friend:

At last, a chance to write to you, and I shall waste no time in seizing it, although I cannot be sure, of course, that this letter will reach you.

Both of us thank you from the bottom of our hearts for the fraternal interest you took in your old friend, when rumor had it that I had been arrested. There was absolutely no truth in that rumor, any more than in the tittle-tattle about the condition of my health.

The person who is to deliver this letter will tell you of the isolated life we lead in our little provincial town: at my time of life, it is materially impossible to participate in public affairs during a revolution, and it is not in my nature to dabble. We spent last winter in Moscow. We worked alongside a team of collaborators on the blueprint for a federalist republic. But the team was forced to break up, and I resumed a study of Ethics which I had begun in England fifteen years ago.

All that I can do now is offer you a general idea of the situation in Russia, which, in my view, is not properly reported in the West. Perhaps an analogy will account explain.

At present we are at the stage experienced by France during the Jacobin revolution, from September 1792 to July 1794, with this addition, that this now is a social revolution feeling its way.

The Jacobins' dictatorial approach was wrong. It was unable to create a stable organization and inevitably led on to reaction. But in June 1793, the Jacobins nevertheless brought off the abolition of feudal rights, which had begun in 1789 and which neither the Constituent nor the Legislative assemblies had been willing to complete. And they loudly proclaimed the political equality of every citizen. Two huge fundamental changes which swept around Europe during the 19th century.

Something of the sort is happening in Russia. The Bolsheviks are striving to introduce, through dictatorship of one faction of the Social Democratic Party, social ownership of land, industry and commerce. This change which they are straining to carry out is the underlying principle of communism. Unfortunately, the method by which they aim to impose, in a strongly centralized State, a communism reminiscent of Babeuf's, and bring the people's constructive endeavor to a halt, makes success utterly impossible. Which lines us up for an angry and nasty backlash. Even now the latter is trying to get itself organized so as to restore the old order, capitalizing upon the widespread exhaustion caused, first, by the war, and then by the famine we in central Russia are suffering and by the utter chaos existing in exchange and production—things inevitable during such a comprehensive revolution, carried out by decree.

In the West, there is talk of re-establishing "order" in Russia by means of armed intervention by the allies. Well, dear friend, you know what a crime against the whole social progress of Europe, in my view, was the attitude of those who toiled to break down Russia's power of resistance, which prolonged the war by a year, brought us German invasion under cover of a treaty, and cost rivers of blood in order to prevent all-conquering Germany from trampling Europe beneath its imperial boot. My feelings on this score, you are familiar with.<sup>3</sup>

And yet I protest as strenuously as I can against armed allied intervention of any sort in Russian affairs. Such intervention would result in an upsurge of Russian jingoism. It would bring back to us a chauvinist monarchy—the signs of it are already discernible—and, mark this well, it would inspire in the Russian people as a whole a feeling of hostility towards western Europe, an attitude which would have the saddest implications. The Americans have already grasped this.

Perhaps the belief is that by backing Admiral Koltchak and General Denikin,<sup>4</sup> one is supporting a liberal, republican party. But even that is a mistake. Whatever the personal intentions of these two military leaders may be, the vast majority of those who have rallied to them have different aims. Inevitably, what they would bring us would be a return to monarchy, reaction and a bloodbath.

Those of the allies who have a clear vision of events ought therefore to turn away from any armed intervention. Especially if they genuinely do wish to come to the assistance of Russia, they will find plenty of opportunity elsewhere.

Across the vast expanses of the central and northern provinces, we are short of bread. We have famine, with all that that implies. An entire generation is



wasting away. And we are denied the right to buy bread in the West!—How come? Is it the intention to give us back a Romanoff?

Everywhere in Russia we lack manufactured goods. The peasant pays crazy prices for a pitchfork, an ax, a handful of nails, a needle, a meter of any cloth at all. The four iron-clad wheels off a sorry-looking Russian cart go for a thousand rubles (equivalent, once upon a time, to 2,500 francs). In the Ukraine, things are even worse: there are no goods to be had any price.

Instead of playing the role that Austria, Prussia and Russia played in 1793 in relation to France, the allies ought to have pulled out all the stops to help the Russian people out of this dire situation. And rivers of blood would be spilled to send the Russian people back to the past, but it would not succeed. There is a new future to be built through the constructive articulation of a new life, which is already taking shape, in spite of everything and in which the allies ought to help us. Do not delay, come to the aid of our children! Come and help us in the constructive work required! And to that end, send us, not your diplomats and generals, but your bread, tools for the production of it and organizers who were able to be of such assistance to the allies over these five awful years in preventing economic chaos and repelling the Germans' barbarous invasion.

I am reminded that I should close this letter, which is overlong already. Let me do so by offering you a fraternal embrace.

# HOW COMMUNISM SHOULD NOT BE INTRODUCED

A LETTER TO THE WORKERS OF WESTERN EUROPE  
DMITROV, MOSCOW GUBERNIYA, APRIL 28, 1919

I have been asked whether I do not have a message for the workers of the western world. Assuredly, there is a lot to say and learn about the current events in Russia. As the message might be unduly long, let me just set out a few main points.

First of all, the workers of the civilized world and their friends in other classes ought to lobby their governments to abandon completely the notion of armed intervention in Russia's affairs, whether this be mounted overtly or in an underhand, military way or in the form of subsidies to different nations.

At this moment, Russia is undergoing a revolution as profound and important as those made by England in 1639–1648 and France in 1789–1794. Each nation ought to refuse the shameful role to which England, Prussia, Austria and Russia were reduced during the French revolution.

Furthermore, it should be remembered that the Russian revolution which is aiming to build a society in which the entire output of the combined efforts of labor, technical expertise and scientific knowledge would go wholly to the community itself, is not a mere accident of party political struggle. It has been incubated over almost a century of communist and socialist propaganda, ever since the days of Robert Owen, Saint-Simon and Fourier.<sup>1</sup> And although the attempt to usher in the new society by means of a one-party dictatorship may seem condemned to failure, it has to be acknowledged that the revolution has already introduced into our everyday life fresh ideas regarding the rights of labor, its true status in society and the duties of every citizen, and that these will endure.

Not just workers but all progressive elements in the civilized nations ought to cut off the support that they have hitherto given adversaries of the revolution. Not that there is nothing objectionable in the methods of the Bolshevik government. Far from it! But any armed intervention by a foreign power necessarily leads to a bolstering of the dictatorial tendencies of those

in government and stymies the efforts of those Russians ready to help Russia, regardless of their government, in the restoration of its life.

The evils inherent in party dictatorship have thus been magnified by the war-time circumstances amid which that party exists. The state of war has provided the pretext for reinforcing the dictatorial methods of the party as well as its tendency to centralise every detail of life within government hands, the upshot of which is to halt the enormous ramifications of the nation's normal activities. The native evils of State communism have been multiplied ten-fold, on the pretext that all of the miseries of our lives are ascribable to intervention by foreigners.

I ought to point out, too, that if the Allies' military intervention persists, it will assuredly spawn in Russia a feeling of resentment towards the western nations, a sentiment of which use will some day be made in future conflicts. Even now that resentment is growing.

In short, it is high time that the nations of western Europe entered into direct relations with the Russian nation. And in this regard, you, the working class and most advanced elements in every nation, ought to have your say.

One more word on the overall situation. The restoration of relations between the European nations, America and Russia in no way signifies the Russian nation's supremacy over the nationalities making up the empire of the tsars. Imperial Russia is dead and will not return from the grave. The future of its different provinces lies in the direction of a great federation. The natural territories of the various parts of this federation are quite distinct, as any of us conversant with Russia's history, ethnography and economic life are aware. All efforts to unite under a central command the constituent parts of the Russian Empire—Finland, the Baltic provinces, Lithuania, the Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia, Siberia, etc.—are assuredly doomed to fail. So it would be useful, were the western nations to declare that they recognise the right to independence of each and every part of the former Russian Empire.

My view is that this trend will continue. I see coming soon a time when each part of this federation will itself be a federation of rural communes and free cities. And I believe, further, that certain parts of western Europe will soon follow the example of this movement.

As far as our present economic and political position is concerned, the Russian revolution, being the continuation of the two great revolutions in England and France, is trying to venture beyond the point where France

stopped, when she managed to establish what was called *de facto* equality, which is to say, economic equality.

Regrettably, in Russia, this attempt has been mounted under the strongly centralized dictatorship of one party, the maximalist Social Democrats. An experiment along the same lines was conducted by Babeuf's extremely centralistic Jacobin conspiracy. I have to tell you candidly that, in my view, this attempt to erect a communist republic upon a base of strongly centralized State communism, under the iron law of a one-party dictatorship is heading for fiasco. We in Russia are beginning to learn how communism should not be introduced, even by a populace weary of the old regime and offering no active resistance to the experiment being conducted by the new governors. The idea of Soviets, that is, of workers' and peasants' councils, first advocated prior to the attempted revolution of 1905 and promptly realized by the February 1917 revolution, once tsarism had been overthrown, the idea of such councils controlling the country's political and economic life, is a grand idea. Especially as it necessarily leads to the idea that these councils ought to be made up of all who, through their own personal effort, play a real part in the production of the nation's wealth.

But as long as a country is governed by a one-party dictatorship, the workers' and peasants' councils obviously lose all significance. They are reduced to the passive role formerly played by the estates general and parliaments when these were summoned by the king and pitted against an all-powerful royal council.

A labor council ceases to be a free and substantial council when there is no press freedom in the land, and we have been in those circumstances for the past two years, supposedly because a state of war obtains. What is more, workers' and peasants' councils lose all significance when elections are not preceded by free electioneering, and when elections are conducted under the pressure from a party dictatorship. Of course, the usual excuse is that dictatorial legislation is inevitable as a means of combatting the old regime. But such law obviously becomes a retrograde step once the revolution buckles down to the construction of a new society upon a new economic foundation. It turns into a sentence of death upon the new construction.

The ways of overthrowing an ailing government are well known to history, ancient and modern. But when new forms of living have to be created, especially new forms of production and exchange, with no examples to imitate, when everything has to be built on the hoof, when a government

that undertakes to issue every inhabitant with lamp glass and matches shows that it is utterly incapable of managing with its officials, no matter how many of the latter there may be, that government becomes irksome. It builds up a bureaucracy so formidable that the French bureaucratic system, which requires the involvement of forty civil servants before a tree felled by storms upon a national highway can be sold off becomes child's play by comparison. This is what we are learning in Russia today. And this is what you western workers can and should avoid by all means if you have the success of social reconstruction at heart. Send your delegates over here to see how a social revolution operates in real life.

The tremendous constructive endeavor which a social revolution requires cannot be performed by a central government, even if it is guided by something more substantial than a few socialist and anarchist hand-books. It takes expertise, brains and the willing cooperation of a host of local specialized elements, who, alone, can successfully address the range of economic issues as they affect the locality. Rejecting such cooperation and falling back upon the genius of the party's dictators is tantamount to destroying the independent agent such as the *trade unions* (known in Russia as professional unions) and local cooperative organizations, by turning them into bureaucratic adjuncts of the party, as is currently the case. But that is the way not to make the revolution, the way to render its making impossible. And the reason why I feel it my duty to place you on your guard against borrowing such directives.

The imperialist conquerors of every nationality may want the populations of the one-time Russian empire to remain for as long as possible in miserable economic conditions and thus condemned to furnishing western and central Europe with raw materials, while the western industrialists will pocket all of the profits that Russians might have been able to reap from their labors. But the working classes of Europe and America, as well as the intelligentsia of these countries, assuredly understand that violence alone could trap Russia in such subjection. At the same time, the sympathies which our revolution evoked everywhere in Russia and in America show that you were happy to salute Russia as a new member of the international confraternity of nations. And you will assuredly soon notice that it is in the interests of all the workers of the world that Russia should be freed as soon as possible from the conditions presently arresting her development.

A few words more. The last war ushered in new living conditions for the civilized world. Socialism will surely make considerable progress and new

forms of more independent living will certainly be generated, with their foundations in local freedom and constructive initiative: these will be created either peacefully or by revolutionary means if the intelligent segments of the civilized nations do not collaborate in inevitable reconstruction.

But the success of that reconstruction will largely be dependent upon the chances for close cooperation between different nations. In order to bring this about, the working classes of every nation must be closely united and the notion of a great international of all the world's workers must be revived, not in the shape of a unity under the baton of a single party, as was the case with the Second International, and is again the case with the Third International. Such unions of course have every reason to exist, but outside of them, and uniting them all, there ought to be a union of all the world's trade unions, federated so as to deliver worldwide production from its present subjection to capital.

## VILKENS' LAST VISIT TO KROPOTKIN<sup>1</sup> (DECEMBER, 1920)

Kropotkin is seventy eight years old. In spite of his years, his thinking has retained all of its lucidity. His steps are as sprightly as ours. His memory inexhaustible. He speaks to us of the days of the Commune and rehearses tiny details, as if it had all happened just yesterday. He also relates tales of his youth, when he explored Siberia and the borders with China, with the same liveliness as a young schoolboy.

(. . .) Now the conversation turns to the Russian revolution. More than ever, Kropotkin is confirmed in his opinions: with their methods, the communists, instead of setting people on the road to communism, will finish up making its very name hateful to them.

Sincere they may well be: but their system prevents them in practice from introducing the slightest principle of communism. And, noting that no progress is being made in the work of the revolution, he foresees from this "that the people is not ready to endorse their decrees, that it will take time and changes of course." This is reasonable: the tale of political revolutions told all over again. The saddest thing is that they do not recognize and refuse to acknowledge their mistakes, and each passing day wrests a morsel of the conquests of the Revolution away from the masses, to be gobbled up by the centralist State.

In any event, he says, the experience of the Revolution is not wasted on the Russian people. It has awakened; it is on the move towards better prospects. Four years of revolution do more to raise a people's consciousness than a century spent vegetating.

—What is your view of the future of the Revolution, and, as you see it, what force might profitably replace the Bolsheviks?

—We should not place undue emphasis upon the masses' refusing indefinitely to back the Bolsheviks. By their methods, they themselves force them to lose interest. But they have access to a mighty military machine which, in terms of discipline, plays the role of the bourgeois armies. In any case, the Bolsheviks will come to grief through their own mistakes and, through their policy, they will have helped the Entente install the reaction, which the people fears, because everybody would have something for which to answer to the Whites.

—And if, through some misfortune, that were to happen, do you think that the power of the reaction would be bolstered?

—I think not. At best, it might endure for a few years, but the people, momentarily beaten, would bounce back with a vengeance, and the new Revolution would have experience and would march in step with revolutionary achievements in Europe.

—And what ought to be the attitude of the world proletariat with regard to the present Revolution?

—Without a doubt, it should carry on defending it, not just verbally any more, but by actions: for the bourgeoisie's hostility will diminish in the face of a steadfast attitude from the working class. And for the world proletariat, it will also be a good training for revolution. But defense of the revolution should not be confused with idolatry: the world proletariat should make ready to overtake the Russian model and rid itself in advance of every impediment to the masses' effective participation and not let itself be gulled by false formulas.



**RECOLLECTIONS OF KROPOTKIN<sup>1</sup>**

[We were in Moscow] when we had word from Dmitrov to say that our old comrade Peter Kropotkin had been stricken with pneumonia. The shock was all the greater because we had visited Peter in July and had found him in good health and in good humor. He seemed younger and in finer fettle than we had seen him last March. His flashing eyes and vivaciousness had shown us that he was in excellent condition. The Kropotkins' property was delightful in the summer sunshine, with all the flowers and Sophie's vegetable garden in full bloom. Peter had spoken to us with great pride about his wife and her green fingers. Taking Sasha<sup>2</sup> and me by the hand, he led us, with childish high spirits, to where Sophie had planted a special variety of salad plants. She had managed to grow heads as big as cabbages, with deliciously curly leaves. He had dug the soil himself, but it was Sophie who was the real expert, he reiterated. Her potato crop last winter had been so good that there were enough left over to swap for forage for their cow, and indeed to share with their neighbors in Dmitrov, who had few vegetables. Our dear Peter had frolicked in his garden while he talked to us about all these things as if they were world-shaking events. Our comrade's boyish spirit had been contagious and he enchanted us all with his charm and gaiety.

In the afternoon, in his studio, he became again the sage and thinker, clear-sighted and perspicacious in his evaluation of persons and events. We had talked about dictatorship and the methods imposed upon the revolution by necessity and those inherent in the nature of the party. I wanted Peter to help me better to understand the situation which was threatening to puncture my faith in revolution and the masses. Painstakingly, and with the sort of tenderness lavished upon a sick child, he had tried to set my mind at rest. He claimed that there was no reason to despair. He understood my inner turmoil, he said, but he was confident that, in time, I would learn to distinguish between the Revolution and the regime. They were worlds apart and the gulf between them necessarily had to deepen as time passed. The Russian Revolution was much greater than the French and carried a more powerful message for the whole world. It had made a deep impression upon the life of the masses everywhere and

no one could predict the rich harvest which mankind was going to reap from it. The communists who had committed themselves implicitly to the notion of a centralized State were doomed to misdirect the course of the revolution. Having political supremacy as their goal, they had inevitably become socialism's Jesuits, justifying any means just as long as it encompassed their ends. Their methods paralyzed the energies of the masses and terrorized folk. But without the people, without direct involvement of workers in the reconstruction of the country, nothing creative or fundamental could be achieved.

Our own comrades, Kropotkin had continued, had in the past failed to give due consideration to the fundamental elements of a social revolution. In any such upheaval, the basic factor was the organization of the country's economic life. The Russian Revolution was proof that we ought to have made preparations for that. He had come to the conclusion that syndicalism was probably about to supply what Russia most sorely needed: an instrument by means of which the economic and industrial reconstruction of the country might proceed. He was referring to anarcho-syndicalism, hinting that such an arrangement, with help from cooperatives, would rescue future revolutions from the fatal mistakes and ghastly suffering which Russia was enduring.

All of which flooded back to mind when I received the sad news of Kropotkin's illness. Leaving for Petrograd without having first paid another call on Peter was unthinkable. Efficient nurses were few and far between in Russia. I could tend him and render that service at least to my beloved mentor and friend.

I discovered that Peter's daughter, Alexandra, was in Moscow and about to set out for Dmitrov. She informed me that a very competent nurse, a Russian woman who had trained in England, had been placed in charge. Their little villa was already overcrowded and she advised me not to disturb Peter for the time being. Off she went to Dmitrov, promising to telephone me about her father's condition and whether there would be any point in my visiting.

Scarcely had I arrived back [in Petrograd] than Madame Ravish telephoned me to say that I was needed urgently in Dmitrov. She had had a message from Moscow asking me to come without delay. Peter had taken a turn for the worse and the family had begged her to tell me to come right away.

My train was beset by a terrible blizzard and we arrived in Moscow ten hours later than scheduled. There was no train for Dmitrov before the following evening and the roads were blocked by snowdrifts too deep for cars to pass. The telephone lines were down and there was no way to reach Dmitrov.

The evening train traveled with exasperating sluggishness, stopping repeat-

edly to take on fuel. It was four o'clock in the morning by the time we arrived. Along with Alexander Schapiro,<sup>3</sup> a close family friend of the Kropotkins, and Lavrov, a comrade from the Bakers' Union, I rushed towards the Kropotkins' villa. Alas! We were too late! Peter had breathed his last an hour earlier. He had died at four o'clock on the morning of February 8, 1921. His devastated widow told me that Peter had asked repeatedly whether I was on my way and when I would be arriving. Sophie was on the verge of collapse and, thanks to the need to tend her, I forgot the cruel conspiracy of circumstances which had denied me the chance to render the slightest service to the man who had given such a powerful fillip to my life and work.

Sophie informed us that Lenin, upon hearing of Peter's illness, had despatched the finest doctors from Moscow to Dmitrov, as well as provisions and sweets for the patient. He had also ordered that he be kept briefed regularly about Peter's condition and that these bulletins be carried by the newspapers. What a sad dénouement, that so much attention had been lavished, as he lay upon his death bed, upon the man who had twice been raided by the Cheka and been forced to go into reluctant retirement for that very reason! Peter Kropotkin had helped prepare the ground for the Revolution, but had been denied a part in its life and development: his voice had rung out throughout Russia in spite of tsarist persecution, but it had taken a communist dictatorship to silence it.

Peter never asked and never accepted any favors from any government, and would countenance no pomp and circumstance. So we decided that there should be no State interference in his funeral, and that it should not be degraded by the attendance of officials. Peter's last days on earth would be spent surrounded by his comrades only.

Schapiro and Pavlov set out for Moscow to track down Sasha and the other comrades from Petrograd. Along with the Moscow group, these were to take charge of the funeral arrangements. I stayed in Dmitrov to help Sophie prepare her dead beloved for removal to the capital for burial.

(. . .) Right up to the day when he had been forced to take to his bed, Peter had carried on working, in the most difficult circumstances, upon his book on Ethics which he had hoped would be his life's crowning achievement. His deepest regret in his declining hours was that he had not had just a little more time to complete what he had begun years earlier.

In the three last years of his life, Peter had been cut off from all close contact with the masses. At his death, such contact with them was restored

in full. Peasants, soldiers, intellectuals, men and women from a radius of several kilometers, as well as the entire Dmitrov community, flooded into Kropotkin's villa to pay final tribute to the man who had lived among them and shared their struggles and distresses.

Sasha arrived in Dmitrov with numerous Moscow comrades to help remove Peter's body to Moscow. The little village had never paid anyone such grand tribute as it did to Peter Kropotkin. The children had been most familiar with him and loved him on account of his playful, boyish nature. The schools closed that day as a sign of mourning for the friend who was leaving them. Large numbers of them gathered at the station and waved their hands in a farewell to Peter as the train slowly pulled out.

From Sasha, I discovered en route that the commission handling Peter Kropotkin's funeral arrangements, which he had helped run and of which he was the chairman, had already been the object of a lot of obstruction from the soviet authorities. The commission had been authorized to publish two of Peter's pamphlets and bring out a special edition of the bulletin in commemoration of Peter Kropotkin. Later, the Moscow soviet, chaired by Kamenev, demanded that the manuscripts for that bulletin be handed over to the censors. Sasha, Schapiro and other comrades objected, saying that that would delay publication. To buy time, they had promised that the bulletin would carry only commentaries upon Kropotkin's life and work. Then, all of a sudden, the censor remembered that he had too much work at the moment and that the bulletin would have to wait its turn. Which meant that the bulletin could not appear in time for the funeral, and it was obvious that the Bolsheviki were relying upon their usual delay tactics to hold it up until it was too late to serve its purpose. Our comrades resolved upon direct action. Lenin had often hijacked that anarchist idea, so why should the anarchists not reclaim it from him? Time was pressing and the matter was important enough to risk arrest over. They broke the seals which the Cheka had placed upon our old comrade Atabekian's printworks and our comrades worked like Trojans to prepare and get the bulletin ready before the funeral.

The homage paid to the respect and affection inspired by Peter Kropotkin turned Moscow into one enormous demonstration. From the moment the body arrived in the capital and was delivered to the trade union headquarters, through the two days when the corpse was on display in the marble hall, there was such a procession of people as had not been witnessed since the events of October.

The Kropotkin commission had sent a request to Lenin asking him to ensure that anarchists imprisoned in Moscow were temporarily released so that they could participate in the final tributes to their late mentor and friend. Lenin had promised to do so and the Communist Party's executive committee had instructed the Ve-Cheka (Russian Cheka) to release imprisoned anarchists "on their own recognizance" so that they might attend the funeral. But the Ve-Cheka was not, it seems, inclined to obey, either Lenin or the highest authority of its own party. It asked if the commission could guarantee the prisoners' return to prison. The commission offered its collective assurances. Whereupon the Ve-Cheka declared that "there were no anarchists imprisoned in Moscow." In point of fact, the Butyrky and the Cheka's own cells were crammed with comrades of ours rounded up during the raid on the Kharkov Conference, even though the latter, by virtue of an agreement between the soviet government and Nestor Makhno, had had official authorization. Furthermore, Sasha had secured admission to the Butyrky prison and had spoken with about twenty of our imprisoned comrades. In the company of the Russian anarchist Yartchuk, he had also visited the Moscow Cheka's holding cells and spoken with Aaron Baron,<sup>4</sup> who was acting at that time as the spokesman for a huge number of other imprisoned anarchists. Yet the Cheka persisted with its claim that there were "no anarchists imprisoned in Moscow."

Once again, the commission was obliged to resort to direct action. On the morning of the funeral, it instructed Alexandra Kropotkin to telephone the Moscow Soviet to say that this breach of promise would be publicly denounced and that the wreaths placed by the soviets and communist organizations were going to be removed, unless Lenin's promise was honored.

The great colonnaded hall was filled to overflowing: among those in attendance were several representatives from the European and American press. Our old friend Henry Alsberg, lately returned to Russia, was there. Another journalist, Arthur Ransome, was there representing the *Manchester Guardian*. They would certainly publicize the soviets' breach of promise. Since the world had been regaled about the care and attention lavished upon Peter Kropotkin by the soviet government during his final illness, publication of such a scandal had to be averted at any cost. Kamenev therefore asked for a delay and gave a solemn undertaking that the imprisoned anarchists would be freed in twenty minutes.

The funeral was delayed for one hour. The huge masses of mourners shivered in the cruel cold of Moscow, waiting for the imprisoned disciples

of the great deceased to arrive on the streets. In the end, arrive they did, but there were only seven of them in the entire Cheka prison. Of the comrades in the Butyrky prison, not one. At the last moment, the Cheka assured the commission that they had been released and were on their way. The paroled prisoners acted as pall-bearers. With pained pride, they bore the remains of their beloved comrade and mentor. The vast assembly greeted them with an impressive silence. Unarmed soldiers, sailors, students, children, trade union organizations representing every trade, groups of men and women representing the intelligentsia, peasants and many groups of anarchists with their red or black banners, a host united without compulsion, put into order without command, followed the lengthy route, over the period of two hours, as far as the Devishy cemetery on the outskirts of town.

At the Tolstoy museum, the strains of Chopin's funeral march greeted the cortege, as did a choir made up of disciples of the seer of Yasnaya Polyana. In token of gratitude, our comrades dipped their banners by way of a tribute from one great son of Russia to another.

As it passed in front of the Butyrky prison, the procession halted a second time and our banners were lowered by way of a final salute from Peter Kropotkin to the brave comrades waving him farewell from their barred windows. Spontaneous expression of deep-seated grief was a feature of the speeches made at our comrade's graveside by men representing a variety of political persuasions. The dominant tone was that the loss of Peter Kropotkin signified the loss of a tremendous moral beacon, the like of which no longer existed in our country.

For the first time since my arrival in Petrograd, my voice was heard in public. It sounded curiously harsh to me and incapable of expressing all that Peter meant to me.

The grief I felt at his death was bound up with my despair at the revolution's failure, which none of us had been able to forestall.

The sun set slowly on the horizon and the sky, bathed in a dark red, formed a fantastic baldachino over the freshly dug earth now covering Peter Kropotkin's final resting place.

The seven prisoners released on parole spent the evening with us and made their way back to prison only late in the night. Not expecting them, the warders had locked the gates and retired for the night. The men practically had to force their way in, so amazed were the warders to see these anarchists crazy enough to honor a promise made on their behalf by their comrades.

In the end, the anarchists from the Butyrky prison had not made it to the funeral. The Ve-cheka had alleged to the commission that they had refused to attend, although they had been offered the opportunity. We knew this to be a lie, but even so I decided to pay a personal visit to our prisoners to hear their version of events. This involved the odious necessity of seeking the Cheka's leave. I was taken into the private office of the head Chekist, a young lad with a gun at his belt and another on his desk. He stepped forward with hand extended and a fulsome greeting of "Dear comrade." He told me that his name was Brenner and that he had spent some time in America. He had been an anarchist and of course he knew Sasha very well, and myself too and knew all about our activities in the United States. He was proud to call us comrades. Of course, now he was with the communists, he explained, for it was his view that the current regime was a step in the direction of anarchism. The important thing was the revolution, and, since the Bolsheviks were working on its behalf, he was cooperating with them. But had I stopped being a revolutionary, given that I had declined to shake the fraternally outstretched hand of one of its defenders?

My answer to him was that I had never shaken the hand of a detective, much less of a policeman who had been an anarchist. I had come to gain access to the prison and wanted to know if my request would be granted.

(. . .) He got up and left the room. I waited for half an hour, wondering if I was a prisoner. It was happening to everyone in Russia, so why not me? Suddenly there were footsteps approaching, and the door opened wide. An elderly man, apparently a Chekist, gave me permission to enter the Butyrky prison.

Among a group of imprisoned comrades, I met several whom I had known in the United States: Fanny and Aaron Baron, Voline,<sup>5</sup> and others who had worked in America, as well as Russians from the Nabat organization whom I had met in Kharkov. A representative of the Ve-Cheka had called upon them, they said, and offered to release some of them, one by one, but not as a collective group, as had been agreed with the commission. Our comrades had bridled at this failure to honor the commitment given and had insisted that they should attend the Kropotkin funeral as a group or not at all. The man told them that he would have to report their demand to his superiors and would return shortly, with their final decision. But he had not returned. The comrades said that it was a matter of no importance because they had held their own meeting in memory of Kropotkin in the prison corridors, at which

they had honored him with impromptu speeches and revolutionary songs. With the aid of other politicals, they had turned the prison into a people's university, Voline told me. They offered courses in science and political economy, sociology and literature and taught common law prisoners how to read and write. In fact, they had a lot more freedom than we on the outside enjoyed, and we ought to envy them, they wise-cracked. But they feared that this haven of peace might not survive much longer.





NO GODS, NO MASTERS

VOLUME 3





**ERRICO  
MALATESTA**  
(1853–1932)



## ERRICO MALATESTA

Errico Malatesta was born in Italy's Caserta province on December 14, 1853, into a family of modest rural landowners. At the early age of fourteen years, he sent an insolent threatening letter to King Victor Emmanuel II, as a result of which he was arrested. He received his education in Naples at the seminary of the Scalloped Friars, going on to read medicine at university. A one-time republican who later repudiated Mazzini's patronage, he joined the International in 1871, a few months before the Paris Commune, falling in with its Bakuninist wing. In October 1876, he played an active part in the Berne congress of the "anti-authoritarian" International, where, straying somewhat from Bakunin's ideological legacy, he repudiated "collectivism" to become an exponent of "libertarian communism" (See Volume II) and also to broach the notion of "propaganda by deed." From then on, Malatesta, Carlo Cafiero and Kropotkin were inseparable.

In the province of Benevento in 1877, the first two named attempted to put their activism into effect, Blanquist-fashion. At the head of around thirty Internationalists, armed and following red flags, they seized the village of Lentino, issued arms to the population and put the public records to the torch. But the population remained passive onlookers and the army stepped in. Malatesta and Cafiero were arrested on the spot. Although they conceded that they had fired shots at the carabinieri, they were acquitted when brought to trial.

After lots of adventures in the Middle East, Malatesta left Marseilles for Geneva, where he joined Kropotkin in publishing the newspaper *Le Révolté*. Expelled from Switzerland and then from a number of other countries, he finally settled in London, where he turned his hand to a number of minor trades.

In 1881, the anarchists assembled in London for an international congress, and Malatesta suggested, to no avail, that an Anarchist International be formed (see below). Returning to Italy, he was able to resume his revolutionary activity and founded two newspapers there, *La Questione sociale* and *L'Anarchia*, which were anti-patriotic and anti-parliamentarist in tone. But soon, by 1884, he fell victim to repression once again. While a political trial was in progress, he managed to escape hidden in the crate of a sewing machine bound for South America. Meanwhile, he had published a "draft for reorganization of the International on exclusively anarchist foundations."

The year 1885 found him in Buenos Aires, where he launched another *Questione sociale* and became a trade union organizer. In 1889, after a lot of picaresque adventures, he turned his back on Latin America for France, then England, then Spain. This tireless little man was forever on the move. In London in 1896, (see below) Malatesta took part in the international socialist labor congress, attending as the delegate of the Spanish anarcho-syndicalists.

Returning illegally to Italy, he waged war there simultaneously against parliamentarism, individualism and marxism and parted company with Kropotkin, of whose “spontaneism” he was critical. He insisted upon the necessity of organizing anarchism as a party and became an advocate of trade union action as well as direct labor action.

But further adventures awaited him. Deported to the Italian islands, he escaped from there in 1889, making his way to England and thence to the United States and Cuba, returning to London in 1900, where he brought out a number of newspapers like *L'Internazionale* and *Lo Sciopero generale* (The General Strike).

In 1907, he was an active participant in the international anarchist congress in Amsterdam (see below). Not until 1913 did he quit England for Italy, where he met Mussolini, who was at that time a left-wing socialist and director of the newspaper *Avanti*. He had lengthy conversations with the future fascist “Duce,” finding him rather a skeptic when it came to the prospect of social revolution: to his friend Luigi Fabbri, he confided that this guy was revolutionary only on paper and there was nothing to be expected of him.

In Ancona, Malatesta published the newspaper *Volontà*, which he had launched earlier in London and proved himself a tireless agitator. In June 1914, he lit the fuse of the “Red Week.” Disturbances erupted after the forces of law and order massacred unarmed demonstrators. The people took over the city. The trade unions called a nationwide general strike. The army stepped in. Malatesta was forced to flee, returning to England.

The First World War found him faithful to working class internationalism and he indignantly upbraided Kropotkin for his support for the war (see below). By the end of 1919, he was able to leave London to return to Italy, where he was greeted by enthusiastic crowds. The *Corriere della Sera* of January 20, 1920 portrayed him as “one of the greatest figures in Italian life.” His newspaper *Umanità Nova* had a print-run of 50,000 copies and he became a leading light of an anarcho-syndicalist labor organization, the *Unione Sindacalista Italiana* (USI).

The years 1919 to 1922 saw Malatesta at the height of his career as a revolutionary militant and agitator. He transferred his newspaper to Rome and attempted to conclude an antifascist “Labor Alliance” with the political parties and trade unions: in July 1922, the Alliance called a general strike, but the attempt was smashed by the rising power of the fascist blackshirts. *Umanità Nova* was banned shortly after the March on Rome and Malatesta’s picture was burned in public. Even so, he managed to bring out a bimonthly review, *Pensiero e Volontà*, in 1924: though frequently censored, it survived into 1926. It carried articles of consummate maturity from him.

From the end of 1926 onwards, the aged Malatesta, whom fascist totalitarianism had reduced to silence (except for a few articles which he managed to smuggle out of the country), was living under house arrest, which is what stopped him from joining the republican revolution in Spain in 1931 as he would have wished. He died on July 22, 1932.



## REVOLUTION AND REACTION

REVOLUTION: is the creation of new, living institutions, new groupings and new social relations. It is also the destruction of privilege and monopoly, the spirit of a new justice and fraternity, of that liberty which should overhaul the whole life of society, the moral level and material circumstances of the masses, prompting them to look to their own future through intelligent direct action.

REVOLUTION: is organization of all public services by those working in them, in their own interest as much as in the public's interest.

REVOLUTION: is abolition of all constraint, autonomy for groups, communes and regions.

REVOLUTION: is free federation conjured into existence by the yearning for human brotherhood, by individual and collective interests and by the demands of production and defense.

REVOLUTION: is the constitution of countless free groupings rooted in such ideas, desires and tastes of all sorts as are to be found in men.

REVOLUTION: is the formation and proliferation of thousands of communal, regional and national representative bodies which, while possessed of no legislative authority, are of service in articulating and coordinating people's wishes, over short distances and long, operating by means of reports, advice and example.

REVOLUTION: is liberty tempered in the crucible of action: it survives as long as independence does, which is to say, until such time as others, seizing upon the weariness descending upon the masses, and the inevitable disappointment that comes in the wake of the unduly high hopes, probable errors and failings of men, manage to found a power which, sustained by an army of conscripts or mercenaries, lays down the law and halts the movement in its tracks, at which point the reaction begins.

### ORGANIZATION WITHOUT AUTHORITY<sup>1</sup>

Believing, under the sway of received authoritarian education, that authority is the essence of social organization, they [certain anarchists] have, in order

to combat the former, resisted and denied the latter (...) The fundamental error of those anarchists who are opposed to organization is believing that organization is not feasible without authority and, having once accepted that hypothesis, preferring to abjure all organization rather than countenance the slightest authority (...) If we held that organization could not exist without authority, we would be authoritarians, because we would still prefer the authority that hobbles life and makes it miserable over the dis-organization that renders it an impossibility.

## ON THE NECESSITY OF ORGANIZATION<sup>2</sup>

Organization is only the practice of cooperation and solidarity, the natural and necessary condition of social life, an ineluctable fact forcing itself upon everyone, upon human society generally as well as upon any group of people with a common aim to strive for.

Man does not wish, nor has he the ability, to live in isolation. He cannot even become truly a man and meet his material and moral requirements other than in society and through cooperation with his fellows. So it is inevitable that all who do not organize themselves freely, either because they cannot, or because they are not alive to the urgent necessity of so doing, should have to endure the organization established by other individuals ordinarily constituted as a ruling class or group, for the purpose of exploiting other people's labor for their own benefit.

And the age-old oppression of the masses by a tiny number of privileged has always been the consequence of most individuals' inability to come to some accommodation, to organize alongside other workers on the basis of shared interests and persuasions, for the purposes of production and enjoyment and self-defense against the exploiters and oppressors. Anarchism offers a remedy for this state of affairs, with its underlying principle of free organization, generated and sustained by the free will of the associated with no authority of any sort, which is to say, without any individual's having the right to foist his wishes upon anyone else. So it is only natural that anarchists should seek to apply to their private lives and party life, this very same principle upon which, they hold, the whole of human society should be founded.

Certain controversies have created the impression that there are some anarchists inimical to all organization, but in fact the many, the all too many disputations we have had upon this matter, even when they have been obscured by semantics or poisoned by personality issues, essentially have had to do with

the modality and not the principle of organization. Thus, some comrades who are verbally loudest in their opposition to organization organize like everyone else and, often, better than the rest, whenever they are seriously intent upon achieving something.

## ANARCHY <sup>1</sup>

The word Anarchy comes to us from the Greek and signifies without government, the condition of a people governing itself without benefit of constituted authority.

Before a whole category of thinkers ever deemed such organization possible and desirable, before it was ever adopted as a goal by a party which has since become one of the prime factors in modern social struggles, the word Anarchy was generally taken in the sense of disorder, confusion: to this very day, it is taken by the ignorant masses and by adversaries concerned to hide the truth to mean just that.

As government was held to be necessary, in that it was accepted that without government there could be naught but disorder and confusion, it is only natural, and indeed logical, that the term Anarchy, signifying absence of government, should also signify absence of order.

The phenomenon is not without precedent in the history of words. In the days and in the countries where the people believed in the necessity of government by one person (monarchy), the term Republic, signifying government by majority, was taken in the sense of disorder and confusion: the very same meaning still attaches to it in the popular parlance in virtually every country.

Do but change minds and persuade the public that not only is government not a necessity, but that it is extremely dangerous and harmful, and the word Anarchy, precisely because it signifies absence of government, would imply, as far as everyone is concerned: natural order, harmony of everyone's needs and interests, utter freedom in solidarity.

It is argued, incorrectly, that the anarchists made a poor choice of name, since that name is misconstrued by the masses and susceptible to misinterpretation. The error resides, not in the word, but in the thing: and the difficulty encountered by anarchists in their propaganda springs, not from the name they espouse, but from the fact that their outlook sits ill with all of the age-old prejudices which people cherish regarding the function of government or, to use the common parlance, regarding the State.

What is government?

The metaphysical tendency (which is an affliction of the mind whereby man, having, by means of logic, abstracted the qualities of an entity, succumbs to a sort of hallucination whereby he mistakes the abstraction for the reality), the metaphysical tendency, shall we say, which, for all of the buffeting of positive science, is still deeply rooted in the minds of most contemporaries, ensures that many think of government as a moral entity, endowed with certain attributes of reason, justice and equity quite separate from the personnel of the government.

For them, the government, or rather, the State, is the abstract power of society: it is the representative, albeit the abstract representative, of the general interest: it is the expression of the rights of all, construed as a limit upon the rights of each. This way of thinking about government is supported by interested parties preoccupied with salvaging the principle of authority and seeing it outlive the shortcomings and errors of those who succeed one another in the exercise of power.

We see government as the collectivity of those who govern: and governments, kings, presidents, ministers, deputies, etc., are those endowed with the faculty of making laws in order to regulate the relations between men and of having those laws carried out; of prescribing and levying taxes; of enforcing military service; of judging and punishing those who trespass against the laws, of supervising and sanctioning private contracts, of monopolizing certain areas of production and certain public services, or, should they so desire, the whole of production and every public service; of expediting or obstructing the exchange of products; of declaring war or concluding peace with governments from other countries; of granting or withholding franchises, etc. Governors, in short, are those who, to a greater or lesser extent, are empowered to make use of society's resources, or of everyone's physical, intellectual and economic wherewithal, in order to compel everyone to do their will. As we see it, this faculty constitutes the principle of government, the principle of authority.

But what is government's *raison d'être*?

Why abdicate our own freedom, our own initiative into the hands of a few individuals? Why empower them to arrogate the power of all to themselves, with or without the consent of the individual, and to do with it what they will? Are they so exceptionally gifted that they can, with some semblance of reason, supplant the masses and look to men's interests better than the people concerned could do? Are they so infallible and incorruptible that the fate of

each and every one can prudently be entrusted to their kind hearts?

And even were there men of boundless kindness and learning in existence, and, to take a hypothesis which has never been proved in history and which, we believe, is not susceptible to verification, even if the power of government were to be bestowed upon the most competent and the best, the possession of power would add nothing to their power of beneficence, and would, rather, paralyze and destroy it on account of their finding themselves confronted with the necessity of concerning themselves with so many things beyond their understanding and, above all, of squandering the greater part of their energies upon keeping themselves in power, appeasing friends, quelling malcontents and thwarting rebels.

Moreover, be they good or bad, wise or ignorant, what are governments? Who appoints them to their elevated position? Do they prevail of themselves by right of war, conquest or revolution? In which case, what assurance does the people have that they are prompted by considerations of general usefulness? It is a straightforward matter of usurpation; and their subjects, should they be unhappy, have no recourse but force if they are to shrug off the yoke. Are they chosen by a class, by a party? In which case it is the interests and ideas of that class which will prevail, while others' wishes and interests will be sacrificed. Are they elected by universal suffrage? In which case the sole criterion is numbers, which is assuredly no proof either of equity, reason or competence. Those elected will be the ones best able to gull the masses, and the minority, which may well be a half minus one, will be sacrificed: and that is without taking into account the fact that experience teaches there is no way of devising an electoral machinery to ensure that those elected are at least truly representative of the majority.

Many and varied are the theories by means of which attempts have been made to explain away and justify the existence of government. All in all, they are all founded upon the presumption, confessed or not, that men have contrary interests and that it takes an outside force to compel some to respect the interests of the rest, by prescribing and imposing such a line of conduct which would, insofar as possible, reconcile the conflicting interests and afford each of them as much gratification as possible with the least possible sacrifice.

If, say authoritarianism's theoreticians, an individual's interests, inclinations and desires are at odds with those of another individual, or even of society as a whole, who is to be entitled and empowered to compel him to respect the interests of the others? Who is to prevent such a citizen from trespassing

against the general will? The freedom of each, they contend, is bounded by the freedom of others, but who is to set such boundaries and enforce respect for them? The natural antagonisms of interests and enthusiasms create the need for government and justify authority's posing as moderator in the social strife, marking out the boundaries of everyone's rights and duties.

So runs the theory: but, if they are to be just, theories must be founded upon facts and have the capacity to explain them, and we know that in social economy, theories are all too often devised in justification of facts, which is to say, in defense of privilege and in order to have it blithely accepted by those who are its victims.

Let us examine the facts instead.

Throughout the whole course of history, as well as in our own day, government has been, either the brutal, violent, arbitrary rule of a few over the mass, or a tool designed to guarantee the rule and the privilege those who, on foot of force or guile or heredity, have laid claim to all of the wherewithal of existence, particularly the soil, and utilize it in order to keep the people in servitude and to have it work for them. Men are doubly oppressed: either directly, by brute force and physical violence; or indirectly, by being denied the means of subsistence, thereby reducing them to powerlessness. The former mode is the source of power, that is, political privilege; the second is the root of economic privilege.

Men can further be oppressed by working upon their intellect and their feelings, as represented by religious or "academic" power, but since the mind is merely a product of material forces, falsehood and the bodies set up in order to peddle it have no reason to exist except insofar as they are the product of economic and political privilege, a means of defending and consolidating the latter.

Today, government, made up of property-owners and of people in their service, is wholly at the disposal of the propertied: so much so that the wealthiest often even disdain to belong to it. Rothschild has no need to be either deputy or minister: it is enough that he has deputies and ministers to do his bidding.

In many countries, the proletariat nominally enjoys a greater or lesser part in the election of the government. This is a concession granted by the bourgeoisie, either in order to secure popular backing in its struggle against royal or aristocratic power, or in order to divert the people away from the notion of self-emancipation, by affording it a semblance of sovereignty. Whether or not the bourgeoisie anticipated this, from the moment it granted

the people the right to vote, it is a certainty that that right turned out to be quite illusory, good only for consolidating the power of the bourgeoisie, by affording the most vigorous portion of the proletariat the illusory hope of achieving power.

Even with universal suffrage, we might indeed say particularly with universal suffrage, government has remained the bourgeoisie's serf and gendarme. Were it otherwise, were the government to threaten to turn hostile, if democracy could be anything other than a means of deceiving the people, the bourgeoisie, its interests in jeopardy, would make ready for revolt and would utilize all of the strength and influence afforded it by its possession of wealth in order to call the government to order as a mere gendarme doing its bidding.

At all times and everywhere, whatever the name by which government has been known, whatever its origins and its organization, its essential function has always been that of oppressing and exploiting the masses and defending the oppressors and usurpers: its chief organs and vital characteristics are the gendarme and tax-collector, the soldier and the jailer, unfailingly joined by the peddler of lies, priest or professor, paid and protected by the government to enslave minds and make them suffer the yoke without complaint.

A government cannot exist for long unless it conceals its nature behind some semblance of general serviceability: it cannot ensure respect for the life of the privileged without seeming to seek respect for everyone's life; it cannot secure acceptance for the privileges of some without going through the motions of safe-guarding everybody's rights. "The law," Kropotkin says, which is to say, those who make the law, meaning the government, "the law has played upon man's social sentiments in order to secure the passage, along with moral precepts readily acceptable to man, orders servicing the minority of despoilers against whom he would have revolted."

A government can scarcely want the break-up of society, because that would signify the disappearance of victims for it and the ruling class to exploit. It cannot allow society to regulate itself without official interference, because then the people would very quickly realize that government serves no purpose, other than to defend the property-owners who keep it hungry, and would make preparation for ridding itself of governments and property-owners.

Today, faced with the urgent and menacing demands of the proletariat, governments display a tendency to meddle in dealings between employers and workers. In so doing, they try to derail the workers' movement and, by



dint of a few deceitful reforms, to prevent the poor from seizing for themselves all that they need, which is to say, as great a morsel of well-being as the others.

Furthermore, it has to be borne in mind that, on the one hand, the bourgeois, which is to say the property-owners, are themselves continually in the process of waging war on one another and gobbling one another up, and, on the other, that the government, although child, slave and protector of the bourgeoisie, tends, like any other serf, to seek its own emancipation, and, like any protector, to lord it over the protected. Hence, among the conservatives, this see-sawing, this tug of war, these concessions awarded and then withdrawn, this questing after allies against the people, this game which constitutes the science of those who govern and which deludes the ingenuous and the lazy into forever waiting for salvation from above.

The government, or, as it is called, the referee "State," arbitrating in social struggles, impartial administrator of public interests, is a lie, an illusion, a utopia never attained and never attainable.

If men's interests were necessarily in conflict one with another, if strife between men was a necessary law of human society, if the liberty of some set a boundary upon the liberty of others, then everyone would always want to see his interests succeed over those of others: everyone would seek to expand his freedom at the expense of his neighbor's. If there had to be government, not because it might be of greater or lesser use to every member of a society, but because the victors would like to assure themselves of the fruits of their victory, by firmly subjugating the vanquished, and spare themselves the burden of being forever on the defensive, by entrusting its defense to men specially trained for gendarme duties, then humanity would be doomed to perish or to remain forever torn between the tyranny of the victors and the rebellion of the vanquished.

(...) Today, the tremendous expansion which has taken place in production, the spread of these needs which can never be met except with the assistance of a huge number of men from every country, the communications media, the habit of travel, science, literature, trade, and indeed wars have knit and increasingly are knitting humanity into a single body, the mutually solidary parts of which look no further than the welfare of the other parts and of the whole for their own scope and freedom to develop.

Abolition of government does not and cannot signify destruction of the social bond. Quite the opposite: the cooperation which today is forced and which is

today directly beneficial to a few, will be free, voluntary and direct, working to the advantage of all and will be all the more intense and effective for that.

The social instinct, the sentiment of solidarity, would flourish in the highest degree: every man will do all that he can for the good of other men, in order to satisfy his feelings of affection as well as out of a properly understood self-interest.

Out of the free collaboration of everyone, thanks to the spontaneous combination of men in accordance with their needs and sympathies, from the bottom up, from the simple to the complex, starting from the most immediate interests and working towards the most general, there will arise a social organization, the goal of which will be the greatest well-being and fullest freedom of all, and which will bind the whole of humanity into one fraternal community; which will amend and improve itself in accordance with the amendments, circumstances and lessons of experience.

Such a society of free men, such a society of friends, is Anarchy.

But suppose that government does not, of itself, constitute a privileged class and that it can live without creating about itself a new class of privileged, while remaining the representative, the slave if you will, of the whole of society. Of what further use would it be? In what and how would it add to the strength, intelligence, spirit of solidarity and concern for the welfare of all and of future humanity which would, by then, be present in the society?

Here again, we have the old saw about the bound man who, having managed to survive despite his bonds, regards them as a necessary circumstance of his existence.

We have grown accustomed to living under a government that commandeers all of the strength, intelligence and resolution which it can bend to its purposes and hobbles, paralyses and does away with any that are not useful or hostile to it, and we imagine that everything done in society is the handiwork of government, and that, without government, society would be bereft of strength, intelligence and goodwill. Thus, the property-owner who has staked claim to the land has it worked to his private benefit, leaving the worker no more than is strictly needed so that he can willingly carry on working, and the enslaved worker thinks that, but for the employer, he could not live, as if the latter had created the earth and the forces of nature.

(...) The existence of a government, even were it, to take our hypothesis, the ideal government of the authoritarian socialists, far from giving a boost to society's productive, organizational and protective forces, would stunt

them beyond measure, by restricting initiative to a few and affording that few the right to do anything, without, of course, affording them the gift of omniscience.

Indeed, if you remove from legislation and from all of the works of government everything included therein to defend the privileged and which represents the wishes of the privileged themselves, what is there left, other than the results of everybody's activity?

Moreover, in order to understand how a society can live without government, one need only look into the depths of the present society, and one will see how, in fact, the greater part, the essential part of the life of society, carries on, even today, outside of government intervention, and how government intervenes only in order to exploit the masses, to defend the privileged and, finally, to sanction, quite pointlessly, everything that gets done without it and indeed despite and against it.

Men work, trade, study, travel and observe how they will the rules of morality and hygiene, capitalize upon the advances of science and art, and sustain an infinite range of dealings with one another, without being sensible of any need for someone to prescribe the manner in which these should be conducted. And it is precisely those affairs into which government has no input that go best, engender the least strife and conform to everybody's wishes, in such a way that everybody affords them their custom and consent.

(...) Government, let me say again, is the body of individuals who have received or have assumed the right and the wherewithal to make laws and to force people to obey; the administrator, the engineer, etc., are, by contrast, men who receive or who assume the task of performing some task and who do so. "Government" signifies delegation of power, which is to say the abdication of everyone's initiative and sovereignty into the hands of a few. "Administration" signifies delegation of work, which is to say, task assigned and task accepted, and free exchange of services on the basis of free contracts.

He who governs is a privileged person, since he has the right to command others and utilize others' strengths in order to bring about the triumph of his own ideas and wishes. The administrator, the technical director, etc., are workers like all the rest—provided, of course, that we are speaking of a society wherein everyone has equal access to growth, where everyone is, or can be simultaneously brainworkers and manual workers, wherein all tasks, all duties entail equal entitlement to enjoyment of social amenities. The function of government should not be confused with the function of administration, for

they are different in essence, for, whereas today they may be mistaken one for the other, this can be attributed to economic and political privilege.

But let us move on speedily to the functions for which government is regarded—by all who are not anarchists—as truly indispensable: the defense of a society, within and without, which is to say, “war,” “policing,” and “justice.”

Once governments have been done away with and society’s wealth placed at the disposal of all, all of the antagonisms between different peoples will very quickly evaporate and there will be no more justification for war.

(...) Let us suppose, though, that the governments of countries as yet unemancipated should attempt to reduce a free people to servitude again. Will the latter require a government in order to defend itself? The waging of warfare requires men with the requisite geographical and technical expertise, and, above all, masses willing to fight. A government can add nothing to the competence of the one, nor to the resolution and courage of the other. Historical experience teaches us how a people truly desirous of defending its own country is invincible: in Italy, everybody knows how thrones collapsed and regular armies made up of conscripts or enlisted men melted away before the volunteer corps (an anarchistic formation).

And what of “policing”? What of “justice”? Many imagine that if there were no gendarmes, police and judges around, everyone would be at liberty to kill, rape and maim his neighbor: that the anarchists, in the name of their principles, would like to see respected this queer freedom that rapes and destroys the liberty and life of other folk. They are all but convinced that, once we have destroyed government and private property, we would blithely allow both to be re-established, out of regard for the “liberty” of those who might feel the need to be governors and proprietors. A truly queer construction to place upon our ideas! True, it is easier, with a shrug of the shoulders, to dispose of them that way rather than take the trouble to refute them.

The liberty we seek, for ourselves and for others, is not that absolute, abstract, metaphysical liberty which, in practice, inevitably translates into oppression of the weak, but rather, real liberty, the achievable liberty represented by conscious community of interests and willing solidarity. We proclaim the maxim: “Do what you will,” and we condense our program, so to speak, into that, because, as will readily be understood, we are convinced that in a harmonious society, in a society without government and without property, “each will want what will be his duty.”

(...) Were it not for the equivocation by means of which an attempt is made to head off the social revolution, we might assert that anarchy is a synonym for socialism.

# MALATESTA AND THE ANARCHISTS AT THE LONDON CONGRESS (1896)

*The “anti-authoritarian” International was defunct, on account of its lack of homogeneity, following the Verviers congress in 1877. In 1881, the anarchists had tried to meet for an international congress in London in order to launch a purely anarchist International there. But the proposal, emanating from Malatesta (see above) had come to nothing, primarily because of the French anarchists’ display of repugnance as far as organization was concerned. Not that Malatesta was discouraged by this. In 1884, he returned to his suggestion that a new International be launched that would, according to him, have had to be at once “communist, anarchist, anti-religious, revolutionary and anti-parliamentary.” But this plan was a slow burner and anarchists had become increasingly isolated from the laboring masses whom the reformists had had growing success in marshaling: in 1889, Social Democrats from several countries met in Paris to lay the groundwork for what was to become the Second International. A few anarchists who showed up at this gathering were made to feel unwelcome and there were violent incidents: the Social Democrats, by sheer force of numbers, silenced any contradictions from the libertarians.*

*There was a similar to-do at the international socialist congress in Brussels in 1891, with the anarchists being expelled to cat-calls. This time, though, a significant number of British, Dutch and Italian workers’ delegates had pulled out of the congress by way of a protest.*

*At the next congress held in Zurich in 1893, the Social Democrats decided, by way of a precaution, that henceforth, in addition to trade union organizations, they would admit only socialist parties and groupings in agreement with the need for political activity, by which they meant taking power through the ballot-box.*

*When a new international socialist congress met in London in July 1896, a few French and Italian anarchists had seen fit to ensure that they were delegated to represent labor unions. But this way of circumventing the obstacle did nothing to defuse the reformists’ venom, and the latter’s behavior, as a pile of documents will reveal, was nothing short of despicable.*

*Thus, as the libertarian writer Victor Serge was to write “anarchism has been a profoundly healthy backlash against the corruption of late 19th century socialism.”<sup>1</sup> Lenin’s view was not far removed from that.<sup>2</sup>*

\*Most of the texts that follow are taken from Paul Delesalle's historical introduction to the minutes of the *Congrès anarchiste internationale de 1907* (Paris, 1908), and from Augustin Hamon's book *Les Socialistes au Congrès de Londres*, 1897.

PAUL DELESALLE:<sup>3</sup> In France the divorce between anarchists and social democrats dates from 1880. The previous year, at the Marseilles congress, all tendencies had rubbed shoulders: possibilists, collectivists and anarchists had lined up under the same banner.

EUGÈNE FOURNIERE:<sup>4</sup> We were then separated from the anarchists by an extremely narrow, rather idealistic, or rather semantic margin (...). There were anarchists inside the *L'Égalité* group itself, right up until 1890. Not until the point where the young Parti ouvrier made up its mind to contest elections did they walk out on us, and it was at the Le Havre congress (November, 1880) that the program drafted in London at the dictation of Karl Marx and offered to us for approval by [Benoît] Malon<sup>5</sup> and which set the seal upon the split between anarchists and [socialists] was adopted.

PAUL DELESALLE: The divorce was final and was quickly to extend to anarchists and social democrats in every country. However, the anarchists, or, to be more precise, a number of them, never stopped, in spite of everything, thinking of themselves spiritually as members of the great family of world-wide socialism. So when, in Paris in 1889 and in Brussels in 1891, the social democrats attempted to revive the practice of international socialist congresses, some anarchists reckoned they could participate in this.

Their presence triggered the most acrimonious clashes. The social democrats, with the force of numbers behind them, stifled any contradiction from their adversaries who were expelled to the sound of catcalls. "It is true," wrote Bernard Lazare (*Echo de Paris*, July, 1896), "that a great number of the English, Dutch and Italian workers' delegates walked out in protest. However, as the victors did not yet feel sufficiently strong, they passed no resolution of significance and chose to side-step the issue of parliamentarism and that of alliance with governmental parties. Nevertheless, the attitude of the majority plainly signified: we are no longer going to concern ourselves with economic struggles but with political struggles, and we will replace revolutionary action with lawful, peaceful action."

At the following congress, which was held in Zurich in 1893, the social democrats finally succeeded (or so they believed, at any rate) in disposing of their adversaries.

## CIRCULAR PASSED AT THE ZURICH CONGRESS AND ISSUED IN 1895

All workers' trades councils will be admitted to congresses; so too will those socialist parties and organizations that acknowledge the necessity of organizing the workers and of political action. By political action, it is meant that, as far as possible, the workers' organizations seek to utilize or capture political rights and the machinery of law-making, in order to bring about the triumph of the proletariat's interests and the conquest of political power.

GUSTAVE ROUANET:<sup>6</sup> The anarchists' doctrines are the very antipodes of ours (...) Socialism and anarchy are mutually exclusive terms.

ARTICLE BY DOMELA NIEUWENHUIS:<sup>7</sup> Shame on those who will exclude, on those who will divide instead of uniting. The world is to witness a re-enactment of the contest between Marx and Bakunin in 1872. It will be a fresh contest between authority and liberty. Just imagine men like Kropotkin, Tcherkessoff,<sup>8</sup> Cipriani<sup>9</sup> and lots of others barred from the congress and you have to concede that this is no longer going to be a socialist congress, but only a parliamentary congress, a reformist congress of social democrats, a congress of one sect. Make up your mind what you want to be: a serious congress of socialists discussing all of the issues of interest to socialists, or a congress of sectarians which has excluded as heretics many a man who has fought and suffered for the people's cause.

### PAUL DELESALLE

*At the following congress (London, July 26 to August 1, 1896), numerous anarchists showed up, not, it is true, in their capacity as anarchists, but as trade union members, delegates from trades councils (Jean Grave, Errico Malatesta, Émile Pouget, Fernand Pelloutier, Tortelier, Paul Delesalle, etc.)<sup>10</sup> At which point the social democrats, following a three-day battle in which they failed to gain the upper hand, issued these famous resolutions, barring from future congresses all groupings, even trades bodies, which might decline to acknowledge the "necessity" of parliamentarism.*

*At the opening of the proceedings of the London Congress, on July 27, 1896, Paul Delesalle took the rostrum and attempted to speak. The interpreter, a young French student, seized him in a bear-hug and flung him violently down the steps, in which action Delesalle suffered bruising.*

JEAN JAURES:<sup>11</sup> If the anarchists, who have evolved considerably, have entered the trade unions in order to turn them into revolutionary groups,



let them say so (...) We will repudiate the organizations that have delegated them, for we cannot countenance anarchist theories.

FERNAND PELLOUTIER: By selecting me as its delegate the Federation of Bourses du Travail meant to signify that the economic movement should take priority over electioneering. Mr. Jaures is well aware that the workers do not, at any price, want their money to be used for electoral activity.

GUSTAVE DELORY:<sup>12</sup> The anarchists are the adversaries of all organization, and we are here in order to get organized and come to agreement on concerted action. So there is no possibility of their being admitted.

JULES GUESDE: Parliamentary action is the socialist principle par excellence. There is no place here for its enemies. We must first take government (...) Anything else is only mystification, and, what is more, treachery. Those who dream of different action have nothing for it but to hold another congress.

JEAN JAURES: I ask you formally to endorse the crucial decision taken at the Zurich Congress, which is to say, the absolute necessity of political action.

H. M. HYNDMAN:<sup>13</sup> Anarchy is disorder: it has no place at this congress.

DOMELA NIEUWENHUIS: It is true that this congress is not an anarchist congress, but it is also true that it is not a social democratic congress. Every socialist is entitled to attend.

JEAN JAURES: We are elected socialists and we are more entitled to be at a congress than with a mandate from some insignificant trades unions with a membership of four or five people.

ALEXANDRE MILLERAND:<sup>14</sup> We formally refuse to have any association with them [the anarchists] (...) Socialism can only come to pass if it remains true to itself and refrains from lining up alongside anarchy.

DOMELA NIEUWENHUIS: We are withdrawing, having no desire to participate any longer in a sham mounted by the social democracy for the greater glory of a few ambitious individuals.

HENRI VAN KOL:<sup>15</sup> Bon voyage!

AUGUST BEBEL:<sup>16</sup> Far from saying to the workers, as the anarchists do "Vote no more!" I will tell them, "Vote again and keep on voting!"

WILHELM LIEBKNECHT:<sup>17</sup> [For the next congress] I ask that anarchists be excluded, no matter the capacity in which they may show up.

### AUGUSTIN HAMON'S COMMENTS

The speeches were abridged (...) while Mrs. Marx-Aveling [Karl Marx's daughter] was translating.

The English at all times voted in favor of exclusion, meaning to bar the individualist anarchists hostile to all organization of whatever sort. They reckoned that they were chasing away dynamiters and bandits.

This congress was characterized by a brazen authoritarianism (...) an extraordinary intolerance.

The Germans were the directors. Assisted by Mr. and Mrs. Aveling, they were the true masters of the congress. The bureau decided whatever (. . .) Liebknecht wanted it to.

The social democracy showed itself up for what it is: intolerant, narrow-minded, so authoritarian that Keir Hardie<sup>18</sup> described it as Bismarckian.

Little by little, the socialists from beyond the Rhine have been seen to abandon socialism's principles. They are leaning towards radicalism.

They are automata.

MRS. MARX-AVELING: All anarchists are madmen.

## JEAN JAURES

(*Petit Republique*, JULY 31, 1896)

No collaboration is possible between socialists and the anarchists, who cannot even plead sincerity in their aberration, and who arrived in order to disorganize the congress just as they disorganize the unions, to the great advantage of the reaction.

## MANIFESTO BY THE ANARCHISTS PRESENT AT THE CONGRESS

We think that it may be useful to offer a proper explanation of the anarchists' position *vis-à-vis* the workers' movement generally and this congress in particular.

With the object of making the workers look upon us with suspicion and in order to gain the upper hand over the movement, the social democrats allege that anarchists are not socialists.

Well now! if there are anarchists fond of calling themselves by that title and who are unwilling to be socialists, they certainly have no place in a socialist congress and they will be the first to want no truck with it.

But we communist or collectivist anarchists seek the complete abolition of classes and of all exploitation and domination of man by his fellow man.

We want the land and all instruments of production and exchange, as well as all the wealth amassed through the toil of past generations, to become,

through expropriation of the present holders, the common property of all men, so that all, by working, may enjoy the products of labor amid full-fledged communism.

We want to replace competition and strife between men with fraternity and solidarity in labor for the sake of the happiness of all. And the anarchists have spread this ideal and fought and suffered for its realization, for many a long year, and in certain countries, like Italy and Spain, well before the inception of parliamentary socialism.

What well-informed man of good faith would dare argue that we are not socialists?

Might we not be socialists because we want the workers to gain their rights through their organized efforts? Or because we want them not to cling to the—as we see it, chimerical—hope of securing them through the concessions of some government? Because we hold that parliamentarism is not merely a weapon of no avail for proletarians but also, by virtue of its being incapable, by its very nature, even should the bourgeoisie not resist, of representing the interests and wishes of all, remaining at all times the instrument of ascendancy of a class or a party? Or because we believe that the new society should be organized with the direct participation of all concerned, from the periphery to the center, freely and spontaneously, at the prompting of the sentiment of solidarity and under pressure of the natural needs of society? Because we believe that if, instead, that reorganization was carried out by means of decrees from some central body, be it elected or self-imposed, it would start off as an artificial organization, doing violence to everyone and making them unhappy, and would culminate in the creation of a new class of professional politicians, which would claim all manner of privileges and monopolies for itself?

It could be argued with much more reason that we are the most logical and most complete of socialists, since we demand for every person not just his entire measure of the wealth of society but also his portion of social power, which is to say, the real ability to make his influence felt, along with that of everybody else, in the administration of public affairs.

So socialists we are. Plainly, it follows that a congress from which we might be excluded could not honestly describe itself as an international socialist congress of the workers. So it ought to assume the particular title of the party or parties which would be granted admission to it. Thus, none of us would have thought of having any truck with a congress that would have described itself as being a social democratic congress or a congress of parliamentary socialists.

It is in the interest of every enemy of capitalist society that the workers should be united and stand by one another in the fight against capitalism. That fight is necessarily economic in nature. Not that we fail to appreciate the importance of political issues. We believe not only that government, the State, is an evil in itself: but also we are convinced that it is capitalism's armed defender. We think that the people will not be able to lay hands upon property without trampling the gendarme's body underfoot, literally or figuratively, according to circumstances. So, of necessity, we should concern ourselves with the political struggle against governments.

But politics is of course a great source of division. Doubtless, this is because of the different conditions and temperaments obtaining in various countries, the fact that relations between a country's political constitution and its people's circumstances are very complex, less assimilable and less likely to be handled in a manner universally applicable. In fact, the conscious workers of various countries, whom the economic struggle might easily marshal and harness together, are split into countless factions on account of politics.

As a result, an understanding between all workers fighting for their emancipation is feasible on the economic terrain only. Anyway, that is what counts the most, for the proletariat's political action, whether it be parliamentary or revolutionary, is equally unavailing as long as the proletariat does not constitute an organized, conscious economic power.

Any attempt to foist a single political view upon the workers' movement would lead to that movement's disintegration and would prevent advancement of economic organization.

Apparently, the social democrats intend to force their special program upon the workers. It is almost as if they wanted to forbid those who do not accept their party's decisions from fighting for human emancipation.

We do not ask—far from it—that the various parties and schools abjure their programs and their tactics. We stand by our ideas and we understand others standing by theirs.

All we ask is that the division is not carried over into a sphere where it has no reason to exist: we ask that every worker have the right to fight against the bourgeoisie, hand in hand with his brothers, without regard to political ideas. We ask that each person should fight howsoever he may see fit, in accordance with like-minded folk, but that they all stand by one another in the economic struggle.

Should the social democrats seek to persist in their efforts to regiment and thereby sow division among the workers, may the latter understand and ensure that victory goes to Marx's great dictum: Workers of the world, unite!

—E. MALATESTA AND A. HAMON.

# MALATESTA AND THE INTERNATIONAL ANARCHIST CONGRESS IN AMSTERDAM, AUGUST 24–31, 1907

*Thereafter the anarchists, having had their fingers burned, abandoned any attempt to rub shoulders with social democrats at international congresses. They resolved to hold congresses of their own. As they did in Amsterdam in 1907. Below, the reader will find lengthy extracts from the minutes of the proceedings, lifted from La Publication Sociale, Paris, 1908, published by Paul Delesalle. Other excerpts from the proceedings of this congress have been reprinted by Jean Maitron in Ravachol et les Anarchistes, Collection Archives, 1964, pp. 141–158: they relate to the Monatte-Malatesta exchanges on the relationship between syndicalism and anarchism, with which we do not deal with here, but with which is dealt later in this volume by Fernand Pelloutier.*

Tuesday, August 27

AMÉDÉE DUNOIS: It is not so long ago that most anarchists were opposed to any notion of organization. Then, the scheme we have before us, would have drawn countless objections from them and its authors would have been suspected of backward-looking ulterior motives and authoritarian intent.

Those were the days when anarchists, isolated from one another, and even more isolated from the working class, seemed to have lost all social sensibility: when anarchism, with its endless appeals for reformation of the individual, appeared to many as the highest expression of the old bourgeois individualism.

Individual action, “individual initiative” was held to be all-sufficing. Generally speaking, no one gave a fig for study of economics, of the factors of production and exchange, and indeed, some of us, denying that the class struggle had any substance to it, refused to see in the existing society anything other than conflicts of opinion for which it was the precise task of “propaganda” to equip the individual.

As an abstract protest against the social democracy’s opportunistic and authoritarian tendencies, anarchism has played a considerable role over the past twenty five years. So why, instead of sticking to that, has it attempted, in the face of parliamentary socialism, to build up an ideology of its very own? In its

daring aerobatics, that ideology has all too often lost sight of the solid ground of reality and practical action, and, all too often also, it had ended up coming in to land, willy-nilly, upon the farther shores of individualism. This is why, among us, organization cannot be thought of any longer in anything other than terms which are inevitably oppressive of the "individual" and why we have come systematically to repudiate any collective endeavor. However, on this matter of organization, which is the one we have before us, a telling shift is taking place. Without the shadow of a doubt, this particular shift should be seen in the context of the overall evolution which anarchism has undergone in France over the past few years.

By taking a more active hand than hitherto in the workers' movement, we have bridged the gulf separating the pure idea, which so readily turns into inviolable dogma, from the living reality. Less and less have we any interest in our former abstractions and more and more in the practical movement, in action: trade unionism and anti-militarism have claimed first place in our considerations. Anarchism appears to us much less in the guise of a philosophical and moral doctrine than as a revolutionary theory, a concrete program for social transformation. It is enough that we should see in it the most comprehensive theoretical expression of the proletarian movement's tendencies.

Anarchist organization still provokes objections. But those objections differ greatly, depending upon whether they emanate from individualists or from syndicalists.

Against the former, we need only appeal to the history of anarchism. The latter evolved as an outgrowth from the "collectivism" of the International, which is to say, in the final analysis, from the workers' movement. So it is not a recent, not the most rounded form of individualism, but rather one of the modalities of revolutionary socialism. Thus, what it refutes is not organization: but, quite the contrary, government, with which, Proudhon tells us, organization is incompatible. Anarchism is not individualist: it is primarily federalist, "association-ist." It might be defined as: unalloyed federalism.

Moreover, we fail to see how an anarchist organization could harm the individual growth of its members. No one, in fact, would be compelled to join it, nor, having joined, prevented from quitting.

The objections raised from the individualist viewpoint against our schemes for anarchist organization do not stand up to scrutiny; they might as readily be voiced against any form of society. Those from the syndicalists have more substance. Let us dwell upon those for a moment.

The existence of a workers' movement of plainly revolutionary outlook is currently, in France, the great fact which any attempt at anarchist organization is likely to run into, if not founder upon, and this great historical phenomenon forces upon us certain precautions which, I imagine, our colleagues abroad need no longer bother with.

"The workers' movement"—they tell us—"offers you a pretty well unlimited theater of activity. Whereas your groups of believers, tiny little cliques visited by none but the faithful, cannot hope to expand their membership indefinitely, trade union organization does not lose hope of eventually enfold- ing the entire proletariat within its supple and elastic embrace."

"Now"—they continue—"your place as anarchists is in the labor union, there and nowhere else. The labor union is not simply a combat organization: it is the living germ of the future society, and the latter will be whatever we make of the trade union. The fault lies in keeping company with the initiated, forever re-hashing the same old doctrinal issues, endlessly spinning within the same thought radius. Under no circumstances must we be separated from the people, for, backward and slow-witted though the people may still be, it—and not the ideologue—is the essential locomotive in every revolution. Have you, then, just like the social democrats, interests different from those of the proletariat to pursue, party interests, sectarian, factional interests? Is it for the proletariat to come to you or for you to go out to it and share its life, earn its trust and incite it, by word and example, to resistance, revolt and revolution?"

I cannot see however that such objections apply to us. Organized or not, anarchists (by which I mean those of our persuasion who do not separate anarchism from the proletariat) do not pretend to the role of "supreme saviors." Long since persuaded that the workers' emancipation will be the doing of the workers themselves, or will not take place, we gladly afford the workers' movement pride of place in our battle order. Meaning that, as far as we are concerned, the trade union is not called upon to play a purely corporative, blandly professional role, as the Guesdists, and, along with them, certain anarchists who cling to obsolete formulas, contend. Corporatism has had its day: that fact may, to begin with, have upset older outlooks, but we, for our part, accept it with all of its consequences.

So our role, the role of us anarchists who regard ourselves as the most advanced, most daring and most liberated fraction of that proletariat, constantly marching at its side, is to fight the same battles, mingling with it. Far be it



from us to subscribe to the inane notion that we should isolate ourselves in our study groups: organized or not, we will remain faithful to our mission as educators and agitators of the working class. And if we reckon today that we ought to combine with other comrades, it is, among other reasons, so that we can invest our trade union activity with maximum force and continuity. The stronger we will be, the stronger also will be the currents of ideas that we can direct through the workers' movement.

But should our anarchist groups confine themselves to completing militants' education, conserving their revolutionary vigor and allowing them to make one another's acquaintance and get together? Should they not be engaged in activity of their own? We think that they should.

The social revolution cannot be carried out except by the mass. But every revolution necessarily entails acts which, by virtue of their, so to speak, technical character, can only be carried out by a small number, by the boldest, most expert fraction of the seething proletariat. In every district, every city, every region, in times of revolution, our groups would represent so many little combat organizations, assigned to carry out special, delicate tasks, for which the broad masses are most often not equipped.

But the essential, ongoing object of a group would be, and at last I come to it, anarchist propaganda. Yes, we would all band together primarily in order to spread our theoretical outlook, our direct action methods and our federalism. Thus far, propaganda has been conducted on an individual basis. Individual propaganda has produced very considerable results in the past, but it has to be confessed that this is not the case today.

For several years now, anarchism has been stricken with a sort of crisis. The virtually complete absence of agreement and organization among us is a major factor in that crisis. In France, anarchists are very numerous. On theoretical matters, they are already greatly divided; in terms of practice, they are even more so. Everybody acts how and when he chooses. Considerable though they may be, individual efforts are diffuse and often turn out to be a complete waste. There are anarchists everywhere: what is missing is an anarchist movement to marshal all of the forces hitherto battling in isolation, on a common platform.

Just such an anarchist movement will grow out of our common action, *our concerted*, coordinated action. Needless to say, the anarchist organization would not seek to unify every element professing, sometimes very mistakenly, to subscribe to the anarchist idea. It would be enough if it would rally around

a program of practical action all comrades subscribing to our principles and desirous of working alongside us.

*The floor was given to comrade H. Croiset of Amsterdam, representing the individualist tendency at the congress.*

H. CROISET: What matters above all else is that I offer a definition of anarchy which will serve as the basis for my reasoning. We are anarchists in this sense, that we seek to bring about a social condition in which the individual will find his complete liberty assured, in which everyone will be able to live his life to the full: to put that another way, in which the individual will be afforded the right to live without constraints of any sort, his whole life his own, and not, as it is today, the life others would have him lead. I mean to say the life that others force upon him.

My motto is: Me, me, me ... and then the rest!

Individuals ought to combine only when it has been shown that their individual efforts cannot enable them to accomplish their aim unaided. But combination, organization ought never, on any account, to become a constraint upon him who enters freely into it. The individual was not made for society: instead, it is society that was made for the individual.

Anarchy seeks to place every individual in a position where he can develop all his faculties freely. Now, the inevitable outcome of organization is that it always limits the freedom of the individual to a greater or a lesser extent. Anarchy thus opposes any system of standing organization. In their pointless ambition to become practical, anarchists have made their peace with organization. It is a slippery slope on to which they are stepping, there. Some day or another, they will wind up making their peace with authority itself, just as the social democrats have done!

Anarchist ideas must retain their ancient purity, rather than incline to become more practical. So let us revert to the ancient purity of our ideas.

SIEGFRIED NACHT: I will not follow Croiset on to the ground where he has taken his stand. It strikes me that what is in need of elucidation above all else is the relationship between anarchism, or, to be more precise, anarchist organizations, and the labor unions. It is in order to facilitate the work of the latter that we, as anarchists, ought to set up special groups to offer training and education for revolution.

The workers' movement has a mission of its own, arising out of the living

conditions foisted upon the proletariat by the present society: that mission is the conquest of economic power, and collective appropriation of all of the wellsprings of production and life. That is what anarchism aspires to, but the latter could not attain it with its ideological propaganda groups alone. However fine it may be, theory makes no deep impression upon the people, and it is primarily through action that it is educated. Little by little, action will invest it with a revolutionary mentality.

The general strike and direct action ideas have a very seductive impact upon the consciousness of the laboring masses. In the revolution to come, those masses will, so to speak, make up the foot-soldiers of the revolutionary army. Our anarchist groups, specializing in technical matters, will, so to speak, represent its artillery, which, though less numerous, is no less vital than the infantry.

GEORGE THONAR: In the anarchist idea taken as a whole, communism and individualism are equal and inseparable. Organization, concerted action, is indispensable to the growth of anarchism and in no way contradicts our theoretical premises. Organization is a means and not a principle: but it goes without saying that if it is to be acceptable, it should be constituted in a libertarian way.

Organization may have been useless in the days when there was only a very small number of us anarchists, all familiar with one another and in frequent contact with one another. We have become legion, and we must take care lest our strength be squandered. So let us organize ourselves, not just for anarchist propaganda, but also and above all for direct action.

I am far from being hostile to trade unionism, especially when its inclinations are towards revolution. But, after all, the workers' organization is not anarchist, and as a result, inside it we will never be absolutely ourselves; our activity there can never be undilutedly anarchist. Hence, the need for us to set up libertarian groupings and federations, founded upon respect for the liberty and initiative of each and every one.

K. VOHRZYK: It is as an individualist that I wish to argue the case for organization. There is no way to pretend that anarchism, by virtue of its very principles, could not countenance organization. The self-proclaimed individualist makes no radical condemnation of association between individuals.

To say, as is sometimes done, either Stirner or Kropotkin, thereby pitting these two thinkers one against the other, is a mistake. Kropotkin and Stirner cannot be contrasted one with the other: they set out the same idea

from differing points of view. That is all. And the proof that Max Stirner was not the dyed-in-the-wool individualist that has been claimed is that he spoke up in favor of "organization." He even devoted a whole chapter to the "Association of Egoists."

Our organization, having no executive power, will not be at odds with our principles. Inside the trade unions, we champion the workers' economic interests. But for everything else, we should combine separately, to create organizations with libertarian foundations.

EMMA GOLDMAN: I too am favorable, in principle, to organization. However, I fear that the latter may, some day or another, lapse into exclusivism.

Dunois spoke against the excesses of individualism. But such excesses have nothing to do with true individualism, any more than the excesses of communism have anything to do with real communism. I have set out my views in a report, the conclusion of which is that organization always tends, more or less, to erode the individual personality. That is a danger which we have to anticipate. So I will agree to anarchist organization on one condition only, that it be based upon absolute respect for all individual initiative and is able to hamper neither its operation nor its evolution.

The essential principle of anarchy is individual autonomy. The International will be anarchist only if it abides by that principle completely.

PIERRE RAMUS: I favor organization and every effort to be made among us in that direction. Yet it does not strike me that the arguments advanced in Dunois's submission are quite of the quality to be desired. We should strive to return to anarchist principles as formulated just now by Croiset, but, at the same time, we ought systematically to organize our movement. In other words, individual initiative should depend upon the strength of the collective and the collective should express itself through individual initiative.

But if this is to be achieved in practice, we must keep our basic principles intact and undiluted. What is more, we are far from devising anything new. In reality, we are the immediate successors of those who, in the old International Working Men's Association, stood with Bakunin against Marx. So we are not offering anything new, and the most that we can do is to inject fresh life into our old principles, by encouraging the trend towards organization everywhere.

As for the aim of the new International, that ought not to be to constitute an auxiliary to the force of revolutionary syndicalism, but rather to work on the dissemination of anarchism in its totality.

ERRICO MALATESTA: I have listened attentively to everything that has been said in my presence regarding this business of organization, and my very clear impression is that what divides us is words which we interpret differently. We are quibbling over words. But with regard to the very crux of the issue, I am persuaded that everybody is in agreement.

All anarchists, whatever the tendency to which they belong, are, in some sense, individualists. But the reverse is far from being true: all individualists are not—if only they were!—anarchists. Individualists are thus divided into two quite distinct types: some demand, for every human individual, themselves and others alike, the right to full development—others have a care only for their own individuality and never hesitate to sacrifice others to it. The tsar of all the Russias belongs to these latter individualists. We belong among the former.

Ibsen's cry, that the most powerful man in the world is the one who is most alone, is taken up. What utter nonsense! Dr. Stockmann, in whose mouth Ibsen places that maxim was not a solitary in the full sense of the word: he lived in a constituted society and not on some desert island. The "solitary" man is disbarred from performing the tiniest useful and productive task: and if anybody needs a master to watch over him, it is the man who lives in isolation. What sets the individual free, what allows him to develop all his faculties, is not solitude but association.

In order to accomplish truly useful work, cooperation is essential, today more than ever. Of course, the association must leave its component individuals complete autonomy, and the federation ought to respect that same autonomy in its groups: preserve us from the belief that lack of organization is a guarantee of liberty. All of the evidence indicates otherwise.

To take one example: there are French anarchist newspapers which close their columns to all whose ideas, style or simply personality has had the misfortune to incur the displeasure of their customary editors. The upshot is that those editors are invested with a personal power that sets limits upon the comrades' freedom of opinion and expression. Things would be different if those newspapers, instead of being the personal property of such and such an individual, belonged to groups: whereupon every opinion might contend freely with every other opinion.

There is much talk of authority and authoritarianism. But we have to be clear here. Against the authority embodied in the State and having no purpose other than to preserve economic slavery in society, we revolt with all of our

might and will never cease revolting. But there is a purely moral authority which arises out of experience, intelligence or talent, and, anarchists though we may be, there is not one of us but respects that authority.

It is wrong to portray the “organizers,” the federalists as authoritarians, and it is also a no less great error to represent the “anti-organizers,” the individualists, as deliberately dooming themselves to isolation. In my view, let me repeat, the squabble between individualists and organizers is purely a semantic quibble that does not stand up to attentive scrutiny of the facts. In practical reality, what then do we see? That the “individualists” are sometimes better organized than the “organizers” for the reason that the latter all too often restrict themselves to preaching organization without practicing it. Then again, it happens that one finds a lot more actual authoritarianism in the groupings noisily invoking the “absolute freedom of the individual” than in the ones ordinarily regarded as authoritarian on the grounds that they have a bureau and make decisions.

To put this another way: organizers or anti-organizers, they are all organizing. Only those who do nothing or next to nothing can exist in isolation and be content with it. That is the truth: why not acknowledge it?

Evidence to back up my argument: in Italy, all of the comrades currently in the struggle invoke my name, the “individualists” and the “organizers” alike, and I really think that they are all right, for, whatever their theoretical discrepancies, they all practice collective action equally.

Enough of the semantics! Let us stick to actions! Words divide and action unites. It is time that we all set to work together to exercise effective influence over social happenings. It pains me to think that in order to wrest one of our people from the clutches of the executioners, we were obliged to look to parties other than our own. And yet, Ferrer would not be indebted to the freemasons and bourgeois free-thinkers for his liberty, had the anarchists, banded together into a mighty and fearsome International, been able, themselves, to take charge of the worldwide protests against the criminal infamy of the Spanish government.

So let us strive to ensure that the anarchist International becomes a reality at last. If we are to be in a position to make quick appeal to all our comrades, in order to struggle against the reaction, as well as display our revolutionary initiative, when the time comes, we have to have our International!

MAX BAGINSKY: A serious mistake, all too often made, is the belief that individualism repudiates all organization. On the contrary, the two terms can-

not be dissevered. Individualism signifies a very special effort in the direction of inner, moral liberation of the individual; organization signifies association between conscious individuals with an eye to some aim to be achieved or some economic need to be satisfied. However, it is important that it should never be forgotten that a revolutionary organization has need of especially energetic and conscious individuals.

AMÉDÉE DUNOIS: Let me place it on record that I was trying to bring the discussion down from the heaven of vague abstractions to the *terra firma* of concrete, precise, humbly relative ideas. Croiset, on the other hand, lifted it into the heavens again, to the metaphysical heights where I refuse to follow.

The resolution which I move be adopted by congress is not inspired by speculative ideas about the individual's entitlement to integral development. It starts from quite practical considerations of the need which exists for our propaganda and combat efforts to be organized and orchestrated.

CHRISTIAN CORNELISSEN: There is nothing more relative than the notion of the individual. Individuality per se does not exist in reality, where we find it forever bounded by other individuals. The individualists are too apt to forget about these *de facto* limits, and the great boon of organization resides precisely in its making the individual conscious of such limits by accustoming him to reconciling his right to personal development with the entitlements of others.

G. RINJNDERS: I too am not hostile to organization either. Moreover, there is not one anarchist who is not, deep down, in favor of it. It all depends on the way in which organization is construed and established. What has to be avoided above all else is personalities. In Holland, for example, the existing Federation falls well short of satisfying everybody: true, those who do not approve of it need only stay out of it.

ÉMILE CHAPELIER: Might I ask that addresses be shorter and more substantial? Since the address delivered by Malatesta yesterday, which exhausted the issue, not a single fresh argument has been adduced for or against organization. Before we talk about authority or liberty, it might be a good idea if we were to agree upon what the words imply. For instance, what is authority? If it is the influence that men of real ability exercise and will always exercise inside a grouping, I have nothing to say against it. But the authority which is to be avoided at all costs in our ranks is that which arises from the fact that certain comrades blindly follow such and such. That is a danger, and in order to prevent it, I ask that the organization which is to be set up should acknowledge no leaders or general committees.

EMMA GOLDMAN: As I have said already, I am for organization. Except that I should like the Dunois motion to explicitly affirm the legitimacy of individual action, alongside collective action. So I move an amendment to the Dunois motion.

*Emma Goldman reads her amendment. Accepted by Dunois, it will be incorporated, in abridged form, into the latter's motion.*

I.I. SAMSON: Here in Holland there is a Federation of libertarian communists, of which I am a member. Of course, as comrade Rinjnders has just stated, lots of comrades have refused to join it. On grounds of principle? No: for personality reasons only. We exclude no one and never have excluded anyone. We are not even opposed to affiliation by individualists. So let them join us, if they wish. To tell the truth, I have no illusions but that, whatever form the organization may take, they will always play the malcontents. They are malcontents by nature and not too much heed should be paid to their criticisms.

K. VOHRZEK: As the Dunois motion has nothing to say about the character which the anarchist organization should assume, I move that it be complemented by a rider specifying that character, a rider to which Malatesta has been willing to put his signature alongside my own. (Vohryzek reads out the rider which appears below).

*The debate is wound up. Next the motions submitted are put to a vote. There are two: the first is Dunois', amended by Emma Goldman and complemented by Vohryzek and Malatesta; the second one has been submitted by comrade Pierre Ramus.*

## THE DUNOIS MOTION

The anarchists assembled in Amsterdam on August 27, 1907, persuaded that the ideas of anarchy and organization, far from being incompatible as has sometimes been argued, are mutually complementary and illuminating, in that the very principle of anarchy resides in the free organization of the producers: that individual action, important though it may be, could not compensate for want of collective action and concerted movement ANY MORE THAN COLLECTIVE ACTION COULD COMPENSATE FOR THE WANT OF INDIVIDUAL INITIATIVE; that organization of militant forces would assure propaganda of a new fillip and could not but hasten the penetration into the working class of the ideas



of federalism and revolution; that the workers' organization, founded upon identity of interests, does not exclude an organization founded upon identity of aspirations and ideas; are of the opinion that comrades of every country should add to their agenda the creation of anarchist groups and federation of groups already in existence.

### THE VOHYRZEK-MALATESTA RIDER

The Anarchist Federation is an association of groups and individuals wherein no one may impose his will or curtail anyone else's initiative. *Vis-a-vis* the existing society, it has as its aim the changing of all moral and economic conditions and, to that end, it supports struggle by all appropriate means.

### PIERRE RAMUS' MOTION

The Amsterdam anarchist congress suggests to the groups in every country that they unite into local and regional federations, in accordance with the various geographical divisions.

We declare that our proposition is inspired by anarchism's very own principles, for we see no prospect for individual initiative and activity outside of the group, which, as we intend, will alone furnish a practical theater for the free expansion of each individual.

Federative organization is the formula best suited to the anarchist proletariat. It bands the existing groups into one organic whole which grows through the affiliation of further groups. It is anti-authoritarian, countenances no central legislative authority making decisions binding upon the groups and individuals, the latter having an acknowledged right to develop freely within our common movement and to act along anarchist and economic lines without let or hindrance. Federation excludes no group and each group is at liberty to withdraw and recover possession of funds invested, as it deems necessary.

Furthermore, we recommend the comrades to combine in accordance with the needs and requirements of their respective movement, and also that they keep it in mind that the strength of the anarchist movement, nationally and internationally, depends upon its being established upon international foundations, the means of emancipation being derived solely from concerted international action. Comrades from all countries, organize yourselves into autonomous groups and unite into an international federation: the anarchist International.

*These motions having been read out in French, Dutch, and German, a vote was held.*

*The Dunois motion obtained 46 votes; the Vohryzek rider obtained 48. Only one hand was raised against the motion, and none against the rider, which therefore secured unanimous backing.*

*The Ramus motion was then put to a vote: 13 votes were cast for it and 17 against. Many attending the congress stated that they were abstaining on the grounds that the Ramus motion added nothing to the motion just voted upon.*

*A report in the review Pages Libres stressed the significance of the vote cast by the congress, in these terms:*

This Amsterdam resolution is not quite without significance: henceforth, our social democrat adversaries will no longer be able to invoke our old hatred of organization of any sort in order to exclude us from socialism without due process. The anarchists' legendary individualism has been put to death in public in Amsterdam by the anarchists themselves, and no amount of bad faith on the part of certain of our adversaries can succeed in breathing life back into it.

Friday, August 30

*Emma Goldman rose to say that it was odd that an anarchist congress had not declared itself in favor of the right of rebellion, in the broadest sense of the term, and she read out the following declaration which bore her signature, along with that of comrade Baginsky:*

The international anarchist Congress declares itself in favor of the right of rebellion by the individual as well as by the mass as a whole.

The congress is of the opinion that acts of rebellion, especially when directed against representatives of the State and of the plutocracy, should be interpreted in the light of psychology. They are the products of the profound impression made upon the individual's psychology by the awful pressures from our unjust society.

As a rule, it could be said that only the noblest, most sensitive and most delicate mind is prey to deep impressions manifesting themselves as internal and external rebellion. Viewed in this light, acts of rebellion can be characterized as the socio-psychological consequences of an intolerable system: and as such, these acts, along with their causes and motives, are more to be understood rather than lauded or condemned.

In times of revolution, as in Russia, the act of rebellion, leaving to one side its psychological character, serves a dual purpose: it undermines the very basis of tyranny and boosts the enthusiasm of the faint of heart. This is especially the case when terrorist activity is directed against despotism's most brutal, most despised agents.

Congress, in accepting this resolution, expresses its support for the individual act of rebellion as well as its solidarity with collective insurrection.

*Put to a vote, the Goldman-Baginsky declaration was carried unanimously.*

# MALATESTA, THE ANARCHIST INTERNATIONAL, AND WAR

*The manifesto below was issued on February 15, 1915. It was signed by thirty-five well-known libertarians of various nationalities—among them Errico Malatesta, Alexander Schapiro, Alexander Berkman, Emma Goldman, Domela Nieuwenhuis, etc. Malatesta and Schapiro were two of the five secretaries of the International Bureau, elected at the international anarchist congress in 1907. Another of the secretaries, Rudolf Rocker,<sup>1</sup> had not been able to append his signature, in that he was an internee at the time—but he too was against the war.*

Europe in flames, tens of millions of men at loggerheads in the most frightful butchery in recorded history, hundreds of millions of women and children in tears, the economic, intellectual and moral life of seven great peoples brutally suspended, with the daily more grave threat of further military complications—such, five months on, is the dismal, harrowing, odious spectacle offered by the civilized world.

But this spectacle was anticipated, by anarchists at any rate.

For there never has been and is no doubt—and today's horrific events reinforce this confidence—that war is permanently incubating within the existing body of society and that armed conflict, be it specific or general, in the colonies or in Europe, is the natural consequence and necessary, inescapable destiny of a regime founded upon the economic inequality of its citizens, relying upon the unbridled clash of interests, and placing the world of labor under the narrow, painful oversight of a minority of parasites who hold both political power and economic might. War was inevitable; from whatever quarter, it simply had to come. Not for nothing has the last half-century been spent on feverish preparation of the most formidable armaments and every passing day seen the death budgets swell. Continual refinement of war materials, every mind and every will kept constantly geared towards ever-better organization of the military machine—scarcely the way to work for peace.

So it is naïve and puerile, once the causes and the occasions of strife have been multiplied, to try to define the degree of blame attaching to such and such a government. No distinction is possible between offensive wars and defensive wars. In the current conflict, the governments in Berlin and Vienna

have justified themselves by producing documents every bit as authentic as those produced by the governments in Paris, London and Petrograd. It is for whoever on each side who will produce the most unchallengeable, most telling documentation to prove their bona fides and portray themselves as the unblemished defender of the right and of freedom, the champion of civilization.

Civilization? Who stands for that at the moment? Is it the German State with its redoubtable militarism, so powerful that it has stifled every vestige of rebellion? Or the Russian State, whose only methods of persuasion are the knout, the gibbet and Siberia? Or the French State with its Biribi, its bloody conquests in Tonkin, Madagascar, Morocco and forcible conscription of black troops; the France whose prisons have housed, for years past, comrades whose only crime was to have written and spoken out against war? Or England, as she exploits, divides, starves, and oppresses the peoples of her huge colonial empire?

No. None of the belligerents has any right to lay claim to civilization, just as none of them is entitled to claim legitimate self-defense.

The truth is that the root of wars, of the war currently bloodying the plains of Europe, just like all the ones that went before it, is located exclusively in the existence of the State, which is the political form of privilege.

The State is born of military might; it has grown through recourse to military might, and, logically, it is upon military might that it must rely if it is to retain its omnipotence. Whatever the form it may assume, the State is merely oppression organized for the benefit of a privileged minority. The present conflict offers a striking illustration of this: all forms of the state are embroiled in the present war—absolutism is represented by Russia, absolutism mitigated by parliamentarism, by Germany, a State ruling over very different peoples, by Austria, constitutional democracy by England and the democratic republican system by France.

The misfortune of the peoples, who were nevertheless all deeply committed to peace, is that they trusted in the State with its scheming diplomats, in democracy and in the political parties (even the opposition parties, like the parliamentary socialists) to avert war. That trust was deliberately abused and continues to be abused when those in government, with the help of their whole press, persuade their respective peoples that this war is a war of liberation.

We are determinedly against any war between peoples, and, in the neutral countries, like Italy, where those in government are seeking once again to push more peoples into the inferno of war, our comrades have opposed, oppose and

always will oppose war with every ounce of energy they possess.

No matter where they may find themselves, the anarchists' role in the current tragedy is to carry on proclaiming that there is but one war of liberation: the one waged in every country by the oppressed against the oppressor, by the exploited against the exploiter. Our task is to summon the slaves to revolt against their masters.

Anarchist propaganda and anarchist action should set about doggedly undermining and breaking up the various States, cultivating the spirit of rebellion and acting as midwife to the discontent in the peoples and in the armies.

To every soldier from every country convinced that he is fighting for justice and freedom, we must explain that their heroism and their valor will serve only to perpetuate hatred, tyranny and misery.

To the factory workers, we must be a reminder that the rifles they now hold in their hands have been used against them during strikes and legitimate revolts, and will again be deployed against them later to force them to submit to the employers' exploitation.

We have to show the peasants that after the war they will once again have to bend beneath the yoke and carry on working their masters' land and feeding the rich.

All of the outcasts must be shown that they should not lay down their weapons until such time as they have settled scores with their oppressors and taken the land and the factory for their own.

We will show mothers, sweethearts and daughters, the victims of overwhelming misery and deprivation, who bears the real responsibility for their grief and for the carnage of their fathers, sons and spouses.

We must capitalize upon every stirring of rebellion, every discontent in order to foment insurrection, to organize the revolution to which we look for the ending of all of society's iniquities.

No loss of heart, even in the face of a calamity such as war! It is in such troubled times, when thousands of men are heroically giving their lives for an idea, that we must show such men the generosity, grandeur and beauty of the anarchist ideal: social justice achieved through the free organization of producers: war and militarism eradicated forever, complete freedom won through the utter demolition of the State and its agencies of coercion.

Long live Anarchy!

(Followed by 35 signatures)

*On a contrary note, in the spring of 1916, some other anarchists, including Kropotkin, Tcherkessoff, Jean Grave, Charles Malato, Christian Cornelissen, Paul Reclus (son of Elisee<sup>2</sup>), etc., issued a declaration approving the war. In France, it was carried by La Bataille Syndicaliste, a news-sheet suspected of being subsidized by the French government. This declaration became famous as the "Manifesto of the Sixteen," although, in fact, it had only fifteen signatories. In May 1916, it elicited a protest from anarchist-communists, which concluded with these words:*

We declare that all propaganda in favor of continuance of the war between the peoples "to the bitter end," which is to say, "until victory" by one of the belligerent coalitions, is essentially nationalistic and reactionary propaganda; that the aims in terms of which this propaganda attempts to justify and explain itself are quite ingenuous, profoundly mistaken and cannot withstand the slightest historical or logical scrutiny; that such propaganda, having nothing in common with anarchism, anti-militarism or internationalism, instead represents, in its very essence and in its practical consequences, a sort of propaganda on behalf of militarism and supposedly "democratic" nationalistic Statism; that it is the absolute duty of anarchist-communists to struggle firmly against such aberrations and against these currents of ideas which are utterly contrary to the workers' vital interests; and that, as a result, not only can we not, hereafter, regard the signatories to the "Declaration" as comrades in the struggle, but we find ourselves obliged to class them resolutely as enemies, unwitting enemies maybe, but real enemies of the working class for all that.

## A PROPHETIC LETTER TO LUIGI FABBRI<sup>1</sup>

London, July 30, 1919

Dearest Fabbri,

(...) It seems to me that we are in perfect agreement on the matters with which you are currently so preoccupied, to wit, the “dictatorship of the proletariat.”

By my reckoning, on this score the opinion of anarchists cannot be called into question, and in fact, well before the Bolshevik revolution, it never was queried by anyone. Anarchy means no government, and thus, all the more emphatically, no dictatorship, meaning an absolute government, uncontrolled and without constitutional restraints. But whenever the Bolshevik revolution broke out, it appears that our friends may have confused what constitutes a revolution against an existing government with what was implied by a new government which had just dominated the revolution in order to apply the brakes to it and steer it in the direction of its party political purposes. And so our friends have all but declared themselves Bolsheviks.

Now, the Bolsheviks are merely marxists who have remained honest, conscientious marxists, unlike their teachers and models, the likes of Guesde, Plekhanov, Hyndman, Scheidemann, Noske, etc.,<sup>2</sup> whose fate you know. We respect their sincerity, we admire their energy, but, just as we have never seen eye to eye with them in theoretical matters, so we could not align ourselves with them when they make the transition from theory to practice.

But perhaps the truth is simply this: our pro-Bolshevik friends take the expression “dictatorship of the proletariat” to mean simply the revolutionary action of the workers in taking possession of the land and the instruments of labor, and trying to build a society and organize a way of life in which there will be no place for a class that exploits and oppresses the producers.

Thus construed, the “dictatorship of the proletariat” would be the effective power of all workers trying to bring down capitalist society and would thus turn into Anarchy as soon as resistance from reactionaries would have ceased and no one can any longer seek to compel the masses by violence to obey and work for him. In which case, the discrepancy between us would be nothing more than a question of semantics. Dictatorship of the proletariat would signify the dictatorship of everybody, which is to say, it would be a dictatorship



no longer, just as government by everybody is no longer a government in the authoritarian, historical and practical sense of the word.

But the real supporters of “dictatorship of the proletariat” do not take that line, as they are making quite plain in Russia. Of course, the proletariat has a hand in this, just as the people has a part to play in democratic regimes, that is to say, to conceal the reality of things. In reality, what we have is the dictatorship of one party, or rather, of one party’s leaders: a genuine dictatorship, with its decrees, its penal sanctions, its henchmen and, above all, its armed forces which are at present also deployed in the defense of the revolution against its external enemies, but which will tomorrow be used to impose the dictators’ will upon the workers, to apply a brake on revolution, to consolidate the new interests in the process of emerging and protect a new privileged class against the masses.

General Bonaparte was another one who helped defend the French Revolution against the European reaction, but in defending it, he strangled the life out of it. Lenin, Trotsky and their comrades are assuredly sincere revolutionaries (...) and they will not be turning traitors—but they are preparing the governmental structures which those who will come after them will utilize to exploit the Revolution and do it to death. They will be the first victims of their methods and I am afraid that the Revolution will go under with them.

History repeats itself: *mutatis mutandis*, it was Robespierre’s dictatorship that brought Robespierre to the guillotine and paved the way for Napoleon.

Such are my general thoughts on affairs in Russia. As for detailed news we have had, it is as yet too varied and too contradictory to merit risking an opinion. It may be, too, that lots of things that strike us as bad are the products of that situation, and, in Russia’s particular circumstances, there was no option but to do what they have done. We would do better to wait, especially as anything we will say cannot have any influence upon the course of events in Russia and might be misinterpreted in Italy and appear to echo the reaction’s partisan calumnies.



**ÉMILE  
HENRY**  
(1872–1894)



## ÉMILE HENRY

Unlike most of the terrorist anarchists, Émile Henry (1872–1894) was an intellectual. He was a brilliant scholarship student at the J.-B. Say school, where one of his teachers described him as “a perfect child, the most honest one could meet.” It only remained for him to don the uniform of the Polytechnic student. But he declined to do so “lest I become a soldier and be compelled to fire on unfortunates as in Fourmies.”<sup>1</sup>

His father, Fortuné Henry, had fought in the ranks of the Communards. Sentenced to death in absentia, he had successfully eluded the repression which followed the defeat, by fleeing to Spain, where his two children were born. He did not return to France until after the amnesty in 1882. He went on to be a contributor to *L'En-dehors*.

At 9:00 A.M. on February 12, 1894, a fair-haired youth entered the Terminus café in the Gare Saint-Lazare. Sitting at an unoccupied table, Henry abruptly drew from the pocket of his cardigan a small tin canister packed with explosives, and tossed it into the air. It struck a chandelier, exploded and shattered all of the windows as well as a few marble tables. A general scramble ensued. Around twenty people were injured, one of them succumbing to his wounds.

Émile Henry took to his heels, chased by a police officer and a waiter, who were joined by a railroad worker, at whom he fired a shot, but missed. A little further on, he seriously injured a police officer, before being caught.

During proceedings in the court of assizes, his repartee was scathing:

The president of the assize court: You reached out that hand (...) which we see today covered in blood.

Émile Henry: My hands are stained with blood, as are your red robes.

To the jury, he read out a statement, from which these are extracts:<sup>2</sup>

(...) I became an anarchist only recently. It was no longer ago than around mid-1891 that I threw myself into the revolutionary movement. Previously, I had lived in circles wholly permeated with the established morality. I had been accustomed to respecting and even cherishing the principles of nation, family, authority and property.

But those educating the present generation all too often forget one thing—that life, indiscreet, with its struggles and setbacks, its injustices and iniquities, sees to it

that the scales are removed from the eyes of the ignorant and that they are opened to reality. Which was the case with me, as it is with everyone. I had been told that this life was easy and largely open to intelligent, vigorous people, and experience showed me that only cynics and lackeys can get a good seat at the banquet.

I had been told that society's institutions were founded on justice and equality, and all around me I could see nothing but lies and treachery. Every day I was disabused further. Everywhere I went, I witnessed the same pain in some, the same delights in others. It did not take me long to realize that the great words that I had been raised to venerate: honor, devotion, duty were merely a mask hiding the most shameful turpitude.

The factory-owner amassing a huge fortune on the back of the labor of his workers who lacked everything was an upright gentleman. The deputy, the minister whose hands were forever outstretched for bribes, were committed to the public good. The officer testing his new model rifle on seven-year-old children had done his duty well, and in open parliament, the premier offered him his congratulations. Everything I could see turned my stomach and my mind fastened upon criticism of social organization. That criticism has been voiced too often to need rehearsing by me. Suffice it to say that I turned into an enemy of a society which I held to be criminal.

Momentarily attracted by socialism, I wasted no time in distancing myself from that party. My love of liberty was too great, my regard for individual initiative too great, my repudiation of feathering one's nest too definite for me to enlist in the numbered army of the fourth estate. Also, I saw that, essentially, socialism changes the established order not one jot. It retains the authoritarian principle, and this principle, despite what supposed free-thinkers may say about it, is nothing but an ancient relic of the belief in a higher power.

(..) In the merciless war that we have declared on the bourgeoisie, we ask no mercy. We mete out death and we must face it. For that reason I await your verdict with indifference. I know that mine will not be the last head you will sever (..) You will add more names to the bloody roll call of our dead.

Hanged in Chicago, beheaded in Germany, garroted in Xerez, shot in Barcelona, guillotined in Montbrison and in Paris, our dead are many: but you have not been able to destroy anarchy. Its roots go deep: it sprouts from the bosom of a rotten society that is falling apart; it is a violent backlash against the established order; it stands for the aspirations to equality and liberty which have entered the lists against the current authoritarianism. It is everywhere. That is what makes it indomitable, and it will end by defeating you and killing you.

EMILE HENRY

## LETTER TO THE GOVERNOR OF THE CONCIERGERIE PRISON<sup>1</sup>

February 27, 1894

Monsieur le Directeur,

During the visit which you paid to me in my cell on Sunday the 18th of this month, you had a rather amicable discussion with me on the subject of anarchist ideas.

You were greatly amazed, you told me, to see our theories in what was for you a new light, and you asked if I would prepare a written summary of what passed between us, so that you might familiarize yourself with what anarchist comrades want.

You will readily understand, Monsieur, that a theory that analyses every manifestation of existing social life, studying them the way a doctor sounds an ailing body, condemning them on the grounds that they are contrary to the happiness of humanity, and erects in their place a whole new life based on principles wholly contrary to those upon which the old society is built, can scarcely be explored in a few pages.

Moreover, persons other than myself have already done what you ask me to do. The Kropotkins, the Reclus and the Sebastien Faures<sup>2</sup> [have set out] their ideas and expanded upon them as far as possible.

Read Reclus's *Evolution and Revolution* or Peter Kropotkin's *Anarchist Morality*, *Paroles d'un Révolté*, or *The Conquest of Bread*; or Sebastien Faure's *Authority and Liberty*, or *Machinism and its Consequences*; or Grave's *The Moribund Society and Anarchy*; or Malatesta's *Between Peasants*; or read the many pamphlets, or countless manifestoes which, over the past fifteen years, have appeared one by one, each of them expounding new ideas as suggested to their authors by study or circumstance. Read all that, and then you can formulate a fairly comprehensive opinion of Anarchy. And yet, beware of thinking that Anarchy is a dogma, an unassailable, incontrovertible doctrine, revered by its adepts the way Muslims venerate the Koran.

No: the absolute liberty which we demand is forever adding to our ideas, drawing them on towards new horizons (at the whim of the brains of various individuals) and making them overspill the narrow boundaries of any regimentation and codification.

We are not “believers,” we bow the knee neither to Reclus, nor Kropotkin. We debate their ideas, accepting them when they elicit fellow-feeling in our minds, but rejecting them when they evoke no response from us.

We are far from having the blind faith of the collectivists, who believe in one thing, because Guesde has said that it must be believed, and who have a catechism whose contents it would be sacrilege to query.

Having established that, let me try to spell out for you briefly and quickly what Anarchy means to me, without thereby speaking for other comrades who may, on given matters, hold views differing from mine.

That the social system today is in a bad way you will not dispute, and the proof is that everyone suffers by it. From the wretched vagrant, breadless and homeless, forever hungry, to the billionaire who lives in constant fear of rebellion by the starvelings upsetting his digestion, the whole of mankind has its worries.

Well now! Upon what foundations does bourgeois society rest? Discounting the precepts of family, nation and faith, which are merely its corollaries, we can state that the two corner-stones, the two underlying principles of the existing State are authority and property.

I am loath to expound upon this point at greater length. It would be easy for me to show that all of the ills we suffer flow from property and authority.

Poverty, theft, crime, prostitution, wars, and revolutions are merely the products of these principles.

So, the twin foundations of society being evil, there are no grounds for hesitation. No need to try out a heap of palliatives (to wit, socialism) that serve only to relocate the evil: the twin seeds of vice must be destroyed and eradicated from the life of society.

Which is why we anarchists seek to replace individual ownership with Communism, and authority with liberty.

No more title deeds then, no more titles of ascendancy: rather, absolute equality.

When we say absolute equality, we are not claiming that all men are to have the same brains, the same physical make-up: we are very well aware that there will always be the widest variation in intellectual and bodily aptitudes.

It is that variety in capabilities that will see to the production of everything that humanity needs, and we are also counting upon it to sustain emulation in an anarchist society.

Self-evidently, there will be engineers and there will be navvies, but the one will pretend to no superiority over the other: for the engineer's work would count for nothing without the assistance of the navvy and vice versa.

With everyone free to choose the trade he will follow, there will no longer be creatures completely in thrall to the inclinations naturally within them (a guarantee of productivity).

At which point a question is posed. What about the lazy? Will everyone be willing to work?

To which our answer is: yes, everyone will be willing to work, and here is the reason why: Today, the average working day is ten hours long.

Lots of workers are engaged in tasks of absolutely no use to society, particularly in the manufacture of military armaments for the land-based and marine services. Many, too, are stricken by unemployment. Add to these a considerable number of able-bodied men producing nothing: soldiers, priests, police, magistrates, civil servants, etc.

Thus we can argue, without fear of being accused of exaggeration, that out of every 100 persons capable of performing some work, only fifty turn in an effort of any real use to society. It is these fifty that produce the entire wealth of society.

From which it follows that if everyone were to work, the working day, instead of being ten hours, would fall to just five hours.

Bear in mind, too, that in the current situation, the total of manufactured products outweighs by four times, and the sum of agricultural produce by three times, the amount required to meet the needs of humanity—which is to say, that a human race three times as numerous could be clothed, housed, heated, fed, in short, could have all its needs met, if the surplus production was not destroyed through waste and many other factors.

(These production figures can be found in a little pamphlet entitled *Les produits de la Terre et les produits de l'Industrie*.)

So, from the foregoing we can deduce the following conclusion:

A society in which everyone would do his bit for production and which would be content with production not greatly in excess of its needs (the excess of the former over the latter should build up a small reserve), need require of each of its able-bodied members only two or three hours' labor, maybe even less.



So who would refuse to contribute such a tiny amount of labor? Who would be willing to live with the shame of being despised by everybody and regarded as a parasite?<sup>3</sup>

(...) Property and authority always march in step, the one supporting the other, to keep humanity enslaved!

What is property right? Is it a natural right? Can it be right that one should eat while the other starves? No. Nature, when she created us, made us similar creatures, and a laborer's stomach demands the same satisfactions as a financier's.

And yet, today, one class has appropriated everything, robbing the other class not just of the sustenance of the body but also of the sustenance of the mind.

Yes, in an age dubbed the age of progress and science, is it not painful to think that millions of minds thirsting for knowledge are denied the opportunity for improvement? How many children of the people, who might have made men of great value to humanity, will never know anything beyond the few rudiments drummed into them in primary school!

Property—that is the enemy of human happiness, for it gives rise to inequality, and thence to hatred, envy and bloody revolution.

Authority is merely property's sanction. Its function is to place force in the service of spoliation.

Well! Since labor is a call of nature, you will agree with me, Monsieur, that no one will shirk the requirement for such a paltry effort as we mentioned above.

(Labor is such a call of nature that History shows us statesmen happily dodging the cares of policy in order to toil like ordinary workmen. To cite only two well-known instances: Louis XVI dabbled in the locksmith's trade, and "the grand old man," Gladstone, spent his holidays chopping down oak trees in his woodland, like a common woodsman.)

So you can well see, Monsieur, that there will not be any need to have recourse to law to abolish laziness.

If, by some fluke, however, someone did want to deny his colleagues his contribution, it would still be cheaper to feed such a wretch, who cannot but be sick, than it is to maintain legislators, magistrates, police officers and warders in order to curb him.

Many other questions arise, but these are of secondary significance: the important thing was to establish that the abolition of property and taking from the common store would not lead to a halt in production as a result

of an upsurge of idleness, and that the anarchist society could feed itself and provide for its every need.

Any other objections that might be raised will easily be rebutted on the basis that an anarchist setting will develop solidarity and love of his fellows in every one of its members, for man will know that in producing for others he will at the same time be working on his own behalf.

One objection which might appear to have more substance is this:

If there is no authority any more, if there is no more fear of the policeman to stay the hand of the criminals, do we not risk seeing offenses and crimes proliferating to a frightening extent?

The answer is simple:

The crime committed today can be classified under two main headings: crimes for gain and crimes of passion.

The former will vanish of their own accord, for there will no longer be any point to such offenses, trespasses against property, in a setting where property has been abolished.

As for the latter, no legislation can prevent them. Far from it. The existing law which frees the spouse who has murdered his adulterous wife, is merely an encouragement to such crimes.

By contrast, an anarchist environment will raise humanity's moral standards. Man will grasp that he has no rights over a woman who gives herself to someone else, because that woman is simply acting in conformity with her nature.

As a result, in the future society, crime will become rarer and rarer until it disappears completely.

Let me sum up for you, Monsieur, my ideal of an anarchist society.

No more authority, which is a lot more contrary to the happiness of humanity than the few excesses which might attend the birth of a free society.

Instead of the current authoritarian organization, individuals combined on the basis of sympathies and affinities, without laws or leaders.

No more private property; products held in common; everyone working in accordance with his needs, and everybody consuming according to his needs, which is to say, according to his whim.

No more selfish bourgeois family making man woman's property and woman the property of man; requiring two creatures who happen to have been in love for a moment to bind themselves one to the other until the end of their days.

Nature is capricious, forever questing after new sensations. She wants free love. Which is why we advocate the free union.

No more fatherlands, no more hatred between brothers, pitting, one against the other, men who have never even laid eyes on one another.

Replacement of the chauvinist's narrow, petty attachment to his homeland with the open, fertile love of the whole of humanity, without distinctions of race or color.

No more religions, forged by priests for the degradation of the masses and to afford them hope of a better life while they themselves savor this earthly life.

Instead, the continual pursuit of the sciences, made accessible to everyone who may be inclined to study them, nursing men gradually towards a materialist consciousness.

Special study of the hypnotic phenomena which science is even today beginning to take under its notice, in order to expose the charlatans who present the ignorant with purely physical feats in a marvelous, supernatural light.

In short, no further impediment to the free development of human nature. Unfettered exercise of all physical, intellectual and mental faculties.

I am not such an optimist as to expect that a society with such foundations should straight-away arrive at perfect harmony. But it is my profound conviction that two or three generations will prove enough to wrest man away from the influence of the artificial civilization to which he is subject today and return him to the state of nature, which is the state of kindness and love.

But if this ideal is to succeed, and an anarchist society is to be erected upon solid foundations, we must start with the work of destruction. The old, worm-eaten structure must be cast down.

Which is what we do.

The bourgeoisie claims that we shall never reach our goal.

The future, the very near future, will teach it differently.

Long live Anarchy!

**THE FRENCH  
ANARCHISTS  
IN THE  
TRADE UNIONS**



# INTRODUCTION TO THE FRENCH ANARCHISTS IN THE TRADE UNIONS

We come now to the penetration into the labor unions of anarchists, or to be more exact, certain anarchists. Indeed, libertarians' attitudes regarding the unions were not uniform. Some sectarians, clinging to doctrinal purity gauged, with undisguised diffidence, the risk of anarchists' being swallowed up by a mass proletarian movement preoccupied pretty well exclusively with short-term demands; others, the anarcho-syndicalists, had no hesitation in immersing themselves in the unions, albeit with the partisan and deliberate intention of "colonizing" them: still others entered the unions with utter lack of selfishness, intent only upon placing themselves in the service of the working class, and the latter were the ones who conjured into existence what has been labeled revolutionary syndicalism, a symbiosis of the libertarian federalist principle and corporative demands, through the day-to-day practice of the class struggle.

How are we to account for this anarchist entry into the trade unions?

Around 1880, anarchism in France was at an impasse. It had managed to cut itself off from the burgeoning workers' movement that was falling more and more under the sway of reformist social democratic politicians. It was walled up in a sort of ideological ivory tower, or else it had preached minority activity, in the shape of "propaganda by deed," a euphemism for terrorism and recourse to bombs.

Kropotkin must have been one of the first to set things to rights and urge anarchism to break out of its impotent insularity: "We have to be with the people, which is no longer calling for isolated acts but rather for men of action in its ranks," he wrote in one article. And to call for a resurrection of mass trade unionism along the lines of its First International fore-runner, but ten times stronger: "Monster unions embracing millions of proletarians."

Following Kropotkin's lead, a young anarchist journalist, Fernand Pelloutier, who came from Saint-Nazaire, published an article in the libertarian review *Les Temps nouveaux* in 1898, under the title of "Anarchism and the workers' unions," the text of which the reader will find below. According to him, the trade union was to be "a practical school of anarchism," much as it was supposed by communists of the Bolshevik school to be the ante-room to communism.

But another anarchist, Émile Pouget, was not quite of the same mind. He had no hesitation in arguing that trade unionism was self-sufficient and had no need of libertarian theoreticians acting as chaperones, and that the trade union should be regarded as the social combination “par excellence.” So, after Pelloutier’s article, we have included a particularly telling piece by Pouget.

The anarchists’ entry into the unions was an event of some significance. It breathed new life into the movement, bringing it a mass base and, far from becoming bogged down in what Lenin was to term “economism,” it was to afford it the opportunity to re-immense itself and rediscover its bearings in a vibrant new synthesis.

Revolutionary syndicalism nevertheless carried with it an implicit risk, against which the die-hard anarchists had not been wrong to sound a note of caution. Might not corporative action in pursuit of short-term demands, in the long run, incubate a labor bureaucracy likely to sterilize the social struggle and reduce it to a conservatism comparable to that which the anarchists pointed to in the social democrats?

As we shall see, Fernand Pelloutier, to his credit, did not overlook this hypothesis in his argument. Far-sightedly, as early as 1895, he conceded that the trade union administrations could “turn into authorities,” which is to say, spawn a bureaucracy. And, later, Malatesta, taking this objection further, was to sound the alarm at the Amsterdam international anarchist congress in 1907 when he opined:

“Inside the labor movement the official poses a threat comparable only with parliamentarism.”

But Pierre Monatte, an overly optimistic supporter of “pure-syndicalism,” was to reply that true, trade union bureaucracy was not without its dangers,” but that syndicalism carried within it enough democratic antidotes to render its officials harmless. Today, we know that they failed to work.



**FERNAND  
PELLOUTIER**  
(1867–1901)





## ANARCHISM AND THE WORKERS' UNION<sup>1</sup>

*Fernand Pelloutier (1867–1901), educated through the religious schools and then Saint-Nazaire College, had turned his back on the bourgeoisie to throw in his lot with the people. At a very early age, he embarked upon a career in journalism. He joined the Parti ouvrier français (French Workers' Party) and then, in 1892, he was sent by the Saint-Nazaire and Nantes Bourses du Travail as their delegate to a socialist congress at which—most unusually for such a setting—he won acceptance for the principle of the general strike.*

*At the beginning of 1893, he moved to Paris. It was not long before he had parted company from the marxists to embrace libertarian ideas. In a "Letter to the Anarchists," he wrote, "We are (...) what they [the politicians] are not—full-time rebels, truly godless men, without master or homeland, incorrigible enemies of all despotism, moral or collective, that is to say, of laws and dictatorships, including that of the proletariat."*

*But at the same time, Pelloutier was urging anarchists to get actively involved in the labor movement. In 1895, he was appointed secretary of the Federation of Bourses du Travail and gave unstintingly of himself in that capacity. In 1897, he launched a monthly review of social economy, L'Ouvrier des Deux-Mondes, seeing to the type-setting personally.*

*Pelloutier looked upon the Bourses du Travail as the very paragon of labor organization, the model closest to the people at the grassroots. He saw in them the embryo of the "free association of producers" to which Bakunin had looked forward, as well as the embryo of the workers' Commune, that essential structure of the coming society. Succumbing to an untimely death as a result of incurable illness, he left behind a posthumous volume, that classic work on revolutionary syndicalism, Histoire des Bourses du Travail.*

Just as some workers of my acquaintance, for all that they are fed up with parliamentary socialism, are loath to confess their libertarian socialism, because, as they see it, anarchy boils down to the individual recourse to dynamite, so I know a number of anarchists who, as a result of a once well-founded prejudice, steer well clear of the trade unions, and, if need be, oppose them, on the grounds that that institution has been, for a time, a downright nursery

for would-be deputies. In Saint-Etienne, for example (and I have this from a reliable source), the members of the trade unions venerate Ravachol; none of them, however, dares declare himself an anarchist, for fear that he might appear to be turning away from working towards collective rebellion and opting for isolated rebellion in its place. Elsewhere, by contrast, in Paris, Amiens, Marseilles, Roanne and a hundred other towns, anarchists admire the new spirit by which the trade unions have been moved these past two years, yet do not dare to venture into that revolutionary field to ensure that the good seed sown by harsh experience germinates. And, between these men, emancipated almost to the same extent, intellectually connected by a shared objective and by a perception here and a conviction there, regarding the necessity of a violent uprising, there is a lingering mistrust which keeps the former distant from comrades held to be systematically hostile to all concerted action, and the latter from a form of combination in which, they persist in believing, alienation of the freedom of the individual is still obligatory.

However, the rapprochement begun in a few large industrial or manufacturing centers is relentlessly spreading. A comrade from Roanne only recently indicated to readers of *Les Temps nouveaux* that not only have that city's anarchists at last joined the trades bodies, but that they have gained a moral authority there of real service to propaganda by virtue of the vigor and passion of their proselytization. What we have learned regarding the trade unions of Roanne, I might repeat relative to many trade unions in Algiers, Toulouse, Paris, Beauvais, Toulon, etc., where, worn down by libertarian propaganda, they are today studying teachings which yesterday, under marxist influence, they refused even to hear tell of. Now, analyzing the grounds behind this rapprochement, which would so recently have seemed impossible, and setting out the stages through which it has proceeded, amounts to dispelling the remains of the distrust that thwarts revolutionary unity and spells ruin for statist socialism, which has turned into the doctrinal form of inadmissible appetites. At one point, the trade unions were ready (and—this is a guarantee against any back-sliding—ready because they had come to their own conclusion, in spite of counsels which previously they had so respectfully heeded) to withdraw from all truck with the so-called social laws; that point coincided with the implementation of the first of the reforms which they had been promised over a period of four years would work wonders.

So often had they been told: "Patience! We will see to it that your work hours are so regulated that you will have the leisure and study time with-

out which you would be perpetually slaves” that they were transfixed in expectation of that reform, so to speak, over a period of several years and distracted from the aim of revolution. But once they had been awarded the law governing female and child labor, what did they find? That their wives’ pay was cut, along with their children’s and their own, in keeping with the cut in working hours, and there were strikes and lock-outs in Paris, Amiens and the Ardeche, out-work became more widespread, or the *sweating system*, or indeed industrialists’ recourse to ingenious combinations (swing shifts, shift work) simultaneously circumvented the law and worsened working conditions. In the end, implementation of the law of November 2, 1892 had such an impact that female and male workers called and are calling still for it to be repealed.

What was the provenance of such a reversal? The trade unions hastened to look for an explanation, but, their faith in legislation being too recently acquired to be seriously stricken, too ignorant of social economy to probe beyond the tangible causes, they believed (in that the cuts in working hours had determined the cuts in pay) that the law would be flawless if regulation of labor costs could be added to regulation of hours.

But the hour of disappointment had finally come. The promises which had made for reformist socialism’s power now yielded to the practice, which would spell its ruination. Fresh laws arose, designed either to see that the producer was paid better or to cater for his old age. But then the unions noticed (and it is primarily to the women that the credit for this discovery, crucial to socialism’s evolution, must go) that the items for which they were paid most as producers were sold to them at increasingly high cost as consumers, and that as wage rates rose, so too the cost of bread, wine, meat, housing, furniture—in short, all of life’s essential needs—rose too; and they noticed too (and this was spelled out formally at the recent Limoges congress) that in the last analysis, retirement pensions are still funded out of levies upon wages. And this lesson of experience, a lesson more instructive to them than the masterly analysis of the impact of taxation devised by Proudhon<sup>2</sup> or taught by the International and indeed accepted and incorporated into the collectivist programs of thirteen years ago—while it was not as yet enough to persuade them that attempts to reduce pauperism in an economic context where everything conspires to add to it are like trying to confine a liquid on a flat surface, at least impressed upon their minds a rough conclusion to the effect that social legislation may not be quite the panacea they had been told it would be.

However, that lesson would not have been enough to inspire the rapid evolution in them of which we speak, had not the socialist schools themselves been bent upon investing them with a distaste for politics. For a long time, the trade unions reckoned that the socialist party's weakness, or rather, the weakness of the proletariat had been primarily, and maybe even exclusively, attributable to divisions among the politicians. The moment that Citizen X fell out with Citizen Z, or the "bespectacled Torquemada," hitherto damned by Clovis Hugues and Ferroul,<sup>3</sup> and some prima donna from what Lafargue<sup>4</sup> has called the "Federation of Socialist Unreliables," the trade unions would be split down the middle, and if it came to the mounting of some concerted action like a May Day demonstration, say, they would find their members splitting into five, six or ten factions, pulling in different directions in obedience to their leaders' watchwords. This gave them pause for thought, and mistaking the effect for the cause, they expended what could be described as immeasurable-energy on efforts to resolve this insoluble problem of socialist unity.<sup>5</sup> Ah, no one who has not lived among the trade unions can have any conception of the efforts made to make a reality of that chimera! Agendas, deliberations, manifestoes: everything, but everything was tried, but found wanting: even as agreement seemed to have been reached, or when the discussions were being wound up, more as a result of weariness than of conviction, one word would fan the spark: Guesdists, Blanquists, die-hards and Broussists would jump angrily to their feet to exchange insults and take issue with this Guesde, Vaillant and Brousse, and this fresh outbreak of fighting would drag on for weeks, only to flare up again when scarcely it had finished.

In this world, everything comes to an end. Wearying of their growing weakness and their pointless endeavors to reconcile politics, which has to do primarily with individual interests, with economics, which has to do with the interests of society, the trade unions eventually came to understand (better late than never) that the divisions in their own ranks had a loftier cause than the division among the politicians, and that both of these proceeded from...politics. At which point, emboldened by the manifest ineffectuality of "social" legislation, by the treachery of certain elected socialists (some of whom gave their backing to the Bercy big business interest), by the lamentable results of interference by deputies or town councilors in strikes, notably the omnibus strike, by the hostility shown towards the general strike by newspapers and men whose entire policy consists of building or finding themselves a stepping stone towards their 25 francs and sash, the trade unions decided

that from now on political agitations would be none of their concern, that all discussion, other than economic, would be ruthlessly excluded from their program of study and that they would devote themselves whole-heartedly to resisting capital. Recent instances have shown how quickly the trade unions have taken to this slant!

Yet the rumor of this about-turn had been vindicated. The new watchword "No more politicking!" had spread through the workshops. A number of union members deserted the churches devoted to the cult of electioneering. So, the trade union terrain seemed to some anarchists ripe to receive and nurture their doctrine, and came to the aid of those who, freed at last of parliamentary tutelage, now strove to focus their attention and that of their comrades upon the study of economic laws.

This entry into the trade union of some libertarians made a considerable impact. For one thing, it taught the masses the true meaning of anarchism, a doctrine which, in order to make headway can very readily, let us say it again, manage without the individual dynamiter: and, through a natural linkage of ideas, it showed union members what this trades organization, of which they had previously had only the narrowest conception, is and may yet become.

Nobody believes or expects that the coming revolution, however formidable it should be, will realize unadulterated anarchist communism. By virtue of the fact that it will erupt, no doubt, before the work of anarchist education has been completed, men will not be quite mature enough to organize themselves absolutely without assistance, and for a long time yet the demands of caprice will stifle the voice of reason in them. As a result (and this seems a good time to spell it out), while we do preach perfect communism, it is not in the certainty or expectation of communism's being the social form of the future: it is in order to further men's education, and round it off as completely as possible, so that, by the time that the day of conflagration comes, they will have attained maximum emancipation. But must the transitional state to be endured necessarily or inevitably be the collectivist jail?<sup>6</sup> Might it not consist of libertarian organization confined to the needs of production and consumption alone, with all political institutions having been done away with? Such is the problem with which many minds have—rightly—been grappling for many a long year.

Now, what is the trade union? An association which one is free to join or quit, one without a president, with no officials other than a secretary and a treasurer subject to instant revocation, of men who study and debate kindred

professional concerns. And who are these men? Producers, the very same who create all public wealth. Do they await the approval of the law before they come together, reach agreement, and act? No: as far as they are concerned, lawful constitution is merely an amusing means of making revolutionary propaganda under government guarantee, and anyway, how many of them do not and will not ever figure in the unions' formal annual returns? Do they use the parliamentary mechanism in order to arrive at their resolutions? Not any more: they hold discussions and the most widely-held view has the force of law, but it is a law without sanction, observed precisely because it is subject to the endorsement of the individual, except, of course, when it comes to resisting the employers. Finally, while they appoint a chairman, a delegated supervisor, for every session, this is not now the result of habit, for, once appointed, that chairman is utterly overlooked and himself frequently forgets the powers vested in him by his comrades.

As a laboratory of economic struggles, detached from election contests, favoring the general strike with all that that implies, governing itself along anarchic lines, the trade union is thus the simultaneously revolutionary and libertarian organization that alone will be able to counter and successfully reduce the noxious influence of the collectivist politicians. Suppose now that, on the day the revolution breaks out, virtually every single producer is organized into the unions: will these not represent, ready to step into the shoes of the present organization, a quasi-libertarian organization, in fact suppressing all political power, an organization whose every part, being master of the instruments of production, would settle all of its affairs for itself, in sovereign fashion and through the freely given consent of its members? And would this not amount to the "free association of free producers?"

To be sure, there are many objections: the federal agencies may turn into authorities; wily persons may come to govern the trade unions just the way the parliamentary socialists govern the political groupings; but such objections are only partly valid. In keeping with the spirit of the trade unions, the federal councils are merely half-way houses generated by the need to spread and make economic struggles more and more formidable, but which the success of the revolution would make redundant, and which, also, the groups from which they emanate monitor with too jealous an eye for them ever to successfully win a directorial authority. On the other hand, the permanent revocability of officials reduces their function and their profile to very little, and often indeed having done their duty is not enough for them to retain their comrades'

confidence. Then again, trades organization is still only in the embryonic stages. Once rid of politicians' tyranny, it can stride out freely and, like the child learning to take his first steps, toddle along the road of independence. But who can say where a softly-softly approach and, rather more, the fruits of freedom will have carried them in ten years' time? It is up to libertarian socialists to commit all of their efforts to getting them there.

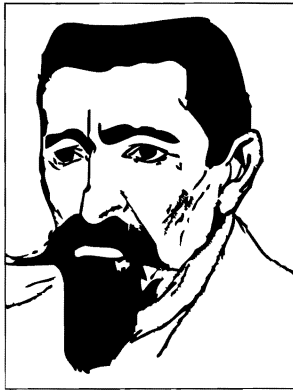
"The Federal Committee of the Bourses du Travail"—say the official minutes carried by the *Bulletin de la Bourse de Narbonne*—"has as its task the instruction of the people regarding the pointlessness of a revolution that would make do with the substitution of one State for another, even should this be a socialist State." That committee, states another minute due to appear in the *Bulletin de la Bourse de Perpignan*, "should strive to prepare an organization which, in the event of a transformation of society, may see to the operation of the economy through the free grouping and render any political institution superfluous. Its goal being the abolition of authority in any of its forms, its task is to accustom the workers to shrug off tutelage."

Thus, on the one hand, the "unionized" are today in a position to understand, study and receive libertarian teachings; on the other, anarchists need not fear that, in taking part in the corporative movement, they will be required to forswear their independence. The former are ready to accept and the latter can strengthen an organization whose resolutions are the products of free agreement—which, to borrow Grave's words (*La Société future* p. 202) "has neither laws, not statutes, nor regulations to which each individual may be obliged to submit on pain of some pre-determined penalty"—which individuals are at liberty to quit as they see fit, except, let me repeat, when battle has been joined with the enemy; which, when all is said and done, may be a practical schooling in anarchism.

Let free men then enter the trade union, and let the propagation of their ideas prepare the workers, the artisans of wealth there to understand that they should regulate their affairs for themselves, and then, when the time comes, smash not only existing political forms, but any attempt to reconstitute a new power. That will show the authorities how well-founded was their fear, posing as disdain, of "syndicalism," and how ephemeral their teaching, evaporated before it was even able to put down roots!







**ÉMILE  
POUGET**  
(1860-1931)



PAUL DELESALLE

## ÉMILE POUGET'S LIFE AS AN ACTIVIST<sup>1</sup>

### YOUTH

Émile Pouget was born in 1860 near Rodez in the department of the Aveyron. His notary father died young. His mother re-married and in this way his life was, in a sense, unbalanced. Nonetheless, his stepfather, a good republican in his day, and a fighter like his stepson, quickly lost his post as a petty official over something he wrote in a little campaigning journal which he had founded.

It was at the high school in Rodez, where he began his studies, that his passion for journalism was conceived. At the age of fifteen, he launched his first newspaper, *Le Lycéen républicain*. I need not say what sort of reception this little sheet received from his teachers.

In 1875, his stepfather died. Émile was obliged to leave the high school to earn his living. Paris attracted him (...) Working in a novelty store, he began, after work, to frequent public meetings and progressive groups and quickly became wholly committed to revolutionary propaganda.

But even then, merely speculative, idealist anarchism left his pronounced social sensibilities unsatisfied and, as early as 1879, he was involved in the foundation in Paris of the first shop assistants' union. Such was Pouget's single-mindedness as an activist that he soon got his trade union to publish the earliest of anti-militarist pamphlets. Needless to say, it had been penned by our syndicalist, and let me add that it would be unpublishable today on account both of the vehemence of his text and of the advice with which it was punctuated.

In and around 1882–1883, unemployment was pretty bad in Paris, so much so that on March 8, 1883 the cabinet-makers' chamber of trade invited the unemployed to an open-air meeting scheduled to be held on the Esplanade des Invalides.

Naturally, the meeting was quickly broken up by the police, but two sizeable groups of demonstrators formed: one set off for the Elysee palace, only to be dispersed quickly; the other, which included Louise Michel<sup>2</sup> and Pouget, raced towards the Boulevard Saint-Germain. A bakery in the Rue du Four was pretty well stripped bare.

Nevertheless, the demonstration carried on and it was only on arrival in the Place Maubert that it confronted a significant force of police. When the police rushed forward to arrest Louise Michel, Pouget did what he could to free her: he, in turn, was arrested and marched off to the station.

A few days later, he was brought before the assizes on the incorrect charge of armed robbery. Louise was sentenced to twelve years in prison, and Pouget to eight years, a sentence he was to serve in the criminal prison in Melun. He remained there for fully three years and an amnesty granted after pressure from Rochefort<sup>3</sup> ensured that he was then released. Prison, however, had not cowed the militant.

### LE PÈRE PEINARD

February 24, 1889 saw the publication of the very first edition of *Le Père Peinard* in small pamphlet form, reminiscent of Rochefort's *La Lanterne* and written in the picturesque style of Hébert's *Père Duchêne*, but in a more proletarian style.

(...) Pouget's little pamphlets were met with a success difficult to appreciate today. During the life-span of *Le Père Peinard*—and then *La Sociale*—there was real proletarian agitation in certain workers' centers and I could name ten or twenty workers' districts, like Trélazé or Fourchambault, where the whole movement dwindled to nothing once the pamphlets stopped coming out.

In Paris in particular, among the cabinet-makers in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, the trade union movement lasted just as long as *Le Père Peinard* did. In the years 1891–1893, a little campaigning sheet called *Le Pot-à-Colle* was published there, imitating the style.

(...) Pouget's anarchism is above all primarily proletarian. Right from the earliest issues of *Le Père Peinard*, he was praising strike movements and the May 1st editions were wholly given over to encouragement to the "lads" to get involved: "May 1st is an occasion that can be put to good use. All that is required is that our brothers, the troopers, should disobey their orders as they did in February 1848 and March 18, 1871 and that would be that."

He was one of the first to grasp the potential of the idea of the general strike, and as early as 1889, he was writing:

Yes, by God, there is nothing else for it today, but the general strike!

Look what would happen if the coal was to run out in a fortnight. Factories would grind to a halt, the big towns would run out of gas and the railways would be at a stand-still.

All of a sudden, virtually the whole population would be idle. Which would give it time to reflect; it would realize that it is being robbed blind by the employers and yes, it might shake them up in double quick order!

And again:

So once the miners are all out and the strike would be all but general, by God, let them set to beavering away on their own account: the mine is theirs, stolen from them by the moneybags: let them snatch back what is theirs, double-quick. Come the day when they've had enough arsing about, there'll be a crop of good guys who will raise a storm like this and then! by Père Peinard, we'll have the beginning of the end!

### A GREAT PROLETARIAN PAMPHLETEER

But while the labor movement occupies a prime position, Pouget subjects every other aspect of the social question to the fine scrutiny of his implacable censure: he overlooks none of the blights of bourgeois society: one huge bank, the Comptoir d'Escompte, had just gone bust: it is worth quoting his article "The gabbers" in its entirety:

Those in government, cake-guzzlers and financiers, blackguards and side-kicks they are! Take today: it has been decided that there will be an inquiry. Let me have the system of '89, which was better. Thus, in July '89, Berthier de Sauvigny was strung up on a street lamp and another of his cronies, Foullon,<sup>3</sup> was massacred. When are we going to get around to reviving that system for popping the clogs of the whole Rothschild and Schneider clique?

The excitement on the streets never left him cold.

Thus: "At home with our pals next door;" "In addition to the lads from Germany who are strutting around with bravado, the Macaronis are socking it to their big landlords and the Serbian and Bulgarian peasants, whom our hack journalists describe as brigands, are pitching into the bigwigs. And even the Brits, for all their phlegm and namy-pamby airs, have had their little strike."

Next came the "military nincompoops," criticism directed at the army, the "dirty work in the barracks" and an all-out assault—and how!—against the army and militarism.

"In the Palace of Injustice" takes on the bench and class justice and all I can say is that it too gets the treatment it deserves.

But that is not all. Every murmur of public opinion triggered an article, a special edition, for Pouget, above all else, had a real talent for propaganda and what needed to be said to the crowd.

The drawing of lots was one good excuse, as were the anniversaries of the Commune or of July 14, and the relevant issue of *Le Père Peinard* often carried a pull-out poster.<sup>4</sup> Nothing that roused public opinion, however trivial, left him indifferent. Because Pouget was, above all, a born reporter.

But where his polemics took a more personal turn—which was not exclusive to him, for it was typical of all the anarchists of the day—was in his criticisms of parliamentarism and the whole machinery of State.

What Pouget and the anarchists of his day were reviving, in fact, were the old tussles of the First International, between libertarian socialism on the one hand, represented by Bakunin, and Marx's authoritarian socialism on the other.

Guesde, the best of the representatives of the authoritarian socialism of the day, Pouget's *bête noire*, who gave as good as he got, used to go around everywhere shouting: "You working class! Send half of the deputies to Parliament plus one and the Revolution will not be far off a *fait accompli*." To which Pouget and his friends retorted: "Band together into your trades societies, into your unions and take over the workshops."

Two approaches which then and now pitted libertarian and authoritarian socialists one against the other, sometimes violently.

And when Pouget turned to illustrating his argument, the polemics were mordant. Judge for yourself: "These blessed elections are scheduled for Sunday! Naturally there is no shortage of candidates—there is something for every taste and in every hue; a sow could not pick out her own farrow. But, by God, while the candidates' colors and labels may alter, one thing never changes: The patter! Reactionaries, republicans, Boulangists, socialists, etc.—they all promise the people that they'll work themselves to death!"

And there was a virulent poster to expand upon this line of argument.

## REPRESSION

But such propaganda, conducted with so much vigor, was certainly not without drawbacks. Prosecutions came hot and heavy and while his editors might escape, Pouget too served his time in Saint-Pelagie, the prison of the day, not that that stopped *Le Père Peinard* from appearing, as his colleagues took it in turns to collect his copy from inside prison itself.

A period of such intense agitation—and, it must be said, not just that—had driven a number of individuals over the edge; a series of *attentats* followed, culminating in the assassination of President Carnot<sup>5</sup> in Lyons.

Whipped up by its servile press, the bourgeoisie was so spooked that it could see no way of salvation other than the passing by Parliament of a series of repressive laws quite properly described, once the panic had subsided, as *Les Scélérates*<sup>6</sup> (blackguardly laws).

Arrests followed the hundreds of house searches carried out across the country and a great trial, known as the “Trial of the Thirty” was mounted.

Pouget and quite a few other comrades put some distance between themselves and their would-be judges. For him, it was the start of his exile, and February 21, 1894 saw the publication of the 253<sup>rd</sup> and final edition of the first run of *Le Père Peinard*.

He fled to London, where he found Louise Michel.<sup>7</sup> It would be a mistake to believe that our comrade was about to stop, and in September that very same year, the first issue of the London run of *Le Père Peinard* appeared. Eight issues appeared, the last in January 1895. But exile was no solution. The bourgeoisie was feeling a little more reassured and Pouget went home to face the music, and was acquitted, as were all of his co-accused in the “Trial of the Thirty.”

None of these adventures had changed the militant’s fervor one iota; on May 11 the same year, *Le Père Peinard*’s successor, *La Sociale*, came out. For a number of reasons, its founder was unable for the time being to resurrect the former title (which reappeared only in October 1896).

What are we to say of Pouget’s two newborn creations, except that in terms of the intensity of their propaganda they were the match of their older brother? There was the same courage, more than courage indeed, for the “blackguardly laws” made difficulties even worse, and there was the same effrontery. It is from this period that the celebrated *Almanachs du Père Peinard* date, as do numerous propaganda pamphlets, one of which, *Les Variations Guesdistes* (Guesdist Zig-zagging), under Pouget’s own signature, created something of a sensation in socialist political circles.

Come the Dreyfus Affair, Pouget again could not help commenting. He threw himself into the fray, but his goal was to demand justice also for anarchists deported for penal servitude and perishing on Devil’s Island, which was a destination specially reserved for them. Through his many articles and the pamphlet *Les Lois scélérates* (co-written with Francis de Pressense), he



successfully captured the attention of the masses, and the government of the day was obliged to release some of the survivors of a supposed revolt adroitly staged in advance by the prison administration.

### “LA VOIX DU PEUPLE”

We come now to the year 1898. The General Confederation of Labor (CGT) was growing and growing and assuming an ever greater significance in society.

At Pouget’s instigation, the Toulouse Congress (1897) had adopted a significant report on *Boycotting and Sabotage* offering the working class a novel weapon of struggle.

Finally, and this was his most cherished idea, he had dreamt of equipping the working class with a fighting journal written entirely by interested parties. An initial commitment to this had been forthcoming at the Toulouse Congress, and had been reiterated by the Rennes Congress. What the comrades had in mind at that point was a daily newspaper, a project which they were later forced to abandon in the light of all sorts of financial difficulties.

No matter. The idea had been floated and we would do well to remember here that it was also thanks to Pouget’s tenacity that the first edition of *La Voix du Peuple* appeared on December 1, 1900.

Pouget, who had been appointed assistant secretary of the CGT, Federations branch, was in charge of getting the newspaper out each week. Thanks to his dogged efforts and with the aid of Fernand Pelloutier, the working class for the first time ever had a newspaper all of its very own.

(...) It would be an easy matter for me, with the aid of a complete run of *La Voix du Peuple* to rehearse, one by one, the campaigns of all sorts, the struggle against the placement offices, the campaign for a weekly rest day, the eight-hour day and the battles against all manner of iniquities, in which the name of Émile Pouget continually crops up in the forefront of the battle.

The entire working class fought through his pen.

However, I have to recall those splendid and unforgettable special editions on “Drawing lots” or “May the first,” conceived and presented in such a way that it is no exaggeration to say that such intensity of propaganda has never been outdone.

Let me recall, too, the campaign for the eight-hour working day, culminating in May 1, 1906: One has to have lived through those times alongside Pouget to appreciate what propagandistic science—and no, that does not

strike me as too strong a word for it—he deployed then. With the aid of his alter ego Victor Griffuelhes,<sup>8</sup> over a period of nearly two years, he was able to come up with something new every time to hold spellbound a mass of workers occasionally overly inclined to self-doubt. So, there is no exaggeration in saying that, wherever it was able to enforce its will entirely, the working class enjoyed the eight-hour day and owes that, in no small part, to Émile Pouget.

One need only review the succession of CGT congresses between 1896 and 1907 to get the measure of the profound influence that he wielded over those labor gatherings. His reports, his speeches and above all his effective work on working parties are still the most reliable index of syndicalism's debt to him. Might I recall that in Amiens he wielded the pen and that the motion which to this day remains the charter of authentic syndicalism is partly his handiwork?<sup>9</sup>

Apart from the many brochures written by him, we ought also to remember his contributions to many little labor newspapers as well as his great articles in Hubert Lagardelle's *Le Mouvement socialiste*,<sup>10</sup> studies so substantial that they cannot be ignored in any future examination of the origins and methods of the syndicalist movement in France that may wish to probe beneath the surface.

### “LA REVOLUTION,”

#### VILLENEUVE-SAINT-GEORGES AND RETIREMENT

(...) Pouget had a life-long obsession with a daily newspaper, but it had to be a proletarian newspaper reflecting the aspirations of the working class only. This is what he had in mind when, with other comrades, he launched *La Révolution*. Griffuelhes had a hand in it, as did Monatte.<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately, it takes a lot of money to keep a daily newspaper afloat and the anticipated help was not forthcoming. After a few months, *La Révolution* was forced to shut down. It was one of the greatest disappointments he had in his life, watching the foundering of a creation for which he had yearned so fervently.

I might stop at this point, but I have to recall the Draveil-Villeneuve-Saint-Georges affair. Indeed, with hindsight, it really does appear that this miserable and dismal episode was desired by Clemenceau.<sup>12</sup> That moreover was Griffuelhes's view, as well as Pouget's. Prosecutions were mounted against a number of militants, of whom Pouget, of course, was one. But after more than two months spent in Corbeil prison, the charges had to be dropped and

there is no exaggeration in saying that had it come to trial, the stigma would doubtless not have attached itself to those in the dock.

But even then the health of Pouget, who is a good ten years older than us, was beginning to leave something to be desired.

In the long run, the struggle—as he understood the term—consumed the man to some extent. For him, rest consisted of starting back to working for a living, and right up until the day when illness laid him low, he never stopped working, despite his seventy-one years.<sup>13</sup>

## WHAT IS THE TRADE UNION?¹

Property and authority are merely differing manifestations and expressions of one and the same “principle” which boils down to the enforcement and enshrinement of the servitude of man. Consequently, the only difference between them is one of vantage point: viewed from one angle, slavery appears as a PROPERTY CRIME, whereas, viewed from a different angle, it constitutes an AUTHORITY CRIME.

In life, these “principles” whereby the peoples are muzzled are erected into oppressive institutions of which only the façade had changed over the ages. At present and in spite of all the tinkering carried out on the ownership system and the adjustments made to the exercise of authority, quite superficial tinkering and adjustments, submission, constraint, forced labor, hunger, etc. are the lot of the laboring classes.

This is why the Hell of Wage-Slavery is a lightless Gehenna: the vast majority of human beings languish there, bereft of well-being and liberty. And in that Gehenna, for all its cosmetic trappings of democracy, a rich harvest of misery and grief grows.

### ESSENTIAL ASSOCIATION

The trade association is, in fact, the only focal point which, in its very composition, reflects the aspirations by which the wage slave is driven: being the sole agglomeration of human beings that grows out of an absolute identity of interests, in that it derives its *raison d'être* from the form of production, upon which it models itself and of which it is merely the extension.

What in fact is the trade union? An association of workers bound together by corporative ties. Depending on the setting, this corporative combination may assume the form of the narrower trade connection or, in the context of the massive industrialization of the 19th century, may embrace proletarians drawn from several trades but whose efforts contribute towards a common endeavor.

However, whatever the format preferred by its members or imposed by circumstance, whether the trade union combination is restricted to the “trade” or

encompasses the “industry,” there is still the very same objective. To wit:

1. The offering of constant resistance to the exploiter: forcing him to honor the improvements won; deterring any attempt to revert to past practice; and also seeking to minimize the exploitation through pressure for partial improvements such as reduction of working hours, increased pay, improved hygiene etc., changes which, although they may reside in the details, are nonetheless effective trespasses against capitalist privileges and attenuation of them.

2. The trade union aims to cultivate increasing coordination of relations of solidarity, in such a way as to facilitate, within the shortest time possible, the expropriation of capital, that being the sole basis which could possibly mark the commencement of a thoroughgoing transformation of society. Only once that legitimate social restitution has been made can any possibility of parasitism be excluded. Only then, when no one is any longer obliged to work for someone else, wage-slavery having been done away with, can production become social in terms of its destination as well as of its provenance: at which time, economic life being a genuine sum of reciprocal efforts, all exploitation can be, not just abolished, but rendered impossible.

Thus, thanks to the trade union, the social question looms with such clarity and starkness as to force itself upon the attention of even the least clear-sighted persons; without possibility of error, the trade association marks out a dividing line between wage slaves and masters. Thanks to which society stands exposed as it truly is: on one side, the workers, the robbed; on the other, the exploiters, the robbers.

### TRADE UNION AUTONOMY

However superior the trade union may be to every other form of association, it does not follow that it has any intrinsic existence, independent of that breathed into it by its membership. Which is why the latter, if they are to conduct themselves as conscious union members, owe it to themselves to participate in the work of the trade union. And, for their part, they would have no conception of what constitutes the strength of this association, were they to imagine that they come to it as perfect union members, simply by doing their duty by the union financially.

Of course, it is a good thing to pay one’s dues on a regular basis, but that is only the merest fragment of the duty a loyal member owes to himself, and thus to his trade union; indeed, he ought to be aware that the union’s value

resides, not so much in the sum of their monetary contributions as in multiplication of its members' coherent endeavors.

The constituent part of the trade union is the individual. Except that the union member is spared the depressing phenomenon manifest in democratic circles where, thanks to the veneration of universal suffrage, the trend is towards the crushing and diminution of the human personality. In a democratic setting, the elector can avail of his will only in order to perform an act of abdication: his role is to "award" his "vote" to the candidate whom he wishes to have as his "representative."

Affiliation to the trade union has no such implications and even the greatest stickler could not discover the slightest trespass against the human personality in it: after, as well as before, the union member is what he used to be. Autonomous he was and autonomous he remains.

In joining the union, the worker merely enters into a contract—which he may at any time abjure—with comrades who are his equals in will and potential, and at no time will any of the views he may be induced to utter or actions in which he may happen to participate, imply any of the suspension or abdication of personality which is the distinguishing characteristic and badge of the ballot paper.

In the union, say, should it come to the appointment of a trade union council to take charge of administrative matters, such "selection" is not to be compared with "election": the form of voting customarily employed in such circumstances is merely a means whereby the labor can be divided and is not accompanied by any delegation of authority. The strictly prescribed duties of the trade union council are merely administrative. The council performs the task entrusted to it, without ever overruling its principals, without supplanting them or acting in their place.

The same might be said of all decisions reached in the union: all are restricted to a definite and specific act, whereas in democracy, election implies that the elected candidate has been issued by his elector with a *carte blanche* empowering him to decide and do as he pleases, in and on everything, without even the hindrance of the quite possibly contrary wishes of his principals, whose opposition, in any case, no matter how pronounced, is of no consequence until such time as the elected candidate's mandate has run its course.

So there cannot be any possible parallels, let alone confusion, between trade union activity and participation in the disappointing chores of politics.

## THE TRADE UNION AS SCHOOL FOR THE WILL

Socrates' dictum "Know thyself!" is, in the trade union context, complemented by the maxim: "Shift for yourself!"

Thus, the trade union offers itself as a school for the will: its preponderant role is the result of its members' wishes, and, if it is the highest form of association, the reason is that it is the condensation of workers' strengths made effective through their direct action, the sublime form of the deliberate enactment of the wishes of the proletarian class.

The bourgeoisie has contrived to preach resignation and patience to the people by holding out the hope that progress might be achieved miraculously and without effort on their part, through the State's intervention from without. This is nothing more than an extension, in less inane form, of millenarian and crude religious beliefs. Now, while the leaders were trying to substitute this disappointing illusion for the no less disappointing religious mirage, the workers, toiling in the shadows, with indomitable and unflinching tenacity, were building the organ of liberation to which the trade union amounts.

That organ, a veritable school for the will, was formed and developed over the 19th century. It is thanks to it, thanks to its economic character that the workers have been able to survive inoculation with the virus of politics and defy every attempt to divide them.

It was in the first half of the 19th century that trades associations were established, in spite of the interdicts placed upon them. The persecution of those who had the effrontery to unionize was ruthless, so it took ingenuity to give repression the slip. So, in order to band together without undue danger, the workers disguised their resistance associations behind anodyne exteriors, such as mutual societies.

The bourgeoisie has never taken umbrage with charitable bodies, knowing very well that, being mere palliatives, they cannot ever offer a remedy for the curse of poverty. The placing of hope in charity is a soporific good only for preventing the exploited from reflecting upon their dismal lot and searching for a solution to it. This is why mutual associations have always been tolerated, if not, encouraged, by those in charge.

Workers were able to profit from the tolerance shown these groups: under the pretext of helping one another in the event of illness, of setting up retirement homes, etc., they were able to get together, but in pursuit of a more manly objective: they were preoccupied with bettering their living conditions and aimed to resist the employers' demands. Their tactics were not always

successful in escaping the attentions of the authorities which, having been alerted by complaints from employers, often kept these dubious mutual aid societies under surveillance.

Later, by which time the workers, by dint of experience and acting for themselves, felt strong enough to defy the law, they discarded the mutualist disguise and boldly called their associations resistance societies.

A splendid name! expressive and plain. A program of action in itself. It is proof of the extent to which workers, even though their trades associations were still in the very early stages, sensed that they had no need to trot along behind the politicians nor amalgamate their interests with the interests of the bourgeoisie, but instead should be taking a stand against and in opposition to the bourgeoisie.

Here we had an instinctive incipient class struggle which the International Working Men's Association was to provide with a clear and definitive formulation, with its announcement that "the emancipation of the workers must be the workers' own doing."

That formula, a dazzling affirmation of workers' strength, purged of all remnants of democratism, was to furnish the entire proletarian movement with its key-note idea. It was, moreover, merely an open and categorical affirmation of tendencies germinating among the people. This is abundantly demonstrated by the theoretical and tactical concordance between the hitherto vague, underground "trade unionist" movement and the International's opening declaration.

After stating as a principle that the workers should rely upon their own unaided efforts, the International's declaration married the assertion of the necessity of the proletariat's enjoying autonomy to an indication that it is only through direct action that it can obtain tangible results: and it went on to say:

Given,

That the economic subjection of the worker to those who hold the means of labor, which is to say, the wherewithal of life, is the prime cause of political, moral and material servitude;

The economic emancipation of workers is, consequently, the great goal towards which every political movement should be striving (...)



Thus, the International did not confine itself to plain proclamation of workers' autonomy, but married that to the assertion that political agitations and adjustments to the form of the government ought not to make such an impression upon workers as to make them lose sight of the economic realities.

The current trade unionist movement is only a logical sequel to the movement of the International—there is absolute identity between them and it is on the same plane that we carry on the endeavors of our predecessors.

Except that when the International was setting out its premises, the workers' will was still much too clouded and the proletariat's class consciousness too under-developed for the economic approach to prevail without the possibility of deviation.

The working class had to contend with the distracting influence of seedy politicians who, regarding the people merely as a stepping-stone, flatter it, hypnotize it and betray it. Moreover, the people also let itself be carried away by loyal, disinterested men who, being imbued with democratism, placed too great a store by a redundant State.

It is thanks to the dual action of these elements that, in recent times (beginning with the hecatomb of 1871), the trade union movement vegetated for a long time, being torn in several directions at once. On the one hand, the crooked politicians strove to bridle the unions so as to tie them to the government's apron strings: on the other, the socialists of various schools beavered away at ensuring that their faction would prevail. Thus, one and all intended to turn the trade unions into "interest groups" and "affinity groups."

The trade union movement had roots too vigorous, and too ineluctable a need for such divergent efforts to be able to stunt its development. Today, it carries on the work of the International, the work of the pioneers of "resistance societies" and of the earliest combinations. To be sure, tendencies have come to the surface and theories have been clarified, but there is an absolute concordance between the 19th century trade union movement and that of the 20th century: the one being an outgrowth of the other. In this there is a logical extension, a climb towards an ever more conscious will and a display of the increasingly coordinated strength of the proletariat, blossoming into a growing unity of aspirations and action.

### THE TASK IN HAND

Trade union endeavor has a double aim: with tireless persistence, it must pursue betterment of the working class's current conditions. But, without letting

themselves become obsessed with this passing concern, the workers should take care to make possible and imminent the essential act of comprehensive emancipation: the expropriation of capital.

At present, trade union action is designed to win partial and gradual improvements which, far from constituting a goal, can only be considered as a means of stepping up demands and wresting further improvements from capitalism.

The trade union offers employers a degree of resistance in geometric proportion with the resistance put up by its members: it is a brake upon the appetites of the exploiter: it enforces his respect for less draconian working conditions than those entailed by the individual bargaining of the wage slave operating in isolation. For one-sided bargaining between the employer with his breast-plate of capital, and the defenseless proletarian, it substitutes collective bargaining.

So, in opposition to the employer there stands the trade union, which mitigates the despicable "labor market" and labor supply, by relieving, to some extent, the irksome consequences of a pool of unemployed workers: exacting from the employer respect for workers and also, to a degree proportionate with its strength, the union requires of him that he desist from offering privileges as bribes.

This question of partial improvements served as the pretext for attempts to sow discord in the trades associations. Politicians, who can only make a living out of a confusion of ideas and who are irritated by the unions' growing distaste for their persons and their dangerous interference, have tried to carry into economic circles the semantic squabbling with which they gull the electors. They have striven to stir up ill-feeling and to split the unions into two camps, by categorizing workers as reformists and as revolutionaries. The better to discredit the latter, they have dubbed them "the advocates of all or nothing" and they have falsely represented them as supposed adversaries of improvements achievable right now.

The most that can be said about such nonsense is that it is witless. There is not a worker, whatever his mentality or his aspirations, who, on grounds of principle or for reasons of tactics, would insist upon working ten hours for an employer instead of eight hours, while earning six francs instead of seven. It is, however, by peddling such inane twaddle that politicians hope to alienate the working class from its economic movement and dissuade it from shifting for itself and endeavoring to secure ever greater well-being and liberty.

They are counting upon the poison in such calumnies to break up the trade unions by reviving inside them the pointless and divisive squabbles which have evaporated ever since politics was banished from them.

What appears to afford some credence to such chicanery is the fact that the unions, cured by the cruel lessons of experience from all hope in government intervention, are justifiably mistrustful of it. They know that the State, whose function is to act as capital's gendarme, is, by its very nature, inclined to tip the scales in favor of the employer side. So, whenever a reform is brought about by legal avenues, they do not fall upon it with the relish of a frog devouring the red rag that conceals the hook, they greet it with all due caution, especially as this reform is made effective only if the workers are organized to insist forcefully upon its implementation.

The trade unions are even more wary of gifts from the government because they have often found these to be poison gifts. Thus, they have a very poor opinion of "gifts" like the Higher Labor Council and the labor councils, agencies devised for the sole purpose of counter-balancing and frustrating the work of the trades associations. Similarly, they have not waxed enthusiastic about mandatory arbitration and regulation of strikes, the plainest consequence of which would be to exhaust the workers' capacity for resistance. Likewise, the legal and commercial status granted to the workers' organizations have nothing worthwhile to offer them, for they see in these a desire to get them to desert the terrain of social struggle, in order to lure them on to the capitalist terrain where the antagonism of the social struggle would give way to wrangling over money.

But, given that the trade unions look askance at the government's benevolence towards them, it follows that they are loath to go after partial improvements. Wanting real improvements only. This is why, instead of waiting until the government is generous enough to bestow them, they wrest them in open battle, through direct action.

If, as sometimes is the case, the improvement they seek is subject to the law, the trade unions strive to obtain it through outside pressure brought to bear upon the authorities and not by trying to return specially mandated deputies to Parliament, a puerile pursuit that might drag on for centuries before there was a majority in favor of the yearned-for reform.

When the desired improvement is to be wrested directly from the capitalist, the trades associations resort to vigorous pressure to convey their wishes. Their methods may well vary, although the direct action principle underlies

them all: depending on the circumstances, they may use the strike, sabotage, the boycott, or the union label.

But, whatever the improvement won, it must always represent a reduction in capitalist privileges and be a partial expropriation. So, whenever one is not satisfied with the politician's bombast, whenever one analyzes the methods and the value of trade union action, the fine distinction between "reformist" and "revolutionary" evaporates and one is led to the conclusion that the only really reformist workers are the revolutionary syndicalists.

### **BUILDING THE FUTURE**

Aside from day to day defense, the task of the trade unions is to lay the groundwork for the future. The producer group should be the cell of the new society. Social transformation on any other basis is inconceivable. So, it is essential that the producers make preparations for the task of assuming possession and of reorganization which ought to fall to them and which they alone are equipped to carry out. It is a social revolution and not a political revolution that we aim to make. They are two distinct phenomena and the tactics leading to the one are a diversion away from the other.





# **THE SPANISH COLLECTIVES**



## THE SPANISH COLLECTIVES

Given that most of the preceding texts have had to deal with plans for an anarchist society, it strikes us that it might be useful to add, by way of contrast and complement, some documents telling of an actual experiment in libertarian construction: the experiment of the Spanish collectives of 1936. The anarchists' political and military role in the Spanish Revolution and Civil War will, of course, have to wait until Volume IV of this anthology. But we believe a leap forward in time may be useful at this point: after the speculation comes the practice of self-management. In any case, there is a direct link between the speculators and the practitioners: the latter had very specifically heeded the lessons of the former. Thus, the reader will be better placed to appreciate anarchism's constructive, rather than destructive, potential.



## COLLECTIVIZATION IN SPAIN<sup>1</sup>

What occurred in Spain [in the wake of July 19] was something quite unprecedented. In fact, the commandeering of land and factories by the Spanish workers was not designed merely to bring pressure to bear upon the proprietors, managers and public authorities in order to secure improved working conditions and pay: instead, it was well and truly aimed at vesting direct management of the means of production and exchange in all who operated them—and, in the case of lands left fallow or inefficient firms, this “taking charge” was in the nature of an authentic social rescue measure. Handicapped on the world market for farm produce and industrial products by a parasitical administration as well as competition from new countries, bourgeois Spain had not the ability to help its unemployed nor to make proper use of its own soil and grow its own food.

The response of the Spanish workers and peasants to that was an act of fairness and responsibility performed by the rank and file, eschewing all bureaucracy and party political dictatorship, enabling the country to feed itself.

On July 19 and the days that followed, every large undertaking was abandoned by its directors. The directors of the railway companies, urban transport companies, shipping lines, heavy steel industries, the textile industry, and the chairmen and representatives of the employers' associations had all vanished. The general strike which the working class had unleashed by way of defending itself against the rebels brought the entire economic life of the country to a standstill for eight days.

Once the back of the rebellion had been broken, the workers' organizations resolved to call off the strike. The CNT members in Barcelona were convinced that work could not be resumed on the same conditions as before. The general strike had not been a strike designed to protect or secure improvements in pay or better working conditions. None of the entrepreneurs had stuck around. The workers had not just to return to their jobs in the plant, on the locomotive or tram or in the office. They also had to take over the overall direction of factories, workshops, firms, etc. In other words, the management of industry and the entire economy was now in the hands of workers and

clerical staff employed in every segment of the country's economy.

In Spain, especially in Catalonia, the socialization process started with collectivization. This should not be construed as the implementation of some preconceived scheme. It was spontaneous. In any case, the influence of anarchist teachings upon this change-over cannot be questioned. For many a long year, Spain's anarchists and syndicalists had regarded the social transformation of society as their ultimate objective. In their trade union assemblies and groups, in their newspapers, pamphlets and books, the issue of social revolution was endlessly and systematically discussed. What should happen once the proletariat had won? The machinery of government had to be dismantled. The workers had to operate their firms for themselves, administer themselves and the unions should oversee all economic activity. The industrial federations had to run production: local federations would see to consumption. Such were the ideas of the anarcho-syndicalists, ideas to which the FAI subscribed also. In its conferences and congresses, the latter had continually reiterated that economic life should be run by the trade unions.

(...) After 19 July 1936, the CNT unions took charge of production and supply. At first, the unions strove to resolve the most pressing problem: keeping the population supplied. In every district, canteens were set up on the union premises. Supply committees took it upon themselves to seek out provisions in the central depots in the towns, or in the countryside. These provisions were paid for with vouchers whose value was guaranteed by the unions. Every union member and the wives and children of militians, as well as the general populace were all fed free of charge. During strikes, workers got no wages. The Antifascist Militias Committee decided to pay workers and staff however much they would have earned had they worked those days.

### COLLECTIVIZATION OF INDUSTRY<sup>2</sup>

(...) Stage one of collectivization began when the workers took charge of running their firms. In every workshop, office, bureau or retail outlet, trade union delegates were appointed to act as the managers. Often, these new directors lacked grounding in theory and lacked expertise in national economics. However, they had a thorough grounding in their personal needs and the demands of the moment.

(...) They knew their trade, their industry's production process and could offer advice. What they lacked in training, they made up for in initiative and inventiveness.

In some textile plants, red and black silk neckerchiefs were produced, over-printed with antifascist slogans. These neckerchiefs were put on sale. "How did you come to set the price? How did you work out the profit margin?" asked one foreign, marxist reporter. "I don't know anything about profit margin," answered the worker to whom these questions had been put. "We looked up the raw material costs in books, worked out running costs, added on a supplement by way of reserve funds, tacked on wage costs, added on a 10 percent supplement for the Antifascist Militias Committee, and the price was set." The neckerchiefs were sold cheaper than they would have been under the old regime. Wages had been increased and the profit margin—sacrosanct in bourgeois economics—was put towards the fight against fascism.

In this way, in most firms, the management of production was assumed by the workers. As long as they resisted the new economic management, the bosses were shown the door. They were allowed in as workers if they agreed to the new arrangements. In which case, they would be taken on as technicians, business directors or, indeed, as simple workmen. They received a wage equivalent to that earned by a worker or technician following that trade.

That start and these changes were comparatively rather straightforward. Difficulties emerged later. After rather a short time, raw materials ran out. In the first few days after the Revolution, raw materials had been requisitioned. Later, they had to be paid for, which is to say, entered in the accounts. Very few raw materials arrived from abroad, leading to an escalation in the prices of raw materials and finished goods. Wages were increased, but not across the board. In some industries, the increase was considerable. During the first phase of collectivization, the wages of workers or staff differed, even within the same industry.

(...) The unions decided to look to the control of firms themselves. Factory unions turned into industrial enterprises. The Barcelona construction union took charge of work on different building sites in the city. Barber shops were collectivized. In every barber shop, there was a trade union delegate. Each week, he brought all of the takings to the union's economic committee. The costs of the barber shops were defrayed by the trade union, as was the wage bill.

(...) However, certain sectors of the economy worked better than others. There were rich industries and poor ones, high wages and low ones. The collectivization process could not (...) stop at this point. At the Barcelona Local Federation of (CNT) Unions, there were discussions about the creation of a

liaison committee. The latter was to embrace all of the economic committees from the various unions, funds were to be concentrated in a single place, and an equalization fund would ensure that funds were properly allocated. In certain industries, this liaison committee and equalization fund had been in existence from the outset. The Barcelona Bus Company, a profitable undertaking run by its workforce had excess revenues. A portion of that revenue was set aside for the purchase of materials abroad. A further portion was set aside for the upkeep of the Tram Company whose revenues were lower than those of the Bus Company.

When petrol became scarce, 4,000 taxi drivers became unemployed. Their wages still had to be paid by the union. This was a heavy burden upon the Transport Union. It was forced to seek assistance from two other unions and from Barcelona corporation.

In the textile industry, because of the dearth of raw materials, working hours had to be reduced. In certain plants, they were down to a three-day week. However, the workers had to have their pay. As the Textile Union did not have the funds at its disposal, the Generalidad had to pay the wages instead.

The collectivization process could not rest there. Trade unionists pressed for socialization. But socialization does not, to them, signify nationalization, or State direction of the economy. Socialization is to be generalized collectivization. It is a matter of gathering the capital from various unions into one central fund: concentration at local federation level turned into a sort of communal economic enterprise. It boils down to a bottom-up socialization of workers' activities at commune level.

### COLLECTIVIZATION IN AGRICULTURE

Not just in Catalonia, but also in every other part of Spain, collectivist traditions went deep. Once the power of the generals had been defeated, there was a discernible general aspiration favoring collectivization of the existing large estates. The trade union organizations and anarchist groups placed themselves at the head of this campaign for collectivization. They kept faith with their traditions.

Collectivization of the land in Spain proceeded along different lines from the ones in Russia. Agricultural property, at commune level, was collectivized if it had previously belonged to a large landowner. The latter had sided with the clerical-military clique and against the people. Those landowners who had

agreed to the economic changes were able to go on working under the supervision of the union which spear-headed the collectivization. Exporters also went over to the union and, in several places, so too did the small-holders.

The land and property were worked in common by the rural workers, all produce being handed over to the union which paid the wages and marketed the produce. Those small-holders unwilling to join the trade union operated on the outside of the collectivization. They had a hard struggle to make a living. No pressure was brought to bear on them, but the advantages of collective production were not extended to them either. Inside the union, on the other hand, work was organized along rational lines. The principle of "all for one and one for all" really did apply there. So, the small-holder lived apart from the commune (or community). When it came to the sharing out of farm machinery, food produce, etc., the small-holder is at the back of the queue.<sup>3</sup>

The farmworkers' union today constitutes an economic enterprise. The cleaning and packaging of different fruits destined for shipment are entrusted to union supervision. Workers get their wages from the union. In certain communes, economic life as a whole is in the unions' hands. The union has appoints several committees to organize work, oversee consumption and distribution and the fight against fascism. Insofar as they exist, cafés and cinemas are under trade union control. In small localities, there is no difference between the various trades unions or crafts sections. They are all amalgamated into a local federation which represents the economic nerve center as well as the political and cultural hub of the commune.

In one sector, there was no collectivization: banking.

So how come the banks were not organized? The bank staffs were barely organized. They belonged, not to the CNT unions, but to the unions of the UGT which is against collectivization. The socialist UGT, in fact, has a different tradition. Its ideology is social democratic and it aims at State ownership. According to that outlook, socialization has to be implemented by the State through decrees. The government failed to order the banks collectivized (...) The seizure of bank assets would have made possible a central, single reallocation of funding and the drafting of a financial plan. A regulating body might have been established. At the instigation of representatives from the industrial unions, the bank employees could have drawn up a scheme for the financing of essential sectors of the country's economy. The country's mighty financial power could have been placed immediately in the service of collectivization.

Collectivization would not have stayed partial but could have been extended into the whole of economic life.

After seven months of collectivizations, the unions, in the light of their experiences, observed that all of the collectivized undertakings across a range of industries stood in need of coordination. So, they worked on the basis of first-hand experience. The central directory, which has been established today, need not bother itself with the creation of subordinate bodies, as these already exist. The edifice of collectivization rests on a solid foundation, based on the industrial union, its trades sections in firms and the workshops themselves.

The unions also entertained the notion of regulating supply, without, however, intending to claim a monopoly there. The Foodstuffs Union took over the operation of the bakeries. (In Barcelona, there are no large bakeries, no bread factories.)

Alongside the latter, there are still little bakers' shops operating as before. The ferrying of milk from the countryside into the towns is also handled by the unions who likewise see to the running of most of the dairies. The Foodstuffs Union oversees agricultural concerns and works hand-in-glove with the collectivized farms.

(...) In Russia, during the early days of the revolution, the shops were shut down. This was not the case in Spain. The larger outlets were taken over by the unions. The smaller shops obtained their goods from the union. In the case of small shops, prices were fixed across the board. Organized internal commerce was controlled. The supply monopoly was headed by a Supply Council. The aim was to organize and orchestrate supply generally right across Catalonia, in such a way that every area's needs might be met. A uniform price was set by the collectivized communes, the fishermen's unions and other food suppliers, in accordance with availability. The object of this economic policy was to prevent rises in food prices. In which case speculators and hoarders could be eliminated.

In mid-December, this policy was set aside. December 16 saw the formation of a new Catalan government. The communists managed to have the POUM (Workers' Party for Marxist Unification) excluded from the government. In the allocation of ministries, the supply ministry was awarded to Comorera,<sup>4</sup> a member of the (Third International-affiliated) Unified Socialist Party (PSUC). Another ministry was assigned to Domenech, representing the members of the CNT. Comorera did away with the monopoly on supply. Freedom of

trade was reintroduced. The gates were opened for price rises. In that area, collectivization was set aside.

In the transport sector, the felicitous results of collectivization were striking. Despite a general rise in costs, the fares of the Barcelona transport companies were not increased. Brand-new and freshly painted trams as well as new buses appeared on Barcelona's streets. Lots of taxi cabs were overhauled.

The position in the textile industry was not so good. Because of the dearth of raw materials, many plants were down to a two- or three-day week, but four days' pay was issued. Persistence of this situation undermined these undertakings. The income of workers in receipt of only four days' pay was inadequate. This was not a result of collectivization, but rather a product of the war. Catalonia's textile industry lost its main outlets. Part of Andalusia, Extremadura, Old Castile and the whole of northern Spain, along with the teeming industrial region of Asturias were in fascist hands. There was no way to locate fresh markets.

(...) During the first month of 1937, the position improved a little, thanks to army contracts. In Sabadell, a textile town with a population of 60,000 people, all of the workforce was in employment. In Barcelona, some spinning mills were still on reduced hours.

(...) Collectivization opened up new prospects and leads down new roads. In Russia, the Revolution followed the path of State controls. (...) In Spain (...) the people itself, the peasants in the countryside and the workers in the towns, assumed control of the use of the land and the means of production. Amid great difficulties, groping their way and learning by trial and error, they pressed ever forward, striving to build up an equitable economic system in which the workers themselves are the beneficiaries of the fruits of their labors.

# THE PROGRAM OF THE ARAGÓNESE FEDERATION OF COLLECTIVES (MARCH 14, 1937)

## I. STRUCTURE OF THE REGIONAL FEDERATION OF AGRICULTURAL COLLECTIVES

1. The regional federation of collectives is hereby constituted, for the purpose of coordinating the region's economic potential, and in order to afford solidary backing to that federation, in accordance with the principles of autonomy and federalism which are ours.
2. In the constitution of this federation, the following rules must be observed: a) collectives must federate with one another at cantonal level; b) in order to ensure that the cantonal committees achieve cohesion and mutual control, a REGIONAL COMMITTEE OF COLLECTIVES is to be established.
3. The collectives are to make precise inventory of their output and their consumption, which they are to forward to their respective cantonal committee—which is to forward it to the regional committee.
4. The abolition of money in the collectives and its replacement by ration card will make it possible for the requisite amounts of basic necessities to be made available to each collective.
5. So that the regional committee may see that the collectives are supplied with imported goods, the collectives or the cantonal committees shall furnish the regional committee with a quantity of products reflecting the wealth of each locality or canton, so as to build up the regional fund for external trade.

## II. THE NEW ORGANIZATIONAL SCHEMA FOR LAND ADMINISTRATION

We embrace the municipality or commune as the future agency to oversee the administration of the people's assets. However, as CANTONALLY FEDERATED COLLECTIVES, we intend to do away with the local boundaries of the property which we farm and, in our view, the congress will have to tackle the following items:

1. As the collectives are organized as cantonal federations, it is to be un-



derstood that the local holdings administered by these federations shall henceforth constitute a single estate without internal boundaries. And, with regard to anything having to do with tilled lands, working tools, farm machinery and the raw materials set aside for them, these are to be made available to collectives which may be lacking in them.

2. An appeal is to be issued to those collectives with a surplus of man-power or which, at certain times in the year, are not using all of their producers because their services may not yet be required, and the available teams may be put to work, under the supervision of the cantonal committee, to bolster those collectives which are short of man-power.

### III. POLICY WITH REGARD TO LOCAL COUNCILS AND SMALL-HOLDERS

1. Relations with local councils: a) Local councils made up of representatives from the various antifascist organizations have a specific, wholly lawful function, as acknowledged by the Aragón Regional Defense Committee. b) The administrative councils of collectives perform a function clearly distinct from that of the local and cantonal councils. c) But as the trade unions are called upon to appoint and monitor the delegates to the two aforementioned functions, they can be performed by the same comrade, it being understood that he ought not to mix them up in any way.
2. Relations with small-holders: a) Be it understood that small-holders who, of their own volition, hold aloof from the collectives, have no right to require labor services or services in kind from it, since they claim that they can meet their own needs for themselves. b) All real estate, rural and urban, and other assets which belonged to seditious personnel at the moment of expropriation and which are incorporated into the collective, become collective property. In addition, all of the land which has thus far not been put to work by its owner, farmer or sharecropper, passes into the ownership of the collective. c) No small-holder holding aloof from the collective will be allowed to possess more land than he will have farmed for himself, the understanding being that such possession will not entitle him to receipt of any of the benefits of the new society. d) In the eyes of the combined workers, he shall be deemed a free and responsible individual as long as his person and his possessions shall cause no upset to the collective order.

## SOME LOCAL EXAMPLES OF COLLECTIVIZATION'

### LÉCERA (ARAGÓN)

LÉCERA is the premier village in the province of Zaragoza and within the jurisdiction of Belchite, from which it lies twelve kilometers distant.

It has a population of 2,400 and has a few industries, notably the plaster industry. Agriculture accounts for the remainder, and the most important crops are wheat, vines, saffron and a few other cereals, albeit on a small scale.

Upon arrival in these places which have today been turned into camps servicing the militias, the first thing we do is to discover the whereabouts of the people's committee. Here, we discover it in the former mayor's office.

Comrade Pedro Navarro Jarque, a national school-teacher and native of LÉCERA, answers our queries:—The Committee was known as the antifascist revolutionary committee and was made up of seven members, all drawn from the CNT-affiliated Amalgamated Trades union. It has a completely free hand and no political party can stay its hand or influence it. We were appointed at an assembly and we reflect the aspirations of the whole village. We have the same powers as a mayor's office as far as anything to do with administration and the life of the population are concerned. There is a local administrative council made up of five members who are also drawn from the CNT trade union and it oversees work in the fields and in the industries in LÉCERA. We have appointed a labor delegate who, in conjunction with twelve sub-delegates, looks after the requirements of the column fighting on the front and looks after collective labor. All of them, of course, are in agreement with the revolutionary committee.

—Have you collectivized the lands?

—That was a very thorny issue, or, to be more exact, the problem is still there, for we want people to come to us out of belief in the excellence and advantages of our ideas. We have collectivized the big estates and have thus far not touched the small-holdings. If circumstances work in our favor, we hope to see the small-holder throw in his lot with the collective voluntarily, because LÉCERA people are intelligent, as they proved to us by offering the collective much of the produce they harvest.

At present, we are harvesting saffron from all the small-holdings, holding it as collective property and placing it in storage to meet consumer requirements and for use in trade.

The small-holders who, in times gone by, could scarcely feed themselves, in that the harvest was virtually wholly taken away by the big landowners in payment of debts incurred, at first wanted to hold on to their lands: but, at a general assembly, the need to pool their harvests was explained to them and they agreed unanimously. We have to respect people's wishes and win them over without pressure by the power of example. The Revolutionary Committee wants to make known the tremendous work of comrade Manuel Martinez, the social sub-delegate from the LÉCERA front. The whole village is indebted to him.

—Has he been serving on the Committee for long?

—Nearly three months. On August 25, he took up office, introducing the libertarian communist system since then and doing away with money in the village.

We have traded various products with Tortosa and Reus. Five thousand sheep have been butchered for the militias on this front and 280,000 kilos of wheat turned over for consumption. The Committee in charge of supply, issues all sorts of items to the civilian population in return.

—With no money in circulation, how do the small-holders contrive to meet their various needs?

—As we said before, we preach by example. There are neither classes nor differentials here. As far as we are concerned, the small-holder who will, of course, have ceased to be that tomorrow is a producer.

Through the good offices of the labor sub-delegates who are also delegates from the city districts, we are perfectly familiar with the workers in work and the supply delegate, who keeps a family register in the food store, issues every family with whatever it needs. Distribution is effected as fairly as possible—Navarro, the Committee's chairman concluded—and we shall ensure that we demonstrate the superiority of our system in every regard.

(...) A short way away from the Revolutionary Committee's offices stands LÉCERA's warehouse. It occupies a huge hall and the separate rooms of a building that was to have seen use as a dance hall. The shops are filled with foodstuffs, churns of milk, sacks of vegetables, drums of oil, stacked tins of beef, etc. and upstairs are the stores of clothing and farming tools. So provisions are plentiful.

## AMPOSTA (CATALONIA)

(...) Amposta is a village with ten thousand inhabitants, the economy of which is dependent on agriculture. The chief crop is rice, in the production of which it leads Catalonia.

In the last rice harvest, in September, 36 million kilos were harvested. It has to be noted that one hundred kilos of unrefined rice produces sixty kilos of white rice.

The lands collectivized by workers will produce a larger return thanks to the good conditions in which they will be put to work. And, irrigated by the rushing waters of the Ebro, they will afford a hardworking, free people, like the people of Amposta, a greater abundance of produce.

There are twelve hundred farmworkers in the district. With an eye to giving a boost to agriculture, some old olive groves and carob trees have been pulled up to make room for a more needed irrigated area. The poultry farm which the comrades have set up with every modern feature is worthy of attention. Its value is estimated at two hundred thousand pesetas. For this year, as soon as installation is completed, five thousand hens will be housed there, and it is estimated that in the coming year, with the aid of incubators, production will be a potential two thousand chicks per week.

Besides the poultry projects, every other project has been collectivized: one huge farm has been set up for the rearing of cattle, pigs and sheep: there are already seventy dairy cattle on the farm, production from which will provide the basis for a modern dairy.

The collective has no problem carrying out its work, for it already has fourteen tractors, fifteen threshing machines and seventy horses. The land has been taken into municipal control and those who, not being members of the farming collective, wish to acquire a few plots to farm for themselves, have to apply to the municipality which grants them—in this way, the hateful wage system, a remnant of slavery which has endured into our own times will be done away with. The building workers have collectivized—their sector includes the manufacture of mosaic tiles and a firing kiln. Entertainments and other trades bodies have also been collectivized.

As far as education goes, Amposta was very backward; at present, there are thirty-eight schools in the town, a figure representing an increase of fifteen schools on pre-revolutionary days. Schooling is compulsory.

( ... ) To house the new schools, the municipality has commandeered a number of premises. It also has the requisite equipment and need not turn

to the Generalidad of Catalonia. (...) Six adult classes have been started. Within a short time, an Arts and Crafts School and a school canteen are to be founded.

The municipality already has a library which is to be developed in order to meet the wishes of a populace generally eager for self-improvement.

In the educational area, some social lectures have been given and a choir and a theater troupe are to be set up, with the object of nurturing a taste for the arts in children. Teachers have already been found.

(...) Amposta has experienced no shortages, thanks to the bartering of rice against other products. And there are still many tons of that nutritious foodstuff left. They have introduced a family ration card for the distribution of basic necessities, with three-days' supply being issued at a time.

In the former church, the consumers' cooperative has been installed and it is curious to see the use to which the various outbuildings have been put. Much of the population obtains its provisions from this cooperative, which sells eleven to twelve thousand pesetas' worth of goods per week.

In the village, there are some forty-five households unable to work on grounds of age or illness. The municipality has seen to it that they want for nothing.

In short, the provisioning of the commune is entirely provided for.

—All we lack, we were told by the smiling secretary of the municipality, are wine and alcohol. But that is because we are concerned that as little as possible should get into Amposta.

The municipality wants to carry out significant improvements, and in particular, demolition of the dilapidated old housing located at the entrance to the town, the completion of sewage systems and extension of water supply.

In Amposta, there is a water-works, one of Spain's first and most important. The water serving the town's needs and which is drawn from the Ebro is purified by liquid chlorine.

Thanks to the sanitary work which has been carried out, epidemics like typhoid fever and certain ailments which have sorely afflicted workers have been eradicated.

A hospital has been set up to cater for the needs of the population. And as an after-thought, a dispensary has been added for the very first time. Now they can care for everyone wanting treatment. Finally, a sanitarium has been built outside the town to treat TB sufferers effectively.

Although the Confederation dominates in Amposta, the various posts in the municipality have been shared among personnel from the CNT and the UGT, and there is absolute harmony between them.

(...) All urban property has been collectivized, rents have been reduced and the revenues from them service the municipality. The municipality has requisitioned some saltworks which can bring in around five hundred thousand pesetas a year and there is a plan to set up a lye factory. (...) There is a plan to set a family wage and the best means of implementing this is being looked into, and the understanding is that the municipality will call a meeting of the people once a year to examine the best way of utilizing profits, after deductions for expenses (...)

## IN THE PROVINCE OF LEVANTE<sup>1</sup>

The Levante Regional Federation set up by CNT comrades, which has served as a basis for the establishment of the parallel federation of agrarian collectives, embraced five provinces: Castellón de la Plana, Valencia, Alicante, Murcia, and Albacete. The significance of agriculture in the first four of these provinces, all of which border the Mediterranean and are among the richest provinces in Spain, and the size of their population (almost 3,300,000 people) add to the profile of the social experiments which have been carried out there. In our view, it is in Levante, on account of its natural resources and the creativity of our comrades, that the work of the agrarian collectives has been conducted on the largest scale and been handled best.

(...) Of the five provinces, the movement has been most extensive in Valencia.

This can be explained, first, in terms of its great importance: it had a population of 1,650,000 when the revolution came. Next, in descending order, came the province of Murcia, with its 622,000 inhabitants, Alicante with 470,000, Castellón de la Plana with 312,000, and finally, Albacete with 238,000. The number of collectives reflected the size of the population. But it was in Valencia province that the socializations proceeded at the most consistent and accelerated rate.

(...) At the time of the congress of the Levante Peasant Federation on November 21–23, 1937, the collectives numbered 430. Five months on, there were five hundred. To get the measure of these figures, we ought to point out that the five provinces together had a total of 1,172 municipalities, ranging from the largest city down to the tiniest village. Which means that in 43 percent of the settlements in Spain's wealthiest farming region, where, in the huerta<sup>2</sup> of Valencia, the population density was the world's highest at 450 people per square kilometer, five hundred agrarian collectives sprouted in twenty months.

Broadly speaking, such collectives were not of the same character as the collectives in Aragón. In the latter region, the virtually unchallenged ascendancy of the CNT and FAI troops has for long deterred the police, the

State administration and political parties using the lever of governmental authority from placing obstacles in the way of their growth. In Levante, as in the remainder of Spain's regions, the authorities had remained in place, as had the Assault Guards, the Carabineros and troops commanded by officers who displayed no revolutionary mentality at all.

Thus, right from the beginning, it was hard to carry out collectivization at the same dogged rate as in Aragón. Also, in the Levante region, the size of villages, which were often like small towns, also made it hard to win the unanimous backing of the populace: political and social divisions there were more plainly marked and the different tendencies better organized.

In Levante, the collectives were almost always launched at the instigation of the local peasants' unions: but it did not take them long to become an autonomous organization. An external link to the trade union, which represented the necessary meeting place between collectivists and individualists was all that was retained. In fact, the individualists used to bring along their produce for exchange against something else. In practice, therefore, their isolationism was entirely dissolved into the intermediary activity of the union, which had been overhauled structurally to cope with this new mission. Commissions had been set up under its aegis—rice commissions, orange commissions, horticultural commissions, potato commissions, etc.—each with its harvest and distribution depot. The collective itself had its own depot and commissions. Later, this pointless duplication was done away with. The depots were amalgamated: the commissions were manned by collectivists and by individualists who were union members. Other collectives set up mixed commissions: such as purchasing commissions buying machinery, seed, fertilizers, insecticides, veterinary products, etc. They used the same trucks. Solidarity was extended. And the collectivist mentality was increasingly attractive to those who had misgivings.

(...) This network quickly tended to amalgamate and rationalize everything. Rationing and the family wage were introduced at cantonal level, with the richest villages helping the poorest through go-between cantonal committees. A corps of technicians was established in each cantonal center; it comprised book-keepers, an agronomist, a veterinarian, an expert in combating plant diseases, an engineer, an architect and an expert in commercial affairs.

(...) Every collective had its vet. Most of the engineers and vets joined the CNT trade union. There was also a large number of agronomists. Nearly every specialist in viticulture and wine-making belonged. The engineers and vets



employed by other undertakings, and not the collective, also worked for the collective, indeed did so disinterestedly, devoting themselves to the drafting of plans and implementation of projects. The revolution's creative mentality had won over the progressively minded.

Agronomists tabled undertakings that were necessary and feasible: agricultural planning, introduction of crops which individual ownership could not always allow to adapt to more favorable geological and climatic conditions. The vet would scientifically organize stock-rearing. If need be, he would consult with the agronomist concerning resources which might be available. And, in concert with the peasant commissions, the latter switched cultivation insofar as was necessary.

But the vet also consulted the architect and the engineer over the construction of piggeries, stables, byres, and collective poultry houses. Work was planned spontaneously. The planning took place at grassroots level, from the bottom up, in accordance with libertarian principles.

Thanks to the engineers, a huge number of canals and artesian wells had been constructed, the better either to irrigate the soil, which was scarce, or to transform waterless soil. By means of vacuum pumps, water was captured and distributed. This was scarcely a new technique, but it was, in fact, a novelty for many of the region's villages. The highly porous nature of the soil and the meager rainfall—400 mms. on average—had always made it very hard to bring up water for which one had to go down 50, 100 or 200 meters below the surface. The greatest ventures were made in the Murcia region and Cartagena. On the outskirts of Villajoyosa, the building of a dam made it possible to irrigate a million almond trees which had hitherto been drought-stricken.

Not that the architects concerned themselves only with housing for livestock. Touring the region, they offered advice on human accommodations, apropos of architecture, materials, foundations, position, sanitation, etc. (...) The adjacent situation of the villages which were a lot less widely scattered than in Aragón, encouraged this active solidarity. Work was an inter-communal venture. A team was set up to fight plant diseases, carry out sulfate spraying, poll trees, and work in the fields and orchards. There was another squad involved in repairing and laying roads.

(...) The five hundred collectives and branches in the Levante region were sub-divided into fifty-four cantonal federations collected into five provincial federations, which built up to a Regional Committee that oversaw everything.

The Committee appointed by the annual congresses and answerable to

them—peasants in smocks and clogs—comprised twenty-six technical sections: commissions dealing with fruits in general, with citrus fruits, vines, olive trees, horticulture, rice, sheep and goats, pigs, and cattle; then came the industrial sections; wine-making, alcohol production, liqueurs, conserves, oil, sugar, fruits, essences, and perfumes as well as their derivatives; in addition, miscellaneous produce sections, sections for import-export, machinery, transport and fertilizers were set up; then there was the construction section, overseeing and encouraging local construction of all manner of buildings; and, finally, the health and educational section.

(...) Half of the orange production—nearly four million quintals—was in the hands of the Levante Peasant Federation and 70 percent of the whole yield was shipped away and marketed by its commercial organization—thanks to its depot warehouses, trucks, and ships—and to its export branch which had opened marketing outlets in France (in Marseilles, Perpignan, Bordeaux, Sete, Cherbourg and Paris) at the beginning of 1938.

The same situation obtained where rice was concerned. There were 30,000 hectares given over to rice in the province of Valencia alone, out of the 47,000 hectares under rice in the whole of Spain. This was true also of fresh vegetables—the *huerta* of Valencia and the gardens of Murcia produced two or three crops each year.

(...) When a district's collectives thought fit to set up a factory producing liqueurs, fruit syrups, conserves, etc., they passed the idea on to the appropriate section of the central committee in Valencia. The latter would look into the proposal and, depending on the circumstances, would invite a delegation from the proposers to see it. If there were enough factories in existence to cope with the available raw materials, the proposal was turned down and that decision explained. If the initiative was a viable one, the proposal was endorsed. But the work was not left to the local collectives unaided. All five hundred collectives had to do their bit, through the regional committee.

(...) Hitherto, a huge amount of fruit has been written off because it spoiled on the spot for want of national and international markets. This was particularly true of oranges eaten whole in their natural state, which had to face competition on the English market from Palestinian and South African produce, forcing a reduction in price and a cut-back in production. The closure of many of the markets in Europe, and the loss of the domestic markets occupied or cut off by Franco's troops, and the obstacles placed in the way of socialization by the government, exacerbated the problem. And this crisis affected not just oranges,

but potatoes and tomatoes as well. Once again there appeared to be a call for initiative on the part of the collectives.

The latter set up drying plants for potatoes, tomatoes, and oranges. And so dried vegetables started to be used all year round; starch and flour were extracted from potatoes. But the innovations applied mostly to oranges. They were used as a source of zest extracted in greater quantities than ever from the peel, orange syrup, pulp for the preservation of blood in abattoirs with an eye to turning it into nourishing poultry feed, orange wine from which alcohol was extracted for medicinal use.

The most important concentrate factories were set up in Olive and in Burriana. Factories producing pickled canned vegetables, primarily in Murcia, Alfasar, Castellon and Paterna were also run by the Federation.

In most cases the premises of the cantonal federations were deliberately located near to rail or road connections, making the shipment of goods all the easier. The collectives in each canton would send their surplus produce there. This was valued, classified, stored and the relevant figures were passed on to the different sections of the regional federation in Valencia, so that the Federation always knew exactly what stocks were available for trade, export and distribution.

The spirit of invention was also displayed in the intensified rearing of livestock. Every day brought more henhouses, hutches and pens. New breeds of rabbits or hens unknown to the ordinary peasant became more and more widespread and the collectives which had led the way helped the others. Finally, essays in economic organization were not the only motives for action. Every collective set up one or two schools. [They were able] to offer schooling to all children. After the revolution, the collectives in Levante, as well as the ones in Aragón, Castile, Andalusia, and Extremadura, had stamped out illiteracy. And let it not be forgotten that around 70 percent of the people in the Spanish countryside were uneducated.

By way of complementing this effort and for immediate practical purposes, a school for secretaries and book-keepers was opened, to which the collectives sent upwards of a hundred students. The most recent venture was the University of Moncada. A creation of the Levante Regional Federation, it was placed by the latter at the disposal of National Peasant Federation of Spain. It offers training in stock-breeding and the rearing of livestock, animal husbandry, breeding methods, breed identification, agriculture, arboriculture, etc. It had 300 students from the collectives.

# THE DECREE ON COLLECTIVIZATION OF THE CATALAN ECONOMY

*Reproduced below, virtually in its entirety, is the Decree of Collectivization of Catalonia's industries which, as we would say today, institutionalized self-management which had been introduced, in anticipation of any legislation, by the workers themselves when, following the Revolution of July 19, they had taken over their firms and elected workers' councils.*

*Even at the time of its appearance, the Decree was regarded by one of its authors, Terradellas, as an "historic document." Indeed, it can be regarded as the prototype of the legislative texts which, nearer our own day, have certainly and more or less satisfactorily codified self-management in Yugoslavia in the first place and later in Algeria. From a strictly libertarian point of view, it displays both the merits and the shortcomings of these last-named documents. In fact, self-management was not universal. It had emerged from a compromise between Terradellas, a left-leaning petit bourgeois, representing Catalonia's Republican Left (Esquerra), and the CNT'S representative, Jose Xena. That compromise was worked out only after bitter wrangling between the two men over several days. It was another anarchist, Juan P. Fabregas, Economy councilor in the Generalidad of Catalonia, who countersigned the document on the CNT's behalf.*

*Under the Decree, self-management was regimented. It was incorporated into the frame-work of a State and power at factory level was split between the workers' elected council, the director appointed by the workers' council—but whose appointment, in the case of the larger concerns, required the endorsement of the Economy council (or ministry) of the Generalidad of Catalonia—and, lastly, an auditor from the Generalidad, appointed by the councilor for Economy.*

*Moreover, the Decree was careful to link the workers' council on the one hand, and on the other, the trade union organization—two elements which certain contemporary advocates of the "councils system" today regard as mutually exclusive. In fact, Article 10 stipulated that, within the council "if need be, there will be equal representation for the various trade union denominations to which workers are affiliated, representation proportionate with their numbers." And Article 24 states that "eight representatives from the different trade union associations, appointed on a basis of proportionality, are to join the industry's general councils."*

*Thus defined, collectivization was not universal because it applied only to one category of firms, to wit, the most important, with the private sector subsisting elsewhere. In fact,*

*collectivization palpably went further than the letter of the decree, in that a number of indebted concerns, even though they failed to meet the specifications for collectivization as set out in Article 2 were socialized anyway.*

*The rules set out with regard to the operation of the workers' council in the private sector were devised in a spirit of extreme solicitude for the small employers, since the workers' control committee's remit included supervision of strict discipline at work.*

*The Decree of October 24, 1936, and particularly this last-mentioned provision, have been quite perceptively glossed by certain anarchist authors like Vernon Richards in his Lessons of the Spanish Revolution (1953). But the decree was the inevitable consequence of the anarchists' deliberate decision, on the morrow of the Francoist putsch, to forswear, in the interests of antifascist unity of action, the immediate introduction of libertarian communism and to take their place in the appendages of the petit bourgeois republican State which was intent upon exercising its rights of supervision while simultaneously safe-guarding small proprietors (See Volume IV).*

*As to "State" interference in the economic power of the workers, that was obvious, but the National Confederation of Labor (CNT) itself wielded great influence in the Generalidad of Catalonia and the Decree was, in part at least, the handiwork of anarchists. It should be added that it was prompted by a concern for economic integration and a remarkable sensibility to socialist planning. It was anticipated that in every industry, there would be an industrial council made up of workers, trade unionists, and technicians, whose task it would be to "lay down the industry's work plans and regularize production in their sector"(Article 25). In every firm, output would have to "conform to the overall plan laid down by the industrial council" (Article 12).*

*For all its shortcomings and limitations, the Decree of October 24, 1936 represents the first legislative document since the Russian Revolution of October 1917, to attempt to define, with an eye to socialist planning, how workers' power in the larger concerns and workers' control in the smaller workshops or craft shops might be exercised democratically. The Decree, of course, is open to criticisms, but it does not deserve, perhaps, all of the onslaughts which it has suffered from anarchist sticklers and "councilists" (supporters of workers' councils) today.*

## DECREE

ARTICLE THE FIRST. ~ In accordance with the rules laid down by the present decree, Catalonia's commercial and industrial ventures are classified into:

- a) Collectivized ventures wherein the responsibility for management devolves upon the workforce of the concern as represented by a works council;

- b) Private enterprises in which management is vested in the owner or manager, with the assistance and supervision of the workers' control committee.

#### A) COLLECTIVIZED FIRMS

ARTICLE 2. ~ All industrial or commercial undertakings which, as of June 30, 1936, employed a workforce in excess of one hundred, as well as those with a smaller workforce but whose owners have been found to be seditious or who have deserted the firm, shall be compulsorily collectivized. In exceptional circumstances, firms with a workforce of less than one hundred may be collectivized after agreement is reached between the majority of the workforce and the owner or owners. Concerns with more than fifty workers and less than one hundred can be collectivized upon approval by three-fourths of their workforce.

The Council of Economy may also decide upon collectivization of other industries which, by virtue of their importance to the national economy or on other grounds, will have to be removed from private control.

ARTICLE 3. ~ By way of complementing the preceding article, it shall be left to the popular tribunals alone to determine what constitutes a seditious employer.

ARTICLE 4. ~ Any person whose name shall be so listed, regardless of opinions, provided that he performs intellectual or manual labor, is to be regarded as part of the workforce and included in the total number of workers making up the firm.

ARTICLE 5. ~ The credits and debts ascribed to the firm prior to implementation of this present Decree shall pass in their entirety to the collectivized venture.

ARTICLE 6. ~ Ventures represented by autonomous production and sale agencies and those which, in the same way, embrace within the same undertaking, several shops or factories, shall continue to operate under the guise of a single collectivized organization. They shall not be allowed to sub-divide without express permission from the Council for Economy, after he has brought the matter to the attention of the Economy Council of Catalonia.

ARTICLE 7. ~ Within the framework of the collectivized undertaking, erstwhile owners or managers shall be assigned to posts where their technical or administrative expertise shall have been found indispensable.

ARTICLE 8. ~ During the transitional period while collectivization is being

implemented, no worker may be dismissed from the enterprise, but he may be reassigned within the same category, should circumstances so require.

ARTICLE 9. ~ In every instance where the interests of foreign investors are represented in the firm, the councils of said firms or the workers' control committees shall be obliged to bring this to the attention of the Council of Economy. The latter shall summon the interested parties or their representatives, with an eye to discussing litigious matters and ensuring that the interests in question are safeguarded.

#### B) ENTERPRISE COUNCILS

ARTICLE 10. ~ The management of collectivized enterprises shall be handled by an enterprise council appointed by the workers, selected from among their own number in general assembly. That assembly will determine the number of the members of the enterprise council, a number that shall never be less than five nor more than fifteen. Its make-up should contain representatives of the various services: production, administration, technical services and marketing services. If need be, there shall also be representatives of the various trade union denominations to which the workers are affiliated, in proportion to their numbers.

The duration of their mandate is set at two years, with a half of the council coming up for replacement every year. Enterprise council members shall be eligible for re-election.

ARTICLE 11. ~ The enterprise councils shall enjoy the same powers as the former management councils in limited companies and firms placed under the control of a board of management.

They shall be answerable for their management to the workers of their own firm and to the general council of the relevant industry.

ARTICLE 12. ~ In the performance of their duties, the enterprise councils shall take account of the fact that production must conform to the overall plan laid down by the industry's general council and shall match their efforts to the principles laid down for the development of the sector to which they belong. In the setting of profit margins, prescription of general sale conditions, purchasing of raw materials, and everything having to do with rules governing depreciation of materials, the extent of liquid capital, reserve funds or profit-sharing, the dispositions taken by the industry's general councils shall be adhered to.

In social terms, the enterprise councils shall ensure that the rules laid down in this respect are strictly observed and that such others are suggested as

they may deem appropriate. They shall take all necessary steps to ensure the preservation of workers' physical and moral well-being; they shall engage in intense cultural and educational endeavor, sponsoring the creation of clubs, recreation centers, sports centers, cultural centers, etc.

ARTICLE 13. ~ The enterprise councils of firms confiscated prior to publication of the present Decree and those of industries which will have been collectivized subsequent to such publication, will, within the compass of fifteen days, forward to the general secretariat of the Council of Economy a record of their constitution, in conformity with the model that will be issued to them from the appropriate offices.

ARTICLE 14. ~ For the purposes of ongoing monitoring of the proper operation of the enterprise, the council shall appoint a director, upon whom it shall bestow all or part of its functions.

In firms with a workforce of more than five hundred, in those with capital assets in excess of a million pesetas, in those which manufacture, convert or market materials bearing upon national defense, the appointment of the director will require the approval of the Council of Economy.

ARTICLE 15. ~ In all collectivized enterprises, it is obligatory that there will be a Generalidad auditor who will be part of the enterprise council and will be appointed by the councilor for Economy, by agreement with the workers.

ARTICLE 16. ~ The lawful representation of the firm will be assured by the director and his signature will be counter-signed by those of two members of the enterprise council elected by that council. The appointments of the director and the two consultants are to be notified to the Council of Economy which will provide them with accreditation for presentation to banks and various official bodies.

ARTICLE 17. ~ The enterprise councils will keep minutes of their meetings and will forward a certified copy of decisions which they may adopt to the relevant general councils of the industry. When these decisions require it, the general council of the industry will intervene as it deems appropriate.

ARTICLE 18. ~ The councils will be under obligation to attend to the demands or proposals advanced by the workers. They are to record these and, if need be, bring them to the attention of the general council of the industry.

ARTICLE 19. ~ At the end of their period in office, the enterprise councils will have to render an account of their stewardship to the workers gathered in a general assembly.



Likewise, they are to provide the general council of the industry with a half-yearly or annual balance sheet or report which will set out in detail the state of progress of the business, its plans and its future projects.

ARTICLE 20. ~ The enterprise councils may be revoked in part or in whole by the workers meeting in general assembly, and by the general council of the relevant industry, in the event of manifest incompetence or default from the prescribed norms. Once they are pronounced revoked by the general council of the industry, they may, with the agreement of the firm's workers meeting in general assembly, appeal that decision to the Councilor of Economy, but the latter's decision, once he has reported to the Council of Economy, shall be final.

#### C) THE CONTROL COMMITTEES IN PRIVATE FIRMS

ARTICLE 21. ~ In non-collectivized industries or businesses, it will be compulsory that a workers' control committee be established and all the services, productive, technical and administrative, making up the firm, be represented on that committee. The number of personnel on the committee will be left to the free choice of the workers. Each union's representation will be in proportion with the respective numbers of their members in the firm.

ARTICLE 22. ~ The functions of the control committee shall be: a) The monitoring of working conditions and strict implementation of applicable norms with regard to pay, hours, social assurance, health and security, etc., as well as ensuring strict discipline in work. All warnings and notices which the manager may feel obliged to issue to the workforce shall be passed on through the committee. b) Administrative oversight, collections and payments in kind as well as through banks and tailoring these transactions to the size of the firm, oversight of other commercial transactions. c) Overseeing production, in close collaboration with the owner of the firm, so as to perfect the expansion of production. The workers' control committees will maintain the best of relations with technicians, with the object of ensuring that work proceeds smoothly.

ARTICLE 23. ~ The owners will be required to present the workers' control committees with annual balance sheets and reports which they will forward to the relevant general council of industry.

#### D) THE GENERAL COUNCILS OF INDUSTRY

ARTICLE 24. ~ The general councils of industry are to comprise: four representatives from the enterprise council of that industry; eight representatives from the various trade union associations appointed on a basis of proportionality; four technicians appointed by the Council of Economy. Each of these councils is to be chaired by the sector's representative on the Council of Economy.

ARTICLE 25. ~ The general councils of industry are to set the industry's work plans, prescribe production targets for their sector and rule on all matters of concern to it.

ARTICLE 26. ~ The decisions adopted by the general councils of industry are to be binding. No enterprise council and no private enterprise will be able to oppose implementation of them. At best, they will be able to submit an appeal to the councilor of Economy, against whose decision there will be no appeal.

ARTICLE 27. ~ The general councils of industry are to liaise with Catalonia's Council of Economy and will monitor its operations closely so as to be in agreement with it every time that matters requiring concerted action may arise.

ARTICLE 28. ~ The general councils of industry will be required to forward to Catalonia's Council of Economy, within the prescribed time-limit in each instance, a detailed document in which the overall progress of the industry in question will be set out and analyzed, and where fresh plans will be advanced for its consideration.

#### E) INDUSTRIAL GROUPINGS

ARTICLE 29. ~ In order to promote establishment and organization of general councils of industry, the general Council of Economy shall, within a period of fifteen days from publication of the present Decree, propose that different industries be classed and grouped together in accordance with their respective specialty and coordination of the sections into which each of them is sub-divided.

ARTICLE 30. ~ In such grouping, account shall be taken of raw materials and of the different industrial operations right through to the point of sale, of the technical unit, of the business management and, whenever possible, steps will be taken to arrive at comprehensive concentration.

ARTICLE 31. ~ At the same time, the Council of Economy is to propose the regulation which will govern the establishment and operation of said industries (...)

– Barcelona October 24, 1936

The Prime Councilor: José Terradellas

The Councilor for Economy: Juan P. Fàbregas

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# THE WRITINGS OF DIEGO ABAD DE SANTILLÁN<sup>1</sup>

## A LIBERTARIAN PLANNING BLUE-PRINT

### THE ORGANIZATION OF LABOR

#### —FROM FACTORY COUNCIL TO COUNCIL OF ECONOMY

The trade unions are organizations charged with the operation of the economy at grassroots level. We can condense their functions into eighteen councils, to wit:

Essential needs: a Council overseeing Foodstuffs, accommodation and clothing.

Raw Materials: Councils to oversee agricultural production, livestock, forestry, mines and fisheries.

A Liaison Council: Councils for transport, communications, press and publishing, credit and exchange.

Manufacturing Industry: Councils for the metal-working, chemical, glass and ceramics industries.

Councils for electricity, power and water.

A Health Council.

A Cultural Council.

These various councils together make up each local council of Economy.

These same councils will provide the basis for the formation of regional councils, and, at national level, of the Federal Council of Economy.

With the economic organism superimposed upon the existing organization of labor, we achieve maximum coordination. Neither capitalism nor the so-called socialist State can attain such identification.

There is the added advantage that the individual's autonomy within the group, that of the group within the union and that of the union within each council is not affected.

This is a federative arrangement which can, if need be, bring pressure to bear upon the individual in respect of his libertarian development, but which may equally provide a guarantee of liberty and foster communication between individuals, which is impossible with an essentially authoritarian organism.

## REGIONAL COUNCILS OF ECONOMY

The local councils of economy in the towns and municipal councils or district councils in the countryside coalesce to form regional councils of economy which perform the same functions as the local councils, albeit on a larger scale. Each zone will have its political autonomy. There are no independent regions in Spain which can be self-sufficient although some regions are wealthier than others.

The regional council of economy, through its credit and exchange council, compiles statistics on production, population, consumption in its own territory, the labor force and raw materials. The regional councils of economy regularly hold congresses at which they re-elect their members and outline the program they are to implement. Delegations from the regional councils are elected either through the local councils or through congresses in order to fill the federal council of economy, the most important economic body in the land.

## THE FEDERAL COUNCIL OF ECONOMY

Finally, we come to the federal council of Economy, the country's main coordinating agency.

The federal council of economy, elected from the bottom up by the workers, coordinates the entire economy of the country with the same aim in mind: producing more and improving distribution.

With the aid of statistics forwarded to it, the council will at all times know the exact economic position throughout the country.

It will know which is the most blessed region, the one which has a surplus, and it will appreciate where there are shortcomings in transport and communications, where new roads, new crops and new factories will be needed. Regions with few assets will be helped by the country in the completion of useful projects.

## TWO VIEWS OF "LIBERTARIAN COMMUNISM": UTOPIA OR ECONOMIC INTEGRATION<sup>2</sup>

Buenos Aires, July 10, 1965

[My book] *El organizmo económico de la revolución* was part and parcel of the propaganda which I had been peddling in our reviews and newspapers for some years past. I wanted to set out a practical scheme for immediate implementation, and not some paradisaical utopia. The network of trade union inter-

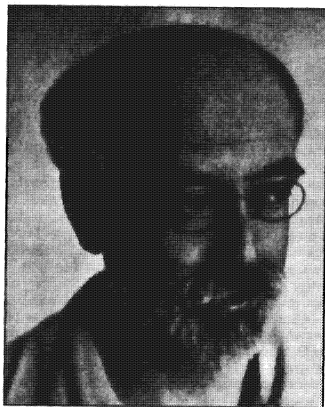
connections, as I saw it, made it possible to replace the capitalist proprietor of industry and land advantageously, and I wanted to make a contribution towards the out-growing of the puerility of a libertarian communism based on supposedly free independent communes, as peddled by Kropotkin and others and presented as being more perfect than schemes deriving from Bakunin's collectivism or Proudhon's collectivism. Indeed, I hold the latter to be closer to man's true nature, in that man is generous and full of self-sacrifice, but selfish with it.

I understand and I argue in favor of local autonomy in a host of particular matters, but a commune is a focus for communal living and work is a duty which requires the creation of bonds, whether these be bonds of affinity or not, at local, regional, national and international levels. Consequently, in work and in economics, my preoccupation is not with family affinities or close friendship, but with efficiency. I cannot call for independence but rather advocate inter-dependence, transcending all borders. The trade union organizations, the local federations of industry and the national federations in Spain held in their hands concrete opportunities to introduce improvements to the system of production and distribution, beyond anything that private, competing, anachronistic enterprises had to offer. In 1936, we were able to give a powerful fillip to Spain's economic development, because we added the fervor of belief and intensification of effort to the existing plant. And the point was, as a first step, to raise the industrial and agricultural levels of the country; we felt able to give it that boost, albeit through the instrument that we had at our disposal, the trade union organization, and not through the idyllic libertarian communes of nudists and practitioners of free love.<sup>3</sup>

What is more, I was uneasy about the widespread tendency to take the line that ownership of the instruments of labor and of the land would devolve upon the workers and peasants, and I issued warnings against that tendency, which is to say, against the prospective new class, the class of administrators and managers of these undertakings. Land, factories and the means of transportation belong to the community and must perform social functions. If, in our hands, they fail to perform those functions, the new form of ownership would be as unacceptable as its predecessor. The slogan "The land to the peasants, the factories to the workers" struck me as legitimate, on condition that it does not lead to thoughts of novel private ownership, vested in a larger number rather than in a minority. The society, the community take precedence over the interests of minorities and majorities. Ownership of the land is a social

asset, just as ownership of the other instruments of production ought to be. It is not my belief that we need pass through a phase of new owners before we arrive at a new world which is neither capitalist nor monopolistic.

At the Zaragoza Congress, which I myself did not attend, approval was given to an outline future organization that mirrored the Kropotkinist view. A schema inspired by the ideas in my book was put to the Congress by the Graphic Arts and Paper Federation, at my instigation. But as we were not present in Zaragoza, the one drafted by Federica Montseny on the basis of a pamphlet by Isaac Puente, which I had published in *Tierra y Libertad*, was adopted. In contradiction of these simplistic views, I had argued in favor of the ideas set out in *El organismo económico de la revolución* in the pages of the review *Tiempos Nuevos* at the time. And as it so happened that shortly afterwards, our forecasts and predictions had to be put into practice, we generally set about it in the manner which I had anticipated, because we were working on the basis of an instrument of action and achievement, to wit, the trade union, the federation of industry, etc.



**VOLINE**  
(1882-1945)





## VOLINE

Vsevolod Mikhailovitch Eichenbaum, better known by his pseudonym Voline, was born on August 11, 1882.<sup>1</sup> Having enrolled as a student in the Saint Petersburg Faculty of Law, he promptly dropped out, attracted even then by the ideas of the Social Revolutionary Party, which led to his being an active participant in the 1905 revolution. He was along on the workers' march on the Winter Palace, led by Father Gapon. A little later, he was present at the birth of the first soviet in Saint Petersburg. Arrested by the tsarist police and imprisoned and finally deported to Siberia, he managed to escape in 1907, making his way to France.

It was in Paris that Voline became an anarchist. As a member since 1913 of the International Anti-War Action Committee, his activities led to his being placed under arrest in 1915. Threatened with internment in a concentration camp, Voline successfully sailed aboard a steamship, as a coaltrimmer, for the United States. For several months past, he had been sending correspondence from Paris to a Russian anarcho-syndicalist weekly *Golos Truda* ("The Voice of Labor") in America. In 1917, its editors—and with them, Voline—arrived in revolutionary Russia, intent upon transferring the weekly to Saint Petersburg.

Around this time Russian anarchists who had stayed behind in Europe (and who were under the sway of Peter Kropotkin's ideas) and those who had spent some time in America were reconciled with one another, as manifested in a declaration, followed up by an organization which then took as its name: the Petrograd Anarcho-Syndicalist Propaganda Union and decided to bring out *Golos Truda*, which was regarded as the continuation of the American publication. Voline was selected to edit it. After the October revolution, *Golos Truda* turned to daily publication and Voline had the help of an editorial panel which included, among others, Alexander Schapiro.

At a time when the proletarian revolution was only a few months old, Voline was already issuing terribly prophetic warnings in that paper: "Once their power has been consolidated and legalized, the Bolsheviks [...] will set about husbanding the country's life and the people's with governmental and dictatorial means. [...] Your soviets will gradually turn into mere executive organs of the will of the central government. We shall witness the installation of an authoritarian political and State apparatus that will operate from above

and will set about crushing everything with its mailed fist (...) Woe betide anyone who does not see eye to eye with the central government!”

Later, after he had left the paper, Voline traveled to Bobrov, where he worked on the staff of the town’s soviet. A little later, he joined the newspaper *Nabat* (“The Tocsin”) and became one of the prime movers behind a Ukrainian anarchist conference in Kursk on November 18, 1918. At that conference, he was commissioned to draft the resolutions passed and to draw up a declaration agreeable to every one of the schools of anarchism, so that they all might work together inside a common framework. The drafting of a program led Voline to articulate the idea of an “anarchist synthesis” which could embrace all three schools of anarchism: the anarcho-syndicalist, the libertarian communist and the individualist.

A second *Nabat* congress was held in March–April 1919. Participants declared themselves to be “categorically and irreversibly opposed to all participation in the soviets, which have become purely political bodies, organized on authoritarian, centralist and Statist foundations.” This declaration was very poorly received by the Bolshevik authorities.

After the congress, Voline left Moscow and went back to work with *Nabat* in Kursk, with the central body (for *Nabat* had regional bodies, too). This was still a time of relative political tolerance, but it was fated not to last for much longer. Soon, the Bolshevik authorities did away with the free press, harassing and arresting the anarchists. It was at that point, July 1919, that Voline managed to link up with the headquarters of the Ukrainian anarchist guerrilla, Nestor Makhno. The intellectual with the ever-ready pen and the comparatively uncouth warrior-peasant, by virtue of the very fact that they were profoundly dissimilar, complemented each other, not that they did not clash on more than one occasion.

As the *Makhnovshchina* had established a cultural and educational department, Voline, in conjunction with one of Makhno’s erstwhile prison acquaintances, Piotr Arshinov, took charge of it and was placed in charge of organizing meetings, conferences, lectures, popular briefings, the publication of tracts, posters and all the rest of the Makhnovists’ printed output. He chaired a congress of the insurgent movement, the one held in October 1919, in Alexandrovsk. It saw the adoption of *General Theses*,<sup>2</sup> which spelled out the doctrine of “free soviets” (See Volume IV).

For six months, as a member of the military council, Voline beavered away unstintingly. But he was arrested by the 14th Red Army, taken to Moscow

and placed in the care of the political police (Cheka). Not until October 1920 would he regain his freedom under a military agreement between the Bolshevik government and Makhno. Whereupon he traveled to Kharkov where, in concert with the *Nabat* Confederation, he laid the preparations for an anarchist congress scheduled for December 25. On the eve of the congress, the Bolsheviks had Voline arrested once again, along with any anarchists who had served with Makhno.

From Kharkov, the prisoners were removed to Moscow and placed in the Butyrky prison. There they mounted a hunger strike which was called off following unexpected intervention: European revolutionary syndicalist delegates, who had come to attend the first congress of the Red International of Labor Unions,<sup>3</sup> secured the release of ten of them, including Voline, on condition that they leave the country for good (under threat of execution should they breach this agreement).

Moving to Germany, where he had help from the *Frei Arbeiter Union* based in Berlin, Voline worked on the FAU's behalf, bringing out a damning pamphlet entitled *The Persecution of Anarchism in the Soviet Union*, translating Piotr Arshinov's book *History of the Makhnovist Movement* into French and also launching and editing the leading Russian-language weekly *The Anarchist Worker*, an anarchist synthesis review.

At the suggestion of Sebastien Faure, who urged him to move to France, Voline contributed to the *Encyclopédie anarchiste*. For it, he wrote essays which have frequently been reprinted as propaganda pamphlets or in the foreign press, notably the Spanish. The Spanish CNT invited him to edit its French language paper *L'Espagne antifasciste* on its behalf.

In 1938, Voline left Paris for Nîmes, at the invitation of his friend André Prudhommeaux,<sup>4</sup> who ran a cooperative printing-works there. For a time, he helped with the editing of the weekly review *Terre libre* and, above all, he had the peace to write, with the maturity of hindsight, *The Unknown Revolution*, the libertarian classic on the Russian revolution and one of anarchism's most significant texts. Later, in Marseilles, from 1940 on, Voline was able to finish off the book. Stricken by tuberculosis, he died in Paris on September 18, 1945. *The Unknown Revolution*, in its French edition was published at the expense of friends of Voline in 1947. For a long time, it was ignored or buried by "authoritarian" revolutionaries. It was not until 1969, thanks to re-publication in French, that it was at last able to reach what is conventionally referred to as the wider public.

VOLINE

## THE UNKNOWN REVOLUTION<sup>1</sup>

### VOLINE AND TROTSKY<sup>2</sup>

In April 1917, I happened to be in New York with Trotsky,<sup>3</sup> in a printworks which worked primarily for various left-wing Russian bodies. At the time, he was in charge of a left marxist daily paper, *Novy Mir*. As for me, the Federation of Russian Workers' Unions had entrusted me with the editing of the final editions of its weekly, the anarcho-syndicalist *Golos Truda*, before its removal to Russia. I spent one night each week at the printworks, on the eve of the newspaper's coming out. And that is how I came to meet Trotsky on my first night on duty.

Naturally, we talked of the revolution. We were both making preparations to quit America shortly in order to move "over yonder."

One time I said to Trotsky: "On balance, I am absolutely sure that you left marxists will end up by taking power in Russia. It is inevitable, for the resuscitated soviets will unfailingly come into conflict with the bourgeois government. The latter will not be able to stamp them out because all of the country's toilers, workers, peasants, etc., and pretty well all of the army as well, will, of course, wind up siding with the soviets against the bourgeoisie and its government. Now, as soon as the people and the army support the soviets, the latter will be the winners in the struggle begun. And as soon as they win, you left marxists will inevitably be swept into power. For the toilers will assuredly carry through the revolution to its bitter end. As syndicalists and anarchists are too weak in Russia to focus the toilers' attention quickly upon their ideas, the masses will place their trust in you and you will become 'the masters of the country.' Whereupon woe betide us anarchists! It is inevitable that you and we should come into conflict. You will begin to persecute us just as soon as your power has been consolidated. And you will end by having us shot down like partridges..."

"—Come, come, comrade," Trotsky replied. "You people are pig-headed and incorrigible fantasists. Look, as things now stand, what is the difference between us? A little question of methodology, quite secondary. You, like us,

are revolutionaries. Like you, we are anarchists, in the final analysis. The only thing is that you want to introduce your anarchism straight away, without transition or preparation. Whereas we marxists believe that one cannot 'leap' into the libertarian realm in a single bound. We anticipate a transitional stage during which the ground can be cleared and smoothed for the anarchist society with the aid of an anti-bourgeois political power: the dictatorship of the proletariat exercised by the proletarian party in power. In short, it is only a difference of 'degree,' nothing more. Essentially, we are very close to one another. Brothers in arms. Think of it: we will have a common foe to fight. Will it even occur to us to fight one another? And anyway, I have no doubt but that you will quickly be persuaded of the necessity for a provisional socialist proletarian dictatorship. So, I really cannot see any reason for warfare between you and us. We will assuredly march hand in hand. And then, even if we do not see eye to eye, you are overstating things a bit to suggest that we socialists will use brute force against anarchists! Life itself and the views of the masses will be enough to resolve the matter and bring us into agreement. No! Can you really, for a single instant, entertain such a nonsense: left-wing socialists in power turning their guns on the anarchists! Come, come, what do you take us for? Anyway, we are socialists, comrade Voline! So, we are not your enemies ..."

In December 1919, gravely wounded, I was arrested by the Bolshevik military authorities in the Makhnovist region. Deeming me a militant "of some standing," the authorities notified Trotsky of my arrest by means of a special telegram asking his view of how I should be handled. His answer arrived snappily and tersely and plainly—also by telegram: "Shoot out of hand.—Trotsky." I was not shot, thanks solely to a set of particularly felicitous and quite fortuitous circumstances.

#### **BOLSHEVISM IN THE DOCK<sup>4</sup>**

##### **THE WORKING CLASS DISPOSSESSED**

[...] The working class was weak. Unorganized (in the proper sense of the word), inexperienced and, essentially, unwitting of its real task, it soon proved incapable of acting for itself and on its own behalf. This it left to the Bolshevik party, which hogged the action.

(...) Instead of simply rallying to the workers' aid in their efforts to carry through the Revolution and emancipate themselves; instead of helping them in their fight, the role which the workers had in mind for them, a role which,

normally, should be the role of all revolutionary ideologues and which does not at all require the seizure nor the exercise of “political power”—instead of fulfilling that role, the Bolshevik party, once in power, ensconced itself there, of course, as absolute master; there, it was quickly corrupted; it organized itself into a privileged caste and thereafter it crushed and subjugated the working class so as to exploit it in new ways for its own benefit.

In light of which, the whole Revolution will be warped, diverted and led astray. For, by the time that the masses of the people realize this mistake, this danger, it will be too late: after a tussle between them and these new masters who are solidly organized and can call upon adequate material, administrative, military and police powers—a bitter, but unequal tussle that will drag on for about three years and will long remain unknown outside of Russia—the people will succumb. And the authentic liberating Revolution will once again be smothered, by the “revolutionaries” themselves.

(...) From October 1917 on, the Russian revolution entered quite new terrain: that of the great social revolution. Thus, it proceeded along a very specific route, virgin territory. From which it follows that the subsequent progress of the Revolution was of a quite novel and original sort.

[...] Through all of the crises and failures that followed one upon another up until the Revolution of October 1917, Bolshevism alone put the case for a social revolution to be carried out. Not counting the (Left) Social Revolutionary doctrine with its similarities to Bolshevism in terms of its political, authoritarian, Statist and centralistic outlook, and a few other small kindred currents, a second fundamental idea, which also envisaged a frank, thoroughgoing social revolution emerged and spread through revolutionary ranks and made headway among the laboring masses also: this was the anarchist idea.

Its influence, initially very slight, grew as events broadened their scope. By the end of 1918, this influence had become such that the Bolsheviks, who would brook no criticism, let alone contradiction or opposition, were seriously worried. From 1919 on, and up until the end of 1921, they were to wage a very savage struggle against this idea’s onward march: a struggle at least as long and as bitter as the struggle against the reaction had been.

On this score, let us stress a third factor which is not sufficiently appreciated: Bolshevism, once in power, fought against the anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist ideas and movements, not at the level of ideological or practical experimentation, not by means of open, above board struggle, but with the same methods of repression that it employed against reactionaries, unadulterat-

edly violent methods. It began by brutally shutting down all the libertarian organizations' premises in order to bar the anarchists from carrying out any propaganda or activity. It doomed the masses to not hearing the anarchist voice or to misconstruing it. And since, in spite of these impediments, the idea gained ground, the Bolsheviks quickly moved on to more violent measures: imprisonment, proscription and death sentences. So, the unequal struggle between the two tendencies, one of them in power and the other opposed to power, escalated and spread and in certain regions, resulted in full-scale civil war. In the Ukraine, in particular, this state of war dragged out for more than two years, obliging the Bolsheviks to mobilize all their resources in order to smother the anarchist idea and crush the popular movements drawing their inspiration from it.

So, the strife between the two approaches to social revolution and, by the same token, between the Bolshevik authorities and certain movements of the toiling masses occupied a very important place in the events of the years between 1919 and 1921.

#### TWO CONFLICTING IDEAS

(...) The Bolshevik idea was to erect upon the ruins of the bourgeois State a new "workers' State," to establish a "worker and peasant government" and introduce the "dictatorship of the proletariat."

The anarchist idea was to overhaul the economic and social foundations of society without resorting to a political State, government or "dictatorship" of any description, which is to say to carry out the Revolution and resolve its difficulties, not by political and State means, but by means of the natural, unforced economic and social activity of the workers' very own associations, once the last capitalist government had been overthrown.

In order to coordinate activity, the first of these outlooks envisaged a central political authority, orchestrating the life of the State to abet the government and its agents, in accordance with formal directives emanating from the "center."

The alternative approach implied jettisoning political and State organization once and for all; direct and federative arrangements between economic, social, technical or other bodies (trade unions, cooperatives, various associations, etc.) at local, regional, national and international levels; signifying not a political, statist centralization reaching out from the government at the center to the periphery controlled by it, but rather an economic and technical centralization, dictated by real needs and interests, moving from the periphery towards the



centers and established naturally and logically in accordance with actual needs, with no domination and no commands.

Note the absurdity, or partisanship of the reproach leveled at anarchists to the effect that they know only “how to destroy” and have no “positive” ideas [...] especially when that reproach emanates from “leftists.” Discussions between the far-left political parties and the anarchists had always centered upon what [...] had to be done once the bourgeois State had been destroyed—a destruction upon which all are agreed. Along what lines should the construction of the new society proceed: statist, centralist and political, or federalist, apolitical and merely social? This was as ever the subject of disputations between the two sides: irrefutable evidence that the anarchists’ central preoccupation was always nothing less than building the future.

In place of the parties’ thesis that there should be a “transitional” political, centralized State, anarchists offered their own: that there should be ongoing but immediate progress towards real economic and federative community. The political parties rely upon the social structure bequeathed by bygone ages and regimes and argue that there are constructive ideas implicit in this model. Anarchists reckon that, from the outset, fresh construction requires fresh methods and they advocate such methods. Whether their contention be right or wrong, it proves at any rate that they are perfectly clear as to what they want and that they have clear-cut constructive ideas.

Generally speaking, a wrong-headed, or, most often, knowingly incorrect, interpretation argues that the libertarian approach signifies absence of all organization. Nothing could be further from the truth. It is not a question of “organization” or of “non-organization,” but rather of two different organizing principles.

Of necessity, every revolution begins in a more or less spontaneous—and thus confused and chaotic fashion. It goes without saying, and libertarians understand this as well as anybody else, that if a revolution remains at that stage, the primitive stage, it founders. Immediately following the spontaneous eruption, the organizing principle has to intervene in a revolution, as in any other human undertaking. And it is at that point that the serious question arises: what are the tenor and the basis of that organization to be?

Some contend that a central leadership group, an “elite” group, should be formed in order to take the whole endeavor in hand and see it through in accordance with its lights, imposing the latter upon the entire collectivity, establishing a government and organizing a State, dictating its wishes to the

population, imposing its “laws” through force and violence and combating, eliminating and even annihilating those in disagreement with it.

Others reckon that such a view is absurd, contrary to the underlying trends in human evolution and, in the last analysis, more than sterile: downright damaging to the whole undertaking. Of course, the anarchists say, society must be organized. But that new, normal and henceforth feasible organizing ought to proceed freely and socially and, above all, from the grassroots up. The organizing principle should emanate, not from some center ready-made for the purpose of capturing the whole and overruling it, but the very opposite, from all points, arriving at coordinating centers, natural centers designed to service all these points.

Of course, the organizing spirit, men with a capacity for organization, “elites,” must play their part. But everywhere and in all circumstances, all such human resources must participate freely in the common undertaking as true collaborators and not as dictators. Everywhere, they should set an example and set about marshaling, coordinating and organizing people’s goodwill, initiative, expertise, talents and aptitudes, without dominating, subjugating or oppressing them. Such men would be true organizers and their handiwork would amount to authentic, fruitful, solid organization precisely because it would be natural, humane and genuinely progressive. Whereas the other sort of “organization,” modeled upon that of an old society rooted in oppression and exploitation, and consequently tailored to those two purposes, would be sterile and unstable, because incongruent with the new targets and thus in no way progressive. Indeed, it would contribute nothing to the new society: instead, it would take all of the blights of the old society to extremes in that only their appearance would have altered.

Belonging to an obsolete society overtaken in every respect and thus impossible as a natural, free and truly human institution, it could not survive other than with the aid of some new artifice, some new trickery, some new violence, fresh oppressions and exploitations. Which would, of necessity, sidetrack, mislead and jeopardize the entire revolution. Self-evidently, such organization would remain stalled as a locomotive of the social revolution. In no way could it serve as a “transitional society” (as the “communists” contend) for such a society would necessarily have to carry at least a few of the seeds of the one towards which it would be evolving—now, every authoritarian and Statist society would possess only residues from the overthrown society.

According to the libertarian case, it was the toiling masses themselves who, through their various class agencies (factory committees, industrial and

agricultural unions, cooperatives, etc.), federated and centralized in response to real needs, were everywhere to busy themselves on the spot with resolving the problems (...) of the Revolution. Through their activity, which would be powerful and fruitful, in that it would be free and deliberate, they were to coordinate their efforts right across the length and breadth of the land. As for the “elites,” their role, as libertarians saw it, was to assist the masses; to enlighten and instruct them, to offer them the requisite advice and nudge them towards such and such an initiative, setting an example and supporting them in their activity, but not directing them government-style.

According to libertarians, happy resolution of the problems of the social revolution could only come about through the freely and consciously collective, solidary efforts of millions of men, contributing and reconciling the whole diversity of their needs and interests as well as of their ideas, strengths and capabilities, their talents, aptitudes, dispositions, professional know-how and expertise, etc. Through the natural inter-play of their economic, technical and social bodies, with the aid of the “elites” and, if need be, under the umbrella of their freely organized armed forces, the toiling masses, according to libertarians, ought to have been able to move the social revolution forward and arrive progressively at the practical accomplishment of all its tasks.

The Bolshevik line was diametrically the opposite. According to the Bolsheviks, it was the elite—their elite—which, by forming a government (a so-called “workers” government enforcing the so-called “dictatorship of the proletariat”) was to carry through the transformation of society and resolve its immense problems. The masses were to assist this elite (the converse of the libertarians’ line, whereby the elite was to assist the masses) by faithfully, blindly and “mechanically” implementing its plans, decisions, orders and “laws.” And the armed forces, likewise modeled upon those of the capitalist countries, had to be blindly obedient to the “elite.”

Such was and is the essential difference between the two outlooks.

Such also were the two contrary notions of social revolution at the time of the Russian overthrow in 1917.

The Bolsheviks, as we have stated, were unwilling even to listen to the anarchists, much less allow them to put their thesis to the masses. Believing themselves to be possessed of an absolute incontrovertible and “scientific” truth, arguing that they had a duty to impose and apply it as a matter of urgency, they fought and eliminated the libertarian movement through recourse to

violence as soon as the latter began to awaken the interest of the masses: the customary practice of all overlords, exploiters and inquisitors.

*What, then, is the State?*

(...) The Bolshevik State, broadly established in 1918–1921, has been in existence for twenty years.

#### WHAT, PRECISELY, IS THAT STATE?

It calls itself: the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). It purports to be a “proletarian” State, or even a “worker and peasant” State. It claims to exercise a “dictatorship of the proletariat.” It flatters itself that it is “the workers’ homeland,” the bulwark of revolution and socialism.

What truth is there in all this? Do the facts and deeds justify such declarations and claims?

(...) The Bolshevik Party’s prime concern in power was to bring all activity, the whole life of the country, under State control: everything that could was to come under the State. The aim was to create the regime which modern terminology describes as “totalitarian.”

Once possessed of enough coercive power, the Bolshevik Party and government set to that task as best they could.

It was in carrying this out that the Communist authorities spawned their vast bureaucratic apparatus. It has finished up fashioning a multitudinous, mighty caste of “accountable” officials which today accounts for a highly privileged caste of some two million individuals. Effectively master of the country, the army and the police, it upholds, protects, venerates and flatters Stalin: its idol, its “tsar,” the only man it holds capable of maintaining “order” and safe-guarding its privileges.

Little by little, the Bolsheviks slickly and quickly brought under the State, monopolized and “totalitarianized...” the entire administration, the labor organizations, peasant organizations and the rest, finance, the means of transport and communications, the sub-soil and mining output, foreign trade and large-scale domestic trade, heavy industry, the land and agriculture, culture, teaching and education, the press and literature, art, science, sports, recreations and even thought, or, at any rate, all its manifestations.

State takeover of workers’ agencies—soviets, trade unions, factory committees, etc.—was the easiest and quickest course. Their independence was done away with. They became simple administrative and executive cogs of the Party and the government.

The game was played skillfully. The workers even failed to notice that they were being placed in fetters. Since the State and the government were now “theirs,” it struck them as natural that they should not stand apart from them. They saw nothing out of the ordinary in their organizations performing certain functions in the “workers” State and implementing the decisions of the “comrade commissars.”

Soon, these organizations found all autonomous action, all unsolicited deeds forbidden to them.

In the end, they realized their mistake. But by then it was too late. When certain worker agencies, hampered in their operation and uneasy about it, sensing that “something was rotten in the kingdom of soviets,” indicated a degree of dissatisfaction and sought to recoup a little of their independence, the government resisted this with all of its energy and guile. For one thing, it immediately took steps and imposed sanctions. For another, it tried reason, telling the workers, as casually as possible, “Since we now have a workers’ State wherein the workers exercise their dictatorship and where everything belongs to them, this State and its agencies are yours. So how can ‘independence’ possibly come into it? Independence from whom? From yourselves? For you are the State now. Failure to understand that signifies a failure to understand the revolution that has been carried through. Opposition to this state of affairs means opposition to the Revolution as such. Such ideas and movements are intolerable, for they can receive their inspiration only from the enemies of the Revolution, of the working class, its State, its dictatorship and workers’ power. Those among you who are still sufficiently unenlightened to listen to the whispering of those enemies and heed their poisonous suggestions simply because not everything is going swimmingly in your young State, are engaged in an outright act of counter-revolution.”

#### THE BOLSHEVIK SYSTEM

(...) The Bolshevik system wants the boss-State also to be the drill-sergeant, the moral guide, the judge and the dispenser of rewards and punishments for every citizen. The State supplies that citizen with work and assigns him a job, the State feeds and pays him, the State monitors him, the State uses and handles him howsoever it pleases, the State educates and molds him, the State sits in judgment of him: the State rewards or punishes him; prosecutor, judge, jailer, executioner—absolutely all, rolled into one, one State that, with the aid of its officials, aims to be omnipresent, omniscient and omnipotent. Woe to him who dares try to escape from it!

Let us emphasize that the Bolshevik State (government) has seized not just all existing material and moral assets, but, more seriously, perhaps, has also asserted its eternal title to all truth, in every realm: truths historical, economic, political, social, scientific, philosophical or whatever. In every sphere, the Bolshevik government regards itself as infallible and destined to give a lead to humanity. It alone is possessed of the truth. It alone knows where and how to proceed. It alone has the capacity to bring off the Revolution. And so, logically and inevitably, it argues that the 175 million people populating this country must also regard it as the sole bearer of truth; a bearer infallible, unassailable, sacrosanct. And as a matter of logic, inevitably, any person or group daring, not to fight that government, but merely to question its infallibility, criticize it, contradict it or in any way rebuke it, is deemed its enemy and, parting company, as an enemy of truth, from the Revolution, a "counter-revolutionary!"

What this amounts to is an outright monopoly upon opinion and thought. Any opinion, any thought other than that of the State (or government) is deemed heretical; dangerously, intolerably, criminally heretical. And, logically, heretics must inevitably suffer punishment: imprisonment, exile, execution.

Syndicalists and anarchists, savagely persecuted solely because they dare entertain an independent opinion with regard to the Revolution, know something of that.

As the reader can see, this system is indeed a system for the complete and absolute enslavement of the people: physical and moral enslavement. If you like, it represents a ghastly new Inquisition in social terms. Such has been the Bolshevik Party's handiwork. Did it intend this outcome? Did it knowingly pursue it? Certainly not. Without doubt, its finest representatives aspired to an arrangement that would have made it possible to build real socialism and open the way to full-blooded communism. They were certain that the methods advocated by their great ideologues would surely lead there. Moreover, they believed any means valid and justified, just as long as they brought that goal nearer.

These honest men were deceived. They took the wrong road.

Which is why certain of them, having realized their irreparable mistake and loath to outlive their evaporated hopes, took their own lives.

The conformists and parvenus, of course, simply adapted.

Here, I must place on record an admission made to me some years ago by an eminent, sincere Bolshevik during a heated, impassioned argument. He

said to me: "Sure we have gone astray and have become bogged down where we neither wanted nor expected to wind up. But we will strive to repair our mistakes, overcome the impasse, and get back on the right track. And we will succeed in that."

Instead, we may be absolutely certain that they will not succeed, that they will never overcome. Because, in the final analysis, the logical sequence of things, human psychology generally, the interconnection of material facts and the predictable impact of causes and effects are mightier than the intent of a few individuals, no matter how strong and sincere these may be.

Ah, if only millions of free men had gone astray, if it were a case of mighty collectivities operating with a free hand, with all candor and in complete agreement—then we might, by a common effort of will, have made good the mistakes and redressed the situation. But such an undertaking is beyond a group of individuals placed outside of and above a subjugated mass of humanity passive towards the mammoth forces lording over it.

The Bolshevik Party seeks to build socialism through a State, a government and centralized, authoritarian political activity. All it has managed is a monstrous and murderous State capitalism, rooted in odious exploitation of "mechanized," unseeing, unenlightened masses.

The more proof is garnered that the Party's leaders were sincere, vigorous and competent and that they had an enormous mass following, the starker the historical conclusion that must be drawn from their handiwork. That conclusion is this:

Any attempt to carry out the social Revolution with the aid of a State, a government and political action, even should that attempt be very sincere, very vigorous, attended by favorable circumstances and buttressed by the masses, will necessarily result in State capitalism, the worst sort of capitalism, which has absolutely nothing to do with humanity's march towards a socialist society.

Such is the lesson which the world must draw from the formidable and crucial Bolshevik experiment; a lesson that offers mighty backing to the libertarian contention and which will shortly, in the light of these events, be grasped by all who labor, suffer, think, and struggle.

# PROCEEDINGS OF NABAT

*Here now are three important documents relating to the conferences or congresses of the Ukrainian anarchist Nabat movement, of which Voline was one of the leading lights. These texts have been taken from the anarchist historian Ugo Fedeli's important work, Dalla Insurrezione dei Contadini in Ucraina all Rivolta de Cronstadt (Milan, 1950).<sup>1</sup>*

## THE FIRST CONGRESS OF THE ANARCHIST ORGANIZATIONS OF THE UKRAINE (NABAT), NOVEMBER 18, 1918

The conference, which assembled and which was very important, prescribed as its primary duty "organizing all of the life forces of anarchism; uniting the various strands of anarchism; bringing together through a common endeavor all anarchists seriously desirous of playing an active part in the social revolution which is defined as a process (of greater or lesser duration) giving rise to a new form of social existence for the organized masses."

Another one of the most important items on the agenda of the get-together was item number three, dealing with the [Makhnovist] "insurgent movement." The final decision was clear and plain.

It stipulated:

- a) The need to step up the struggle against reactionary forces of every sort, against all who have laid hands upon the Ukraine and are using it as a bridge-head.
- b) The need to inject the anarchist spirit into that struggle, thereby bolstering anarchist power for an imminent victory and for the organizing of the forces of revolution. Conference acknowledges the need for anarchists to be broadly and actively participants in the Ukraine's insurgent movement.

Given the lack of success and the negative results of purely anarchist formations, as demonstrated by experience, conference takes note of the ineffectuality of the latter.

As for anarchists' participation in all sorts of insurgent units and in non-anarchist organizations, conference states:

1. That anarchists' participation in insurgent organizations of all sorts and most especially in non-party (worker and peasant) insurgent units organized by anarchists is vital.



2. Anarchist participation in each sort of insurgent organization (revolutionary war committees, staffs, etc.) is feasible on the following conditions:
  - a) The revolutionary war committees and like organizations must be regarded by anarchists exclusively as technical-executive bodies (overseeing exclusively military operational matters), but should on no account be regarded as administrative or executive bodies posing, in any form, the problem of authority or assuming the latter.
  - b) Anarchists should not participate in organizations (revolutionary war committees, staffs, etc.) which are of the nature of party political or authoritarian institutions. Wheresoever this may be the case, anarchists must do all in their power to establish analogous organizations above party.
  - c) Anarchists may work with organizations that are not of the political or party sort, and not authoritarian in nature. In the event of the organizations with which anarchists work becoming political and party organizations, anarchists should quit them and launch separate but analogous organizations.
  - d) Anarchists are to create revolutionary war committees, where none exist. In exceptional cases, such as, say, critical times of decisive struggle, and when the salvation of the revolution depends upon it, anarchists' provisional participation in military organizations is allowed, even should the latter be of a party political nature: this, however, is permissible for information purposes only.

Conference draws the attention of militants in a particular way to the inescapable need:

1. Not to mass in military formation organizations and not to be content to be mere combatants, but rather to devote all available time to propaganda activity, striving to develop and reinforce ideas and practices of an anarchist nature among the members of such organizations and formations. We must arouse their spirit of initiative and activities of their own, inculcating the moral and cultural principles and underlying ideas of anarchism.
2. Not to restrict ourselves to the narrow confines of organizations and formations, but to strive at all times to join the life and activities of

these formations and organizations to the life of the populace, doing what we can, by word and deed, to cultivate the populace's sympathy with the insurgents, engaging in active and deliberate revolutionary effort, thereby inducing the populace to render effective support to the insurgents.

# THIRD CONGRESS OF THE ANARCHIST ORGANIZATIONS OF THE UKRAINE

(NABAT) (SEPTEMBER 3–8, 1920)

*The third congress of the full members of the Nabat confederation took place in particularly difficult circumstances. After the second congress [in March–April of 1919], a further congress had been scheduled for August that year, but it was unable to proceed because of the sweeping offensive unleashed in June by the White general, Denikin.*

*That offensive and the ensuing advance by Denikin's troops necessarily had to smash all possible liaison between the organizations. In the end, the Nabat's own secretariat was scattered and its members put to flight. One of them was captured by the White Guards in the autumn of 1919, two others joined the ranks of the МАХНОВИТСІ and fought with them against Denikin, while the fourth [Voline] was arrested in Moscow.*

*Against this backdrop, work had to be resumed clandestinely and confronted enormous difficulties, with very limited results.*

*So, the third congress met a year and a half later, after numerous occurrences had altered previous situations and positions.*

*At this congress, which assembled under the control and in the presence of the Cheka (the Bolshevik police), discussion focused upon three main items:*

I. PRINCIPLES; 2. ORGANIZATION; 3. TACTICS.

*Important and grave resolutions were passed.*

*With regard to principles, one of those taking part in the congress asked for a specific answer to the question: "Might not anarchism's fundamental principles be in need of a modicum of revision, in the light of the lessons of the Revolution?"*

*The mere fact that such questions were raised demonstrated that explanations were needed. Certain people's preoccupation with leading anarchism down a road closer to the road taken by the Bolsheviks, and also the preoccupation with prosecuting and defending the revolution, made this congress one of the most important ones held thus far. Among the issues dealt with, pride of place went to the issue of the "transitional period," with all that it necessarily implied, as well as to the matter of the "dictatorship of labor." These matters provoked such an animated and stormy debate that it seemed at one point that the various tendencies would never come to an agreement and that a split was inevitable.*

*But the final resolution, upon which there was majority agreement, spelled out the anarchist viewpoint on all these many issues. Here are the essential points of that text:*

## RESOLUTION

Passed at the Ukrainian Anarchists' Nabat Federation Congress, meeting from September 3 to 8, 1920.

We need scarcely stress the significance of the following resolution, wherein the grave ideological differences dividing Russian anarchists from the Bolsheviks are clearly and firmly set out. This resolution was adopted in the absence of Voline, he being captive in Moscow at the time.

1. Anarchy's deserters may argue that the revolution has demonstrated the flimsiness of anarchist theory, but this is without foundation. On the contrary; the underlying principles of the anarchist teaching remain unbelievably solid and have been further confirmed by the experience of the Russian revolution.

These facts demonstrate the necessity of standing firm in the struggle against all forms of authority.

2. Anarchists deny that, between the libertarian-inclining first days of the Revolution and the ultimate goal of anarchy, an anarchist Commune must interpose itself for a time, during which the remnants of the old slavery would be mopped up and new forms of free association effectively devised. That interval, fraught with uncertainties and errors but also filled with unceasing amelioration, might instead be described as a "period for accumulation of anti-authoritarian experiences," or a "period of deepening of the social revolution," or indeed, "the launching of the anarchic Commune."

Describing that transitional period in the conventional manner, one might even dub it "the change-over to the perfect form of social coexistence." But we do not recommend use of that description, because it has a precise and very special meaning inherited from the socialist movement over the past fifty years.

The notion of the "transitional period" suggests something final, fixed, and rigid.

The term "transitional period" has become so much part and parcel of the international social democracy and so heavily impregnated with the historical marxist mentality as to have become unacceptable to an anarchist.

3. We likewise refuse to employ the term "dictatorship of labor," despite the efforts of some comrades eager to see it adopted. This "dictatorship of

labor” is nothing but that so-called “dictatorship of the proletariat” that has been such a resounding and protracted failure; ultimately it leads, of necessity, to the dictatorship of one fraction of the proletariat, and more especially of the party, of its officials and a few *condottieri*, over the mass of the proletariat.

There is no reconciling anarchy with any dictatorship, even with that of workers possessed of class consciousness, over other workers and even should it have the interests of the latter in mind.

(..) Once the notion of “dictatorship” is embraced, it would lead on to acceptance (..) of the brutal domination and unrestrained force of the State. Introducing the notion of dictatorship into the anarchist program would sow unforgivable confusion in minds.

4. The revolution advocated by anarchism, one in which the principle of communism and of non-recourse to violence occupy pride of place, faces lots of difficulties in its development. The forces of active resistance, which have an interest in the preservation of the authoritarian capitalist regime, and the passivity and ignorance of the toiling masses can give rise to circumstances that would force the anarchist Commune, free and organized, to deviate from its ideal. It is an impossibility to define in hard and fast terms the various social forms of the future, given that we are ignorant of the qualitative and quantitative content of various forces which, taken together, make up reality. For that reason, we regard the writing of prescriptions for an unknown future as pointless.

We draft no “minimum program.” We act directly upon actual events with utter faith and in open view of the toiling masses, in order to show them the ideal of anarchism and communism clearly and in its entirety.

Following that first part, and the essential business of the resolutions passed, attentions turned to other business; the matter “of the situation in Russia generally and on the Ukraine in particular,” and finally, to conclude, “relations with soviet authority.”

Regarding these latter deliberations, it is important that the following points be made:

*In their ongoing struggle against every form of the State, the anarchists of the Nabat confederation would countenance no compromise and no concession.*

For a time, we conducted ourselves differently with regard to “soviet power.”

The October Revolution’s outpouring of energy (..) the anarchist phraseology of the Bolshevik “leaders” and the urgency of the struggle against

worldwide imperialism, enclosing the revolution, born amid torment, in a circle of iron...all of these tempered our opposition to soviet power.

We invited the peasant and worker masses to consolidate the Revolution, and offered our advice to the new rulers, offering them comradely criticisms.

But when the soviet power born of the revolution turned, over a three year period, into a mighty machinery of rule, the revolution was strangled.

The “dictatorship of the proletariat” (without the bourgeoisie) has replaced the bourgeoisie with the dictatorship of one party and one minuscule fragment of the proletariat over the whole toiling people. That dictatorship has stifled the will of the broad masses of the toilers. Thereby dissipating the only creative force that could have resolved the various problems of the Revolution.

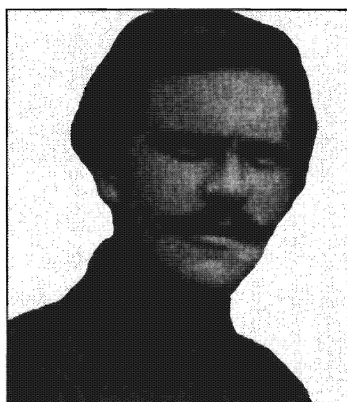


NO GODS, NO MASTERS

VOLUME 4







**NESTOR  
MAKHNO**  
(1889–1935)



## NESTOR MAKHNO, ANARCHIST GUERRILLA

In the wake of the October Revolution, the young anarchist son of poor peasants, Nestor Makhno, had taken it upon himself to organize the peasant masses of the southern Ukraine socially and militarily, on a basis of autonomy. It had all started with the establishment in the Ukraine of a right-wing regime imposed by the German and Austrian armies of occupation—a regime that had wasted no time in restoring to the former landlords estates which the revolutionary peasants had just wrested from them. The farm laborers took up arms in defense of what they had so recently won and defended it against the reactionaries, as well as against the ill-timed intrusions into the countryside of Bolshevik commissars and their unduly onerous requisitioning.

This mammoth *Jacquerie*, married to a guerrilla war, was enlivened by an avenger, a sort of anarchist Robin Hood whom the peasants nicknamed *Batko* (Little Father) Makhno. The armistice on November 11, 1918 led to a withdrawal of the German-Austrian armies of occupation, as well as offering Makhno a unique opportunity to accumulate weapons reserves and stock-pile.

The congress of the *Makhnovshchina* embraced both peasants' delegates and delegates from the guerrillas. Indeed, civilian organization was an extension of a peasant insurgent army prosecuting a guerrilla war. It was remarkably mobile, capable of covering up to a hundred kilometers a day, not just because it had cavalry but thanks also to its infantry who traveled aboard light horse-drawn and spring-loaded carts. This army was organized on the specifically libertarian foundations of volunteer service, the elective principle applicable to all ranks, and freely accepted discipline; the rules of the latter, drawn up by teams of partisans and then endorsed by general assemblies, were strictly observed by all.

“The honor of having eradicated Denikin's counter-revolution in the autumn of 1919 belongs chiefly to the anarchist insurgents,” writes Piotr Arshinov, the chronicler of the *Makhnovshchina*.

But Makhno refused to place his army under the supreme command of the Red Army chief, Trotsky. Inventing a ploy that the Spanish Stalinists were to deploy against the anarchist brigades some eighteen years later, the

Bolsheviks withheld arms from Makhno's partisans. They defaulted upon their duty to afford them aid, only to accuse them later of "treachery" and of letting themselves be beaten by White troops.

However, the two armies twice came to another accommodation, when the gravity of the interventionist threat required that they act in concert—action which came, first, against Denikin in March 1919 and then, in the summer of 1920, when Wrangel's White troops threatened before Makhno put them to flight. But once the dire threat had receded, the Red Army resumed military operations against Makhno's guerrillas, who matched them blow for blow.

At the end of November 1920, the Bolshevik authorities had no hesitation in laying an ambush. The officers of Makhno's Crimean army were invited to participate in a military council. Whereupon they were promptly arrested by the political police, the Cheka, and shot out of hand, or stripped of their weapons. At the same time, an all-out offensive was launched against the partisans. The struggle—an increasingly one-sided struggle—between libertarians and "authoritarians," between a conventional army and a guerrilla force, dragged on for a further nine months. In the end, thwarted by forces far outnumbering him and better equipped, Makhno was obliged to give up. He managed to flee into Rumania in August 1921, before moving on to Paris, where he was to die much later, in July 1935, ailing and impoverished.

With Piotr Arshinov, we may regard the *Makhnovshchina* as the prototype of an independent mass peasant movement, while it can also be viewed as a foretaste of 20th century revolutionary guerrilla warfare, as practiced by the Chinese, the Cubans, the Algerians and heroic Vietnamese.

NESTOR MAKHNO

## VISIT TO THE KREMLIN

*In June 1918, Makhno went to Moscow for consultations with some anarchist militants regarding methods and approaches to the revolutionary libertarian work needing to be done among the Ukrainian peasantry. He availed of the occasion to present himself at the Kremlin and meet with Yakov Mikhailovitch Sverdlov, the then secretary of the Bolshevik Party's Central Committee, and then with Lenin himself. Here, from his as yet unpublished MEMOIRS, is Makhno's account of these two meetings.*

### MY AUDIENCE WITH SVERDLOV

I arrived at the gates of the Kremlin resolved to see Lenin and, if possible, Sverdlov, and to have an audience with them. A trooper sat behind a counter. I handed him the credentials with which I had been issued at the Moscow soviet. After a careful reading of them, he issued me with a pass which he himself clipped to my credentials and I crossed the porch to the inner Kremlin. There, a Latvian rifleman was marching up and down. I slipped past him and entered a courtyard where I came face to face with another sentry whom one could ask to point out the building one was looking for. After that, one was at liberty to stroll around, look at the cannons and cannonballs of various caliber, dating from before or after Peter the Great, to loiter in front of the Tsar-Bell (a monumental bell) and other celebrated sights or to make straight for one of the palaces.

I turned to my left and disappeared inside one of these (I cannot recall its name), climbed a staircase, as far as the third floor, I think, then wandered down a long, empty corridor where there were placards attached to doors reading "Party Central Committee" or indeed "Library," but, being after neither of those, I continued on my way. In any case, I was unsure what lay behind those doors.

As the other placards carried no name either, I doubled back and stopped before the one which read "Party Central Committee;" I knocked on the door. "Enter," a voice answered. There were three people seated inside the office. Of these, I thought I recognized Zagorski, whom I had seen two or three days before in one of the Bolshevik Party's clubs. I asked these people,

who were busy with something amid a deadly silence, if they could let me know where the Central Executive Committee's offices were.

One of the trio (Bukharin,<sup>1</sup> if I am not mistaken) stood up and, tucking his briefcase under his arm, said to his colleagues, but loud enough for me to hear: "I'm off," and, gesturing in my direction, "I'll point out the CEC's offices to this comrade." Whereupon he walked towards the door. I thanked those present and walked out with what I took to be Bukharin. A sepulchral silence still prevailed in the corridor.

My guide asked me where I was from. "The Ukraine," I replied. Then he asked me several questions about the terror to which the Ukraine was prey and was keen to know how I had managed to reach Moscow. Reaching the staircase, we stopped in order to pursue our conversation. Finally, my informal guide pointed to a door on the right hand side of the corridor, where, he claimed, I would be given the information I needed. And, after shaking my hand, he descended the staircase and left the palace.

I stepped up to the door, knocked and entered. A young girl asked what I wanted.

—I would like to see the chairman of the Executive Committee of the Soviet of Worker, Peasant, Soldier and Cossack Deputies, Comrade Sverdlov, I answered.

Without a word, the young girl sat behind a table, took my credentials and my pass, scanned them, scribbled a few words and issued me with a fresh pass showing the number of the office to which I had to go.

At the office to which the young girl had directed me, I found the secretary of the CEC, a thickset, dapper man who looked weary. He asked what I wanted. I explained. He asked to see my papers. I handed them over. They piqued his interest and he asked me:

—So, comrade, you've come from Southern Russia?

—Yes, from the Ukraine, I replied.

—I see you were chairman of the Committee for the Defense of the Revolution even in Kerensky's day?

—Yes.

—You're a Social Revolutionary then?

—No!

—What links have you or have you had with the Communist Party in your region?

—I am on personal terms with several Bolshevick Party militants, I replied. And I mentioned the name of the chairman of the Alexandrovsk Revolutionary Committee, Comrade Mikhailevitch, a few other militants from Ekaterinoslav.

The secretary said nothing for a moment, then questioned me about the state of mind of the peasants of “Southern Russia,” their behavior towards the German troops and the Central Rada’s<sup>2</sup> soldiers, their attitude to the soviet authorities, etc.

I made some short replies which manifestly satisfied him: personally, I regretted that I did not have the time to answer more fully.

Then he made a telephone call to somewhere and promptly invited me to enter the office of the CEC chairman, Comrade Sverdlov.

En route, my thoughts turned to the tales peddled by the counter-revolutionaries as well as by revolutionaries, by my own friends indeed, who were against the policies of Lenin, Sverdlov and Trotsky, tales to the effect that it was impossible to gain access to these earthly gods. They were, talk had it, surrounded by bodyguards and the leader of the latter only granted admission to those of whom he liked the look.

Now, with only the CEC secretary for company, I realized the absurdity of these rumors. Sverdlov himself opened the door to us with a wide grin, tinged, it seemed to me, with comradeship, offered me his hand and steered me to an armchair. After which the CEC secretary returned to his desk.

Comrade Sverdlov struck me as being in better form than his secretary. He also gave me the impression that he had more interest than him in what had been happening in the Ukraine over the past two or three months. Straight out, he said:

—So, comrade, you’ve come from our tortured South; what work did you do down there?

—The same as was done by the broad masses of the revolutionary toilers of the Ukrainian countryside. The latter, having been active participants in the Revolution, strove to secure their complete emancipation. I was, you might say, always the first among them to go down that road. Today, following the collapse of the Ukrainian revolutionary front, I find myself momentarily stranded in Moscow.

—What’s that you say? shouted Comrade Sverdlov, interrupting me. The peasants in the South are, for the most part, kulaks or supporters of the Central Rada.



I burst out laughing and at no great length but sticking to the essentials, I described for him the operations of the anarchist-organized peasants of the Gulyai-Polye region against the Austro-German occupation troops and the soldiers of the Central Rada.

Seemingly shaken, Comrade Sverdlov was nonetheless unable to stop repeating: Why then have they not supported our Red Guards? According to our intelligence, the South's peasants are infected by the worst Ukrainian chauvinism and have everywhere rapturously welcomed the German troops and Rada soldiers as liberators.

I could feel myself getting irritable as I set about strenuously rebutting Sverdlov's information about the Ukrainian countryside. I admitted to him that I myself had been the organizer and leader of several battalions of peasant volunteers who waged a revolutionary fight against the Germans and the Rada and I was sure that the peasants could recruit a mighty army from among their ranks to fight them, but they could not see the Revolution's battle-front clearly. The Red Guard units which, with their armored trains, had fought along the railway lines without ever straying far from them, withdrawing at the first set-back, very often without taking care to load up their own fighters and surrendering dozens of versts to the enemy, whether the latter advanced or not . . . these units, I told him, inspired no confidence in the peasants who realized that, being isolated in their villages and unarmed, they were the ones at the mercy of the Revolution's foes. Indeed, the Red Guards' armored trains never sent detachments out into the villages located within a ten or twenty kilometer radius, not merely to issue them with weapons but also to stimulate the peasants and urge them into mounting daring strikes against the Revolution's enemies by taking a hand in the action themselves.

Sverdlov heard me out attentively and from time to time exclaimed: Can that be possible? I named several units of Red Guards attached to the groups of Bogdanov, Svirski or Sablin and others; very calmly, I pointed out that Red Guards charged with protecting the railroads for armored trains thanks to which they could switch rapidly on to the offensive, but more often beat a retreat, could scarcely inspire much confidence in the peasant masses. Now, those masses saw the Revolution as the means of getting rid of the oppression not just of the big landowners and rich kulaks but also of their hirelings and of escaping from the political and administrative power of the State official, and that consequently they were ready to defend themselves and their gains against summary executions and mass destruction, whether these emanated

from the Prussian Junkers<sup>3</sup> or from the hetman [Skoropadsky's] troops.

—Yes, said Sverdlov, I believe that you are right as far as the Red Guards are concerned . . . but we have now reorganized them into a Red Army, which is building up its strength and if the peasants in the South are, as you describe, driven by such revolutionary commitment, there is every chance of the Germans' being flattened and the hetman's biting the dust shortly—in which case, soviet power will triumph in the Ukraine also.

—That will depend upon the clandestine action carried out in the Ukraine. For my own part, I reckon that such action is more necessary today than ever, provided that it be organized and whipped into fighting shape, which would inspire the masses to open revolt in town and countryside against the Germans and the hetman. In the absence of an essentially revolutionary uprising inside the Ukraine, the Germans and Austrians will not be forced to evacuate and we will not be able to get our hands on the hetman and those supporting him or to force them to flee with their protectors. Do not forget that on account of the Brest-Litovsk treaty and international political factors with which our Revolution has to contend, a Red Army offensive is out of the question.

While I was putting this to him, Comrade Sverdlov was making notes.

—As it happens, he told me, I am entirely of the same view as yourself. But what are you, a Communist or a Left<sup>4</sup> Social Revolutionary? It is plain from the way you talk that you are Ukrainian, but it is unclear to which of those two parties you belong.

While it did not bother me (the CEC secretary having put it to me already) that question did place me in a bit of a quandary. What was I to do? Tell Sverdlov bluntly that I was an anarcho-communist, the comrade and friend of those whom his party and the State system created by it had crushed in Moscow and several other cities just two months previously, or should I fly some other flag of convenience?

I was of two minds and Sverdlov noticed it. I was loath to spell out my conception of the social revolution and my political affiliation in the middle of our interview. But I also found it repugnant to conceal them. That is why, after a few moments' deliberation, I told Sverdlov:

—Why so much interest in my political affiliation? Are my papers which show you who I am, whence I come and the part I have played in a certain region in the organizing of the toilers of town and country as well as partisan bands and volunteer battalions to fight the counter-revolution which has fastened on the Ukraine, not enough for you?

Comrade Sverdlov offered his apologies and begged me not to doubt his revolutionary honor or suspect him of lacking confidence in me. His pleas struck me as so heartfelt that they made me uneasy, and without further ado, I declared to him that I was an anarcho-communist of the Bakunin-Kropotkin stripe.

What manner of anarcho-communist are you, comrade, since you accept organization of the toiling masses and their direction in the struggle against the power of capital? Sverdlov exclaimed with a comradely grin.

To his amazement, I told the CEC chairman:

—Anarchism is too realistic an ideal not to understand the modern world and current events, and the part that its exponents play in one way or another in those events is there to be seen, and not to pay attention to the guidelines by which its action must be governed and the means that have to be used to that end. . .

—Glad to hear it, but you are not at all like these anarchists who, here in Moscow, had set up their headquarters in Malaia Dmitrovka, Sverdlov told me, and he was about to add something else, but I interjected:

—Your Party's crushing of the Malaia Dmitrovka anarchists<sup>5</sup> must be regarded as a painful episode of which, for the sake of the Revolution, there must be no repetition in the future. . .

Sverdlov mumbled something into his beard and, rising from his armchair, came up to me, placed his hands on my shoulders and told me:

—I see that you are very well-briefed about what happened during our withdrawal from the Ukraine and, above all, about the peasants' state of mind. Ilitch, our comrade Lenin, would certainly be glad to hear you. Do you want me to telephone him?

My answer was that there was not a lot more for me to tell Comrade Lenin, but Sverdlov was already holding the telephone and was telling Lenin that he had with him a comrade with very important intelligence on the peasants of Southern Russia and their feelings towards the German invasion troops. And, right there and then, he asked Lenin when he could grant me an audience.

A second later, Sverdlov replaced the telephone and scribbled me a pass making it possible for me to return. As he handed it to me, he said:

—Tomorrow, at one in the afternoon, come straight here: we will go see Comrade Lenin together. Can I rely upon you?

—Rely on it, was my reply.

## MY AUDIENCE WITH LENIN

The next day, at one o' clock, I was back in the Kremlin where I met Comrade Sverdlov who promptly took me to Lenin. The latter welcomed me like a brother. He took me by the arm, and tapping my shoulder lightly with his other hand, had me sit in an easy chair. Having invited Sverdlov to settle into another armchair, he went over to his secretary and told him.

—Be so kind as to finish that job by two o'clock.

Whereupon he sat facing me and began to question me.

His first question was: What region do you come from? Then: How have the peasants of the area taken to the watchword ALL POWER TO THE SOVIETS IN THE VILLAGES and what has the reaction been from the enemies of that watchword, and the Central Rada's reaction in particular? Then: Have the peasants of your area risen up against the Austro-German invaders? If so, what prevented the peasant revolts from turning into a general uprising and linking up with the actions of the Red Guard units which have so courageously been defending our revolutionary gains?

I gave Lenin brief answers to all of these questions. With that talent that was all his own, he strove to put the questions in such a way that I could answer them point by point. Take, for instance, the question: How have the peasants of the area taken to the watchword ALL POWER TO THE SOVIETS IN THE VILLAGES? Lenin put it to me three times, and was astonished at my reply: The peasants have welcomed it after their fashion, which is to say that, as they understand it, all power should, in every sphere, mirror the consciousness and wishes of the toilers; that the soviets of worker-peasant deputies, at village, cantonal or district levels are nothing more nor less than offshoots of the revolutionary organization and economic self-management of the toilers struggling against the bourgeoisie and its lackeys, the Right Social Revolutionaries and their coalition government.

—Do you think that that is a proper construction to place upon our watchword? asked Lenin.

—Yes, I replied.

—In that case, the peasants of your region have been infected with anarchism, he told me.

—Is that such a bad thing? I asked.

—That is not what I mean. On the contrary, it is to be celebrated for it would hasten communism's victory over capitalism and its power.

—I find that flattering, I told Lenin, straining not to laugh.

—No, no, I am very seriously arguing that this social phenomenon in the life of the peasant masses would hasten communism's victory over capitalism, Lenin reiterated, adding: But I think that this phenomenon has not come about spontaneously; it is a consequence of anarchist propaganda and will not take long to evaporate. I am even inclined to believe that this mentality, cornered by the triumphant counter-revolution before it had the time to spawn an organization, has already perished.

I pointed out to Lenin that a political leader ought never to display pessimism or skepticism.

—So, according to you, Sverdlov interrupted, these anarchist tendencies in the life of the peasant masses ought to be given encouragement?

—Oh, your party is not going to encourage them, I replied. Whereupon Lenin interjected:

—And why should we encourage them? In order to divide the proletariat's revolutionary forces, clear a path for the counter-revolution and, when all is said and done, mount the scaffold ourselves along with the proletariat?

I could scarcely contain myself, and with my voice betraying my irritation, I pointed out to Lenin that anarchism and anarchists did not aspire to counter-revolution and would not lead the proletariat there.

—Did I really say that? Lenin asked me, and he added: I meant to say that anarchists, lacking mass organizations, are not in a position to organize the proletariat and the poor peasants and, as a result, incite them to defend, in the broadest sense of the term, what has been won by us all and which we hold dear."

The conversation then turned to other matters raised by Lenin. To one query, regarding "The Red Guard units and the revolutionary courage with which they defended our common gains" Lenin forced me to give as complete an answer as possible. Plainly, the question bothered him or else reminded him of what the Red Guard units had recently accomplished in the Ukraine in achieving, so they claimed, the objectives which Lenin and his party had set themselves and in the name of which they had despatched them from Petrograd and other far-off great cities in Russia. I remember Lenin's emotion, the emotion that could only be displayed by a man who passionately lived the struggle against the social order which he despised and wanted to see beaten, when I told him:

—Having been involved in the disarming of dozens of Cossacks withdrawn from the German front at the end of December 1917 and the start of 1918, I

am well-informed about the 'revolutionary bravado' of Red Army units and especially their commanders. Now it strikes me, Comrade Lenin, that, taking second- and third-hand intelligence as your basis, you are exaggerating it.

—How so? Are you questioning it? Lenin asked.

—The Red Guard units have displayed revolutionary spirit and courage, but not to the extent you describe. The Red Guards' struggle against the Central Rada's 'haidamaks'<sup>6</sup> and above all against the German troops have seen times when revolutionary spirit and bravery, as well as the Red Guards' and their commanders' actions, have proved very flimsy. To be sure, in many instances, there are, as I see it, grounds for putting this down to the fact that the Red Guard detachments had been hastily put together and employed against the enemy tactics that resembled neither the tactics of partisan bands nor those of regulars. You must know that the Red Guards, whatever their numerical strength, mounted their attacks upon the enemy by traveling along the railroads. Some ten or fifteen versts from the rails, the terrain was unoccupied: defenders of the revolution or of the counter-revolution could have circulated there at will. For that reason, surprise attacks almost always succeeded. It is only around railway halts, towns or hamlets served by the railways that the Red Guard formations organized a front and launched their attacks.

But the rear and the immediate environs of the places under enemy threat were left undefended. The revolution's offensive action suffered counter-thrusts as a result. Red Guard units had scarcely finished issuing their appeals in a region before the counter-revolutionary forces went on to the counter-offensive and very often forced the Red Guards to beat the retreat, scrambling aboard their armored trains. So much so that the rural population never even saw them and consequently could scarcely support them.

—What are revolutionary propagandists doing in the countryside? Can they not even manage to keep the rural proletariat on stand-by to act as fresh troops to replenish Red Guard units passing through the neighborhood, or to form new Red Guard irregulars and occupy positions for the purposes of combating the counter-revolution? Lenin asked.

—Let's not get carried away. There are very few revolutionary propagandists in the countryside and there is not much that they can do. Now, every passing day brings hundreds of propagandists and secret enemies of the Revolution into the villages. In many places, we should not be waiting for revolutionary propagandists to conjure up fresh forces for the revolution and organize them to confront the counter-revolution. These are times, I told

Lenin, that require decisive action of all revolutionaries in every aspect of the workers' life and struggle. Failure to take that into account, especially where we in the Ukraine are concerned, amounts to letting the counter-revolution marshaled behind the hetman expand at will and consolidate its power.

Sverdlov's eyes darted from me to Lenin and back again and he smiled with satisfaction. As for Lenin, his fingers were intertwined and he was deep in thought, his head tilted to one side. Having taken it all in, he said to me:

—Everything that you have just told me is greatly to be regretted. And, turning towards Sverdlov, he added: We are on the right track in reorganizing the Red Guard units into the Red Army, the track that leads on to the proletariat's definitive victory over the bourgeoisie.

—Yes, yes, Sverdlov responded with animation.

Whereupon Lenin said to me:

—What work have you in mind to do here in Moscow?

My answer was that I would not be staying long. As agreed by the Conference of partisan groups held in Taganrog, I was due to return to the Ukraine early in July.

—Clandestinely? Lenin asked.

—Yes, I replied.

Turning then to Sverdlov, Lenin mused:

—Anarchists are always full of the spirit of sacrifice, ready to face any sacrifice, but being blind fanatics, they ignore the past and have their thoughts fixed exclusively upon the distant future.

And, begging me not to take that as applicable to me, he went on:

—You, comrade, I regard as a man with a feeling for the realities and requirements of our times. If only a third of the anarchists in Russia were like you, we Communists would be ready to work with them under certain conditions and work in concert in the interests of free organization of the producers. Right then, I felt a deep regard for Lenin develop within me, although until recently I had held him responsible for the elimination of Moscow's anarchist organizations, which had been the signal for the crushing of them in lots of other cities. And in my heart of hearts, I was ashamed of myself. Searching for what answer I should make to Lenin, I let him have it point-blank:

—The Revolution and its gains are dear to anarchist-communists: and that is proof that on that count they are all alike.

—Oh, come off it! Lenin returned with a laugh. We know the anarchists as well as you do. For the most part, they have no idea of the here-and-now,

or at any rate, care very little about it; now the present is so serious that not thinking about it or not adopting some positive stance with regard to it is more than shameful in a revolutionary. Most anarchists have their minds focused on the future and devote their writings to that, without making any attempt to understand the here-and-now: and that is another thing that sets us apart from them.

At which Lenin rose from his easy chair and pacing back and forth, added:

—Yes, yes, anarchists are big on ideas for the future, but in the here-and-now, their feet never touch the ground; theirs is a deplorable attitude, because their vacuous fanaticism ensures that they have no real links to that future.

Sverdlov smirked, and, turning in my direction, said:

—You cannot challenge that. Vladimir Ilitch's reasoning is spot-on. Lenin hurriedly added:

—Have anarchists ever acknowledged their lack of realism in the 'here-and-now' of life? It doesn't even occur to them.

In reply to that, I told Lenin and Sverdlov that I was a semi-literate peasant and would not get into a discussion of the, to me, overly erudite, view which Lenin had just expressed regarding anarchists.

—But I ought to tell you, Comrade Lenin, that your assertion, to wit, that anarchists have no grasp of the 'here-and-now' and have no real ties to it, et cetera, is wrong through and through. The anarchist-communists of the Ukraine, (or "Southern Russia," since you Bolshevik-Communists try to steer clear of the word Ukraine)—as I say, the anarchist-communists—have already furnished proof aplenty that they stand four-square in the 'here-and-now.' The entire struggle of the Ukrainian revolutionary countryside against the Central Rada has been conducted under the ideological direction of anarchist-communists and, partly, of the Social Revolutionaries (who, to be honest, ascribe to their fight against the Rada quite different objectives than we anarchist-communists do). Your Bolsheviks are, so to speak, non-existent in our countryside; where any do exist, their influence is minuscule. Nearly all of the peasant communes or associations in the Ukraine have been launched at the instigation of anarchist-communists. And the laboring population's armed struggle with the counter-revolution generally, as well as with the counter-revolution embodied in the Austro-Hungarian and German armies of invasion, has been undertaken under the exclusive ideological and organizational aegis of anarchist-communists. True, it may not suit your



party's interests to give us credit for all that, but the facts are there and you cannot dispute them. You are, I imagine, perfectly well aware of the numbers and fighting capabilities of the Ukraine's revolutionary irregulars. Not for nothing have you referred to the courage with which they have heroically defended our common revolutionary gains.

A good half of them have fought under the anarchist colors. Mokroussov, M. Nikiforova, Cherednyak, Garin, Chernyak, Lunev and many another partisan commander—it would take too long to list them all—are all anarchist-communists. Not to mention myself and the group to which I belong, or all the other partisan groups and volunteers that we have set up to defend the revolution and of which the Red Guard command simply must be aware. All of which demonstrates rather forcefully, Comrade Lenin, the extent to which you are mistaken in alleging that we anarchist-communists do not have our feet on the ground, that our attitude in the 'here-and-now' is to be deplored, although we were fond of thinking about the 'future' a lot. What I have said to you in the course of this conversation cannot be called into question, for it is the truth. The account I have given you contradicts the verdict you pronounced upon us, and everyone, you included, can see there proof that we are four-square in the 'here-and-now,' that we operate there, keeping an eye out for whatever brings us closer to the future, about which we do think, and very seriously at that.

I glanced at Sverdlov now. He blushed, but carried on smiling at me. As for Lenin, spreading his arms, he said:

—Perhaps I may be mistaken.

—Yes, yes, as it happens, Comrade Lenin, you have been too hard on us anarchist-communists, simply, I believe, because you are misinformed as to the reality in the Ukraine and the role we play there.

—Maybe, I won't challenge that. In any case, show me who does not make mistakes, especially in the situation in which we find ourselves? was Lenin's response.

And, realizing that I had become a little agitated, he tried, in a fatherly way, to assuage me by steering the conversation very skillfully on to another topic. But my bad character, for want of another word for it, prevented me from taking any further interest in it, in spite of all the respect which I had developed for Lenin in the course of our exchanges. I felt insulted. And no matter that I had facing me a man with whom there would have been a lot more topics to explore and from whom there would have been a lot to learn,

the mood had been broken. My answers now were more curt; something in me had snapped and a feeling of irritation swept over me.

Lenin could not have failed to notice this change of mood in me. He strove to smooth things over by switching to a different topic. And noticing that I was coming out of my sulk and succumbing to his eloquence, he suddenly asked me:

—So, it is your intention to return clandestinely to the Ukraine?

—Yes, I replied.

—May I be of assistance?

—Certainly, I said.

Turning then to Sverdlov, Lenin asked:

—Which of our people is presently in charge of the service for getting our lads south?

—Comrade Karpenko or Zatonski, Sverdlov answered. I'll make inquiries.

While Sverdlov made a telephone call to discover whether it was Karpenko or Zatonski that was in charge of the agency whose task it was to smuggle militants into the Ukraine for underground work there, Lenin attempted to persuade me that I ought to conclude from his treatment of me that the Communist Party's stance *vis à vis* anarchists was not so hostile as I seemed to believe.

—While we have been compelled—Lenin told me—to take vigorous action to remove the anarchists from the private hotel they were occupying in the Malaia Dmitrovka, where they were harboring certain bandits, locals or just passing through, the blame for that lies, not with us, but with the anarchists who had settled in there. Anyway, we won't be bothering them again. You ought to know that they have been given permission to occupy other premises not far from Malaia Dmitrovka and they are free to operate as they see fit.

—Have you any evidence—I asked Comrade Lenin—to indicate that the Malaia Dmitrovka anarchists were harboring bandits?

—Yes, the Extraordinary Commission [Cheka] collected the evidence and authenticated it. Otherwise our party would never have authorized it to proceed, Lenin replied.

Meanwhile, Sverdlov had returned to sit with us and he announced that Comrade Karpenko was indeed in charge of the smuggling agency, but that Comrade Zatonski was also conversant with things.

Whereupon Lenin burst out:

—There you go, comrade, drop in on Comrade Karpenko tomorrow afternoon, or whenever you like, and ask him about everything you'll be needing in order to make your way back to the Ukraine by clandestine means. He will work out a safe route to get you over the border.

—What border? I asked.

—Haven't you heard? A border has been drawn between Russia and the Ukraine. The troops manning it are Germans, Lenin said wearily.

—Yet you look upon the Ukraine as "Southern Russia?" I replied.

—Looking upon is one thing, comrade, and keeping one's eyes open in life is quite another, returned Lenin.

And before I could answer, he added:

—Tell Comrade Karpenko that I sent you. If he has any queries, he need only telephone me. Here is the address at which you can find him.

By now we were, all three, on our feet. We shook hands and after a seemingly cordial exchange of thanks, I left Lenin's office.

PIOTR ARSHINOV

## THE MAKHNOVIST MOVEMENT

*The texts below are taken from Piotr Arshinov's 1928 book History of the Makhnovist Movement.*

### THE FIRST "FREE COMMUNES"

[In the southern Ukraine, following the expulsion of the great landowners] the land came into peasant hands. The latter were well aware that it was not all over yet, that it was not enough to seize a tract of land and leave it at that. Life, a tough teacher, had taught them that there were enemies lurking everywhere and had taught them to stick together. In a number of places, attempts were made to reorganize life along communal lines. In spite of the peasants' hostility towards the official (government) communes, in many places throughout the Gulyai-Polye region there sprang up peasant communes known as "labor communes" or "free communes." Thus the township of Pokrovskoye saw the formation of the very first free commune, called after Rosa Luxemburg. Its members were all unemployed. To begin with, this commune comprised only a few dozen members; later, their numbers expanded to over three hundred.

(...) With a straightforwardness and expansiveness of the soul characteristic of the people, the peasants had honored the memory of a heroine of the Revolution, a stranger to them, who had perished as a martyr in the revolutionary struggle. Now, the commune's internal arrangements were based upon the anti-authoritarian principle. As it developed and grew, it began to exercise great influence over the peasants of the entire district. The "communist" authorities attempted to meddle in the commune's internal affairs, but were rebuffed.

(...) Another commune which brought together the poor peasants of Gulyai-Polye was launched on an old estate seven kilometers outside Gulyai-Polye. It was simply called "Commune No. 1 of the peasants of Gulyai-Polye." Communes No. 2 and No. 3 lay around twenty kilometers from there. And there were further communes elsewhere. True, taken all in all, the communes were not numerous and encompassed only a minority of the population: par-

ticularly the ones who had no solidly established arable holdings. But these communes had been formed on the initiative of the poor peasants themselves. The Makhnovists' work only influenced them to the extent that the latter were pushing the idea of free communes in the region.

The communes were launched, not as the result of some dream or example, but quite simply to meet the essential needs of the peasants who had had nothing prior to the revolution and, having achieved victory, set about organizing their economic activity along communal lines. These were not the contrived communes of the Communist Party which usually included people rounded up haphazardly who did nothing except waste the grain and ruin the ground, who enjoyed support from the State and the government and thus lived off the labors of the people whom they presumed to teach how to work.

These were genuine working communes of peasants accustomed to work since childhood and capable of appreciating the labors of others as well as their own. To begin with, the peasants worked there in order to secure their daily bread. In addition, every individual received there all the moral and material backing he could need. The principle of fraternity and equality was staunchly upheld in the communes. Everyone, man, woman or child, was expected to work there, insofar as they were able. Organizational tasks were entrusted to one or two comrades who, once those tasks had been dealt with, returned to their normal work alongside all the other members of the commune. Obviously, such healthy, responsible practices were due to the communes' having emerged in a working context and their growth having proceeded along natural lines.

However, these seeds of free communism fell far short of accounting for the whole of the peasants' creative, constructive, economic and social activities. Instead, these seeds came to light only slowly and gradually, whereas the political climate required from the peasants immediate, concerted effort on a grand scale, with widespread mobilization and activity. It was essential that a united organization be arrived at, not just within the confines of such and such a hamlet or village, but also in whole districts or even departments (governments) making up the liberated region. There was a need to work together to resolve the various questions confronting the region as a whole. Appropriate bodies had to be created, and the peasants did not fail to do so. These bodies were the regional congresses of peasants, workers and partisans. During the region's period of freedom, three such congresses were held. The peasants succeeded in establishing close links, setting guidelines and prescribing the economic and social tasks which lay ahead.

(...) With regard to the organs of social self-direction, the peasants and workers supported the notion of free labor soviets. Contrary to the Bolsheviks' and other socialists' political soviets, the free soviets of the peasants and workers were to have been the organs of their social and economic "self-governance." The individual soviet was only the executor of the wishes of the district's toilers and of their organizations. The local soviets established the requisite liaison with one another, thereby forming larger-scale economic and territorial bodies.

However, the context of war made the creation and operation of these bodies extremely difficult, and for that reason, complete organization of them was never successfully carried through.

### MAKHNO'S INSURGENT ARMY INCORPORATED INTO THE RED ARMY (EARLY 1919)

At the beginning of 1919, after a series of skirmishes, the Makhnovist insurgents drove Denikin's troops back in the direction of the Sea of Azov and captured around one hundred wagon-loads of wheat from them. The first thought of Makhno and the staff of the insurgent army was to despatch these captured provisions to the famished workers of Moscow and Petrograd. That suggestion was enthusiastically endorsed by the broad masses of the insurgents. The hundred wagon-loads of wheat were delivered to Petrograd and Moscow, under escort from a Makhnovist delegation that was very warmly received by the Moscow Soviet.

The Bolsheviks arrived in the region of the MAKHNOVSHCHINA long after Denikin. The Makhnovist insurgents had, by then, been locked in battle with him for a good three months; they had by then driven him out of their region and established their line of defense east of Mariupol, by the time that the first Bolshevik division, headed by Dybenko,<sup>1</sup> arrived in Sinelnikovo.

Makhno personally, and the entire insurgent revolutionary movement, were still unknown quantities as far as the Bolsheviks were concerned. In the Communist press in Moscow and in the provinces, Makhno had hitherto been mentioned as a daring insurgent of great promise. His struggle against Skoropadsky, and then against Petliura and Denikin assured him in advance of the goodwill of the Bolshevik chiefs. To them, there seemed to be no doubt but that the Makhnovists' revolutionary detachments which resisted so many varieties of counter-revolution in the Ukraine, would be absorbed into the Red Army. So they arrived singing Makhno's praises, without first having

acquainted themselves with him on his home turf, and whole columns of their newspapers were devoted to him.

The Bolshevik fighters' first encounter with Makhno took place under the same auspices of goodwill and praise (in March 1919). Makhno was immediately invited to join the Red Army along with all his detachments, with an eye to joining forces in order to defeat Denikin. The political and ideological idiosyncrasies of the revolutionary insurgency were regarded as quite natural and in no way potential obstacles to amalgamation on the basis of common cause. Those idiosyncrasies were to be left intact. As we shall see anon, the leaders of the МАХНОВШЧИНА had been mistaken in their hopes that the Bolsheviks would be ideological adversaries only. They had failed to take into consideration that they were dealing here with the most accomplished of statist and exponents of authoritarian violence. Errors, unless danger ensues, can have their uses. Theirs proved a good lesson for the Makhnovists.

The insurgent army became a component part of the Red Army under the following conditions:

- a) the insurgent army is to retain its former internal order.
- b) it is to have seconded to it political commissars appointed by the Communist authorities.
- c) it is to be subordinated to the Red high command only in relation to military operations proper.
- d) it is not to be removed from the Denikin front.
- e) It is to obtain munitions and provisions on the same footing as the Red Army.
- f) it is to retain its title as the Insurgent Revolutionary Army and keep its black flags. The Makhnovist insurgents' army was organized in accordance with three underlying principles: volunteer service, the elective principle and self-discipline.

Volunteer service meant that the army comprised solely revolutionary combatants enlisting of their own volition.

The elective principle consisted of the fact that the commanders of every part of the army, members of the staff and council as well as all persons holding positions of importance generally in the army, had to be elected or endorsed by the insurgents of those respective parts or by the army as a whole.

Self-discipline meant that all of the army's disciplinary rules were drawn up by commissions of insurgents, then endorsed by the general assemblies of the parts of the army, and were stringently observed, on the responsibility of each insurgent and each commander.

All of these principles were retained by the Makhnovist army when it amalgamated with the Red Army. To begin with, it was awarded the designation of "Third Brigade," later altered to "First Ukrainian Revolutionary Insurgent Division." Later, it adopted the definitive title of "Insurgent Revolutionary Army of the Ukraine (Makhnovist)."

### COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY? REPLY TO DYBENKO (APRIL 1919)

"Comrade" Dybenko<sup>1</sup> declared the congress scheduled for Gulyai-Polye on April 10, 1919 counter-revolutionary and outlawed its organizers, against whom, he claims, the severest repressive measures must be enforced. Here, verbatim, we publish his telegram:

From Novo-Alexeyevka, No. 283. 22.45 hours, 10 [April]. Forward to comrade Batko Makhno, Alexandrovsk divisional command. Copy to Volnovakha, Mariupol, for forwarding to comrade Makhno. Copy to the Gulyai-Polye soviet:

Any congress convened in the name of the military revolutionary command, disbanded by my orders, is regarded as manifestly counter-revolutionary, and the organizers of it will be liable to the severest repressive measures up to being declared outlaws. I order that steps be taken immediately to ensure that there is no repetition of such things.—Divisional Commander Dybenko.

Prior to declaring the congress counter-revolutionary, "comrade" Dybenko did not even take the trouble to inquire in what name and for what purpose this congress was convened by the "disbanded" military revolutionary staff of Gulyai-Polye, whereas in point of fact, it had been summoned by the executive committee of the military revolutionary committee. So the latter, having summoned the congress, cannot tell whether it is it which "comrade" Dybenko regards as being outside of the law.

If such be the case, allow us to inform Your Excellency by whom and to what end that (in your view, manifestly counter-revolutionary) congress



was convened, and then, it may, perhaps, no longer appear as frightening as you portray it.

The congress, as said, was summoned by the executive committee of the military revolutionary council of the Gulyai-Polye region, in Gulyai-Polye itself (it being the centrally situated town). It was designated as the third Gulyai-Polye regional congress. It was summoned for the purpose of determining the future policy line of the military revolutionary council. (You see, “comrade” Dybenko, three of these “counter-revolutionary” congresses have taken place already.) But the question arises: what is the provenance of the regional military revolutionary committee itself and for what purpose was it founded? If you still do not know the answer, “comrade” Dybenko, let us enlighten you.

The regional military revolutionary council was set up in accordance with the resolution from the second congress held in Gulyai-Polye on February 12th this year. (A long time ago, as you can see, long before you ever got here.)

The regional military revolutionary council was formed, then, to organize combatants and oversee voluntary mobilization, for the region was encircled by the Whites, and the insurgent detachments made up of the first volunteers were no longer sufficient to hold an extended front. At that time, there were no soviet troops in our region; and then again, the population expected no great help, its view being that it was up to itself to look to the defense of its region. To that end, the Gulyai-Polye regional military revolutionary council was set up; that council comprised, according to the second congress’s resolution, one delegate per district, thirty-two members in all, representing the districts of the Ekaterinoslav and Tauride governments.

But we will go into the military revolutionary council later. Here the question arises: where did that second regional congress come from? who convened it? who authorized it? was the convener an outlaw, and if not, then why not? The second regional congress was summoned to Gulyai-Polye by a steering committee made up of five individuals elected by the first congress. The second congress took place on February 12 this year and, to our great astonishment, its conveners were not outlawed, for at the time there were none of those “heroes” who would dare trespass against the people’s rights, won with the people’s own blood. A further question therefore arises: where had the first congress come from? who had convened it? was its convener not outlawed, and if not, why not? “Comrade” Dybenko, you are, it seems, still very new to the revolutionary movement in the Ukraine and we must educate

you as to its very beginnings. Which is what we are about to do; and you, once you have been educated about it, will perhaps mend your ways a little.

The first regional congress took place on January 23 this year in the first insurgent camp in Greater Mikhailovka. It consisted of delegates from the districts adjacent to the front. Soviet troops were then a long way away, a very long way away. The region was cut off from the whole world: on one side by the Denikinists, on the other by the Petliurists; consequently, there were only the insurgent detachments with Father Makhno and Shchuss at their head to match these others blow for blow. The organizers and social institutions in the towns and villages in those days did not always go by the same names. In such and such a town, there might be a “soviet,” somewhere else a “people’s regency,” in a third place a “military revolutionary staff,” in a fourth a “provincial regency,” etc., but the ethos was equally revolutionary throughout. In order to consolidate the front as well as to introduce a degree of uniformity of organization and action across the region, the first congress was summoned.

No one had convened it; it had come together spontaneously, in accordance with the population’s wishes and with its approval. At the congress it was proposed that those of our brothers who had been forcibly enlisted in the Petliurist army be snatched back. To that end, a five-man delegation was elected and instructed to call to Father Makhno’s headquarters and whichever others might be necessary, and to infiltrate even the army of the Ukrainian Directory (known as Petliura’s army) in order to proclaim to our conscripted brethren that they had been misled and must quit that army. In addition, the delegation was charged with summoning, upon its return, a more comprehensive second congress, with a view to organizing the entire region delivered from the counter-revolutionary bands and creating a more powerful defense front.

So, upon returning, the delegates did summon that second regional congress, outside of any “party,” “authorities” or “law”; for you, “comrade” Dybenko, and other lovers and guardians of the law of the same ilk as yourself were away far away: and since the heroic leaders of the insurgent movement did not aspire to power over the people who had just, with their very own hands, torn asunder the shackles of slavery, the congress was not declared counter-revolutionary, and its conveners were not outlawed.

To return to the regional council: Even as the Gulyai-Polye regional military revolutionary council was being formed, the soviet authorities ar-

rived in the region. In accordance with the resolution passed at the second congress, the regional congress did not leave matters in abeyance pending the arrival of the soviet authorities. It had a duty to implement the instructions from congress, unswervingly. The council was not a directing agency but merely an executive one. It carried on doing what it could and continued its efforts along revolutionary lines. Little by little, the soviet authorities began to place obstacles in the way of the council's activities; commissars and other high-ranking officials of the soviet government began to look upon the council as a counter-revolutionary organization. At which point the council members decided to summon the third regional congress for April 10 in Gulyai-Polye, in order to determine the council's future policy line or indeed to wind it up, should congress so decide. And lo and behold, the congress went ahead.

Those who attended were not counter-revolutionaries, but rather the people who had been the very first to raise the flag of insurrection in the Ukraine, the flag of social revolution. They had come in order to assist in the coordination of the overall struggle against all oppressors. Representatives from 72 cantons spread over various districts and governments, as well as several military units showed up for the congress, and they all found that the Gulyai-Polye regional military revolutionary council was needed; indeed, they expanded its executive committee and enjoined the latter to carry out egalitarian mobilization of volunteers in the region. The congress was well and truly stunned by "comrade" Dybenko's telegram pronouncing the congress "counter-revolutionary," when that region had led the way in raising the banner of insurrection. Which is why the congress passed a vigorous protest against that telegram.

Such is the picture that should come as an eye-opener to you, "comrade" Dybenko. Catch yourself on! Think! Do you, on your own, have any right to declare counter-revolutionary a population of one million toilers who, with their very own horny hands, have cast off the shackles of slavery and are now rebuilding their lives as they deem fit?

No! If you are truly revolutionary, you must rally to their aid in the struggle against the oppressors and in their endeavors to build a new, free life.

Can it be that there are laws made by a handful of individuals purporting to be revolutionaries, entitling them to place the most revolutionary of peoples, in its entirety, outside of the law? (Given that the council's executive committee represents the whole mass of the people.)

Is it tolerable, is it reasonable that they should turn up to lay down laws of trespass designed to enslave a people which has just brought down all law-makers and all laws?

Is there some law under which a revolutionary is supposedly entitled to apply the severest of punishments to the revolutionary mass of which he purports to be the defender, simply because that mass has, without seeking anyone's leave, seized the benefits which that revolutionary had promised it: liberty and equality?

Can the revolutionary mass of the people remain silent when that revolutionary strips it of the liberty so recently won?

Do the revolution's laws require that a delegate be shot because of his belief that he has a duty to carry out the mandate entrusted to him by the revolutionary mass which elected him?

What interests should a revolutionary defend? The party's interests or those of the people, the spilling of whose blood sets the revolution in motion?

The Gulyai-Polye military revolutionary council stands above party political control and influence; it acknowledges no one, except the people who have elected it. Its duty is to carry out the tasks entrusted to it by the people, and not to hamper any left-wing socialist party in the dissemination of its ideas. Consequently, should the Bolshevik idea some day find favor with the workers, the military revolutionary council, this manifestly counter-revolutionary organization as the Bolsheviks see it, will yield to another, more "revolutionary" Bolshevik organization. But in the meanwhile, do not stand in our way and do not attempt to snuff us out.

If, "comrade" Dybenko, you and your like carry on with the same policy as before, if you should deem it proper and conscientious, then do your worst with your dirty work. Outlaw all of the instigators of the regional congresses and also those who were summoned when you and your party met in Kursk. Label as counter-revolutionaries all of those who led the way in raising the banner of insurrection and social revolution in the Ukraine and took action everywhere without waiting for your leave and without sticking to the letter of your program, but took a more left-wing approach. Outlaw, too, all who sent their delegates to the congresses which you have described as counter-revolutionary. And finally, outlaw too all of the fallen fighters who, without your leave, participated in the insurgent movement for the liberation of the whole toiling people. And don't forget to declare illegal and counter-revolutionary all of the congresses that proceeded without authorization from you.

But know this: that in the end, truth will triumph over might. In spite of all your threats, the council will not default upon the duties entrusted to it, for it is not entitled to do so, any more than it is entitled to usurp the people's rights.

—The Gulyai-Polye Regional Military Revolutionary Council:  
(followed by signatures)

## TROTSKY AND THE “MAKHNOVSHCHINA” (MAY 31–JUNE 4, 1919)

*Regardless of all the respect due the memory of a great revolutionary such as Leon Trotsky, the squalid episode, retailed below, from his prestigious political and military career ought not to be passed over in silence. Truth alone is revolutionary.*

The anti-Makhnovist propaganda of the Bolsheviks resumed with a vengeance.

It was Trotsky, who had in the meantime arrived in the Ukraine, who set the tone for this campaign; according to him, the insurgent movement was nothing but a movement of well-to-do farmers (“kulaks”) bent upon consolidating their power in the area. All of the Makhnovist and anarchist prattle about the libertarian toilers’ commune was merely a tactical ploy, whereas in reality the Makhnovists and anarchists were bent on establishing their own anarchist authority, which, when all was said and done, added up to that of the wealthy kulaks. (see Trotsky’s article “The Makhnovshchina” in the newspaper *On the Road*, No. 51).

Simultaneously with this campaign of deliberately misinformative agitation, the surveillance, or rather blockade, maintained on the insurgent territories was taken to extremes. Revolutionary workers drawn to that proud and independent region by their sympathies from far-flung regions in Russia, from Moscow, Petrograd, Ivanovo-Voznessensk, the Volga, the Urals and Siberia had to confront the greatest difficulties before they could arrive there.

Fresh supplies of munitions, cartridges and other essential equipment, issued on a daily basis along the front, were cut off completely (...) and the situation took a disastrous turn—just when Denikin’s troops were receiving considerable reinforcement in the very sector in question, through the arrival of the Kuban Cossacks and detachments raised in the Caucasus.

Did the Bolsheviks realize what they were doing and understand the implications of their policy for the already very complex situation in the Ukraine?

Certainly. They were perfectly well aware of what they were doing. They had resorted to blockade tactics with an eye to destroying and eradicating the region’s military might. It is of course a lot easier to take on unarmed adversaries. It would be easier to bring to heel insurgents short of munitions

and confronting the heavily armed Denikin front than those same insurgents kitted out with all the requisite equipment.

But at the same time, the Bolsheviks failed utterly to comprehend the overall situation right across the Donetz region as a whole. They had no idea of Denikin's front or the resources available to him—they did not even know what his immediate plans were. And yet, considerable numbers of soldiery had been raised, well-trained and organized in the Caucasus, and the Don and Kuban regions, preparatory to a general onslaught against the Revolution.

The stubborn resistance put up over a four-month period by the Gulyai-Polye region had prevented Denikin's troops from making serious progress in their push northwards, for the Gulyai-Polye insurgents represented a standing menace to their left flank.

(...) With all the more commitment, the Whites laid the groundwork for their second campaign, which opened in May 1919 on a huge scale which even the Makhnovists had not anticipated. The Bolsheviks knew nothing of all this, or rather, did not want to know about it, preoccupied as they were by their plan of campaign against the МАКХНОВШЧИНА.

In this way, the liberated region and with it, the whole of the Ukraine, was threatened on two flanks simultaneously. At which point the Gulyai-Polye military revolutionary council, cognizant of the full gravity of the situation, decided to summon an extraordinary congress of the peasants, workers, partisans and Red soldiers from several regions, notably from the governments of Ekaterinoslav, Kharkov, Tauride, Kherson and Donetz. This congress was to have appraised the overall position, given the mortal danger represented by Denikin's counter-revolutionary forces and the soviet authorities' incompetence to lift a finger to counter it. The congress was to have spelled out the short-term tasks and practical measures to be undertaken by the toilers in order to remedy that state of affairs.

*Here is the text of the summons issued in this connection by the military revolutionary council to the toilers of the Ukraine:*

**SUMMONS TO THE FOURTH EXTRAORDINARY  
CONGRESS OF PEASANT, WORKER AND  
PARTISAN DELEGATES (TELEGRAM NO. 416)**

To all district, cantonal, communal and village executive committees in the governments of Ekaterinoslav, Tauride and neighboring regions; to all units of

the First Insurgent Division of the Ukraine, known as the Father Makhno Division; to all Red Army troops stationed in the same areas. To one and all.

At its sitting on May 30, the executive committee of the military revolutionary council, after scrutiny of the impact upon the front of the onslaught of White gangs, and consideration of the overall political and economic situation of soviet power, came to the conclusion that only the toiling masses themselves, and not individuals or parties, can devise a solution to this. Which is why the executive committee of the Gulyai-Polye regional military revolutionary committee has decided to summon an extraordinary congress in Gulyai-Polye on June 15.

Electoral procedure: 1. The peasants and workers are to choose one delegate per three thousand members of the population. 2. Insurgents and Red soldiers are to delegate one representative per troop unit (regiment, division, etc.). 3. Staffs: the staff of the Father Makhno Division will send two delegates: the brigade staffs will send one delegate per rank. 4. The district executive committees will return one delegate per fraction (party representatives). 5. District party organizations—the ones accepting the foundations of “soviet” rule—will return one delegate per organization.

Notes: a) Elections for workers’ and peasants’ delegates are to take place at village, cantonal, workshop of factory general assemblies. b) On their own, the assemblies of the members of the soviets or committees of these units may not proceed with these elections. c) In the event that the military revolutionary council is not sufficiently numerous, delegates will have to be issued with provisions and money on the spot.

Agenda: a) Report from the executive committee of the military revolutionary committee and delegates’ reports. b) News. c) The object, role and tasks of the soviet of peasants’, workers’, partisans’ and Red soldiers’ delegates of the Gulyai-Polye region. d) Reorganization of the region’s military revolutionary council. e) Military disposition in the region. f) Supply issues. g) The agrarian question. h) Financial business. i) Peasant laborers’ and workers’ unions. j) Public security business. k) The matter of the administration of justice in the region. l) Matters in hand.

Signed: The Executive Committee of the Military Revolutionary Council.  
Dated: Gulyai-Polye, May 31, 1919.

*Immediately after this summons was issued, the Bolsheviks launched an all-out military campaign (...) While insurgent troops marched out to face death resisting the savage*



*onslaught of Denikin's Cossacks, the Bolsheviks, at the head of several regiments, swept into the villages in the insurgent region from the north, that is, from behind. There they seized militants, destroying the communes or kindred organizations established in the region. There can be no question but that the go-ahead for this invasion had emanated from Trotsky who had, meanwhile, arrived in the Ukraine.*

*With boundlessly cavalier approach, Trotsky set about "liquidating" the Makhnovist movement.*

*For a start, he issued the following order, by way of a reply to the summons from the Gulyai-Polye military revolutionary council:*

**ORDER NO. 1824 OF THE MILITARY  
REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL OF THE REPUBLIC,  
JUNE 4, 1919, KHARKOV**

To all military commissars and all executive committees in the Alexandrovsk, Mariupol, Berdyansk, Bakhmut, Pavlograd and Kherson districts.

The Gulyai-Polye executive committee, in concert with Makhno's brigade staff, is attempting to schedule a congress of soviets and insurgents from the Alexandrovsk, Mariupol, Berdyansk, Melitopol, Bakhmut and Pavlograd districts for the fifteenth of this month. Said congress is wholly an affront to soviet power in the Ukraine and to the organization of the Southern front, to which Makhno's brigade is attached. That congress could not produce any result other than to (...) deliver the front to the Whites, in the face of whom Makhno's brigade does nothing but fall further and further back, thanks to the incompetence, the criminal tendencies and treachery of its commanders.

1. The meeting of that congress, which will in any case not take place, is hereby forbidden.
2. The entire peasant and worker population must be warned by the spoken and the written word that participation in said congress will be regarded as an act of high treason towards the Soviet Republic and the fronts.
3. All delegates to said congress must be placed under arrest forthwith and brought before the revolutionary court martial of the 14th (formerly the 2nd) Army of the Ukraine.
4. Persons circulating calls from Makhno and the Gulyai-Polye executive committee must be placed under arrest.
5. This present order acquires the force of law once issued by telegraph

and must be publicized widely everywhere, posted up in all public places and passed on to representatives from the cantonal and village executive committees, as well as to all representatives of the soviet authorities, and to the commanders and commissars of troop units.

—Signed: Chairman of the Military Revolutionary Council  
of the Republic: Trotsky (Other signatures followed)

*Without giving due attention to the matter, and swallowing the conventional view, Trotsky adjudged Makhno as responsible for everything that was going on in Gulyai-Polye and for all revolutionary dispositions in the region. He had even omitted to note that the congress had been convened, not by Makhno's brigade staff, nor indeed by the Gulyai-Polye executive committee, but by an agency wholly independent of both: by the regional military revolutionary council.*

*And significantly: in Order No. 1824, Trotsky hinted at treachery by the Makhnovist commanders in, he said, "retreating further and further in the face of the Whites." A few days later, he and the whole of the Communist press returned to this alleged opening of the front to Denikin's troops:*

(...) That front had been built up exclusively thanks to the efforts and sacrifices of the insurgent peasants themselves. It had come into existence at a particularly heroic point in their epic, at a time when the country had been rid of authorities of any sort. It was established in the south-east by way of a defensive outpost of the freedom that had been won. For more than six months, revolutionary insurgents had held the line against one of the most vigorous strands of the monarchist counter-revolution: they had offered up the lives of several thousands of their finest, mobilized all of the region's resources and were ready to defend their liberty to the death, by standing up to the counter-revolution which was now embarking upon a general offensive.

*The order from Trotsky just cited was not passed on by the soviet authorities to the Makhnovists' high command which only learned of it quite by accident two or three days later. Makhno replied posthaste by telegram, declaring that he was willing to resign his command, in view of the inept and impossible position in which he had been placed. It is a manner of regret to us that we do not have the text of that telegram available.*

*As stated earlier, Trotsky's order acquired the force of law once telegraphed. The*

*Bolsheviks set about implementing it in every particular by force of arms. The assemblies of Alexandrovsk factory workers at which the call issued by the Gulyai-Polye regional military revolutionary council came up for discussion were broken up by force and banned on pain of death. As for the peasants, they were quite bluntly threatened with being shot or hanged. In a variety of places around the region, several individuals, such as Kostin, Polounin, Dobroluboff, etc., were seized, charged with having circulated the council's summons and executed out of hand.*

*In addition to Order No. 1824, Trotsky issued other orders addressed to Red Army units, enjoining the latter to destroy the МАКХНОВШЧИНА root and branch. He also issued secret orders instructing them to, at all costs, capture Makhno, and members of his staff as well as the peaceable militants concerned with the cultural side of the movement, and to produce them all before a court martial, which is to say to execute them.*

### **МАКХНО OFFERS TO TAKE A BACK SEAT (JUNE 6–9, 1919)**

Makhno informed his staff and the council that the Bolsheviks had left the front in the Grishino sector unmanned and were thereby offering Denikin's troops unhindered access to the Gulyai-Polye region via the north-east flank. And in fact, the Cossack hordes burst into the region, not where they faced the insurgents' front but on the left flank where the Red Army troops were stationed. As a result, the Makhnovist army manning the front in the Mariupol-Kuteynikovo-Taganrog area found itself outflanked by Denikin's troops. The latter flooded through in huge numbers into the very heart of the region.

(...) The peasants throughout the region had so expected an all-out attack by Denikin that they had made preparations for it and had resolved to raise a levy of volunteer troops in reply. Ever since April, peasants in a host of villages had been despatching fresh fighters to Gulyai-Polye. But arms and munitions were in short supply. Even older units serving on the front had no munitions left and often mounted attacks on the Whites for the sole purpose of procuring some. The Bolsheviks who, under the agreement concluded, had undertaken to keep the insurgents supplied militarily, had begun their sabotage and blockade policy back in April. For which reason it was not possible to train fresh troops in spite of the influx of volunteer recruits, and the outcome of this could be predicted.

In just one day, the Gulyai-Polye peasants raised a regiment in an effort to save their village. To which end they had to arm themselves with primitive tools: axes, picks, ancient carbines, hunting pieces, etc. They set out on a

march to meet the Cossacks, in an attempt to halt their progress. Around 15 kilometers outside of Gulyai-Polye, near the village of Sviatodukhovka, they clashed with significant numbers of Cossacks from the Don and Kuban. They engaged them in bitter, heroic, murderous fighting, during which they almost all perished, along with their commander, B. Veretelnikoff, a native of Gulyai-Polye who was a worker from the Putilov plant in Petrograd. Whereupon a veritable avalanche of Cossacks descended upon Gulyai-Polye, occupying it on June 6, 1919. Makhno and the army staff, having only one battery, retreated as far as the Gulyai-Polye railroad station, around seven kilometers from the village: but, towards evening, he found himself obliged to quit the station too. Having marshaled whatever forces he still could, Makhno successfully mounted a counter-attack against Gulyai-Polye the next day and managed to dislodge the enemy. But he held the village for only a very short time: a fresh onslaught of Cossacks compelled him to abandon it once again.

It should be noted that the Bolsheviks, even though they had already issued several orders targeting the Makhnovists, carried on, right from the start, to look well upon them, as if nothing was wrong. This ploy was calculated to win over the movement's leaders for sure. On June 7, they sent Makhno an armored train, urging him to hold out to the bitter end and promising that further reinforcements would follow. In fact, a few Red army detachments arrived two days later at the Gaitchur railway station in the Chaplino sector, about twenty kilometers from Gulyai-Polye; with them came the army commissars Mezhlauk, Voroshilov and others.

Contact was established between the Red Army and insurgent commands: a sort of joint staff over both camps was formed. Mezhlauk and Voroshilov rubbed shoulders with Makhno in the same armored train, and they directed military operations together.

But at the same time, Voroshilov had with him an order signed by Trotsky, instructing him to seize Makhno and all other ranking leaders of the МАХ-НОВШЧИНА, disarm insurgent troops and mercilessly mow down any who might attempt resistance. Voroshilov was just waiting for the right moment to carry out that mission. Makhno was alerted in time and realized what he had to do. He summed up the situation as it stood, and saw the bloody events that might erupt any day and cast around for a satisfactory resolution. He reckoned that the best thing would be for him to quit his post as commander of the insurgent front. He stated as much to the insurgent army's staff, adding that his work in the ranks as a mere enlisted man might prove more useful at

a given point. And was as good as his word. To the soviet high command, he tendered a written explanatory note, as follows:

**4TH ARMY STAFF, VOROSHILOV—KHARKOV, CHAIRMAN  
OF THE MILITARY REVOLUTIONARY COUNCIL, TROTSKY  
MOSCOW, LENIN AND KAMENEV**

In the wake of Order No. 1284 from the military revolutionary council of the Republic, I had sent a dispatch to the staff of the 2nd Army and to Trotsky, asking to be relieved of the post I currently hold. I now reiterate my statement and here are the reasons which I hold should support it. Even though I have, with the insurgents, waged war solely upon Denikin's White bands, preaching nothing to the people save love of liberty and self-action, the entire official soviet press, as well as that of the Bolshevik-Communist Party, peddles rumors about me that are unworthy of a revolutionary (...) In an article, entitled 'The Makhnovshchina' (in the newspaper *On the Road*, No. 51), Trotsky poses the question: "Against whom are the Makhnovist insurgents revolting?" And throughout the article he is at pains to show how the MAKHNOVSHCHINA is supposedly nothing other than a battle-front against the power of the soviets. He utters not one word about the actual front against the Whites, a front that stretches for more than one hundred versts (a little over one hundred kilometers) where, for the past six months, the insurgents have been and still are sustaining countless losses. Order No. 1824 declares me to be a plotter against the soviet republic (...)

I deem it the inalienable right of workers and peasants—a right earned by the Revolution—to decide for themselves to summon congresses to discuss and determine their private or general affairs. Which is why the central authorities' ban prohibition upon the calling of such congresses and the declaration which proclaims them unlawful (Order No. 1824) are a direct and insolent breach of the rights of the toiling masses.

I am perfectly well aware of the central authorities' attitude to me. I am convinced through and through that these authorities regard the insurgent movement in its entirety as incompatible with their statist activities. At the same time, the central authorities think that this movement is closely bound up with my person, and they do me the honor of all their resentment and all their hatred with regard to the insurgent movement. There could not be any better proof of that than the aforementioned article by Trotsky, in which,

while knowingly peddling calumnies and lies, he makes a show of animosity directed at me personally.

This hostile attitude, now turning to aggression, on the part of the central authorities against the insurgent movement, is ineluctably leading to the creation of a specific internal front, on both sides of which will be the toiling masses who have faith in the Revolution. I regard such an eventuality as a gross and unpardonable crime against the toiling people, and I believe I have a duty to do all that I can to counter it. The surest way of avoiding the authorities' committing of this crime is, in my view, for me to step down from the post which I occupy.

I imagine that, that done, the central authorities will stop suspecting me and the revolutionary insurgents of dabbling in anti-soviet conspiracies and that they will come, in the end, to see the Ukraine's insurrection in a serious revolutionary light, as a living, active manifestation of the masses' social Revolution, and not as a hostile clan with which relations have hitherto been dubious and fraught with mistrust, with every item of munitions begrudged and supplies of them being sometimes quite simply sabotaged: thanks to which the insurgents often had to endure great losses in men and territory won for the Revolution—which might readily have been avoided, had the central authorities adopted a different approach. I ask that arrangements be made for the collection of my records and logs.

Signed: Father Makhno

Gaitchur Station, June 9, 1919.

### THE REGIONAL PEASANTS' AND WORKERS' CONGRESS (OCTOBER 1919)

A regional peasants' and workers' congress was held in Alexandrovsk on October 20, 1919. Upwards of two hundred delegates took part, 180 of them peasants and two or three dozen workers. The congress examined both issues of a military nature (the fight against Denikin, expansion of the insurgent army and its supply lines) and other business relating to the elements of civilian life.

The congress proceedings lasted for more than a week and were marked by a quite extraordinary vigor on the part of participants. The very ambiance of the congress made a powerful contribution to that. For one thing, the return of the victorious Makhnovist army to its native territory was an event of the

utmost importance for the peasant population, virtually every peasant family having one or two members among the insurgents.

But even more telling was that the congress proceeded under the auspices of genuine and absolute freedom; no influence emanating from above was sensible there. And, to crown it all, the congress had an excellent contributor and rapporteur in the anarchist Voline, who, to the great astonishment of the peasants, was able to articulate their very deepest thoughts and desires. The idea of free soviets working in concert with the wishes of the toiling population locally; the relations between the peasants and the urban workers, based upon mutual exchanges of the products of their labors: the idea of organizing life along egalitarian and libertarian lines, all these theses, which Voline expounded in his reports, reflected the thinking of the peasant population which could not imagine the Revolution and creative revolutionary endeavor in any different shape or form.

The political parties' representatives did try, during the first day's proceedings, to introduce a note of discord, but they were promptly shouted down by the body of the congress and the gathering's efforts proceeded thereafter with perfect unanimity.

(...) The authentic spirit of liberty, such as is but rarely sensed, was at large in the hall. Everyone could look forward to and contemplated a truly great endeavor, deserving of all their efforts and indeed worth dying for. The peasants among whom there were many older, in fact elderly folk, said that this was the first congress at which they had felt, not just that they were completely free, but also the spirit of brotherhood and that they would never forget. And, in fact, the likelihood is that no one who took part in that congress will ever be able to forget it.

# MANIFESTO OF THE INSURGENT ARMY OF THE UKRAINE (JANUARY 1, 1920)

To all of the Ukraine's peasants and workers! For transmission by telegraph, telephone or courier to all of the Ukraine's villages! For reading at peasants meetings, in factories and in firms!

Brother toilers!

The Insurgent Army of the Ukraine has been created to resist the oppression of workers and peasants by the bourgeoisie and by the Bolshevick-Communist dictatorship. It has set itself the task of fighting for the complete liberation of Ukrainian toilers from the yoke of any sort of tyranny and for the creation of a genuine socialist constitution of our own. The Insurgent Army of makhnovitsi partisans has fought with gusto on many fronts in order to achieve that goal. It is presently bringing to a successful conclusion the fight against Denikin's army, liberating region after region, wheresoever tyranny and oppression existed.

Many peasant toilers have asked themselves the question: what to do? What can and what ought we to do? How should we conduct ourselves with regard to the laws of the authorities and their organizations?

To which questions the Ukrainian Union of Toilers and Peasants will reply anon. Indeed, it must meet very shortly and summon all peasants and workers. Given that the precise date on which that assembly of the peasants and workers will proceed, at which they will have the chance to come together to debate and resolve the most important problems facing our peasants and workers, is not known, the makhnovitsi army deems it useful to publish the following manifesto:

1. All ordinances of the Denikin government are hereby annulled (...). Likewise annulled are those ordinances of the Communist government which conflict with peasant and worker interests. It will be for the toilers themselves to resolve the question which ordinances of the Communist government are damaging to the toilers' interests.
2. All estates belonging to monasteries, big landowners and other enemies pass into the hands of the peasants who live by the labor of their arms alone. Such transfer should be determined at meetings after discussion by the peasantry. Peasants will have to bear in mind and take account



not just of their personal interests but also the common interests of the toiling people, bowed down under the exploiters' yoke.

3. Factories, firms, collieries and other means of production become the property of the working class as a whole, which assumes the responsibility for their direction and administration, encouraging and pursuing development with the benefit of experience and seeking to gather the whole production of the country under the umbrella of a single organization.
4. All peasants and workers are invited to set up free peasants' and workers' councils. Only workers and peasants playing an active part in some useful sector of the popular economy may be elected to such councils. Representatives of political organizations are to play no part in the workers' and peasants' councils, because that might harm the interests of the toilers themselves.
5. The existence of tyrannical, militarized organizations which are at odds with the spirit of the free toilers will not be countenanced.
6. Freedom of speech, of the press and of assembly, is the right of every toiler and any gesture contrary to that freedom constitutes an act of counter-revolution.
7. Police organizations are hereby abolished: in their place, self-defense bodies will be set up and these may be launched by the workers and peasants.
8. The workers' and peasants' councils represent the toilers' self-defenses: each of them must struggle against any manifestation of the bourgeois and the military. Acts of banditry must be resisted and bandits and counter-revolutionaries shot where they stand.
9. Either of the two currencies, the soviet and the Ukrainian, shall be accepted as the equivalent of the other: all breaches of this ordinance will be punished.
10. The exchange of work produce or luxury goods remains free, unless overseen by peasant and worker organizations. It is proposed that such exchanges should proceed between toilers.
11. All persons hindering diffusion of this manifesto are to be deemed counter-revolutionaries.

The Revolutionary Councils of the  
Ukrainian Army (МАХНОВИТСІ),  
January 1, 1920.

# PROGRAM/MANIFESTO OF APRIL 1920<sup>1</sup>

## I. WHO ARE THE “MAKHNOVITSI” AND FOR WHICH CAUSE DO THEY FIGHT?

The MAKHNOVITSI are peasants and workers who rose up as long ago as 1918 against the brutality of the bourgeois, German, Hungarian and Austrian authorities and against that of the hetman of the Ukraine.

The MAKHNOVITSI are toilers who have unfurled the banner of struggle against Denikin and against any form of oppression, violence and falsehood, whatever its provenance.

The MAKHNOVITSI are those same toilers who, through their life-long labors, have enriched and fattened the bourgeoisie in general and, today, the soviets in particular.

## 2. WHY ARE THEY CALLED “MAKHNOVITSI”?

Because, during the darkest and gravest moments of the reaction in the Ukraine, our ranks included our indefatigable friend and CONDOTTIERE,<sup>2</sup> Makhno, whose voice rang out across the whole of the Ukraine, in protest at every act of violence against the toilers, summoning them all to the struggle against the oppressors, robbers, usurpers and political charlatans who deceive the toilers. To this very day, that voice rings out among us, within our ranks, unchanging in its exhortation to struggle for the ultimate goal of the liberation and emancipation of toilers from each and every oppression.

## 3. HOW DO YOU INTEND TO BRING THAT LIBERATION ABOUT?

By overthrowing the monarchist coalition government, the republican, social democratic government, the Bolshevik-Communist government. In their place, through free elections, toilers' councils must be elected and these will not constitute a government, complete with written, arbitrary laws. For the soviet arrangement is not authoritarian (unlike the Social Democrats and Bolshevik Communists who purport to be the soviet authorities today). It is the purest form of anti-authoritarian, anti-State socialism, articulated through free organization of the social life of toilers, independent of authorities: a life where every worker, alone or in association, can quite independently pursue his own happiness and his own complete well-being, in accordance with the precepts of solidarity, amity and equality.

4. WHAT IS THE “MAKHNOVITSI” VIEW OF THE SOVIET REGIME?

The toilers themselves must choose their own councils (soviets) which are to carry out the wishes and instructions of those same toilers: so they are to be executive councils, not authoritative councils. The land, factories, firms, mines, transport, etc., should belong to the toilers who toil, so they must be socialized.

5. WHICH ARE THE PATHS LEADING TO THE “MAKHNOVITSI” FINAL OBJECTIVE?

A consistent and implacable revolutionary struggle against all falsehoods, arbitrariness and violence, from wherever these may emanate, a struggle to the death: free speech, just deeds and struggle under arms.

Only through the abolition of each governor, every representative of authority, through radical destruction of every political, economic and statist falsehood, through destruction of the State by social revolution can a genuine system of worker and peasant soviets be achieved and progress towards socialism assured.

## ANARCHISM AND THE “MAKHNOVSHCHINA”<sup>3</sup>

The Makhnovist army is not an anarchist army, not made up of anarchists. The anarchist ideal of happiness and general equality cannot be attained through the strivings of an army, any army, even were it made up exclusively of anarchists. At best, the revolutionary army can serve to destroy the despised ancient regime; any army, which by its very nature can rely only on force and command, would be utterly impotent and indeed a hindrance to constructive endeavor, elaboration and creation. If the anarchist society is to be made possible, the workers themselves in their factories and firms and the peasants themselves in their districts and villages must set about constructing the anti-authoritarian society, awaiting decrees and laws from nowhere.

Neither anarchist armies nor isolated heroes, nor groups, nor the anarchist Confederation will introduce a new life for the workers and peasants. Only the toilers themselves, through their deliberate efforts, can build their well-being, free of State and seigneurs.

### THE “MAKHNOVITSI” APPEAL TO THEIR BRETHREN IN THE RED ARMY

Stop! Read! Reflect! Red Army comrade! You have been despatched by your commissar-commanders to fight the MAKHNOVITSI insurgents and revolutionaries.

On the orders of your commanders, you will bring ruination to peaceable areas, you will carry out searches, make arrests and murder folk whom you personally do not know, but who will have been pointed out to you as enemies of the people. You will be told that the MAKHNOVITSI are bandits or counter-revolutionaries. They will order, not ask, but make you march like a humble slave to your commander. You will arrest and you will kill! Who? Why? On what grounds?

Reflect, Red Army comrade! Reflect, toilers, peasants and workers forcibly subjected to the new masters who go by the ringing title of the ‘worker-peasant authorities’!

We are the MAKHNOVITSI revolutionary insurgents, peasants and workers like you, our Red Army brethren!

We have risen up against oppression and degradation; we fight for a better and more enlightened life. Our ideal is to attain a community of toilers, with no authority, no parasites and no commissars.

The government of the Bolshevik-Communists sends you to mount punitive expeditions. It is in a hurry to make peace with Denikin and with the wealthy Poles and other White Army scum, so that it may the more easily harass the popular movement of revolutionary insurgents, of the oppressed risen up against the yoke of authority, all authority.

But the threats from the White and the Red commands do not scare us! We will answer violence with violence!

If need be, we, a tiny handful of men, will rout the divisions of the government's Red Army. Because we are free and enamored of liberty! We are insurgent revolutionaries, and the cause we champion is a just cause.

Comrade! Reflect upon whose side you are on and against whom you fight. Do not be a slave. Be a man!

—The МАКНОВИТСІ revolutionary insurgents.



# KRONSTADT

(1921)



## KRONSTADT

The Kronstadt revolt has a deserved place—a considerable place—in an anarchist anthology. Although spontaneous, it was not specifically libertarian and, to be truthful, anarchists did not play a major role in it. Ida Mett, who wrote a book on *The Kronstadt Uprising* (1938, reprinted 1948) acknowledges that the anarchist influence in it was discernible “only to the extent that anarchism too was pushing the idea of a workers’ democracy.” However, the Kronstadt Revolutionary Committee had invited two anarchists to join its ranks: Efim Yartchuk, who later wrote *Kronstadt*, and Voline, who devoted a substantial segment of his *The Unknown Revolution* to Kronstadt “the first wholly independent popular essay (...) at social revolution (...) mounted directly by the laboring classes themselves.” But neither Yartchuk nor Voline was able to take up the Kronstadt Revolutionary Committee’s invitation, in that they were both held in Bolshevik prisons at the time.

We offer, in their unpolished state, the imprecations uttered by the rebel sailors and workers. Our purpose, of course, is certainly not to join with them as they mock Lenin and Trotsky, nor to reiterate on our own account the insults and sarcastic remarks they shower upon that pair. It is all too obvious that anger pushed the revolt’s language over the edge and rendered it, in part, unfair. The accumulated errors of the Bolshevik authorities between 1918 and 1921, of which Kronstadt was to be the culmination, in no way diminished the revolutionary convictions or genius of the authors of the October Revolution. But how could these sailors and workers—once the grassroots architects of the mass uprising of 1917—who were about to perish under the gunfire of the Red officer cadets and Mongolian troops have retained the historian’s objectivity and sung the praises of their executioners?

Contrary to the impression that might be obtained from a reading of the revolt’s daily newspaper *Izvestia*, the crushing of the Kronstadt revolt was not the result of perverse and malignant intent on the part of Lenin and Trotsky, but rather the outcome of a conspiracy of fate attended by implacable objective circumstances (like civil war, economic disarray, famine) and daring human miscalculations (the harshness of an autocratic regime increasingly isolated from the popular forces which had hoisted it into power).

Viewed thus, the lesson of Kronstadt turns out to be a cautionary note and forewarning for all advocates of revolution from above who might be inclined not to heed it and who, in the proletariat’s name, might finish up, paradoxically, turning their guns on the proletariat.



## MEETING WITH TROTSKY<sup>1</sup> (MARCH 1917)

(...) I had been aware for some time (. . .) that Trotsky was in New York (. . .) Thus far I had never met Trotsky, but I happened to be in town when a farewell rally at which he was to speak before leaving for Russia was announced.<sup>2</sup> I attended that rally. Trotsky was introduced after a few rather tiresome speakers. Of average height with hollow cheeks, red hair and a sparse beard, he strode forward athletically. His speech, delivered initially in Russian and then in German was powerful and electrifying. I did not see eye to eye with his politics, he being a Menshevik (Social Democrat) and as such far removed from us. But his analysis of the causes of the war was brilliant, his denunciation of the ineptitude of the provisional government in Russia scathing and his portrayal of the conditions amid which the revolution was developing enlightening. He wound up his two-hour address by paying eloquent tribute to the toiling masses of his homeland. The audience was in raptures of enthusiasm and Sasha and I delightedly joined the ovation which greeted the speaker. We wholeheartedly subscribed to his profound faith in Russia's future.

After the rally, we sought out Trotsky to bid him farewell. He had heard tell of us and asked us when we intended to come to Russia to help with the reconstruction. "We shall assuredly meet again over there," he told us.

With Sasha I discussed the unexpected turn of events whereby we felt closer to the Menshevik Trotsky than to Peter Kropotkin, our comrade, our mentor and our friend. War made for strange bed-fellows and we wondered if we would still feel as close to Trotsky once we were in Russia (...)

EMMA GOLDMAN

## MEMORIES OF KRONSTADT'

*Deported from the United States to Russia in 1919, Goldman happened to be in Petrograd just when the Bolsheviks made up their minds to crush the Kronstadt revolt. She tells of this tragic episode in her book of memoirs, Living My Life.*

(...) During my previous time in Russia, the question of strikes had often intrigued me. People had told me that the slightest hint of anything of the sort was crushed and participants jailed. I had found that hard to credit and as ever in such cases, I had turned to Zorin<sup>2</sup> for clarification. He exclaimed: "Strikes! Under the dictatorship of the proletariat? No such thing." He had even chastised me for having entertained such nonsensical, impossible notions. In fact, against whom would the workers in soviet Russia go on strike? Against themselves? They were the masters of the country, politically and industrially alike. To be sure, among the workers, there were still a few whose class consciousness was not fully developed and who were not aware where their true interests lay. Such folk did indeed grumble from time to time, but they were pawns (...) manipulated by selfish interests and enemies of the Revolution. Skinflints and parasites very deliberately leading the ignorant astray (...) Obviously, the soviet authorities had a duty to protect the country against saboteurs of that sort. Anyway, most of them were behind bars.

Later, I discovered from personal observation and experience that the real "saboteurs," counter-revolutionaries and bandits in the prisons of soviet Russia accounted for only a negligible minority. The vast bulk of the prison population was made up of social heretics, guilty of original sin against the Communist church. For no trespass was regarded more hatefully than that of entertaining political views different from the Party's, and of protesting against Bolshevism's mischief and crimes. I noticed that the majority were political prisoners, peasant and worker alike, guilty of having sought better treatment and living conditions. Such facts, kept strictly hidden from the public, were however common knowledge, as were all manner of things going on in secret beneath the soviet surface. How could such forbidden information leak out

in spite of everything? That was a mystery to me, but leak out it did and it spread with the speed and intensity of a forest fire.

Less than twenty-four hours after our return to Petrograd, we learned that the city was seething with discontent and rumors of strikes. The cause lay in the increased suffering caused by an exceptionally severe winter, and in the soviets' habitual shortsightedness. Terrible blizzards had delayed the delivery of food and fuel supplies to the city. In addition, the Petro-Soviet had made the stupid mistake of shutting down several factories and halving their workforce's rations. At the same time, it emerged that in the shops, Party members had been issued with a new batch of shoes and clothing, while the rest of the workers were miserably clothed and shod. And, to cap all these errors, the authorities had banned the rally scheduled by the workers to discuss ways of improving the situation.

Among non-Communist personnel in Petrograd, the general opinion was that the situation was very grave. The atmosphere was tense and at explosion point. We of course decided to remain in the city. Not in the hope that we might avert the imminent disturbances but we wanted to be on the spot so that we might be of use to folk.

The storm broke even earlier than anticipated. It started with a strike by the workers from the Trubetskoy mills. Their demands were very modest: increased food rations, as they had been promised long ago, and distribution of whatever footwear was available. The Petro-Soviet refused to talk to the strikers until such time as they had returned to work.

Companies of armed "kursantyn"<sup>3</sup> made up of young Communists performing their military service, were despatched to break up the concentrations of workers around the mills. The cadets attempted to provoke the masses by shooting over their heads, but luckily the workers had disarmed them and there was no bloodshed. The strikers resorted to a much mightier weapon: the solidarity of their fellow workers. The upshot was that five plants downed tools and joined the strike. They were pouring in, as one man, from the Galernaya docks, the Admiralty yards, the Patronny mills, and the Baltysky and Laferm plants. Their street demonstration was abruptly broken up by troops. From all of the reports coming in, I concluded that the treatment meted out to the strikers was anything but fraternal.

A fervent Communist like Lisa Zorin herself was alarmed and voiced objection to the methods employed. Lisa and I had long since come to a parting of the ways, so I was startled that she felt the need to unburden her heart to

me. She would never have credited that the men of the Red Army would have manhandled the workers in such a manner. She objected. Several women had fainted and others had become hysterical at the sight. One woman who had been alongside Lisa had recognized her as an active Party member and reckoned that she was responsible for this brutal display. She turned on her like a fury and slapped her right across the face, leaving her bleeding profusely.

Dear old Lisa! who had always teased me about my sentimentality. Reeling from the blow, she told her assailant that “it did not matter.” Lisa told me, “In order to reassure her, I begged her to let me escort her to her home. Home? It was a vile hovel, such as I did not even dream could still exist in this country. One dark room, cold and bare, occupied by the woman, her husband and their six children. And to think that I was living in the Astoria Hotel all this time!” she sighed. She continued, telling me that she was very well aware that it was scarcely the fault of her Party if such ghastly conditions still prevailed in soviet Russia. Nor was obstinacy on the Communists’ part at the back of the strike. The imperialist world’s blockade and conspiracy against the workers’ republic had to be held to blame for her country’s poverty and suffering. But for all that, she could no longer stay in her comfortable apartment. That desperate woman’s room and the image of her children, paralyzed from the cold, was to haunt her nights. Poor Lisa! She was loyal, committed and a woman of integrity. But so blinkered, politically!

The workers’ demand for more bread and fuel soon became specific political demands, thanks to the arbitrary and unbending stance of the authorities. One manifesto posted on the walls by an unknown hand called for “a complete change in government policy.” It stated: “First of all, the workers and peasants need freedom! They do not want to live according to the Bolshevik’s decrees; they want to control their own fate.” The situation was growing tenser by the day and new demands were circulating and posted on the walls and inside buildings. In the end, there emerged a demand for a Constituent Assembly, so thoroughly detested and despised by the Party in power.

Martial law was declared and workers were ordered to return to their factories, failing which they would be denied their rations. That, however, made no impact: but in addition, a number of trade unions were disbanded, their leaders and the most die-hard strikers tossed into prison.

We looked on, powerless, as gangs of men, escorted by troops and armed Chekists, passed below our windows. In the hope of persuading the soviet leaders of the folly and danger of their tactics, Sasha<sup>4</sup> tried to find Zinoviev,

while I sought out Messrs Ravitch, Zorin and Zipperovitch, the head of the Petrograd soviet of trade unions. But they all declined to meet us, on the pretext that they were too busy defending the city against counter-revolutionary plots, dreamt up by MENSHEVIKS and Social Revolutionaries. This formula was threadbare from overuse over the past three years, but was still good for pulling the wool over the eyes of Communist militants.

The strike spread, in spite of all their extreme measures. Arrests followed, but the very stupidity with which the authorities reacted acted as a spur to the ignorant. Counter-revolutionary and anti-Semitic proclamations began to appear, as mad rumors of military repression and Cheka atrocities against the strikers swept the city.

The workers were determined, but it soon became plain that hunger would be their undoing; there was no way to help the strikers, even if we had had anything to give them. All avenues leading to the industrial districts were sealed off by troops. Anyway, the population itself was in dire straits. What little food and clothing we were able to collect was but a drop in the ocean. We all understood the disparity of weapons between the dictatorship and the workers. It was too great to allow the strikers to hold out for much longer.

Into this tense and desperate situation there suddenly came a new element which held out the hope of an accommodation. The Kronstadt sailors. Keeping faith with their revolutionary traditions and with solidarity among toilers, as so loyally demonstrated during the 1905 revolution and later during the uprisings in March and October of 1917, they again came out in support of the harassed workers of Petrograd. Without blinkers. Quietly and without anyone's having realized it, they had sent out a fact-finding commission to look into the strikers' demands. The commission's report led the crews of the warships "Petropavlovsk" and "Sebastopol" to pass a resolution in favor of their striking fellow workers. They declared their devotion to the Revolution and to the Soviets as well as their loyalty to the Communist Party. Not that that stopped them protesting at the arbitrary attitude of certain commissars and insisting strongly upon the need for the workers' organized groupings to have more powers of self-defense. In addition, they demanded freedom of association for the trade unions and peasant organizations, as well as the release of all political and trade unionist detainees from soviet prisons and concentration camps.

The example set by these crews was taken up by the First and Second Squadron of the Baltic Fleet stationed in Kronstadt. At a street rally on

March 1, attended by 16,000 sailors, Red Army soldiers and workers from Kronstadt, similar resolutions were passed unanimously, except for three dissenting voices. The three against were Vassiliev, chairman of the Kronstadt soviet, who chaired the meeting, Kuzmin, commissar of the Baltic Fleet, and Kalinin, president of the federated soviet socialist republic.

Two anarchists had been at the rally and returned to regale us with the order, enthusiasm and good mood which had prevailed at it. They had not witnessed such a spontaneous display of solidarity and fervent comradeship since the early days of October. They merely deplored the fact that we had missed this demonstration. The presence of Sasha, whom the Kronstadt sailors had staunchly defended when he was in danger of being extradited to California in 1917, and myself, whom the sailors knew by reputation, would have added weight to the resolution, they said. We agreed with them that it would have been a marvelous experience to participate on soviet soil in the first great mass meeting not organized to order. Gorky had long ago assured me that the men of the Baltic Fleet were all born anarchists and that my place was with them. I had often wanted to go to Kronstadt to meet the crews and talk to them, but it was my belief that in my confused, befuddled state of mind of the time I had nothing constructive to offer. Now I would go and take my place alongside them, knowing well that the Bolsheviks would peddle the rumor that I was inciting the sailors against the regime. Sasha said that he did not care much what the Communists might say. He would join the sailors in their protests on behalf of the striking workers of Petrograd.

Our comrades labored the point that Kronstadt's expressions of sympathy with the strikers could not in any way be construed as anti-soviet activity. In fact, the sailors' frame of mind and the resolutions passed at their mass rally were markedly pro-soviet. They objected vigorously to the autocratic attitude shown towards the famished strikers, but the rally had contained not the slightest hint of opposition to the Communists. Indeed, that great meeting had taken place under the auspices of the Kronstadt Soviet. In token of their loyalty, the sailors had welcomed Kalinin with singing and music when he arrived in the town, and his address had been listened to attentively and with the utmost respect. Even after he and his colleagues had condemned the sailors and their motion, they had escorted Kalinin to the railway station with the utmost friendliness, as our informants were able to testify.

We had had wind of rumors that Kuzmin and Vassiliev had been arrested by the sailors at a meeting of three hundred delegates from the fleet, the garrison

and the trade union soviet. We asked our two comrades what they knew of this. They confirmed that the pair had indeed been placed under arrest. The reason was that Kuzmin had denounced the sailors and Petrograd strikers to the gathering as traitors, (...) declaring that henceforth the Communist Party was going to fight them to the bitter end as counter-revolutionaries. The delegates had also learned that Kuzmin had issued orders that all provisions and munitions be removed from Kronstadt, thereby condemning the town to starve. On these grounds the Kronstadt sailors and garrison had decided to arrest the pair and to take precautions to ensure that the provisions were not removed from the town. But no way was that an indication of any intent to revolt, nor of the men of Kronstadt's having stopped believing in the revolutionary integrity of the Communists. On the contrary. They allowed Communist delegates to speak like the rest. Further proof of their confidence in the regime was that a thirty-strong committee was sent for talks with the Petro-Soviet regarding an amicable settlement of the strike.

We felt pride at this splendid solidarity on the part of the sailors and soldiers of Kronstadt with their striking brethren in Petrograd and we hoped for a speedy end to disturbances, thanks to the sailors' mediation.

Alas! our hopes crumbled when news came an hour later of developments in Kronstadt. Petrograd was stunned by an order signed by Lenin and Trotsky. The order said that Kronstadt had mutinied against the soviet government and denounced the sailors as "the tools of former tsarist generals, who, by arrangement with the Social Revolutionary traitors, had mounted a counter-revolutionary conspiracy against the proletarian republic."

"Nonsense! Utter madness!" Sasha shouted when he read a copy of that order. "Lenin and Trotsky must have been misinformed by someone. Even so, they cannot believe that the sailors are guilty of counter-revolution! What? The crews of the 'Petropavlovsk' and 'Sebastopol,' who had been the staunchest supporters of the Bolsheviks in October and ever since? Didn't Trotsky himself salute them as 'the pride and glory of the Revolution'?"

"We must go to Moscow right away," said Sasha. It was absolutely essential that we see Lenin and Trotsky and explain to them that this was all a horrible misunderstanding, a mistake that could prove fatal to the Revolution itself. It was very hard for Sasha to renounce his faith in the revolutionary integrity of men who were, for millions across the globe, apostles of the proletariat. I agreed with his belief that Lenin and Trotsky had perhaps been misled by Zinoviev who telephoned every night with detailed reports from Kronstadt.

Even among his own comrades, Zinoviev had never had a reputation for personal courage. He had been seized by panic at the first sign of discontent on the part of the Petrograd workers. When he learned that the local garrison had indicated its sympathy with the strikers, he lost his head completely and ordered that a machine-gun be set up in the Astoria Hotel for his personal protection. The Kronstadt business had filled him with terror and drove him to peddle nightmarish stories to Moscow. Sasha and I knew all that, but I could not believe that Lenin and Trotsky truly thought that the Kronstadters were guilty of counter-revolution, or capable of colluding with White generals, as Lenin's order accused them of doing.

An exceptional state of martial law was imposed throughout the entire province of Petrograd, and no one except officials with special passes could leave the city now. The Bolshevik press launched a campaign of calumny and venom against Kronstadt, announcing that the sailors and soldiers had made common cause with the "tsarist General Kozlovsky;" they were thereby declaring the Kronstadters outlaws. Sasha was beginning to realize that the roots of the situation went a lot deeper than simply Lenin and Trotsky acting upon bad information. The latter was to attend the special sitting of the Petro-Soviet at which the fate of Kronstadt was to be decided. We resolved to attend.

This was the first time I had heard Trotsky in Russia. I had thought that I might remind him of his farewell words in New York;<sup>5</sup> the hope which he had expressed that we might soon meet in Russia to help out with the great tasks now possible following the overthrow of tsarism. We were going to ask him to let us help resolve the Kronstadt problems in a spirit of fraternity, to offer our time and our energy, and even our lives, in this supreme test to which the revolution was putting the Communist Party.

Unfortunately, Trotsky's train was late in arriving and failed to make the sitting. The men who addressed that assembly were inaccessible to reason or appeal. A demented fanaticism prompted their words and a blind fear ruled their hearts.

The platform was tightly guarded by "kursanty;" bayonets fixed, Cheka troops stood between the platform and the audience. Zinoviev, who was in the chair, looked as if he was on the verge of a nervous breakdown. He stood up to speak several times, only to sit down again. When he eventually did start to speak, his head turned to right and left, as if fearing a surprise attack. His voice, weak as a child's at the best of times, rose to an extremely disagreeable and unconvincing shriek.



He denounced "General Kozlovsky" as the evil genius behind the Kronstadters, although most of those present knew that that officer had been assigned to Kronstadt as an artillery expert by Trotsky, no less. Kozlovsky was old and decrepit, and wielded no influence over the sailors or the garrison. Not that that prevented Zinoviev, chairman of the special purpose-built defense committee, from announcing that Kronstadt had revolted against the revolution and was attempting to carry out the plans of Kozlovsky and his tsarist aids.

Kalinin departed from his customary fatherly attitude and launched violently into the sailors, forgetful of the homage paid to him in Kronstadt only a few days earlier. "No measure can be too severe for counter-revolutionaries who dare raise their hand against our glorious Revolution," he declared. Secondary speakers carried on in the same tone, stirring their Communist fanaticism, ignoring the true facts, and calling for a frenzied revenge on men who, until very recently, had been acclaimed as heroes and brothers.

Above the din of the screaming, foot-stamping audience, a single voice strove to make itself heard: the strained and serious voice of a man from the front rows. He was the delegate from the striking Naval dockyard workers. He was forced, he said, to register a protest at the false accusations hurled from the platform against the courageous, loyal Kronstadters. Looking at Zinoviev and pointing him out, the fellow thundered: "It is your cruel indifference and your party's which have driven us to strike and awakened the sympathy of our sailor brothers, who have struggled alongside us in the revolution. They are guilty of no other crime and you know that! You are deliberately misrepresenting them and calling for their extermination." Shouts of "Counter-revolutionary, traitor! Menshevik! Bandit!" reduced the meeting to complete bedlam.

The elderly workman remained standing, his voice soaring above the tumult: "Barely three years ago, Lenin, Trotsky, Zinoviev and all of you were being denounced as traitors and German spies," he cried. "We workers and sailors came to your aid and rescued you from the Kerensky government. We are the ones who hoisted you into power! Have you forgotten that? Now you threaten us at sword point. You are playing with fire, remember! You are repeating the same mistakes and crimes as the Kerensky government! Watch out lest the same fate overtake you too!"

Zinoviev winced at that threat. Up on the platform, the others, embarrassed, fidgeted in their seats. The Communists in the audience seemed momentarily terrified by this sinister warning.

At which point another voice rang out. A great strapping fellow in a sailor uniform stood in the rear of the hall. Nothing had altered his brothers' revolutionary spirit, he declared. To the last man, they stood ready to defend the revolution to the last drop of their blood. And he began to read out the Kronstadt resolution passed at the mass meeting on March 1.<sup>6</sup> The hubbub which erupted at this act of daring drowned his voice, except for those sitting close to him. But he stuck at it and carried on reading until the end.

The sole reply to these two bold fellows, sons of the revolution, was the resolution moved by Zinoviev, demanding that Kronstadt surrender immediately and unconditionally, or face extermination. It was rushed through, amid a pandemonium of confusion and opposing voices were shouted down.

But this silence in the face of the approaching massacre was unbearable. I had to make myself heard. Not by these men possessed who would shout me down, as they had others. I would spell out my position that very night in a submission addressed to the supreme soviet defense authorities.

Once we were alone, I spoke to Sasha about this and I was glad to discover that the same thought had occurred to my old friend. He suggested that our missive should be a joint protest and should deal exclusively with the murderous resolution passed by the Petro-Soviet. Two comrades who had been with us at the meeting were of the same mind and offered to sign their names to a joint appeal to the authorities. I had no expectation that our message would have any moderating influence or would in any way impede the measures decreed against the sailors. But I was determined to register my view, by way of leaving a testament to the future that would prove that I had not stayed silent on the Communist Party's darkest act of treason to the revolution.

At 2:00 A.M., Sasha telephoned Zinoviev to tell him that he had something important to say to him regarding Kronstadt. Maybe Zinoviev thought that it could be something that might be of use to the plot against Kronstadt: otherwise, he might not have taken the trouble to send Madame Ravitch to us at that hour of the night, within ten minutes of Sasha's call. She was absolutely reliable, the note from Zinoviev said, and any message should be handed to her. We gave her the following communiqué:

“To the trade union soviet and Petrograd Defense soviet.  
Chairman Zinoviev.

It has become impossible to remain silent; indeed, it would be a crime!

Recent events require that we anarchists speak out and spell out where we stand on the present situation.

The spirit of ferment and discontent manifest among the toilers and sailors is the product of factors demanding our serious attention. Cold and hunger have led to discontent and the absence of opportunities for discussion and criticism compels the workers and sailors to express their grievances in public.

White Guard gangs wish, and may attempt to exploit this discontent in the interests of their own class. Taking cover behind the toilers and sailors, they issue slogans demanding a Constituent Assembly, freedom of trade and articulating similar demands.

We anarchists have long since been denouncing the wrong-headedness of these slogans, and to the whole world, we declare that with weapons in hand, we will fight any attempt at counter-revolution, in cooperation with all friends of the socialist revolution and hand in glove with the Bolsheviks.

As regards the conflict between the soviet government and the toilers and sailors, we reckon that that should be settled, not by force of arms, but by the methods of comradeship, through a revolutionary, fraternal agreement.

The decision to spill blood which the soviet government has taken will not reassure the toilers, in the present situation. Instead, it will serve only to exacerbate things and will play into the hands of the Entente and the domestic counter-revolution.

Even more serious, the use of force by the toilers' and peasants' government against the workers and sailors will have a reactionary effect upon the international revolutionary movement and will do the greatest damage to the socialist revolution.

Comrade Bolsheviks, think before it is too late! Do not play with fire: you are about to take a decisive and very serious step.

Consequently, we offer you the following proposal: allow the election of a commission of five individuals, two of them anarchists. That commission will travel to Kronstadt to settle the quarrel by peaceable means. That, in the present situation, is the most radical approach. It will have international revolutionary significance.

Petrograd, March 5, 1921.

Alexander Berkman, Emma Goldman,  
'and two additional signatures'”

Proof that our appeals reached only deaf ears came that very day with Trotsky's arrival and his ultimatum to Kronstadt. By order of the workers' and peasants' government, he announced to the sailors and soldiers of Kronstadt that he was going to "go on a pheasant shoot" against all who had dared to "raise their hand against the socialist homeland." The defiant ships and crews were instructed to conform immediately with the soviet government's orders, or face being reduced by force of arms. Only those who would surrender unconditionally could expect clemency from the soviet republic.

This final warning was signed by Trotsky as chairman of the revolutionary military soviet, and by Kamenev as commander in chief of the Red Army. Once again, the penalty for querying the divine right of those in government was death.

Trotsky was as good as his word. Having taken power thanks to the Kronstadters, he was now in a position to repay in full his debt to "the pride and glory of the Russian Revolution." The tsarist regime's finest military experts and strategists were in his retinue; among them was the famous Tukhachevsky<sup>7</sup> whom Trotsky appointed to overall command of the assault on Kronstadt. In addition, there were hordes of Chekists trained over a three-year period in the arts of killing, "kursanty" and Communists specially selected for their unquestioning obedience to orders received, as well as the most dependable troops from various fronts. With such might ranged against the condemned town, it was expected that the "mutiny" would soon be broken. Especially as the sailors and soldiers of the Petrograd garrison had been disarmed and all who had expressed solidarity with their besieged comrades pulled out of the danger zone. From my window in the International Hotel, I watched them led away in small batches under escort from powerful detachments of Chekist troops. There was no spring left in their step, their arms hung limp and their heads were bowed in sadness.

The authorities had lost their fear of the Petrograd strikers. These had been weakened and broken by hunger, their energy drained. They were demoralized by the lies peddled about them and their Kronstadt brethren, their spirit crushed by the poison of doubt planted thanks to the Bolsheviks' propaganda. They had no stomach left for a fight, no hope of being able to go to the aid of their Kronstadt comrades who had, without a thought for themselves, made a stand on their behalf and were now about to pay for that with their lives.

Kronstadt was abandoned by Petrograd and cut off from the rest of Russia. It stood alone and could offer scarcely any resistance. "It will collapse at the first rifle shot!" the soviet press boasted.

Incorrectly. Kronstadt had never had any thought of “mutiny” or resisting the soviet government. Right up to the last, it was determined to spill no blood. Continually it called for a compromise and amicable settlement. But, forced to defend itself against military provocation, it fought like a lion. For a fraught ten days and nights, the besieged town’s sailors and soldiers held out against continual artillery bombardment from three sides and against aerial bombardment of its non-combatant population. Heroically, it beat off the Bolsheviks’ repeated efforts to storm its fortresses with specialist troops imported from Moscow. Trotsky and Tukhachevsky had every advantage over the Kronstadters. They had the backing of the entire machinery of the Communist State, and the centrally-controlled press continued to spread poison about these alleged “mutineers and counter-revolutionaries.” They could call upon endless reinforcements and manpower, wearing white camouflage to pass undetected across the snow blanketing the frozen Gulf of Finland, thereby concealing the night assault against the unsuspecting Kronstadters. The latter had nothing but their indomitable courage and unshakable faith in the rightness of their cause and in the free soviets they championed as the only ones capable of saving Russia from dictatorship. They lacked even an ice-breaker to hold off the Communist enemy’s assault. They were worn down by hunger, cold and sleepless nights on watch. Even so, they held out well, fighting a hopeless fight against overwhelming odds.

Throughout this fearful period, not a single friendly voice was heard. During whole days and nights filled with the thunder of heavy artillery and the boom of cannons, there was no one to protest or call for a halt to the awful blood bath. Gorky. . . Maxim Gorky. . . Where was he? His voice they would heed.

“Let’s go see him!” I approached some members of the “intelligentsia.” Gorky, they told me, had never protested, even in serious, individual cases, not even in those involving members of his own profession, not even when he knew the condemned men to be innocent. He would not speak out now. It was hopeless.

The “intelligentsia,” these men and women who had once been the spokesmen of revolution, the master-thinkers, the authors and poets, were as powerless as we and paralyzed by the futility of individual efforts. Most of their comrades and friends were in prison or in exile, and some had been executed. They felt shattered by the eradication of all human values.

I turned to the Communists of our acquaintance. Pleaded with them to do something. A few understood the monstrous crime that their party was in the process of committing against Kronstadt. They conceded that the charge of counter-revolution had been concocted. The supposed leader Kozlovsky was a nonentity, too preoccupied with his own fate to have had any hand at all in the sailors' protests. The latter were top quality, their sole concern Russia's welfare. Far from making common cause with tsarist generals, they had even declined an offer of help from Chernov, leader of the Social Revolutionaries. They sought no help from abroad. They demanded their right to choose their own deputies in the forthcoming elections to the Kronstadt soviet and justice for the Petrograd strikers.

Our Communist friends spent night after night with us ... talking ... and talking ... but not a one of them dared raise his voice in public protest. We did not realize the implications of that for them, they said. They would be expelled from the party, they and their families deprived of work and rations and would be literally condemned to death by starvation. Or they would quite simply and straightforwardly vanish and no one would ever discover what had become of them. And yet they assured us that it was not fear that dictated their inaction but rather the utter futility of appeals. Nothing, absolutely nothing could stop the mill-stones of the Communist State. They had been crushed by them; they no longer had even the strength to protest.

I was haunted by the ghastly fear that Sasha and I too might be reduced to that state, all resourcefulness gone and resigned like them. Anything was better than that. . . prison, exile, even death! Or escape! Escape from this horrific fraud, this sham of a revolution.

The notion of wanting to quit Russia had never before occurred to me. The very thought disturbed and shocked me. Leave Russia to her Calvary! But my feeling was that I would brave even that rather than be a part of the grinding of this machinery, rather than become an inanimate thing manipulated at will.

The bombardment of Kronstadt continued non-stop for ten days and ten nights, ceasing abruptly on the morning of March 17. The silence which shrouded Petrograd was more daunting than the endless cannonades of the previous night. The agonizing wait gripped us all. There was no way of knowing what had happened and why the bombardment had stopped so abruptly. Later in the afternoon, the tension gave way to dumb horror. Kronstadt had been brought to heel. Tens of thousands of men murdered,

the town drowned in blood. The Neva, whose heavy guns had broken up the ice, became the tomb of many, kursanty and young Communists. The heroic sailors and soldiers had held their positions to their dying breath. Those unlucky enough not to have perished in combat fell into the clutches of the enemy, only to be executed or despatched to lingering torture in the frozen wastes of North Russia.

We were dumb struck. Sasha, having lost any remaining shred of belief in the Bolsheviks, roamed the streets in despair. I walked on leaden legs, every nerve overcome by tremendous weariness. I sat motionless, staring into the night (...)

The next day, March 18, still groggy from lack of sleep during seventeen anxious days, I woke to the tramp of many feet. The Communists were marching past to the sound of military tunes, singing the *Internationale*. Those strains, which had previously sounded so splendid to me, now sounded like a dirge sung over the fervent hopes of humanity.

March 18: the anniversary of the Paris Commune of 1871, crushed after two months by Thiers and Gallifet, the butchers of thirty thousand Communards! Re-enacted in Kronstadt on March 18, 1921.

The true implications of this “liquidation” of Kronstadt were disclosed by Lenin himself three days after the nightmare. At the Communist Party’s tenth congress, held in Moscow, while the siege of Kronstadt was in progress, Lenin unexpectedly switched from his inspired paeans to communism to an equally fervent paean to the New Economic Policy. Free trade, concessions to capitalists, a free labor market in the countryside and in the factories, all things which had been vilified for more than three years as indications of counter-revolution, punishable by imprisonment or death, but now etched by Lenin upon the glorious colors of the dictatorship.

Brazenly, as ever, he confessed what honest, thoughtful people in the party and outside of it, had been aware of for seventeen days, to wit “that the Kronstadters wanted no truck with counter-revolutionaries. But they wanted no truck with us either!” The ingenuous sailors had taken seriously the revolution’s watchword of “All power to the soviets!” to which Lenin and his party had solemnly promised to remain faithful. Therein lay the Kronstadters’ unforgivable mistake! For which they had to die. They were to become martyrs so as to fertilize the soil for a fresh crop of slogans from Lenin, who was wiping the slate clean of his old ones. His masterpiece was the New Economic Policy, the NEP.<sup>8</sup>

Lenin's public admission regarding Kronstadt did nothing to halt the hunting down of sailors, soldiers and workers from the defeated town. They were arrested in their hundreds and the Cheka was busy "target-shooting."

Curiously, the anarchists were not mentioned in connection with the Kronstadt "mutiny." But at the tenth party congress, Lenin had declared that a war without quarter had to be waged against the "petite bourgeoisie," anarchist personnel included. The anarcho-syndicalist leanings of the Workers' Opposition<sup>9</sup> showed that this tendency had spread to the very ranks of the Communist Party itself, he had stated. Lenin's call to arms against the anarchists was taken up with alacrity. The Petrograd groups were raided and a large number of their members arrested. In addition, the Cheka shut down the presses and the offices from which *Golos Truda*, the mouthpiece of our movement's anarcho-syndicalist wing was published.

We had bought our tickets for the journey up to Moscow, before this happened. On learning of the mass arrests, we decided to stay for a little longer, in case we might be on the wanted list. We were not bothered, however; maybe because it was thought useful to have a few anarchist celebrities at large, to show the world that only the "bandits" were in soviet prisons.

In Moscow, we found all of the anarchists arrested, except for a half dozen. Yet no charge had been preferred against our comrades; no statements had been taken from them, nor were they brought to trial. In spite of which a number of them had already been sent to the penitentiary in Samara. The ones still in the Butyrky or Taganka prisons were subjected to the foulest persecution and indeed violence. Thus, one of our people, the young Kashirin, had been beaten up by a Chekist as some prison warders looked on. Maximoff<sup>10</sup> and other anarchists who had served on the revolutionary fronts and were well-known and well respected by many Communists, had been forced to launch a hunger strike to protest against the ghastly conditions of detention.

The first thing that was asked of us upon our return to Moscow was that we sign a manifesto addressed to the soviet authorities denouncing the concerted efforts to exterminate our comrades.

This we did, readily. Sasha was now as convinced as I was that protests from the handful of politicians still at large inside Russia were utterly pointless and futile. Then again, no effective action was to be expected of the Russian masses, even had it been possible to contact them. Years of war, civil strife and suffering had drained them of their vitality and terror had left them dumb and submissive.



Our only hopes, Sasha said, were Europe and the United States. The time had come to reveal the shameful betrayal of October to the toilers abroad. The awakened consciences of the proletariat and other liberal and radical opinions in every country must build to a mighty protest against this ruthless persecution. Only that could stay the dictatorship's hand. Nothing else.

The martyrdom of Kronstadt had already had this effect upon my friend: it had destroyed any lingering traces of the BOLSHEVIK MYTH.<sup>11</sup> Not just Sasha, but other comrades who had hitherto defended the Communists' methods as inevitable in time of revolution, had been forced to gaze into the abyss between October and the dictatorship.

# **RESOLUTION PASSED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE 1ST AND 2ND SQUADRONS OF THE BALTIC FLEET, HELD IN KRONSTADT**

(March 1, 1921)

Having listened to reports from the representatives sent to Petrograd by the crews' general assembly to look into the situation there, the Assembly's decision is that we must, given that the current soviets do not reflect the wishes of the workers and peasants:

1. Proceed immediately with the re-election of the soviets by secret ballot. Electioneering among the workers and peasants must proceed with complete freedom of speech and action;
2. Establish freedom of speech and press for all workers and peasants, for anarchists and left-wing socialist parties;
3. Afford freedom of assembly to trade unions and peasant organizations;
4. Summon, over the heads of the political parties, a conference of the workers, Red soldiers and sailors of Petrograd, Kronstadt and the province of Petrograd, for no later than 10 March 1921;
5. Release all socialist political prisoners and also all workers, peasants, Red soldiers and sailors imprisoned in the wake of worker and peasant disturbances;
6. Elect a commission to review the cases of those held in the prisons and concentration camps;
7. Abolish "political offices," because no political party should have privileges in the propagation of its ideas, nor should it receive State financial subsidies for that purpose. In their place, we must introduce educational and cultural commissions, elected in every district and funded by government;
8. Abolish all checkpoints forthwith;
9. Standardize rations for all toilers, save for those engaged in trades involving health risks;

10. Abolish the Communist shock detachments inside every army unit: likewise the Communist Guard inside factories and plants. Should the need arise, guard corps can be appointed by companies within the army and by the workers themselves in the plants and factories;
11. Afford peasants complete freedom of action in respect of their land and also the right to own livestock, provided that they do their own work, that is, do not make use of waged labor;
12. Appoint a roving audit commission;
13. Permit the free pursuit of craft production, without use of waged labor;
14. We ask all army units and the “kursanty” military comrades to associate themselves with our resolution;

This resolution has been passed unanimously by the assembled crews of the squadron. There were two individual abstentions.

Signed—Petritchenko, chairman of  
the assembly: and Perepelkin, secretary.

# THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE KRONSTADT UPRISING

(EXTRACTS FROM THE KRONSTADT IZVESTIA)<sup>1</sup>

*And for openers, here are a few headlines:*

All power to the soviets and not the parties!

The power of the soviets will free the toilers in the fields from the Communist yoke.

Lenin says: 'Communism is soviet power plus electrification,' but the people has seen that Bolshevik Communism is the absolutism of the commissars plus firing squads.

The Soviets, and not the Constituent [Assembly] are the bulwark of the toilers.

Long live red Kronstadt with the power of free soviets!

Trotsky's first shot is the Communists' distress signal.

[NO. 1, MARCH 3, 1921]

TO THE POPULATION OF THE FORTRESS AND TOWN OF KRONSTADT

Comrades and citizens, our country is passing through a tough time. For three years now, famine, cold and economic chaos have trapped us in a vice-like grip. The Communist Party which governs the country has drifted away from the masses and proved itself powerless to rescue them from a state of general ruination. The Party has not taken any heed of the disturbances which have recently occurred in Petrograd and Moscow, which plainly demonstrated that it has lost the toiling masses' confidence. Nor has it paid any heed to the demands articulated by the workers. It looks upon all this as inklings of counter-revolution. It is profoundly mistaken.

Those disturbances and those demands are the voice of the people as a body, the voice of all who labor. All workers, sailors and Red soldiers today can clearly see that only concerted efforts, only the concerted determination of the people can afford the country bread, wood and coal, can clothe and shoe the people and rescue the Republic from the impasse in which it finds itself.

This determination on the part of all toilers, Red soldiers and sailors was demonstrated plainly at the great meeting in our town on March 1st. The meeting unanimously endorsed a resolution from the 1st and 2nd squadrons' crews.

One of the decisions made was that fresh elections to the soviets should proceed without delay.

In order to lay the fairest foundations for those fresh elections in such a way that the soviet may effectively represent the workers and the soviet be an active and vigorous body, the delegates from all of the fleet organizations, the garrison and the workers met on March 2 in the Education College. That meeting was to draw up the basis for fresh elections and thereby embark upon positive, peaceable work, the task of overhauling the soviet system.

Now, since there were grounds for fearing repression, and in the light also of threatening speeches by representatives of the authorities, the meeting decided to establish a Provisional Revolutionary Committee and invest it with full powers over the administration of the town and fortress.

The Provisional Committee has its headquarters aboard the ship of the line "Petropavlovsk."

Comrades and citizens! The Provisional Committee is particularly concerned that no blood shall be spilled. It has done all in its power to maintain revolutionary order in the town, in the fortress and in the forts.

Comrades and citizens! Carry on with your work. Workers, stand by your machines! Sailors and soldiers, do not leave your posts. All employees, every institution must carry on with their work.

The Provisional Revolutionary Committee calls upon all workers' organizations, all seamen's unions and others, all sea-going and land-based units, as well as every individual citizen to rally to its aid.

Its task is to assure, in fraternal collaboration with us, the requisite conditions for fair and honest elections to the new soviet.

So, comrades, order, calm, a cool head! Let us all be about honest socialist work for the good of all toilers!

Kronstadt, March 2, 1921.

Signed: Petritchenco, chairman of the Provisional Revolutionary Committee: Tukin, secretary.

## WIRELESS FROM MOSCOW

We publish the following wireless telegram issued by the "Rosta" agency in Moscow and intercepted by the wireless operator on the "Petropavlovsk:"

Prepare to do battle against the White Guardist conspiracy!

The mutiny of ex-General Kozlovsky and the vessel "Petropavlovsk" has been orchestrated by Entente spies, as has been the case in numerous earlier plots. This can be seen from a reading of the French bourgeois newspaper *Le Matin* which, two weeks ahead of Kozlovsky's revolt, carried the following telegram from Helsingfors: "From Petrograd comes a report that in the wake of the Kronstadt revolt, the Bolshevik military authorities have taken steps to isolate Kronstadt and prevent the Kronstadt soldiers and sailors from nearing Petrograd. Provisions for Kronstadt are banned until further notice."

It is plain that Kronstadt's sedition has been directed from Paris and that French counter-espionage is mixed up in it. The same old story. The Social Revolutionaries, run from Paris, plotted rebellion against the soviet government, and scarcely have their preparations been completed than the real master, a tsarist general, puts in an appearance. The story of Koltchak who attempted to restore authority with the Social Revolutionaries' help is played out once again. All of the enemies of the toilers, ranging from tsarist generals through to Social Revolutionaries, are attempting to make capital out of hunger and cold. Of course, this revolt by generals and Social Revolutionaries will be crushed in short order and General Kozlovsky and his acolytes will meet the same fate as Koltchak.

But there can be no question but that the Entente's espionage network has not swooped upon Kronstadt alone. Workers and Red soldiers, rip that network asunder! Expose the whisperers and provocateurs! You must display a cool head, self-mastery and vigilance. Do not forget that the real way to overcome food shortages and other difficulties, which are passing but tiresome indeed, lies in intense effort of goodwill and not in nonsensical excesses that can only add to the misery, to the greater relish of the accursed enemies of those who toil.

We are bringing to everyone's notice the text of a proclamation dropped from a Communist airplane over Kronstadt. Citizens will feel naught but contempt for this provocative calumny:

To the deceived Kronstadters!

Can you see now where the wastrels have led you? Look where you are now! Even now the yawning maw of former tsarist generals looms at the back of the Social Revolutionaries and Mensheviks. All of these Petritchenkos and Tukins dance like puppets to the tune of the tsarist General Kozlovsky, Captains Borkser, Kostromitinoff, Shirmanovsky and other known White Guardists. They have deceived you! You were told that you were fighting for democracy. Barely two days have elapsed and you see that in fact you are fighting, not for democracy, but for tsarist generals!

## [NO. 2, MARCH 4, 1921]

### TO THE POPULATION OF THE TOWN OF KRONSTADT

Citizens! Kronstadt begins a bitter struggle for freedom. At any moment, we may expect an attack by the Communists designed to capture Kronstadt and re-impose upon us their power, which has brought us famine, cold and economic chaos.

Everybody, every last one of us, will forcefully and steadfastly defend the freedom we have won. We will resist the attempt to capture Kronstadt. And should the Communists attempt to do so by force of arms, we will offer stiff resistance in reply.

The Provisional Revolutionary Committee urges the population not to panic should it hear gunfire. Calm and a cool head will bring us victory.

THE PROVISIONAL REVOLUTIONARY COMMITTEE

### NOTICE

The Provisional Revolutionary Committee must refute rumors to the effect that arrested Communists have been subjected to violence. The arrested Communists are completely safe.

Of the several Communists arrested, some have in any event been freed. A Communist Party representative will make up part of the commission charged with investigating the basis for the arrests. The Communist comrades Ilyin, Kabanoff and Pervushin have made overtures to the Revolutionary Committee and have been authorized to visit the detainees held aboard the

vessel "Petropavlovsk." Which those comrades hereby confirm through their signatures here.

Signed: Ilyin, Kabanoff, Pervushin.—This is a true copy, signed: N. Arhipoff, member of the Revolutionary Committee.—Signed on the secretary's behalf, P. Bogdanoff.

[NO. 3, MARCH 5, 1921]

#### VICTORY OR DEATH

A DELEGATE MEETING—Yesterday, March 4th, at 6:00 P.M., there was a meeting in the Garrison Club of delegates from the military units and trade unions, summoned in order to expand the Provisional Revolutionary Committee through the election of further members, and to hear reports on developments in progress.

Twenty-two delegates, most of them directly arrived from their place of work, attended the meeting.

The seaman Petritchenko, chairman, declared that the Provisional Revolutionary Committee, being swamped with work, needed to be expanded to incorporate at least another ten new members.

Out of the twenty candidates put forward, the meeting elected, by an overwhelming majority, the comrades Vershinin, Perepelkin, Kupoloff, Ossossoff, Valk, Romanenko, Pavloff, Baikoff, Patrusheff and Kilgast.

The new members took their places on the bureau.

Then Petritchenko, chairman of the Provisional Revolutionary Committee, delivered a detailed report on the actions of the Committee since its election up to the present.

Comrade Petritchenko stressed that the entire garrison of the fortress and the ships was in battle readiness, should the need arise. He noted the great enthusiasm animating the whole working population of the town, its workers, sailors and Red soldiers.

Frantic applause greeted the newly elected members and the chairman's report. Whereupon the meeting moved on to current business.

It was revealed that the town and garrison are adequately supplied with provisions and fuel. The question of arming of the workers was examined.

It has been decided that all workers, without exception, are to be armed and charged with keeping guard within the town, for all of the sailors and



soldiers were keen to take their place in the combat detachments. This decision evoked enthusiastic backing, to cries of “Victory or death!”

It was then decided that within three days, the steering commissions of all the trade unions and the trades union council should be re-elected. The latter is to be the leading worker body and keep in continual contact with the Provisional Revolutionary Committee.

Next, some sailor comrades who had, at great risk, successfully escaped from Petrograd, Strelna, Peterhof and Oranienbaum delivered their briefings.

They noted that the population and workers of all those places had been kept by the Communists in a state of absolute ignorance of what was afoot in Kronstadt. There were rumors circulating everywhere to the effect that White Guards and generals were operating in Kronstadt.

This news provoked general hilarity.

What cheered the meeting even more was the reading given to a sort of ‘Manifesto’ dropped over Kronstadt by a Communist airplane.

“Oh yes!”—the shout went up—“We have but one general here: the commissar of the Baltic Fleet, Kuzmin! And even *he* is under arrest!”

The meeting closed with expressions and demonstrations of enthusiasm, displaying the unanimous and steadfast determination to secure the victory or die.

## [NO. 4, MARCH 6, 1921]

### EDITORIAL

The horny hands of the Kronstadt sailors and workers have wrested the tiller from the Communists’ hands and have taken over the helm.

The ship of soviet power will be steered, alert and sure, towards Petrograd, whence this horny-handed power is to spread right across a wretched Russia.

But, take care comrades!

Increase your vigilance tenfold, for the course is strewn with reefs. One careless touch to the tiller and your ship, with its cargo so precious to you, the cargo of social reconstruction, may founder upon a rock.

Comrades, keep a close eye upon the vicinity of the tiller: enemies are even now trying to creep closer. A single lapse and they will wrest the tiller from you, and the soviet ship may go down to triumphant laughter from tsarist lackeys and henchmen of the bourgeoisie.

Comrades, right now you are rejoicing in the great, peaceful victory over the Communists' dictatorship. Now, your enemies are celebrating it too.

Your grounds for such joy, and theirs, are quite contradictory.

You are driven by a burning desire to restore the authentic power of the soviets, by a noble hope of seeing the worker engage in free labor and the peasant enjoy the right to dispose, on his land, of the produce of his labors. *They* dream of bringing back the tsarist knout and the privileges of the generals.

Your interests are different. They are not fellow travelers with you.

You needed to get rid of the Communists' power over you in order to set about creative work and peaceable construction. Whereas they want to overthrow that power to make the workers and peasants their slaves again.

You are in search of freedom. They want to shackle you as it suits them. Be vigilant! Don't let the wolves in sheep's clothing get near the tiller.

#### BROADCAST APPEAL

To all ... all ... all.

Comrade workers, Red soldiers and sailors!

Here in Kronstadt, we know the measure of your suffering, yourselves, your women and your famished children, under the yoke of the Communists' dictatorship.

We have overthrown the Communist soviet. In a few days, our Provisional Revolutionary Committee will proceed with elections to the new soviet, which, being freely elected, will mirror the wishes of the whole laboring population and garrison, and not those of a handful of "Communist" madmen.

Our cause is just. We are for soviet power, not the power of parties. We are for free election of the toiling masses' representatives. The soviets, counterfeited, captured and manipulated by the Communist Party, have always been deaf to our needs and our demands—the only answer we have ever had was the murderer's bullet.

Now, with the toilers' patience at an end, they are trying to stop your mouth with alms; by order of Zinoviev, checkpoints are to be done away with in Petrograd province and Moscow is assigning ten million gold rubles for the purchase, abroad, of provisions and basic necessities. But we know that the Petrograd proletariat will not let itself be bought off by such alms. Over the heads of the Communists, revolutionary Kronstadt stretches out its hand and offers you its fraternal aid.

Comrades! Not only do they deceive you, but they are shamelessly twisting the facts and stooping even to the foulest dissembling. Comrades, do not let yourselves be taken in!

In Kronstadt power lies exclusively in the hands of the sailors, soldiers and revolutionary workers, and not in those of “counter-revolutionaries led by a Kozlovsky,” as lying Moscow radio would have you believe.

Don’t delay, comrades! Join us! Make contact with us! Insist that your nonparty delegates are authorized to come to Kronstadt. Only they can tell you the truth and expose the abject slander about “Finnish bread” and Entente machinations.

Long live the revolutionary proletariat of the towns and countryside! Long live the power of the freely elected soviets!

#### A LETTER

Rank and file Communist comrades! Look around you and you will see that we are caught in a terrible bind. We have been led into it by a handful of bureaucratic “Communists” who, under cover of being Communists, have feathered themselves very comfortable nests in our Republic.

As a Communist, I beseech you: dump these phony “Communists” who are herding you in the direction of fratricide. It is thanks to them that we rank and file Communists, who are not responsible for any of it, suffer reproach from our non-party worker and peasant comrades.

The current situation frightens me.

Can it be that our brothers’ blood is to be spilled for the benefit of these “bureaucratic Communists?”

Comrades, pull yourselves together! Do not let yourselves be taken in by these bureaucratic “Communists” who are provoking and inciting you into carnage. Show them the door! A true Communist should not impose his ideas, but should march alongside the whole toiling mass, among its ranks.

ROZHKALI, member of the Russian (Bolshevik) Communist Party

[NO. 5, MARCH 7, 1921]

#### EDITORIAL

“Field Marshal” Trotsky makes threats to the whole of free, revolutionary Kronstadt which has risen up against the absolutism of the Communist commissars.

The toilers, who have thrown off the shameful yoke of Communist Party dictatorship, are threatened with a military rout by this brand new Trepoff.<sup>2</sup> He promises to bombard Kronstadt's peaceable population. He repeats Trepoff's order: "Don't spare the bullets." He must have a goodly supply for the revolutionary sailors, workers and Red soldiers.

#### TALKS ABOUT A DELEGATION

The Provisional Revolutionary Committee has received the following wireless telegram from Petrograd:

Inform Petrograd by wireless whether some delegates from the soviet, chosen from among non-party and Party members can be sent from Petrograd into Kronstadt on a fact-finding visit.

The Provisional Revolutionary Committee immediately replied by wireless:

Wireless telegram to the Petrograd Soviet—Having received the Petrograd soviet's wireless message "whether some delegates from the soviet, chosen from among non-party and Party members can be sent from Petrograd into Kronstadt on a fact-finding visit," we hereby inform you that:

We have no confidence in the independence of your non-party delegates.

We suggest that, in the presence of a delegation of ours, non-party delegates be elected from the factories, Red units and sailors. To these you may add fifteen percent of Communists. It would be a good idea if, by return, we might have 18:00 hours on March 6 as the departure date for Kronstadt's representatives to Petrograd and Petrograd delegates to Kronstadt. Should it not be possible to reply by that time, we request that you let us know the date and the reasons for delay.

Transportation will have to be arranged for the delegation from Kronstadt.

THE PROVISIONAL REVOLUTIONARY COMMITTEE

#### WE WREAK NO VENGEANCE

The Communist dictatorship's oppression of the toiling masses has sparked perfectly natural indignation and resentment in the population. By reason of

this state of affairs, a few individuals linked to the Communists were boycotted or dismissed. This should no longer be the case. We seek no vengeance: we defend our workers' interests. We must act with a level head and eliminate only those who, through sabotage or a slander campaign, hinder the restoration of the power and rights of the toilers.

We Red soldiers of the Red Army from the "Krasnoarmeyetz" fort are with the Revolutionary Committee, body and soul. We will defend the Committee, the workers and the peasants to the finish.

Let no one believe the lies of the Communist proclamations dropped from airplanes. We have neither generals nor masters here. Kronstadt has always been the workers' and peasants' town and will remain such.

The Communists say that we are led by spies. That is a bare-faced lie. We have always defended the freedoms won by the Revolution, and we always will. If they want to convince us, let them send us a delegation. As for generals, they are in the Communists' service. At present, when the fate of the country is at stake, we, who have taken power into our own hands and entrusted supreme command to the Revolutionary Committee, declare to the whole garrison and all toilers that we are ready to die for the freedom of the laboring people. Freed from the Communist yoke and the terror of these past three years, we would rather die than retreat a single step.

The KRASNOARMEYETZ FORT detachment

### [NO. 6, MARCH 8, 1921]

#### FIRST "COMMUNIQUÉ"

At 6:45 P.M., the Communist batteries in Sestroretsk and Lissy Noss became the first to open fire on the Kronstadt forts.

The forts accepted the challenge and quickly reduced those batteries to silence.

Whereupon it was Krasnaya Gorka that opened fire. To a worthy reply from the battle-ship 'Sebastopol.' Sporadic artillery fire ensued.

On our side, two Red soldiers have been wounded and admitted to hospital. No material damage.

Kronstadt, March 7, 1921

## THE FIRST SHOT

They have started to bombard Kronstadt. Well, we are ready for them! Let us have a trial of strength!

They are in a hurry to act. Understandably so: for all of the Communists' lies, the Russian toilers are beginning to grasp the grandeur of the work of liberation upon which revolutionary Kronstadt has embarked after three years of slavery.

The executioners are uneasy. Soviet Russia, victim of their ghastly aberration, is breaking out of their prison. And by the same token, they are being forced to surrender their domination over the laboring people. The Communists' government has sent up a distress signal. The eight day life of free Kronstadt is proof of their impotence.

A little while longer, and a proper response from our glorious ships and our revolutionary forts will sink the ship of the soviet pirates who have been forced to enter the lists against a revolutionary Kronstadt flying the flag reading: "Power to the soviets and not to the parties."

## LET THE WORLD KNOW!

To all. . . all. . . all.

The first cannon shot has just been fired. "Field Marshal" Trotsky, stained with the blood of the workers, was first to open fire upon revolutionary Kronstadt which rose up against the Communists' autocracy in order to restore authentic soviet power.

Without having spilled one single drop of blood, we Red soldiers, sailors and workers of Kronstadt have shrugged off the Communist yoke. We have allowed those of their people living among us to keep their lives. Now, they wish to impose their power on us again under the threat of artillery.

Wishing no bloodshed, we asked that non-party delegates from the Petrograd workers be sent here so that they might understand that Kronstadt is fighting for soviet power. But the Communists concealed our request from the Petrograd workers and opened fire: the supposedly worker and peasant government's usual answer to the demands of the laboring masses.

Let the workers of the whole world know that we, the defenders of the power of soviets, will watch over the gains of the social Revolution.

We will conquer or perish beneath the ruins of Kronstadt, fighting for the righteous cause of the working masses.

The toilers the world over will sit in judgment of us. The blood of the innocents will be upon the heads of the Communists, savage madmen drunk on power.

Long live the power of the soviets!  
The Provisional Revolutionary Committee

LIBERATED KRONSTADT CALLING THE  
WORKING WOMEN OF THE WORLD

Today is a world-wide holiday: the feast of the working woman. From amid the boom of cannons and the explosions of shells fired by the Communist foes of the toiling people, we workers of Kronstadt send our fraternal greetings to the working women of the world: greetings from free, revolutionary Kronstadt.

We hope that you will soon achieve your emancipation from all forms of violence and oppression. Long live the free revolutionary working women!

Long live the world-wide social Revolution!

The Provisional Revolutionary Committee

CALM PREVAILS IN KRONSTADT

Yesterday, March 7, the toilers' enemies, the Communists, opened fire on Kronstadt.

The population greeted this bombardment courageously. The workers rushed to arms with a will! It was plain that the working population of the town lived in perfect accord with its Provisional Revolutionary Committee.

In spite of the opening of hostilities, the Committee saw no point in declaring a state of siege. Indeed, what was there to fear? Certainly not its own Red soldiers, sailors, workers or intellectuals! By contrast, in Petrograd, under the state of siege in force there, one is not allowed on the streets after seven o'clock. Which is understandable: the impostors have reason to fear their own laboring population.

THE AIMS FOR WHICH WE FIGHT

In making the October Revolution, the working class had hoped to secure its emancipation. But out of it came an even greater enslavement of the individual human being.

The power of the police-backed monarchy passed into the hands of usurpers, the Communists, who, instead of leaving freedom to the people, reserved

for it instead fear of the Cheka's jails, the horrors of which far exceed the methods of the tsarist gendarmerie.

At the end of many a long year of struggles and suffering, the toiler in soviet Russia has received nothing but insolent orders, bayonet blows and the whistling bullets of the Cheka's "Cossacks." In fact, Communist power has replaced that glorious emblem of the toilers, the hammer and sickle, with another symbol: the bayonet and prison bars, which has allowed the new bureaucracy, the Communist commissars and functionaries, to carve out a peaceable carefree existence for themselves.

But the most abject and most criminal thing of all is the spiritual slavishness introduced by the Communists; their hand reaches out even to thought, to the toilers' moral life, forcing everyone to think in accordance with their prescription only.

With the aid of State-run trade unions, they shackled the worker to his machine and turned work into a new slavery, instead of making it pleasant.

To the protests of the peasants which extended even to spontaneous uprisings; to the demands of workers forced by their very living conditions to have recourse to strikes, they replied with mass shootings and a savagery that the tsarist generals might have envied.

The toilers' Russia, which led the way in hoisting the red banners of the emancipation of labor, has turned renegade on the blood of the martyrs, all to the greater glory of Communist rule. In that sea of blood, the Communists are drowning all of the great, beautiful promises and potential of proletarian Revolution.

It was becoming more and more plain, and has now become apparent that the Communist Party is not, as it pretends to be, the toilers' champion. The interests of the working class are foreign to it. Having achieved power, it has but one concern: not to lose it. And it shrinks from no method: defamation, deceit, violence, murder and reprisals against rebels' families.

But the martyred toilers' patience has run out.

Here and there the country has been lighted by the fires of revolts in the struggle against oppression and violence. Workers' strikes have proliferated.

The Bolshevik sleuths are vigilant. All sorts of steps are taken to thwart and smother the ineluctable third revolution.

In spite of everything, it has arrived. Carried out by the toiling masses themselves. Communism's generals can see clearly that it is the people that has risen in revolt, persuaded as it is of their betrayal of the ideas of the revolution.



Fearing for their own skins and knowing that they cannot hide anywhere from the toilers' wrath, the Communists try to terrorize the rebels, with the help of their "Cossacks," by means of imprisonment, execution and other atrocities. Under the yoke of Communist dictatorship, life itself has become worse than death.

The toiling people in revolt has realized that there can be no half measures in the struggle against the Communists and the restored system of serfdom. The Communists pretend to make concessions: they set up roadblocks in Petrograd province; they set aside ten million gold rubles for the purchase of produce abroad. But let no one kid themselves: lurking behind this bait is the mailed fist of the master, the dictator, of the master who, once calm has been restored, will exact a high price for his concessions.

No, no half measures! We must conquer or die!

Red Kronstadt, the terror of the counter-revolution, be it from left or right, has set the example.

It is here that the great new impetus was given to the Revolution. The flag of revolt against the tyranny of the past three years, against the oppression of a Communist autocracy that puts three centuries of the monarchist yoke to shame, has been unfurled here.

It is here in Kronstadt that the foundation stone was laid of the third revolution that will smash the last shackles on the toiler and open up before him the broad new avenue to socialist construction.

That new revolution will rouse the toiling masses of the Orient and Occident. For it will offer the example of fresh socialist construction as opposed to mechanical, governmental "Communist" construction. The toiling masses beyond our borders will then be persuaded by facts that everything that has thus far been cobbled together over here, in the workers' and peasants' name, was not socialism.

The first step in that direction was taken without a single shot's being fired, without one drop of blood's being spilled. The toilers have no need of blood. They will only spill it in self-defense. Despite all of the Communists' revolting deeds, we will have enough self-control to confine ourselves to isolating them from social life so as to prevent their hindering the work of revolution by means of their phony, malevolent agitation.

The workers and peasants are forging irresistibly ahead. They are leaving behind the Constituent with its bourgeois regime and the Communist Party's dictatorship with its Cheka and State capitalism tightening the noose around

the toilers' necks and threatening to strangle them. The change which has just occurred at last offers the toiling masses the chance of ensuring that they get freely elected soviets that will operate without any violent pressure from a party. That change will also enable them to revamp the State-run trade unions into free associations of workers, peasants and intellectual workers.

The police machinery of the Communist autocracy is smashed at last.

### [NO. 7, MARCH 9, 1921]

#### LISTEN, TROTSKY!

Over their radio stations, the Communists have slung cartloads of mud at the leading lights of the third revolution, who champion authentic soviet power against the commissars' usurpation and arbitrariness.

We have never concealed that from the population of Kronstadt. At all times, in our *Izvestia*, we have reported these slanderous attacks.

We had nothing to fear. Citizens knew how the revolt had come about and whose handiwork it was. The workers and Red soldiers know that our garrison includes neither generals nor White Guards.

For its part, the Provisional Revolutionary Committee sent Petrograd a wireless message demanding the release of the hostages held by the Communists in their over-crowded prisons—workers, sailors and families of the same—and that political detainees be set free, too.

Our second message suggested that nonparty delegates be sent to Kronstadt so that, having seen for themselves what was afoot among us, they might tell the truth to the toiling masses of Petrograd.

Well now, what have the Communists done? They have concealed that message from the workers and Red soldiers.

A few of "Field Marshal" Trotsky's troop units, having defected to us, have passed on some Petrograd newspapers. Those newspapers contain not one word about our wireless messages!

And yet, not so long ago, these tricksters, used to playing with a marked deck, were shouting that one should have no secrets from the people, not even diplomatic secrets!

Listen, Trotsky! For as long as you can give the slip to the people's verdict, you can go on shooting innocents in batches. But you cannot gun down the truth. It will eventually find a way through. You and your "Cossacks" will then be forced to give an account of yourselves.

## REORGANIZING THE TRADE UNIONS

Under the Communists' dictatorship, the tasks of the trade unions and their steering commissions have been cut to a minimum.

During the revolutionary trade union movement's four years in "socialist" Russia, our trade unions had no opportunity to act as class bodies.

Not that that was in any way their fault. It was, in fact, the result of the ruling party's policy of seeking to educate the masses employing the centralistic, "Communist" approach.

When all is said and done, the trade unions' work was reduced to utterly useless minutes and correspondence, the object of which was to establish the membership figures of such and such a union and then to record the specialty of each member, his standing *vis-à-vis* the Party, etc.

As for economic activity along cooperative lines, or cultural education of the unions' worker membership, not a thing was done in those areas. Which was quite understandable. For, had the unions been given the right to engage in far-reaching independent activity, the entire centralist approach to construction followed by the Communists would, of necessity, have fallen apart, which would have resulted in a demonstration of the uselessness of the commissars and the "political sections."

It was these shortcomings that alienated the masses from the trade unions, the latter having eventually turned into a gendarmerie corps hobbling all authentic trade union activity by the toiling masses. Once the Communist Party dictatorship has been overthrown, the role of the union is going to have to change radically. The trade unions and their steering commissions, once re-elected, will have to tackle the great and urgent task of educating the masses for the economic and cultural renewal of the country. They will have to breathe a new and cleansing breath into their activities. They will have to become genuine vehicles of the people's interests.

The soviet Republic cannot be strong unless its administration is handled by the laboring classes, with the aid of revitalized trade unions.

To work, then, comrade workers! Let us build the new trade unions, free of all influence: therein lies our strength.

[NO. 9, MARCH 11, 1921]

TO THE WORKER AND PEASANT COMRADES

Kronstadt has launched a heroic struggle against the Communists' odious power, on behalf of the emancipation of the workers and peasants.

Everything that is happening now was prepared by the Communists themselves: by their bloody, ruinous work over the past three years. Letters reaching us from the countryside are filled with complaints and curses on the Communists. Our comrades returning off furlough, seething with anger and indignation, have told us of horrors perpetrated by the Bolsheviks right across the land. In addition, we ourselves have seen, heard and felt everything that has been happening around us. A tremendous, heart-rending cry of distress was reaching us from the fields and towns of our vast Russia. It ignites outrage in our hearts and steels our arms.

We do not want a return to the past. We are neither lackeys of the bourgeoisie nor hirelings of the Entente. We are for the power of all toilers, but not for the unrestrained tyrannical authority of any party.

There are no Koltchaks,<sup>3</sup> no Denikins and no Yudenitches operating in Kronstadt: Kronstadt is in the hands of the toilers. The good sense and consciousness of simple sailors, soldiers and workers of Kronstadt have at last found the words and the path that will allow us all to escape from the impasse.

To begin with, we sought to sort everything out by peaceable means. But the Communists have refused to back down. More than Nicholas II, they cling to their power, ready to drown the whole country in blood, if only they can rule as autocrats.

And now, here, we have Russia's evil genius, Trotsky, hurling our brothers against us. Hundreds of their corpses already litter the ice around the fortress. For four days now the fighting has been bitter, the cannons booming, the blood of brothers flowing. For four days, the heroes of Kronstadt have successfully repulsed all enemy attacks. Trotsky hovers over our heroic town like a sparrow-hawk. But Kronstadt still stands. We are all ready to die rather than surrender.

Our enemies operate with "kursanty," special Communist guards and troops drafted in from far away, misinformed and threatened by machine-guns in their rear. Comrade workers! Kronstadt fights on your behalf, on behalf of the famished, on behalf of the ragged and homeless. As long as the Bolsheviks remain in power, we will not see a better life. You support all that.

In the name of what? Just so that the Communists may live in comfort and so that the commissars may grow fat? Do they still have your confidence?

Informing the Petrograd soviet that the government had set aside millions of gold rubles for the purchase of various items, Zinoviev reckoned that it worked out at 50 rubles per worker. Behold, comrade workers, the price at which the Bolshevik clique hopes that it can buy each of you.

Comrade peasants! It is you whom the Bolshevik authorities have deceived and robbed the most. Where is the land that you took back from the landlords, after centuries of dreaming about it? In the hands of Communists, or worked by the sovkhozes. And as for you, you are left to gaze upon it and lick your lips over it.

They have taken from you everything that there was to take. You are marked down for pillage and utter ruination. You are worn out by Bolshevik serfdom. You have been obliged docilely to carry out the wishes of your new masters as they starve you and stop your mouths, leaving you in the filthiest poverty.

Comrades! Kronstaders have raised the banner of revolt in the hope that tens of millions of workers and peasants would answer their call.

The dawn breaking over Kronstadt must become a sun shining over the whole of Russia.

The Kronstadt eruption must breathe new life into the whole of Russia and, first and foremost, Petrograd.

Our enemies have filled their prisons with workers. But many honest, daring workers are still at large.

Comrades, stand up for the struggle against the absolutism of the Communists!

## [NO. 10, MARCH 12, 1921]

### OUR GENERALS

The Communists insinuate that generals, White Guardist officers and a priest are numbered among the members of the Provisional Revolutionary Committee.

In order to have an end of these lies once and for all, let us point out to them that the Committee comprises the fifteen members that follow:

1. Petritchenco, chief clerk aboard the "Petropavlovsk."
2. Yakovenko, telephonist, Kronstadt district.

3. Ossossoff, mechanic on the "Sebastopol."
4. Arhipoff, quarter-master mechanic.
5. Perepelkin, mechanic on the "Sebastopol."
6. Patrushev, quarter-master mechanic on the "Petropavlovsk."
7. Kupoloff, first-aid doctor.
8. Vershinin, seaman on the "Sebastopol."
9. Tugin, electrician.
10. Romanenko, guard in the naval repair yards.
11. Oreshin, employee of the 3rd Technical School.
12. Valk, joiner.
13. Pavloff, worker in the naval mine yards.
14. Baikoff, carter.
15. Kilgast, steersman.

[NO. 12, MARCH 14, 1921]

#### WE MUST FOLLOW THE PACK

We could have waited until Lenin, in the midst of the toilers' struggle for their trampled rights, stopped being a hypocrite and learned to speak the truth.

Because, as they see things, the workers and peasants made a distinction between Lenin on the one hand and Trotsky and Zinoviev on the other.

No one believed a word from Zinoviev or Trotsky, but where Lenin is concerned, confidence in him had not yet been lost.

But . . .

March 8th saw the opening of the Tenth Congress of the Russian Communist Party. Lenin reiterated there all of the lies about rebel Kronstadt. He declared that the rebellion's watchword was "freedom of trade." True, he did go on to say that "the movement was for soviets, but against the Bolsheviks' dictatorship"; but he could not resist invoking "White generals and petit-bourgeois anarchist elements."

So, by uttering rubbish, Lenin confuses himself. He lets slip the admission that the basis of the movement was the fight for soviet power and against the Party's dictatorship. But, rather troubled, he adds: "This is counter-revolution of another breed. It is extremely dangerous, however insignificant the would-be amendments to our policy may appear at first glance."

There is reason to worry. The blow struck by revolutionary Kronstadt is a hard one. The Party's leaders sense that the end of their autocracy is nigh.

Lenin's great preoccupation shines through all his speeches on Kronstadt. The word "danger" recurs constantly.

For instance, he has this to say, word for word: "We must finish off this petit-bourgeois danger which is very dangerous for us for, instead of uniting the proletariat, it disunites it: we must have maximum unity."

Yes, the Communists' chief is obliged to quiver and call for "maximum unity." For the Communists' dictatorship and the Party itself show serious fissures.

Broadly speaking, is it possible for Lenin to speak the truth?

Recently, at a Communist debate on the trade unions, he stated: "All of this bores me to death. I have had it up to here. Quite apart from my illness, I would be happy to leave it all and flee anywhere!"

But his partners will not let him flee. He is their prisoner. He has to slander as they do. And, in addition, the entire policy of the Party is put out by Kronstadt's action. For Kronstadt demands, not "freedom of trade," but true soviet power.

### [NO. 13, MARCH 15, 1921]

#### THE BUSINESS HOUSE OF LENIN, TROTSKY AND CO.

It has worked well, the business house of Lenin, Trotsky and Co.

The criminal, absolutist policy of the Communist Party in power has brought Russia to the edge of the abyss and brink of ruin. After which, you might think it would be time for it to take a back seat. Alas! it seems that the toilers have not shed enough tears and blood.

Even as the historic struggle boldly launched by revolutionary Kronstadt on behalf of the rights of the toiling people, (rights ridiculed and trampled underfoot by the Communists) raged, a flock of crows has decided to hold its "Tenth Party Congress." At which it works out how to carry on, with even more malice and success, its fratricidal work.

Their effrontery knows no bounds. Blithely they talk about "trade concessions."

Lenin very simply declares as follows:

"We are starting to operate the principle of concessions. The success of this undertaking does not depend on us. But we ought to do everything within our power." And then, he admits that the Bolsheviks have brought soviet Russia to a pretty pass: "For"—he said—"we will not be able to rebuild

the country without resorting to foreign technology if we want to catch up economically, to some extent, with other countries. Circumstances have forced us to look abroad to purchase not just machinery but also coal, which, however, we have in abundance.” He went on to say: “In future, we will still have to make further sacrifices in order to get everyday consumer goods and also what the agrarian economy needs.”

So where are the famous economic feats in the name of which the worker is turned into a slave in the State factory and the peasant laborer into a serf of the sovkhoses?

That is not all. Speaking of agriculture, Lenin promises even more “well-being,” if the Communists carry on with their “economic functionalism” (which was his expression).

“And if, one day”—he continues—“we do manage to rebuild great rural economics and big industry here and there, it will only be by imposing further sacrifices upon every producer, while offering nothing in return.”

So much for the “well-being” which the Bolsheviks’ leader dangles as a carrot before all who might docilely bear the yoke of the commissars’ absolutism.

He was fairly right, the peasant who told the Eighth Congress of Soviets: “Everything is going very well. Except, whereas we get the land, you get the bread: we get the water, but the fish is yours: the forests belong to us, but the wood belongs to you.”

That aside, the toiler need have no worry.

Lenin indeed promises “to award a few incentives to small employers, to expand a little the boundaries of the free economy.” Like the “good old seigneur,” he prepares “a few incentives” so as to clamp the toilers’ necks even tighter into the vice of the Party’s dictatorship later on. As is plain from this admission: “True, we will not be able to dispense with constraint, for the country is weary and in terrible poverty.”

There we have it plain: we may have the last shirt off the pauper’s back.

Which is how Lenin thinks of the task of construction: trade concessions at the top, taxes at the bottom.

#### THE BENEFITS OF THE “COMMUNE”

“Comrades! We are going to build a splendid new life.” That is what the Communists used to say and write.



“We’re going to destroy the world of violence, and we will build a new, socialist, quite beautiful world.” Which is how they used to serenade the people.

Let us examine the reality.

All the best houses, all the best apartments are commandeered as offices and sub-offices of Communist institutions. So only the bureaucrats are agreeably, comfortably and spaciouly accommodated. The number of habitable lodgings has fallen. The workers have stayed where they were. They now live there in dire straits, in worse conditions than before.

Houses, not being maintained, are going to wreck and ruin. The heating is out of order. Broken windows are not replaced. The roofs are falling apart and water is starting to seep through. Fences collapse. Pipes are half wrecked. Toilets are out of order and their contents invade the apartments, forcing citizens to answer their needs in the yard or in a neighbor’s place. Staircases are still unlighted: and covered in filth. The yards are full of excrement, on account of the latrines, rubbish bins, sewage outlets and spouting being neither repaired nor emptied. The streets are filthy. The pavements, which are never repaired, are grimy and slick. Walking the streets is dangerous.

To secure accommodation, one has to have a good “connection” in the lodgings office, in the absence of which, just forget it. Only the favored few have acceptable lodgings.

Things are even worse where provisions are concerned. Irresponsible, ignorant officials have let thousands of tons of produce spoil. The potatoes distributed are always frost-bitten; the meat, in the spring and summer, always “off.” Once upon a time, we were reluctant to set before the pigs that which citizens today get from the “builders of the splendid new life.”

For quite some time, it was “honest soviet fish,” herring, that saved the situation. But now even herring is turning into a rarity.

Soviet shops are worse than the factory shops of dismal memory, where the industrialists used to serve up all sorts of shoddy goods and where their slave workers could not say a thing about it.

In order to destroy family life, those who govern us have invented the collective restaurant. With what result?

The food there is even less appetizing. Before reaching the citizenry who get only the leftovers, produce is skimmed off by every conceivable means. Children’s food is a little better, but still very inadequate. Above all, there is a milk shortage. For their own sovkhoses, the Communists have requisitioned

all of the peasant population's dairy cattle. And a half of these beasts die before arriving at their destination. Milk from the surviving cattle goes primarily to those in government and then to functionaries. Only the leftovers reach the children.

But the hardest things of all to get hold of are clothing and footwear. Old clothes are worn or swapped. Virtually nothing is distributed. (For example, one of the trade unions is currently distributing buttons: one and a half buttons per head. Is that not poking fun at everybody?) As for shoes, there just aren't any to be had.

The path to the Communist paradise is a beautiful one. But can we tread it barefoot? Meanwhile, there are lots of cracks for all necessities to slip through. The associates of the so-called "cooperatives" and those in government own everything. They have their own restaurants and special rations. They can also avail of the "coupon offices" which distribute goods as the commissars deem fit.

We have finally come to realize that this "commune" has undermined and utterly disorganized productive labor. So any urge to work, any interest in work has evaporated. Shoe-makers, tailors, plumbers, etc., have thrown it all up and gone their separate ways, to work as watchmen, messengers, etc.

So much for the paradise that the Bolsheviks have set about building.

In place of the old one, a new system of arbitrariness, insolence, "cronyism," favoritism, theft and speculation has been erected—a ghastly regime wherein one is obliged to hold out one's hands to the authorities for every crumb of bread, every button; a regime wherein one is not one's own person, not free to do as one will; a regime of slavery and degradation.

## [NO. 14, MARCH 16, 1921]

### SELF-STYLED "SOCIALISM"

In making the October Revolution, the sailors, Red soldiers, workers and peasants shed their blood for the power of the soviets, to build a toilers' Republic.

The Communist Party has taken careful note of the aspirations of the masses. Having etched upon its banners attractive slogans that evoke the toilers' enthusiasm, it drew them into the struggle and promised to lead them into the splendid reign of socialism which the Bolsheviks alone are supposed to know how to build.

The workers and peasants of course were gripped by boundless delight. "At last, slavery beneath the yoke of the landlords and capitalists can be consigned to the mythology books," they reckoned. It looked as if free labor's time had come in the countryside, in the factories and in the workshops. It looked as if power was about to pass into the toilers' hands.

Skillful propaganda drew children of the laboring people into the ranks of the Party, where they were subjected to strict discipline.

After which the Communists, sensible of their strength, progressively eliminated from power, first of all, the other socialist denominations, and then ousted actual workers and peasants from many State positions, while continuing to govern in their name.

In this way, the Communists substituted for the power which they had usurped tutelage by commissars with all of the whimsicality of personal authority. Contrary to all reason and contrary to the toilers' wishes, they then set about doggedly building a State socialism, with slaves, instead of erecting a society founded upon free labor.

Industry being in utter disarray, in spite of "workers' control," the Bolsheviki carried out a nationalization of the factories and workshops. The worker was transformed from a capitalist's slave into the slave of the State enterprises. Soon, even that was not enough. There were plans for the introduction of the Taylor<sup>4</sup> system.

The toilers, en masse, were declared enemies of the people and lumped with the "kulaks." The highly enterprising Communists then set about ruining the peasants and launching soviet ventures, which is to say, estates belonging to that new agricultural profiteer, the State. That is the sum total of what the peasants got out of Bolshevik socialism, instead of the free labor on freed soil for which they had hoped.

In return for bread and livestock, which were requisitioned virtually in their entirety, they got Cheka raids and mass shootings. A fine system of exchange for a toilers' State: lead and bayonets instead of bread!

The life of the citizen became monotonous and deadly banal, regulated according to the prescriptions of the authorities. Instead of a life enlivened by free labor and the free evolution of the individual, there was born an unprecedented, unbelievable slavery. All independent thinking, all fair criticism of the deeds of our criminal governors became crimes, punishable by imprisonment and, often, death.

The death penalty, that disgrace to the human race, became commonplace in “the socialist homeland.”

So much for the splendid kingdom of socialism to which the Communist Party’s dictatorship has brought us.

We have had State socialism, with its soviets of hacks blithely voting for whatever the authorities and their infallible commissars dictate to them.

The watchword “Who does not work does not eat” has been amended under this splendid “soviet” regime to read “All power to the commissars!” As for the workers, peasants and brain-workers, well! they need only get on with their work in a prison-like atmosphere.

That became unbearable. Revolutionary Kronstadt has led the way in smashing its chains and ripping out the prison bars. It fights for the authentic soviet toilers’ republic where the producer himself will become the master of the products of his labors and dispose of these as he sees fit.

## PETRITCHENKO'S TESTIMONY<sup>1</sup>

I have read the correspondence that has passed between the Left Social Revolutionaries' organization on the one hand and the British Communists on the other. Also at issue in that correspondence is the question of the Kronstadt uprising of 1921.

As one who presided over the Kronstadt uprising, I feel that I have a moral duty to educate the British Communist Party's political bureau about that happening. I know that you have been briefed by Moscow, and I know too that such briefings are one-sided and partisan. It would do no harm for you to hear the other side of the story, too.

You, yourselves, have conceded that the 1921 Kronstadt uprising was not inspired by outsiders; putting this another way, that means that the patience of the toiling masses, sailors, Red soldiers, workers and peasants simply had run its course.

The people's wrath against the Communist Party dictatorship, or rather, against its bureaucracy, took the form of an uprising: so began the spilling of precious blood—it was not a matter of differences of class or caste—toilers stood on both sides of the barricades. The difference consisted solely of the Kronstadters acting in knowledge and free of constraint, whereas the attackers had been misled by the Communist Party leaders and acted under coercion. I am ready to say more to you: that Kronstadters had no stomach for taking up arms and spilling blood!

Now then, what happened that Kronstadters were forced to speak in the language of cannons with the Communist Party's dictators who styled themselves the “worker and peasant government?”

The Kronstadt sailors had an active hand in the establishment of that government: they protected it against attacks from the counter-revolution: they not only guarded the approaches to Petrograd, the heart of the world-wide revolution, but also formed military detachments for service on the countless fronts against the White Guards, starting with Kornilov and finishing with generals Yudenitch and Neklyudov. But lo! those very same Kronstadters are supposed to have suddenly become enemies of the revolution; the “worker and peasant government” has depicted them as Entente agents, French spies, stalwarts of the bourgeoisie, Social Revolutionaries, Mensheviks, etc.

It is astounding that the Kronstadters should have turned abruptly into dangerous enemies at the very moment when all threat from the generals of the counter-revolutionary army had evaporated; just when the time had come to set about rebuilding the country and reaping the fruits of October's gains, to set out one's stall in its true light and spread out one's political baggage (in that promises were not enough any more and there were promises to be delivered), when it was time to draw up a balance sheet of the revolution's gains, of which no one dared even dream while the civil war was in progress. That the Kronstadters should have turned out, right at that point, to be enemies? So, what crime had Kronstadt committed against the revolution?

Once the civil war fronts had been mopped up, the Petrograd workers reckoned that they could remind the city's soviet that it was now time to turn to their economic circumstances and switch from wartime arrangements to peace-time rule.

The Petrograd soviet took the view that this demand of the workers (a demand both harmless and essential) was counter-revolutionary. It remained deaf and dumb with regard to these demands, but embarked upon search and arrest operations against the workers, declaring them to be spies and Entente agents. These bureaucrats had been corrupted during the civil war, at a time when nobody dared resist. But they had failed to see that the circumstances had changed. The workers' response was to strike. The Petrograd soviet's fury was like that of a savage beast. Abetted by its OPRITCHNIKS,<sup>2</sup> it penned the famished, exhausted workers inside a ring of steel and used every conceivable means to force them back to work. For all their sympathy with the workers, military units (Red soldiers and sailors) did not dare stand up for them, for those in government had warned them that Kronstadt would attack anyone who dared oppose the soviet government. But on this occasion, the "worker and peasant" government did not succeed in using Kronstadt as a bogeyman. Thanks to its geographical location, adjacent to Petrograd, Kronstadt had—albeit somewhat belatedly—nonetheless discovered how things really stood in the city.

So, British comrades, you are correct in saying that the Kronstadt revolt was not inspired by anyone. And I should like to know also, what shape did the support of Russian and foreign counter-revolutionary organizations for the Kronstadters take? Let me repeat once again that the revolt did not break out at the will of any political organization; and I believe, too, that none such even existed in Kronstadt. The revolt erupted spontaneously at the wish of

the masses themselves, civilian population and garrison alike. We can see that in the resolution passed and in the make-up of the Provisional Revolutionary Committee. One cannot discern, there, the overwhelming expression of the wishes of any anti-soviet political party.

As Kronstaders saw it, everything that happened and was done was dictated by the circumstances of the moment. The rebels placed their hopes in nobody. Not the Provisional Revolutionary Committee, not the delegates' assemblies, nor the rallies—nor, indeed, was there any question of that. The Provisional Revolutionary Committee never made any move in that direction, although that had been feasible. The COMMITTEE STROVE TO CARRY OUT THE PEOPLE'S WISHES SCRUPULOUSLY. Was this a good thing or bad? I cannot tell, but the fact of the matter is that the mass steered the Committee and not the other way around.

We did not have among us any famous militants capable of seeing everything underground to a depth of three ARSHINS<sup>3</sup> and knowing everything that needs to be done in order to extract everything useful from it. The Kronstaders acted without plan or program, merely feeling their way within the parameters of their resolutions and according to circumstances. Cut off from the whole world, we had no idea what was going on outside Kronstadt, in soviet Russia or abroad. It is possible that certain people might have expected much of our insurrection, as is usually the case, but in our case their pains were in vain. We could not speculate about what would have happened had events taken a different turn, for the outcome would have been quite different from the one we had had in mind. BUT KRONSTADTERS HAD NO INTENTION OF LETTING THE INITIATIVE SLIP FROM THEIR GRASP.

In their press, the Communists have accused us of having accepted an offer of provisions and medicines from the Russian Red Cross based in Finland. We have to say that we saw nothing wrong in that offer. Not only the Provisional Revolutionary Committee, but also the assembly of delegates had given their approval to it. We looked upon it as a purely philanthropic offering of inoffensive assistance, without any ulterior motives. When we decided to admit the (Red Cross) delegation to Kronstadt, we escorted them under blindfold to our headquarters.

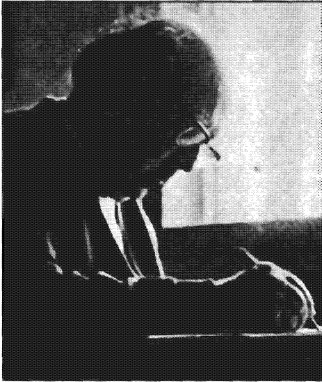
At our first meeting, we told them that we were accepting their help with gratitude, given that it came from a philanthropic organization, but that we regarded ourselves as in no way beholden to them. We acceded to their request that they second a permanent representative to Kronstadt to oversee

regular distribution of the provisions which their organization proposed to send us and which would have been for distribution primarily to the women and children. It was Captain Vilken<sup>4</sup> who stayed behind in Kronstadt: he was lodged in an apartment which was under permanent guard so that he could not budge without authorization. What danger did Vilken pose? All he could see was the morale of Kronstadt's garrison and civilian population.

Is there anything in that adding up to help from the international bourgeoisie? Or in the fact that Victor Chernov<sup>5</sup> had sent greetings to rebel Kronstadt? Does that add up to backing from the Russian and international counter-revolution? Are we really to believe that the Kronstaders threw themselves into the embrace of any anti-soviet political party? In fact, when the rebels learned that the Right had plans for their uprising, they had no hesitation in warning their comrades of the fact, as the editorial in the March 6 edition of the Kronstadt *Izvestia* bears witness.







# **ANARCHISTS BEHIND BARS**

(SUMMER 1921)



## ANARCHISTS BEHIND BARS

*Gaston Leval, born the son of a Communard in 1895 and himself a French anarcho-syndicalist militant, was a participant in the foundation congress of the Red International of Labor Unions in June–August 1921 in the wake of the third congress of the Communist International, as a delegate from the Spanish CNT. During his time in Moscow, his attention turned to the fate of imprisoned Russian anarchists.*

Once I discovered that there were so many of our comrades in prison, I arranged, together with the French syndicalist delegates to make overtures to Dzerzhinsky, the People's Commissar for the Interior, implicitly obedient to Lenin. Being wary of me, my fellow delegates chose Joaquin Maurin<sup>1</sup> to speak on behalf of the CNT delegation. Maurin reported back on their first audience. At the sight of the list of the prisoners whose release was being sought, Dzerzhinsky<sup>2</sup> blanched, then went red with fury, arguing that these men were counter-revolutionaries in cahoots with the White generals; he accused them of having derailed trainloads of Red Army troops and of being responsible for the deaths of thousands of soldiers, in the Ukraine especially.

We were unable to probe any further into what had happened and Maurin and his friends among our delegation won the day. Not that I gave up, any more, indeed, than a number of delegates of other nationalities did, and we pressed on with our lobbying. Not a single piece of evidence had been adduced to back Dzerzhinsky's claims, not so much as one criminal indictment. No indictment, no trial, no judges, let alone defense lawyers—there was none of that. Whatever the "people's commissar," whose job it was to defend the regime, might have said, this was a case of arbitrary imprisonment.

We persisted. As my fellow delegates took the line that it was hopeless and banished the matter from their minds, they at last left it to me to take formal charge of it. The people's commissar for Public Education, Lunacharsky,<sup>3</sup> visibly discomfited by the role he was forced to play in the name of party discipline, was despatched to us on two occasions but, being unable to take any decisions, he merely acted as an intermediary, receiving and passing on requests and responses. After Lunacharsky, they sent us Ulrikh,<sup>4</sup> a significant

and mysterious bigwig from the prosecution office. This again was a waste of time and the weeks slipped by. They were assuredly determined to wear us down.

I regularly went to see Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman. Through their two rooms paraded the wives whose spouses were imprisoned. Worried and distraught, they sometimes broke down in tears. And I listened to the odyssey, the lives of these men who had fallen victim to the so-called socialist State. Victor Serge himself, who from time to time sincerely kept a foot in both camps and carried on writing articles in the western press in favor of the regime, filled me in on their background. Maximoff was an anarcho-syndicalist theoretician of stature, incapable of perpetrating an act of anti-soviet sabotage. Yartchuk was the erstwhile secretary of the soviet in Kronstadt where Zinoviev had sought refuge when Kerensky ordered him arrested. Voline, the *bête noire* of government circles, was an anarcho-syndicalist theoretician, a lecturer, a gifted writer who had been living in exile at the time of the revolution against tsarism. Such and such was now in prison, someone else banished to Siberia. And all of these authentic revolutionaries were now languishing in jails which some of them, such as Maria Spiridonova,<sup>5</sup> had occupied years earlier.

We sought permission to visit them and although we were delegates from trade union organizations which it was hoped to win over, permission was denied. I remember that in the Spain of Alfonso XIII, where I had come from, and during one of the most fearful repressions that country ever experienced, aside from the Franco era, we were still able to visit prisoners, unless they were being held in secret. In the Modelo prison in Valencia and in the one in Barcelona, my friends had had no difficulty in seeing me. They had only to ask for me during visiting hours and the warders would escort me down to the visiting room. In the villages of Spain, through which I passed later, I was always able to visit my imprisoned comrades. In the Russia of Lenin and Trotsky, this was impossible. Most of the delegates did not press the matter—not knowing what else to do—but I stuck to my guns. Accusations were not enough. We were offered no proof and there were too many valid challenges contradicting the authorities' allegations. I was intent upon having proof.

Among the female comrades whom I met at Emma Goldman's place was Olga Maximoff,<sup>6</sup> a thin, thirty-year-old brunette of average height, drained by her ordeals. She had met her spouse while a deportee in Siberia under tsar-

ism, his circumstances being the same. She suggested to me that I enter the Butyrky prison the next day to speak with our comrades. I would go in with her and other prisoners' wives and would be supplied with Russian papers to get me past the guards. I might fail, but I agreed to chance it. The following day, off I went with four comrades who were traveling as a party. Their bare feet slipped upon the small cobbles and gravel of the city streets. Two of them carried, hanging from their shoulders, a huge canvas bag containing a few provisions obtained with great difficulty. The youngest of them, Yartchuk's wife, had fought on the barricades in Petrograd and Moscow, in order to bring down first tsarism and then the Kerensky government.

At the entrance to the prison, there was a female sentry on duty. She knew my female comrades and barely glanced at their visiting permits. I handed her my papers without uttering a word and she returned them to me with the comment "Da," to which I responded with a smile. Two of the women engaged her in conversation about something while I wandered off with the others.

We crossed a courtyard and entered the visiting room. The comrades called out the names of the prisoners whom they wished to see, Voline included. The gap between the visitors and the inmates was no bar to almost direct contact, and no member of staff, or policeman, listened in on the conversations, which, for me, was confirmation that this was a case of preventive detention, with no inquiry and no court proceedings involved.

In came the prisoners. "This is Gaston Leval," one of the women told Voline, a man of average height, around forty-five-years of age, wearing a black beard and with the splendid head of a Jewish intellectual.

My name was known to him because he had heard tell of me. Effusively, he shook my hand, speaking to me in very correct French. Then, at the risk of startling him and looking a bit ridiculous, but because I was keen to conduct an utterly impartial investigation, I asked him to brief me in detail about what he had been up to since his return to Russia.

Over an hour or an hour and a half, with painstaking precision, while I made notes, Voline explained his work as a propagandist and fighter. After a tour of the prison system, Voline had wound up in Butyrky. He related his odyssey to me in a very detailed manner, rehearsing the facts, dates, names, towns and villages. And, along with the rest of the prisoners, he demanded a public trial.

(...) I returned to the Lux Hotel, determined to carry on the campaign to release my comrades. But by the time the congress of the Red International of

Labor Unions opened, we had not moved forward by a single concession, promise or hope. On five or six occasions already, we had met with delegates from the Soviet authorities, and on every occasion, relations had been broken off or suspended without result. They were sticking to the tactics of attrition.

Then the comrades in the Butyrky embarked upon a hunger strike. They smuggled out a manifesto written in French in which they asked syndicalist delegates to lobby the Russian authorities on behalf of their release and freedom of thought and expression for all revolutionaries. But the disheartened delegates to whom they appealed merely deplored the strike which was an embarrassment to them. Three, four and five days passed. I could do nothing at the congress. Marginalized by my fellow-delegates and unused as I was—on account of the clandestine activity to which I had been condemned thus far—to maneuvers and counter-maneuvers, commissions and backstairs lobbying, I was reduced to inactivity and powerlessness. Although more coherent and, for the most part, oppositionist, the French delegation was likewise unable to do much more. Our comrades pressed on with their hunger strike. We were told that in Orel and in other towns whose names I cannot now recall, there were similar strikes and that two or three of the strikers had perished.

Which was not impossible, for all of Russia's jails were bulging with prisoners who had been prompted to protest by the international congresses, in the hope that their voices might reach beyond the borders of Bolshevik Russia. What else was there for them to do?

Five days, six days, seven days. One or two delegates made isolated efforts but all to no avail. At Emma Goldman's and Alexander Berkman's apartments could I still see our comrades' womenfolk, distraught and tormented and occasionally in tears in that news of executions might arrive at any time. Olga Maximoff arrived to tackle me again at the congress and, knowing no French, she tugged at my jacket while repeating in tones of supplication and with pleading eyes that I can still hear and see: "Comrade Leval, Comrade Leval!"

Seven days, eight days, nine days! We were distraught, not knowing where to turn. And I found the opposition delegates powerless and disheartened. Others, powerless to do anything, even took our comrades to task for having exploited their presence and placed them in an uncomfortable position.

Finally, on the eleventh day, after one final plea from dear, good Olga Maximoff, I managed to persuade two or three delegations at the congress to make a supreme effort. Others followed suit. Shortly afterwards, around

fifteen of us set off for the Kremlin. We were off to speak with the master of Russia, Lenin.

Arriving outside one of the perimeter gates at the Kremlin, we ran into the guards. One of us, Michel Kneller,<sup>7</sup> a Russian-speaker, explained our desire to see “tovaritch” Lenin. Note was taken of our names and of the foreign delegations represented. Telephone calls, waiting. After a quarter of an hour, a positive response. Two troopers, Chekists no doubt, escorted us through the maze of streets. We passed palaces and sumptuous mansions and chapels in the ancient residence of Rurik.<sup>8</sup> Outside the building where Lenin was, we bumped into another guard who refused to let us proceed any further. We explained who we were. But he had had no orders. We had to write another note re-applying for an audience with comrade Lenin, who sent us, in reply, another note in rather flawed French, asking us to be specific as to the object of our visit and apologizing for the fact that he could not receive us, being swamped with work. We scribbled a further note, signed by every one of us in turn. We represented around ten foreign trade union organizations, which must have counted for something in the reckonings of the tactician who missed nothing. And back came the Chekist trooper, bearing, at last, one last note from Lenin, who agreed to see us.

We were shown up to the first floor, into a room where we waited for a long time, curious and on edge. Then, a door opened behind us and Lenin appeared, quite small, with a Mongoloid face, eyes squinting and grinning in icy irony.

One by one, he shook hands with us all, asking our name and the delegation to which we belonged. And while he questioned us, and we answered, he fixed us in his amused, penetrating gaze with disconcerting indifference.

Then, he invited us to go through to an adjoining room and be seated around a huge rectangular table. He took his own seat. Tom Mann,<sup>9</sup> the English trade union delegate and the most prominent figure among us, sat near him and spelled out, in English, the purpose of our visit. We had made up our minds to seek, not just the release of our comrades jailed in the Butyrky, but of all left-wing revolutionaries. In English, Lenin answered our spokesman who heard him out attentively, his face all intelligence, smiling and ruddy: in the end, seemingly convinced, he nodded his agreement. Whereupon the master of the Kremlin translated his reply into French.

He reiterated the charges made by Dzerzhinsky, announcing that our overtures were out of place. Those in prison were not true anarchists nor ideal-



ists—just bandits abusing our good intentions. The evidence for this was that there were anarchists, real ones, collaborating with the Bolsheviks and holding official positions. And he came to Voline “who, with Makhno, has had trains derailed in the Ukraine and butchered thousands of Red Army soldiers and allied himself with the White general, Denikin, against the Bolsheviks.”

On this particular matter, I was in possession of rather detailed information. Among other things, the testimony of one Red Army general who had been in the Ukraine when these things had happened and who had talked at length with our delegation in one of the rooms at the Lux Hotel. He had been categorical: “Makhno has never allied himself with the Whites against us. At times, he fought the Whites and us simultaneously, but it cannot be said that he was in cahoots with the Whites.” I remember too that Voline had been in charge of propaganda and cultural affairs in districts recaptured from the Austro-Hungarian armies and counter-revolutionary generals and not of directing military operations. And if Makhno had fought the Red army, it was because Trotsky had attacked the Ukrainian revolutionary forces unwilling to kowtow to Bolshevik despotism. For, when all was said and done, the Communist Party was one of the revolutionary parties and the others had a right to defend themselves against its attempts to ride roughshod over everyone.

So I interrupted Lenin, not abruptly but clearly and firmly. I had, I told him, spoken with Voline in the Butyrky prison “to which I had gained access perfectly legally, I might add.” (Lenin made a gesture indicating “very well, I do not doubt it”). And I repeated, item by item, all that I knew of my imprisoned comrade’s activities. I talked for a quarter of an hour, citing dates, facts and names. Lenin heard me out attentively, eyes squinting and with a long face which made him look somewhat rat-like, staring at me curiously. Once I had finished, he was visibly rattled. But, too cute to show that he had been beaten, he picked his words, and crafted his phrases and circumlocution to buy time to recover:—Yes, obviously ... if things are as you say, that is a horse of a different color ... I must seek additional information about Voline ... I was not aware of these very important details ...

He carried on falteringly, for the point—as far as he was concerned—was not to give ground. I had bushwhacked the fellow! Finally, he improvised:

As you appreciate, today we face a very special situation. Folk who yesterday were revolutionaries have become counter-revolutionaries and we are compelled to fight them. Look at Plekhanov, the founding father of socialism in

Russia. To one of our comrades who was leaving Switzerland, bound for Russia, he said: "This vermin must be crushed!" The Bolshevik State has to struggle against these new enemies. The State is a machine for which we are answerable, and we cannot allow its operation to be frustrated. Voline is highly intelligent, which makes him all the more dangerous, and we must take the most strenuous steps against him. After all, along with Makhno, he has played along with the White generals Denikin and Koltchak by having Red Army troop trains derailed.

The other delegates were less well informed than me and did not quibble. For they were *au fait* with certain things and had learned that one could not speak up without risking assassination at the hands of "White Guards" on the border. Even so, they spoke up about the matter of freedom of expression for all revolutionary denominations and for the freeing of all political prisoners, across the board. While they were talking, Lenin, just as he had done with Tom Mann, and as he had done while I was speaking, stared hard at them, ever ironic, as if entertained, moving his bald head and little beard up and down, up and down. Or else, with his right cheek resting on his hand, he seemed absorbed in examination of the ceiling. So much so that, disconcerted and realizing that it was pointless to proceed, the champion of freedom and humanity simply dried up or stopped short.

The audience lasted for around three quarters of an hour, at the end of which time Lenin announced that rights for the revolutionary opposition were out of the question. The comrades on the Politburo would certainly refuse that. All that he could do was look into the cases of the hunger strikers, but it was not up to him to decide. That was a matter for the Politburo upon which he could not, in any case, impose his view, for decisions were made democratically by a majority.

Lenin lied, and we pretended to swallow his lies in order to avoid a brutal falling-out. There was play-acting on both sides. And, at his request, I drew up a note in which we called upon "Comrade Lenin" to present to the Politburo our request that those on hunger strike in the Butyrky prison be released. Just them. Lenin promised to let us have the answer the next day, at ten o'clock, in the room of the French delegate Sirolle.<sup>10</sup> And we parted after a hand-shake, accompanied by a final probing and ironic stare.

The following day, the answer did not come until noon, which was not a good omen. Signed, not by Lenin but by Trotsky, who had the candor to

acknowledge his responsibilities. A categorical refusal to free the hunger strikers. The sole firm suggestion? That they be expelled from Russia. Followed by a lecture on the necessity of learning to take account of revolutionary responsibilities and not accede to superficial sentiments when the higher interests of the revolution were at stake.

What could we do other than accept? We could not resume our overtures to high ranking persons already approached, who would doubtless not even have agreed to receive us. And that could have backfired on our comrades to whom we passed on the solution that had been offered. On the positive side, they would get out of prison. They would be expelled from their own country—quite a symbol.

For the other prisoners, the other parties, we could do nothing now.

The congress finished a few days later. Delegates to'ed and fro'ed in the streets of Moscow. We were invited to attend theater shows. At the opera, Chalyapin sang for us: ballets were mounted for us, and there were splendid gymnastic displays on the banks of the Moskova. Few delegates took notes. But two weeks had passed and our comrades were still in prison in spite of the deal signed between the delegates and Lunacharsky, stipulating that they were to be freed and expelled from Russia. From the Russia from which some of them had had to flee in tsarist times, and where they had returned so brimful of hope when the revolution broke out. We did not trust the word of the Bolshevik leadership with whose dishonesty we were familiar, and we wondered whether they were not waiting for us to leave in order to keep our comrades, who were also impatient, behind bars.

But Trotsky had it announced to the French delegation that he would one evening call to Sirolle's room on a friendly visit. The Italian and Spanish syndicalists were alerted, and we decided to avail of the occasion to press for details about the implementation of the agreement signed.

A very handsome, intelligent, energetic and supercilious man, Trotsky showed up, took a seat in our midst and spoke in French about various aspects of the fight being waged against the White generals and the economic straits in which the new Russia found itself. Regarding bureaucracy, which we thought a frightful danger, he said that, if he could, he would load whole ships with bureaucrats and sink them in the sea without hesitation. But the problem was not that simple. He regretted that and could not prevent it.

Other matters were broached—including the revolutionary movement in France, the policy of the CGT and the treachery of the western trade union

leaders. We were in all but complete agreement, for Trotsky charmed us with his persuasive arguments and the explanations he offered. But deep-down, we were waiting for an opening to raise the topic dearest to our hearts and it seemed that he had guessed as much, for he talked unendingly of the most diverse matters. Just as he was about to leave, we raised what he assuredly had been hoping to avoid.

Whereupon he raised his eye-brows, and half-smiling, half in anger, he began by saying that it might be better not to spoil this interview by broaching our intervention on behalf of the imprisoned Russian anarchists, which was not the best thing that we had done in Russia, that we ought not to brag about it to our country's workers when we got home, that we had been deceived and that our primary duty ought to have been trust in the Soviet government. Then, changing tone and concealing his wrath from the delegates, whose smiles were visibly false, he assured us that his promise would be honored.

That seemed too vague. And with the support of Arlandis,<sup>11</sup> I asked when it would be honored, when our comrades would get out of prison.

Then I watched as Trotsky drew himself up to his full height, inflated his chest, raising his arms while clenching his fists and, in an explosion of rage, asked me, in a near scream:

Who are you to ask me, and I don't know you, when I am going to implement the decisions I have made?

Then, seizing me by the lapels of my jacket, he added, in the same tone:

We Bolsheviks have made our revolution, and what have you done? It is not your place to give us orders, and we have nothing to learn from you!

What other phrases he uttered I cannot recall now. I was so startled, surprised and dumbfounded by this outburst that, right then and there, I could not think of an answer. I will even admit that I felt the blood drain from my face. Then, I calmly told him:

No need to answer in that tone, comrade Trotsky. We are quite within our rights to ask you a question!

The other delegates stepped in, trying to calm him down. Trotsky reiterated that he would honor his word.

Before I left, I bade good-bye to many comrades still at large, all of whom were to perish in the jails or isolators that prefigured the concentration camps. I shook hands with Voline and his friends, freed from the Butyrky prison at last, and departed for Berlin, via Riga.

The revolution which had loomed after the world-wide slaughter like the dawn of liberation for the international proletariat and the whole of mankind now appeared to us as one of the deadliest threats to the future of the peoples. The methodical police terror, the Party's tightening grip upon the whole of social life, the systematic annihilation of all non-Bolshevik currents, the no less systematic extermination of all revolutionaries who thought along lines different from those of the new masters, and indeed the eradication of every hint of dissent within the Party all proved that we were on the road to a new despotism that was not merely political but also intellectual, mental and moral, reminiscent of the darkest days of the Middle Ages.



# **ANARCHISM IN THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR**



# **ANARCHISM IN THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR**

The reader will already have encountered the Spanish Revolution of 1936 (in Volume III) in connection with its experiments in social reconstruction, described at the time as collectives, but which might be referred to today as self-management.

It only remains to offer a number of readings dealing with the Spanish anarchists' political and military role in the civil war. Some of these documents relate to the years between 1919 and the revolutionary victory on July 19, 1936. There are indications of the clash between Spanish anarcho-syndicalism and Bolshevism even then.

After that, we turn to the great guerrilla Buenaventura Durruti, who, to borrow his own words, "made revolution and war simultaneously." The reader can thus get some notion of the Spanish libertarians' all too little known conception of self-discipline and revolutionary warfare. Durruti was another Makhno. Indeed, he had made the exiled Russian guerrilla's acquaintance in Paris and had been able to benefit from Makhno's advice, straight from his own lips.

Finally, we will turn to the anarchists' participation in government, in two governments in fact, the (autonomous) government of the Generalidad of Catalonia and the (central) government based first in Madrid and then in Valencia. Such participation, needless to say, flew in the face of the fundamental principles of "apolitical" anarchism, and, even in libertarian quarters, provoked heated arguments which have not abated to this very day.



# ANARCHISM IN SPAIN FROM 1919 TO 1936

## THE CNT AND THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL

*The texts below reveal that there was not always an unbridgeable gulf between the Bolshevik and the anarcho-syndicalist versions of social revolution. When the prestige of the recent October Revolution, victorious but suffering onslaughts on all sides from the world-wide reaction, stood at its highest point, the Spanish National Confederation of Labor (CNT), drawn like a moth to a lamp, made up its mind to participate, on a provisional basis at any rate, in the sessions of the Communist International in Moscow. But quite quickly, fundamental differences of outlook surfaced as Russian Bolshevism increasingly showed its sectarian, overbearing face, and the breakdown was not long in coming.*

*It is to be noted that this trend mirrored the experience of a number of French revolutionary syndicalists of the stripe of Pierre Monatte, who, after having pledged allegiance to Moscow, rather speedily came to the conclusion that they had been mistaken and distanced themselves once and for all from the Kremlin and from the French Communist Party alike.\**

## THE DECEMBER 1919 CONGRESS OF THE CNT<sup>1</sup>

The CNT's national congress was held in Madrid from December 10 to 18, 1919. It dealt with three major issues: amalgamation of the Spanish proletariat's trade union centrals (defeated by 325,955 votes to 169,125, with 10,192 abstentions), a new organizational format based upon national federations of industry (rejected by 651,472 votes to 14,008) and a statement of libertarian communist principles (carried unanimously by acclamation).

But the most important debate was the one that focused upon the stance to be adopted with regard to the Russian revolution. Several ideas had been put forward:

What action might we take to lend support to the Russian revolution and circumvent the blockade (...) by the capitalist States?

Ought we to affiliate<sup>1</sup> to the Third trade union International?

Should the Confederation affiliate forthwith to the International, and which one? Several propositions were accepted, including the following:

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\* See *Syndicalisme révolutionnaire et communisme. Les archives de Pierre Monatte* (1969).

The National Confederation of Labor declares itself a staunch defender of the principles upheld by Bakunin in the First International. It declares further that it affiliates provisionally to the Third International on account of its predominantly revolutionary character, pending the holding of the International Congress in Spain, which must establish the foundations which are to govern the true workers' International.

(...) Angel Pestaña<sup>2</sup> was charged to travel to Russia in order to attend the second congress of the Third International and communicate the decisions taken by the confederal congress.

### THE SECOND CONGRESS OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL (JUNE 1920)<sup>1</sup>

The Third International's second congress opened on 28 June 1920 in its headquarters in Moscow. Straight off, Zinoviev moved that the Spanish Confederation be accepted as a member of the Third International's Executive Committee, which was agreed.

Comrade Lozovsky,<sup>2</sup> in turn, moved that a revolutionary trade union International be organized. To that end, he read out a document which declared:

In most of the belligerent countries, most of the trade unions had been supporters of neutrality (apoliticism) during the grievous war years: they had been the slaves of imperialist capitalism and had played a poisonous role in delaying the emancipation of the toilers (...); the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie must be countered by the dictatorship of the proletariat, the only one capable of breaking the resistance of the exploiters and thereby ensure that the conquest of power by the proletariat is consolidated, as the only decisive, transitional method.

Following upon which the congress decided to:

Condemn all tactics designed to remove vanguard elements from existing trade union organizations, and instead radically to remove from the leadership of the trade union movement opportunists who had collaborated with the bourgeois by embracing the war:

(...) Wage methodical propaganda inside trade union organizations the world over, establishing within each one a communist cell which might eventually impose its viewpoint.

(...) Create an international action and campaign committee to overhaul the trade union movement. That committee will operate as an international council of labor unions in conjunction with the executive committee of the Third International, observing conditions to be prescribed by congress. That council will comprise representatives from all affiliated national labor organizations.

(...) When my turn to speak came, I stated: "Three items from the document will be the focus of a quick and concrete scrutiny, in that the organizations which I represent have espoused a stance which quite distances them from this document; those three items are:

1) Apoliticism; 2) the conquest of power; and, 3) the dictatorship of the proletariat."

(...) In effect, apoliticism is, in this document, damned by some trade union organizations, when virtually all of the trade union organizations which took a hand in the imperialist war were politicized, which runs counter to what this document asserts (...) So where is the logic in this document? The remaining two items relate to the conquest of power and dictatorship of the proletariat (...) A few words would suffice to spell out the thinking of the Confederation which I am here to represent with regard to these two matters. On this score, let me remind you that at the Confederation's first congress held in Madrid during the second fortnight of December last year, it was decided unanimously by the five hundred delegates present that the ultimate objective was the establishment of libertarian communism.

(...) Let me add a couple of words more on the article commending close collaboration with the politicized communist proletariat.

The Confederation is agreeable to cooperation with all revolutionary organizations fighting against the capitalist regime, while reserving the right, however, to do so as it sees fit. I do not think, indeed, that the Confederation would consent to act if its freedom of action were called into question (...)

There was no discussion of paragraphs one or two. In the course of discussion of paragraph three, I reaffirmed that we were apolitical and that we had to resist war by whatever means and that it was flying in the face of reason to endorse a document that condemned our action and our principles. In the end, it was agreed that the phrasing of the paragraph should be amended.

Paragraph four was the focus of protracted discussion, for several of us argued the case for complete trade union autonomy. In the end, after endless debate [the document was signed by five of the seven delegates present].

I was in a very delicate position, given that the Confederation had affiliated to the Third International. I could hardly repudiate a document which it had accepted. So I had to fall in line with the majority.

(...) However, when I came to sign that document, I wrote: Angel Pestaña “of the” National Confederation of Labor, instead of the conventional practice of signing as Angel Pestaña for the National Confederation of Labor. Thereby discharging my responsibility. When I was called as a speaker, I reminded delegates that they were already conversant with my differences with regard to the conquest of power and dictatorship of the proletariat, and that these positions were not personal to me, but reflected the Confederation’s position.

I announced that, this being the case, if the majority forced me to agree to the document as it stood, I would sign it but would first issue the following caution:

Everything having to do with conquest of political power, dictatorship of the proletariat and cooperation with the Communist political proletariat remains subject to further decisions to be made by the Confederation upon my return to Spain, and the Confederal Committee has been briefed about everything decided at this gathering.

The same thing applied to the summons due to be issued to trade union organizations the world over. It was indicated in that summons that those national and international trades’ unions, local and regional unions which accepted revolutionary class struggle, were invited to attend the conference.

I was not in agreement either with (...) this summons which (...) ruled out lots of organizations that would have liked to attend the conference but which were not in agreement with dictatorship or with the conquest of power. That, in my view, was a mistake (...)

### A “PANTOMIME” CONGRESS!

Pestaña contends that the Communists agreed to revise the phrasing of the document with regard to dictatorship of the proletariat, but while the Spanish delegate was momentarily absent, the document was issued in its original format and with Pestaña’s signature. Of the progress of the congress itself,

Pestaña says that the struggle that broke out over the appointment of a chairman took up all its attention. But he soon realized that the congress itself was a pantomime. The chair made the rules, amended propositions as it saw fit, turned the agenda upside down and tabled propositions off its own bat. The way in which it manipulated the congress was thoroughly abusive: Zinoviev delivered a speech lasting an hour and a half, even though no speech was to have exceeded ten minutes in duration.

Pestaña made to reply to that speech, but he was “guillotined” after ten minutes by the chairman brandishing a watch. Pestaña himself was criticized by Trotsky in another speech that lasted over three quarters of an hour, and when Pestaña made to reply to the attacks leveled at him by Trotsky, the chairman wound up the proceedings. He also had to register a protest at the manner in which rapporteurs were appointed. In theory, every delegate was free to table a motion, but the chair itself selected the ones that were “interesting.” Proportional voting [by delegation or delegate] had been provided for, but was not implemented. The Russian Communist Party ensured that it enjoyed a comfortable majority.

To top it all, certain important decisions were not even made in the congress hall, but were made behind the scenes. Which is how the following text came to be adopted:

In forthcoming world congresses of the Third International, the national trade union organizations affiliated to it are to be represented by delegates from each country's Communist Party.

Objections to this decision were quite simply ignored. Pestaña left Russia on September 6, 1920, after a short exchange of impressions with Armando Borghi<sup>2</sup> (...) the delegate from the Italian Syndicalist Union (USI), who returned to Italy disheartened by this unfortunate experience. But before they left Moscow, both would have been aware of the circular issued regarding the organization of the Red International of Labor Unions. If, in the forthcoming congress of the Third International, the intention was to guarantee the Communist parties ascendancy over the trade union organizations, it could be supposed that the green light would have been given for the affiliated labor organizations inside the trade union International. But this unfortunate project for a Red International of Labor Unions demonstrated the very opposite. That plan was as follows:

1. A special Committee is to be organized in each country by the Communist Party there.
2. That Committee will take charge of receiving and distributing to all trade union organizations circulars and publications from the Red International organization.
3. The Committee is to appoint the editors of the trades and revolutionary newspapers, inculcating into them the viewpoint of this International as against the rival International.
4. The Committee is to commit its own resources to intervention and debate.
5. The Committee will work in close concert with the Communist Party, though a separate body.
6. The Committee will help to convene conferences at which matters of international organization are to be discussed and will select orators with a talent for propaganda.
7. In the composition of the Committee, preference must be given to Communist comrades. Elections are to be supervised by the Communist Party.
8. In a country where this approach cannot be followed, Communist Party emissaries are to be despatched to create a similar organization.

# THE SPANISH REVOLUTION (1936)

## IN RESPONSE TO FASCISM:

### A GENERAL STRIKE!

(JULY 19, 1936)

People of Catalonia! Be on the alert! Be on a war footing! The time to act is upon us. We have spent months upon months criticizing fascism, denouncing its blemishes and issuing watchwords to get the people to rise up when the time comes against the poisonous reaction in Spain which will attempt to impose its repulsive dictatorship. People of Catalonia, that time has come: the reaction (the military, the clergy, and the large banks), all of them hand in hand, aims to introduce fascism in Spain with the aid of a military dictatorship. We, the authentic representatives of the CNT in Catalonia, consistent with our revolutionary antifascist line of conduct, cannot hesitate in these grave times and we hereby formally instruct everyone to abide by the call for a general strike the moment anyone rises in revolt, in no matter which region of Spain, while abiding by the watchwords of the National Committee. Our position remains well established and we warn that our call will go out very quickly. Remember that no one should obey a call not emanating from the Committee, that being the only way to avert the irreparable. We are passing through moments fraught with gravity. We must strike vigorously, firmly and all of us together. Let no one hold aloof! Everyone must keep in touch with one another!

It is time to remain in a state of alert and ready for action. Fascism has emerged master of the city of Seville. A revolt has occurred in Cordoba. North Africa is under fascist rule. We the people of Catalonia must be on a war footing, ready to act; now that we are facing the enemy, let everyone take up his combat post.

Let there be no pointless waste of energy nor fratricidal strife! Let us fight whole-heartedly and keep our guns handy and ready for the fray! Anyone holding back is a traitor to the cause of the people's liberation. Long live the CNT! Long live libertarian communism! In response to fascism, a general strike by revolutionaries!

—THE CNT REGIONAL COMMITTEE

## ANTIFASCISM IN POWER<sup>1</sup> (JULY 1936)

The army revolt of July 19, 1936 has had profound implications for Spain's economic life. The struggle against the clerico-militarist clan was rendered possible only through the help of the working class. Left to its own devices, the republican bourgeoisie would have been overwhelmed.

That alliance could not be confined to the realm of politics. Syndicalists and anarchists had had bad experiences with the bourgeois Republic. So it was unthinkable that they should rest content with thwarting the clerico-militarist rebellion. The initiation of changes to the economic system was to be expected. Indeed, they could not carry on putting up with economic exploitation which was, in their eyes, the root of political oppression.

These were facts known to the clergy, the military cabal and the big capitalists who had ties to the first two of these clans. They were well aware of what was at stake and what the implications were.

(...) For which reason the privileged class sided with the rebel military leaders.

Whereas the generals were the actors, the big capitalists pulled the strings while remaining in the background. Some of them were not even present in the theater of operations—Juan March, Francisco Cambó and the like were not in Spain when the rebellion broke out. From abroad they awaited the outcome of events. Had the military leaders achieved victory, their masters would have come home immediately. But in Catalonia, as in the greater part of Spain, the military revolt was smashed. And the puppet-masters stayed abroad.

(...) The choice now was either to hide behind the military, clerical and fascist faction which could employ terror in defense of the ancient privileges, or seek the protection of the armed workers, leaving the paralyzed sectors of the economy and the public services to look to their own organization and administration. It goes without saying that the liberal and socialist sector, hoisted back into power by the February 1936 elections, after two years of black reaction, was greatly upset, but the hesitancy of the bourgeois republicans, who were more or less hungry for reforms, was in the last resort overruled by the audacity of more extreme elements.

This was something completely new in Spain and in the world and it ushered in a new era in history. For the first time, an entire people had stood up to fascism. In Germany and elsewhere, parliamentary stultification and



bureaucratic fossilization of the workers' movement had assisted the rise of fascism: in Spain, the bulk of the workers' break with parliamentary methods and bourgeois politics enabled a whole people to offer resistance to the generals. Second important observation: in Spain, the distinguishing feature of development was that it plunged the country into a period of social upheavals without which these far-reaching innovations might have taken place under the aegis of some party dictatorship. Instead, change was initiated by direct participation of the broad masses in the economic process, and the burden of the requisite expropriations was assumed by the labor unions which decisively shaped the socialist construction. In political terms, the new order, primarily devised within the parameters of the war's possibilities and demands, also was not dependent upon State monopolization of power. It was rooted in democratic collaboration of very motley antifascist groupings, which had hitherto been diametrically opposed to one another.

# FAI MANIFESTO

*On July 26, the FAI Peninsular Committee broadcast this manifesto over the radio:*

People of Barcelona! Workers from every labor organization, from all left-wing parties united in the fight against fascism! In these crucial times, these historic hours for Barcelona and Spain as a whole, the Iberian Anarchist Federation (FAI), which has given generously of its blood and which has been the driving force behind the super-human heroism that secured the victory thanks to the sacrifice of many lives, also needs to make its voice heard by the masses who listen to the Radio.

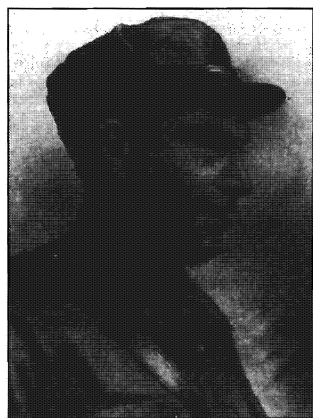
Comrades! One more push and victory will be ours. We have to keep up the historical tension in which we have been living for the past seven days. Strengthened by our rage and enthusiasm, we are invincible. The first antifascist column is advancing victoriously on Zaragoza, greeted by delirious cries of enthusiasm. Men from the liberated towns are joining the bravoos from Barcelona, who are going to take Zaragoza. Defeat for fascism in Zaragoza will be a mortal blow!

The sovereign will of the masses, who are capable of anything when, eager for success, they march in step, must set a great example in the eyes of the world. It must show what we are capable of, what we want and must demonstrate our determination and resistance. It will thereby influence the fate of the world. We appreciate that we are living in decisive times, and with equanimity and loyalty, we fight alongside our allies, of whom we require the same loyalty, the same sense of responsibility and the same heroic determination to succeed. Determination that buoyed us up during those great, unforgettable events in Barcelona.

You men and women who have taken up arms, you popular militias prompted by the most fervent enthusiasm and you obscure heroes toiling in the shadows to furnish combatants with bread and war materials, should not forget that, as Napoleon famously said as he stood before the pyramids, "Twenty centuries are gazing down on us." The whole world is watching us. Let us all be a coordinated, invincible force. Let us be simultaneously models of unparalleled bravery and honesty at every level. To battle, comrades! Let us crush the fascist hydra completely! July 19 marks the beginning of a new era: the peace of the past is no more. Amid the blood bath, we will build the

new Spain. Long live the FAI, symbol of the revolution and emblem of the violent yearning for freedom! Long live the antifascist fighting front!

—THE FAI PENINSULAR COMMITTEE



**DURRUTI (1896-1936)**  
**AND LIBERTARIAN**  
**WARFARE**



## BUENAVENTURA DURRUTI'

Buenaventura Durruti y Domingo, son of railman Santiago and Anastasia, was born on July 14, 1896 in León.

At the age of five, he started primary school, moving at the age of nine to the school in the Calle Misericordia, run by Ricardo Fanjul. His teacher's evaluation of Durruti after he completed his studies was: "A pupil with a talent for literature, unruly, but good-hearted."

At fourteen, he entered a machine shop as an apprentice, leaving at the age of eighteen, having received sound training, as he proved when he got his first job in Matallana de Torio, installing baths at the pit-head. After that, he joined the Northern railroad company as machine-fitter. This happened in 1914, when the First World War broke out.

Although León was under the thumb of the clergy and aristocracy, the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE) and General Workers' Union (UGT) had a working-class core there. Durruti belonged to the latter union, joining on the very day he became a wage-slave. His rebellious nature, because of which he was forever ready to confront injustice, ensured that he was always thought well of by his workmates and it made him popular in the mining towns. He took part in trade union meetings and spoke inside the workplaces, where his militant, pugnacious mentality took shape. It was then that the revolutionary strike of August 1917 erupted; in León, it ended with workers being sacked and their leaders persecuted. The León branch of the National Confederation of Labor (CNT) also participated in the strike. Durruti was drawn to the pugnaciousness of these men and joined that trade union grouping, remaining with it for the rest of his life. Sacked from the railroad workshops, black-listed by the employers in León, he was forced into exile and settled in Gijón, a revolutionary hub in the North of Spain and the center of the anarcho-syndicalist influence in the Asturias region. There, he struck up a friendship with Manuel Buenacasa,<sup>2</sup> who educated him to anarchist theory. After a two month stay in Gijón, he was forced out to France, in that it was, for one thing, impossible for him to find work, and for another, he had failed to report for his military service, although he had reached the age of twenty-one.

In Paris, he came under the influence of three people: Sébastien Faure, Louis Lecoin and Émile Cottin.<sup>3</sup> These men were to remain forever associated with his life.

From friends who had stayed in Spain, he received news. The breath of revolution sweeping Europe prompted his return to Spain at the beginning of 1920. In San Sebastian, he found Manuel Buenacasa, who was the general secretary of the CNT Construction Union there. Within a few days of his arrival, he began work as a mechanic, which enabled him to strike up a friendship with other worker militants from Barcelona, Madrid and Zaragoza. The groundwork for an anarchist group had been laid in San Sebastian and Durruti's first affiliation was to the LOS JUSTICIEROS (Avengers) group. But the population of San Sebastian was one of those to which "nothing ever happened," and Durruti decided to move on. Buenacasa gave him a letter of introduction for Angel Pestaña, the then general secretary of the CNT National Committee, who was in Barcelona.

He stopped over in Zaragoza, where the atmosphere was heavy with labor disputes. Cardinal Soldevila, along with the governor of Zaragoza, had brought in a gang of hired killers (PISTOLEROS) from Barcelona, to assassinate CNT militants and finish off the CNT in Zaragoza. There was a violent backlash and one group of CNT militants, including Francisco Ascaso,<sup>4</sup> was incarcerated in the Predicadores prison to await sentencing to lengthy terms. This happened to coincide with the arrival of Durruti and his friends in Zaragoza. The prisoners were released while the strife escalated to new heights. In this climate, Durruti, a close friend of Ascaso and of Torres Escartin,<sup>5</sup> made up his mind in January 1922 to go and live in Barcelona.

Like Zaragoza, Barcelona just then was a battle-field. PISTOLEROS had targeted labor leaders and were gunning them down in the streets. In the face of this onslaught, which had the backing of the employers and police, trade unions could not but reply in kind.

The struggle operated like a filtering process, sifting out the best, and this led to the formation of Durruti's new group, this time called LOS SOLIDARIOS. Men like Garcia Oliver, Gregorio Sobreviela,<sup>6</sup> etc., joined the new group which soon became the axis of the battle against gangsterism and the bosses, thanks to the solidarity of its members. On March 10, 1923, Salvador Seguí,<sup>7</sup> a very famous militant, great public speaker and superb organizer, was murdered. Around this time, militant anarchism was looking to launch a more homogeneous organization, and Zaragoza's LIBRE ACU-

ERDO anarchist group summoned an anarchist conference for the month of April in Madrid.

Durruti traveled to Madrid with the dual mission of attending the conference and speaking to the comrades imprisoned following the assassination of Eduardo Dato<sup>8</sup> in 1921. A price having been placed on his head, he made the prison visit to the journalist Mauro Bajatierra, held as an accessory in the Dato case, under an alias. He attended the conference and was arrested as it concluded, on suspicion of unlawful activity, but freed a few days later. The inspector by whom he was arrested (who was not aware of his true identity) was disciplined by the minister of the Interior, following which the Barcelona chief of police pointed out that “the Madrid inspector’s lack of experience had allowed the terrorist individual Durruti to escape justice.”

In Barcelona, a National Revolutionary Committee was set up to orchestrate an insurrection. One of the committee members was Sobreviela. This was a time when the CNT had to contend with countless difficulties: it had no money, the cream of its membership was in prison or on the run. In the wake of Seguí’s murder, gangsterism prevailed in the Catalan capital as well as in other towns. It was at this juncture that the LOS SOLIDARIOS group despatched envoys to several corners of the Peninsula: Zaragoza, Bilbao, Seville and Madrid. There were tremendous nation-wide upheavals between May and June 1923. In Zaragoza, Cardinal Soldevila was executed. In the wake of that execution, Francisco Ascaso and Torres Escartin were indicted. Only Ascaso managed to escape.

Fernando Gonzalez Regueral, one-time governor of Bilbao, the stalwart of employer-subsidized gangsterism, was executed in León one fiesta night.

The groundwork was laid for insurrection, the manpower was ready, but weapons were in short supply. The National Revolutionary Committee had bought some in Brussels and loaded them aboard shipping in Marseilles, but these guns turned out to be inadequate, and for that reason, in June 1923, Durruti and Ascaso set out from Bilbao to purchase a sizable consignment. They procured some from an arms plant in Eibar, through the good offices of an engineer. The consignment was shipped out, bound for Mexico, but, once on the high seas, the ship’s captain was to await instructions to divert to the straits of Gibraltar and put the arms ashore in Barcelona, without putting into port. Time passed very quickly. The factory was slow to meet the order, and unfortunately the weapons only reached Barcelona after General Primo de Rivera had mounted his *coup d’état* in September 1923. Given that landing



its cargo was impossible, the ship was forced to make its way back to Bilbao to return the weapons to the factory.

Gregorio Sobreviela had been murdered (...) Ricardo Sanz<sup>9</sup> had been sentenced to hard labor, as had Garcia Oliver. The group had been dismantled. Gregorio Jover,<sup>10</sup> Segundo Garcia, Durruti and Ascaso were at large, but it was very dangerous for them to stay in Spain, which is why they decided to go into exile.

Their stay in France was none too long, just long enough to devise a propaganda project in conjunction with Italian, French and Russian exile militants, the upshot of which was the launch of the *Librairie internationale*, the principal mission of which was to promote ideological and campaign literature as well as a trilingual (Italian, French, Spanish) review. Towards the end of 1924, Durruti and Ascaso left for Cuba (...) There they embarked upon a campaign of agitation in favor of the Spanish revolutionary movement. This was the first time that Durruti and Ascaso ever addressed the public. Durruti, it turned out, was a popular spokesman. They soon had to quit the country, being sought by the police as dangerous agitators, and they began to live a topsy-turvy existence. They were forever on the move, with more or less short stays in Mexico, Peru and Santiago de Chile, before a slightly longer sojourn in Buenos Aires, where, in spite of everything, they found themselves in danger. They left for Montevideo (Uruguay), from where they embarked on a ship bound for Cherbourg. But, once on the high seas, the ship was forced to change course several times. It was later dubbed the "ghost ship." In the end, they arrived in the Canary Islands, where they went ashore, only to embark upon another ship bound for England. They put ashore clandestinely in Cherbourg in April 1926. From there, they traveled to Paris, where they lodged in a hotel in the Rue Legendre. It was as they emerged from that hotel that they were arrested by French police one morning. The formal grounds for arrest was: "having conspired against the king of Spain, Alfonso XIII, due to visit the French capital on July 14."

In October that year, they appeared before the criminal court charged with unlawful possession of weapons, rebellion and breaches of the law on aliens. During the trial, they declared that they reserved:

the right to do all in their power to combat the dictatorial regime prevailing in Spain and that, to that end, they had intended to seize the king, Alfonso XIII, so as to contrive the downfall of the monarchy in their country.

Argentina applied for the extradition of Durruti, Ascaso and Gregorio Jover. For its part, Spain did likewise, accusing them of having killed Cardinal Soldevila. The French government was ready to accede to Argentina and Spain. At the time, the French Anarchist Union was leading a campaign seeking the release of Sacco and Vanzetti, who were facing the electric chair in the United States. A further campaign was launched, headed by Louis Lecoin, Ferandel<sup>11</sup> and Sébastien Faure, to press for the release of the three Spanish anarchists, who were ardently defended during the trial by Louis Lecoin. Indeed, Lecoin mobilized French political and intellectual circles as well as the working class. There was great agitation in Paris. Several newspapers backed the campaign, and in July 1927, the three Spanish anarchists were freed.

Expelled from France, denied residence in Belgium, Luxemburg, Switzerland and Germany, the borders of Italy and Spain remained open for them, but that spelled certain death. The USSR offered them sanctuary, albeit with conditions attached that no anarchist could accept. Which left them with but one option: to give the police the slip and stay in France. So they returned clandestinely to the Paris area. In clandestinity, Durruti struck up a friendship with the Russian revolutionary, Nestor Makhno. Life was impossible for the Spaniards, and they tried in vain to enter Germany; they had to stay in France, in Lyons to be exact, where they found work under assumed names. Discovered by the police, they were put back into prison for another six months. With a straight face, Durruti told a journalist who had asked him, on the day of his release, what they were going to do: "We will begin all over again!"

In autumn 1928, they finally succeeded in entering Germany illegally, there to make contact with Rudolf Rocker<sup>12</sup> and Erich Mühsam, who attempted to secure political refugee status for them. Although they made overtures to highly influential figures in the political world, they failed. It was plain that if Durruti, Ascaso and Jover were to fall into the hands of the police, they would promptly be returned to Spain. As a result, the first two named decided to go to Belgium, where they reckoned they could get false passports and embark for Mexico. But they were in dire financial straits, as they admitted to the famous German actor Alexander Granach, a great friend of the poet Mühsam. He let them have all the money he could lay his hands on at the time. Thanks to which help they crossed the border but failed to embark for Mexico, because an emissary from the CNT national committee, sent from Spain, told them that the regime had collapsed.

Whereupon the two friends resolved to stay in Belgium, once they had obtained false papers. They stayed in Brussels until April 13, 1931. At this point in their careers as militants, they tasted a measure of tranquillity. They availed of it in order to better their intellectual and revolutionary grounding and to collaborate with the Comité Pro-Liberté (Freedom Committee), which included international militants like Hugo Treni,<sup>13</sup> Camillo Berneri and Hem Day. Come the Republic, Durruti returned to Spain. That Republic quickly dashed the hopes raised. A revolutionary show of strength on May 1, 1931 was held in the Bellas Artes hall in Barcelona. A demonstration by a hundred thousand people followed, and the demonstrators paraded through Barcelona's streets up to the Generalidad Palace, intent upon registering their demands: "Freedom for the prisoners and urgent social reforms." The army and Civil Guard broke up the demonstration. There were people killed and wounded, but Durruti persuaded the soldiers to turn their guns on the Civil Guard.

Durruti's popularity was tremendous across the peninsula and his very name guaranteed a CNT rally's success. He was not, strictly speaking, a good public speaker, but he knew how to captivate the masses and open their eyes by means of examples to social injustice.

Between April 1931 and July 19, 1936, he played a part in every one of the great social conflicts in Spain. He came to prominence in the events in Figols and was deported to the Canaries, to Puerto Cabra on the island of Furteventura, where he was obliged to spend the months between February and September 1932. He was also active in the revolutionary uprising of January 1933 and was again imprisoned from January to August that year. In December 1933, Durruti was on the National Revolutionary Committee, but from December 1933 to July 1934 was again sent to prison in Burgos and Zaragoza, only to be sentenced to penal servitude on October 5, 1934 until mid-1935. He was jailed again in September 1935, only to be freed days ahead of the elections of February 1936.

The proceedings of the CNT's third congress, in Zaragoza, a congress in which about seven hundred delegates participated, opened on May 1, 1936. Durruti was part of the Textile Union delegation, as were Garcia Oliver and Francisco Ascaso. This last congress focused on construction: the revolution was imminent. The CNT National Committee denounced the fascist conspiracy, but the government elected by the Popular Front proved unable to put paid to the generals' plotting.

Durruti whipped up such a tremendous frenzy in revolutionary militants and among the working class that the president of the Generalidad, Companys<sup>14</sup> sought an interview with the CNT, an interview during which it was determined that a commission would be established to liaise between the CNT and the Generalidad government. Durruti and Ascaso belonged to that commission, which pressed for the arming of the people, but got nothing but fine words from the government. Given the attitude of those in leadership, it was decided that the merchant vessels at anchor in Barcelona port would be raided, with an eye to capturing a few dozen weapons to add to the few that the CNT already had, as well as those seized from armories. This was the only way of confronting the Barcelona garrison which comprised 35,000 soldiers.

Rebel troops took to the streets of Barcelona at 5:00 A.M. on July 19, and at 5:00 P.M., on the Monday afternoon, Garcia Oliver reported over Radio Barcelona that the people had beaten the fascists in the course of an unequal battle. State power had never before been seen to evaporate at such speed. In under 72 hours, the State had been reduced to a nominal existence. What little forces there were left to represent it had quickly melted into the people. The CNT and the FAI were absolute masters of the situation in Barcelona and in the provinces alike.

Companys, now president of a non-existent Generalidad, had to face facts and sought an audience with the CNT and FAI in order to hand over power. (Is “hand over” the right phrase for it?) From Garcia Oliver, we have a written account of this historic audience, explaining the exact situation and showing how the new organ of power known as the Central Militias’ Committee came into being.

One of the first steps that this Committee took was to organize a column to set out immediately for the Aragón region. It was known as the Durruti-Farras column, in that Major Perez-Farras was its military delegate and Durruti its political delegate. On July 23, the column set out for Lerida with fewer men than had been expected, in that it had been reckoning on 10,000 men to start with. Once revolutionary power had been established in Lerida, the column made for Caspe before reaching Bujaraloz, a strategic location nearly 30 kilometers from Zaragoza, where it dug in. It took several villages and forced back the enemy.

The Bujaraloz “shack” where Durruti established his headquarters became a magnet for journalists and VIPs; it was visited by journalists, worker

militants, intellectuals and political figures like Sébastien Faure and Emma Goldman.

The international group which the Column had named as the “Sébastien Faure” group included in its ranks personalities such as Émile Cottin (who died in action) and Simone Weil.<sup>15</sup>

As the war developed, the Aragón front was, on account of its libertarian spirit, increasingly boycotted by the central government. Durruti spoke with the Central Militias’ Committee, which, once briefed on the position in which he found himself, recommended that he go to Madrid to press for arms or foreign currency. Around mid-September, Durruti went to Madrid for talks with the socialist Largo Caballero<sup>16</sup> who was simultaneously prime minister and minister of War, and who assured him of a loan of 1800 million pesetas for the purchase of arms and the running of the Catalan war industries. But the central government failed to honor its word and the Aragón front had to confront the enemy with makeshift means, unable to capture Zaragoza, a capture that would have been highly significant.

When Madrid came under Francoist attack in October–November 1936, fear seized government and high command figures; it was believed that the loss of the capital was imminent. The government called in Durruti, reckoning that his prestige might raise its fighters’ morale. His column was summoned to defend Madrid. And so, to the delight of the capital’s inhabitants, Durruti arrived on November 12 at the head of his men, and without so much as being given time to rest up, was assigned to the most dangerous sector. Between November 12 and the day he died, he knew not a single day’s respite.

Around 2:00 p.m. on November 19th, Durruti was hit right in the lung by a “stray bullet” while facing the Clinical Hospital, a stronghold overlooking the University City, where the fascists were dug in. He was rushed urgently to the Catalan militias’ hospital in the Ritz Hotel. There he underwent several operations, before dying at 6:00 A.M. the next day, November 20.

So as to spare the morale of the Republicans fighting in Madrid, who were embroiled in bitter fighting and facing the enemy’s armor, the death of the man who had come to symbolize resistance to fascism was at first kept secret and his body covertly removed to Barcelona. His funeral in the Catalan capital on November 23 was attended by upwards of a half million people.

Similarly, it was out of a concern not to wreck the morale of anti-Francoists that the republican government and the CNT both felt obliged to issue categorical denials of rumors that were beginning to circulate regarding the

questionable circumstances of Durruti's death and to affirm that he had indeed perished under enemy fire.

With hindsight, it is hard to swallow the official version, and the enigma shrouding his death is undiminished. Three other versions were advanced to the effect that:

- 1) Durruti was killed by anarchist militants because, being obliged to fight in Madrid alongside the Communists, he was tending to lean in the direction of the Communists. This is the least likely of the hypotheses.
- 2) Durruti was eliminated by members of the CNT's reformist right wing, keen to build upon the political compromise with other Republican forces in order to divest the struggle of all revolutionary character, against Durruti's will, he being an advocate of all-out revolutionary struggle.
- 3) Finally, Durruti was executed by the GPU on Stalin's orders, for his immense popularity was an obstacle to the machinations of the Spanish Communist Party.

There is no way, today, that we can make an objective option in favor of any of these hypotheses. However, as in any mystery story, we are entitled to seek the truth on the basis of the question: whom might Durruti's death have profited?

KARL EINSTEIN<sup>1</sup>

## THE SPIRIT OF DURRUTI

The Durruti Column learned of the death of Durruti during the night, without much comment. Sacrificing one's life is commonplace among Durruti's comrades. A mumbled phrase: "He was the best of us," a shout hurled simultaneously into the night: "We will avenge him," was all the comrades had to say. "Vengeance" was the watchword of the day.

Durruti had had a profound grasp of the power of anonymous endeavor. Anonymity and communism are but one. Comrade Durruti operated at a remove from all of the vanity of the luminaries of the left. He lived alongside his comrades, and fought side by side with them as a comrade. A shining example, he filled us with enthusiasm. We had no general, but the battler's zeal, the profound modesty, and the complete self-effacement before the great cause of revolution which twinkled in his eyes swamped our hearts and made them beat in unison with his, which, for us, lives on in the mountains. We will forever hear his voice: "ADELANTE, ADELANTE!"<sup>2</sup> Durruti was not a general; he was our comrade. There is a lack of decorum there, but in our proletarian column, the revolution is not exploited, the lime-light unsought. We have but one thing on our minds: victory and revolution.

The comrades used to gather in his tent. He would explain the meaning of his measures and converse with them. Durruti did not command, he persuaded. Only belief in the well-foundedness of a measure guaranteed clear, resolute action. Every one of us knows the reason for his action and identifies with it. And, for that very reason, every single person will see to it that the action succeeds no matter what. Comrade Durruti set us the example.

The soldier obeys out of a feeling of fear and social inferiority, and fights for want of consciousness. Which is why soldiers always fought for the interests of their social adversaries, the capitalists. The poor devils fighting alongside the fascists are a pitiful example of this. The militiaman fights primarily for the proletariat and seeks to achieve victory for the laboring classes. The fascist soldiers fight on behalf of a decadent minority, their enemies: the militiaman for the future of his own class. So, the latter appears more intelligent than the soldier. The Durruti Column is disciplined by its ideal and not by the goose-step.

Everywhere that the column goes, collectivization follows. The land is given over to the collective. From the slaves of the caciques they used to be, the farming proletariat becomes free men. Rural feudalism yields to libertarian communism. The population is supplied by the column with food and clothing. It becomes part of the village community for the duration of its stay in a locality.

The revolution imposes upon the column a stricter discipline than militarization ever could. Everyone feels answerable for the success of the social revolution, which is at the core of our struggle, and which will determine it in the future, just as it has in the past. I do not believe that generals or the military salute would imbue us with an attitude more attuned to current requirements. In saying that, I am convinced that I am reflecting the thinking of Durruti and the comrades.

We do not renege upon our old anti-militarism, our healthy mistrust of the rigid militarism that has always profited capitalists only. It is precisely for the sake of this militaristic rigidity that the proletariat has been prevented from educating itself and been kept in a position of social inferiority: military rigidity was to crush the will and intellect of proletarians. When all is said and done, we are fighting against the rebel generals. Which of itself demonstrates the questionable value of military discipline.

We obey no general: we seek the realization of a social ideal that will permit, alongside lots of other innovations, precisely such optimal education of the proletarian personality. Militarization, by contrast, was and is still a favorite means of diminishing that personality. One can grasp the spirit of the Durruti Column when one understands that it will always remain the daughter and defender of the proletarian revolution. The Column embodies the spirit of Durruti and of the CNT. Durruti lives on through it: his column will faithfully preserve its inheritance. It fights in conjunction with all proletarians for the revolution's victory. In the doing of which we honor the memory of our dead comrade, Durruti.



ANDRÉ PRUDHOMMEAUX

## THE DEFENSE OF MADRID<sup>1</sup>

(NOVEMBER–DECEMBER 1936)

The Government's departure for Valencia came as a cold shower for the uneasy and the careless; it replaced cant about unity and discipline with a real upsurge in responsibility and initiative in answer to the appeal from the Madrid Defense Committee. Everybody realized that he had his bit to do, that people were relying on him to do it. Everybody realized that he could rely upon others for sincere resistance, and in place of a few onslaughts of oratorical heroism, concluded by tributes of confidence in the government, we had effective work, the contagion of example, the coming into play of the broad masses. The departure of the ministers was a tonic.

The arrival of Durruti with five thousand Catalan fighters; the rough, manly proclamation he issued over the airwaves, giving a good tongue-lashing to the idlers, poseurs and phony revolutionaries; the offer he made to give every MADRILEÑO a rifle or a pick, and the invitation to all to dig trenches and throw up barricades—all of it helped create a sort of enthusiastic, joyous euphoria, which the government's communiqués and lying speeches could never have done. Up to that point, they had organized neither the defense nor the evacuation of useless mouths for fear of upsetting morale. Durruti and the Defense Committee treated MADRILEÑOS like men and the latter conducted themselves like men. The CNT, which in Madrid comprised the extremist element of the working class, set the example by mobilizing all its members in order to form a fortifications brigade and other like formations.

The following proclamation was carried by the Madrid daily *CNT*:

The Local Federation of the Sindicatos Unicos of Madrid, whose responsibility is bound up with the fate of the antifascist cause, yesterday, Monday, mobilized all of the workers under its control in order to make a decisive contribution to the fight against the rebels on the outskirts of the Republic's capital. All works not bearing directly upon the war have been declared suspended, and

today there are forty thousand confederated workers under arms in Madrid to bolster the government.

The fascist endeavor will be broken upon a rampart of proletarian flesh, unless defeated before that by our weaponry, which is mightier and more effective with every passing day. Our ranks have now been cleansed of all traitors. In the July events, it was the people that stormed the fascist redoubts with its combative spontaneity and revolutionary ardor. Now, hardened by three months of battle, it must be the people that annihilates the traitors once and for all. Energy, comrades, and the victory will be ours!

The defense of Madrid led to a confrontation between federalist, libertarian fighting methods and governmental, Stalinist methods. Experience demonstrated that the humane system practiced in anarchist ranks in no way harmed combat potential and proper organization of services. Which led a rather large number of international proletarians militarized under the Russian baton to quit their units and fall into line with Durruti. The desire to be treated like a thinking citizen and not as “cannon-fodder” made the CNT-FAI militias a magnet for all tendencies. Cognizant of their role as educators and feeling themselves to be the repositories of the revolution’s soul and honor, CNT organizers largely returned to their principled stances on anti-militarism and self-discipline. Their propaganda, inspired by a preoccupation with consolidating the militias’ gains within the frameworks of the people’s army, took a freer, more revolutionary turn. Thus, one proclamation dated November stated:

Knowing the psychology of our people, we know that the soldier of the revolution will not fight effectively if he is turned into a soulless automaton under the rigid discipline of a code that speaks not of right or duty but rather of obedience and punishment. The old formulas are unacceptable here, because they were not laid down by a people defending itself. They were designed for the enslavement of the people, for the defense of exploiter classes using armed force to protect their interests and their privileges.

The Spanish army, which vanished as of July 19, for all the rigidity of its military code, was not at all outstanding for its discipline, its courage nor its organization. The bourgeois republic should no longer look to its governors, nor rebuild a new army, but should break with all the old obsolete ideas and formulas. The proletarian revolution, which we are in the process of build-

ing, need not look for its model to the national, political, military or social remnants opposed to its development.

Revolutionary discipline grows out of the basis of conscious duty and not out of constraint. The severest punishment that a comrade refusing to carry out his task in the proletarian revolutionary society in matters military or economic can earn is to face scorn, isolation and ultimately elimination from a society where parasites have no place.

To conclude: we believe we have a duty to set before our reader a document that encapsulates rather well the practical conclusions we are entitled to expect after the discussion upon which we have reported. It comes from the German fighters who have rallied around the Durruti Column's red and black colors and represents a minimum schedule of demands for any revolutionary, within the framework of a military organization designed to be controlled by its members in the people's interests:

#### THE PEOPLE'S ARMY AND SOLDIERS' COUNCILS

The German comrades from the international group of the Durruti Column have taken a stand on the question of militarization in general, and in the context of the Column in particular. The comrades take the current implementation of the principles of militarization to task for having been drawn up in the absence of any close contact with front-line personnel. They deem the measures adopted thus far to be provisional and accept them as such, until such time as a new "military code" is devised, demanding that this be drawn up as quickly as possible in order to put paid to the current state of ongoing confusion. The German comrades suggest that in the drafting of that new code, account be taken of the following demands:

1. Saluting to be abolished.
2. Equal pay for all.
3. Freedom of the press (front-line newspapers).
4. Freedom of discussion.
5. Battalion council (three delegates returned by each company).
6. No delegate to wield powers of command.
7. The battalion Council will summon a general assembly of soldiers, should two thirds of company delegates be so minded.
8. The soldiers from each unit (regiment) are to elect a delegation of

three men enjoying the unit's confidence. These trustees will be able to summon a general assembly at any time.

9. One of them will be seconded to the (brigade) staff in an observer capacity.
10. This format should be extended until the army as a whole has representation in the form of soldiers' councils.
11. The general staff should also second a representative from the overall Soldiers' council.
12. Field councils of war are to comprise exclusively of soldiers. In the event of charges being brought against ranks, an officer is to be seconded to the council of war.

EMMA GOLDMAN

## DURRUTI IS NOT DEAD

Durruti, whom I saw for the last time a month ago, has perished fighting on the streets of Madrid.

I knew this great fighter from the anarchist and revolutionary movement in Spain from what I had read about him.

When I arrived in Barcelona, I heard anecdotes aplenty about Durruti and his column. Which meant that I had a great desire to go to the Aragón front, a front where he was the guiding spirit of the valiant militias fighting against fascism.

As night fell I arrived at Durruti's headquarters, utterly drained by the long journey made by car along a rocky road. A few minutes in Durruti's company proved a great comfort, tonic and encouragement to me. A muscular man, as if carved out of stone, Durruti plainly represented the most dominant figure among the anarchists I had met since my arrival in Spain. His tremendous energy impressed me, as it appeared to have the same impact on all who neared him.

I found Durruti in a veritable hive of activity. Men were coming and going, the telephone was forever summoning Durruti, and at the same time, there was an unbroken and formidable hubbub produced by workers busily erecting a wooden skeleton for his headquarters.

Amid this ongoing noisy activity, Durruti remained serene and patient. He greeted me as if he had known me all his life. For me, the cordial, warm audience with this man bent upon a life or death struggle against fascism was something unexpected.

I had heard a lot of talk about Durruti's strong personality and standing in the column which bore his name. I was curious to discover by what means—especially as it had not been thanks to the military—he had managed to mass ten thousand volunteers with no experience or training. Durruti seemed startled that I, as an old anarchist militant, should have put such a question to him:

“I have been an anarchist all my life”—he replied—“and I hope to remain such. That is why I took the view that it would be very disagreeable for me to turn into a general and command my men with stupid military-style discipline. They have come to me of their own free will, ready to offer their lives for our

antifascist struggle. I believe, as I always have, in freedom. Freedom taken in the sense of responsibility. I regard discipline as indispensable, but it must be self-discipline prompted by a shared ideal and a sturdy feeling of comradeship.”

He had earned the trust and affection of his men because he had never imagined himself superior to them. He was one of their number. He ate and slept as they did. Often he would forego his ration for the sake of some sick or weak fellow more needy than himself. In every battle, he shared their danger. This was but one of the secrets of Durruti’s success with his column. His men adored him. Not only did they obey his every order, but they were forever ready to follow him into the riskiest actions to capture fascist positions.

I had arrived on the eve of an attack that Durruti had scheduled for the following day. At the time fixed, Durruti, like the rest of his militians, set out on the march with his Mauser slung over his shoulder. Together they forced the enemy back four kilometers. They also managed to capture a substantial amount of armaments which the enemy had abandoned when he fled. No doubt the example of simple moral equality was the explanation of Durruti’s influence. There was another: his great capacity for getting militians to grasp the profound significance of the war against fascism; the significance that had dominated his existence and which he had passed on to the poorest, least capable of them.

Durruti talked to me of the difficult problems his men put to him whenever they sought leave just when they were most needed on the front. That they knew their leader is obvious; they knew his decisions, his iron will. But they were also familiar with the sympathy and kindness lurking deep within him. How could he resist when men spoke to him of sickness and suffering at home, of their fathers, wives, children?

(..) He could never be indifferent to his comrades’ needs. Now he had entered into a desperate battle with fascism, in defense of the Revolution. Everyone had to take up his place. He truly did have a difficult task. He would listen patiently to the suffering, seek out its causes and suggest remedies in every instance where a wretch was beset by some moral or physical affliction. Overwork, inadequate food, lack of clean air and loss of appetite for life.

—Don’t you see, comrade, that the war that you, I and we all sustain is for the salvation of the Revolution, and that the Revolution is made in order to put an end to men’s misery and suffering? We have to beat our fascist enemy. We have to win this war. You are an essential part of that. Don’t you see that, comrade?

Sometimes, a comrade would refuse to heed this reasoning. And insist upon leaving the front:

—Very well—Durruti would tell him—but you will leave on foot, and when you get back to your village everyone will know that you lacked courage, that you deserted rather than do the duty that you set yourself.

These words produced splendid results. The fellow would ask to stay. No military severity, no constraint, no disciplinary sanction to uphold the Durruti Column on the front. Only the great energy of the man who drove them and made them feel at one with him.

A great man, this anarchist Durruti. One born to lead, to teach. An affable, cordial comrade. All rolled into one. And now Durruti is dead. His heart beats no more. His imposing physique cut down like some giant tree. Yet Durruti is not dead. The hundreds of thousands who paid their final tribute to Durruti on November 22, 1936 bear witness to that.

No. Durruti is not dead. The fire of his ardent spirit enlightened all who knew and loved him. It will never be extinguished. Even now the masses have taken up the torch dropped from the hands of Durruti. Triumphant, they are carrying it down the trail which Durruti lighted for many years. The trail leading to the summit of Durruti's ideal. That ideal is anarchism, the great love of Durruti's life, to which he was committed entirely. He was faithful to it to his last breath! No, Durruti is not dead.

## DURRUTI SPEAKS<sup>1</sup>

I am satisfied with my Column. My comrades are well-equipped, and when the time comes everything operates like a well-oiled machine. Not that I mean by that that they are no longer men. No. Our comrades on the front know for whom and for what they fight. They feel themselves revolutionaries, and they fight, not in defense 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. They know that their very life depends upon success.

We make revolution and war simultaneously—and this is my personal opinion—because the circumstances so require. Revolutionary measures are not taken in Barcelona alone, but from the firing lines too. In every village we capture, we set about developing the revolution. That is the best thing about this war of ours, and when I think of it, I am all the more sensible of my responsibility. From the front lines back to Barcelona, there are nothing but fighters for our cause. All working on behalf of the war and the revolution.

One of the most important watchwords currently invoked is discipline. It is much talked about, but few strive after that goal. As for myself, discipline has no meaning beyond one's notion of responsibility. I am inimical to barrack-style discipline, the discipline that leads to brutality, horror and mechanical action. Nor do I acknowledge the wrong-headed watchword to the effect that freedom is out of place as the war currently stands and is the last refuge of the coward. Within our organization, the CNT enforces the best of disciplines. Confederation members accept and implement decisions made by the committees put up by elected comrades to shoulder these burdens of responsibility. In war-time, we should defer to our elected delegates. Otherwise no operation can be mounted. If we know that we have waverers to contend with, then let us appeal to their consciences and sense of pride. That way, we will be able to make good comrades of them.

I am satisfied with the comrades who follow me. I hope that they too are happy with me. They want for nothing. They have food to eat, reading matter and revolutionary discussions. Idleness has no place in our columns. We are forever building trench-works.

We will win this war, comrades!



## **DURRUTI'S MESSAGE TO THE RUSSIAN WORKERS'**

Many international revolutionaries who are close to our hearts and our minds live in Russia, not as free men, but in the political isolators and in penal servitude. Several of them have asked to come and fight our common foe in Spain, in the front ranks of the firing line. The international proletariat would not understand their not being released, nor would it understand that the reinforcements in weapons and man-power which Russia seems to have available for despatch to Spain should be the subject of haggling involving any abdication of the Spanish revolutionaries' freedom of action.

The Spanish revolution must take a different track from the Russian revolution. It must not develop in accordance with the formula of "One party in power, the rest in prison." But it should ensure success for the only formula ensuring that a united front would not be a deception: "All tendencies to work, all tendencies in the fray against the common foe. And the people will plump for the system that it deems best."

## FINAL ADDRESS<sup>1</sup>

If the militarization being introduced by the Generalidad is supposed to intimidate us and impose an iron discipline upon us, it is sadly mistaken, and we invite the authors of the decree to travel up to the front to gauge our morale and our cohesiveness; then we will come and compare them alongside the morale and discipline in the rearguard.

## MILITIANS, YES! SOLDIERS, NEVER!

The workers' militias have played a crucial role in respect of the war effort against fascism. They have borne the brunt of operations. They could have imposed their own stamp upon the very nature of those operations. Logic required that the loyal army units be absorbed into the militia, not the militia incorporated into the army. This however is the miscalculation made by the Madrid and Barcelona "authorities" by proceeding with mobilization attempts which would necessarily have tipped the balance in favor of political indifference and involved militarization of the militias. In Catalonia that attempted mobilization failed.

(...) The streets of Barcelona have been invaded by recruits from the classes of '33, '34 and '35 who, having no confidence in the officers and considering themselves freed of the old military outlook of barrack life, refused to surrender themselves bodily. A number of these young folk enlisted in the militias, and some even wanted to set off immediately for Zaragoza. To spell out their point of view, they organized a huge gathering involving 10,000 of them, during which they passed the following resolution:

We are not refusing to do our civic and revolutionary duty. We are keen to go and liberate our brethren in Zaragoza. We want to be militians of freedom, but not soldiers in uniform. The army has proved to be a danger to the people: the people's militias alone protect public freedoms: Militians, yes! But soldiers? Never!

The CNT has lobbied Madrid and the Catalan Generalidad on their behalf. Moreover, the new recruits' declarations were promptly turned into actions: thousands spontaneously enlisted with the militias. And mobilization without regard to class differences or revolutionary determination was dropped as far as the struggle "against the rebels" was concerned.

Let Madrid and Barcelona not delude themselves either; it is not a matter of simply repressing a "seditious" movement. We are faced here with a social phenomenon whose emergence the fascist endeavor has merely brought forward a little. Any who would stand against it will be swept aside. If, on the other hand, those in leadership grasp its power and afford it a free rein, they will avoid irreparable damage.

The CNT has told these young recruits: "Since the shirking of your duty does not enter into it, we will support your rights: you can fight as militians and not as soldiers." A solution applauded by the soldiers. We like to think that Spanish governments will not deny them this right, if need be. They must know that an army that fights under coercion ultimately winds up defeated, as witness Napoleon's armies which averted neither Waterloo nor the collapse of the Empire. Volunteer armies have a whole epic behind them, like the army of the French revolution's volunteer fighters.

The CNT knows that in summoning the militians to arms, none will shirk, for desertion in battle would amount to betrayal.

### REGULAR ARMY OR LIBERTARIAN MILITIAS?

*The streets were filled with posters, streamers and emblems towards the end of August, and the makeshift recruiting offices were at full stretch. What were we to do with these masses of fresh recruits at a time when fascism and antifascism made up islets, neutral zones, inextricably intertwined forces, with no established front lines? Compact masses to be sent against Franco's hastily mustered Moors and Requetés?<sup>1</sup> Or fighters in the revolutionary style, propagandists by insurgent deed, guerrillas and irregulars?*

*The military experts were divided. But, oddly enough, the civilian politicians all inclined towards a mass army, probably afraid of appearing inadequately imbued with the warrior spirit and unduly heedless of the "requirements of the hour!"*

(...) It seems<sup>2</sup> increasingly necessary that we should wonder if the militarism of the seditious generals is going to impose its own modalities of struggle upon Spanish revolutionaries, or if, instead, our comrades will manage to dismantle militarism by opting instead for methods of action resulting in the liquidation of the military front and the dissemination of the social revolution throughout the length and breadth of Spain.

The factors for success available to the fascists are as follows: material galore, draconian rigidity of discipline, thoroughgoing military organization, and terror wielded against the populace with the assistance of fascism's police agencies. These factors for success are validated by the tactics of the warfare of positions, of the continuous front, with masses of troops being transported to the points where decisive clashes are expected. On the people's side, the factors for success are the very opposite: manpower galore, initiative and passionate aggressiveness in individuals and groups, the active sympathy of the toiling masses as a whole right across the entire country, the economic

weapon of the strike and sabotage in fascist-occupied regions. Full utilization of these moral and physical resources, which are of themselves far superior to anything available to the enemy, can only be brought about through a generalized campaign of raids, ambushes and guerrilla warfare extending to every part of the land.

The very plainly expressed intention of certain Popular Front political elements is to combat militarism by confronting it with military technique of the same order, conducting against it a “regular” warfare with large-scale strikes by army corps and concentrations of materiel, decreeing conscription, implementing a strategic plan under a single command—in short, by aping fascism pretty well completely. Here too, we have publicized the views of comrades who have let themselves be swayed by Bolshevism to the extent of calling for the creation of one “Red Army.”

That approach strikes us as dangerous from more than one point of view. We ought not to forget that the Red Army of the Bolsheviks was a peace-time creation, victory over the reaction having been primarily the handiwork of bands of “partisans” employing methods comparable to those of the Spanish guerrillas.

At present, the essential issue is not the conversion of the militia, a body of partisans suited to guerrilla warfare, into a regular army with all of the characteristics of a professional army. The point is, rather, to raise the militia units’ own expertise by learning from the tactical ideas of the combat group and section school, as applied in the main armies of Europe, and kitting out the combat groups with appropriate equipment (automatic weapons, hand grenades, rifle grenades, etc.). Doing otherwise would amount to staking all upon a Napoleonic battle, all of the wherewithal of which has yet to be created as far as the Spanish antifascist camp is concerned. It would amount to putting off the decision until the Greek kalends, endlessly dragging out the current position, and, in that case, trusting to serendipity a victory that would inevitably fall to us if we knew how to make full usage of our own weaponry.

All of which leads us to believe that the decision in the contest being fought out in the four corners of Spain will be moral rather than strategic in nature.

Let us be on the alert for the interested maneuvers of the appeasers and makers of compromises, who are just biding their time before betraying the people by reaching some accommodation with the fascist segment of the

bourgeoisie, for the sole purpose of annihilating and smothering forever the revolutionary élan of the proletariat.

(...) Daily, fresh popular levies are being raised in Barcelona. After a few days' summary training, these units are issued with their equipment and bid the capital farewell in a procession through the streets. Along this march-past of volunteers, the premises of all of the affiliated organizations of the Anti-fascist Militias' Committee are saluted and shouts of victory are exchanged between the comrades on the point of departing and those massed at the windows and balconies above.

Each column has a character of its own, more distinctive than the emblems it displays. The Communist and Socialist detachments are distinguished by a certain military stiffness, the presence of cavalry and special weapons squadrons, more compact formations, rhythmic step and raised fists. POUM<sup>3</sup> troops, the police troops and Catalanists' troops are noted for the splendor and profusion of their equipment. The FAI and CNT comrades march without chanting or band music.

There they are in three widely separated ranks, out of step, excited, man after man, interspersed with milling groups, an endless snake. At their head, in a single rank, the staff, in blue workers' overalls. It comprises well-known trade union militants: in the CNT, every organizer or propagandist doubles as a guerrilla, an activist and a fighter. Even in Barcelona, when evening falls, men who today hold the reins of the country's economy and sit in the armchairs vacated by bankers, pick up their handgun or militiaman's rifle to proceed with their own hands to liquidate fascist elements whose lairs are still numerous on Catalan soil. Thus, in the anarchist ranks, there is no dividing line between the machine gunners and the typists, between personnel in the rearguard and front-line personnel. There are no professional "chiefs," only leaders of men who have paid and daily pay a personal price. No bureaucratic specialization, but rounded militants, revolutionaries from head to toe.

Through the broad avenues trickle the three narrow streams of humanity, with a crowd in tow. Alongside the militiaman in his red and black forage cap, rifle slung over his shoulder, strides a friend, a child, a mother, a spouse, a sister, sometimes an entire family of relatives and friends. Greetings are exchanged, names called out, hands shaken, workmates swap fraternal embraces, and we have the column invaded by a whole populace, packing the gaps in its ranks and sweeping it along in the warmth of its fervor.

An old gray-haired woman stands in the path of the middle rank: every

passing man, every one without distinction, receives a mother's farewell from this woman. Thus, hundreds and hundreds of men carry away the short, vigorous hug, the clumsy, impassioned embrace, the supreme clasp of an unknown mother who acknowledges all of the lads from the FAI as her own, clinging momentarily to their arms, re-enacting a thousand times over the heart-rending moment of parting. Whereupon a cry goes up from the crowd, flapping into the breeze like the wings of a gull: "Long live the FAI! Long live Anarchy!" And anyone hearing that cry understands then that the UGT, the CNT, the PSUC,<sup>4</sup> all of these party and group designations are no more than things, slogans, initials, but that the FAI ("the fai" as it is pronounced) is a woman: a fiancée, spouse, sister, daughter and idealized mother of all whose hearts beat for love of liberty.

(...) Sentimental twaddle! it will be said. But is not such twaddle what revolutions are all about?

# THE ITALIAN SECTION OF THE ASCASO COLUMN OPPOSES MILITARIZATION

(MONTE PELADO, OCTOBER 30, 1936)

The members of the Ascaso Column's "Italian Section" are volunteers who have come from various nations to do their bit for the cause of Spanish freedom and that of freedom worldwide. Having learned of the decree promulgated by the Generalidad Council regarding amendment of the constitution of the militias, they reiterate their commitment to the cause that has brought them on to the battle-front against fascism and must declare as follows:

1. The decree in question can refer only to those who are subject to the obligations implicit in mobilization emanating from the authorities who have promulgated it—a measure on the advisability of which we shall refrain from offering any principled opinion.
2. This confirms us in our belief that the decree in question cannot be applicable to us. However, we have to state with the requisite absolute clarity that, in the event of the authorities' deeming us as liable to implementation of it, we could not but regard ourselves as released from any moral obligation and invoke our complete freedom of action—the foundation compact of the Section as such being dissolved utterly.

## AN IRON COLUMN DELEGATE'S ADDRESS TO THE REGIONAL PLENUM IN VALENCIA

(ENDORSED BY THE COLUMN AND REPRINTED IN ITS MOUTHPIECE  
LINEA DE FUEGO [TERUEL FRONT] ON NOVEMBER 17, 1936)

The Iron Column asks that the reporting panel not deal with the structure of the CNT militias.

The Iron Column must describe its structure and its internal organization. On this score, debate ought to focus on a number of points. For one thing, the militarization issue, for there is a government decree providing for militarization of all columns, and there are comrades who believe that militarization settles everything.



We say that it will settle nothing.

In place of corporals, sergeants and officer graduates from academies who are sometimes abysmally ignorant of the problems of war, we offer our organization and accept no military structure. The Iron Column and all of the CNT and FAI columns—and, indeed, others which are not confederal columns—have not found military discipline acceptable.

#### SINGLE COMMAND OR COORDINATION?

In a motion tabled and approved at a meeting in Valencia<sup>1</sup> by the CNT, the FAI, the Iron Column, etc., wherein the need was expressed for the establishment of a body to liaise between the forces fighting in Teruel and on a number of fronts, a request was made that war committees and column committees be set up, with an eye to establishing a delegate operations committee, made up of two civilian delegates and a general technician in an advisory capacity per column, plus the delegate from the people's executive committee, to act as liaison between the Teruel columns and those on other fronts.

Which is to say that we, who are against what is termed the single command, propagate, by example and practice, coordination of all fighting forces. We cannot countenance some staff, some minister, with no practical acquaintance with the situation on the ground, and who have never set foot on the field of battle and know nothing of the mentality of the men they command (which ignorance may well extend also to military expertise) should direct us from behind desks and issue us with orders, mostly inane ones. And as we have virtually always had to submit to the orders from the military command, war delegates and delegations from the staff, we must protest and request that the aforesaid Valencia staff be stood down. For as long as we have abided by it, such was the extent of the disorientation that we knew nothing of the situation on other fronts, nor about the activities of other columns: we suffered bombardment without managing to discover whence it emanated. Which is why we suggest that an operations committee be established, made up of direct representatives of the columns and not, as the marxists wish, of representatives from each organizational grouping; *we* want representatives familiar with the terrain and who know their way around.

The establishment of war committees is acceptable to all confederal militias. We start with the individual and form groups of ten, which come to accommodations among themselves for small-scale operations. Ten such groups together make up one CENTURIA, which appoints a delegate to represent it.

Thirty CENTURIAS make up one column, which is directed by a war committee, on which the delegates from the CENTURIAS have their say.

Another point is the matter of the coordination of all fronts. This will be handled by the committees constituted by two civilian delegates with one military delegate in an advisory capacity, in addition to the delegation from the people's executive committee. Thus, although every column retains its freedom of action, we arrive at coordination of forces, which is not the same thing as unity of command.

The marxists and republicans did not want that, because they said that the columns ought not to debate and that everybody had to abide by whatever the staff orders. Thus, better a defeat under the staff than fifty victories under fifty committees.

#### MILITARY HIERARCHY OR FEDERALISM?

As for militarization, we will readily concede that the military, who have spent their entire lives studying the tactics of warfare, are better informed than us and that their advice is often more valuable than ours. Consequently, we accept their advice and their contribution. Inside our column, for instance, the military personnel in whom we have every confidence, work in concert with us and together we coordinate our efforts: but if we should be militarized, only one thing can happen, which is that [we switch] from a federalist structure to a barrack-style discipline, which is the very thing that we do not want.

There is talk too of amalgamating militias. We reckon that association on the basis of affinity should prevail tomorrow just as it does today. Let individuals come together in accordance with their thinking and temperament. Let those who think along such and such lines combine their efforts in order to achieve their common goals. If columns are formed along heterogeneous lines, we will achieve nothing practical.

Which means that we do not in any way surrender the columns' independence and have no wish to subject ourselves to any governmental command. We fight, first to defeat fascism, and then for our ideal, which is anarchy. Our activity ought not to tend to strengthen the State, but rather to progressively destroy it and render government redundant.

We consent to nothing that conflicts with our anarchist ideas, which are a reality, given that one cannot act in contradiction of one's beliefs.

Consequently, we suggest that our organization into groups, CENTURIAS or column committees and war committees made up of military and civilian

personnel be accepted, so as to establish coordination of all of the militias fighting on the various fronts, with a central staff.

#### EQUIPMENT SHORTAGES

Final point under discussion: shortages of war materials. To date, our columns have been kept supplied feebly by the State. For example, in the column which I represent, out of its three thousand component members, we may say that only around a thousand rifles have been furnished by the State and we have had to find all the rest ourselves, 80 percent of them having been taken from the enemy. Which means to say that the State, the government, official bodies have shown no interest in the question of arming and equipping columns with the material they need. This is a matter the organization ought to have resolved, and in Valencia, very little heed was paid to it. The organization must see to it that we want for nothing.

It has also been said that discipline averts demoralization and desertion. That is far from certain. Courage and fear depend on many factors, for the same person may be afraid in one engagement and behave like a downright hero in another. Discipline or not, it all works out the same, since it has been established that those who are militarized are the first to turn tail and run; and when danger arises, the individual, be he anarchist, marxist or republican, is gripped by the same instinct for self-preservation and either flees or advances.

#### THE PAY QUESTION

Here now, we have another problem, which, we contend, it is for the organization to resolve. The rapporteurs' commission says that militians must be economically dependent on the State. Our answer to that must be that to begin with, the Confederation's columns were formed spontaneously and set off for the front. Nobody spared a thought for pay, because the villages where those combatants lived looked after their families, whose needs were thus provided for: but a point came when the villages stopped looking after the families and the complaints began. We have always been against this ten peseta payrate, because the individual got used to fighting for a living and made a profession of it. Such fears were justified, for a number of our comrades have been, so to speak, corrupted. We say that the unions can meet the families' needs, so we renounce the ten pesetas and seek nothing; otherwise, we will continue to draw them as we have thus far.

The one big union in Segorbe should inform you that, as we abide by the conclusions it has adopted, it is in complete agreement with the structure of the Iron Column, the Torres-Benito column and Column No. 23. Segorbe, which is where they are concentrated and recruited from, recognizes that such a structure in the militias is necessary, for it is in a better position to judge than most of the delegations attending the plenum, because it has, in addition, by way of a delegate at our plenum, a female comrade who has spent upwards of a month with the Iron Column, helping to organize our outposts.

And in that regard, we laugh at this unity of command, this militarization they are trying to introduce into our confederal columns, and we laugh at them because, as one Iron Column comrade put it so well, we already have our structure and our unity of command without resorting to militarization. And we have that because we are the first, the finest of the Levante region to have stood up against fascism and to have successfully prevented fascism from taking over that region (in Segorbe to begin with and then in Valencia); and as we were the first, we have a right to speak out and to inform this plenum how the Iron Column operates.

#### THE MILITIAN AS A CONSCIOUS INDIVIDUAL

My predecessor on this rostrum talked about structure. I should like to explore the matter further. Will an absolute unity of command which decides what the role of the individual is to be in the war prove more effective in action than that individual's convictions?

Because let me tell you this: those who bridle at the Iron Column because it swoops on the rear in order to make the revolution that you do not know how to make—such people, I say, do not know what they are talking about.

The ordinary militian comes to the Column because he knows that he will find there a moral, revolutionary and intellectual unity. That is why we, who were the first on to the field of battle, cannot now allow marxism and bourgeois democracy to attempt, as the reaction did yesterday, to annihilate the cream of the crop of the revolutionary Levante countryside, that is to say, its anarchist revolutionary yield.

And it is also why we cannot agree to a single command, because the military have not seen fit to do anything other than stay in the rear. And we, who have marveled at the morale of our brother confederals, who know, that among their number, there are those who are worth a hundred of the

militarized, we want no obstruction and do not want anyone invoking this falsehood—that we cannot win this war without unity of command.

The practices of the ancien regime's political parties, seeking to create unity of command so as to hand it to their Red Armies in order to install a dictatorship perhaps as poisonous as its predecessor, are placing the revolution in jeopardy. We cannot countenance that, and on that score I have to say that this whole plenum, misdirected, unfortunately, by the regional committee, is proceeding in a plainly reformist and political atmosphere, and that is why our feeble voice must be heard, because, later, we shall all have to pay the price for our incomprehension.



**ANARCHO-  
SYNDICALISM  
IN GOVERNMENT**



# ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM IN GOVERNMENT

To conclude, we turn now to a prickly, burning issue which inspired floods of words and ink at the time and which even now gives rise to bitter debate.

The anarchists' participation in two Spanish republican governments, the central government of the Republic and the autonomous regional government of Catalonia, under the umbrella of the "united front against fascism" is, in fact, one of Iberian anarchism's Achilles heels.

"Pure" anarchists and non-Stalinist marxists alike took, and with hindsight now take, anarcho-syndicalists sorely to task for having jettisoned their principles. But does such criticism not lean a little too heavily upon absolutes? Is it not a little too glib in its ignoring of the context of a civil war that the Spanish revolution had to win at all costs if it wanted to survive?

—Sorry! the die-hards reply, it was precisely absorption into the machinery of the republican government, itself increasingly infiltrated by the Stalinists, that compromised the Spanish revolution's chances of survival.

What we offer below is a fairly comprehensive dossier on the debate:

—First, the rigorously principled stance enunciated by the Spanish libertarians just prior to the Revolution; the basis of which is a scathing indictment of "Antifascist" coalition governments.

—Followed by a laborious effort to justify an abrupt and unexpected U-turn.

—Then, a violent diatribe by Camillo Berneri (the Italian anarchist who went to Spain to throw in his lot with the Spanish Revolution) written against Federica Montseny, then a minister in the central government, not long before Berneri was murdered.

—Finally, to close, the self-criticism drafted by Federica Montseny thirty years after the event and especially for this anthology.



# THE USELESSNESS OF GOVERNMENT<sup>1</sup>

(A MANIFESTO ADOPTED BY THE CNT)

“Wealthy nations are those where poverty is the rule.” That dictum from a bourgeois economist is a fine summary of the contrasts within our society, where the strength of nations comprises the weakness and poverty of the largest number. Similarly, we might say that it is weak peoples that make for strong governments.

The existence of a Popular Front government, so very far from being an essential element in the struggle against fascism, in point of fact denotes a voluntary limit set to that same struggle. We need not recall that in the face of the preparations for the fascists’ putsch, the Generalidad and Madrid governments did not lift a finger, all of their authority being deployed to cover up the intrigues of which they were fated, sooner or later, to become the witting or unwitting instruments.

The war underway in Spain is a social war. The part of a moderator State, based on equilibrium and retention of class differences, could scarcely be an active part in this contest, when the very foundations of the State are being undermined with every passing day. So, it is correct to say that the existence of the Popular Front government in Spain is nothing more than a reflection of a compromise between the popular masses and international capitalism.

By the very nature of things, this compromise, which is merely temporary, must give way to the claims and comprehensive program of the social revolution. Whereupon the role of negotiator and preservationist in which the republicans and liberals of Barcelona, Valencia and Madrid are presently cast will vanish.

The notion of replacing these weak governments, care-takers of the changes and of foreign finance’s holdings in Spain, with a strong government based upon an ideology and a “revolutionary” political organization would, in fact, result only in suspension and liquidation of the autonomous action of the toiling masses in arms, suspension and liquidation of the revolution.

If marxism were to take power, it would resemble more closely a self-limitation of the people’s action, prompted by opportunistic savvy. The built-to-last “worker’s” State sets itself the immediate task of channeling and absorbing every single one of the forces presently at liberty within the proletariat and

peasantry. The “worker’s” State is the full stop concluding all revolutionary progress, the beginning of a new political enslavement.

Coordinating the forces of the antifascist front, organizing supplies of munitions and foodstuffs on a large scale, collectivizing all undertakings of essential interest to the people in pursuance of that end, these, self-evidently, are the tasks of the hour. Thus far, they have been carried out by non-governmental, non-centralistic, non-militaristic procedures. We need only continue. There are great improvements to be made to this approach. The CNT and UGT unions find a use for their resources there, and the best deployment of their capabilities. On the other hand, the installation of a coalition government, with its discreet strife between majority and minority, its bureaucratization of elites, the concomitant fratricidal warfare between rival tendencies, all of that is more than useless to the performance of our liberating mission in Spain. It would spell the rapid collapse of our capacity for action, our desire for union, the beginning of a fatal debacle in the face of an omnipresent enemy.

We hope that Spanish and foreign workers will appreciate the correctness of the decisions taken to this effect by the National Confederation of Labor (CNT) and by the Iberian Anarchist Federation (FAI). The withering away of the State is socialism’s ultimate objective. Facts have demonstrated that, in practice, it is achieved by liquidation of the bourgeois State, brought to a state of asphyxiation by economic expropriation, and not by the unprompted withering away of a “socialist” bureaucracy.

The Spanish people, and the Russian case, bear witness to that.

## A WOULD-BE JUSTIFICATION

*However, within a few weeks, in mid-September 1936, the CNT reversed its stance. In the name of "antifascist unity," it saw fit to petition the Spanish prime minister, Largo Caballero, for the establishment of a fifteen-member "National Defense Council," in which five places would be reserved for it. It was only a step from that to cabinet membership—a step that the anarcho-syndicalists took. In the end, they took up portfolios in both the Generalidad government in Catalonia and, later, in the central government. Let us see, now, how the CNT attempted to explain away its U-turn.*

Two months have elapsed since the CNT staked its claim to a share in the running of Spain's affairs. Our view is that some new agency needed to be set up, and it was with that in mind that we suggested the formula of a National Defense Council. We have forsworn that notion, in a sincere intent to clear away the obstacles that prompted our opposition. Yet again, we yield, not for political considerations, but so as to achieve the unity necessary for victory.

This is not the time to indulge in speculation nor to quibble over trifles. Primarily, it should be remarked that the tasks of the new government are not the same as those of its predecessor, and although the portfolios held by the CNT may be without significance, its very presence in that ministry ought to amend its approach and action. Attention should be focused upon the two overriding problems of the day: winning the war and consolidating the economic reconstruction, in such a way that the new Spain may have all she needs in order to survive. No government is viable that fails to have a care for achieving those two objectives.

The preceding government was referred to as the government of victory. The facts demonstrated that it was nothing of the sort. On the contrary: things went from bad to worse. Today, there must be no repetition of that experience. Wheresoever the ministries that gave the lead from July 19 failed, today's must succeed. And for that to happen, all who figure in the new government must set aside their partisan preferences or outlooks, in order to act as if prompted by a single thought: victory. If such open and disinterested cooperation is forthcoming, if the requirements of the war and the needs of the civilian population alone dictate everyone's every action, then victory will soon smile upon us.

Two problems arise: beating fascism and sparing revolutionary Spain privation. These are the goals, and in order to achieve them, let everyone set to work in loyal, disinterested collaboration.

#### THE CNT, THE GOVERNMENT AND THE STATE

The CNT's entry into the central government is one of the most monumental events in the recorded political history of our country. In principle and out of conviction, the CNT has always been anti-statist and inimical to all forms of government. But circumstances, almost always stronger than men's will, though the latter determines them, have altered the nature of the Spanish government and the Spanish State.

At present, the government as the instrument regulating the agencies of the State, is no longer a force for oppression targeting the working class, just as the State is no longer that agency dividing society into classes. And with the participation of CNT personnel in both, the State and the government will refrain all the more from oppressing the people.

The State's functions will be restricted by agreement with the workers' organizations, to overseeing the workings of the country's economic and social life. And the government will have nothing to preoccupy it beyond the proper running of the war and coordinating revolutionary endeavors in accordance with an overall plan.

Our comrades will bring to government the collective or majority will of the working masses, who will first have been gathered into great general assemblies. They will not act as the spokesmen for personal views but solely for decisions freely taken by the hundreds of thousands of workers organized inside the CNT. Historical inevitability is a burden upon us all, and the CNT bows to that inevitability in order to be of service to the country, by speedily winning the war and preventing any deviation by the popular revolution.

We are absolutely certain that those of our comrades chosen to represent the CNT in government will be able to do their duty and carry off the mission entrusted to them. We ought not to look upon them as individuals but rather as the organization for which they stand. They are neither governors, nor Statists, but fighters and revolutionaries in the service of success over fascism. And that success will come all the quicker and more completely, the greater the support we lend them.

## THE CNT'S ENTRY INTO THE GOVERNMENT

Spanish trade unionists are called upon to share in the running of the country. This new phase of the fight against fascism, and in the development of the Spanish trade union and anarchist movement, should not be viewed in terms of doctrine only. On July 19, it was the anarchists and trade unionists who marched at the head of the revolutionary movement to confront the fascist generals. The creation of antifascist militias and the collectivization of industry in Catalonia were primarily the handiwork of the CNT-FAI.

For a time, there were two sorts of governments: on the one hand, the Generalidad, on the other the Antifascist Militias' Committee and the Economic Council. It was soon realized that this duality could not continue. Whereupon there arose the Generalidad General Council, comprising all of the antifascist organizations. In Catalonia, in Levante and in Aragón, where trade unionists and anarchists account for more than half of the antifascist forces, fascism was wiped out completely, whereas in those districts where the democratic socialists and other parties were in the ascendancy, the struggle did not have such a felicitous outcome.

In Madrid, trade unionists are in the minority. However their influence has grown of late. For more than two months now, the CNT has been calling for the dissolution of the government and the creation of a National Defense Council, with equal participation of the CNT and the UGT. Largo Caballero was unwilling to give up the levers of power; he wanted to be Spain's Lenin. His policy tended to weaken the antifascist fighting front. The dispensing of weapons to the various parties and organizations was conducted with partiality, and the need for unity in the conduct of the war was felt with increasing urgency.

Being merely soldiers of the Revolution and letting Communists and Socialists act as the generals was not a course that could have satisfied the trade unionists and anarchists. They too were entitled to have their say in national deliberations on the prosecution of the war. Hence the CNT's request concerning creation of a National Defense Council. Caballero was not willing to surrender one iota of his power. Meanwhile, the military situation in Madrid was growing more critical each day. Unity in the direction of the war is not feasible unless the CNT is called upon to share in that direction.

On notices posted up all over Spain by the CNT, one could read: "Two million members: 50,000 soldiers on the front; upwards of 2,000 local organizations; Catalonia, Levante and Aragón in CNT hands." This

mighty organization was seeking a share in the direction of the antifascist struggle. A Regional Defense council, largely made up of CNT supporters, was formed in Aragón. At which point the Madrid government found itself compelled to accede to the CNT's request: four trade unionists joined the cabinet. The CNT is entitled to more, but this is no time for partisan strife.

CAMILLO BERNERI'

## THE CONTRARY VIEW—OPEN LETTER TO FEDERICA MONTSENY (APRIL 1937)

Dear Comrade,

I had intended to address myself to all of you minister comrades, but once I had taken up my pen, I spontaneously addressed myself to you alone, and I was unwilling to go against that instinctive impulse.

That I have not always seen eye to eye with you will come as no surprise to you, nor will it be an irritant, and you have shown yourself generously oblivious of criticisms, which it would virtually always have been reasonable and human to regard as unfair and over-stated. That, in my eyes, is a quality of some significance, and it is testimony to the anarchist nature of your mind. Speaking as a friend of course, that certainty effectively makes up for the ideological idiosyncrasies, which you have often displayed in your articles with their highly personal style and in your admirably eloquent speeches.

I could not blithely accept the identity which you assert exists between Bakuninist anarchism and the federalist republicanism of Pi y Margall.<sup>2</sup> I cannot forgive you for having written “that, in Russia, it was not Lenin who was the real builder of Russia, but rather Stalin, the spirit of accomplishment, etc.” And I applauded Voline’s retort in *Terre libre* to your utterly inaccurate assertions regarding the Russian anarchist movement.

But it is not about that that I wish to engage you today. I hope some day to broach those matters and many another with you directly. If I address myself publicly to you, it is in regard to infinitely more serious matters, to remind you of your enormous responsibilities, which you may well have overlooked on account of your modesty.

In your speech of January 3 [1937], you said: “Anarchists have entered the government in order to prevent deviation in the Revolution and to prosecute it beyond the war, and also to oppose the eventuality of dictatorial ambitions, from wherever these may emanate.”

Well comrade! In April, three months into the collaborationist experience, we find ourselves faced with a situation which has thrown up serious events, with still worse looming ahead.

Wherever—take the Basque Country, Levante or Castile—our movement has not prevailed through grassroots strength, or, in other words, comprehensive trade union structures and overwhelming affiliation of the masses, the counter-revolution is oppressive and threatens to crush everything. The government is in Valencia, and it is from there that Assault Guards set out to disarm the revolutionary nuclei formed for defensive purposes. Casas Viejas<sup>3</sup> comes to mind whenever one thinks of Vilanesa.<sup>4</sup> It is the Civil Guards and Assault Guards who get to hold on to their weapons; it is they who are to control the “uncontrollables” in the rear, which is to say, disarm the revolutionary nuclei with their few rifles and handful of revolvers. All of this is happening at a time when the internal front has yet to be liquidated. Happening during a civil war, in which no surprise can be ruled out and in regions where the front-line is very close and extremely indented and not a mathematical certainty. This when there is a blatantly political dispensing of weapons whereby the Aragón front, that armed accompaniment to the agrarian collectivization in Aragón and buttress of Catalonia, that Iberian Ukraine, tends to get only the bare necessity (let us hope that that “bare necessity” will prove sufficient). You are a member of a government which has offered France and England concessions in Morocco, whereas, as long ago as July 1936, Morocco ought to have been formally declared to be politically autonomous.<sup>5</sup> I imagine that as an anarchist you find this business as squalid as it is stupid, but I think that the time has come to let it be known that you and the other anarchist ministers are not in agreement either with the nature or the tenor of such proposals.

On October 24, 1936, I wrote in *Guerra di classe*: “The fascist army’s operational base is Morocco. Propaganda in favor of Moroccan autonomy must be stepped up throughout the whole pan-Islamic sphere of influence. We must force upon Madrid unequivocal declarations announcing withdrawal from Morocco and protection for Moroccan autonomy. France is anxious about the possibility of a chain reaction of uprisings in North Africa and Syria; England sees Egyptian agitation for autonomy and that of the Palestinian Arabs being strengthened. We should exploit such worries by means of a policy that threatens to unleash revolt in the Islamic world. Such a policy, will require funding and as a matter of urgency, we must despatch agitator and organizer



emissaries to every focal point of Arab emigration in every one of the frontier areas of French Morocco. It would require only a few Moroccans to carry out propaganda work (by means of wireless, leaflets, etc.) on the fronts in Aragón, the Center, Asturias and Andalusia.”

It goes without saying that we cannot simultaneously guarantee English and French interests in Morocco *and* raise insurrection. Valencia carries on with Madrid’s policy. That must change. And, in order to change it, it has to spell out all its own thinking loud and clear, because there are influences at work in Valencia that favor a compromise with Franco. Jean Zyromski<sup>6</sup> wrote in *Le Populaire*, of March 3:

The intrigues are there to be seen and they are aimed at concluding a peace which would in fact signify not just the halting of the Spanish revolution, but indeed the abolition of what social progress has been achieved. “Neither Caballero nor Franco,” that would be the catch-phrase summing up a notion which is in the air, and I am not sure that it may not be favored by certain political, diplomatic and indeed government circles in England and in France alike.

Such influences, such maneuvers account for a variety of gray areas: the inactivity of the loyalist fleet, for instance. The marshaling of forces from Morocco, the piracy by the *Canarias* and the *Baleares*<sup>7</sup> and the fall of Malaga are the consequences of that inactivity. And the war is not yet over! If Prieto<sup>8</sup> is so inept and lazy, why put up with him? If Prieto’s hands are tied by a policy that has him keep the fleet paralyzed, why not denounce that policy?

You anarchist ministers make eloquent speeches and write brilliant articles, but one does not win the war and defend the Revolution with speeches and articles. The one is won and the other defended by the passage from defensive to offensive. Positional strategy cannot carry on forever. The problem can only be resolved by launching the watchwords: general mobilization, weapons to the fronts, single command, people’s army, etc., The problem is resolved by doing immediately whatever is practicable.

The *Depeche de Toulouse* of January 17th [1937] wrote:

The chief preoccupation of the Interior ministry is the reassertion of the authority of the State over that of groups and over that of uncontrollables, whatever their provenance.

It goes without saying that, while months can be spent attempting to wipe out “uncontrollables,” no resolution can be found to the problem of liquidating the “fifth column.”<sup>9</sup> A prior condition of the mopping-up of the internal front is the investigative and repressive activity which can only be conducted by tried and tested revolutionaries. A domestic policy of class collaboration and flirtation with the middle classes inevitable leads to tolerance being shown to politically dubious elements. The “fifth column” is made up, not just of elements belonging to fascist organizations, but also of all the malcontents who yearn for a moderate republic. Now, it is the latter who profit from the tolerance displayed by those who hunt down the “uncontrollables.”

The mopping-up of the internal front was conditional upon wide-ranging and radical action by the defense committees set up by the CNT and the UGT.

We are witnessing the infiltration into the officer corps of the Popular Army of questionable elements who cannot offer the assurances of political and trade union affiliation. The militias’ committees and political delegates exercised a salutary control which has today been undermined by the prevalence of strictly military schemes of advancement and promotional. The authority of the committees and delegates must be strengthened.

We are witnessing something new, with potentially dangerous consequences—to wit, whole battalions under the command of officers who do not enjoy the respect and affection of the militians. This is a serious matter, because the value of most Spanish militians is in direct proportion with the confidence enjoyed by their own commanders. So, direct election and the rights of the rank and file to dismiss must be reintroduced.

A grave mistake was made in accepting authoritarian practices, not because they were so formally authoritarian, but because they enshrined enormous errors and political aims that had nothing to do with the demands of the war.

I have had occasion to speak with Italian, French and Belgian superior officers, and I have noticed that they display a much more modern and rational understanding of discipline than certain neo-generals who purport to be realists.

I believe the time has come to form the confederal army, just as the Socialist Party has launched its own troop in the shape of the 5th Regiment of People’s Militias. I believe that the time has come to resolve the command problem by moving towards an effective unity of command that may render going on to the offensive on the Aragón front feasible. I believe the time

has come to create a war industry to be reckoned with. And I believe the time has come to put paid to certain glaring oddities: such as the respect for Sunday as a day of rest and certain "workers' rights" that sabotage the defenses of the Revolution.

Above all, we must keep up the morale of the fighters. Luigi Bertoni,<sup>10</sup> articulating feelings expressed by various Italian comrades fighting on the Huesca front, wrote, not so long ago: "The Spanish war, thus bereft of all new faith, all notion of social change, all revolutionary grandeur, all universal import, is left as a vulgar war of national independence which has to be waged in order to avert the extermination which the world plutocracy has in mind. It remains a terrifying life or death issue, but is no longer a war for the establishment of a new system and a new humanity. It will be said that all is not yet lost, but in reality all is in jeopardy and invested. Our side uses the language of renunciation, as did Italian socialism in the face of fascism's advance: 'Beware of provocations! Keep calm, keep cool! Order and discipline!' All of which in practice boils down to *laissez-faire*. And just as Fascism wound up winning in Italy, so in Spain anti-socialism in republican garb cannot but win, failing unforeseen events. Needless to add, we are merely placing this on record and not condemning our side: we cannot say how they might act differently and with effect as long as the Italo-German pressure is growing at the front and that of the Bolsheviko-bourgeois in the rear.

I do not have Luigi Bertoni's modesty. I venture to assert that Spanish anarchists could pursue a different policy line from the prevailing one; I claim that I can, on the basis of what I know about the experiences of various great recent revolutions and what I read in the Spanish libertarian press itself, recommend a few policy lines.

I believe that you must tackle the problem of whether you defend the Revolution better by making a larger contribution to the fight against fascism by participating in government, or whether you might not be infinitely more useful carrying the torch of your magnificent oratory among the fighters and in the rear.

The time has also come to clarify the unitary import which our participation in the government may have. We must address the masses, and call upon them to judge whether Marcel Cachin<sup>11</sup> is right when he declares in *L'humanité* of 23 March: "The anarchist leaders are redoubling their unitary efforts and

their appeals are heeded more and more.”

Or whether it is *Pravda* and *Izvestia* which are right when they vilify the Spanish anarchists by depicting them as sabotaging unity.

We must appeal to the mass to sit in judgment of the moral and political complicity of the Spanish anarchist press’s silence concerning Stalin’s dictatorial crimes, the persecutions visited on Russian anarchists, the monstrous trials mounted against the Leninist and Trotskyist opposition, a silence duly rewarded by *Izvestia*’s defamatory remarks about *Solidaridad Obrera*.

The masses must be called upon to judge whether certain ploys designed to sabotage supplies are not part and parcel of the plan announced on December 17, 1936 by *Pravda*: “As for Catalonia, the purging of Trotskyist and anarchist syndicalist elements has begun; this endeavor will be prosecuted with the same vigor with which it has been carried out in the USSR.”

The time has come to gauge whether anarchists are in government to act as the vestals of a flame on the verge of going out, or whether they are henceforth there solely to serve as a Phrygian cap for politicians flirting with the enemy or with forces keen to restore the “republic of all classes.” The problem is posed by the obviousness of a crisis deeper than the men who are its representative personalities.

The dilemma—war or revolution—no longer has any meaning. The only dilemma is this: either victory over Franco, thanks to revolutionary war, or defeat.

The problem for you and other comrades is to choose between Thiers’s Versailles and the Paris of the Commune, before Thiers and Bismarck cobble together a sacred union. It is for you to answer, for you are “the light beneath the bushel.”

—Camillo Berneri

# THE CNT TAKEN TO TASK BY ITS INTERNATIONAL

(PARIS, JUNE 11-13, 1937)<sup>1</sup>

After having heard reports from the IWA,<sup>2</sup> from the CNT delegation and clarification and opinions from the association delegates regarding the latest happenings in Spain, and their implications, the extraordinary plenum of the IWA meeting in Paris on June 11, 12 and 13, 1937 notes:

1. That the events which occurred in Barcelona recently were essentially aimed at wresting control of firms and frontiers from the CNT and driving it from its locals and the important positions it occupied, at exterminating its militants and preventing the social revolution from getting into its full stride and at strangling it.
2. That this drive, hatched over many a long month between certain members of the Valencia and Barcelona governments, in which the CNT has a share through its representatives, but unbeknownst to these, is part and parcel of a plan devised by the political parties inspired by the Spanish Communist Party, acting on orders from the Soviet government.
3. That this plan has an international dimension and serves Anglo-American capitalist interests, Franco-Anglo-Russian diplomacy having acted as the champion of the same ever since the Revolution began, and subsequently, by means of non-intervention, blockade, land-based and sea-borne controls and mediation.
4. That mediation, which the Valencia government at present rejects on grounds of opportunity, aims at a white peace, a compromise between adversarial political forces under the auspices of France and England, with a view to getting that Valencia government formally to agree to the restoration of a "democratic and parliamentary" republic, which all are agreed in regarding as having been largely overtaken by events.

Consequently, the plenum declares:

- a) That the war unleashed by a military, fascist counter-revolution should increasingly take on the character of a drive for the utter liberation of the Spanish proletariat, and, for that very reason, cannot but be revolution.

- b) That the salvation of the social revolution must be, more than ever, the overriding and essential preoccupation of the CNT.
- c) That admiration for the invincible courage of Spain's worker and peasant masses, and more especially of the masses organized under the colors of the CNT, remains undiminished, in spite of all of the vicissitudes of an unequal contest.
- d) That the solidarity of the revolutionary proletariat world-wide, united within the ranks of the IWA, hostile to marxism in all of its forms, remains unshakably the same as in the past, given that reformist social democracy, as well as dictatorial Bolshevism of the Stalinist school or the Trotskyist school with all of their ramifications and subsidiaries, such as the PSUC or the POUM, are equally noxious and dangerous for the making of the Revolution.
- e) That the conduct of the revolutionary war in conjunction with the transformation of society, ought, insofar as the CNT is concerned, to rule out any direct participation or indirect compact with the Valencia and Barcelona governments, and would require that the CNT abandon all political, economic and doctrinal concessions made to these governments which have the intention of preserving intact a self-styled antifascist front made up of sectors which are negotiating with the class enemy in order to conclude the war and liquidate the revolution: [the IWA] considers that the CNT's formal withdrawal from the antifascist front is increasingly necessary, although it retains the right to accept or table circumstantial arrangements with the genuinely antifascist elements of that front, eager to see the war concluded through a liberating revolution of the Spanish proletariat directed against fascism as well as against so-called republican democracy.

While not wishing to impose upon the CNT a policy line that might be momentarily disagreeable to it, the extraordinary plenum remains convinced that the CNT will keep faith with the principles and doctrines enunciated by the IWA and will, as soon as circumstances permit, make the adjustment to its course which events require, such adjustment being closely bound up with the very existence of the CNT and with the salvation of the social revolution in Spain, and elsewhere.

For its part, the IWA commits itself to continuing to support the Spanish revolution more forcefully and more coherently than ever, materially and by its actions. The Plenum consequently empowers the IWA secretariat, in conjunction with all our affiliated and sympathizer associations, to make urgent examination of means of stepping up propaganda on behalf of the Spanish Revolution, increasing and adding to aid to our CNT comrades, and, in every country, making provision for the eventuality of general strikes in solidarity with the Spanish proletariat in revolution. The most immediate tasks facing the IWA are:

1. Organizing a systematic campaign against the fascist States as well as the democratic ones which are directly or indirectly interfering in the struggle in Spain, with the admitted intention of strangling the proletarian revolution.
2. Implementing the earlier decisions of IWA Congresses, so as to devise, as soon as practicable, an international economic reconstruction plan for which the Spanish experience has very specific suggestions to offer.

At the same time, the Plenum asks the IWA Secretariat to communicate to the CNT, as and when appropriate, the IWA's feelings with regard to every important event which may occur in Spain.

# FEDERICA MONTSENY SETS THE RECORD STRAIGHT

*We have certainly not offered Federica Montseny space to try to justify her past attitudes, but rather out of democratic scruples and because she deserves the right of reply.*

The issue of CNT participation in government during the war and the Revolution in Spain is a burning issue. When it is mooted again, thirty years on, the intention is always to offer the most scathing of condemnations, without bothering in the least to inform oneself, to understand or to explain. Criticism is wielded like a sword, and stones are cast at the men, and above all the one woman, who were impelled by circumstance to take up government portfolios.

Back in 1937, Camillo Berneri, Emma Goldman and Sébastien Faure broached this matter. Others, like Rudolf Rocker and Max Nettlau refrained from judgment and trusted us. Maybe we ought to clarify a few points so that everyone may understand and then make a judgment.

Above all, one has to appreciate the contemporary context and view things, not through a thirty-year looking-glass, but bearing in mind the situation in which the CNT and the libertarian movement were placed in 1936.

It all started the day we had to turn the Antifascist Militias Committee of Barcelona, the premier agency of the Revolution, which incorporated all political and trade union forces, into the Generalidad Council [of Catalonia]. Was that truly necessary? At any rate, the issue was raised within the Committee itself. It was debated for nights on end, at meetings and plenums. All of the leading lights from the trade unions and anarchist groups were in attendance. A decision to go it alone and keep the Militias Committee was an option to breach the antifascist front and confront the situation all alone. Ought we to have done so? Maybe. At the time, though, the majority, cognizant of the implications for the future involved in such isolation and this sort of a *coup d'état*, decided otherwise. Participation in the bodies which were to reconstitute the State started then and there.

The better to understand, we should recall that we had been left to our own devices by organizations the world over, that other political forces were intriguing, that the Communist Party was already at its blackmail, exploit-



ing Russian aid, the only aid, aside from that from Mexico, reaching a Spain defenseless in the face of a Burgos Junta that was receiving arms, men and funding from Italy and Germany.

That initial venture into participation in government was camouflaged by turning the Catalan government into a “Generalidad Council” and describing as councilors people who were in reality ministers. There was an attempt to excuse it by delegating as representatives of the CNT low-profile figures, recent recruits to the Confederation such as Fabregas. But the first step had been taken.

Later, it was drama and panic when Largo Caballero established his first “war” cabinet, incorporating two Communists and inviting the CNT to join them. The shadow of Kronstadt, of libertarian Ukraine trampled underfoot, loomed. There was the mealy-mouthed invention of a “National Defense Council.” Largo Caballero would have none of it. As he saw it, facing the Burgos Junta, we could not give up the cachet internationally implicit in our having a lawful government of the Republic, democratically chosen by the Spanish people.

A further plenum was summoned. In spite of support for entry into the Largo Caballero government from the then CNT general secretary, Horacio Martinez Prieto, nothing could be done until a fresh plenum of the regional branches could be held. It was decided that we should insist upon making do with a share in a National Defense Council. But Largo Caballero would not budge.

While the CNT and the FAI were in the majority in Catalonia, Valencia and Andalusia, the composition of forces was more varied in the Centre, Asturias and the Basque Country. The Socialists had substantial organizations and the Communists, thanks as ever to Russian aid and flirtation with the right-wing forces, were soaring to new heights.

Relying upon the vote of confidence which the plenum had passed in him, and persuaded that there was no alternative, Horacio Martinez Prieto therefore entered into talks with Caballero with an eye to the CNT joining a ready-made government.

We looked for men who would be representative of the two tendencies within the CNT: Lopez and Peiro representing the moderates; Garcia Oliver and myself representing the extremists. We argued it out. And wound up by giving in. In the position we were in, any scruples seemed like “evading the

issue” and was regarded as “desertion;” our belief had been that we should not take upon ourselves responsibilities in which everybody ought to have had a share.

The rest we know. We were obliged to accept posts as army corps commanders, police chiefs, prison governors, political commissars, etc. Were we carried away by ambition, by thirst for power? No. No one, right then, had a thought for his personal prospects. But we did cast around for justification. Today, one cannot scan the pro-militarization contents of *Solidaridad Obrera* and *CNT* without a sense of unease and bewilderment.

In spite of everything that the men of the CNT-FAI did, scurrying around and popping up everywhere, things went from bad to worse every day. So I said: “We cannot be on the streets and in the government at one and the same time.” We were in the government, but the streets were slipping away from us. We had lost the workers’ trust and the movement’s unity had been whittled away. On the day when we quit the Caballero government, after the May 1937 events in Barcelona—a coup carefully contrived by Russian agents casting around for an excuse to stamp out the anarchist movement in Spain—I was immensely relieved, as I imagine my colleagues were too.

The war, meanwhile, was virtually lost—the Revolution, too. We were split by controversy over what policy to adopt during those final months. There were comrades who shared the republicans’ opinion and believed that some way had to be found of averting the final catastrophe. Others, on the other hand, called for a fight to the finish, even where hope had evaporated. Juan Negrín<sup>1</sup> was the leading light of the die-hard line, arguing that a world war would erupt before the year was out. Was he sincere? Be that as it may, Mariano R. Vazquez, then the CNT’s general secretary, was of the same mind. So too were most comrades. Had we held out until September 1939, war would have been upon us. Would things have changed for us? Judging by the way Hitler handled the initial fighting, and in light of the lightning-quick invasion of France, which reached the Pyrenees within a few days, that is questionable. Once the war was lost and the vast majority of the membership in exile, the moral rehabilitation of the CNT began. A huge number of comrades in occupied France and, a few months later, in North Africa, forcefully denounced political deviationism—there were many who reckoned that we should carry on collaborating with every antifascist force, including any governments-in-exile that might be established—at the Muret plenum in 1944, a motion to that effect was passed.

Meanwhile, once the Liberation made it feasible to have open debate and organize CNT groups right across France, the lobby that was eager to bring to a conclusion a period which they considered regrettable—during which the principles and tactics by which the CNT had been informed ever since its creation had been badly mangled—grew by leaps and bounds each day.

At the Congress of Local Federations held in Paris on May 1, 1945, after eight days of heated arguments, the adversaries of political collaboration won the first round. We had made our self-criticism. I myself, attending as delegate from the Bessieres Local Federation, spoke at length about my personal experience and the futility of our participation in government, declaring that my beliefs had come through that ordeal all the stronger for it. The fact that I had been a minister and was espousing a plainly “anti-reformist” stance, to borrow the idiom of the day, made me one of the standard-bearers of what the “reformists” termed “the classicals.”

The years of exile were to be replete with protracted battles and countless ups and downs. When, at the end of 1945, the national committee of the (underground) CNT inside Spain decided, flying in the face of the majority view among the exiles, to second two ministers to the Giral government—Leiva, from inside Spain, and Horacio Martinez Prieto, who was living in Orleans—the reformist wing split from the Libertarian Movement-CNT-in-exile. The supporters of collaboration, a minority in France, may well have been in the majority inside our country.

But helped by the passage of time and by disappointments that opened the eyes of those who still believed in the feasibility of acting within the framework of a government-in-exile, our cause gained support day by day. Our movement defined its thinking clearly. At the Toulouse Congress in 1947, a motion was passed unanimously, since the opposition “reformists” had already broken away. That motion closed the door once and for all upon political participation in any government.

Here are some excerpts from it:

#### STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLE

The Congress (...) meeting in Toulouse of October 20, 1947, and ensuing days, takes the view that all first-hand experience and all of the events which have occurred in the world in recent years merely endorse the line taken since 1870 by the proletariat organized in accordance with the watchwords of the First International;

(...) considers that all concessions made to the State have resulted only in consolidation of the latter and that any acceptance—even provisional acceptance—of the principle of authority, represents an effective loss of ground and implies renunciation of comprehensively liberating ultimate goals;

(...) considers that the experiences of the war and the Revolution in Spain have confirmed the enduring value of efforts undertaken at the people's instigation and the endorsement by the force of events of the tactics of direct, anti-State, revolutionary action.

(...) in the light of the foregoing, the Congress declares: that it ratifies the principles and revolutionary anti-State direct action tactics which are substantial with anarchism and anarcho-syndicalism;

(...) that all power constituted on the principle of the political and economic State, whatever its name and whichever the parties and organizations supporting it may be, is but one of the many faces of authority;

(. . .) that our movement has as its ultimate aim the introduction of libertarian communism, with no transitional stage, and with tactics consonant with our principles (...)

I honestly believe that the Spanish CNT's case is a unique one in the history of all of the world's labor and political movements. After a slide towards politics, after a taste of government, as a result of which some went astray and were forever lost, an overwhelming majority returned to its roots, cured forever of any political yearnings, persuaded that only direct action by the workers can bring about the social transformation that frees man and does away with the class society. Honestly and sincerely, all who had a taste of military, administrative and political leadership positions emerged from them nauseated and more opposed to the State than ever.

Some may well wonder:

—Would the same have been true if you had won the war? If the Republic had prevailed over Francoism, what would then have become of our participation in the government?

—Had we won the war, the Revolution would have proceeded on its way. Nothing and nobody would have prevented the expansion and completion of what the majority of the people had begun on July 19. Which is probably precisely the reason why the war had to be lost and the Revolution done to death.



NO GODS, NO MASTERS

NOTES



## NOTES TO VOLUME I

# MAX STIRNER

### MAX STIRNER BY E. ARMAND

1. Not just for his poems, several of which have survived, or for his novels, among which we might cite *Die Anarchisten* (*The Anarchists*) and *Der Freiheitsucher* (*Seeker after Freedom*), but also on account of his involvement with the German individualist movement.
2. So much so that the face of the author of *Zarathustra* used to light up at the mention of *The Ego and His Own*, a book that he regarded as the most daring work since Hobbes. “So profoundly at one with Stirner did he feel that in his day he was afraid of being perceived as his plagiarist.” (Ch. Andler, *Nietzsche, sa vie et sa pensée*, Volume IV, 1928)

### THE FALSE PRINCIPLES OF OUR EDUCATION

1. Taken from Max Stirner, *Lesser Writings*, 1842.
2. Stirner’s “personalism” of course has as little to do with the personalism of Emmanuel Mounier as with that of Cruz Martinez Esteruelas. In Stirner’s usage, “personalism” means championing the “I” as the Ego.

### COUNTER CRITICISM

1. Taken from his *Lesser Writings*.
2. *The Ego and His Own*.

# PIERRE-JOSEPH PROUDHON

### PIERRE-JOSEPH PROUDHON (1809–1865)

1. See *De la Justice dans la Révolution et dans l’Eglise*, 1958.
2. The extracts below are lifted from *De la Justice*. . . , from *Lettres à l’Académie de Besançon*, 1837: from *Confessions d’un révolutionnaire pour servir à l’histoire de la révolution de février*, 1849.
3. *Turquie*, a name the peasants gave to maize (having mixed it up with so-called Turkey wheat, which in fact originated in the New World).
4. Long-term printing work: to this day, printing presses are divided into ones that are “de labour” (long-term) and those which are “de presse” (occasional).
5. The reference here is to the funeral of General Maximilien Lamarque (1770–1832) which had just provided the occasion for a huge popular demonstration that degenerated into riots.
6. The reference is to the 1830–1848 reign of King Louis-Philippe.
7. Adolphe Blanqui (1798–1854) a bourgeois economist and brother of the great revolutionary Auguste Blanqui.

### PROPERTY IS THEFT

1. Taken from *What is Property?*, 1840.
2. In Greek *skeptikos*, examiner, a philosopher who makes a profession of seeking out the truth (Proudhon’s note).



3. This title has been devised by us (D. Guérin).
4. By “community,” Proudhon means, as he himself puts it elsewhere, the “communist system,” a “faceless, mystical tyranny,” “the human person stripped of its prerogatives.” (See below, Proudhon, “Against ‘Communism’”.)

### THE SYSTEM OF ECONOMIC CONTRADICTIONS

1. Extract taken from *Confessions d'un révolutionnaire*, op. cit.
2. The reference is to the book *Système des contradictions économiques ou Philosophie de la misère*, two vols., 1846, to which Marx was to reply the following year with his *Poverty of Philosophy*.
3. A reference to the Parisian revolution of February 1848.

### PROUDHON IN THE 1848 REVOLUTION

1. General Louis-Eugène Cavaignac (1802–1857), the butcher of the conquest of Algeria and later butcher of the Parisian proletariat in June 1848.
2. For Raspail's candidature, see below.
3. Colette Audry, *Léon Blum ou la politique du juste*, 1955.
4. *Confessions d'un révolutionnaire*.
5. Alphonse de Lamartine (1790–1869), better known as a poet, but a one-time Legitimist turned moderate republican: he played a significant political role in the provisional government that emerged from the revolution of February 1848.
6. Pierre Leroux (1797–1871), socialist of Saint-Simonian stamp, with overtones of religiosity. François Villegardelle (1810–1856), at first a Fourierist and later a communist. François Vidal (1814–1872), simultaneously close to the Saint-Simonians and the Fourierists, played an important role on the Luxembourg Commission during the 1848 Revolution.
7. Extract lifted from *La Révolution sociale démontrée par le coup d'État du 2 décembre* (1852).
8. *Confessions d'un révolutionnaire*.
9. *Confessions d'un révolutionnaire*.
10. *Carnets de Proudhon*, Vol. III, 1968, p. 68: *Confessions d'un révolutionnaire*.
11. Adolphe Thiers (1797–1877), reactionary statesman and butcher-to-be of the Commune in 1871.
12. Proudhon of course means the victory of the government forces.

### THE AUTHORITY PRINCIPLE

1. Extracts lifted from *Idée générale de la révolution au XIXe siècle*, 1851.
2. The subtitles have been added by Daniel Guérin.
3. Louis de Bonald (1754–1840), reactionary philosopher and poodle of the monarchy and religion.
4. A community which the French communist Etienne Cabet (1788–1856), author of *Voyage en Icarie*, attempted to launch in the United States.
5. Author of the *Code de la Nature*, 1755.
6. Henri de Saint-Simon (1760–1825), founder of so-called Saint-Simonian “utopian” socialism.
7. Pierre Jurieu (1637–1713), French Protestant theologian and adversary of absolutism in general and of Louis XIV in particular.
8. Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778), author of *The Social Contract*: Joseph Sieyès (1748–1836), theoretician of the Third Estate: Maximilien Robespierre (1758–1794), parliamentary revolutionary leader: François Guizot (1787–1874), historian and conservative politician and head of government during the latter years of the reign of Louis-Philippe.
9. *Brasse*, in the old French, meant the length of two arms.

## PROUDHON AND WORKER CANDIDATES (1863–1864)

1. The title is our own. The text has been lifted from Proudhon's *Correspondance*, XIII, pp. 247–266.
2. Jules Favre (1809–1880), one of the leaders of the liberal opposition under the Second Empire. Émile Ollivier (1825–1913), ditto, and was later head of government of the so-called liberal Empire between 1867 and 1870. Pierre Marie (1795–1870), former member of the provisional government of 1848 and organizer of the National Workshops. Jules Simon (1844–1896), philosopher and liberal politician.

## PROUDHON: AGAINST “COMMUNISM”

1. See *On the Political Capacity of the Working Classes*, 1864.
2. Following a demonstration by trades bodies outside the city hall on 28 February 1848, the provisional government launched a “Governmental commission for workers,” housed in the Luxembourg Palace and chaired by Louis Blanc: it assembled employers’ and workers’ representatives there. That commission also consulted specialists in social issues. The work of the commission was carried out during the period between March 1 and May 16. In the end, it ventured to draw up a labor organization plan and drafted the social legislation which was subsequently promulgated by the provisional government.
3. Robert Owen (1771–1858), English “utopian” socialist and promoter of the earliest producers’ and consumers’ cooperatives. The Moravians, a religious sect founded in Bohemia in the 15th century, were characterized by a very rigorous asceticism, being intent upon living a life of sanctity and charity, away from the world. Campanella (1568–1639), Italian philosopher and author of *The City of the Sun*. Thomas More (1478–1535), Lord Chancellor of England and author of the political and social novel, *Utopia*. Plato (429–347 BC.), author, among other things, of the dialogues *The Republic* and *The Laws*.

# MIKHAIL BAKUNIN

## THE REVOLUTION OF FEBRUARY 1848, AS SEEN BY BAKUNIN

1. Extracted from *Confession* (1857 Letter to the Tsar), Paris, 1932.

## BAKUNIN, AS SEEN BY JAMES GUILLAUME

1. Mazzinians, followers of Giuseppe Mazzini (1805–1872), an Italian republican plotter and one of the architects of Italian unification.
2. Nikolai Ogareff (1813–1877), Russian poet, co-publisher with Alexander Herzen of the journal *Kolokol* (The Bell) in London, and a correspondent with Bakunin.
3. Nikolai Outine (1815–1883), a Russian émigré living in Switzerland. A marxist, he took part in the congress of the League of Peace and Freedom in Berne in 1868 and in the London conference of the International in 1871: editor of the journal *L'Égalité* in Geneva in 1870–1871.
4. According to this calumny, the revolutionary Bakunin had been an agent of the Russian government. See below.
5. Giuseppe Fanelli (1827–1877), initially an Italian republican along with Mazzini and Garibaldi: he broke with Mazzini over his statist centralism: he became a friend and collaborator of Bakunin from 1864. In October 1868, Bakunin sent him to Spain to establish there a branch of the International as well as of his International Alliance for Socialist Democracy, even though Fanelli spoke no Spanish.
6. On César de Paepe, see below: Eugène Varlin (1839–1871), French Internationalist and Communard, was shot in the Rue des Rosiers on 28 May 1871 by the Versailles counter-revolution.

7. Wilhelm Liebknecht (1826–1900) introduced marxism to Germany and founded the Social Democracy at the Eisenach congress (1869).
8. This was the name of the premises on which the Geneva Internationalists used to meet, an erstwhile Masonic lodge. (James Guillaume's note).
9. Sergei Netchayev (1847–1882), a young Russian revolutionary. He met, captivated and influenced Bakunin while in Switzerland, winning him over, for a time, to his terrorist and nihilistic ideas: extradited, he died in prison in Russia after lengthy suffering.
10. The journal *Kolokol* was published in the West by the Russian revolutionary Alexander Herzen (1812–1870).
11. See below for Bakunin's essay on the Paris Commune.
12. Petr Lavrov (1823–1900), mathematics teacher turned anti-State revolutionary: escaping from Siberia, he went to Paris and was a sympathizer with the Commune: he then spent some time in Switzerland and afterwards London, before finally returning to Paris to die there.
13. Netchayev had just been arrested in Zurich on 11 August 1872: Switzerland handed him over to Russia on 27 October 1872. (James Guillaume's note).
14. Hans Georg Eccarius (1818–1889), German tailor and member of the Communist League and then, from 1864, in London, of the International: secretary of the General Council from 1867 to 1871: fell out with Marx at the time of the split in The Hague in 1872, and although no anarchist, joined the "anti-authoritarian" International. Hermann Jung (1805–1870), a Swiss watch-maker settled in London, and a friend of Marx, was treasurer of the International's General Council.
15. The Blanquists had already broken with Marx on September 6 at the congress in The Hague, accusing him of having betrayed them. (James Guillaume's note).
16. See below. Carlo Cafiero (1846–1892), Italian anarchist, initially friendly with Marx, then became a disciple of Bakunin and finally a libertarian communist alongside Kropotkin, Elisee Reclus, etc.

#### WHO AM I

1. The title is of Daniel Guérin's devising. The extract is lifted from *La Commune de Paris et la notion de l'État 1870* as it appears in *Oeuvres IV*, p. 249ff.
2. (Bakunin's note) It has also been embraced and will be embraced more and more by the essentially anti-political instincts of the Slav peoples.

#### THE INTERNATIONAL REVOLUTIONARY SOCIETY OR BROTHERHOOD

1. Max Nettlau (1864–1944), born in Vienna, but of German nationality, the indefatigable historian and historiographer of anarchism, a prolific and erudite author of numerous writings and articles and, notably, of this memorable life of Bakunin.
2. A. Lehning and A. Romano, in *La Première Internationale* (a symposium from 1964), CNRS, 1968, (pp. 284, 335 and 349).
3. H.-E. Kaminski, *Bakoumine, la vie d'un révolutionnaire*, 1938, pp. 213–214.
4. In stapling this text by hand into the manuscript of his Bakunin, Max Nettlau saw fit to write in the word (sic) after the words "leaders" and "government."

## NOTES TO VOLUME II

# MIKHAIL BAKUNIN

### I. THE EXCOMMUNICATION OF THE HAGUE

1. See Miklos Molnar, *Le Declin de la Premiere Internationale*, Geneva, 1963.
2. Taken from *Oeuvres*, Tome IV, pp. 342–351. The title has been added by us.
3. The resolutions passed at The Hague by a contrived majority were disowned by all of the International's component regional federations, to wit: 1. by the Jura Federation at its Saint-Imier congress (September 15–16, 1872): 2. by all of the French sections who were able, in spite of the Dufaure law, to meet and deliberate, by a congress of 23 delegates from the French sections (October 1872) among other occasions: 3. by the Italian federation (letter from its correspondence commission, December 1872) which, ever since its first congress in Rimini in August 1872, had broken off relations with the General Council: 4. by the Belgian federation, at its congress in Brussels (December 25–26, 1872): 5. by the Spanish federation at its Cordoba congress (December 25–30, 1872): 6. by the American federation (resolution from the federal council at Spring Street, New York, January 19, 1873): 7. by the English federation at its London congress (January 26, 1873): 8. by the Dutch federation (the result of a poll reported by the Dutch federal council on February 14, 1873). The International had no sections in Germany, as they were forbidden by law: there the International could only count upon individual affiliates, directly affiliated with the General Council (note by James Guillaume).
4. The International's General Council, which had been based in London from 1864 to 1872, was removed, at the decision of the congress of The Hague, to New York, where Marx and Engels were counting upon finding compliant servants of their wishes.

### 2. STATISM AND ANARCHY

1. We have chosen to use the term “marxians” here rather than “marxists” as the translator does, because Bakunin, when expressing himself in French, preferred the former term.

### THE INTRODUCTION TO BAKUNIN AND MARX ON THE COMMUNE

1. Bakunin, *Oeuvres*, Tome IV, 1910, p. 62.
2. *Ibid.* p. 381–382.
3. *Ibid.* p. 476.
4. Franz Mehring (1846–1919), *Karl Marx, Geschichte seines Lebens 1918*: and Lenin in *The State and Revolution* complained of “perversion” by Social Democratic “opportunism” of the “essential correction” which Marx had made to the *Manifesto*.
5. Bakunin, letter addressed to the Brussels newspaper *La Liberté*, dated October 5, 1872, in *Oeuvres*, Stock, Tome IV, p. 387.
6. *Ibid.* p. 372.
7. James Guillaume, *Souvenirs de l'Internationale 1907*, Tome II, p. 192.
8. Arthur Lehning, “Marxism and Anarchism in the Russian Revolution,” in the review *Die Internationale*, Berlin, 1923.
9. Karl Marx, *Pages choisies pour une éthique socialiste*, readings selected by Maximilien Rubel, 1948, introduction p. 4, note.

### BAKUNIN: THE PARIS COMMUNE

1. Taken from *The Paris Commune and the Idea of the State* (1871).

### KARL MARX: THE PARIS COMMUNE

1. Taken from *The Civil War in France* (1871).
2. For Kropotkin's critique of the Commune's system of representation, see below.
3. See below for Kropotkin's essay on the medieval Communes.
4. Parish councils.

### BAKUNIN ON WORKER SELF-MANAGEMENT

1. From the article "On Cooperation" in *L'Egalite* Geneva, September 21, 1869.
2. Taken from a letter of January 3, 1872 to Lodovico Nabruzzi. The title has been added by ourselves.

## DIRECT ACTION AND LIBERTARIAN CONSTRUCTION FORESHADOWED

### CÉSAR DE PAEPE

1. From Miklos Molnar, *Le Declin de la premiere Internationale*, 1963.
2. See Louis Bertrand, *César de Paepe, sa vie, son oeuvre*, Brussels, 1909. See also Bertrand's *Histoire de la democratie et du socialisme en Belgique depuis 1830*, Brussels, 1906–1907, two vols. (note by Molnar).
3. In *Histoire du socialisme européen*, Paris, 1948, p. 151 (note by Molnar).
4. The Baron Colin (1783–1859), in his chief works (*Le Pactes social* 1835, and *Socialisme rationnel* 1849), espoused an essentially collectivist socialism relying upon common ownership of the land. His chief disciple, Louis de Potter, published, among other things, a *Catéchisme social* in 1850.

### ON THE ORGANIZATION OF PUBLIC SERVICES

1. Taken from César de Paepe, *De l'organisation des services publics dans la société future*, 1874, a report read to the Brussels congress of the (so-called "anti-authoritarian") International. The subtitles have been added by us.

### THE QUESTION OF PUBLIC SERVICES

1. Report presented to the Jura congress held in Vevey, on August 1 and 2, 1875, by the Courtelary district Engravers' and Chequerworkers' Section. (All the sub-titles have been added by us).

## JAMES GUILLAUME

### JAMES GUILLAUME

1. Fritz Brupbacher (1874–1945), a medical doctor from Zurich, member of the Swiss Socialist Party from 1898 to 1914, at which point he was expelled. Thereafter, he was a member of the Communist Party from 1920 up until he was expelled from that at the end of 1932. Es-

entially, he always remained an anarchist and was forever making propaganda on behalf of sexual freedom. Published *Marx und Bakunin and 60 Jahre Ketzer* (an autobiography), books from which extracts have been translated into French as *Socialisme et liberté* (1955).

2. *L'internationale, documents et souvenirs (1864–1888)*, four vols., 1905–1910.

#### IDEAS ON SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

1. It should be noted, however, that even in these trades, the larger-scale industrial approach to production may be applied to make savings in time and labor. What we say about them is therefore applicable only to the transitional period. (Note by James Guillaume).
2. The sub-headings which follow were added by James Guillaume.
3. The sub-headings below have been added by ourselves.

## PETER KROPOTKIN

#### PETER KROPOTKIN

1. *Autour d'une vie*, 1902.
2. Paul Brousse (1844–1912), physician, anarchist at first and disciple of Bakunin, member of the Jura Federation. In 1877 in Chaux-de-Fonds, along with Kropotkin, he launched a secret society which he called "our international intimacy," made up of Internationalists of various origins, a continuation of the secret Brotherhood founded by Bakunin in 1865. Around about 1880, he switched from anarchism to reformist socialism and became an advocate of "possibilism," a euphemism for opportunism.
3. In fact, *Ethics* was published, unfinished, after Kropotkin's death.

#### THE ANARCHIST IDEA

1. This was a report delivered by Peter Kropotkin, using the alias of Levashoff, to the Jura gathering on November 1, 1879. It was printed in the Geneva newspaper *Le Révolté*.

#### THE INTRODUCTION TO THE 1880 CONGRESS OF THE JURA FEDERATION

1. This was founded on September 1, 1868 through the amalgamation of the Sonvilier section and about twenty local sections from the Saint-Imier Valley. Adhémar Schwitzguébel had already reported to the Basle congress (1869) on the progress of this federation.
2. Max Nettlau, *Bibliographie de l'anarchie* (no date), p. 58.

#### MINUTES OF THE JURA FEDERATION CONGRESS

1. Carried in *Le Révolté*, Geneva, 17 October 1880.
2. Elisée Reclus (1830–1905), geographer and theoretician of anarchism, author in particular of *L'Evolution, la révolution et l'idéal anarchiste*, 1898.
3. See below for the report on "Anarchy and Communism" by Carlo Cafiero.

#### MEMORANDUM SUBMITTED TO THE 1880 JURA CONGRESS

1. The allusion is to the period (after 1878) when Chancellor Bismarck was cracking down on the Social Democrats.

## PAROLES D'UN RÉVOLTÉ

1. Taken from Pierre Kropotkin, *Paroles d'un Révolté*, 1885.

### Introduction to FROM THE MEDIEVAL COMMUNE TO THE MODERN COMMUNE

1. Daniel Guérin, *L'Anarchisme* 1965; Santillan, *El Organismo económico de la Revolución*, 1936: See also Volume III.

## REVOLUTIONARY GOVERNMENT

1. Auguste Blanqui (1805–1881), the great revolutionary who advocated the dictatorship of a minority. See the foreword to Vol I of this anthology.
2. Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte (Napoleon III) had seized power by *coup d'état* on December 2, 1851.
3. Tadeusz Kosciuszko (1746–1817), appointed dictator of Poland in 1794.
4. Proclamation of May 7, 1794, promulgated on May 30. Had this decree been put into effect, it would indeed have spelled the end for personal slavery and patrimonial courts (Kropotkin's note).
5. Cimourdain, hero of Victor Hugo's novel *Ninety Three*, 1873: See Kropotkin, *La Grande Révolution*, 1909; and Daniel Guérin, *La lutte de classes sous la première République* (1793–1797), new edition, 1969.

## LETTER TO GEORGE BRANDES

1. George Woodcock and I. Avakumovic, *The Anarchist Prince; The Biography of Prince Peter Kropotkin*.
2. Georg Brandes (1842–1927), renowned Danish literary critic.
3. During the 1914–1918 war, Kropotkin had sided with the western empires against the central powers, in a declaration known as the “Manifesto of the Sixteen.” This reneging upon anarchism's basic principles was disowned by anarchist communists. (See Volume III of this anthology).
4. Alexis Koltchak (1874–1920), White Russian general defeated and shot by the Bolsheviks: General Anton Denikin (1872–1947), another White Russian general, eventually defeated by the Bolsheviks.

## HOW COMMUNISM SHOULD NOT BE INTRODUCED

1. For Robert Owen and Saint-Simon, see Volume I. Charles Fourier (1772–1837) was a French “utopian” socialist, founder of the phalansterian school and theoretician of universal harmony.

## VILKENS' LAST VISIT TO KROPOTKIN

1. Taken from the newspaper *Le Libéraire*, of January 28, 1921.

## EMMA GOLDMAN'S RECOLLECTIONS OF KROPOTKIN

1. Taken from Emma Goldman, *Living my Life*, 1934. Emma Goldman (1869–1940) was of Russian Jewish extraction: she emigrated to the United States in 1886 and there became an anarchist. An advocate of women's rights, birth control and individual and sexual freedom, she published a newspaper, *Mother Earth*, and later brought out her admirable memoirs as *Living my Life*. In 1919, with the anti-anarchist witch-hunt at its height, she was deported from the United States to Soviet Russia. She stayed there up until the Kronstadt revolt (1921). Then she returned to Europe and America, carrying on indefatigably with her writing and lecturing. In 1936, she visited Spain.
2. “Sasha,” the familiar name of Alexander Berkman (1870–1936), also of Russian Jewish ex-

- traction, who emigrated to the United States in 1888. Seeking to support the strikers in their battle against professional strike-breakers, in 1892 he shot the steel magnate Henry Clay Frick in Pittsburgh, wounding him slightly. On March 1, 1893, he was sentenced to a prison term of 21 years, of which he served 14, staunchly defended by Emma Goldman. He was arrested and deported along with her in 1919 to Soviet Russia. In December 1921, after the crushing of the Kronstadt revolt and the execution of Fanny Baron, he left Russia for Germany and then on to France. In poor health, he committed suicide in Nice. He wrote *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist* (1912) and *The Bolshevik Myth* (1922).
3. Alexander M. Schapiro (1882–1947), son of a Russian anarchist. Secretary of the Anarchist International Bureau after the International Anarchist Congress held in Amsterdam in 1907 (see Volume III of this anthology). During the Revolution he was, alongside Voline, editor of the newspaper *Golos Truda* (see Volume III) and was a member of the Commissariat for Foreign Affairs. The Bolshevik crack-down on the anarchists forced him to leave for Berlin in 1922, there to be the driving force behind the exiled Russian anarchist group. Later he lived in Paris, where he contributed to *Le Combat syndicaliste* before moving on to the USA.
  4. Aaron Baron, anarchist, took part in the Russian revolution of 1905, was then banished to Siberia and escaped to the United States, returning to Russia in 1917: joint editor with Voline of the Kharkov newspaper *Nabat*: arrested by the Cheka along with his companion Fanya in November 1920, he was kept in prisons and concentration camps until 1938, before being rearrested and disappearing. Fanny Baron was shot by the Bolsheviks in September 1921.
  5. For a biography of Voline, see Volume III.



## NOTES TO VOLUME III

# ERRICO MALATESTA

### REVOLUTION AND REACTION

1. *L'Agitazione*, Ancona, Nos. 13 and 14 (June 4 and 11, 1897).
2. *Anarchiè et organisation* (1927), republished 1967.

### ANARCHY

1. Excerpts from *L'Anarchia*, 1891.

### MALATESTA AND THE ANARCHISTS AT THE LONDON CONGRESS

1. Victor Serge, "La pensée anarchiste" in *Le Crapouillot*, January, 1938.
2. Lenin, *The State and Revolution*, 1917.
3. On Paul Delesalle, see below for French anarchists and syndicalism.
4. Eugène Fournière (1857–1914), one-time lapidary, founder, along with Gustave Rouanet, of the *Revue socialiste*, Paris municipal councilor and deputy, and lecturer in labor history. This has been taken from his book *La Crise socialiste*.
5. Benoît Malon (1841–1893), French socialist and author of *Le Socialisme intégral*.
6. Gustave Rouanet (1855–1927), journalist and socialist deputy for the Seine from 1893 to 1914. Taken from *La Petite République*, July 15, 1896.
7. Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis (1846–1919), Dutch anarchist and former Lutheran pastor turned revolutionary socialist and libertarian, advocate of the general strike; author of *Socialism in Danger* (1894) and *Libertarian Socialism and Authoritarian Socialism* (1895).
8. Vladimir Tcherkessoff (1854–1925), Russian anarchist born in Georgia: fled to London in 1891: friend to Kropotkin and Malatesta: anti-marxist and advocate of revolutionary syndicalism: author of *Teachings and Actions of the Social Democracy* (1896) and translator of Bakunin, Kropotkin, Malatesta, Reclus, etc.
9. Amilcare Cipriani (1844–1918), Italian libertarian revolutionary, former colleague of Garibaldi's on the Sicilian expedition, took part, in London, in the launch of the First International in 1864 and participated in the Paris Commune.
10. Jean Grave (1854–1939), French anarchist of working class extraction, published *Le Révolté* in Geneva, then *Les Temps nouveaux* in Paris: author, notably of *Society the Day after the Revolution* (1882) and of *The Moribund Society and Anarchy* (1893), which book resulted in his being brought before the courts.  
For Fernand Pelloutier and Émile Pouget, see below on French anarchists and syndicalism.  
Joseph Tortelier (1854–1925), carpenter, took part in direct action against unemployment and property-owners along with Louise Michel and Émile Pouget: turned anarchist in 1884, advocated the general strike, abstention from elections, supply of bread, accommodation and clothing free of charge, by way of an overture to consumption based upon needs.
11. Jean Jaures (1859–1914), Republican and Social Democratic leader, journalist and historian, assassinated on the eve of the First World War.
12. Gustave Delory (1857–1925) of working class extraction, one of the first socialist activists in the North of France, arrested during the strike wave of May 1, 1890, elected mayor of Lille in 1896, councilor-general and deputy in 1902.
13. For Jules Guesde and H. M. Hyndman, see Malatesta's letter to Luigi Fabbri, below.
14. Alexandre Millerand (1859–1943), reformist socialist who became a minister in 1899 and president of the Republic from 1920 to 1924.
15. Henri van Kol (1852–1925), Dutch Social Democrat deputy, specializing in colonial matters,

and author of a pamphlet, *Anarchism* (1893), under the *nom de plume* of Rienzi.

16. August Bebel (1840–1913), one of the founding fathers of the German Social Democracy.
17. For Wilhelm Liebknecht, see Volume I.
18. Keir Hardie (1856–1915), Scottish ex-miner and left-wing Laborite, founder of the Independent Labor Party in 1893.

#### MALATESTA, THE ANARCHIST INTERNATIONAL AND WAR

1. Rudolf Rocker (1873–1958), German anarchist historian and philosopher who died in the United States. Author, notably of *The Bankruptcy of Russian State Communism* (in German), 1921.
2. Charles Malato (1857–1938), anarchist writer, author, notably, of *The Philosophy of Anarchy* (1889): Paul Reclus, son of Elisee Reclus (on whom see Volume II).

#### A PROPHETIC LETTER TO LUIGI FABBRI

1. Luigi Fabbri (1877–1938), Italian anarchist writer and militant, author of *Dictatorship and Revolution*.
2. Jules Guesde (1845–1922), social democrat leader, after having been an anarchist and then pioneer of marxism in France. Georgi Plekhanov (1856–1918), a Russian populist turned marxist in exile: pioneered marxism in Russia: mentor and collaborator of Lenin, before breaking with him in order to condemn the Bolshevik seizure of power in 1917. Henry Hyndman (1842–1921), founder of laborism, after having been a pioneer of marxism in England. Philip Schedidemann (1864–1935), German Social Democrat chancellor in 1919. Gustav Noske (1868–1946), right-wing Social Democrat, governor of Kiel in 1918, joined the counter-revolutionary council of people's commissars at the start of 1919, then went on to become Army minister, organizing the repression of the post-war revolutionary movements.

## ÉMILE HENRY

#### ÉMILE HENRY (1872–1894)

1. The reference is to May 1, 1891, when troops opened fire on a crowd of workers, leaving ten dead.
2. From Andre Salmon, *La Terreur noire*, 1959, and Jean Maitron, *Ravachol et les anarchistes*, 1964.

#### LETTER TO THE GOVERNOR OF THE CONCIERGERIE PRISON

1. This text is reprinted with the kind permission of Jean Maitron: taken from Jean Maitron, *Histoire du mouvement anarchiste en France (1886–1914)*.
2. Sebastien Faure (1858–1942) was initially schooled by Jesuits, before becoming a Guesdist socialist and standing in the October 1885 elections: after 1888, he was an anarchist: he launched the newspaper *Le Libertaire* in 1895: a brilliant public speaker and lecturer rather than a theoretician: he founded the libertarian school, La Ruche, in Rambouillet in 1904: he took over the supervision of the four-volume *Encyclopedie anarchiste*: author of, among other things, *La douleur universelle* (1895).
3. Jean Maitron mentions that there is a passage missing here.

# THE FRENCH ANARCHISTS IN THE TRADE UNIONS

## INTRODUCTION TO THE FRENCH ANARCHISTS IN THE TRADE UNIONS

1. See Jean Maitron, *Ravachol et les anarchistes*.

## FERNAND PELLOUTIER

### NOTES FOR ANARCHISM AND THE WORKERS' UNION

1. Written on October 20, 1895; printed in *Les Temps nouveaux* of November 2–8, 1895.
2. The reference is probably to Chapter III of *Le Système des contradictions économiques* (1846) and perhaps also to Chapter III of *La Théorie de l'impôt* (1861).
3. Clovis Hugues (1851–1907), French politician and poet; Ernest Ferroul (1853–1921), physician, socialist mayor and deputy for Narbonne.
4. Paul Lafargue (1842–1911), born in Cuba of French parents, student of medicine, initially a Proudhonian libertarian, then disciple and son-in-law of Karl Marx, marrying his daughter Laura: member of the International: actively involved in the Commune: Karl Marx's delegate to Spain, designated to combat Bakunin's supporters there: amnestied in 1880: elected deputy in 1891, he joined Jules Guesde in the launching of the Parti Ouvrier français: author of *The Right to be Lazy*, a pamphlet of somewhat libertarian panache. He committed suicide alongside his wife on November 26, 1911, "pre-empting a pitiless old age."
5. On socialist unity, see Daniel Guérin's introduction to a forthcoming edition of Rosa Luxemburg's *Le Socialisme en France (1898–1912)*; Edouard Vaillant (1840–1915), one of the greatest of French revolutionaries, a Blanquist to begin with, a member of the Commune of 1871, condemned to death, then amnestied. Wound up supporting the "Sacred Union."
6. By this term, Pelloutier means State socialism. *Émile Pouget's Life as an Activist* by Paul Delesalle

## ÉMILE POUGET

### EMILE POUGET'S LIFE AS AN ACTIVIST

1. Paul Delesalle (1870–1948), former steel-worker, anarchist and revolutionary syndicalist: contributed to *Les Temps nouveaux*, then was elected secretary of the Federation of the Bourses du Travail until 1907: later publisher and revolutionary book-seller. This text has been taken from *Le Cri du Peuple* of July 29 and August 5, 1931.
2. On Louise Michel, see note 7.
- 2a. Henri Rochefort (Marquis de Rochefort-Luzay, 1830–1913), journalist and pamphleteer: mounted lively opposition to the Empire from his weekly paper *La Lanterne*. Deputy of the Commune in 1871.
3. Joseph Foullon (1717–1789), comptroller-general of finances, hanged and then beheaded after the fall of the Bastille.
4. A number of placards and posters under the title of "Le Père Peinard au Populo" had a print run in excess of 20,000 copies, and I could cite more than thirty such. (Note by Paul Delesalle).
5. Sadi Carnot (1837–1894), President of the French Republic, assassinated in Lyons by the Italian anarchist Caserio.
6. The "blackguardly" laws, designed to stamp out anarchist terrorist activity, were passed after Auguste Vaillant's outrage in 1894. Auguste Vaillant (1861–1894), anarchist, ENFANT DE LA BALLE,

Jack of all trades, was guillotined after throwing a bomb into the benches of the Chamber of Deputies on December 9, 1893.

7. Louise Michel (1830–1905), teacher and indomitable anarchist militant: she participated in the Paris Commune of 1871, was deported and later pardoned.
8. Victor Griffuelhes (1874–1923), one-time cobbler: at first a Blanquist, he became a revolutionary syndicalist: general secretary of the CGT from 1902 to 1909.
9. The Charter of Amiens (1906), in which revolutionary syndicalism proclaimed itself independent of political parties.
10. Hubert Lagardelle (1875–1958), lawyer, began as a Guesdist, then became founder of *Le Mouvement socialiste* (1899–1914), a theoretical revolutionary syndicalist review: author of the remarkable book *Le socialisme français*. He ended up a minister under Marshal Petain.
11. Pierre Monatte (1881–1960), proof-reader, contributed to the anarchist review *Les Temps nouveaux* then, having become a revolutionary syndicalist, joined the CGT's pre-1914 Confederal Committee: he founded the review *La Vie ouvrière*, which lasted from 1909 to 1914. In 1923 he joined the French Communist Party and became editor of the social affairs page in *L'humanité*. He was expelled from the Party in November 1924, whereupon he launched *La Révolution Proletarienne*, organ of the Ligue syndicaliste. See *Syndicalisme révolutionnaire et communisme, les archives de Pierre Monatte* (1969).
12. In 1908, strikes in Draveil and Villeneuve-Saint-Georges were crushed with bloodshed by the government of Georges Clemenceau (1841–1929), after which the leaders of the CGT were arrested.
13. In 1920, in the village of Lozere (Palaiseau), a pauper's hearse, followed by Pierre Monatte, Maurice Chambelland and a few others, myself (Daniel Guérin) among them, bore Émile Pouget to his final resting place.

#### WHAT IS THE TRADE UNION?

1. Taken from *Le Syndicat*, 1905.

## THE SPANISH COLLECTIVES

#### COLLECTIVIZATION IN SPAIN

1. Augustin Souchy, a German anarcho-syndicalist who placed himself in the service of the Spanish Revolution. These extracts are from his *Collectivization, L'oeuvre constructive de la révolution espagnole*, April 1937 (republished 1965): The abbreviations used are: CNT—National Confederation of Labor (anarcho-syndicalist); FAI—Iberian Anarchist Federation; UGT—General Workers' Union.
2. The sub-titles have been added (Daniel Guérin's note).
3. In the province of Valencia, I witnessed an assembly of the farmworkers, at which the small-holders were also represented. These were also free to take part in the discussions. They complained that they did not have such and such. They were invited to join the union. A commission submitted a report on potential improvements to the working of the soil. It was very educational to see the workers there present fleshing out the commission's proposals with their own experiences. (Note by Augustin Souchy).
4. Juan Comorera, a Catalan socialist turned Communist in 1936 and a councilor in the Generalidad of Catalonia: he was later expelled from the party: fearing that he was marked for assassination, he entered Spain clandestinely and was sentenced to a lengthy term of imprisonment: he died in prison.

## SOME LOCAL EXAMPLES OF COLLECTIVIZATION

1. Taken from CNT documents.

### IN THE PROVINCE OF LEVANTE

1. Gaston Leval, a French anarcho-syndicalist closely connected with Spanish anarcho-syndicalism from well before the Revolution of 1936, as will be seen in Volume IV. This extract is from his Italian book, *Né Franco Né Stalin*.
2. HUERTA—an expanse of irrigated orchards.

### THE WRITINGS OF DIEGO ABAD DE SANTILLÁN

1. Diego Abad de Santillán, who was to become minister of Economy with the Generalidad in Catalonia, published this outline prior to the revolution of July 1936: (this extract is from his book *El organismo económico de la revolución*, 1936).
2. Unpublished letter from Diego Abad de Santillán.
3. The reference is to certain utopian articles in the program adopted at CNT congress in Zaragoza in May 1936.

## VOLINE

### THE INTRODUCTION TO VOLINE

1. This introductory essay on Voline is based upon the biography published by “The Friends of Voline,” with which *La Révolution inconnue* opens. An essay on Nestor Makhno appears at the beginning of Volume IV of this anthology.
2. This precious document, which appeared in print and which Voline intended later to translate into French, has never been relocated: all that we have of it are short quotations.
3. See Volume IV.
4. For more about Prudhommeaux, see Volume IV.

### THE UNKNOWN REVOLUTION

1. Extracts taken from *La Révolution inconnue, 1917–1921*, republished in 1969 by Pierre Belfond.
2. Voline’s own testimony, taken from his unpublished “Conclusions” to *La Révolution inconnue*.
3. “We had known each other in Russia and later in France from where he, like me, was deported in 1916” (Voline’s note).
4. The sub-headings have been added by us (Daniel Guérin’s note).

### PROCEEDINGS OF NABAT

1. Ugo Fedeli (1898–1964), an Italian anarchist who also used the pen-name of Ugo Treni, was a disciple of Malatesta. Exiled from Italy until 1945, he was a countryman and collaborator with Camillo Berneri (for whom see Volume IV): in 1936, he placed himself in the service of antifascist Spain and helped Berneri publish the newspaper *Guerra di classe*. On his return to Italy, he published historical works.

## NOTES TO VOLUME IV

# NESTOR MAKHNO

### VISIT TO THE KREMLIN

1. Nikolai Bukharin (1888–1938), Bolshevik since 1906, member of the Party's Central Committee from 1917 up until his death. Leader of the "rightists" after 1928. A brilliant economist and theoretician, he was executed under Stalin.
2. From November 1917 on, the Central Rada was a sort of parliament of the new "Ukrainian democratic republic." The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, agreed between the Bolsheviks and the German imperial government at the beginning of 1918, had opened the gates of the Ukraine to the Austro-Germans. They set up a reactionary government there headed by the first "hetman" (a title formerly held by the elected leader of the Ukrainian Cossacks), Skorpadsky. But the defeat suffered by the Central empires towards the end of 1918 forced the withdrawal of German and Austrian troops from the Ukraine, while Skoropadsky took to his heels. He was replaced by a "Directory," headed by a former member of the Rada, the bourgeois separatist, Petliura.
3. JUNKERS—a German term meaning squires: the German officer corps being made up of aristocrats and recruits drawn from among the great land-owning families east of the Elbe.
4. At the time, only the *Left* wing of the Social Revolutionary Party had sided with the Bolsheviks.
5. On a specious pretext, the Bolshevik authorities, on the night of April 12, 1918, had had their police and military troops ransack the premises of the Moscow federation of anarchist groups, a private hotel situated in the Malaia Dmitrovka.
6. HAIAMAKS—military forces of the Ukrainian reactionary government: the name is borrowed from the heroes of a Ukrainian popular uprising against the troops of the Tsar and the king of Poland in the 18th century.

### MAKHNO'S INSURGENT ARMY INCORPORATED INTO THE RED ARMY

1. For more about Dybenko, see the next page. Makhno was not quite unknown to the Bolsheviks, for Lenin, as we have seen, granted him an audience in June 1918.

### COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY? REPLY TO DYBENKO

1. Dybenko, Commander of the Bolshevik forces.

### PROGRAM/MANIFESTO OF APRIL 1920

1. Drafted by the cultural and educational branch of the Makhnovist Insurgent Army.
2. In Italy, a *CONDOTTIERE* was a partisan leader.
3. Taken from the Makhnovist newspaper *The Road to Freedom*.

# KRONSTADT

## MEETING WITH TROTSKY (MARCH 1917) BY EMMA GOLDMAN

1. Taken from Emma Goldman, *Living My Life*, 1934.
2. Trotsky and his family sailed from New York, bound for Russia, on March 17, 1917.

## MEMORIES OF KRONSTADT

1. Extracted from Emma Goldman, *Living My Life*.
2. This Zorin, from a working class background and at this time secretary of the Bolshevik Party's Petrograd Committee, is unconnected with the Valerian Zorin who was later USSR ambassador to France: this one ended his days in the Cheka's crematoria.
3. Hand-picked officer cadets who, along with Mongolians, were employed in the destruction of the Kronstadt rebellion.
4. For more on Alexander Berkman, see Volume II.
5. As mentioned in the preceding extract.
6. Mikhail Tukhachevsky (1893–1937), former tsarist officer and future Soviet marshal, was finally executed on Stalin's orders, on the basis of false evidence concocted by Hitler.
7. The NEP (New Economic Policy), introduced by Lenin after the failure of "war communism," was aimed at restoring private enterprise to some extent.
8. A current within the Bolshevik Party, headed by Shliapnikov and Alexandra Kollontai, and condemned at the tenth party congress.
9. Grigori Petrovitch Maximoff (1893–1950) turned into an anarchist in Russia after reading Kropotkin: he contributed to the newspaper *Golos Truda*, spokesman for the anarcho-syndicalist tendency during the Russian Revolution. He was forced to quit his native land in 1922 for Berlin, where he was active in the International Workers' Association, and then for Paris: he then emigrated to the United States, in 1925, where he published anarchist newspapers in Russian and published, in English, one of the finest books on the Russian Revolution viewed from the anarchist perspective, *Twenty Years of Terror in Russia* (1940).
11. *The Bolshevik Myth (1920–1921)* was to be the title of a pamphlet published in English by Berkman in 1922.

## THE OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE KRONSTADT UPRISING

1. This newspaper had been launched well before the uprising of March 1921. A complete French translation of the issues of the paper which came out during the revolt was published by Editions Belibaste as *La Commune de Cronstadt* (1969).
2. F. Trepoff, one of the most ferocious of Tsar Nicholas II's generals, famous for having ordered his troops during the disturbances of 1905: "Don't spare the bullets!"
3. Admiral Alexis Koltchak (1874–1920) waged war on revolutionary Russia in Siberia (1918–1919) and was shot in 1920: General Nikolai Yudenitch (1862–1919) also headed a White army in 1918–1919, specifically a Cossack army, only to perish in battle against the Bolsheviks. For Denikin, see Volume II.
4. From the name of the American Frederick Winslow Taylor (1856–1915), a system for super-exploitation of the worker, bent upon introducing "more rational" organization of labor, by timing work in order to avert "time-wasting."

## PETRITCHENKO'S TESTIMONY

1. Published in the January 1926 edition of *Znamya Borby*: taken from Ida Mett, *La Commune de Cronstadt* (Editions Spartacus, 1938, new edition 1948).
2. OPRITCHNIKS, the personal guard of Tsar Ivan the Terrible and simultaneously the supreme political police. In the seven years (1565–1572) of its existence, its members earned a reputa-

tion for savagery (Ida Mett's note).

3. ARSHIN—a Russian measure of length (Ida Mett).
4. Vilken was an officer in the former Russian navy (Ida Mett).
5. Victor Chernov (1876–1952), one of the leaders of the Social Revolutionary Party, was a government minister after the revolution of February 1917 and had to quit Russia in 1920.

## ANARCHISTS BEHIND BARS

### ANARCHISTS BEHIND BARS

1. Joaquin Maurin (born 1897), the founder, successively, of the Communist Federation of Catalonia, then, after his break with Moscow, of the Worker and Peasant Bloc (1931) and then of the Workers' Party of Marxist Unification-POUM, (1935: both teacher and trade union activist with the CNT: spent fifteen years in prison under the Primo de Rivera dictatorship and then under Franco: moved to the United States.
2. Felix Dzerzhinsky (1877–1926), of aristocratic extraction, a Lithuanian Social Democrat from 1895, arrested and convicted several times, freed from prison by the 1917 Revolution: founded the political police, the Cheka (later the GPU); died of a heart attack.
3. Anatol Lunacharsky (1873–1933), writer and literary critic. Social Democrat from 1898, turned Bolshevik in 1903, Commissar for Education from 1917 to 1929.
4. Ulrikh was to be shot during the Stalinist purges.
5. Maria Spiridonova (born 1889), active terrorist, sentenced to death for the execution of a provincial governor, a sentence commuted to life imprisonment: raped and tortured while being transferred to Siberia: after February 1917, leader of the Left Social Revolutionaries: implicated in their rebellion in July 1918: imprisoned from 1919 or 1920: never released thereafter.
6. Olga Maximoff, wife of G.P. Maximoff.
7. Michel Kneller, a French activist who, in 1919, fired revolver shots at the Élysée Palace in protest at the blockade on soviet Russia: delegate from the French CCT to the foundation congress of the Red International of Labor Unions. A Communist sympathizer with syndicalist leanings: subsequently became a left-wing "abundancist."
8. Rurik, founder of the Russian Empire, died in 1879.
9. Tom Mann (1856–1941), English mechanic, secretary of the Independent Labor Party in 1894: joined the American revolutionary syndicalist Industrial Workers of the World (IWW): took part in the founding of the Communist Party of Great Britain in 1921.
10. Henri Sirolle (born 1886), joint secretary of the Rail Federation in 1920: a versatile anarcho-syndicalist: at the first congress of the CCTU in Saint-Etienne in July 1922, reporting on his experiences as a delegate in Moscow in 1921, he told how, at an audience with Lenin, the latter had shown him a few files on anarchists and that he, Sirolle, had concluded from these . . . that they deserved to die! Ended up in charge of Marshal Petain's Secours National.
11. One of the Spanish trade union delegates accompanying Gaston Leval.

## ANARCHISM IN THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR

### THE DECEMBER 1919 CONGRESS OF THE CNT

1. Extract from José Peirats, *La CNT en la revolucion española*, 2 vols., 1958.
2. Angel Pestaña (1886–1937), watch-maker, moved from the secretariat of the Metalworkers'



Union to the CNT national secretaryship in 1914: along with Salvador Seguí, he had been behind the resurgence of Spanish anarcho-syndicalism between 1916 and 1923: after 1931, he was the leading light within the CNT of the reformist current known as the “Thirty” and was expelled. In 1934, he launched a Syndicalist Party, which he represented in the Spanish parliament up to 1936: he died after an illness.

#### THE SECOND CONGRESS OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL (JUNE 1920)

1. Extracts from Angel Pestaña’s account.
2. Salomon Lozovsky (1878–1952), worker and Bolshevik from 1903: in 1909, he emigrated and was active in the French labor movement up until 1917. Leader of the Textile Workers’ Union within which he conducted oppositionist trade union activity. After 1919, he became a slavish hack. Chairman of the Red International of Labor Unions (Profintern) from 1921 to 1937.

#### A “PANTOMIME” CONGRESS

1. Taken from José Peirats, op. cit.
2. Armando Borghi (1882–1968), general secretary of the Italian Syndicalist Union, an anarcho-syndicalist labor organization, traveled to Russia in 1920 and had met Lenin there: his most important book is *Mezzo secolo de Anarchia (1898–1945)*.

#### ANTIFASCISM IN POWER (JULY 1936)

1. Taken from A. Souchy, *Collectivizations, l’oeuvre constructive de la Révolution espagnole* (April 1937, reissued 1965). For Souchy, see Volume III.

## DURRUTI AND LIBERTARIAN WARFARE

#### BUENAVENTURA DURRUTI

1. Taken from an unpublished life of Durruti written by Abel Paz, with the kind permission of the author. [This book, *Durruti in the Spanish Revolution*, has since been published in English by AK Press.]
2. Manuel Buenacasa (1886–1964), former seminarian, then worker, the first general secretary of the CNT, director of the newspaper *Solidaridad Obrera*: in 1936, he headed the CNT’s school for militants in Barcelona: author of *History of the Spanish Workers’ Movement, 1886–1926*.
3. Louis Lecoin (1888–1971), French anarchist pacifist and anarcho-syndicalist: secretary of the French Anarchist Federation in 1912: had a hand in the trade union split in 1921, before quitting the CGTU: organized the campaign trying to save the lives of Italian anarchists Sacco and Vanzetti, who were sentenced to death and eventually electrocuted: rallied to the defense of Spanish activists Durruti and Ascaso: served over twelve years in prison for draft evasion and anti-militarist propaganda: in 1939, he drafted the manifesto “Immediate Peace”: in the twilight of his life, he fought for the rights of conscientious objectors: publisher of the monthly *Liberte*; Louios-Émile Cottin (1896–1936), anarchist: while still a youth, he attempted the life of premier Georges Clemenceau in 1919. Sentenced to death, his punishment was commuted to ten years’ imprisonment. During the Spanish revolution, he perished in the ranks of the libertarian militias.
4. Francisco Ascaso Abadia (1900–1936), libertarian activist, friend and indefatigable companion of Durruti, killed in the storming of the Atarazanas barracks on July 20, 1936.
5. José Torres Escartin (1900–1939), libertarian activist credited with the assassination of arch-bishop Carlos Soldevila, in Zaragoza, in reprisal for the murder of the great libertarian leader

- Salvador Seguí by the killers of the governor, Martínez Anido. Driven out of his mind by police torture, he was freed by the 1931 revolution, only to be shot by the Francoists in spite of his mental condition.
6. Juan García Oliver (1897–1980), one of the activist leaders of the Iberian Anarchist Federation (FAI): from 1923, he served a prison sentence from which the revolution of 1931 and an amnesty released him: fought on the barricades on July 19, 1936: in Catalonia, he organized the first militias columns and war industries: was Justice minister in the Largo Caballero government, until May 1937. Gregorio Sobreviela, metalworker and anarchist trade unionist, wanted by police for a number of *coups de main* and *attentats*: murdered in February 1924.
  7. Salvador Seguí (1896–1923), Catalan and brilliant public speaker, trade union organizer and cultural promoter: protagonist of the SINDICATO ÚNICO (single union) instead of the trades union. Murdered by the hired killers of Catalonia's governor, Martínez Anido, on March 10, 1923.
  8. Eduardo Dato, ultra-reactionary Spanish premier, assassinated by CNT metalworkers on March 8, 1921, in Madrid, in reprisal for the White terror enforced in Barcelona with Dato's consent by governor Martínez Anido.
  9. Ricardo Sanz (born 1900), construction worker, organized the anarchist action group "Los Solidarios" in 1922: fled to France, then returned to Spain in 1926 to plot against the dictatorship of General Primo de Rivera: repeatedly jailed between 1931 and 1936: in July 1936 he belonged to the War Committee of the Central Militias' Committee: after Durruti's death, Sanz replaced him as head of the column: author of several books.
  10. Gregorio Jover (1892–1964?), trade union organizer, libertarian activist who was involved in a would-be attack on King Alfonso XIII in France, along with Durruti and Ascaso on July 14, 1926: during the Civil War, he led a libertarian column on the Aragón front.
  11. Ferandel, a friend of Louis Lecoin, was treasurer of two committees spearheading the campaigns referred to.
  12. On Rudolf Rocker, see Volume II.  
Erich Mühsam (1878–1934), revolutionary poet and German anarchist, author of a "Marseillaise of the workers' councils": involved in the government of the Bavarian Councils republic, which survived for only six days in Munich (April 7–13, 1919) along with Gustav Landauer (1870–1919), an anarchist writer brutally done to death: Mühsam was sentenced to 15 years' imprisonment by a court martial, then amnestied at the end of 1924. Arrested by the Nazis on February 28, 1933, he was murdered by the S.S. in a concentration camp on the night of July 9–10, 1934 (See Roland Lewin's *Erich Mühsam*, supplement to *Le Monde libertaire*, June 1968).
  13. Hugo Treni, nom de plume of Ugo Fedeli. See Volume III. For Camillo Berneri, see below.  
Hem Day, alias of Marcel Dieu (1902–1969), anarchist journalist and Belgian antifascist, founder of the *Cahiers Pensée et Action*.
  14. Lluís Companys, lawyer and leader of a Catalan petit bourgeois party, the ESQUERRA REPUBLICANA (Republican Left): he was the CNT's defense counsel while also relying upon small-holders and share-cropping farmers: in 1936, he became the president of the Generalidad of Catalonia: he was handed over to Franco by the Vichy government and shot in Barcelona by the Francoists.
  15. Simone Weil (1909–1943), French militant and philosopher, worked in a Renault plant: she fought in Spain during the civil war: she ended up a Christian and mystic and died prematurely.
  16. Francisco Largo Caballero (1869–1946), of worker extraction, reformist socialist, secretary of the General Workers' Union (UGT): radicalized during the Asturias strike in 1934: premier and minister of War from September 5, 1936 to May 15, 1937: exaggeratedly nicknamed "the Spanish Lenin."

#### THE SPIRIT OF DURRUTI

1. Karl Einstein, member of the Durruti Column.
2. In English: "Forward!"

## THE DEFENSE OF MADRID

1. Taken from *Catalogne 36–37*: for Prudhommeaux, see below.

## DURRUTI SPEAKS

1. Text taken from Andre Prudhommeaux's *Cahiers de terre libre* and his *Catalogne 36–37* (1937): Prudhommeaux (1902–1968), a libertarian writer and journalist, ran a workers' bookstore in Paris and then a cooperative print shop in Names, connected with the German councilist movement as well as with Spanish anarcho-syndicalism: he published the newspaper *Terre libre* and a collection of pamphlets under the title *Cahiers de terre libre*, the earliest editions of *L'Espagne antifasciste* (1936) and later *L'Espagne nouvelle* (1937).

## DURRUTI'S MESSAGE TO THE RUSSIAN WORKERS

1. Taken from A. Prudhommeaux, op. cit.

## FINAL ADDRESS

1. Taken from A. Prudhommeaux, op. cit.

## REGULAR ARMY OR LIBERTARIAN MILITIAS?

1. *Requetés*, armed bands of Navarrese Traditionalists, organized and regimented for civil war in the name of "God, Fatherland and King."
2. Taken from *L'Espagne Antifasciste*, No. 4, as reprinted in *Cahiers de terre libre*, 1937.
3. POUM, the anti-Stalinist inclined Workers' Party for Marxist Unification. Catalanists, members of a Catalan autonomist party.
4. PSUC, the (Stalinist) Unified Socialist Party of Catalonia.

## THE ITALIAN SECTION OF THE ASCASO COLUMN

1. Valencia was then the seat of the central government of the republic, which had had to quit Madrid.

# ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM IN GOVERNMENT

## THE USELESSNESS OF GOVERNMENT

1. From *Solidaridad Obrera*, in the summer of 1936.

## THE CONTRARY VIEW

1. Camillo Berneri (1897–1937), born in Lodi, Italy, started off in the Young Socialists, which he left, publicly, around 1915 in order to join the anarchist movement. Exiled under the Mussolini regime, he was deported from a number of European countries and sampled the prisons of half of Europe. In Germany, he contacted the anarcho-syndicalists. On learning of the Spanish Revolution, he set off immediately and was involved in the fighting. In Barcelona, he launched the newspaper *Guerra di classe*, some of the articles from which were collated under the title "Guerre de classes en Espagne" in *Cahiers de terre libre* of April–May 1938. He

did not stint his criticisms of the anarchists' participation in government. Arrested by police on the orders of the Stalinists on May 5, 1937, during the bloody incidents in Barcelona. He was taken from his cell and gunned down.

2. In January 1937, in a public lecture in Barcelona, Federica Montseny sang the praises of the regionalism of Francisco Pi y Margall (1821–1901), a disciple of Proudhon. This had earned her criticism from Gaston Leval, along the same lines as Berneri's.
3. In 1933, the workers of Casas Viejas had taken over their village and proclaimed libertarian communism. The Civil Guards had put this rebellion down with savagery.
4. Vilanesa, a tiny Spanish village where several CNT militants were massacred after their trade union premises were ransacked.
5. The republican government had adopted an imperialist line, refusing to de-colonize Spanish Morocco, which allowed Franco to use Moroccan troops against the Spanish republic.
6. Jean Zyromski (born 1890), leader of the left wing of the SFIO socialist party, and later a member of the French Communist Party.
7. These were two Francoist cruisers which shelled Malaga at the beginning of February 1937. The *Baleares* was sunk by the republican fleet on March 6, 1937. The *Canarias*, which had earlier shelled Gerona and Tarragona, caused many deaths after the fall of Malaga when it shelled the coastal road by which fugitives were trying to reach republican Spain.
8. Indalecio Prieto (1883–1962), socialist minister of the Spanish republic: he died in Mexico.
9. Fifth column: name given in the Spanish press to the range of fascist organizations existing in the rear of the republican front.
10. Luigi Bertoni (1872–1947), Italian anarchist who had offered his services to the Spanish revolution.
11. Marcel Cachin (1869–1958), one-time social democrat, one of the founders of the French Communist Party and a Stalinist to his dying day.

#### THE CNT TAKEN TO TASK BY ITS INTERNATIONAL

1. Drafted by Pierre Besnard, the secretary of the IWA.
2. INTERNATIONAL WORKERS' ASSOCIATION, the anarcho-syndicalist International, which exists to this day.

#### FEDERICA MONTSENY SETS THE RECORD STRAIGHT

1. Juan Negrín (1889–1956), professor of medicine, right-wing socialist and fellow-traveler with the Stalinists. Starting as minister of Finance, he replaced Largo Caballero on May 17, 1937 in charge of the republican government. After April 1938, he was minister of War. He died in exile in London.

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**DANIEL GUÉRIN** was a lifelong radical and gay activist, and a prolific author. His works previously translated into English include *Anarchism: From Theory to Practice*, *Fascism and Big Business*, and *Class Struggle in the First French Republic*.

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