

Black Flag

Anarchist Review



**Lucy
Parsons:
American
Anarchist**

Remembering Sam Dolgoff



**Voltairine
de Cleyre:**
“the greatest woman
America has produced
so far”

And much more...

Spring 2022

Volume 2

Number 1



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Editorial

Welcome to the first issue of *Black Flag* for 2022!

This is another bumper issue, including articles on and by such noted anarchists as Sam Dolgoff, Voltairine de Cleyre and Lucy Parsons. Dolgoff was a stalwart of the American anarchist movement from the 1920s until his death in 1990, active in numerous groups and papers including the Libertarian League and journal *Libertarian Labour Review*. A key activist in the previous generation, de Cleyre moved from Individualist Anarchism to Communist Anarchism. The writings of both have much to give to modern activists.

In terms of Parsons, we show that attempts to portray her as not understanding what anarchism was, that she and Emma Goldman had radically different ideas rest on an ignorance of anarchist ideas. In spite of disagreements on certain subjects (such as free love), both Parsons and Goldman were communist-anarchists who advocated syndicalism, direct action and the general strike. Sadly, Parsons refused to see through the Bolshevik Myth, so helping Leninists today to present a false picture of the American anarchist movement of the time to try and recruit anarchists today. As such, it is worthwhile putting the record straight.

We also mark the birth of libertarian socialist Cornelius Castoriadis whose ideas impacted on the anarchist movement via the British Solidarity group in the 1960s and 1970s. Originally a Trotskyist, he rejected its analysis of the Soviet Union before moving on to a critique and rejection of Marxism as such. In so doing, he came to many conclusions anarchists had reached long before. While influenced by the post-war period, many of his ideas remain relevant today.

Finally, we start and end our issue with two original contributions. The first is on anarchists and their views on elections, the second an analysis of the *Communist Manifesto*. Both we hope will be of interest.

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

Those in Favour of Anarchist Electoralism Please Raise Your Hands

Benjamin Franks¹

One set of the anarchist responses to the failure of Jeremy Corbyn and his supporters to reposition the Labour Party as a radical social democratic movement, has been to see this *loss of Momentum*

(if you excuse the pun) as an opportunity to win over disaffected and disappointed Corbynistas to class struggle anarchism. This highlights a curious tension. From a traditional anarchist perspective these social democratic movements are distinct and lie outside of anarchist support, but they are also so similar that it does not take much for supporters of one to move to support the other. Anarchists are often juxtaposed – and frequently define themselves – against social democrats. The influential anarchist Yiddish paper *Der Arbeter Fraint*, produced amongst Jewish immigrants to Britain in the 1880s (which was later to be edited by Rudolf Rocker), split from the broader socialist *Polishe Yidl* over the latter's advocacy of voting for a progressive parliamentary candidate.

It is not necessarily goals but tactics that divide anarchists from radical social democrats. Many of the early radical social democrats shared the same long-term goals as the anarchists, namely the

freedom is not the version increasingly ascribed to by social democrats, which is 'living under forms of exploitation a majority have voted for', but the anarchist one of removing the structures of repression and exploitation and replacing them with creative practices of non-domination.

socialist transformation of the economy. There was a shared aspiration for a free, classless society of equals, where everyone has access to goods of life for the full development of the individual. Albeit for many social democrats this access would be organised through the state.² Even today one of the remnants of this tradition, the Socialist Party of Great Britain (founded in 1904), continues to operate at the fringes of constitutional politics, and still consistently advocates for absolute anti-capitalism.

Where early social democrats and anarchists differed was on the means: social democrats concentrated on winning state power through the ballot box, anarchists on direct action that prefigured liberated social relations.³ So important are

these tactical differences that we often identify shifts in an individual's or group's politics through

¹ This article is loosely based on the talks and discussion and an academic paper. The talks were 'Anti-State Activists and the Problem of the Scottish Independence Referendum: Implications for the Brexit Campaign', May 2016 at the Autonomous Centre Edinburgh; 'Anarchist Engagements I Elections', Radical Independent Bookfair, Glasgow September 2016 (my thanks to the organisers and participants). The much longer article 'Four Models of Anarchist Engagements with Constitutionalism', *Theory in Action* 13.1. (January 2020).

² See for instance Henry Hyndman's (Social) Democratic Federation, See for instance (1881), *England for All* available at <https://www.marxists.org/archive/hyndman/1881/england/index.html>

³ See also Carl Boggs (1977). 'Revolutionary Process, Political Strategy and the Dilemma of Power', *Theory and Society* 4.3 Autumn 1977: pp. 359-93, whose tripartite division also identifies state seizure, which he associates with Leninism and he refers to as *Jacobinism*.

the nexus of parliamentarianism/anti-parliamentarianism, such as Tom Mann movement from social democracy to syndicalist action, to rejecting parliamentarianism in favour of revolutionary syndicalism. Such tactical differences have other important ramifications, however, because in promoting different methods, the importance of these apparently shared long-term objectives began to alter and their meanings begin to shift.

For the more constitutionally-engaged social democrats, the means (electoral success) becomes more important than the goal (radical transformation). The more a group becomes committed to the electoral reformist mode of social change, the more the meaning alters of once radical concepts, like 'freedom'. As the late Albert Meltzer (in the previous edition of *Black Flag*) points out, freedom is not the version increasingly ascribed to by social democrats, which is 'living under forms of exploitation a majority have voted for', but the anarchist one of removing the structures of repression and exploitation and replacing them with creative practices of non-domination.

Therefore, the question of choice of methods for socialism also unavoidably goes hand-in-hand with questions of motivating goals and ambitions. Anarchists are rightly portrayed as being, in the main, against state participation, which means being against electoral activism. The great figures of the anarchist past, Mikhail Bakunin, Peter Kropotkin, Lucy Parsons and Emma Goldman, later Guy Aldred (of the Glasgow-based Anti-Parliamentary Communist Federation) and Vernon Richards (of the Freedom Press Group) were all highly critical of electoral participation. So too are contemporary activists like the anarcho-syndicalist Phil Dickens and Floaker of the Anarchist Federation as well as members of the Anarchist Communist Group and the Solidarity Federation. However, this account of anarchism as committed to electoral abstention, whilst broadly accurate, omits some minority forms of anarchism that engages with electoral politics. Although a peripheral feature of anarchism, there are numerous examples spread historically and geographically.

Although anarchists have powerful, and hard to refute, outright rejections of constitutional participation, I argue, the bases of these criticisms also open up opportunities for *highly selective* intervention in elections. Selective, because there

are different forms of electoral participation, which will be outlined below, and that only *some of these*, under *particular circumstances* can be justified on similar grounds to anarchist abstentionism.

Against participation

The main arguments against elections are partly based on the rejection of the state because it is an unavoidably oppressive set of institutions operating on principles of domination and exploitation, and that merely electing people to run these would be little different than selecting which person executes you. Similarly there are those anarchists, not all of whom are individualists, who reject majority voting because it is a violation of individual freedom, though of course in certain circumstances organising in democratically accountable organisations (with sufficient bottom-up safeguards that the state can never provide) can extend individuals' freedom to do things. Intersecting with the general critique of the state, there are fourfold criticisms of electoral politics as a tactic.

1) The first concerns the *hierarchical organisational means* of this tactic. Electoral politics generates damaging, mutually-reinforcing structures of power. Those already lacking power are further encouraged to become order takers, whilst those in control legitimise monopolising information and decision-making.¹ It also reinforces a particular political identity as the supreme one: the national citizen. The ultimate authority is reserved for those given a mandate by the vote through the state, undermining other types of organisation and forms of power, such as trade unions or syndicates; community groups or neighbourhood assemblies; ecological direct action movements and mutual aid organisations. It also excludes those who are impacted by decisions but are not given full rights of citizenship. In this liberal-democratic formulation, activity is secondary to the democratic election and the institutions the majority vote is supposed to legitimate. As Bakunin amongst others points out, such as electoral participation simply recreates a form of oppressive administration, which supposed radicals have merely contributed their labour.²

In electoral politics what the leader or representative says has far greater bearing than the ordinary member or voter. They enter into the fame-economy. The delegated spokesperson becomes better known, has greater access to the

¹ P. Kropotkin, *Words of a Rebel*, ed. I. McKay (Oakland: PM, 2022 –forthcoming) pp. 110-11.

² Mikhail Bakunin (nd), *Bakunin on Anarchy: Selected works of the activism – Founder of world anarchism*. Ed Sam Dolgoff (Pirated edition), pp. 220-21.

media, and to the networks of influence, and thus to audiences than those who are lesser known. Representatives are regarded as more authoritative and what they speak upon as being more important. Former leading figures from known political parties maintain a degree of influence, because members of the public recognise them. Thus, they seek to remain in the public eye to reinforce their position with the economy of fame. The example of George Galloway should be a chastening one. His desire to remain famous (from appearing on reality TV in a skin-tight leotard to fronting increasingly fringe political parties) has become his main compulsion, rather than the radical socialist ideals he initially (supposedly) held.¹ Some parties have embraced the fame-economy with, for example, the Scottish Socialist Party creating a cult of personality around Tommy Sheridan, with disastrous results for it.

2) The second area of criticism covers the *wrong place* or more technically, *misdirected location for action*. Democratic politics concentrates almost exclusively on winning state power. Electoral politics under liberal democratic theory is regarded as the legitimate site of authority and control. According to this perspective, so long as power is won *fairly* in a democratic election, then the state can dictate the laws by which people live. There are, of course, certain provisos that protect future democratic participation – and for various liberal theories the areas on which even democratic mandates cannot interfere alters depending on the types of threat. However, on-the-whole, democratic theory presents the political state as the location of power. Anarchists and other radicals, by contrast, point out that the

state is not the sole, or often the main location of power.

For syndicalists, like Mann, there are more important sites of power, primarily the economy. Winning economic control is much more important than gaining control of the state.

Now I submit to you this: that the success of the working class will depend, in some considerable measure, on the agency through which they will function as controllers of the industries that they are engaged in. Some say not the present capitalist system, but a democratised state. We are not saying that. I am saying that it should be the organisation of the workers, the industrial organisation of the workers, made exactly what it ought to be to fill requirements.²

Anarchists who prioritise syndicalist methods, like other anarchists, are not blind either to the other forms of power and institutions that embed them.³ They are aware that social relations and institutions based on militarism, patriarchy and racism do not stem from the economy *alone*, but in contrast to social democrats they argue that these forms of oppression cannot be resolved by state action either.

The central criticism anarchists make of radical social democrats is that

winning state power will not produce the desired radical change, because of the influence of these institutions (such as police, business, military or other states). If radicals seek to appease these groups, their radical proposals become so diluted as to become meaningless, think of Greek SYRIZA-

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¹ See his personal Unity (or vanity) Party Scottish Parliamentary election leaflet for the regional list vote, which pictured Galloway far more prominently than the local candidate, with a call to vote for the Conservative Party in the area's constituency election.

² Tom Mann (1913), 'Industrial organisation versus political action: debate between Tom Mann and Arthur M. Lewis'.

Marxist Internet Archive. <
<https://www.marxists.org/archive/mann-tom/1913/tmamldebate.htm>>

³ 'I am not declaring that there is nothing outside of economics that will require attention.' Mann, 'Industrial organisation'.

led government in 2015. If these parties do not adequately compromise they will be brought down, such as Allende in Chile in 1973, the socialist republicans in Spain in 1936.

Whilst working class action can put pressure on elected governments, such economic power is considered by liberals to be illegitimate with strong state sanctions to prevent such popular influence (see the anti-Union laws of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher). However, business leaders organising investment strikes, movement of assets overseas to create domestic economic crises to bring down social democratic governments are encouraged and celebrated by the same liberal democratic theorists.

Corbyn's Romantic aura as a radical social democrat will be enhanced precisely because it was unsuccessful, it will remain untarnished because he never had the opportunity to engage with the realities of state power. Given Corbyn's inadequacies in the limited office he held, it is unlikely he would have avoided the twin threats of damaging compromise or outright destabilisation.

3) The third major criticism of electoral politics is thus the *bad results* or *negative outcomes of electoral politics*. The standard position of social democrats is that they engage in the world of the possible, in *realpolitik* on practical decision-making with the stable institutions of the state, unfettered by ideological considerations. Reforms brought in by 'heroic' Labour governments, like a national health service or free secondary education are trumpeted, whilst the deficiencies with these solutions especially as many rely on social democrats acquiescence to militarism, war, colonialism and capitalist relations of production are rarely acknowledged. Opponents are dismissed as 'impossibilist' or 'utopian'. However given the record of social democratic government to bring about a heralded socialist revolution, it is much more 'impossibilist' to expect benevolent radical transformation through piecemeal reform through the state.¹

Such developments confirm Bakunin's prediction that "inevitable result will be that workers' deputies, transferred to a purely bourgeois

environment and into an atmosphere of purely bourgeois political ideas, ceasing in fact to be workers and becoming statesmen instead, will become middle class in their outlook, perhaps even more so than the bourgeois themselves." This was because "men do not create situations; it is situations that create men."²

4) Finally, anarchists argue that there are *better alternatives than electoral participation*. A more practical solution for social change is mutual aid for the immediate alleviation of harms, which also oppose and supplant oppressive, hierarchical institutions. To borrow a phrase from the Industrial Workers of the World: 'direct action gets the goods'. Rather than spend resource and effort on influencing oppressive organisations to behave in a slightly less psychopathic manner, or operate through the rules and laws developed to restrict threats to the dominant classes, operating outside and against the state is more fulfilling immediately as well as producing better long term results. Rather than working in and strengthening capitalist institutions, we should build and support our own.

Historically, this was expressed in building syndicalist unions. More recent examples of these are the autonomous self-help groups that developed during the Covid crisis, not only providing mutual support and assistance where the state and business had failed, but also confronting employers over unsafe working practices and finding links of solidarity with Black Lives Matter.³ These were much more effective solutions than the social democratic tactic, which would involve campaigning for a political party who, some years after the peak of the crisis, might win sufficient electoral support to eventually pass legislation, which might then be enacted to provide help to those survivors who were in need some years earlier.

A result of these criticisms of electoral politics is that the vast majority of anarchists promote electoral abstention. Abstention might be passive, through ignoring elections, or more actively encouraging electoral non-participation through anti-voting campaigns – such as the Spanish CNT's

¹ See John Holloway (2002) *Change the World Without Taking Power*. London: Pluto: p. 12.

² Mikhail Bakunin (1953) *The Political Philosophy of Bakunin*. New York: The Free Press: p. 216. See too Alexander Berkman (2003) *What is Anarchism?* Edinburgh: AK Press: Chapter XIII (Socialism).

³ See of instance Nathan Jun and Mark Lance (2020). *Anarchist Responses to a Pandemic: The COVID-19 Crisis as*

a Case Study in Mutual Aid. *Kennedy Institute of Ethics Journal* <https://kiej.georgetown.edu/anarchist-responses-covid-19-special-issue/> and Jade Saab and John Clarke (2021). Visualizing an alternative response to COVID-19: Lessons of the pandemic for the fights to come. 23 June 2021. <https://jadesaab.com/visualizing-an-alternative-response-to-covid-19-2fc8fae28749>.

abstentionist campaigns,¹ the *Anti-Elections Alliance* of 1992 and 1997 and more recently *Angry Not Apathetic*. However, there has also been a small subsection of anarchists that have engaged in electoralism. Whilst such incidents tend to be regarded as either anomalies, failures of principle or doomed experiments - and this is certainly the case with many examples – I would argue that certain, very specific and targeted forms can be consistent with anarchism and yield positive results.

There are, perhaps surprisingly given the general agreement about the failures of constitutional politics amongst anarchists, numerous examples of libertarian socialist engagements in electoralism historically and recently, both in the UK and far wider a field. Pierre-Joseph Proudhon was an elected member of the French Assembly during the 1848 Revolution (although his experience confirmed his earlier analysis that the State could not be captured as it was chained to Capital).² In the 1960s and 1970s the anarchic counter-culture *Kaboteurs* and *Provos* stood and gained representation on Amsterdam's local council. In the 1970s a coalition of Israeli anti-authoritarian and non-Communist Party radicals stood a candidate to the Israeli parliament for propaganda purposes, but also to raise the issue of releasing activist Rami Livne, who had been imprisoned for 'meeting with a Palestinian from the occupied territory'.³ More recently, many who identified as anarchists who had been involved in Spain's 15M protests and occupations, left the streets in order to engage in – and win – representation as horizontalist parties in Spain's regional elections.⁴

In the UK too, some notable anarchists and anarchist groups have flirted with constitutional activism. The most recent was the veteran anarchist Ian Bone's 2021 candidacy in the Croydon council elections for the Woodside ward, gaining 2.5% vote, (a higher percentage of the vote than celebrity far-right troll Lawrence Fox achieved in the London mayoral elections held on the same day).

Bone first participated in 1969 in the Swansea council elections, where he reportedly got 10 votes. A decade later, Bone was joined in the 1979 Swansea Council elections by his colleagues from the anarchist group around *Alarm*. In 1988 *Class War*, a group initially started by Bone and Martin Wright,⁵ stood a candidate, John Duignan, in the Kensington by-election gaining just 60 votes. In May 2003, the Bristolian Party, also heavily influenced by anarchists (including Bone), stood 12 candidates in the local council elections, receiving on average about 8% of the vote in the wards they stood in. In 2015, a resurrected *Class War* stood a small slate of candidates, which included Andy Bennetts, Jon Bigger, Adam Clifford and Lisa McKenzie. Bigger has subsequently written an entertaining and accessible doctoral dissertation on the experience.⁶

Four Models

There are differences in the forms of anarchist electoral participation and these have different degrees of consistency with anarchist principles and methods of equality. The four types are:

1. Lesser Evil (minor engagements)
2. Radical social democracy (anti-hierarchical structural reformism)
3. Sinn Fein Option (revolutionary anti-representationalism)
4. Guerrilla activism

These four positions are not absolutely discrete, but can bleed into one another, as critics of anarchist electoralism also point out.

1. *Lesser Evil (minor engagements)*

The first is perhaps the best known and the most widely practised. In the UK and USA, legislative elections are plural rather than proportional. So electors will often choose not the candidate they want most to win – as they maybe too marginal to have any chance of electoral success – but opt for the candidate who is the lesser evil of the few

¹ See Stuart Christie, (2009). *We the Anarchists: Study of the Iberian Anarchist Federation (FAI)*. Meltzer Press and Vernon Richards *Lessons of the Spanish Revolution (1936-1939)*. London: Freedom <https://libcom.org/files/lessons-spanish-revolution.pdf>,

² Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (2011) *Property is Theft! A Pierre-Joseph Proudhon Anthology*. Edinburgh: AK Press: p. 423.

³ Ilan Shalif, (2015). Personal interview.

⁴ See for instance Ramon Feenstra, Vincente Roig and Benjamin Franks, B. 2017. Spanish Anarchist Engagements in Electoralism: From street politics to party politics.' *Social Movement Studies* 17.1.: pp.85-98.

Ramon Feenstra, Simon. Tormey, Andreu Casero-Ripolles, and John Keane, J. 2017. *Refiguring Democracy: The Spanish political laboratory*. London: Routledge.

⁵ See Ian Bone (2006) *Bash the Rich: True Life Confessions of an Anarchist In the UK*. Bristol: Tangent.

⁶ Jon Bigger (2021). *Class War at the 2015 UK General Election: Radicalism, subversion and the democratic process*. PhD Dissertation. Loughborough University. https://repository.lboro.ac.uk/articles/thesis/Class_war_at_the_2015_UK_General_Election_radicalism_subversion_and_the_democratic_process/14844885.

(usually two) candidates who are most likely to win. Examples of this are Noam Chomsky calling for votes for barely social democratic candidates like Hillary Clinton and later Joe Biden to defeat Donald Trump, radicals voting for Corbynite (and prior to that Miliband-ite) candidates against the Tories in 2015, 2017 and 2019.

It is, perhaps, one of the 'dirty secrets' of anarchism that come Election Day many outwardly revolutionary anti-statists cast a vote for the least objectionable of the main candidates. This is not a new feature of the anarchist politics, as Vernon Richards reports just prior to the Spanish Civil War the CNT debated the 'lesser evil' of abandoning abstentionism and supporting the social democrats against authoritarian reaction.¹ Even though the official abstentionist position remained officially in place,² 'members of the CNT voted at the election of 1936 in large numbers' resulting in the republicans and social democrats returning to power.³

Stopping the far-right (which increasingly includes many allegedly mainstream conservative parties in countries like America and Britain) frequently motivates anarchist participation in the polls. Selecting a lesser evil helps to water down the percentage of the vote for fascist parties (in the UK candidates who fail to reach 5% of the vote lose an election deposit of £500). Whilst high abstention rates might lessen democratic legitimacy (see the panicked responses to the temporary falls in electoral participation rates from 2000-10 from leading political figures such as former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan⁴), but abstention or spoiling ballots, currently, has little impact. Elections often have abstention rates higher than 60% and sometimes as great as 85% (such as some council ward and police commissioner elections). In most general elections, including the last one, non-voters far outnumber the total of people who voted for the victorious party. None of these prevent a candidate being elected and operating their form of state power under the cover

of legitimacy.⁵ Whilst there has been little systematic study of the impact of abstention campaigns, one of the few made indicates that it might counter-intuitively increase participation as it reminds the electorate of an election and their civic duty.⁶

Anarchists standardly regard participating in the vote as a violation of principle. One reason is that it leads to slippery slopes of more overt electoral support. After all, if a lesser evil is to be supported, why not campaign for, raise funds for, even directly join the social democratic party in order to enhance electoral success over the greater evil? Yet such slippery slope arguments are invariably fallacious. Most non-anarchists, with varying degrees of enthusiasm, vote in elections without ever joining or assisting a political party in any other way, so it would seem odd that anarchists are more prone to slide down the slope.⁷

Whilst the effectiveness of voting for the more socially democratic party is highly questionable, given the track records of the British Labour Party and US Democratic Party, nonetheless, *lesser evilism* can have some limited salience with anarchism. Anarchists, like Bakunin, are aware that although all states are oppressive, some are more despotic than others: 'We are firmly convinced that the most imperfect republic is a thousand times better than the most enlightened monarchy.'⁸ Protecting, albeit in a highly constrained way, some social welfare from neoliberal or conservative 'reform' or frustrating especially chauvinist nationalist policies is consistent with anarchist rejection of hierarchy, even if they remain committed to the view that the social revolution cannot be achieved, nor is it prefigured by, the ballot box.⁹

Whilst *lesser evilism* does not challenge the hierarchies of party-politics and directs attention to the state as the sole centre of power, near the end of 2021, and in many locations, especially within the UK, there is little autonomous (anti-)politics going on. A brief visit to the polling booth will not

¹ Richards, *Lessons of the Spanish Revolution*, p.17, pp.21-23.

² Richards, *Lessons of the Spanish Revolution*, pp.17-18, p.22

³ Richards, *Lessons of the Spanish Revolution*, pp. 18-19

⁴ Koffi Annan, (2016). 'Introduction'. To D. van Reybrouk. *Against Elections: The case for democracy*. New York: Seven Stories.

⁵ See also Phil Dickens (2015). Active abstention isn't the answer either. *LibCom*. 7 March 2015. <http://libcom.org/library/active-abstention-isnt-answer-either> last accessed 8 August 2021.

⁶ Carol Galais (2014) "Don't Vote for Them: The Effects of the Spanish Indignant Movement on Attitudes about Voting."

Journal of Elections, Public Opinion and Parties 24.3: pp. 334-350.

⁷ Though there are examples of some anarchists who did go down this slippery slope. One such, was Francesco Saverio Merlino, who debated with Malatesta arguing for the merits of limited electoral engagement, before abandoning anarchism for more orthodox social democracy (My thanks to an editor of *Black Flag* for this example)

⁸ Bakunin, *Bakunin on Anarchy*, p.144.

⁹ Richards, *Lessons of the Spanish Revolution*, p. 20; Bakunin, 'On Real Democracy', *Bakunin: Selected texts 1868-75*. London: Anarres: pp.60-70.

disrupt those few sites of anti-hierarchical activism. However, when *lesser evil*-ism extends into far more active support for state-representative politics, then (intellectual and physical) labour and resource is dedicated to oppressive politics which could be better directed.

2. *Radical Social Democracy (Horizontal Structural Reformism)*

This is the most familiar of the methods of radicals as Carl Boggs calls it: ‘the dominant paradigm of socialist politics in the advanced capitalist societies where bourgeois institutions are firmly implanted’.¹ Many direct action movements on the past have reverted to social democratic methods, starting initially with the Labour movement in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the ecological movement creating Green parties and the feminist movement developing into Women’s Equality parties. Boggs calls social democracy *structural reformism* as it assumes that a more equitable economic and political system is achieved by working through democratic institutions. Radical syndicalists, like Mann, initially supported parliamentary action because it would help support workers’ direct industrial action.²

These tactics are clearly distinct from Anarchist *prefiguration*, which prioritises direct action outside and against the state and done autonomously. Mann’s change to this prefigurative position is signalled when he later advocated for ‘the complete emancipation of the workers, and I believe that can be achieved by industrial and economic organisation without resorting to the legislative institution.’³ Participation at the polling station being seen as a peripheral feature at best.

Social democracy regards electoral participation and the forms of organisation that support it as core to the political project. As a result, some social democrats will support non-parliamentary activity, but like the Labour-left turning up at a picket-line,

these are either done in order to support the parliamentary goal (to promote the electoral brand) or they are secondary to the electoral goal.

Many recent converts to social democracy, frustrated at the impasse reached by the direct action movements,⁴ call themselves ‘horizontalist’ as many come from the anarchist-backgrounds, and have an explicit commitment to anti-hierarchical or horizontal forms.⁵ These include the horizontally-organized groups that grew out of the Greek and Spanish anti-austerity and anti-corruption movements such as the Greek SYRIZA and the Spanish national movement, *Podemos* and local groups such as *Ahora Madri*, *Barcelona en Comú*, *Castelló en Moviment* and *Zaragoza en Común*.⁶ Many involved in these groups still identified their goals with anarchism. They wanted an egalitarian transformation of the economy and to replace the hierarchy of representative government with systems of accessible and participatory decision-making.⁷ However, these radical changes would be achieved through the constitutional process by parties that prefigured more egalitarian decision-making. The measure to ensure that hierarchies of power were flattened included bans on corporate donations, party assemblies having executive power rather than the elected delegates, time limits on official positions and revocation mechanisms. The Spanish horizontalists also utilised social media to engage with members and supporters and to identify which issues to prioritise.⁸

Thus advocates of horizontal reformism claimed that their methods of organisation and policy formation were novel and experimental (Feenstra and Roig et. al 2017). However critics point out that these participatory and horizontal forms of organising representative bodies offered little that was new, bar the application of new Information and Communications Technology, which other, more reactionary parties were adopting with growing effectiveness, as Donald Trump’s tweets demonstrate.⁹ Similar radical values and procedural

¹ Boggs ‘Revolutionary Process’, pp. 372.

² ‘Trade-union efforts should be, and must be, supplemented both by county councils and by Parliament.’ Tom Mann (1890), *The Development of the Labour Movement*. *Marxist Internet Archive*. <<https://www.marxists.org/archive/mann-tom/index.htm>>

³ Mann ‘Industrial organisation’.

⁴ See Feenstra, Roig and Franks 2017.

⁵ Bray, M. (2018). ‘Horizontalism’ In B. Franks, N. Jun, L. Williams eds., *Anarchism: A Conceptual Account*. London: Routledge: pp.101-14., Tormey, S. and Feenstra, R. (2015). ‘Reinventing the Political Party in Spain: The case of 15M and the Spanish mobilisations’. *Policy Studies*. 36.6: pp. 590-606.; Feenstra et. al. 2017

⁶ Feenstra, Roig and Franks, ‘Spanish Anarchist Engagements’.

⁷ See for instance Simon Tormey and Ramon Feenstra 2015. ‘Reinventing the political party in Spain: the case of 15M and the Spanish mobilisations’, *Policy Studies* 26.6: pp.590-606.

⁸ See Feenstra, Tormey, *Refiguring Democracy*, pp. 46-8, pp. 58-61.

⁹ More widely see Ernst, Nicole, Frank Esser, Sina Blassnig, and Sven Engesser (2019). ‘Favorable opportunity structures for populist communication: Comparing different types of politicians and issues in social media, television and the press.’ *The International Journal of Press/Politics* 24. 2: 165-188; Enli, Gunn, and Linda Therese Rosenberg. “Trust in the

norms were part of the early Ecology and Green Parties as they entered the parliamentary fray (see Bray 2018), groups which also contained considerable numbers of social libertarians.

However, the tension of winning elections and making effective policy within the democratic-capitalist arrangement led to conflict between the *Fundi's* and *Realos* in the Green parties. The former wished to maintain prefigurative, egalitarian structures and radical goals while the *Realos* sought to replace party structures with more efficient centralised organisation that can better gain positions within the executive and manage, with other parties and established institutions, targeted reform. New horizontalist parties face a similar tension as they seek greater electoral support by attracting support from those not radicalised, and to gain the cooperation from the main organs of the capitalist state in order to achieve benign policy goals.

In Greece, SYRIZA imposed more of the austerity they had been elected to end. *Podemos* entered into government with the more longstanding and corrupt Spanish Social Democrats and bar a few minor reforms helped to sustain the capitalist economy. Groupings that started with a strong commitment to radical change based on anti-hierarchical principles of solidarity and mutual aid underwent, as they moved away from direct action and into representative functions, the transformation predicted by abstentionist anarchists. They quickly transformed into groups based on electoral success and effective policy reform, developing efficient working relationships with the institutions of domination (banks, business, military and other states) and rejecting the direct action movements, such as squatters and those facing house-repossession in whose name they originally claimed to be acting upon.¹

3. *Sinn Fein Option (Revolutionary Anti-Representationalism)*

Some groups recognise the problems of working through the structures of domination but argue that standing for election and refusing representation in the legislature of a capitalist state can still advance the revolutionary cause. Elections give an opportunity to engage with people who, at least at that moment, are more attuned to political conversation and show the strength of popular support for their cause. These argue for militants to take on a *representative* function of symbolising

the revolutionary movement but not to participate in being part of the government or vote on legislation.

It is named after the Irish Republican party Sinn Fein who have adopted this strategy for Westminster elections.² For many legislatures, taking a seat in the parliament requires the elected candidate to swear an oath allegiance to the monarch, state and constitution. For radicals taking such an oath would show lack of integrity and

be an act of subservience. Taking the seat in the parliament was supposed to help broadcast the message of equality and liberty, obedience to the procedures of the state would transmit an entirely different message. However, Sinn Fein avoid this problem by not entering the House of Commons and therefore not swearing the oath of allegiance. By refusing to swear, they still gain attention and have legitimacy as the popular candidate, but without compromising by taking an official position within the state.

The Glasgow-based anarchist Guy Aldred who also used this tactic also named it after *Sinn Fein*.³ He initially suggested as a compromise position between the traditional Marxist Social Democrats of the British Socialist Party and the anti-parliamentarians (the 'infantile left' attacked by

Groupings that started with a strong commitment to radical change based on anti-hierarchical principles of solidarity and mutual aid underwent, as they moved away from direct action and into representative functions, the transformation predicted by abstentionist anarchists.

age of social media: Populist politicians seem more authentic." *Social Media+ Society* 4, no. 1 (2018)

¹ See Stephen Burgen. 'Riots in Barcelona after squatters evicted from former bank', *The Guardian* 24 May 2016. <[https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/may/24/riots-in-](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/may/24/riots-in-barcelona-after-squatters-evicted-from-bank)

[barcelona-after-squatters-evicted-from-bank](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/may/24/riots-in-barcelona-after-squatters-evicted-from-bank)> last accessed 8 August 2021.

² In the Irish Republic and in devolved assembly they take their seats and indeed are part of the executive in the latter.

³ John Couzin (2018), 'Guy Aldred', *Strugglepedia* <http://strugglepedia.co.uk/index.php?title=Guy_Aldred>

Lenin¹) during the discussion to form what became the Communist Party of Great Britain. It was also advocated by some amongst the Dutch counter-cultural radicals the *Kaboteurs* and *Provos* in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Thus the *Sinn Fein option* involves standing in elections in order to provide revolutionary groups an opportunity to highlight the oppressive features of capitalism and test the broader acceptability of revolutionary ideas. The elected representative acts as a spokesperson for the revolutionary cause but refuses to take their seat in Parliament or participate in government. Electoral success adds to the legitimacy of the revolutionary cause and helps further boost its popularity

There is much to recommend the tactic. It takes advantage of the spaces that open up for political conversations that elections provide, especially in apolitical constituencies. It is hard for even seasoned activists to knock on a stranger's door and ask them to take part in (legally dubious) direct action but it is far less intimidating to canvass for a vote. The tactic also avoids those elected taking over the role of order-givers, managing the order-takers. It also recognises that change cannot come through working with the rules of existing oppressive social institutions.

There are, however, problems with this method. One of these more significant weaknesses is due to the method of depending on gaining legitimacy through the ballot box. What matters is the electoral vote, rather than building and participating in radical alternatives to capitalism. This leads to a further problem, as the types of political organisation this method requires, whether *Sinn Fein* or the ultra-left, is hierarchical. It requires recognisable media-friendly spokespeople who, when elected, can use the opportunities presented to voice the Party's case for radical change. These elected representatives might not take legislative power, but by participating in the electoral process, they enter into the fame-economy, where being well known provides them with additional power and influence.

The revolutionary (anti-)representationalism of the *Sinn Fein option* also faces the problem of the slippery slope. Those elected on such a basis are then often pressured to take electoral positions and use their influence in parliament. They then

become *social reformists*. The Dutch *Provos* split because some members wanted to use their electoral weight in the Amsterdam council to assist their movement.² When there is a particular threat of an especially reactionary government, pressure mounts on revolutionary (anti-)representatives to use the constitutional processes to prevent the greater evil. If they succumb to this pressure, then they become little more than radical social democrats; if they fail to do so, they appear to be responsible for a policy they could have stopped.

4. *Guerrilla Activism*

The final form of electoral engagement is the one most consistent with core anarchist principle. Like the *Sinn Fein option* and contrary to the radical social democracy, this tactic rejects working within the existing system to bring about change.

However, unlike the *Sinn Fein option*, *guerrilla activism* in its purest form does not seek votes, but uses the opportunities of the electoral process to critique and satirise the democratic, capitalist state and instead promote direct action – indeed for participants like Bigger, it can be a form of direct action in itself.³

The name derives from L. M. Bogad's account of the distinction in forms of electoral protest between 'guerrilla' electoral interventions and the softer, jocular stunts, like the candidates from the Monster Raving Loony Party of Great Britain and the Rhinoceros Party of Canada, which humorously 'sends-up [...] the political system that just about anyone can laugh at without feeling insulted.'⁴

Guerrilla activists, by contrast, use the opportunities of electoral engagement to make the far deeper criticisms of political and economic oppressions, wishing to unsettle the parliamentary parties. Rather than provide just a humorous interlude from the 'serious politics', guerrilla activists like the anarchist abstentionists promote alternatives that are outside and against capitalist-democratic institutions.

Class War's 2015 general election campaign provides a good example of *guerrilla activism*. Election campaigns provide opportunities for largely marginalised viewpoints to gain some exposure in the national and local press. Class War's candidate Adam Clifford, for example, appeared on one of the more memorable episodes of the BBC's *The Daily Politics Show*.⁵ Class War

¹ V. Lenin (1975) [1921] "*Left-Wing*" *Communism: An infantile disorder*. Peking: Foreign Language Press.

² See L. M. Bogad, (2005). *Electoral Guerrilla Theatre: Radical social movements*. London: Routledge.

³ Bigger, *Class War at the General Election*

⁴ Bogad, *Electoral Guerrilla Theatre*, pp. 31-2

⁵ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o_5WpUL0WXo

used these opportunities to draw attention to the inherent power structures of representative democracy. They used the platform to make many of the key anarchist critiques of representative democracy, including the promotion of anti-hierarchical, extra-parliamentary action. Appearing alongside establishment candidates, including the soon to be Prime Minister Theresa May, they could voice their hatred directly at the political ruling class.¹

Guerrilla activism, unlike the *Sinn Fein option* does not seek to become the main representatives of the views of others. It also rejects notions of legitimacy through parliamentary processes. It prioritises the actions of the oppressed acting for themselves, outside of parliament and independent of any managerial class (see Bone 2015, Ross 2015). Andy Bennetts, Class War's candidate for Lichfield, used his candidate's interview with a local paper to explicitly call for people not to vote, including for himself.² As such this guerrilla method does not seek to get people elected and does not create the hierarchy of representative-represented that is central to the *Sinn Fein option*. Instead it uses of the opportunity of election to advance the abstentionist critique of standard democratic politics.³

At first sight, *guerrilla activism* – like the *Sinn Fein option* - appears to be in tension with *lesser-evilism*. The guerrilla activist is drawing electoral support from the lesser evil candidate, opening the way for the greater evil to win. Tacticians for orthodox political parties are aware of this, and try to use it for their advantage, such that supporters of one party will sometimes secretly provide support for a third party, with an apparently rival ideology, so that the third party will take vital votes away from their main opponent. For instance, Republican-funders, like Bernie Marcus, assisted Green candidates in marginal states.⁴ See too, the suspicious behaviour of the *Literal Democrats* in the 1994 European election and *Independent Green Voice* (whose ballot logo emphasised the word Green and appeared higher up the ballot paper than the Scottish Green Party) who took vital votes from Liberal Democrats and Greens (to Conservative

Party advantage). Might guerrilla activists be used, or accused of behaving, in a similar fashion?

There are a number of replies. First, for more consistent guerrilla activists who don't seek to win votes and indeed carry an abstentionist message, this is not a problem as real power lies outside of parliament and thus whoever wins is largely immaterial. For those still worried by the interpretation potentially placed on standing guerrilla candidates by those with only a partial understanding of the tactic, there are further responses and modifications of the method. For instance, where the two major competing parties are largely similar, allowing one to win over the other provides no significant disadvantage. Alternatively, guerrilla activists might avoid standing in places where there is a genuinely tight race between a palpable and lesser evil.

However, there are problems with this *guerrilla activism*. First, some of Class War's other candidates, to Bennett's disappointment, did appear to be offering policy solutions, such as a mansion tax, duty free beer and the doubling social security benefits,⁵ which suggested a return to social democracy. Other Class War candidates, such as Bigger, suggest these policy slogans were only offered up as part of the satirical features of the campaign and as a way of opening up a dialogue with voters,⁶ but many more members of the electorate would see what appears to be reformist demands without being engaged in the wider discussion that deconstructs them.

Secondly, as anarchist critics from an abstentionist-position point out, to stand seven candidates in a general election meant that Class War had to pay the state £3,500 in deposits. This was because their overall vote was too small to reach the level where these would be returned (the most successful candidate in electoral terms was the one most explicit in calling for no one to vote and he did not achieve one twentieth of the electoral support needed to save his deposit). Abstentionists argue that this money - and more importantly the time and effort in running an electoral campaign – would have been better directed towards direct action campaigns.⁷ Bone's response to these

¹ Bigger, *Class War at the General Election*, pp. 213-14.

² Ross, (2015). 'Candidate insists "voting isn't the answer" ahead of general election', Lichfield Live 7 April 2015. <<http://lichfieldlive.co.uk/2015/04/07/candidate-insists-voting-isnt-the-answer-ahead-of-general-election>> last accessed 7 August 2021.

³ J. Bigger (2015). Personal Interview

⁴ Maggie Haberman, Danny Hakim and Nick Corasaniti, 'How Republicans Are Trying to Use the Green Party to

Their Advantage', *New York Times* 22 September 2020. <<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/22/us/politics/green-party-republicans-hawkins.html>>

⁵ Bigger, *Class War at the General Election*, p. 135.

⁶ Bigger, Interview.

⁷ See Phil Dickens (2016). 'An afterthought: "extra-parliamentary electoralism"' *Libcom*, <http://libcom.org/library/afterthought-extra-parliamentary-electoralism> last accessed 16 May 2016.

arguments is if there was meaningful extra-parliamentary action going on, then it would be a waste of resource to direct it towards an election campaign but there was in 2015 (and indeed in 2021) no such alternative.¹ The guerrilla participations was a way of publicising and enhancing what little was going on, like squatting and campaigns against Poor Doors (separate, inferior entrances for social housing tenants in mixed housing units).

Floaker a longstanding member of the Anarchist Federation in Scotland, argues that standing candidates damages the possibility for direct action – as it appears to support constitutional engagement.² For Floaker, like Mann in the latter's revolutionary syndicalist period, there is no need for parliamentary action, direct action by the oppressed is sufficient and parliamentary action is unnecessary or a distraction. In support of Floaker's contention, the types of tactic Bigger regarded as 'direct action' being advanced in Class War's election campaign seem much closer to symbolic action – shouting slogans – rather than prefiguring different types of practice that embody freer, more equal and more exciting social relationships, even allowing for some fluidity in the distinction between symbolic and direct action.³ However, Bigger's case for electoral engagement was also that it made explicit to new audiences the case for direct action and helped promote and normalise it. His election campaign gave precedence to the anti-poor door and squatting movements as assaults on gentrification.⁴ These types of direct action took precedence over electioneering for a candidate.⁵

Whilst Floaker accepts that guerrilla activism is deliberately mocking the elections, Floaker's concern is that not everyone will see it as satire. There are good reasons to support Floaker's position. If the Internet has demonstrated anything, it is that not everyone will recognise irony or get the joke. However, this can be mitigated by candidates making their satirical position clearer. It should also be added that any tactic is open to being misconstrued. Strike action, which Floaker supports, is often misinterpreted as selfish or an

attempt to annoy the public, rather than attack the power and authority of the bosses. The task is to clarify as clearly as possible, to the intended audience, the objective being prefigured through the action, not necessarily to abandon the tactic.

There is also the problem that *guerrilla activism* itself is hierarchical, even if the aim is not to win an elected position. The tactic requires that attention is centred on the individual candidates and the role of others is largely to passively vote for them. This creates a fame economy, where the candidate is the most important figure – the centre of attention – for transmitting the anarchist critique of state-centred democracy and the capitalist system it protects. The erudite Lisa McKenzie provides a significant example. McKenzie stood as the Class War candidate against one of the main architects of austerity, the right wing Conservative (and former party leader) Iain Duncan Smith. Although an active writer and researcher in her own right, Lisa gained additional media attention partly because of her candidacy, including in *The Guardian*, *THES* and *Sky News*. Even though she has moved on from Class War and espouses causes and arguments which are not necessarily Class War's, because of her electoral position she is still linked by many people to Class War and thus they to her changed positions.⁶ Bigger records that being highly positioned within the fame economy brings significant disadvantages including he and his family being targeted by the tabloid press, with intrusive questions about his background and out of context extractions from his social media.⁷ There are mental health implications for being at the centre of a campaign, which then comes to a grinding halt once the count is over, while they remain identifiable targets for reactionaries for years to come.⁸

There is a possible reply to the criticism. It acknowledges that guerrilla action is unavoidably hierarchical, but then hierarchy is not, and cannot be, entirely absent from direct action either. Each form of direct action will raise particular persons, groups or sections of society to prominence and the temptation, especially by those used to seeing problems and solutions in terms of leaders-and-

¹ Ian Bone, 'An Anarchist Guide to Electioneering', *Strike* 9: 24-5.

² Floaker. 2015. 'This is what democracy looks like?', Glasgow Anarchist Federation, 19 May 2015, <<https://glasgowanarchists.wordpress.com/2015/03/19/this-is-what-democracy-looks-like/>> last accessed 8 August 2021.

³ Bigger *Class War at the General Election*, pp. 38-9.

⁴ See for instance Bigger, *Class War at the General Election*, pp. 82-3.

⁵ Bigger. Interview.

⁶ See for instance Brixton Buzz <<https://www.brixtonbuzz.com/2019/04/demolition-is-your-estate-next-local-councillors-housing-activists-researchers-and-journalists-discuss-lambeth-policy/>>; see also Bigger *Class War at the General Election*, p. 309.

⁷ Bigger *Class War at the General Election*, pp. 251-54.

⁸ Bigger *Class War at the General Election*, pp. 309-10.

followers, will make them represent the totality of the cause. Strike action raises the strike organisers to prominence, green direct action puts those making most effective and eye-catching disruption at the forefront.

There is a risk of activist burnout with these methods in direct (prefigurative) methods and guerrilla electoralism. What it points to is the need for better mutual support and self-care not a blanket rejection of these tactics. The task is to make practices as diverse, mutually beneficial and anti-representational as possible. Taking action is about building communal, supportive social activities and organisations that are as anti-hierarchical, effective and enjoyable as possible. Guerrilla activism, as it restricts hierarchy more than the other models of electoral engagement, can operate and develop in this way, especially when used in concert with – and gives appropriate priority to – more direct methods.

Anarchist abstentionists fear a slippery slope where guerrilla activism becomes a more prominent and reified form of the *Sinn Fein option*, with a party structure and set of rules (formal and informal) based on promoting their spokespeople in electoral campaigns which then merges into social democracy. This results in the organisation morphing into the pro-capitalist, pro-state and anti-autonomous action parties of the main forms of social democracy (as the horizontalist parties are doing). These are not fallacious fears, as noted above there are pressures on electoral engagement that generate moves into this reformist direction, but there may be forms of anarchist guerrilla activism that can – and do – avoid falling down the slope.

Concluding bit

Not all anarchist engagements with electoralism are the same. Here I have outlined four, as they apply largely to representative state elections, rather than examine engagements in direct democracy such as state referendums.¹ Whilst the abstentionist arguments against electoral-participation are compelling and remain pertinent, there are, nonetheless, forms of Anarchist engagements with electioneering which can be largely consistent with anarchist principles, especially when they take a

deliberately guerrilla form. This would involve making explicit in their main election material and engagements with voters, the critique of the representative state and the oppressive institutions that constitute – and are maintained by – government. It needs to make plain its rejection of the order-giver / order-taker, representative / represented hierarchies and thus its lack of interest in vote-gathering. Guerrilla electoralism is most consistent with anarchism when it prioritises the importance of pertinent direct action rather than

Taking action is about building communal, supportive social activities and organisations that are as anti-hierarchical, effective and enjoyable as possible.

electoral action, both by providing specific actions ‘constituents’ can participate in, but also the advantages of direct action and prefigurative organisation in general.

Such a tactic should be used sporadically, not least because satire is not funny or engaging when the joke is old and expected. But by using it intermittently it also underlines that, unlike in radical social democracy and to a lesser extent with the *Sinn Fein option*, emancipatory change does not occur primarily through engaging with the hierarchy of the state or party organisations. Using this method infrequently also undermines the fame-economy, where a small cabal of candidates start to represent the diverse and changing movement. Where activists use this method, they should learn from the examples of the past, including identifying risks to candidates and the need for mutual care.² Those who have undertaken this tactic are usually willing to share their knowledge and skills, being equally aware of the strengths and pitfalls, the personal costs and thrills of such a form of participation. If former Corbynistas are drawn to anarchism, their experiences of electioneering can be used for selective *guerrilla activism* and, like former engagers in constitutionalism such as Proudhon and Mann before them, in updating the general anarchist critique of representative, state-democratic action.

¹ For an interesting critical account of anti-state activist engagement in the Scottish Independence referendum, see Leigh French and Gordon Asher (2014) ‘Gordon Asher and Leigh French on Scottish Independence’, *YouTube* <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A3y_6aG6bxc> and (2012) ‘Crises Capitalism and Independence Doctrines’,

Bella Caledonia 28th August 2012 <<https://bellacaledonia.org.uk/2012/08/28/crises-capitalism-and-independence-doctrines/>>. See too Franks, ‘Four Models of Anarchist Engagement’.

² Bigger 2021, fn 15. p.80; pp.309-10.

Sam Dolgoff: Ideas

Jeff Stein

Sam Dolgoff is perhaps best remembered for his books about anarchist history, *Bakunin on Anarchism*, *The Anarchist Collectives*, *The Cuban Revolution: A Critical Perspective*, and *Fragments*. These books were about the ideas of an important figure in the origin of the anarchist movement, the experience of worker self-management during the Spanish Civil War and Revolution, the repression of the Cuban anarchists by Fidel Castro and his Marxist-Leninist regime, and Sam's memories of the IWW and US anarchists, respectively. Sam Dolgoff, however, was also an activist who tried to find solutions to current social problems and how anarchism might be applied in the future.



Sam Dolgoff (1902-1990)

Dolgoff contributed several original ideas in his writing for the journals, *Vanguard*, *Views and Comments*, *Freedom*, *Interrogations*, *Libertarian Labor Review* (now *Anarcho-Syndicalist Review*), and others. Some of these ideas were developed into pamphlets. Among his better known ideas are 1) that the increasing complexity of society requires decentralisation and local self-management, 2) that advanced information and communications technology makes anarchist forms of organisation possible, 3) that the incorporation of the labour movement into the capitalist welfare state has led to the growth of union bureaucracy and produced a rank-and file revolt that could revive anarcho-syndicalist and revolutionary tendencies, and 4) that the nation-state and "national liberation" is not an effective means of resisting imperialism and global capitalism but leads to new regimes of exploitation.

In "The Relevance of Anarchism to Modern Society", Dolgoff first corrects the misconception that anarchists oppose organisation. Pointing to the classical anarchist thinkers, as well as the labour federations and co-operative associations inspired by anarchism, Sam shows that anarchism is based upon the organisational forms of federalism, decentralisation, local autonomy, and self-

management. Society is increasingly interdependent, and it would be difficult, if not impossible, to return to a primitive condition of isolated nations, not to mention isolated tribes or villages. On the other hand, trying to coordinate everything from a central administration, whether we are talking of a government bureaucracy or a large corporation, is unmanageable. The larger and more complicated any organisation becomes, the greater the need to get flexibility and cooperation by allowing

changes to be made by smaller organisations on the local level.

"Bourgeois economists, sociologists and administrators like Peter Drucker, Gunnar Myrdal, John Kenneth Galbraith, Daniel Bell, etc., now favour a large measure of decentralisation not because they suddenly became anarchists, but primarily because technology has rendered anarchistic forms of organisation operational necessities. But the bourgeois reformers have yet to learn that as long as these organisational forms are tied to the state or capitalism, which connotes the monopoly of political and economic power, decentralisation will remain a fraud – a more efficient device to enlist the cooperation of the masses in their own enslavement." (*The Relevance of Anarchism to Modern Society*)

Workers are only too aware of this conflict between the need for autonomy at the point of production and the constant interference of ignorant managers and capitalists from above. Coordination between departments, industries, and communities could be better achieved under democratic worker control, i.e., self-management. Industrial engineers and scientists, who have studied the problem, frequently come to the same conclusion. As Dolgoff points out, the anarchists

have always recognised that workers have the ability to run the economy since the days of the First International and earlier.

“The libertarian principle of workers’ control [has not been] invalidated by changes in the composition of the work force or in the nature of work itself. With or without automation, the economic structure of the new society must be based on self-administration by the people directly involved in economic functions. Under automation millions of highly trained technicians, engineers, scientists, educators, etc., who are already organised into local, regional, national and international federations will freely circulate information, constantly improving both the quality and availability of goods and services and developing new products for new needs” (*The Relevance of Anarchism to Modern Society*)

If anything, advances in computers and communications technology have only made the anarchist forms of organisation of the future easier to set-up and function. Information and data can be transferred almost instantaneously from one community to another, one workplace to another, allowing all to take part in those decisions which affect them. Direct polling can help regional and industrial federations work out plans to take into account local preferences and needs. As Dolgoff pointed out in his essay *Modern Technology and Anarchism*:

A major obstacle to the establishment of a free society is the all-pervading bureaucratic machinery of the state and the industrial, commercial and financial corporations exercising de facto control over the operations of society. Bureaucracy is an unmitigated parasitical institution... In his important work *Future Shock* Alvin Toffler concludes that: “In bureaucracies the great mass of men performing routine tasks and operations – - precisely these tasks and operations that the computer and automation do better than men – - can be performed by self-regulating machines... thus doing away with bureaucratic organisation... far from fastening the grip of automation on civilisation... automation leads to the overthrow [of the] power laden bureaucracies through which authority

flowed [and] wielded the whip by which the individual was held in line...” Professor William H. Read of McGill University believes that “the one effective measure of coping with the problem of coordination in a changing society will be found in new arrangements of power which sharply break with bureaucratic tradition...” William A. Faunce (School of Industrial and Labor Relations, Michigan State University) predicts that “the integration of information processing made possible by computers would eliminate the need for complex organisations characteristic of bureaucracies.”

Sam Dolgoff, however, was not so naïve as to believe these changes would take place by themselves. In order to make worker self-management successful will require the help of technicians, engineers and scientists willing to side with the working class against the common enemy, the capitalists and bureaucrats, and willing to teach their skills to their “blue-collar” fellow workers, without trying to dominate them.

Many scientific and technical workers are unhappy. Quite a few whom I interviewed complain that nothing is so maddening as to stand helplessly by while ignoramuses who do not even understand the language of science dictate the direction of research and development. They are particularly outraged that their training and creativity are exploited to design and improve increasingly destructive war weapons and other anti-social purposes. They are often compelled, on pain of dismissal, to perform monotonous tasks and are not free to exercise their knowledge. These frustrated professional workers already outnumber relatively unskilled and skilled “blue collar” manual workers rapidly displaced by modern technology. Many of them will be receptive to our ideas if intelligently and realistically presented. We must go all out to reach them. (*Modern Technology and Anarchism*)

Dolgoff made these remarks with the labour movement in mind. Sam Dolgoff was a member of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), and an admirer of the anarcho-sindicalist union in Spain, the Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (CNT). The IWW advocated “revolutionary industrial

unionism” that all the workers in the same industry should belong to the same union regardless of skill, department, or profession so that strikes could be supported by all workers in that industry, making an “injury to one, an injury to all.” The IWW also had the goal of replacing capitalism with worker self-management of the entire economy. The Spanish CNT put many of these same ideas into practice when in response to a military coup in 1936, the workers took over a large portion of the economy and organised it into collectives and communes. Dolgoff wrote a book about the Spanish Revolution, *The Anarchist Collectives*, and was aware of the need for technical and scientific support for these efforts to be successful.

At the time Dolgoff wrote about the anarchist collectives, very little information was available about the successful application of anarchist ideas in Spain and elsewhere. The IWW had been in decline for a number of years, and anarcho-syndicalist unions which had existed in Spain and several other countries had been destroyed by Fascism and Stalinism. Rather than rebuild the anti-authoritarian wing of the labour movement, the post-war anarchist movement was swept up by the “New Anarchism”. The New Anarchists ignored working class struggles and instead looked to protest movements, the youth counter-culture, and other issues. The problem with the New Anarchism, as Dolgoff saw it, was not that these issues were unimportant, but that none of these movements had the same potential of a social revolution, of replacing capitalism and the state, as had the earlier workers’ movement. If anarchism was still relevant, how to get there? Had the capitalists, by buying off the labour movement with welfare reforms and consumerism, completely ended its revolutionary potential?

“The incorporation of the American Labour Movement into the Labour Front of the emerging American welfare capitalist State, plus the alarming extent to which bureaucracy and corruption – all the vices of capitalist society – infects the unions has had a devastating effect upon the morale of the anti-totalitarian left and undermined faith in the revolutionary capacity of the labour movement.... In rightfully stressing

What We Stand For

Libertarian League (1955)

Two great power blocs struggle for world domination. Neither of these represents the true interests and welfare of Humanity. Their conflict threatens mankind with atomic destruction. Underlying both of these blocs are institutions that breed exploitation, inequality and oppression.

Without trying to legislate for the future we feel that we can indicate the general lines along which a solution to these problems can be found.

The exploitative societies of today must be replaced by a new libertarian world which will proclaim – Equal freedom for all in a free socialist society – “Freedom” without socialism leads to privilege and injustice – “Socialism” without freedom is totalitarian.

The monopoly of power which is the state must be replaced by a worldwide federation of free communities, labour councils and/or cooperatives operating according to the principles of free agreement. The government of men must be replaced by a functional society based on the administration of things.

Centralism which means regimentation from the top down must be replaced by federalism which means cooperation from the bottom up.

The Libertarian League will not accept the old socio-political clichés but will boldly explore new roads while examining anew the old movements, drawing from them all, that which time and experience has proven to be valid.

the indisputable degeneration of the labour movement, the pessimists underestimate or ignore an equally formidable and more important development: the spontaneous mass revolts of the rank-and-file ordinary members against the triple exploitation of the labour bureaucracy, the employers and the regimentation of the State. The myth of the happy uncomplaining American worker satisfied with his [or her] lot is not sustained by the facts.” (*Notes for a Discussion on the Regeneration of the American Labor Movement*)

The late 1960s through the early 1980s, was a period of numerous wildcat strikes and conflicts, not only with employers, but against union leaders and in defiance of labour laws. These conflicts were similar to those which had created the IWW and anarcho-syndicalist unions before, and Dolgoff saw the opportunity for rebuilding a similar movement. Unfortunately, the opportunity passed, the young anarchists of the time were either not willing or not prepared to do the hard organisational work required to build revolutionary syndicalist organisations. Whatever energy there was for making changes in the labour movement was misdirected into organising for the business unions, political parties or replacing the old bureaucrats with new ones. Yet times and

conditions change, and we are beginning to see another upsurge of rebellion in the ranks. Once again, Sam Dolgoff's suggestion that anarchists make an effort to rebuild our unions based on direct action and worker self-management, deserves serious consideration.

Sam Dolgoff also contributed to anarchist thinking about national liberation movements and global capitalism. Contrary to the Marxist-Leninists and others on the left who uncritically supported nationalist movements, as long as they claimed to be "socialist" and were resisting colonial powers, Dolgoff pointed out the need to be sceptical of such claims. In his book, *The Cuban Revolution: A Critical Perspective*, Dolgoff shared the history of the Cuban anarchist movement and how they had resisted the forces of not only US imperialism, but also the Communist Party which had allied itself with the Batista regime. However, when Castro and Guevara took over, they turned on the anarchists and other revolutionaries and threw their former comrades into prison, and made an alliance with the Communists and the former military. Worker self-management or democratic control of the economy was not part of the Castro agenda, who instead adopted the Bolshevik model of state bureaucracy and state capitalism. Dolgoff further developed these observations in his pamphlet, *Third World Nationalism and the State*:

There is an unbridgeable difference between the concept of the nation-state as against natural communities. The natural community, a confluence of human beings, with a common history, a common language and cultural background, springs from free social alliances....National Self-determination is by no means synonymous with the internal freedom of individuals, groups and communities, Native regimes in "liberated" independent states are no less despotic and no less corrupt than are their former rulers....Nor is national self-determination synonymous with social revolution, During the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) both the quasi-independent Catalonian Generalidad and the Basque regime made common cause with their erstwhile enemy, the Central Republican Government and the capitalists, to extirpate the revolutionary anarcho-syndicalist General Confederation of Labour (CNT) and to crush the libertarian revolution.

The anarchist alternative to nationalism is a libertarian, stateless federation of various peoples with all other peoples of the world. To survive and grow, the fluid, ever-changing associations which constitute natural communities, must be constantly renewed and enriched by free association with equally free communities. The free associations must transcend the unalterable artificial boundaries erected by the state.

Sam Dolgoff's suggestions for peoples wishing to free themselves from the imperialism of global capitalism and the power politics of nation-states bear a striking resemblance to the revolt of the Rojavans in the Syrian region of the Middle East, and in many ways anticipated the ideas of Murray Bookchin.

The Sam and Esther Dolgoff Institute

During the past year, a number of veterans of the anarchist movement and the IWW, including many past associates of Sam Dolgoff and Esther (Miller) Dolgoff have organised an educational institute to keep their ideas alive. The Mission Statement of the Institute reads, in part:

The Sam and Esther Dolgoff Institute brings their ideas into the 21st century to present an anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist view of contemporary social concerns. First, the Institute will preserve and promote their many contributions to literature about anarchism, anarcho-syndicalism, anti-fascism, and critiques of Marxism and state socialism. Second, the Institute will support programs, events, and conferences that explore the relevance of anarchist ideas today. Third, the Institute will support the publication of the *Anarcho-Syndicalist Review*, which chronicles contemporary anarcho-syndicalism internationally, and which Sam co-founded under the name of *Libertarian Labor Review*. Fourth, the Institute will issue occasional papers and publications to ensure broad access to contemporary anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist ideas and approaches.

Anarchists, Anarcho-Syndicalists, and Wobblies who are interested in the work of the Institute or form information can contact us at:

Sam and Esther Dolgoff Institute,
P. O. Box 8341,
2001 N. Mattis Avenue, Champaign, Illinois 61821

Anarchist Communism

Sam Weiner (pen-name of Sam Dolgoff)

Vanguard: A Libertarian Communist Journal, July; August-September, November 1932

I

The fast approaching downfall of capitalism, as shown by the worldwide economic debacle, is driving men to think about a new social order. It is generally admitted, even by conservatives, that capitalism is on its last legs. The greatest confusion prevails as to what should be done. Many so-called remedies are suggested, ranging from earnest prayer as recommended by the Pope, to fifty-seven varieties of dictatorship – as urged by Fascists, Communists, and Socialists.

The proposed remedies while differing in many respects, possess one quality which is common to all. They are based upon an abiding faith that *government* can remedy all evils. They would extend the functions of the State. The State would control and operate all the industries, would regulate the distribution of commodities, determine the conditions of labour, monopolise the sources of information and enlightenment – schools, newspapers, radio, etc. It would thrust itself into the life of every individual. No one would dare question its authority.

The delegation of power into the hands of an all-omnipotent State cannot solve the problems which are facing the working class – the problems of exploitation, of monopoly, of inequality, of suppression of the individual. The State bureaucracy constitutes a class in itself. This privileged class, not being engaged in productive labour, must be supported by the workers. The tremendous waste, inefficiency, and corruption of present-day government is well known. How much greater would this burden become, how much more entrenched would this bureaucracy become, should the powers of the State be multiplied a thousand-fold?

The growth of a bureaucratic class endowed with special privileges must give rise to inequality. The interests of those who rule, and the interests of those who are ruled cannot be reconciled. The people finding themselves reduced to mere tools in the hands of the all-enveloping State machine would be compelled to check the ever-growing power of the bureaucracy. The Contradictions inherent in state socialism, far from being solved through the metaphysical “Withering away

of the state” must result in a war between the privileged bureaucracy and the oppressed masses. It would lead to a social-revolution. The State cannot conduct the economic life of Society in the interests of all. The State cannot lose its class character. The abolition of capitalism is not sufficient as long as the State and its bureaucracy are maintained. The new social order must be based on entirely different principles. The need for a social philosophy which will avoid the pitfalls of state centralisation is becoming more and more pressing in

the face of the ever-growing tendencies toward dictatorship of one type or another. Anarchism is the only Social theory capable of filling this need. Anarchism aims to establish a society in which the economic activities will be conducted by voluntary groups and federations. It aims to institute mutual agreement in place of coercion as the guiding principle of human life. The development of the individual should be the sole aim of social life. A social system which does not provide for the development of the individual is a failure. A social system based upon exploitation and oppression cannot allow for the fullest development of the individual. We therefore believe in the abolition not only of Capitalism

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Society is an organic whole intricately connected and bound by a thousand ties. Should one organ fail to function it will immediately affect the others. The tremendous complexity and interdependence of social life is leading to communism. Communism is a system whereby industry is operated for the benefit of the whole of society. Society must be conducted upon the basis of “*From each according to his ability and to each according to his needs.*” No man has the right to monopolise that which generations of men have laboured to produce. The combined efforts of all are necessary in order to produce the means of life, consequently all are entitled to share alike that which all have laboured to produce. There is no room in such a society for privilege, inequality or dictatorship. Anarchist-communism combines freedom and equality. One is indispensable to the other.

The economic life of society should be conducted by those who are actually engaged in industry, through co-operatives, industrial unions, federations and voluntary societies of all kinds and for all purposes. The needs of mankind are so infinitely varied, the specific problems affecting a given industry or locality are so different that no single body, be it a bureaucratic state or a centralised administrative agency, can ascertain and efficiently attend to the needs of society, even if government would be impartial and wholly disinterested which it is not and cannot be. An all-seeing omnipotent governmental bureaucracy in Washington, cannot work the mines in Pennsylvania, or drill oil wells in Oklahoma, or can fruit in California. Only the people who do the work, who are intimately acquainted with the needs of a given industry or community can successfully solve the problems that constantly present themselves. The economic structure must be based upon the fullest possible amount of local autonomy and independent action. The economic basis of society must correspond to life itself, must reflect its many sidedness and its varied interests. This can be done only when every group and every individual is free to conduct his affairs in accordance with his needs. The decentralisation of functions in the hands of those directly concerned will ensure freedom for the producers, and will prevent the monopoly, oppression, and inefficiency which are the distinguishing characteristics of centralised institutions.

An examination of present-day society will show the extent to which voluntary association and mutual co-operation are responsible for all that is constructive in modern life. The voluntary scientific societies of all types, without which the wonders of modern life would be impossible, the voluntary educational societies, producers' and consumers' co-operatives, labour unions, mutual benefit associations, and societies of all types embracing every field of human endeavour are indispensable to social life. Social life is impossible without mutual agreement. The need for mutual co-operation is so great that even centuries of governmental oppression and red-tape have been unable to crush them. Recent history fully bears out the contention that government is absolutely helpless in any emergency, that only the creative impetus of the masses is capable of responding to such situations. The abolition of the State and Capitalism will release the masses from the dead weight of exploitation and oppression. Voluntary associations, increased in scope and united by the impetus of mutual necessity, would be free to develop. The constructive genius of mankind would regenerate the social-organism.

The question of the economic structure of the future society will be further developed in the next article, which will also deal with the tactics to be pursued in realising our Ideal.

II

In the previous article, I stated that the tremendous complexity and interdependence of social life is leading to Communism.

The production of steel, for example, is dependent upon the production of iron ore, coal, machinery, railroad transportation, etc., whereas iron ore, coal, machinery or railroad transportation is impossible without the production of steel. The curtailment or suspension of operation of any industry immediately affects the others. The harmonious relationships of one industry to another are indispensable to social life. Production of any article is no longer the individual task of a single

artisan, but is the task of the whole of society. The evolution of industry shows a distinct tendency toward the co-ordination and integration of human effort. This change is well illustrated in the development of agriculture.

Agriculture has long since ceased to depend upon archaic methods of cultivation. The introduction of labour-saving machinery, the great contributions of chemistry in increasing the fertility of the soil, the facilities for storing and transporting perishable foods has made possible the cultivation of tremendous areas at a minimum of human labour. Gigantic farms covering thousands of acres are too well known to require further description. The rationalisation of agriculture is spelling the doom of individualised farming and is placing the industry on a par with any other in technique and efficiency.

The growth of tenant farming, the inability of the individual farmer to pay heavy taxes and mortgages imposed by the capitalist and the state is placing the land in the hands of the bankers, leaving the dispossessed farmer in the same position as any other unemployed worker. The banking interests are establishing huge farms operating upon the principle of mass production. If a conflict of interests between the petty landed proprietor and the industrial worker exists, the antagonism is being liquidated by the rationalisation of agriculture and the expropriation of the land into the hands of the self-same class that controls the other basic industries.

The present development of society is due to the interdependence of industry.



The natural relations between producers and consumers are distorted by production for profit instead of for use. The contradiction between private ownership and monopoly, and the social nature of production is one of the principle factors in the breakdown of capitalism. Society must own and control industry. Society is being impelled to adopt communism as the economic form of the new society.

Production under Anarchist-Communism will be conducted by the workers themselves through their own organisations. The workers would be organised into industrial unions. The basic unit of production would be the factory council which would choose a factory committee composed of the representatives of the various departments to undertake the task of administration and co-ordination. Frequent meetings between the workers and the factory committee would give the benefit of the experience of all the workers for the better execution of the work at hand. The rotation of workers on the factory committee would develop their capacities to understand the problems of production and would preclude the possibility of any group monopolising their functions.

The fullest amount of local autonomy would characterise each unit. The abolition of a centralised, coercive institution, and its inevitable abuse of power, the abolition of the wage system, the abolition of inequality and privilege destroys the leading motives for oppression. The factory committees would act only in an advisory capacity. No agency could be better acquainted with the needs and methods of production than those who are actually doing the work. Having no fear of being fired by the "boss," be that boss the state or a private individual, and having everything to gain by efficient administration, the workers would be compelled by their common interests, if by no other, to cooperate with one another.

The factory councils of a given industry would elect representatives to the regional federation of workers' councils in their industry. These regional councils would co-ordinate the work for that area. They would in turn choose delegates to the national and international union of their industry. The functions of these bodies would be to suggest ways and means of improving the quality or quantity of work, to establish technical schools, to gather and publish statistical material, to conduct laboratories, etc. The congress of regional or national industrial unions would, like the factory committees, act only in an advisory capacity. It would not possess the power to compel any group to abide by their suggestions any more than scientific associations can compel any of its members to accept its findings. They merely submit them for discussion. The acceptance of their conclusions depends solely upon their validity.

The present administration of industry contains many examples of the principle of the suggestive body. The

association of American Engineers, the American Association of Railway Managers, Trade Associations embracing practically every phase of industry voluntarily congregate and discuss the problems affecting the administration and development of their various industries. They publish trade journals, conduct research bureaus, etc. Their findings are not binding or compulsory. They act as a clearing house of information for mutual benefit.

The actual problems of administration of industry must be differentiated from the question of exploitation of industry. Administration requires the voluntary association of trade bodies and groups for the purpose of exchanging suggestions, and applying scientific methods to the production of commodities. The exploitative function in industry demands a rigid centralisation based upon coercion. In order to exploit, it is necessary to keep the workers in ignorance, and to maintain an army of overseers whose function consists in seeing to it that the last ounce of energy is squeezed out of the workers. Workers' control and initiative cannot go hand in hand with exploitation.

The removal of exploitative functions of industry automatically increases the scope and creative impetus of the trade bodies. The energy and resourcefulness of mankind is directed toward constructive channels. It is not dissipated and warped in applying these abilities for the purpose of devising better ways of exploiting mankind. In advocating these principles, we extend the constructive tendencies in modern industry and at the same time eliminate the destructive features which are characteristic of capitalistic production.

The problem of distribution in an Anarchist-Communist Society would be successfully solved by an extensive system of consumers' societies, a network of co-operatives of all types which would reflect the myriad needs of mankind. Consumers' co-operatives would undertake the work of distribution. Agricultural co-operatives would undertake the task of supplying farm and dairy produce. The numerous class of artisans and handicraft workers which cannot fit into the general plan of a socialised industry could freely combine into artels. Housing societies, medical and health associations, etc. – each of the various co-operatives would be federated into national and international bodies similar in structure to that of the industrial unions. Local, national, and international confederations of co-operative societies would harmonise the work of the various co-operatives. Being in direct touch with the needs of the people, they would be able to accurately gauge the quantity of commodities to be consumed and would thereby supply the necessary statistics for a planned economy.

The fact that over fifty million people are now in the co-operative movement and that the movement attained such proportions in spite of the determined opposition of the state and the capitalists only serves to illustrate

the vitality of the principle of voluntary association. Society is in reality nothing more than the grouping of individuals for the satisfaction of human needs. The state and the exploiter are a parasitic growth upon the social body. They are no more beneficial than a cancer.

The various organs of production and distribution meet in the free commune. The commune is the unit which reflects the interest of all. Through the commune the connection between the various associations is achieved. The commune, through its bodies, plans production to satisfy its needs. It utilises all the resources at its command. It endeavours to eliminate waste.

It is the exchange bureau wherein the particular service of each is made available to all. In the commune, the “factory hand,” whose only function in capitalistic society is to turn bolt No.29 would become a MAN. For the city and the country would combine to give each person the opportunity to achieve that balance and variety of pursuits which makes for a healthy mind. Agriculture and manufacturing would go hand in hand. The factory would move to the people instead of the people moving to the factory. The development of electricity instead of steam, in addition to the development of high tension lines through which power can be transmitted to any section of the country, makes it possible to bring the factory to any community. Machinery can now be made available for decentralised production.

There is a tendency even in modern capitalistic society to decentralise production by establishing complete factories throughout the country. It has been proven that this method makes for greater efficiency and economy.

In an Anarchist-Communist Society the fullest extension of this principle would allow for the greatest amount of local autonomy. It would immeasurably increase the ability of the commune to become self-sustaining. It would simplify and facilitate the task of co-ordination.

Anarchist-Communism is the only social theory that is all embracing. It provides for the fullest development of the best in man. Here he attains his fullest stature. He is represented as a producer in his factory or shop, as a consumer in his co-operative, as both in his commune, and as a happy creative human being in the liberty of thought and action, which only a free society can develop.

III

Anarchist-Communism, being in direct contradiction to the institution of the state, cannot employ parliamentary tactics as a means towards its realisation. It casts aside as useless and dangerous the idea that a series of gradual and legal changes can bring about the fall of Capitalism, or usher in a new society.

The great struggles in the First International between Marx and Bakunin represented two directly opposing points of view on the tasks and tactics of the working class. In the main, as far as tactics were concerned, they differed in the following respects.

The Marxian faction advocated political action, *i.e.*, electing labour representatives who would support petty reforms. They believed in the centralisation of the affairs of the labour bodies into a single directing agency. They advocated the alliance of trade unions with a political party. They conceived of the Socialist State as the necessary link between Capitalism and a free society.

The Bakuninist faction advocated the direct economic action of the working class,

i.e., general strikes, sabotage, and armed resistance, through the organised power of the masses, such as revolutionary industrial unions, peasant organisations, etc. They conceived of the labour movement as a federation of workers and farmers bodies, possessing the greatest amount of local autonomy, and the federation of these decentralised units for common action and solidarity as the most desirable form of organisation. They held that any state is in its very nature reactionary, and therefore proposed that the mass organisations replace the state in the transitional period between the old and new society.

The history of the labour movement in every country and in every period, shows how well the Bakuninists understood the nature of reformism. What has become of the reformist labour movement? Why have they failed to live up to their “Historical Mission?” Despite the fact that the British labour movement was strong enough to paralyse England in the general strike of 1926, we see it reduced to beggary, chasing after doles, dominated by the politicians of the “labour” party, and advocating the most reactionary policies. The British labour movement is standing idly by while British

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Imperialism is crushing their brother workers in India, Ireland and other colonies.

The great labour movement of Germany, despite its numbers, is helpless in the face of the Fascist menace. Like the labour movement of England it is the plaything of the traitorous Social-Democratic Party. Deprived of its initiative and its revolutionary spirit at a low ebb, it has allowed the politicians to dupe them so that reaction has gained the upper hand. There is no doubt whatever that the World War would never have been fought were these self-same reformist unions revolutionary, and free from the deadening influence of opportunism.

Wherever we turn, in Italy, in Spain, in Germany, we see reaction in the saddle; the revolution thwarted. The greatest obstacle in the path of the revolution has been not so much the conservatives, as these Judases, the "socialists" who are in reality the last bulwark of Capitalism.

The Communist Party of Germany is in a large measure responsible for the rise of Fascism. When the crying need of the hour was a united front of all class-conscious workers regardless of party, when only the united working class fighting on the economic field was important, when only the armed resistance of the workers was capable of crushing the reaction, the Communist Party of Germany, by the order of the Moscow bureaucrats, took a long step backward. Knowing that a united front was impossible without them, they laid down the law: either rule or ruin. They insisted upon dominating the entire labour movement of Germany. When the labour movement refused to accept what they called a "united front," the resulting lack of unity among the workers gave the fascists an opportunity to consolidate their forces. The situation was and still is most critical. Either the united front or fascism. The communists refused the united front. The interests of the bureaucracy outweighed the interests of the working class.

Even a revolutionary movement is rendered ineffective when it is dominated by a centralised bureaucracy. When the labour movement is dominated by a political party, it inevitably becomes the football of politics. It is clear to all except "those who will not see" that the downfall of Capitalism, and the establishment of a new society, cannot be accomplished by the use of such tactics. It is clear that political action is one of the greatest impediments in the path of the coming social revolution. Only a fundamental change in the political, economic and social relationships of man, only the social revolution can accomplish what the reformists have failed to do. Nor is a social revolution in itself a guarantee that Anarchist-Communism will be realised. A social revolution can stop short of its objectives, can like a stream, be diverted from its course. The failure to understand the goal of the revolution, or a labour movement brought up in the authoritarian school trained to leave all in the hands of a bureaucratic and corrupt

leadership, can so distort the character of a revolution as to render it harmful to the further progress of mankind.

The Russian Revolution shows that despite the heroic struggle of the masses, the revolution failed to achieve its objectives – liberty and well-being for all. The Russian labour unions have become blind pawns in the hands of a party dictatorship. The masses are being ground to dust by the Communist steam roller. The revolution failed because the labour movement was unprepared. They did not understand that the delegation of power into the hand of the state meant the death of the revolution.

There is no record of any great change, any great victory of labour that was won through parliamentary means. The eight-hour day, the right to organise, the right of free speech, were the triumphs of direct action.

The early history of the American labour movement is replete with examples of militant direct action. The struggles of the Knights of Labour, the struggles of the Black International which culminated in the Haymarket tragedy, the struggles of the Western Federation of Miners, and of the I.W.W., etc., were mainly responsible for whatever progress the movement has made in America. On the other hand, what has been accomplished by the reformist American Federation of Labour? The degeneration of the modern labour movement is nowhere so apparent as in the present happenings in the Illinois coal fields. The officialdom of the United Mine Workers of America has joined the bosses and the state in crushing the revolt of the militant rank and file against the bureaucracy of the A. F. of L. What really important victory was gained without the direct economic pressure of the working class? To this question history answers – none.

In the light of the struggles and hard-won gains of the workers all over the world, the position taken by the Anarchist-Communists is basically sound and therefore fully justified.

The goal of the working class must be the social revolution. The workers must be prepared to overthrow Capitalism through a Social Revolution; must be prepared to conduct the economic life of the country when the time comes. In order to do this, they will be obliged to organise into mass movements such as industrial unions, artels, agrarian co-operatives, etc. The solidarity of the working class must be attained through the federation of autonomous bodies, instead of centralisation from the top down. The tactics must correspond to the ends in view. The masses, permeated with the revolutionary spirit, must make use of the general strike, sabotage, armed resistance, expropriation, etc. The revolutionary labour movement must become the militant vanguard who by their deeds and intelligence will show the rest of the masses how to help themselves, how to establish a new society. The militant vanguard consisting of mass organisations of

workers and peasants takes the place of the bureaucratic party and renders the state unnecessary in the transitional period.

The revolution will be successful to the extent that the workers are prepared for it. A good deal will depend upon the extent to which Anarchist ideas have permeated the social body. A period of intense propaganda and revolutionary struggle is necessary in order to influence the masses. Outside of the labour movement as such, Anarchist-Communism must be propagated among the intelligent youth through study groups, propaganda centres and through the dissemination of literature. The field of education, the

co-operative movement, the anti-war leagues, every mass organisation, must be invested with a revolutionary character. Anarchists must turn them into organs of successful social revolution.

In a very real sense, we are facing a momentous period in human history. The inevitable social revolution will determine the paths in which mankind will tread for a long time. All depends upon a correct conception of the nature of our tasks and the manner and spirit in which we approach them. "Anarchist-Communism," as Kropotkin so aptly said, "must be the goal of the revolution of the twentieth century."

For an Anarchist Policy in the Trade Unions

Sam Weiner (pen-name of Sam Dolgoff)

Vanguard: A Libertarian Communist Journal, May-June 1935

The elementary task of the Anarchist movement is to take an active, militant part in the life of the masses, to radicalise, revolutionise, nurture and encourage the revolutionary tendencies within the mass organisations, especially in the unions which are the vital organs of the masses. The effectiveness of the anarchist movement, its very existence, depends upon the extent to which the movement strikes its roots in mass life. Its effectiveness is contingent upon the degree to which the movement evaluates these revolutionary tendencies and adopts tactics in accordance with the needs of the workers.

The Anarchists reject parliamentary action. They believe that the direct action of the mass organisations can overthrow capitalism and build the new society. Contrary to the position of the authoritarian socialists, the anarchists insist that only mass organisations can reorganise society. Furthermore, the domination of these organisations by a centralised authority, state or party, is incompatible with true socialism.

This means that the anarchist movement must adopt its own policy in relation to the mass movements and must place a greater emphasis upon mass work than upon political parties.

Because of that the anarchists in the International Working Men's Association – from the time of Bakunin to the present day – realised the supreme importance of working in mass organisations. They developed a clear

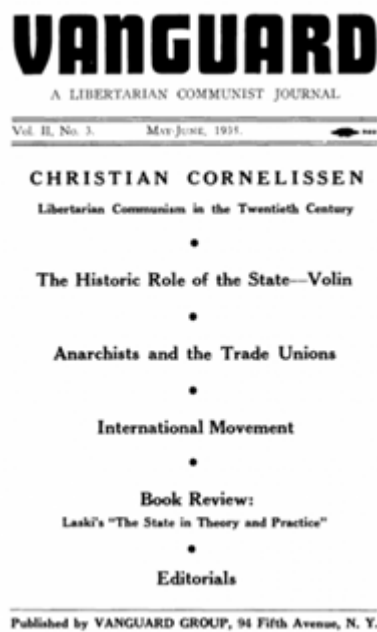
anarchist policy, and tactics in the workers organisations. The anarchist movement in America, which flourished in the period of the Chicago Martyrs (1887), played an active part in the unions. It did not lose its identity, but became the centre of attraction for the most militant section of the proletariat. The present

weakness and chaotic condition of our movement is due to the fact that the movement has left the solid ground of class-struggle and has become enmeshed in the utopian aspects of our ideal. Out of touch with the daily struggles of the masses, the movement is stagnant, is stewing in its own juice. The libertarian tendencies in the labour movement remain uncultivated; the name "anarchist" is either unknown, or what is worse, has come to symbolise a hopeless erratic visionary.

In the unions of the needle trades, as well as in other unions where the Jewish, Italian, Spanish and Russian comrades are influential, we find a most deplorable condition. The anarchists who are of necessity members in the unions are inarticulate. They have completely lost their identity. On every vital question

affecting the life of the membership the anarchist position is neither formulated nor stated. Until recently no attempt has been made to initiate discussions or develop clear-cut anarchist policies and tactics to trade union work. Little or no propaganda for anarchism is being conducted in the unions.

The membership of the unions is being mulcted by the bureaucracy of the Socialist Party, the labour fakers,



their gangsters and racketeers. The unions of the A. F. of L. are assisting in, and becoming part of the growing policy of fascisation of our economic life carried on by the government. Where are the anarchists? What resistance is being put up against them? The anarchists did not even see fit to issue a manifesto exposing the betrayers of the proletariat and calling upon the membership of the corrupt machine to reorganise the unions into true fighting organisations of the workers. What did the anarchists do in order to rally the militants in the unions for a fight against their misleaders?

When the battle between the “socialists” and the “communists” for control of the needle trades took place several years ago, the anarchists had an opportunity to show the workers the validity of their principles and tactics, to give a revolutionary orientation to the movement and point the way out for the confused workers. Because they did not take an independent position and swung their influence to the corrupt officialdom, they unwittingly became a support for the machine politicians. The anarchists were bewildered, hopelessly confused; they forgot that they were anarchists, they were unprepared ideologically or tactically to attract the militant workers, to give concrete expression to the needs of the rank and file. The above does not apply to the few honourable exceptions who fought, in vain, for an independent, consistent anarchist policy.

There is no more fertile field for the propaganda of anarchism than the labour union. The dormant libertarian tendencies of the labour movement can be revived to form the bedrock for an effective libertarian movement. There is room for an effective anarchist vanguard which will apply anarchist principles to the problems of the unions. The workers must be made to realise the following facts.

1. The bureaucratic machine of the A F. of L. must be smashed and the unions must be reorganised on the principles of rank and file control, direct action and workers democracy.
- 2 The unions are not only an instrumentality for attaining better conditions but must become the mechanism which will overthrow capitalism and take over production in the new social order.
3. The mass organisation must replace the State. Anarchists cannot take sides in the bickerings of politicians, but must expose them. The position of the anarchist must be clearly stated at all times. The lines which mark off the anarchists from the would-be messiahs and the bureaucrats must be sharply drawn.

All this cannot, of course, be realised immediately. Nevertheless, the indispensable foundations for a militant movement in the unions must be laid right now. There are:

1. The realisation that an anarchist policy in the trade unions is a necessity.
2. Anarchists in each union should form groups, work out policies and tactics for activity in the union, in order to guide them in their work.
3. There should be discussions among the members on the problems of the Labour movement in general, and the union in particular.
4. Propaganda of anarchist ideas should be carried on within the unions.

In adopting the principles of anarchism to the unions in a realistic manner, the anarchist ideals will become a vital factor in the labour movement.

Reflections on the Steel Settlement

S.W. (pen-name of Sam Dolgoff)

Views and Comments, May 1960

The article about the steel strike as a symbol of the crisis in the American Labour Movement, that appeared in our last issue, was written shortly before the settlement of the strike. The terms of the agreement and the manner in which the strike was settled have been acclaimed as a clear-cut victory by the union's president, David McDonald. However, this is not the opinion of the Rarick opposition movement which seriously challenged McDonald's dictatorship in the 1958 union elections. The opposition is planning to run a slate against McDonald in the next union elections.

Indicative of widespread dissatisfaction of the rank and file with the terms and manner of the settlement is the protest of Nicholas Mamula, president of Aliquippa

Local 1211. The reaction of the *MESA Educator*, official organ of the Mechanics Educational Society of America, indicates that this unrest is not limited to members of the Steelworkers' union. Other labour elements are wise to the conniving manipulations of the Steelworkers' pie-card artists.

While we have no illusions about the character of the Rarick opposition, its criticism of the terms and the manner of the strike settlement are correct. They explain how the 39 cent an hour increase actually amounts to 20 cents; that McDonald gave up the 4 cent cost-of-living increase due under the old agreement and that McDonald signed a contract which permits the

bosses to permanently discharge 30 men who had been fired for participating in a wildcat stoppage.

The opposition wants an accounting of the money spent during the strike for what McDonald calls “propaganda.” They also want a full explanation of McDonald’s backdoor agreement with Vice President Nixon, his sinister dealings with John P. Kennedy, big Wall Street speculator and father of Senator Kennedy. They should be interested in knowing that the *Wall Street Journal*, organ of big business, thanked McDonald for his leniency to the steel trust.

The steel settlement followed the general pattern of past negotiations. McDonald pledged that the workers would cooperate in boosting steel production. The unpleasant atmosphere that prevailed during the strike was dissipated in renewed and stronger friendship with his friends in the steel trust. Now, Nixon, the steel barons and the labour fakers are re-united. The family squabble is over. As a sign of good feeling the leaders of capital and labour have pledged themselves anew to avoid family disputes and never again to have any strikes.

In its leading editorial, the *MESA Educator* for February 1960 has this to say:

“There can be no doubt that the militant action of the rank and file members of the United Steelworkers forced a settlement on the steel companies as well as on USW President McDonald. Apparently, to avoid any such unforeseen events happening in the future, Secretary Mitchell and President McDonald are making statements that with the setting up of a tripartite committee of company, union and public members, as provided in the present contract, future strikes of the steel workers will be eliminated.

“The people involved in this settlement, and particularly USW President McDonald, should learn a fundamental and self-evident truth that,

in the unceasing struggle between labour and management, if you take away the workers’ sole weapon and abolish strikes, freedom is gone and fascism will inevitably rush in to fill the void.

“The settlement of this strike in a basic industry is a sordid one, and brings into sharp focus how deeply the labour movement is enmeshed in the cesspool of political connivance.”

The Libertarian view of the independent role of the State in relation to the other pressure groups in society was illustrated in the steel strike. We spoke of the opposition of both labour and management to compulsory arbitration. The fact of this opposition shows that the State is not as the Marxists say merely the “executive committee of the capitalist class” but constitutes a class in itself, using other classes merely to increase its own power. Nixon said:

“I don’t need to tell you that the government arbitration means government wage-fixing, and that government wage-fixing inevitably means government price-fixing. Once we get into this vicious circle, not only collective bargaining, but the production enterprise system as we know it is doomed.”

Another article in this issue emphasises our disagreement with the capitalist type of Anti-Statism. On the other hand the fact that the capitalists should for reasons of their own at times be Anti-Statist shows that the State is not a mere rubber stamp. Nixon in this respect is but echoing the sentiment of Henry Ford: “... government big enough to give us all we want is a government that can take from us everything we have.”

In the course of the class struggle, the workers must battle the unholy trinity of the capitalist class, the State, and the labour brokers who dominate most American unions today.

On Woodcock’s *Anarchism*

A Muddled History of Anarchism

Sam Wiener (pen-name of Sam Dolgoff)

Views and Comments, Fall 1963

George Woodcock’s *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements*
(New York & Cleveland, World Publishing Co., 1962)

A serious history of Anarchism in English is most timely, for there is a revival of interest in our ideas everywhere, and our English movement is growing. The author was once an active Anarchist and has written extensively on the subject. This book, therefore, is regarded as authoritative and is widely used in academic circles.

The author has made available for the first time in English historical data from French, Italian, German and Spanish sources. He gives biographical sketches of Godwin, Proudhon, Bakunin, Kropotkin, Stirner, Tolstoy and others. Woodcock discusses their ideas – correcting popular misconceptions of Anarchism which confuse Anarchism with Nihilism, bomb throwing and general chaos. He points out that Anarchism claims to

be a constructive theory for the regeneration of society and that it is destructive only insofar as it aims to remove the parasitic institutions which block progress.

A historical work reveals as much about the author's state of mind as it does about the facts which he records. A careful reading of his book indicates that Woodcock is confused. He rejects Anarchism as a practical alternative to Statism. At the same time he has not given up his objections to the State. Unable to work out a consistent viewpoint of his own, he becomes enmeshed in his own contradictions.

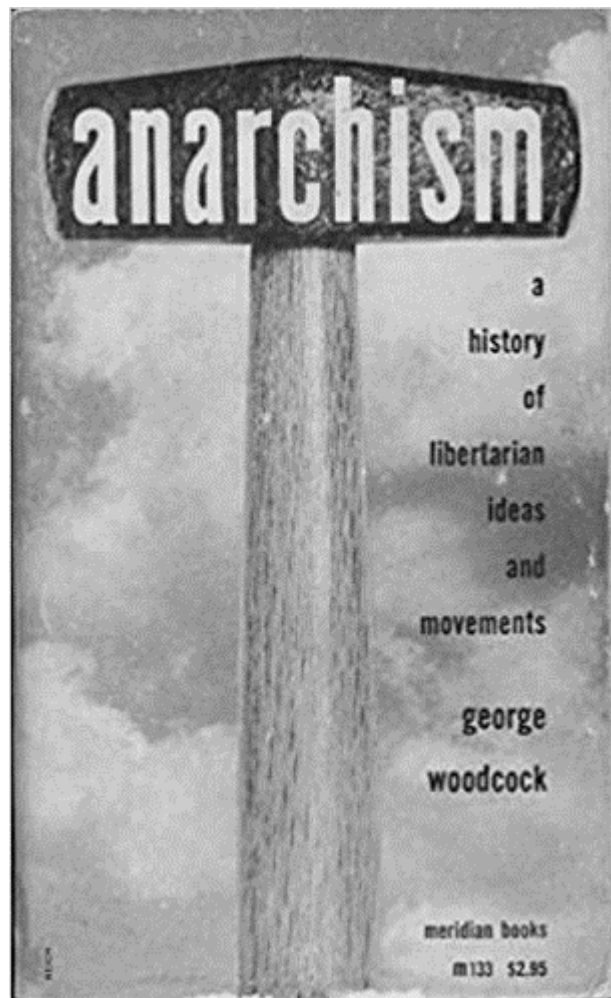
For example, Woodcock criticises the Anarchists for "the weakness of their practical proposals for the society that would follow their hypothetical revolution." Two pages later he contradicts himself: "the Anarchist movement showed a concrete aspect of libertarianism that at least sketched out an alternative to the totalitarian way." (pages 472, 474)

Woodcock devotes five pages (393-398) to the constructive achievements of the Anarchists in reorganising economic and social life during the Spanish Revolution. He even admits that "the Anarchist methods of organising economic and social relations turned out to be at least as practical as authoritarian methods." All competent observers, including non-Anarchists, are agreed that Anarchist reconstruction was more efficient than under the authoritarian nightmare and had the supreme virtue of combining good administration with freedom and equality. Woodcock also identifies Anarchist tendencies in various popular communal movements in different parts of the world.

If one wanted to demonstrate the practicability of Anarchism he would find plenty of examples in Woodcock's book – anyone – except Woodcock. He says, "Such scattered examples of constructive Anarchist efforts do not prove that a complete Anarchist society, such as Kropotkin, for example, envisaged can come into existence or that it would work if it did." (see pages 472-74-75)

Woodcock is referring to Kropotkin's *Conquest of Bread*, a work not intended to be the final blueprint of a final Anarchist society. He only wanted to demonstrate how Anarchist principles could be applied to practical problems. Nowhere does Woodcock tell *why* Kropotkin was wrong. Yet, a host of modern thinkers, including Erich Fromm, Martin Buber, Ashley Montague, Lewis Mumford, Daniel Guérin in their re-examination of socialist thought find practical alternatives to Statism in the Anarchist classics and libertarian social structures.

Woodcock again contradicts himself on the matter of anarchist participation in the Loyalist Government during the Spanish Civil War. On page 391 he correctly denounces the anarchist leaders for joining the governments of Madrid and Barcelona. This violation of basic anarchist principles led to the defeat of the revolution. Yet in the section dealing with events



leading up to the Civil War, Woodcock shows strong sympathy for the advocates of governmental collaboration as against such "extremists" as Durruti, Ascaso and other comrades of the F.A.I. (Iberian Anarchist Federation). He even slanders the consistent anarchists as "extremists who (in 1933) engineered with an almost totalitarian intolerance" the expulsion of the collaborationist faction from the C.N. T. (see page 385).

Primo De Rivera became dictator of Spain in 1923. Woodcock says that the dictator "had no prejudices against the working class as such" and then tells how De Rivera made a united front with the reformist UGT section of the working class to crush the revolutionary CNT working class movement (pages 379-80).

Woodcock stresses the point that the Aragon Front remained static primarily because the Anarchist Columns "lacked the necessary discipline and authority needed for a long war" and in the same paragraph contradicts himself by saying that the Anarchist units were "starved for arms owing to the policy of the Republican government" (pages 390-91).

"1939 marks the real death in Spain of the Anarchist movement," says Woodcock, his reason being that the Anarchists did not defend Barcelona, the citadel of Spanish Anarchism. All participants and historians without exception agree that a last-ditch defence of Barcelona would have meant suicide not only for the Anarchists but for the civilian population. The

revolution was lost and the Civil War was almost over. The people were exhausted and dispirited and could fight no longer against imminent air bombardment by the international fascist air armada. No Anarchist has the right to purchase glory by condemning unwilling people to unwilling martyrdom. Throughout his book Woodcock condemns violence and needless slaughter. Why does he reverse himself in the case of the Spanish Anarchists?

The Spanish Anarchists made many mistakes, as they themselves admit, but they cannot be charged with lack of valour. Our Spanish comrades do not need the hopeless defence of Barcelona to establish their reputation for bravery and self-sacrifice. For three years they and their comrades-in-arms withstood the might of German, Italian and Franco armies. The socialist and communist parties, who controlled the strongest sections of the European labour movement, gave no effective help from the outside and sabotaged the revolution from the inside. What died was not the Anarchist movement but the *conscience of the world*. With the defeat of the Spanish Revolution came World War II, the counter-revolution of the State, the threat of nuclear war III, and what we hope will be only the temporary eclipse of the entire socialist and humanist movements. No responsible historian has the right to ignore or underestimate this all-important phase of the situation. For Woodcock to do so indicates an almost unpardonable lack of perspective.

Woodcock makes the surprising statement that “the Anarchists who followed Bakunin and Kropotkin were political and social absolutists, and they displayed an infinite contempt for piecemeal reform or the kind of improvements in living conditions and wages which trade unions sought and benevolent employers offered” (page 472).

Woodcock devastatingly refutes himself in the chapters dealing with both the Anarcho-Syndicalist and Anarchist movements of France, Spain, Italy, England and the United States. The Declaration of Principles of the Anarcho-Syndicalist International lays the greatest stress on the importance of immediate demands. Article 3 reads: “The double task of revolutionary Syndicalism – on the one hand it pursues the daily revolutionary struggle for the economic, social and intellectual improvement of the working class within the framework of existing society....” This quote comes from the appendix to Woodcock’s pamphlet *Anarchy Or Chaos* (page 122), published when he was a convinced follower of Bakunin and Kropotkin.

Woodcock’s insinuations in characterising certain people and interpreting some events borders on vilification and outright distortion. For example:

The act of hungry workers who illegally entered bakeries and took bread for their starving families is called “pillaging and plundering” (page 304). Among

the “pillagers and plunderers” were Louise Michel and Emile Pouget.

“The fascination that Nechayev wielded over Bakunin seems to be due to a submerged touch of homosexuality” (page 172). Skilfully phrased slander.

“But it (the Haymarket bomb) would never have been thrown and Parsons and Spies would never have been hanged, if it had not been for the exhortations to violence that poured forth from Most ‘s *Die Freiheit* during the critical years 1883 and 1886” (page 464). Bullshit!

“The Spanish Anarchist tended easily to assassination” (page 375). This is a lie!

“In Barcelona there arose a whole class of *pistoleros* (hired murderers) who shifted from side to side, sometimes fighting for the Anarchists, sometimes for the employers and even the police” (page 376). This is a vicious falsehood! The Anarchists formed *volunteer* squads to protect their comrades from the assassins. These and other remarks scattered throughout the book display a bias unworthy of any historian.

The chapter on Bakunin is entitled “The Destructive Urge.” Woodcock’s caricature of Bakunin rivals E.H. Carr’s, who also did a hatchet job on Alexander Herzen and his circle. Bakunin emerges as an impractical, irresponsible eccentric, a romantic conniver, a revolutionary adventurer, bent on bloodshed and destruction. It is impossible to square this caricature with Woodcock’s statement that “Bakunin was the *builder* of the Anarchist movement” (our emphasis). While Woodcock discusses the major works of Godwin, Proudhon, Kropotkin, Stirner and Tolstoy, he does not even list Bakunin’s principal writings! Bakunin’s pre-eminent place in the history of the revolutionary movement does not rest on his personal eccentricities nor even on his revolutionary exploits. His permanent contributions to socialist thought are contained in such great theoretical, philosophic and tactical works as, *Statism and Anarchy*, *The Knouto-Germanic Empire and The Social Revolution*, *The Policy of the International*, and in his polemical debates with the foremost social thinkers of his time.

Bakunin’s ideas about the libertarian reconstruction of society are barely mentioned. Woodcock says very little about Bakunin’s devastating critique of the Marxist theories of the State and the dynamics of social change, that he was one of the pioneers of the Anarcho-Syndicalist tendency in the international labour movement, his realistic approach to the problems of agrarian revolution, his realisation that Anarchists must emerge from their ivory tower and become a movement of the people fighting with them and spreading the seeds of Anarchism among the oppressed.

There is nothing in Bakunin’s works or in his career to back up Woodcock’s preposterous charge that Bakunin

was an apostle of destruction. As in most of his book, Woodcock's own evidence clashes with his unwarranted conclusions. He says that "Bakunin extolled the bloodthirstiness of peasant uprisings." Woodcock has no quote to prove this accusation, but on the same page (15) he does quote contrary evidence from Bakunin:

"Bloody revolutions are often necessary, thanks to human stupidity; yet, they are always evil, a monstrous evil and a great disaster, not only in regard to the victims but also for the sake of the purity and perfection of the purpose in whose name they take place."

There is now a great revival of interest in the constructive ideas of Bakunin, but Woodcock's chapter on Bakunin does not even provide a basis for fruitful discussion. Even Marxist historians Like Franz Mehring and the reactionary jurist Paul Eltzbacher [in his 1900 book *The Great Anarchists: Ideas and Teachings of Seven Major Thinkers*] gave a far better presentation of Bakunin's ideas than Woodcock does.

Woodcock's indictment of the Anarchist movement is drawn up as if the Anarchists could do almost anything they pleased in any situation. But they could not create the circumstances in which they had to act. Woodcock may not like peasant rebellions, violent revolutions, the General Strike or other forms of mass action. These weapons were forged not by the Anarchists, or other minorities, but by the oppressed in the heat of struggles, as were non-violent and milder measures. The Anarchists could abstain and isolate themselves from life or they could participate and try to give a libertarian direction to the protest movements. He criticises the Anarchists for using tactics they did not invent in situations they did not create.

To condemn rebels then for making mistakes is like condemning scientists because some of their experiments failed. There can be no progress without revolt. Rejecting, as Woodcock does, almost every method of mass protest, without offering any satisfactory alternative, leads to sterility and makes impossible any kind of social advance.

Woodcock thinks that the Anarchists failed to achieve even the limited objective of weakening the state anywhere because they could not "compete" with the Marxists who were more opportunistic and knew how to win the people over to their side. What Woodcock ignores is the all-important fact that the Marxists did not achieve their objective either. In the process of becoming top-level statesmen, the Marxists had to give up their socialist principles and became the greatest obstacle to its achievement. The Marxist parties deserted the socialist movement and made common cause with its greatest enemy, the State. The Anarchists

Woodcock may not like peasant rebellions, violent revolutions, the General Strike or other forms of mass action. These weapons were forged not by the Anarchists, or other minorities, but by the oppressed in the heat of struggles, as were non-violent and milder measures. The Anarchists could abstain and isolate themselves from life or they could participate and try to give a libertarian direction to the protest movements.

and associated libertarian movements had to carry on the fight alone against the reinforced might of the State capitalist counter-revolution. Woodcock has no right to blame the Anarchist movement for refusing to purchase power at the expense of principle.

Woodcock makes an artificial distinction between what he calls "pure anarchism" and Anarcho-Syndicalism. "Pure" Anarchism is defined as "the loose and flexible affinity group" which needs no formal organisation and carries on anarchist propaganda "through an invisible network of personal contacts and intellectual influences" Anarcho-Syndicalism, on the other hand, is not Anarchistic because it needs "relatively stable organisations – because the world is only partly governed by Anarchist ideals and must make compromises with the day to day situations – has to maintain the allegiance of the mass of workers who are only remotely conscious of the final aim of Anarchism (therefore) the relative success of Anarcho-Syndicalism is no Anarchist triumph" (pages 273-274).

If these statements are true, then "pure" Anarchism is a pipe dream. Firstly because there will never be a time when everybody will be a "pure" Anarchist and humanity will forever have to "make compromises with the day to day situation." Secondly, because the intricate economic and social functions of an interdependent world cannot be carried on without stable organisations. Even if every inhabitant were a convinced Anarchist, "pure" Anarchism would be impossible for technical and functional reasons alone,

Woodcock's argumentation reveals a misconception of Anarchist theory. An Anarchist society would be a flexible, pluralistic society where all the myriad needs of mankind would be supplied through the infinite

varieties of human association. The world is full of “affinity” groups from propaganda clubs to dog fanciers. Such groups can be loosely or informally organised; they are dissolved and reformed according to the fluctuating whims and fancies of the making of goods, food, clothing, housing etc. and the rendering of indispensable public services such as transportation are ever-present necessities which must be rendered at all times without fail. These functions require stable intricate organisations. The personnel may change and the enterprises may be reorganised to meet new technological improvements and expanding social needs. A person, for example, may belong at one and the same time to a number of informal associations and a highly organised federation of post office syndicates. This is not a contradiction. It merely expresses man’s many-sided preferences and physical necessities.

The form of organisation is determined by need. There is room for all forms of organisation and everyone must be free to choose his own. The Anarchist thinkers were concerned with finding the structural basis for social, individual and collective freedom. The Anarchists favour a decentralised, federative type of organisation which will provide the necessary coordination with the greatest possible amount of freedom. Libertarian

organisation is not a deviation. It is the very essence of Anarchism as a viable social system. There is no “pure” Anarchism. There is only the application of anarchist principles to the realities of social life.

The erroneous idea that stable organisations and federations on a wide scale are incompatible with Anarchism could not appeal to the workers who need precisely this type of libertarian organisation to effect their emancipation from wage slavery and the State. The tenor of Woodcock’s book is that Anarchism is suitable only for a relatively simple society, requiring comparatively rudimentary forms of social organisation. He no longer thinks that Anarchism is applicable to modern complex industrial society which requires intricate organisation. Self-imprisoned in the “ivory tower” of fictitious “pure” Anarchism, Woodcock consoles himself with a semi-religious mystique of personal salvation.

Woodcock’s book is the political testament of a disillusioned man.

– Sam Wiener

Space limitations have made it impossible to go into Woodcock’s misinterpretations and distortions of the thought of Kropotkin and Proudhon.

Anarchism – a slanted history

Sam Wiener (pen-name of Sam Dolgoff)

Direct Action: Monthly Paper of the International Workingmen’s Association, April 1964

The ex-anarchist George Woodcock has written a 476-page book, *Anarchism – a History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements* (Penguin Books, 7s. 6d.), which we are afraid might be accepted as a reliable textbook on the subject. Valuable historical material is intertwined with factual errors and distortions. Flat statements are contradicted by equally emphatic “evidence”. More serious are the misinterpretations and distortion of Anarchist theory, as formulated by Bakunin, Kropotkin and, to a lesser extent, Godwin and Proudhon. It would take another book to straighten out the mess. We have already dealt with some objections to Woodcock’s “history” in *Views and Comments*, No. 45.

Before going into a few of Woodcock’s many theoretic falsifications, we shall cite one more glaring example of his numerous factual errors. Woodcock says :

“...the FORA (Anarcho-Syndicalist labour movement of Argentina) continued as a large and influential organisation until 1929, when it merged with the socialist UGT into the General Confederation of Workers and quickly shed its Anarcho-Syndicalist leanings” (page 426).

This statement is not true. The FORA was suppressed, militants were murdered, thousands suffered imprisonment and exile. Despite the persecutions, the FORA valiantly continued to function as an illegal

underground movement. It merged with no-one and still functions. The FORA never abandoned its Anarcho-Syndicalist principles and participated in the recent congress of the Anarcho-Syndicalist IWMA.

Any exposition of Anarchism must begin with a concise definition of terms. What is the nature of the State... Freedom... Authority... Federalism? Woodcock gives neither his own definition, nor does he clearly state what the Anarchist thinkers mean by these fundamental concepts This major defect adds to the confusion. Woodcock says :

“The dissolution of authority and government, the decentralisation of responsibility, the replacement of states and similar monolithic organisations by a federalism which will allow sovereignty to return to the intimate primal units of society... necessarily implies a policy of *simplification*” (page 28, our emphasis).

This is a theoretical error. The direct and voluntary administration of all the affairs of society by all the people demands the creation of *more* and not less organisations. Such a society is bound to be more complex. In an authoritarian society all the affairs of the people are conducted by a comparatively few highly-centralised governmental agencies. All social life is standardised, “simplified,” compressed into rigid

moulds to expedite the control of the many by the few. Soldiers and wage slaves lead “simple” lives. Everything is done for them and to them. All they have to do is obey. If they try to revolt and do things for themselves, by creating new organisations of their own, they are punished by the State. A free, pluralistic society, where all the countless needs of mankind are supplied by the people themselves through their infinite varieties of human association is necessarily a complex society. Kropotkin declares:

“The voluntary associations which to cover all the fields of human activity would take a still *greater extension* so as to substitute themselves for the State in all its functions... they (the associations) would represent, an interwoven network composed of an infinite variety of groups and federations... local, regional, national and international.” (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 1958). Woodcock finds fault with Kropotkin’s vision of Anarchist society, because it is “complexly organised” (page 221), our emphasis.

Bakunin and Proudhon envisioned a proliferation of voluntary associations co-ordinated by a vast and intricate network of federations and confederations on a global scale. Anarchists accept the fact that society is complex and is bound to become more so. Because of this, they insist that society is too complex for any centralised authority to manage efficiently and still satisfy the needs of all with freedom and equality, and that the State hampers the harmonious functioning of social life. Woodcock’s misinterpretation only reinforces the false charge of our enemies, that Anarchism will not work in an increasingly complex and interdependent world. This is, unfortunately, the theme of Woodcock’s book. That Woodcock’s brand of “simplicity” cloaks his essential reactionary, escapist ideas is demonstrated by the following quote:

“... But we would miss the essence of the Anarchist attitude if we ignored the fact that the urge toward social simplification rises not from any desire for the more efficient working of society, nor even entirely for a wish to eliminate the organs of society that destroy individual freedom, but largely from a moral conviction of the virtues of a simpler life.” (page 28)

Woodcock speaks only for himself. No Anarchist will agree that a moral life is possible without freedom. No Anarchist will sacrifice the “efficient working of society” and, above all, his freedom, in order to live the “simple life.” To attain a simple life without freedom is easy. No change in society is necessary. One can escape to a hermitage or a nunnery. Such irresponsible statements amount to the renunciation of Anarchism.

Woodcock’s criticisms of some of Kropotkin’s ideas are completely unfounded. One of the basic tenets of Anarchism is that society is natural to man. Man is

social by nature and will act co-operatively when the State and other artificial restrictions to mutual aid and freedom are removed. Woodcock objects to this. He argues that Kropotkin ignores the “... fact that when men have been conditioned into dependence, the fear of responsibility becomes a psychological disease that does not disappear *as soon as* its causes are removed” (page 206, our emphasis).

This is a typical capitalist argument. Kropotkin did not expect that men would miraculously become saints as once. What he did maintain was that, once the causes of the disease were removed, a cure would follow. The cure for mental and physical slavery is the practice and the habit of freedom. Can Woodcock suggest a better remedy?

With the exception of Stirner and Woodcock every Anarchist writer from Godwin to Malatesta and Rocker upholds the right of freely constituted associations to exert moral pressure, persuasion and public opinion to convince anti-social individuals to honour their voluntarily accepted obligations. If they refuse to do this, they are no longer entitled to receive the benefits of the association and are free to leave. Kropotkin illustrates this point. He says to a man who refuses to do his share of the work:

“If we are rich enough to give you the necessities of life we shall be delighted to give them to you. You are a man, and you have the right to live. But as you wish to live under special conditions, and leave the ranks, it is more than probable that you will suffer for it in your daily relations with other citizens.” (*Conquest of Bread*, quoted by Woodcock)

Anarchists accept the fact that society is complex and is bound to become more so. Because of this, they insist that society is too complex for any centralised authority to manage efficiently and still satisfy the needs of all with freedom and equality, and that the State hampers the harmonious functioning of social life.

Woodcock disagrees with Kropotkin He insists that moral pressure by public opinion against individuals who will not keep their agreements violated fundamental principles of Anarchism. Does Woodcock propose to abolish public opinion? If so, how? By State decree? Today public opinion is tyrannical, because it reflects the amorality of Statist society. No-one will have anything to fear from “public opinion” when it will be enlightened and inspired by the humanistic ethics of freedom, solidarity and love.

Woodcock correctly asserts that “the Anarchist movement made its earliest appearance within the First International” (page 240) and that “the Anarchist movement was his (Bakunin’s) last and only creation” (page 183). (Note : First International or International Working Men’s Association, founded 1864). The conscientious historian must, therefore, thoroughly explain the principles and tactics of the International, as worked out in its congresses. He must, above all, present a well-documented, clear and concise exposition of Bakunin’s ideas and his activity within the International. In *Anarchy or Chaos* Woodcock established the indisputable fact that the IWMA was

and still is an Anarcho-Syndicalist labour organisation, described its tactics and reprinted its Declaration of Principles. In his present work he does not do this and confines himself to a few, scattered remarks.

Woodcock devotes 38 pages, a whole slanderous chapter, to Bakunin, which he calls for no logical reason, “The Destructive Urge.” Why does not Woodcock record the facts about Bakunin’s constructive Anarcho-Syndicalist theoretical and tactical principles? There is not a single responsible historian of the socialist movement who does not recognise the enormous contribution made by the First International and the Bakuninists in the evolution of modern Anarcho-Syndicalism. Why does not Woodcock give a single quotation to establish this connection?

Anyone has the right to criticise our movement and we must learn from our mistakes when they are pointed out to us. Woodcock has the right to change his mind. But he has no right to slant his “history” of Anarchism in order to justify his defection from the Anarchist Movement.

The New Anarchism

Sam Dolgoff

Win, 1 March 1973

American anarchists do not constitute an organised movement, but rather an assortment of scattered ephemeral, ad hoc, grouplets reflecting all shades of “anarchism”, from right-wing laissez faire “libertarian capitalists” to extreme “left-wing” anarcho-individualists [sic]. They are chaotic mixture of disparate elements more agreed on what they are AGAINST than what they are FOR.

“Anarchism’s contemporary revival [writes Kingsley Martin] mostly comes from the dissident middle-class intellectuals, students and other marginal groups... who base themselves on individualist, utopian, non-working-class elements...” (*The Nation*, November 16, 1970).

While many new anarchists, unlike the laissez-faire anarchists, do not deny the link between free socialism and anarchism, they nevertheless repudiated the classical anarchism of Bakunin and Kropotkin insofar as too much emphasis was laid on the labour movement as a revolutionary force. There had always been a strong anti-syndicalist current in the old anarchist movement and the younger anarchists unconsciously echoed these views.

More recently, the anarchist David Wieck, (*Anarchy* No. 8 London, 1972) referred to how the anarchist journal *Resistance* (ceased publication in the 1950s) anticipated the ideas of the new anarchists. He recalled that: “...among the ideas generally accepted in the youthful milieu in the 1940s and early 1950s was

the...critique of Marxist and Anarcho-Syndicalist ideas of the ‘working class’...”

Wieck’s attitudes towards a number of anarchist problems are almost identical to the views held by the new generation of anarchists. Anarchism is not regarded as a social-revolutionary movement with a mass base, but as a sort of semi-religious formula for personal salvation, defined by Wieck as: “...personalist individualism... a general orientation of an individual’s life, rather than a set ideology...” Wieck’s attitude illustrates a chronic affliction which to a great extent still plagues the new anarchism: regression to primitive forms of social organisation; an infantile rejection of any form of organisation much above the level of town-hall meetings and an intimate circle of friends, now called “affinity groups”. The obvious contradiction between these ideas and an ambivalent if not permissive attitude toward dictatorial “third world” regimes (Cuba, North Vietnam, China, etc.) can only be ascribed to revolutionary euphoria and indifference to theory.

The new libertarian communes and “affinity groups” owe their existence to disappointment over their inability to shake the system by campus rebellions, demonstrations, direct confrontations with the military at induction centres, etc. Many young rebels became escapists who hoped that “The Establishment” would be gradually undermined if enough people followed their example and resigned from the system to “live like

anarchists” in communes and other “lifestyle” enclaves. Unfortunately, the same confusion and chaos which characterises the neo-anarchists in the outside world, is unfortunately duplicated within the communes themselves. The communes do not constitute a real movement. They are, in effect, petty entrepreneurs absolutely incapable of creating a true “counter-culture.”

Among many anarchists, the collapse of the New Left provoked intense discussion and precipitated a reorientation of libertarian ideas, with special emphasis on more positive,

constructive policies still to be worked out. One of the attempts in this direction is being made by the anarcho-communist ecology groups cantered around the ideas of the activist writer and speaker, Murray Bookchin, who enjoys a large following among students and New Left circles.

Bookchin’s ideas are a bridge between, or rather, a combination of utopian New Left ideas and traditional anarchism. In addition to the magazine *Anarchos*, his most important

works are assembled in the volume, *Post-Scarcity Anarchism*. Bookchin repudiates anti-social individualism and places himself squarely in the anarchist-communist camp. The economic problem under anarchist-communism would be greatly simplified and rendered altogether irrelevant by “...post-scarcity technology which will assure material abundance for ALL [Bookchin’s emphasis]...it means the...disappearance of toil...[abundance will remove] the most fundamental premises of counter-revolution, the rationale of domination...[with abundance for all] no sector of society need fear the communist revolution...”

Bookchin’s idea that the free society is impossible without abundance, which in turn depends on advanced technology and economic development, rests upon the Marxist theory of economic determinism. But the deterioration of the radical and labour movements refutes this theory. Abundance, far from promoting social revolution, leads instead to the bourgeoisification of the proletariat, converting them into the staunchest defenders of the status quo. Moreover, according to this theory, economically underdeveloped countries would be automatically excluded from making a successful

social revolution. Given depletion of natural resources, the population explosion, and the chronic poverty of 2/3 of the human race: it has been suggested that abundance, even under socialism, is not likely in the foreseeable future.

The economic proposals closely resemble Kropotkin’s ideas as explained in his *Fields, Factories and Workshops*. Bookchin assembled impressive modern evidence to demonstrate the feasibility of decentralising industry to achieve greater balance between rural and urban living and scaling down industry to manageable

proportions. From the ecological point of view, the pollution threatening the very existence of life on this planet would be largely eliminated by modern technology.

Anarchos, like all new groupings, is inclined to overstress utopistic ideas like: repudiation of the organised labour movement and the proletariat as the revolutionary class, together with the whole concept of class; “...the tragedy of the socialist movement is that it opposes class-consciousness to self-consciousness...”; glorification of the bogus “counter-culture”; etc. But while still elaborating these

familiar utopistic formulas, the *Anarchos* group, like other groups, is gradually beginning to search for more practical approaches to immediate social problems. Under such circumstances a certain amount of confusion is, of course, unavoidable.

Thus, where *Anarchos* formerly derided all such attempts, it now prints “...a comradely response to the *Anarchos* group’s article suggesting that anarcho-communists participate in local electoral politics...” Where *Anarchos* formerly maintained that decisions be arrived at by consensus, it now suggests the idea that decisions be made by majority vote. Where the form of organisation of social organisation was, in effect, limited to local general assemblies, *Anarchos* now calls for far more complex forms of organisation, rarely, if ever, mentioned before: not only federations, but federations of federations – CONFEDERATIONS. *Anarchos* favours “...confederations of municipalities...confederations of city councils...workers’ councils, food co-operatives, communes, independent and non-hierarchical trade union locals...” community organisations, etc. (all quotes *Anarchos*, No. 4, 1972)

As long as the young anarchists lived in the close atmosphere of the academic world, sheltered from direct contact with the tribulations of the workers, they approached anarchism from the purely academic plane. But they felt this need for practical libertarian alternatives most keenly when they left school to join the labour force to face altogether different and harsher problems.

While these revisions are far too simplistic to meet the problems of modern complex societies (the confederations must not go “beyond the municipal level...”) and are objectionable on other grounds, the very fact that such forms of organisation are even being considered indicates that they were made in response to the expressed needs of many young anarchists for more realistic and constructive alternative to authoritarianism. As long as the young anarchists lived in the close atmosphere of the academic world, sheltered from direct contact with the tribulations of the workers, they approached anarchism from the purely academic plane. But they felt this need for practical libertarian alternatives most keenly when they left school to join the labour force to face altogether different and harsher problems.

In search for such alternatives many young libertarians joined the IWW. Most, if not all, of the new members belong at one and the same time to both the IWW and to anarchist groups. This reorientation far from being confined to the IWW, is but one manifestation of the changing moods and ideas of serious-minded young anarchists. The better to appreciate the attitude of these militants we cite typical responses to requests for information:

“Unfortunately, the irresponsible exhibitionist ‘let’s do it in the street’ variety of anarchists themselves personify and perpetuate the false image of anarchists as ultra-individualists who are against all organisation and who are incapable of doing anything constructive. These people trapped in the myth of the ‘counter-culture’ believe that youth, they alone, can make the hippie revolution...It seems to me (although I may be hopelessly old-fashioned) that true anarchism has to be a movement of the poor and of the working-classes – not *OF*, but *FOR*. The new generations of anarchists have been coming together to study and to put into practice the real principles of working-class anarchism...Valuable experiences which could have helped us to build this new movement are lost to us because two generations separate the young from the old anarchists.

“Many of us younger anarchists were attracted to the IWW because it is the kind of an organisation that combines a libertarian approach to the working-class movement with a constructive economic and organisational alternative to the capitalist nation-state. There is

a need for a strong libertarian movement and a consciously anarchist thrust of organisers and militants who by example and intelligent educational work will render the workers receptive to libertarian ideas...the present anarchist movement is attempting to convey the ideas of voluntary cooperation and mutual aid and to translate the inspiration and example of our tradition to these new times...”

Concluding Remarks

To their everlasting credit, the magnificent struggles of the young rebels against war, racism, and the false values of that vast crime, The Establishment, sparked the revival of the long dormant anarchist and other leftist movements. In rightfully pointing out the mistakes of the new anarchists, the lasting significance of these achievements must always be taken into account.

The break in the continuity of the anarchist movement cut-off the young anarchists from the rich experience of past struggles. They were from the very outset doomed to recapitulate all the mistakes, and uncritically accept as new, all the utopistic ideas which the anarchist movement has long since outgrown and rejected as totally irrelevant to the problems of our increasingly complex society.

In two essential respects – the revolt against authority and the paucity of constructive ideas – the character of the “new anarchism” is remarkably similar to the experience of past movements. The 1848 revolution, wrote Bakunin:

“...was rich in instincts and negative theoretical ideas which gave it full justification for its fight against privilege, but it lacked completely any positive and practical ideas which would be needed to enable it to erect a new system upon the ruins of the old bourgeois setup...”
(Federalism-Socialism-Anti-Theologism)

From the disappointing, but no less valuable experience of the past ten years, many young anarchists have arrived at similar conclusions. They have come to realise the necessity for positive thinking and action. It is no longer enough to be against everything. Increasing signs point to the emergence of a constructive tendency in American anarchism, whose general orientation we have outlined in preceding paragraphs. The new anarchism is slowly maturing, but it is only beginning to emerge from its chaotic and erratic phase. It is far too early to make assessments or gauge its full impact.

In rightfully pointing out the mistakes of the new anarchists, the lasting significance of these achievements must always be taken into account.

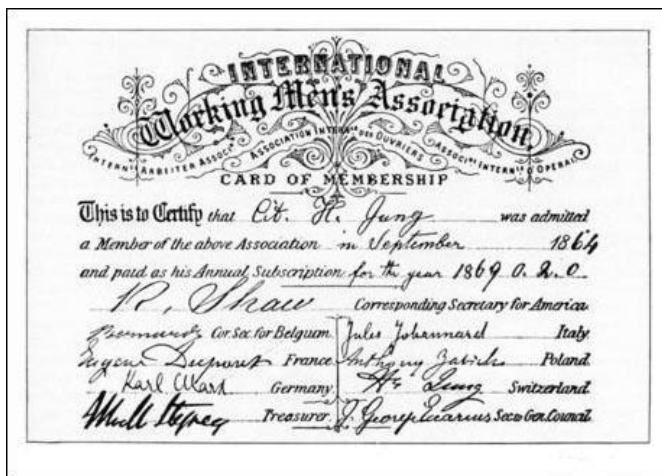
Evolution of Anarcho-Syndicalism

Sam Dolgoff

Libertarian Labor Review No. 3, 1987

1: BEGINNINGS

Anarcho-Syndicalism is not a utopia. Anarcho-syndicalist ideas, tactics, and forms of organisation gradually developed out of the daily lives and struggles of the oppressed and rebellious workers against the employing class and the State. Anarcho-Syndicalism – i.e. , self-management of industry by the workers themselves in a stateless society – rests on very solid foundations. In various forms (guilds, free communes, revolutionary unions, collectives, cooperatives and many other voluntary associations) this tendency traces back to the Communes of the French Revolution of 1789, Haymarket, the Paris Commune and other upheavals of the 1880s , the International Workingmen’s Association (First International, IWA, founded 1864), as well as the French Anarcho-syndicalist movement of the 1890s and early 1900s.



The early labour movement at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution did not, as Marx declared, consist of an “incoherent scattered mass” of ignoramuses. The labour movement of that period actually constituted a counter-society, a closely-knit network of thousands of living mutual aid and cultural associations covering all of Great Britain, including the most remote areas. All the themes stressed by modern revolutionary socialists – not only the State and political institutions, but the social and economic features of industrial and finance capitalism, law, monopoly, private property, rent, interest profit armed struggle, the class nature of workers’ struggle, etc. – were already discussed in the 1790s when the Industrial Revolution began, by thousands of articulate workers

Marx added absolutely nothing new or constructive to the legacy left by the pioneers of the socialist labour movement, formulated when Marx was still in his teens. What is more, as far back as 1833 radical workers had already formulated the basic principles of Anarcho-Syndicalism so viciously opposed by Marx in his notorious, slanderous campaign against the libertarian sections of the First International. Surprisingly enough, E.P. Thompson (himself a professed Marxist and former Communist Party member) in his well-known work, *THE MAKING OF THE ENGLISH WORKING*

CLASS, reveals that in 1833 the principles of Anarcho-Syndicalism were already formulated and quotes from a periodical of the period to prove his point:

“The trades unions will not only strike for less work and more wages, but they will eventually abolish wages, become their own masters, and work for each other... a House Of Trades will take the place of the House of Commons and direct the commercial affairs of the country, according to the will of the trades which

comprise associations of industry... It will begin in our lodges, extend to our general union, embrace the management of the trade, and finally swallow up the whole political power...” (see pages 206-207, and 829-830)

In his ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM (page 70, Italian edition, 1947), Rudolf Rocker notes that “...the idea of the General Strike was met with great sympathy by the English workers...” as

far back as 1832.

2: ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM IN THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL

In the days of the International, the radical labour and socialist Federations in Spain, Italy, Latin America, large parts of Switzerland (Jura Federation) , Belgium , Holland, France, etc., were predominantly Anarcho-Syndicalist in character, while Marxist influence, even in England, was at most minimal. Rather than relinquish control over the International, the Marxist faction, in typical communist party fashion, connived to break up the International (as Marx and Engels later admitted). Their conduct was severely criticised even by Marxist historians like Franz Mehring, Otto Rühle, Eduard Bernstein, and others .

Over a century ago, the libertarian pioneers of the First International formulated the main principles of Anarcho-Syndicalism. Eugene Varlin, member Of the French Federation Of the international, declared:

“...the social riches can be assured to humanity only on the condition that it is controlled by labour. Otherwise social wealth will be monopolised by the centralised, authoritarian State. The State will then institute a hierarchical organisation of labour from the top down in

which the worker will be reduced to the level of a cowed, domesticated animal, indifferent, without initiative and without freedom...”

The resolution of the Basle Congress of the International outlined an Anarcho-Syndicalist economic order in which the intermeshing coordination of local, regional, national and international Industrial Federations “...will take the place of the present governments, and do away once and for all with the governments of the past...”

In a major policy declaration contrasting the Anarcho-Syndicalist position as against the authoritarian attitude of the Marxist factions Bakunin -explained:

“...Just as the State is authoritarian, artificial, violent, alien and hostile to the natural interests and instincts of the people, to that same degree must the organisation of the International be free, natural, and in every respect in accordance with these interests and instincts...”

“But what is the natural organisation of the masses? It is based upon their different occupations, their daily Life , their various kinds of work, their trade organisations . Their federation in the International and representation in the Chambers of Labour not only create a great academy in which the workers of the International, combining theory and practice, can and must study economic science. They also bear in themselves the living seeds of the new social order. They are creatin not only the ideas, but the facts of the future itself...” (Protestation of the Alliance)

The anarchist dictum that power in society must circulate from the bottom up, from the periphery to the centre, should be reformulated. Power should not flow from the bot tom up or the top down for the simple reason that **THERE IS NO TOP, AND THERE IS NO BOTTOM**. Power, like the blood stream, should circulate freely throughout society, continually renewing and revitalising its cells.

3: SOVIETS

Oscar Anweiler , in his pioneering work **THE SOVIETS**, lists Bakunin and Proudhon among the theoretical forerunners of the Soviet fora of workers’ self-management; i.e., release from the State’s tutelage, self-government by cooperative producer groups, autonomy of self-regulating communes.

“...The inherent quality of soviets is driving toward the most direct, far-reaching, and unrestricted participation of the individual in public life. When applied to the collective the soviet becomes the area of self-government by the masses combined _ with the will to revolutionary transformation. the council becomes effective wherever the masses wish to

overcome feudal or centralised power... Councils took an inherently revolutionary direction... Proudhon’s and Bakunin’s concepts are closely associated with these ideas... “

4: ANARCHO-SYNDICALISM VERSUS MARXISM-Leninism

Historians concerned above all with the Marxist-Leninist character Of the Russian Revolution ignore or underestimate its Anarcho-Syndicalist tendencies. As far back as 1907 Lenin, in a draft resolution to the Fifth Bolshevik Party Congress, initiated discussion on “...the unaffiliated workers organisations in relation to the Anarcho-Syndicalist tendencies among the proletariat” . Anna Pankratava, a Bolshevik historian, deplores the fact that “in the early days of the October Revolution, anarchist tendencies were easily and successfully manifested in the first period of chaotic and primitive socialisation... The factory councils frequently took over management of factories whose owners were eliminated or fled... Similarly, at the Third Congress of Soviets (early 1918) Lenin deplored “...anarchist tendencies [which] now take on living form as self-governing communes of producers and consumers...”

The Russian Anarcho-Syndicalist G.P. Maximoff declared that “the period from February to October 1917 was in its sweep and scope a most resplendent one in anarchist and syndicalist propaganda and action... The land to the peasants! The factories to the workers! All power to the Soviets!” Maximoff documents the growth of the Anarcho-Syndicalist, self-management movement:

“...before the All-Russian Trade Union Convention, the Anarcho-Syndicalists succeeded in organising, on the platform of the IWW, between twenty and thirty thousand miners on the Debaltsev District of the Don Basin... Throughout the Novoyrossisk Province, the labour movement adopted the Anarcho-Syndicalist platform...”

“Anarcho-syndicalist periodicals in Moscow, Petrograd and twenty major cities were widely circulated and avidly read by the workers. In Petrograd, the journal **GOLOS TRUDA** and **BURAVESTNIR** each reached a circulation of 25,000... In Moscow, the daily **ANARCHIA**’s circulation was 25,000...”

Lenin told the Congress of Factory Councils (June 27, 1918) that “...we have abandoned the old methods of workers control and preserved only the principle of State control...” The attempts of the Bolshevik Workers’ Opposition faction to alter the policy of the Communist Party in favour of allowing a measure of workers’ control of industry was condemned by both Lenin and Trotsky (who urged the militarisation of labour) as a “syndicalist deviation” . The heroic

attempts to save the Revolution from its usurpers – uprisings, strikes, passive resistance – culminated in the slaughter of the gallant Kronstadt rebels in 1921 and the Makhno peasant movement in the Ukraine.

5: REVIVAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL WORKERS' ASSOCIATION (IWA/AIT)

The campaign of the Communist Party-dominated Red International of Trade Unions to infiltrate and finally capture the international libertarian and Anarcho-Syndicalist labour movement led to the reestablishment in 1921-22 of the original IWA/AIT, retaining the same principles worked out by the libertarian wing of the first IWA. Affiliated to the revived IWA/AIT were the international Anarcho-Syndicalist organisations, totalling well over six million militants.

Though almost depleted by the catastrophic rise of fascism, the sabotage and infiltration of the communist parties, the degeneration of the Social Democrat parties into the structure of modern capitalism, World War II, and the defeat of the Spanish Civil War and Revolution, the IWA/AIT miraculously survives – even making some progress.

6: CONCLUSIONS

The desire for workers' control of industry – a key principle of Anarcho-Syndicalism – is deeply rooted in the heart of the world proletariat. The movement for free Soviets (councils) which the workers and peasants of Russia fought for and which was finally crushed with

the massacre of the Kronstadt Soviet in 1921, the crushing of the workers' council movement in the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, the 1958 and magnificent Solidarity uprisings in Poland, the Czechoslovakian freedom revolts in 1968 and manifestations to this day, even in Russia itself; all included many ex-communists but would certainly be condemned by the Bolsheviks as an "Anarcho-Syndicalist deviation". There is, of course, the classic example of the Spanish Revolution of 1936-39 in which the great constructive achievements of the Anarcho-Syndicalist movement in establishing rural collectives and workers' control of industry were carried out in accordance with the Anarcho-Syndicalist principles formulated by the Libertarian wing of the First International over a century ago.

It is obvious that workers control in the true sense of that term is possible only in the kind of libertarian society envisioned by the pioneers of Anarcho-Syndicalism. Deep changes in the structure of society will have to be made, and many hard battles fought before workers' control is a reality. The class-collaborationist, politically-dominated labour organisations now thoroughly integrated into the structure of capitalism and the state cannot, and will not even begin to initiate revolutionary changes. It is imperative that we begin a wide-ranging discussion of radicalising and rebuilding the workers' movement and work out much more effective methods than have thus far been advanced. Speed the day!

Carlo Tresca Remembered

Sam Dolgoff

Libertarian Labor Review No. 6, 1989

Dorothy Gallagher, *All the Right Enemies: The Life and Murder of Carlo Tresca*, Rutgers University Press, 1988

Dorothy Gallagher's biography merits the highest praise for fusing the career of the Italian anarcho-syndicalist Carlo Tresca with the great class struggles and other social movements of the first half of the 20th century. Her work is the product of years of painstaking research, interviews with survivors who participated in the struggles, and those who knew him personally.

Tresca was a natural rebel. To escape military service and punishment for "subversive" activities he fled to Switzerland and finally emigrated to the United States in 1904. He was then a socialist (in Italy he edited the Socialist paper *Il Germe* [*The Seed*]), becoming an anarcho-syndicalist eight years later in 1912. He propagandised the cruelly



Carlo Tresca (1879-1940)

exploited Italian immigrants herded into virtual slave mining camps and steel mills in the Pittsburgh and other midwestern areas. Tresca participated in the great IWW struggles, the Lawrence, Massachusetts textile strike, the Paterson, New Jersey silk mill strike, the New York City hotel and restaurant workers strike, the great Mesabi Range iron ore miners strike in Minnesota, the demonstrations calling on the workers to avenge the Ludlow, Colorado massacre to crush the miners strike, the hunger march of the unemployed in New York, and many other no less militant struggles. In all of these struggles, as against the liberals and socialists, Tresca urged the adoption of anarcho-syndicalist direct action tactics.

Tresca's propaganda included not only purely economic issues but also attacked the priesthood, the gangsters and extortionists like the notorious "Black Hand" who came from Italy, as well as a host of other social evils. In this connection, Tresca's journal *L'Avvenire* (The Future) congratulated the parents of newborn infants who shunned baptism and pledged their children as the champions of free thought. During his lifetime Tresca was jailed dozens of times, fined, threatened with deportation, charged with offenses ranging from disturbing the peace and assault to high treason; was bombed, mutilated by an assassin armed with a razor, almost kidnapped, shot at, and finally murdered. Tresca's journal *L'Avvenire* was barred from the mails for opposing World War One and often for violating other postal regulations.

What has been mistakenly called the "Tresca Movement" was neither a party nor a movement guided by a written constitution, rules and regulations, but rather, an informal association of comrades communicating with each other through personal contacts, gatherings, correspondence, and informal exchange of views. Decisions were reached by consensus. Thus, for example, the campaign that drove the fascists from the streets of New York by assaulting their speakers and breaking up their meetings was informally launched by Tresca and his comrades.

The impression that Tresca, because of his participation in IWW strikes, was a member of the organisation is not true. When he became an anarcho-syndicalist, he became a freelancer, never a member of any labour organization. Regardless of their affiliation, he was devoted solely to the cause of the rank-and-file, the underdog. He persistently exposed the corruption, class collaboration, and dictatorship of their officials. For example, Gallagher reports that Tresca, in 1910 during the Westmoreland miners strike, proved that the officials of their union, the United Mine Workers, were in league with the coal operators.

Tresca, while proclaiming consistent adherence to anarcho-syndicalist principles, was nevertheless at times given to poor judgment in interpreting events. Gallagher cites two examples; approval of the Soviet regime and the electoral victory of the Italian Socialist Party. Ignoring the obvious fact that Russia was ruled by a ruthless Communist Party dictatorship, he maintained that the position of the Spartacists (a communist sect) and the Italian Communist Party were all in accord with revolutionary syndicalism.¹ Tresca preferred the electoral victory of the Italian Socialist Party rather than the clergy, the employer, and the government. But as in Russia, a new socialist party government, like all states, indicates not an orientation toward Socialism but to the monopoly of power.

¹ To clarify, Tresca – like most anarchists – initially supported the Bolshevik regime but – again like most

When I criticized him for associating with reformist class collaborationist unions, Carlo explained that since the practical disappearance of the IWW from the textile mills after the defeat of the Paterson strike, the Italian-speaking workers joined reformist unions like the ACW (Amalgamated Clothing Workers) and ILGWU (International Ladies Garment Workers Union), leaving him no alternative.

Tresca's organ *Il Martello* (The Hammer) was bankrupt. For him, the disappearance of *Il Martello* meant the loss of effective contact with the Italian workers. He was so constituted that without such activity he could not exist. In a revealing meeting with Luigi Antonini, Secretary-Treasurer of Italian-speaking Local 89 of the ACW, Tresca told him that his only condition for cooperation was that financial assistance be provided by the union. Antonini reminded him that he should be grateful because "*Il Martello* would not exist without me." Tresca was not employed by the union in any capacity, sought no privilege for himself and served without compensation. In return for financial assistance Tresca would collaborate – as he put it – "give my work to you."

Tresca's collaboration was accepted, not because the union leaders suddenly became anarchists, but because his influence in the Italian locals would serve to reinforce their power. To ask the dictator of a pro-state capitalist union to subsidize an anarchist journal is an illusion – an unprincipled and unworkable deviation. True to our principles, the publication of *Il Martello* should have been suspended if the funds to sustain it could not otherwise be raised.

To her credit, Gallagher documents the very important point that Tresca, in collaborating with the ACW did not sell out, did not repudiate anarcho-syndicalism but on the contrary, tried to sustain and reinforce his principles. She notes in this connection that Tresca, in opposition to the euphoric pro-Roosevelt "New Deal" policy of the reformist unions, argued that "Roosevelt was an industrial and social dictator whose attempts at reform served only to preserve the failing capitalist system," a charge that applies equally to Roosevelt's labour allies as well as Tresca's cooperation with these very same unions. Tresca trapped himself in the insoluble contradiction between collaboration and his dearest revolutionary aspirations. Notwithstanding his mistakes, his dedication to our cause never faltered.

Without reservations, Tresca endorsed the position of our anarchist communist/syndicalist journal *Vanguard*, a position based on the anarcho-syndicalist principles of the International Workers Association (IWA). Like Tresca, *Vanguard* castigated both the CIO and AFL for helping the government to regulate the labour movement into the pattern of emerging state capitalism.

anarchists – by the early 1920s he had recognised the nature of the regime and opposed it. (*Black Flag*)

The *Vanguard* fearlessly exposed the sickening duplicity and opportunism of the pro-capitalist collaborationist unions and their dictatorial conduct, gladly reprinting an article from the Italian IWW organ *Il Proletario* by fellow worker Joseph Mangano, denouncing the dictatorship of Luigi Antonini, Secretary-Treasurer of the Italian-speaking Local 89 of the ACW. We gladly accepted Tresca's offer to provide a supplementary page in English in *Il Martello*, uncensored, and with full expression of our views.

I first met Tresca in 1933 when a united front defence committee was organised to defend the militant anti-fascist Athos Terzani (an anarchist whom I first met in the "Road to Freedom" group). Terzani was falsely accused of having shot and killed his young comrade Anthony Fierro during a free-for-all battle at a meeting of the fascist Silver Shirts of America. By way of supplementing Gallagher's account, I must stress the key role of Herbert Mahler, Secretary of the IWW General Defense Committee in gathering the information needed for Terzani's release. To celebrate Terzani's acquittal and publicize the demand for punishment of the real killers, Terzani and his fiancée accepted Mahler's suggestion that they be married on the stage of Irving Plaza Hall. They were married by Municipal Court Judge Dorothy Kenyon, an event widely reported in the press and radio.

Since united front arrangements between anarchist and non-anarchist groups were successfully concluded, there was all the more reason to expect much closer cooperation between the Italian anarchist *L'Adunata* and *Il Martello* groups. From my own observation, it was the antagonistic attitude of the *L'Adunata* group and their willingness to engage in sectarian attacks against *Il Martello* which made any kind of cooperation impossible. For example, Emma Goldman severely condemned Marcus Graham, editor of the anarchist

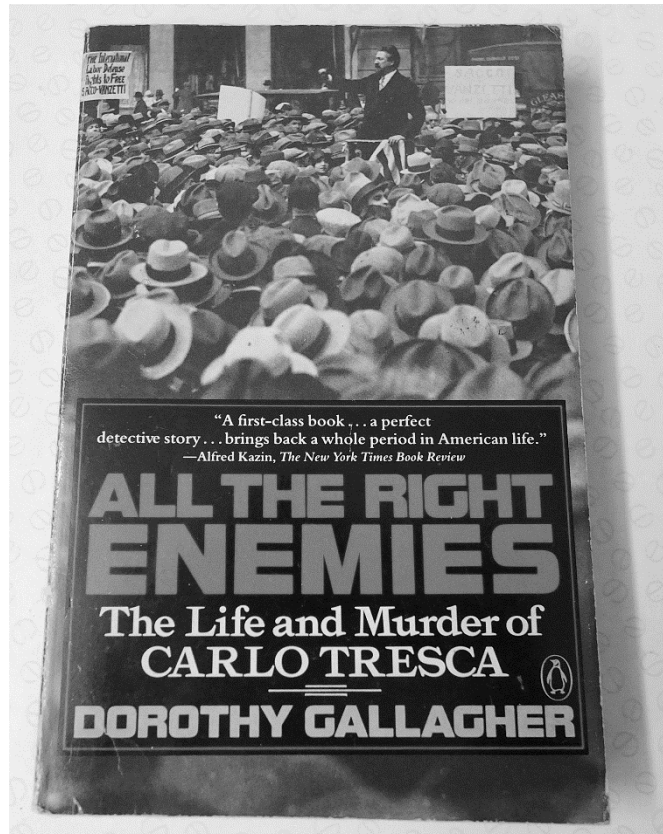
paper *Man!* for writing, and *L'Adunata* for publishing, an article full of lies and misrepresentations, even insinuating that she justified the Bolshevik crushing of the Kronstadt rebellion and Alexander Berkman attacked Graham for his "jesuitry and vindictiveness."

I spoke with Tresca on the same platform on many occasions before, during, and after the Spanish Civil War and Revolution and at no time did he display the slightest inclination to modify his anarcho-syndicalist convictions. The "pure" anarchists condemned Tresca for his friendly relations with influential politicians and individuals. But his critics ignored the fact that he used these connections to help people in need of protection, who could not cope with the byzantine governmental bureaucracy. Tresca was, so to speak, a one-man social agency. His assistance made life a little more bearable *now* for hundreds of desperate troubled people at the bottom of the social pyramid. In the words of Patrick Henry, I defy Tresca's detractors: "If this be Treason Make the Most of It."

While Tresca faithfully abided by necessary temporary agreements with different groupings, he would debate even personal friends who were political ideological opponents

at the "drop of a hat." I remember his debate with the then Trotskyite communist Max Shachtman before a huge audience in Irving Plaza Hall – the subject: Anarchism versus Bolshevism. Shachtman, a skilled debater, eloquently argued his case in fluent English. But Tresca, in spite of his halting English, in the overwhelming opinion of the audience convincingly presented the anarchist position and devastatingly refuted Shachtman's arguments.

Over forty years ago I took my place among Tresca's comrades and strewed flowers on the spot where he fell, murdered by hired assassins, paid tribute to his gallant achievements for the emancipation of the oppressed. Since then, only a few of us remain. The rest of our dear comrades have passed away. Dorothy Gallagher's biography is a fitting tribute to his memory.



"I am what I have always been – a syndicalist anarchist, body and soul with the revolution in Russia. But many new things have taken place in Russia since the time the communists in authority spoke... about the transitory dictatorship of the Proletariat. But the dictatorship is there to stay until the third revolution uproots it in the name of liberty, which today, even in Russia, groans under the heel of government." – Carlo Tresca

Voltairine de Cleyre

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Communism, August 1912

This brilliant fighter for individual freedom, who died in Chicago on June 29, was buried in Waldheim Cemetery, close to the Chicago Martyrs' Memorial. She had been an invalid for years, but her strong will kept her from giving way entirely. Recently, however, it was found necessary to perform an operation, which gave some relief; but a second operation took place, from which she never recovered.

Voltairine de Cleyre was born at Leslie, Michigan, on Nov. 17, 1869. Her father was French, and her mother American. She received an ordinary school education as a child, and from the age of, 13 to 18 was in a Catholic educational institute in Canada.

On leaving this place, and beginning the struggle for a living, the effects of her religious training soon disappeared, and at the age of 19 she began writing in a Freethought magazine, and soon became its editor, shortly afterwards making a tour of the Eastern Provinces for the American Freethinkers' Society. The eight-hour movement of 1886 and the Chicago tragedy brought her into the Anarchist ranks. She obtained a very scanty livelihood by teaching, which in recent years prevented her taking a prominent part in propaganda work. However, those who heard her lecture or read her writings know how her indignation burned at white heat when describing the wrongs and injustices of our social system. To her, the Anarchist ideal was something more than a dream of the future; it was a guide for everyday life, and not to be comprised with. Most of us can find excuses for ourselves



**Voltairine de Cleyre
(1866-1912)**

when we deviate from the straight line; but Voltairine kept herself to it unflinchingly. Writing from New York, Alexander Berkman says: "Voltairine was, without exaggeration, the greatest woman America has produced so far. Certainly the ablest and most revolutionary and uncompromising *American Anarchist*. Her death is a very serious loss to the movement"

The esteem in which she was held was shown by the crowd which assembled at the graveside, among those present being representatives of the Workers' Ring, the Bohemian Bakers' and Turners' Unions, the English, Hungarian, Czech, and Italian branches of the I.W.W., the Woman's Society "Progress" and the Jewish Cabinet

Makers' Union. Vincent St. John (Sec. of the I.W.W.), William Haywood, W. Trautmann, and others represented the militant wing of the American Labour movement.

A very large international memorial meeting took place in New York on July 1. Numerous well-known speakers paid their tribute to the memory of our comrade, and telegrams were read from various associations and comrades unable to be present.

A committee has been formed to gather and publish her works. Many poems and articles in MS. are in hand, and these, with her published works and a biographical sketch, will be issued in two volumes. Donations and advance orders showy be sent to H. Kelly, care of *Mother Earth*, 55 West 28th Street, New York.¹

To her, the Anarchist ideal was something more than a dream of the future; it was a guide for everyday life

¹ The *Selected Works of Voltairine de Cleyre*, edited by Alexander Berkman, was published Mother Earth in 1914. It was reprinted in 2016 by AK Press. (*Black Flag*)

Sex Slavery

Voltairine de Cleyre

1890

Night in a prison cell! A chair, a bed, a small washstand, four blank walls, ghastly in the dim light from the corridor without, a narrow window, barred and sunken in the stone, a grated door! Beyond its hideous iron latticework, within the ghastly walls, – a man! An old man, grey-haired and wrinkled, lame and suffering. There he sits, in his great loneliness, shut in front all the earth. There he walks, to and fro, within his measured space, apart from all he loves! There, for every night in five long years to come, he will walk alone, while the white age-flakes drop upon his head, while the last years of the winter of life gather and pass, and his body draws near the ashes. Every

night, for five long years to come, he will sit alone, this chattel slave, whose hard toll is taken by the State, – and without recompense save that the Southern planter gave his Negroes, – every night he will sit there so within those four white walls. Every night, for five long years to come, a suffering woman will he upon her bed, longing, longing for the end of those three thousand days; longing for the kind face, the patient hand, that in so many years had never failed her. Every night, for five long years to come, the proud spirit must rebel, the loving heart must bleed, the broken home must be desecrated. As I am speaking now, as you are listening,

there within the cell of that accursed penitentiary whose stones have soaked tip the sufferings of so many victims, murdered, as truly as any outside their walls, by that slow rot which eats away existence, inch-meal, – as I am speaking now, as you are listening, *there sits Moses Harman!*

Why? Why, when murder now is stalking in your streets, when dens of infamy are so thick within your city that competition has forced down the price of prostitution to the level of the wages of your starving shirt makers; when robbers sit in State and national Senate and House, when the boasted “bulwark of our liberties,” the elective franchise, has become a U. S. dice-box, wherewith great gamblers play away your liberties; when debauchees of the worst type hold all your public offices and dine off the food of fools who

support them, why, then, sits Moses Harman there within his prison cell? If he is so *great* a criminal, why is he not with the rest of the spawn of crime, dining at Delmonico’s or enjoying a trip to Europe? If he is so bad a man, why in the name of wonder did he ever get in the penitentiary?

Ah, no; it is not because he has done any evil thing; but because he, a pure enthusiast, searching, searching always for the cause of misery of the kind which he loved with that broad love of which only the pure soul is capable, searched for the data of evil. And searching so he found the vestibule of life to be a prison cell; the

Let Woman ask herself, “Why am I the slave of Man? Why is my brain said not to be the equal of his brain? Why is my work not paid equally with his? Why must my body be controlled by my husband? Why may he take my labour in the household, giving me in exchange what he deems fit? Why may he take my children from me? Will them away while yet unborn?” Let every woman ask.

holiest and purest part of the temple of the body, if indeed one part can be holier or purer than another, the altar where the most devotional love in truth should be laid, he found this altar ravished, despoiled, trampled upon. He found little babies, helpless, voiceless little things, generated in lust, cursed with impure moral natures, cursed, prenatally, with the germs of disease, forced into the world to struggle and to suffer, to hate themselves, to hate their mothers for bearing them, to hate society and to be hated by it in return, – a bane upon self and race, draining the lees of crime.

And he said, this felon with

the stripes upon his body, “Let the mothers of the race go free! Let the little children be pure love children, born of the mutual desire for parentage. Let the manacles be broken from the shackled slave, that no more slaves be born, no more tyrants conceived.”

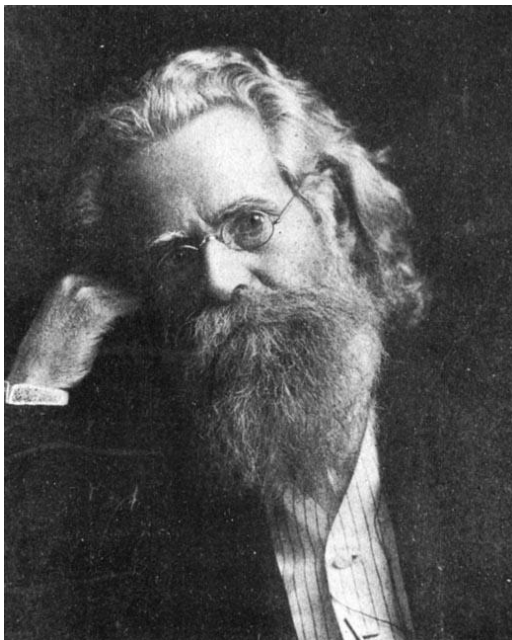
He looked, this obscenist looked with clear eyes into this ill-got thing you call morality, sealed with the seal of marriage, and saw in it the consummation of *immorality*, impurity, and injustice. He beheld every married woman what she is, a bonded slave, who takes her master’s name, her master’s bread, her master’s commands, and serves her master’s passion; who passes through the ordeal of pregnancy and the throes of travail at *his* dictation, – not at her desire; who can control no property, not even her own body, without his consent, and from whose straining arms the children she bears

may be torn at his pleasure, or willed away while they are yet unborn. It is said the English language has a sweeter word than any other, – *home*. But Moses Harman looked beneath the word and saw the fact, – a prison more horrible than that where he is sitting now, whose corridors radiate over all the earth, and with so many cells, that none may count them.

Yes, our Masters! The earth is a prison, the marriage-bed is a cell, women are the prisoners, and you are the keepers!

He saw, this corruptionist, how in those cells are perpetrated such outrages as are enough to make the cold sweat stand upon the forehead, and the nails clench, and the teeth set, and the lips grow white in agony and hatred. And he saw too how from those cells might none come forth to break her fetters, how no slave dare cry out, how all these murders are done quietly, beneath the shelter – shadow of home, and sanctified by the angelic benediction of a piece of paper, within the silence-shade of a marriage certificate, Adultery and Rape stalk freely and at ease.

Yes, for that is adultery where woman submits herself sexually to man, without desire on her part, for the sake of “keeping him virtuous,” “keeping him at home,” the women say. (Well, if a man did not love me and respect himself enough to be “virtuous” without prostituting me, he might go, and welcome. He has no virtue to keep.) And that is rape, where a man forces himself sexually upon a woman whether he is licensed by the marriage law to do it or not. And that is the vilest of all tyranny where a man compels the woman he says he loves, to endure the agony of bearing children that she does not want, and for whom, as is the rule rather than the exception, they cannot properly provide. It is worse than any other human oppression; it is fairly *God-like*! To the sexual tyrant there is no parallel upon earth; one must go to the skies to find a fiend who thrusts life upon his children only to starve and curse and outcast and damn them! And only through the marriage law is such tyranny possible. The man who deceives a woman outside of marriage (and mind you, such a man will deceive *in* marriage too) may deny his own child, if he is mean enough. He cannot tear it from her arms – he cannot touch it! The girl he wronged, thanks to your very pure and tender morality standard, may die in the street for want of food. *He* cannot force his hated presence upon her again. But his wife, gentlemen, his wife, the woman he respects so much that he consents to let her merge her individuality into his, lose her identity and become



Moses Harman (1830-1910)

his chattel, his wife he may not only force unwelcome children upon, outrage at his own good pleasure, and keep as a general cheap and convenient piece of furniture, but if she does not get a divorce (and she cannot for such cause) he can follow her wherever she goes, come into her house, eat her food, force her into the cell, *kill* her by virtue of his sexual authority! And she has no redress unless he is indiscreet enough to abuse her in some less brutal but unlicensed manner. I know a case in your city where a woman was followed

so for ten years by her husband. I believe he finally developed grace enough to die: please applaud him for the only decent thing he ever did.

Oh, is it not rare, all this talk about the preservation of morality by marriage law! O splendid carefulness to preserve that which you have not got! O height and depth of purity, which fears so much that the children will not know who their fathers are, because, forsooth, they must rely upon their mother’s word instead of the hired certification of some priest of the Church, or the Law! I wonder if the children would be improved to know what their fathers have done. I would rather, much rather, not know who my father was than

know he had been a tyrant to my mother. I would rather, much rather, be illegitimate according to the statutes of men, than illegitimate according to the unchanging law of Nature. For what is it to be legitimate, born “according to law”? It is to be, nine cases out of ten, the child of a man who acknowledges his fatherhood simply because he is forced to do so, and whose conception of virtue is realised by the statement that “a woman’s duty is to keep her husband at home;” to be the child of a woman who cares more for, the benediction of Mrs. Grundy than the simple honour of her lover’s word, and conceives prostitution to be purity and duty when exacted of her by her husband. It is to have Tyranny as your progenitor, and slavery as your prenatal cradle. It is to run the risk of unwelcome birth, “legal” constitutional weakness, morals corrupted before birth, possibly a murder instinct, the inheritance of excessive sexuality or no sexuality, either of which is disease. It is to have the value of a piece of paper, a rag from the tattered garments of the “Social Contract,” set above health, beauty, talent or goodness; for I never yet had difficulty in obtaining the admission that illegitimate children are nearly always prettier and brighter than others, even from conservative women. And how supremely disgusting it is to see them look from their

own puny, sickly, lust-born children, upon whom he the chain-traces of their own terrible servitude, look from these to some healthy, beautiful “natural” child, and say, “What a pity its *mother* wasn’t virtuous!” Never a word about *their* children’s fathers’ virtue, they know too much! Virtue! Disease, stupidity, criminality! What an *obscene* thing “virtue” is!

What is it to be illegitimate? To be despised, or pitied, by those whose spite or whose pity isn’t worth the breath it takes to return it. To be, possibly, the child of some man contemptible enough to deceive a woman; the child of some woman whose chief crime was belief in the man she loved. To be free from the prenatal curse of a stave mother, to come into the world without the permission of any law-making set of tyrants who assume to corner the earth, and say what terms the unborn must make for the privilege of coming into existence. This is legitimacy and illegitimacy! Choose.

The man who walks to and fro in his cell in Lansing penitentiary tonight, this vicious man, said: “The mothers of the race are lifting their dumb eyes to me, their scaled lips to me, their agonising hearts to me. They are seeking, seeking for a voice! The unborn in their helplessness, are pleading from their prisons, pleading for a voice! The criminals, with the unseen ban upon their souls, that has pushed them, pushed them to the vortex, out of their whirling hells, are looking, waiting for a voice! *I will be their voice.* I will unmask the outrages of the marriage-bed. I will make known how criminals are born. I will make one outcry that shall be heard, and let what will be, *be!*” He cried out through the letter of Dr. Markland, that a young mother lacerated by unskilful surgery in the birth of her babe, but recovering from a subsequent successful operation, had been stabbed, remorselessly, cruelly, brutally stabbed, not with a knife, but with the procreative organ of her husband, stabbed to the doors of death, and yet there was no redress!

And because he called a spade a spade, because he named that organ by its own name, so given in Webster’s dictionary and in every medical journal in the country, because of this Moses Harman walks to and fro in his cell tonight. He gave a concrete example of the effect of sex slavery, and for it he is imprisoned. It remains for us now to carry on the battle, and lift the standard where they struck him down, to scatter broadcast the knowledge of this crime of society against

a man and the reason for it; to inquire into this vast system of licensed crime, its cause and its effect, broadly upon the race. The cause! Let Woman ask herself, “Why am I the slave of Man? Why is my brain said not to be the equal of his brain? Why is my work not paid equally with his? Why must my body be controlled by my husband? Why may he take my labour in the household, giving me in exchange what he deems fit? Why may he take my children from me? Will them away while yet unborn?” Let every woman ask.

There are two reasons why, and these ultimately reducible to a single principle – the authoritarian, supreme power, *God*-idea, and its two instruments, the Church – that is, the priests, – and the State – that is, the legislators).

From the birth of the Church, out of the womb of Fear and the fatherhood of Ignorance, it has taught the inferiority of woman. In one form or another through the various mythical legends of the various mythical creeds, runs the undercurrent of the belief in the fall of man through the persuasion of woman, her subjective condition as punishment, her natural vileness, total depravity, etc.; and from the days of Adam until now the Christian Church, with which we live specially to deal, has made *woman* the excuse, the scapegoat

So pickled is the male creation with the vinegar of Authoritarianism, that even those who have gone further and repudiated the State still cling to the god, Society as it is, still hug the old theological idea that they are to be “heads of the family”

for the evil deeds of *man*. So thoroughly has this idea permeated Society that numbers, of those who have utterly repudiated the Church, are nevertheless soaked in this stupefying narcotic to true morality. So pickled is the male creation with the vinegar of Authoritarianism, that even those who have gone further and repudiated the State still cling to the god, Society as it is, still hug the old theological idea that they are to be “heads of the family” – to that wonderful formula “of simple proportion” that “Man is the head of the Woman even as Christ is the head of the Church.” No longer than a week since, an Anarchist (?) said to me, “I will be boss in my own house” – a “Communist-Anarchist,” if you please, who doesn’t believe in “*my* house.” About a year ago a noted libertarian speaker said, in my presence, that his sister, who possessed a fine voice and had joined a concert troupe, should “stay at home with her children; that is *her place.*” The old Church idea! This man was a Socialist, and since an Anarchist; yet his highest idea for woman was serfhood to husband and children, in the present mockery called “home.” Stay at home, ye malcontents! Be patient, obedient,

submissive! Darn our socks, mend our shirts, wash our dishes, get our meals, wait on us and *mind the children!* Your fine voices are not to delight the public nor yourselves; your inventive genius is not to work, your fine art taste is not to be Cultivated, your business facilities are not to be developed; you made the great mistake of being born with them, suffer for your folly! You are *women*, therefore housekeepers, servants, waiters, and child's nurses!

At Macon, in the sixth century, says August Bebel, the fathers of the Church met and proposed the decision of the question, "has woman a soul?" Having ascertained that the permission to own a nonentity wasn't going to injure any of their parsnips, a small majority vote decided the momentous question in our favour. Now, holy fathers, it was a tolerably good scheme on your part to offer the reward of your pitiable "salvation or damnation" (odds in favour of the latter) as a bait for the hook of earthly submission; it wasn't a bad sop in those days of faith and ignorance. But fortunately fourteen hundred years have made it stale. You, tyrant radicals (?), have no heaven to offer, – you have no delightful chimeras in the form of "merit cards;" you have (save the mark) the respect, the good offices, the smiles – of a slave-holder! This in return for our chains! Thanks!

The question of souls is old – we demand our bodies, now. We are tired of promises, God is deaf, and his church is our worst enemy. Against it we bring the charge of being the moral (or immoral) force which lies behind the tyranny of the State. And the State has divided the loaves and fishes with the Church, the magistrates, like the priests take marriage fees; the two fetters of Authority have gone into partnership in the business of granting patent-rights to parents for the privilege of reproducing themselves, and the State cries as the Church cried of old, and cries now: "See how we protect women!" The State has done more. It has often been said to me, by women with decent masters, who had no idea of the outrages practiced on their less fortunate sisters, "Why don't the wives leave?"

Why don't you run, when your feet are chained together? Why don't you cry out when a gag is on your lips? Why don't you raise your hands above your head when they are pinned fast to your sides? Why don't you spend thousands of dollars when you haven't a cent in

your pocket? Why don't you go to the seashore or the mountains, you fools scorching with city heat? If there is one thing more than another in this whole accursed tissue of false society, which makes me angry, it is the asinine stupidity which with the true phlegm of impenetrable dullness says, "Why don't the women leave!" Will you tell me where they will go and what they shall do? When the State, the legislators, has given to itself, the politicians, the utter and absolute control of the opportunity to live; when, through this precious monopoly, already the market of labour is so overstocked that workmen and workwomen are cutting each others' throats for the dear privilege of serving their lords; when girls are shipped from Boston to the south and north, shipped in carloads, like cattle, to fill the dives of New Orleans or the lumber-camp hells of my own state (Michigan), when seeing and hearing these things reported every day, the proper prudes exclaim, "Why don't the women leave?," they simply beggar the language of contempt.

When America passed the fugitive slave law compelling men to catch their fellows more brutally than runaway dogs, Canada, aristocratic, un-republican Canada, still stretched her arms to those who might reach tier. But there is no refuge upon earth for the enslaved sex. Right where we are, there we must dig our trenches, and win or die.

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This, then, is the tyranny of the State; it denies, to both woman and man, the right to earn a living, and rants it as a privilege to a favoured few who for that favour must pay ninety per cent toll to the granters of it. These two things, the mind domination of the Church, and the body domination of the State are the causes of Sex Slavery.

First of all, it has introduced into the world the constructed crime of obscenity: it has set up such a peculiar standard of morals that to speak the names of the sexual organs is to commit the most brutal outrage. It reminds me that in your city you have a street called "Callowhill." Once it was called Gallows' Hill, for the elevation to which it leads, now known as "Cherry Hill," has been the last touching place on earth for the feet of many a victim murdered by the Law. But the sound of the word became too harsh; so they softened it, though the murders are still done, and the black shadow of the Gallows still hangs on the City of Brotherly Love. Obscenity has done the same; it has placed virtue in the shell of an idea, and labelled all "good" which

dwells within the sanction of Law and respectable (?) custom; and all bad which contravenes the usage of the shell. It has lowered the dignity of the human body, below the level of all other animals. Who thinks a dog is impure or obscene because its body is not covered with suffocating and annoying clothes? What would you think of the meanness of a man who would put a skirt upon his, horse and compel it to walk or run with such a thing impeding its limbs? Why, the "Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals" would arrest him, take the beast from him, and he would be sent to a lunatic asylum for treatment on the score of an *impure* mind. And yet, gentlemen, you expect your wives, the creatures you say you respect and love, to wear the longest skirts and the highest necked clothing, in order to conceal the *obscene human body*. There is no society for the prevention of cruelty to women. And you, yourselves, though a little better, look at the heat you wear in this roasting weather! How you curse your poor body with the wool you steal from the sheep! How you punish yourselves to sit in a crowded house with coats and vests on, because dead Mme. Grundy is shocked at the "vulgarity" of shirt sleeves, or the naked arm!

Look how the ideal of beauty has been marred by this obscenity notion. Divest yourselves of prejudice for once. Look at some fashion-slaved woman her waist surrounded by a high-board fence called a corset, her shoulders and hips angular from the pressure above and below, her feet narrowest where they should be widest, the body fettered by her everlasting prison skirt, her hair fastened tight enough to make her head ache and surmounted by a thing of neither sense nor beauty, called a hat, ten to one a hump upon her back like a dromedary, – look at her, and then imagine such a thing as that carved in marble! Fancy a statue in Fairmount Park with a corset and bustle on. Picture to yourselves the image of the *equestrienne*. We are permitted to ride, providing we sit in a position ruinous to the horse; providing we wear a riding-habit long enough to hide the obscene human foot, weighed down by ten pounds of gravel to cheat the wind in its free blowing, so running the risk of disabling ourselves completely should accident throw us from the saddle. Think how we swim! We must even wear clothing in the water, and run the gauntlet of derision, if we dare battle in the surf minus stockings! Imagine a fish trying to make headway with a water-soaked flannel garment upon it. Nor are you yet content. The vile standard of obscenity even kills the little babies with clothes. The human race is murdered, horribly, "in the name of" Dress.

And in the name of Purity what lies are told! What queer morality it has engendered. For fear of it you dare not tell your own children the truth about their birth; the most sacred of all functions, the creation of a human being, is a subject for the most miserable falsehood. When they come to you with a simple, straightforward question, which they have a right to ask, you say, "Don't ask such questions," or tell some silly hollow-

log story; or you explain the incomprehensibility by another – God! You say "God made you." You know you are lying when you say it. You know, or you ought to know, that the source of inquiry will not be dammed up so. You know that what you Could explain purely, reverently, rightly (if you have any purity in you), will be learned through many blind gropings, and that around it will be cast the shadow-thought of wrong, embryo'd by your denial and nurtured by this social opinion everywhere prevalent. If you do not know this, then you are blind to facts and deaf to Experience.

Think of the double social standard the enslavement of our sex has evolved. Women considering themselves very pure and very moral, will sneer at the street-walker, yet admit to their homes the very men who victimised the street-walker. Men, at their best, will pity the prostitute, while they themselves are the worst kind of prostitutes. Pity yourselves, gentlemen – you need it!

How many times do you see where a man or woman has shot another through jealousy! The standard of purity has decided that it is right, "it shows spirit," "it is justifiable" to – murder a human being for doing exactly what you did yourself, – love the same woman or same man! Morality! Honour! Virtue! Passing from the moral to the physical phase, take the statistics of any insane asylum, and you will find that, out of the different classes, unmarried women furnish the largest one. To preserve your Cruel, Vicious, indecent standard of purity (?) you drive your daughters insane, while your wives are killed with excess. Such is marriage. Don't take my word for it; go through the report of any asylum or the annals of any graveyard.

Look how your children grow up. Taught from their earliest infancy to curb their love natures – restrained at every turn! Your blasting lies would even blacken a child's kiss. Little girls must not be tomboyish, must not go barefoot, must not climb trees, must not learn to swim, must not do anything they desire to do which Madame Grundy has decreed "improper." Little boys are laughed at as effeminate, silly girl-boys if they want to make patchwork or play with a doll. Then when they grow up, "Oh! Men don't care for home or children as women do!" Why should they, when the deliberate effort of your life has been to crush that nature out of them. "Women can't rough it like men." Train any animal, or any plant, as you train your girls, and it won't be able to rough it either. Now *will* somebody tell me why either sex should hold a corner on athletic sports? Why any child should not have free use of its limbs?

These are the effects of your purity standard, your marriage law. This is your work – look at it! Half your children dying under five years of age, your girls insane, your married women walking corpses, your men so bad that they themselves often admit that *Prostitution holds against PURITY a bond of indebtedness*. This is the beautiful effect of your god, Marriage, before which

Natural Desire must abase and belie itself.
Be proud of it!

Now for the remedy. It is in one word, the only word that ever brought equity anywhere – LIBERTY! Centuries upon centuries of liberty is the only thing that will cause the disintegration and decay of these pestiferous ideas. Liberty was all that calmed the blood-waves of religious persecution! You cannot cure serfhood by any other substitution. Not for you to say “in this way shall the race love.” Let the race *alone*.

Will there not be atrocious crimes? Certainly. He is a fool who says there will not be. But you can’t stop them by committing the arch-crime and setting a block between the spokes of Progress-wheels. You will never get right until you start right.

As for the final outcome, it matters not one iota. I have my ideal, and it is very pure, and very sacred to me. But yours, equally sacred, may be different and we may both be wrong. But certain am I that with free contract, that form of sexual association will survive which is best adapted to time and place, thus producing the highest evolution of the type. Whether that shall be monogamy, variety, or promiscuity matters naught to us; it is the business of the future, to which we dare not dictate.

For freedom spoke Moses Harman, and for this he received the felon’s brand. For this he sits in his cell tonight. Whether it is possible that his sentence be shortened, we do not know. We can only try. Those who would help us try, let me ask to put your signatures to this simple request for pardon addressed to Benjamin Harrison. To those who desire more fully to inform themselves before signing, I say: Your conscientiousness is praiseworthy – come to me at the close of the meeting and I will quote the exact language of the Markland letter. To those extreme Anarchists who cannot bend their dignity to ask pardon for an offense not committed, and of an authority they cannot recognise, let me say: Moses Harman’s back is bent, low bent, by the brute force of the Law, and though I would never ask anyone to bow for himself, I can ask it, and easily ask it, for him who fights the slave’s battle. Your dignity is criminal; every hour behind the bars is a seal to your partnership with Comstock. No one can hate petitions worse than I, and no one has less faith in them than I. But for my champion I am willing to try any means that invades no other’s right, even though I have little hope in it.

If, beyond these, there are those here to-night who have ever forced sexual servitude from a wife, those who have prostituted themselves in the name of Virtue, those who have brought diseased, immoral or unwelcome

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children to the light, without the means of provision for them, and yet will go from this ball and say, “Moses Harman is an unclean man – a man rewarded by just punishment,” then to *you* I say, and may the words ring deep within your ears UNTIL YOU DIE: Go on! Drive your sheep to the shambles! Crush that old, sick, crippled man beneath your juggernaut! In the name of Virtue, Purity and Morality, do it! In the names of God, Home, and Heaven, do it! In the name of the Nazarene who preached the golden rule, do it! In the names of Justice, Principle, and Honour, do it! In the names of Bravery and Magnanimity put yourself on the side of the robber in the government halls, the murderer in the political convention, the libertine in public places, the whole brute force of the police, the constabulary, the court, and the penitentiary, to persecute one poor old man who stood alone against your licensed crime! Do it. And if Moses Harman dies within your “Kansas Hell,” be satisfied *when you have murdered him!* Kill him! And you hasten the day when the future shall bury you ten thousand fathoms deep beneath its curses. Kill him! And the stripes upon his prison clothes shall lash you like the knout! Kill him! And the insane shall glitter hate at you with their wild eyes, the unborn babes shall cry their blood upon you, and the graves that you have filled in the name of Marriage, shall yield food for a race that will pillory you, until the memory of your atrocity has become a nameless ghost, flitting with the shades of Torquemada, Calvin and Jehovah over the horizon of the World!

Would you smile to see him dead? Would you say, “We are rid of this obscenist?” Fools! The corpse would laugh at you from its cold eyelids! The motionless lips would mock, and the solemn hands, the pulseless, folded hands, in their quietness would write the last indictment, which neither time nor you can efface. Kill him! And you write his glory and your shame! Moses Harman in his felon stripes stands far above you now, and Moses Harman *dead* will live on, immortal in the race he died to free! Kill him!

November Eleventh

Voltaire de Cleyre

Free Society, 26 November 1899

Greater love hath no man known than this, that he give up his life for his friend.

We are they to whom was given that uttermost of love – we, into whose ears there came a crying through the wilderness of poverty and shame and pain, a wind through the desert from the Land of Promise; voices that said:

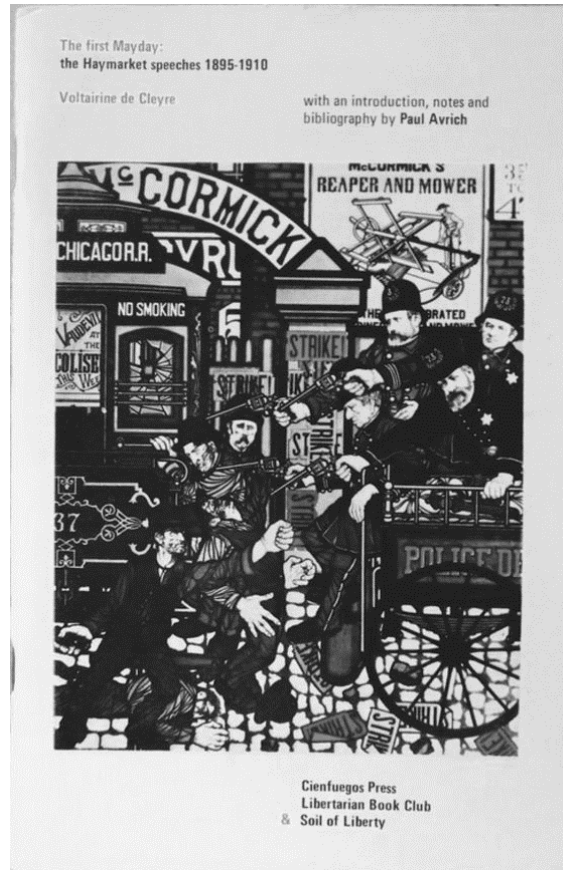
‘It is not right that you should hunger, it is not just that you should be denied one of the glories of this earth. The world is wide: it is not reason that you should bury yourselves in a narrow den and see the earth from behind a cave mouth, while a bird that you could grasp in your hand, so, is free to cross the continent and pick its food where it lists. It is not fairness that the thing you have made should be taken from you by the hand that did not make it, and you be left with nothing but the smut and smell and memory of the torture of its making. It is insane that men should rot for want of things and things for want of men; insane that millions of creatures should huddle together till they choke while millions of acres of land lie desolate; insane that one should pour down his throat the labour of hundreds in a single night, and those hundreds always near the gateway of famine. It is criminal to believe that the mass of us are to be dumb animals, with nothing before us all our lives but eating, sleeping and toiling at the best, with all the light and loveliness of nature and of art an unknown realm of delight to us to which we may look only as the outcast at Eden. It is stupid to allege, still more stupid to believe, that you who are able to do all the hard things of this world, to burrow and dig and hammer and build, to be cramped and choked and beaten and killed for others, are not able to win all for yourselves.

‘You are not helpless if you do not will to be, you workers who labour and do not share; you need not be the ever-tricked dupes of politicians, who promise what it is not in their power to perform, and perform what their buyers order them to; you have only to learn your own power to help yourselves, only to learn the

solidarity of the interests of all those who work, only to learn to trust yourselves to take your rights, by no indirection, through no intermediary, but openly on the spot where they are denied from the one who denies them – and having taken, keep. The wealth and the love and the beauty of this earth are yours, when you are ready to take them; you are no beggars at your brothers’ table: children of one plenteous board, there is enough for all and none need want.

‘Do they tell you to look to the kingdom of God? We tell you to look to the kingdom of this world; for, verily, men have looked long enough to *post mortem* justice, and thereby only supported another injustice, the trade in salvation, and buying and selling of heaven. They tell you there have always been rich and poor, and that what has always been always must be. It is not true that there have always been rich and poor; neither is it true that what has always been must always be. Men and the societies of men are creatures of their conditions, responsive to the pressure upon them from without, like all other things, and not only liable to change but bound to change. Every age finds its own adjustment. There have been times and places wherein all men were poor, as

we should think them now, yet no injustice done, for all shared alike. There have been whole races of men with indefinite history behind them, who never knew mine and thine. They have passed away, people and system together, with the method of making a living. And Property, with all its varying forms of attendant slavery, has come into existence in response to the irresistible demand for a change to suit new methods of production – and as it had to come so it will have to go. It is impossible it should continue; for under this plethora of products turned out by the newer methods, Property has lost its power to balance Man and the Thing. Shoved out by the tireless, flying steel hands, piled in great masses, products accumulate; the toiler at the base is flattened under the weight which Property makes it impossible to distribute. The mountain of riches crushes its creator; men and things alike waste. It *cannot* go on. The dead weight cannot forever press down the living



energy: in the end distribution must come. Out from its burrow comes writhing a distorted, mangled, bruised, and bleeding figure – misshapen, ugly, black, covered with hell-light: suffocated, gasping, it struggles on to its feet at last, wipes the blood and sweat out of its eyes, gives a wild stare at this mountain of gold and glass and glitter it has made, catches a brief vision of the dwellers on the mountain, and with a mad cry leaps upon the thing to destroy it. He is a giant still: has he not, down there in the underground, been through the blows that temper and fires that try? Maimed and lamed, there is brawn in him yet; seared and numbed he can yet feel for a white throat. The hand that hammered the bolts has a wild grasp in it still, that lays hold and wrenches apart more desperately than it put together. The mountain is levelled, and – *he begins again.*

'He is the Revolution, and he is a fool. For he will need to make and destroy, make and destroy, until he destroys the institution which makes accumulation possible. He! Why 'he'? You, working people, you are that fool. You are he who scoops the sea and dies in the desert for a cup of water. You are he who piles that mountain of wealth, and finds nothing better to do with it when it crushes him thereafter than to set fire to it.

'But listen, Fool, there is something better for you. This thing, Property, is not the final word of the human intellect with regard to the distribution of wealth. Beyond the smoke-edge of this frightful battle of Man and Machine, what lies? The ideal of Communism: perpetual freedom of access to natural sources of wealth, never to be denied by Man to his brother Man. Perpetual claim on the common wealth of the ages, never to be denied to the living by the dead. Perpetual claim upon the satisfactions of all common needs of the human body, never to be denied to the living *by the living*. Beyond the smoke wreath of the battle, what lies? Days of labour that are sweet, men and women doing the work that nature calls them to, that in which they delight – labouring at a *chosen* service, not one into which they have been forced; working and resting at reasonable hours, sleeping when the earth sleeps, not driven out into the darkness, like an unloved child, to turn night into day, and cripple the overdriven body by unnatural hours of pleasure stolen from sleep. Chosen toil, room, recreation, sleep – these, poor outcast animal, Man, are to be yours! Beyond the smoke-rim of the battle, what lies? The death of cities, the people resurgent upon the land, the desert blossoming into homes, the air and light

of nature once more sending their strength through nerve and vein, and with it the lost power to feel the joy of existence, the realisation that one is something more than flesh to feed and sleep – a creature of colours and sounds and lights, with as keen an ear for a bird's song, as ready an eye for a tint of cloud, as any woodsman in the older days; a creature with as fine a taste for pictures and books and statuary and music, ay, and with a hand to execute them too, as any man who lives today upon your sweat, buys his library with your dribbled blood, and condenses the flesh that has vanished from your bones into the marble which adorns his alcoves.

'Beyond the smoke-haze of the battle, what lies? Life, life! Not *existence* – life, that has been denied to you, life that has ever been reserved to your masters, the broad world and all its pleasant places, and all its pleasant things.'

This was the cry that came to us, and we listened and heard. We followed the crying voices through these wildernesses of brick and stone; for it was a fair hope, and who would not wish to dream it true? None but the masters, and they were afraid; they clamoured for suppression of the voices; 'Let not these work-cattle of

ours get this vision of Man,' they said, 'else they will cease to be beasts, and we...?'

And that demand for suppression produced the Haymarket bomb. Let it be said here and now, in the city of the event, in the teeth of those that compassed the death of five men whose sin was to have prophesied a nobler life, to be born even through blood and pain after the manner of all birth, that the time has gone past when one should stand and say, as has been said in the past, that 'the Haymarket bomb was a police plot'. The police never plotted anything half so just! The Haymarket bomb was the defence of a man who stood

upon the constitutional declaration that the right of free speech, and the right of the people peaceably to assemble, shall not be abridged. Worker or non-worker, Anarchist or Archist, that man acted as an American constitutionalist; and if ever in this world an act of violence was just, that bomb was just. Every policeman wounded by that bomb was the victim of the treasonable order of Inspector Bonfield. At his door, and the door of the masters he served, lies the blood of Mathias Degan and his fellows'.

But did they care, they who had been waiting their opportunity, whose was the act? Did they care for the

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dead policemen, whose names they used to hang their black, lying charge upon? Not they. They cared no more for the ‘hounds of the law’, thus sacrificing to a violation of law, than they cared for the undiscovered hand that threw the bomb. They cared only for the crying voices that threatened them with the New Time. They set themselves to do those men to death, and they did it. What need to repeat here the history of that black crime called ‘The Trial of the Chicago Anarchists’? Is it not fresh in all our minds how the ‘jury of peers’ was chosen from the ruling class – not one single ‘peer’ of the accused among them all? Has not the highest official authority in the State of Illinois told with legal dispassion how every one of these jurymen admitted before he began that he was prejudiced, and how each was so tampered with and twisted by the ruling judge that the lie think I can be fair’ was wrung out of their mouths? Do we not remember how Grinnell boasted to Mr Favor that he had packed the jury to hang? Are not that dead wretch’s words yet in our ears, saying ‘Anarchy is on trial’? Was it not openly avowed to all the world that here, in this country, founded as the asylum of opinions, men were being sentenced to death for their opinions? Have we not today admission coming in from every quarter, such as this from the November number of the *Century Magazine*:

As to miscarriages of justice have there been no cases where groups of men among our most disinterested citizens, moved by misinformation or touched by pride or influenced by false notions of ‘honour’ have stood up on the side of falsehood and worked sad injustice to men of conscience who spoke the truth and feared not? At least one such *cause celebre* has not quite passed out of the memory of the living.

‘Sad injustice to men of conscience’! This bit of justice comes a little late for the men who are dead. Yet it is an admission.

Of all the political trials that ever outraged the forms even of legal justice to say nothing of the spirit, it has remained to republics to give the worst. If the Czar of Russia wishes an example of despotism, let him look to America. Here it is that we shoot men for marching on the highway and hang them for preaching ideas.

Yes, it is all fresh in our memories – fresh as that bitter November day twelve years ago when Parsons, Fischer, Engel, Spies waited within for the signal of doom, while without a helpless mother and wife plead for the keeping of a broken promise to the heartless cordon of the ‘law’ around the sullen hole of death; plead for the last clasp of the hand that in an hour could clasp no more, the last look from the eyes that would die and never know whose promise it was that had been broken; fresh as the memory of the singing voice that went up in the night and gloom calling sweetly, ‘she’s a’ the world to me’; fresh as the memory of the lifted hand and the voice repeating,

This hand is as steady

As when, in the old days, It plucked the already

Ripe fruit from Life’s tree;

fresh as the memory of the deathless words:

The time will come when our silence will be more powerful than the voices you strangle today.

Long live Anarchy: this is the happiest moment of my life.

Will I be allowed to speak, O men of America? Let me speak, Sheriff Matson! Let the voice of the people be heard! O –

fresh as the memory of the gallows and trap and the swinging, dying bodies; fresh as the memory of him, the beautiful one, the brave, defiant one who took his death not waiting for your hangman and from his poor mangled dying throat whispered hoarsely at the end, ‘Long live Anarchy!’

Fresh and fresh, and forever fresh, O rulers of the world, the memory of the deed you did that day! Green in our hearts as the holly at Yule – doubt not ye shall be remembered, doubt not ye shall be paid! With what measure ye mete unto others it shall be meted back unto you again. No item of the record shall escape. Shall we not recall the tricks that were done to turn the tide of sympathy which welled up, when terror and cowardice were abating, and decent human nature began to assert itself? Have we not before our eyes the picture of petition-tables overturned in the streets? In our ears the edict of Mayor Roach, ‘No public discussion of the Anarchist case, no singing of the *Marseillaise*’? Do we not remember the four ‘bombs’ found in Lingg’s cell conjured through the stone walls and deposited there by Anarchist magic! It is all remembered: we know you are our creditors still! Perhaps you would have interest: it is one of your institutions!

And what did you accomplish? You struck a welding blow that beat the hearts of the working people of the world together. You lifted out of the obscurity of the common man five names, and set them as beacons upon a hill. You sent the word Anarchy ringing through every workshop. You gave us a manifold crucifixion, and dignified what had been a speculative theory with the sacrificial cast of a religion. In the heart of this black slag heap of grime and crime you have made a sacred place, for in it you lopped off an arm from the Cross and gave us the Gallows.

And if it were given us to see tonight the thoughts of men made visible, we should behold the grave at Waldheim in the heart of a star whose rays shot inward from the uttermost earth. Ay, they are streaming over many waters, and out of strange lands where the English tongue is never spoken – they, the invisible phantoms that pass in the darkness, less of substance than the

wind that floats the November leaf, but mightier than all the powers that ever mowed the human grass when governments went reaping! They are pouring in tonight, the intangible dreams that bind masses of men together in the bond of the ideal – a bond that ties tighter than all bonds of flesh; for it makes that one shall look into a stranger's eye and know

him for his own; shall hear a word from the antipodes, and hold it for a brother's voice; shall ask no name nor station nor race nor country nor religion, but put himself beside his fellow-worker, needing no question since he knows that other labours and would be free. A surge of comradeship sweeping over the earth this night, the chant of rebellious voices singing the storm-song of the peoples, an earth-circle of reverberations from those lips that are dead – 'Long live Anarchy', rung out this hour

from platforms in every great city in the United States, England, France, Australia; talked low in Italy and Spain and Germany; whispered in the cellars of Russia, the cells of Siberia! And murmured on the lonely islands where our prisoned comrades rot away, the words, 'Twelve years ago today they hanged our comrades in Chicago, and the debt is yet unpaid'.

Ay, it is growing, growing – your fear-word, our fire-word, *Anarchy*.

Lean your ear to the wind and you will hear it, the never-dying, never finished speech, denied, choked by you that shameless day.

A warmer sanguine glows on the world's communal flag, stamped out, stamped in, by you – the blood of the Rose of Death.

Why I am an Anarchist

Voltaireine de Cleyre

Mother Earth, March 1908

+It was suggested to me by those who were the means of securing me this opportunity of addressing you, that probably the most easy and natural way for me to explain Anarchism would be for me to give the reasons why I myself am an Anarchist. I am not sure that they were altogether right in the matter, because in giving the reasons why I am an Anarchist, I may perhaps infuse too much of my own personality into the subject, giving reasons sufficient unto myself, but which cool reflection might convince me were not particularly striking as reasons why other people should be Anarchists, which is, after all, the object of public speaking on this question.

Nevertheless, I have been guided by their judgment, thinking they are perhaps right in this, that one is apt to put much more feeling and freedom into personal reasons than in pure generalizations.

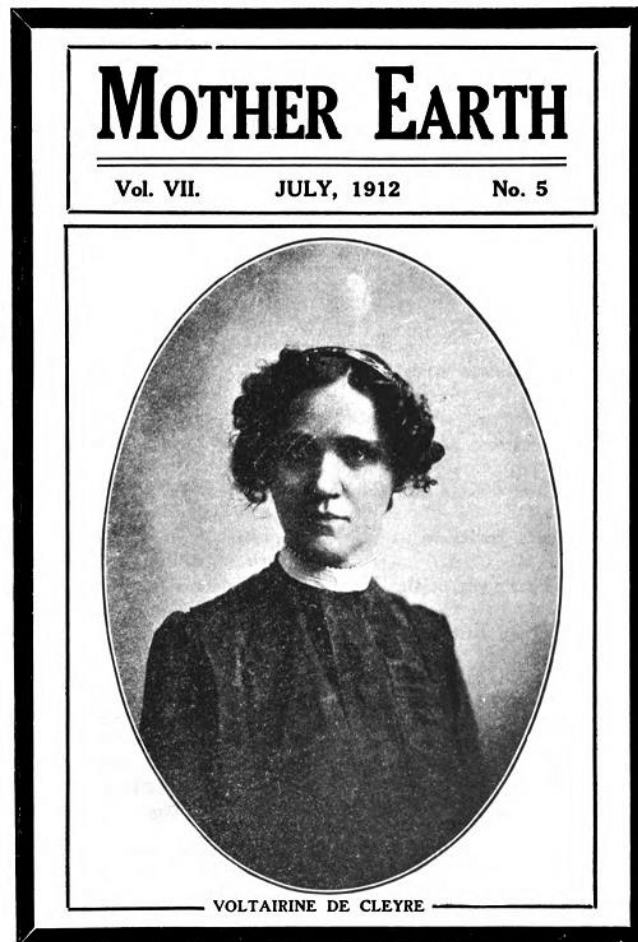
The question "Why I am an Anarchist" I could very summarily answer with "because I cannot help it," I cannot be dishonest with myself; the conditions of life

press upon me; I must do something with my brain. I cannot be content to regard the world as a mere jumble of happenings for me to wander my way through, as I

would through the mazes of a department store, with no other thought than getting through it and getting out. Neither can I be contented to take anyone's dictum on the subject; the thinking machine will not be quiet. It will not be satisfied with century-old repetitions; it perceives that new occasions bring new duties; that things have changed, and an answer that fitted a question asked four thousand, two thousand, even one thousand years ago, will not fit any more. It wants something for today.

People of the mentally satisfied order, who are able to roost on one intellectual perch all their days, have never understood this characteristic of the mentally active. It was said of the Anarchists that they were peace-disturbers, wild, violent ignoramuses, who were jealous of the

successful in life and fit only for prison or an asylum. They did not understand, for their sluggish temperaments did not assist them to perceive, that the



peace was disturbed by certain elements, which men of greater mental activity had sought to seize and analyze. With habitual mental phlegm they took cause for effect, and mistook Anarchists, Socialists and economic reformers in general for the creators of that by which they were created.

The assumption that Anarchists were one and all ignoramuses was quite as gratuitously made. For years it was not considered worth while to find out whether they might not be mistaken. We who have been some years in the movement have watched the gradual change of impression in this respect, not over-patiently it is true; we are not in general a patient sort – till we have at length seen the public recognition of the fact that while many professed Anarchists are uneducated, some even unintelligent (though their number is few), the major portion are people of fair education and intense mental activity, going around setting interrogation points after things; and some, even, such as Elisée and Elie and Paul Reclus, Peter Kropotkin, Edward Carpenter, or the late Prof. Daniel G. Brinton, of the University of Pennsylvania, men of scientific pre-eminence.

Mental activity alone, however, would not be sufficient; for minds may be active in many directions, and the course of the activity depends upon other elements in their composition.

The second reason, therefore, why I am an Anarchist, is because of the possession of a very large proportion of sentiment.

In this statement I may very likely not be recommending myself to my fellow Anarchists, who would perhaps prefer that I proceeded immediately to reasons. I am willing, however, to court their censure, because I think it has been the great mistake of our people, especially of our American Anarchists represented by Benj. R. Tucker, to disclaim sentiment. Humanity in the mass is nine parts feeling to one part thought; the so-called “philosophic Anarchists” have prided themselves on the exaggeration of the little tenth, and have chosen to speak rather contemptuously of the “submerged” nine parts. Those who have studied the psychology of man, however, realize this: that our feelings are the filtered and tested results of past efforts on the part of the intellect to compass the adaptation of the individual to its surroundings. The unconscious man is the vast reservoir which receives the final product of the efforts of the conscious – that brilliant, gleaming, illuminate point at which mental activity centers, but which, after all, is so small a part of the human being. So that if we are to despise feeling we must equally despise logical conviction, since the former is but the preservation of past struggles of the latter.

Now my feelings have ever revolted against repression in all forms, even when my intellect, instructed by my conservative teachers, told me repression was right. Even when my thinking part declared it was nobody’s

fault that one man had so much he could neither swallow it down nor wear it out, while another had so little he must die of cold and hunger, my feelings would not be satisfied. They raised an unending protest against the heavenly administration that managed earth so badly. They could never be reconciled to the idea that any human being could be in existence merely through the benevolent toleration of another human being. The feeling always was that society ought to be in such a form that any one who was willing to work ought to be able to live in plenty, and nobody ought to have such “an awful lot” more than anybody else. Moreover, the instinct of liberty naturally revolted not only at economic servitude, but at the outcome of it, class-lines. Born of working parents (I am glad to be able to say it), brought up in one of those small villages where class differences are less felt than in cities, there was, nevertheless, a very keen perception that certain persons were considered better worth attentions, distinctions, and rewards than others, and that these certain persons were the daughters and sons of the well-to-do. Without any belief whatever that the possession of wealth to the exclusion of others was wrong, there was yet an instinctive decision that there was much injustice in educational opportunities being given to those who could scarcely make use of them, simply because their parents were wealthy; to quote the language of a little friend of mine, there was an inward protest against “the people with five hundred dollar brains getting five thousand dollar educations,” while the bright children of the poor had to be taken out of school and put to work. And so with other material concerns.

Beyond these, there was a wild craving after freedom from conventional dress, speech, and custom; an indignation at the repression of one’s real sentiments and the repetition of formal hypocrisies, which constitute the bulk of ordinary social intercourse; a consciousness that what are termed “the amenities” were for the most part gone through with as irksome forms, representing no real heartiness. Dress, too, – there was such an ever-present feeling that these ugly shapes with which we distort our bodies were forced upon us by a stupid notion that we must conform to the anonymous everybody who wears a stock-collar in mid-summer and goes *dé-colleté* at Christmas, puts a bunch on its sleeves to-day and a hump on its back to-morrow, dresses its slim tall gentlemen in claw-hammers this season, and its fat little gentlemen in Prince Alberts the next, – in short, affords no opportunity for the individuality of the person to express itself in outward taste or selection of forms.

An eager wish, too, for something better in education than the set program of the grade-work, every child’s head measured by every other child’s head, regimentation, rule, arithmetic, forever and ever; nothing to develop originality of work among teachers; the perpetual dead level; the eternal average. Parallel with all these, there was a constant seeking for

something new and fresh in literature, and unspeakable ennui at the presentation and re-presentation of the same old ideal in the novel, the play, the narrative, the history. A general disgust for the poor but virtuous fair-haired lady with blue eyes, who adored a dark-haired gentleman with black eyes and much money, and to whom, after many struggles with the jealous rival, she was happily married; a desire that there should be persons who should have some other purpose in appearing before us than to exhibit their lovesickness, people with some other motive in walking through a book than to get married at the end. A similar feeling in taking up an account of travels; a desire that the narrator would find something better worth recounting than his own astonishment at some particular form of dress he had never happened to see before, or a dish he had never eaten in his own country; a desire that he would tell us of the conditions, the aspirations, the activities of those strange peoples. Again the same unrest in reading a history, an overpowering sentiment of revolt at the spun-out details of the actions of generals, the movements of armies, the thronement and dethronement of kings, the intrigues of courtiers, the gracing or disgracing of favorites, the place-hunting of republics, the count of elections, the numbering of administrations! A never-ending query, "What were the common people doing all this time? What did they do who did not go to war? How did they associate, how did they feel, how did they dream? What had they, who paid for all these things, to say, to sing, to act?"

And when I found a novel like the "Story of An African Farm," a drama like the "Enemy of the People" or "Ghosts," a history like Green's "History of the People of England," I experienced a sensation of exaltation at leaping out from the old forms, the old prohibitions, the old narrowness of models and schools, at coming into the presence of something broad and growing.

So it was with contemplation of sculpture or drawing, – a steady dissatisfaction with the conventional poses, the conventional subjects, the fig-leaved embodiments of artistic cowardice; underneath was always the demand for freedom of movement, fertility of subject, and ease and *non-shame*. Above all, a disgust with the subordinated cramped circle prescribed for women in daily life, whether in the field of material production, or in domestic arrangement, or in educational work; or in the ideals held up to her in all these various screens whereon the ideal reflects itself; a bitter, passionate sense of personal injustice in this respect; an anger at the institutions set up by men, ostensibly to preserve female purity, really working out to make her a baby, an irresponsible doll of a creature into to be trusted outside her "doll's house." A sense of burning disgust that a mere legal form should be considered as the sanction for all manner of bestialities; that a woman should have no right to escape from the coarseness of a husband, or conversely, without calling down the attention, the scandal, the scorn of society. That in spite of all the

hardship and torture of existence men and women should go on obeying the old Israelitish command, "Increase and multiply," merely because they have society's permission to do so, without regard to the slaveries to be inflicted upon the unfortunate creatures of their passions.

All these feelings, these intense sympathies with suffering, these cravings for something earnest, purposeful, these longings to break away from old standards, jumbled about in the ego, produced a shocking war; they determined the bent to which mental activity turned; they demanded an answer, – an answer that should co-ordinate them all, give them direction, be the silver cord running through this mass of disorderly, half-articulate contentions of the soul.

The province for the operation of conscious reasoning was now outlined; all the mental energies were set to the finding of an ideal which would justify these clamors, allay these bitternesses. And first for the great question which over-rides all others, the question of bread. It was easy to see that any proposition to remedy the sorrows of poverty along old lines could only be successful for a locality or a season, since they must depend upon the personal good-nature of individual employers, or the leniency of a creditor. The power to labor at will would be forever locked within the hands of a limited number.

The problem is not how to find a way to relieve temporary distress, not to make people dependent upon the kindness of others, but to allow every one to be able to stand upon his own feet.

A study into history, – that is a history of the movements of people, – revealed that, while the struggles of the past have chiefly been political in their formulated objects, and have resulted principally in the disestablishment of one form of political administration by another, the causes of discontent have been chiefly economic – too great disparity in possessions between class and class. Even those uprisings centered around some religious leader were, in the last analysis, a revolt of the peasant against an oppressive landlord and tithe-taker – the Church.

It is extremely hard for an American, who has been nursed in the traditions of the revolution, to realize the fact that that revolution must be classed precisely with others, and its value weighed and measured by its results, just as they are. I am an American myself, and was at one time as firmly attached to those traditions as anyone can be; I believed that if there were any way to remedy the question of poverty the Constitution must necessarily afford the means to do it. It required long thought and many a dubious struggle between prejudice and reason before I was able to arrive at the conclusion that the political victory of America had been a barren thing: that a declaration of equal rights on paper, while an advance in human evolution in so far that at least it

crystallized a vague ideal, was after all but an irony in the face of facts; that what people wanted to make them really free was the *right to things*; that a “free country” in which all the productive tenures were already appropriated was not free at all; that any man who must wait the complicated working of a mass of unseen powers before he may engage in the productive labor necessary to get his food is the last thing but a free man; that those who do command these various resources and powers, and therefore the motions of their fellow-men, command likewise the manner of their voting, and that hence the reputed great safeguard of individual liberties, the ballot box, become but an added instrument of oppression in the hands of the possessor; finally, that the principle of majority rule itself, even granting it could ever be practicalized – which it could not on any large scale: it is always a real minority that governs in place of the nominal majority – but even granting it realizable, the thing itself is essentially pernicious; that the only desirable condition of society is one in which no one is compelled to accept an arrangement to which he has not consented.

Since it was a settled thing that to be free one must have liberty of access to the sources and means of production, the question arose, just what are those sources and means, and how shall the common man, whose right to them is now denied, come at them. And here I found a mass of propositions, by one school or another; all however agreed upon one point, viz.: that the land and all that was in it was the natural heritage of all, and none had a right to pre-empt it, and parcel it out to their heirs, administrators, executors, and assigns. But the practical question of how the land could be worked, how homes could be built upon it, factories, etc., brought out a number of conflicting propositions. First, there were the Socialists (that is the branch of Socialism dominant in this country) claiming that the land should become the property of the State, its apportionment to be decided by committees representing the majority of any particular community directly concerned in such apportionment, the right to reapportion, however, remaining perpetually under the control of the State, and no one to receive any more advantage from an extra-fine locality than others, since the surplus in production of one spot over another would accrue to the State, and be expended in public

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benefits. To accomplish this, the Socialist proposed to use the political machinery now in existence – a machinery which he assures us is in every respect the political reflex of the economic of capitalism; his plan is the old, familiar one of voting your own men in; and when a sufficient number are in, then by legal enactment to dispossess the possessors, confiscate estates, and declare them the property of all.

Examination of this program, however, satisfied me that neither in the end nor the accomplishment was it

desirable. For as to the end, it appeared perfectly clear that the individual would still be under the necessity of getting somebody’s permission to go to work; that he would be subject to the decisions of a mass of managers, to regulations and regimentations without end. That while, indeed, it was possible he might have more of material comforts, still he would be getting them from a bountiful dispenser, who assumed the knowledge of how to deal them out, and when, and where. He would still be working, not at what he chose himself, but at what others decided was the most necessary labor for society. And as to the manner of

bringing into power this new dispenser of opportunities, the apparent ease of it disappeared upon examination. It sounds exceedingly simple – and Socialists are considered practical people because of that apparent simplicity – to say vote your men in and let them legalize expropriation. But ignoring the fact of the long process of securing a legislative majority, and the precarious holding when it is secured; ignoring the fact that meanwhile your men must either remain honest figure-heads or become compromising dealers with other politicians; ignoring the fact that officials once in office are exceedingly liable to insensible conversions (being like the boy, “anything to get that’ere pup”); supposing all this overcome, Socialists and all legislative reformers are bound to be brought face to face with this, – that in accepting the present constitutional methods, they will sooner or later come against the judicial power, as reforms of a far less sweeping character have very often done in the past. Now the judges, if they act strictly according to their constitutional powers, have no right to say on the bench whether in their personal opinion the enactment is good or bad; they have only to pass upon its constitutionality; and certainly a general enactment for the confiscation of land-holdings to the State would without doubt be

pronounced unconstitutional. Then what is the end of all the practical, legal, constitutional effort? That you are left precisely where you were.

Another school of land reformers presented itself; an ingenious affair, by which property in land is to be preserved in name, and abolished in reality. It is based on the theory of economic rent; – not the ordinary, everyday rent we are all uncomfortably conscious of, once a month or so, but a rent arising from the diverse nature of localities. Starting with the proposition that land values are created by the community, not by the individual, the logic goes as follows. The advantages created by all must not be monopolized by one; but as one certain spot can be devoted to one use only at a given time, then the person or business thereon located should pay to the State the difference between what he can get out of a good locality and a poor locality, the amount to be expended in public improvements. This plan of taxation, it was claimed, would compel speculators in land either to allow their idle lands to fall into the hands of the State, which would then be put up at public auction and knocked down to the highest bidder, or they would fall to and improve them, which would mean employment to the idle, enlivening of the market, stimulation of trade, etc. Out of much discussion among themselves, it resulted that they were convinced that the great unoccupied agricultural lands would become comparatively free, the scramble coming in over the rental of mines, water-powers, and – above all – corner lots in cities.

I did some considerable thinking over this proposition, and came to the conclusion it wouldn't do. First, because it did not offer any chance to the man who could actually bid noting for the land, which was the very man I was after helping. Second, because the theory of economic rent itself seemed to me full of holes; for, while it is undeniable that some locations are superior to others for one purpose or another, still the discovery of the superiority of that location has generally been due to an individual. The location unfit for a brickyard may be very suitable for a celery plantation; but it takes the man with the discerning eye to see it; therefore this economic rent appeared to me to be a very fluctuating affair, dependent quite as much on the individual as on the presence of the community; and for a fluctuating thing of that sort it appeared quite plain that the community would lose more by maintaining all the officials and offices of a State to collect it, than it would to let the economic rent go. Third, this public disposing of the land was still in the hands of officials, and I failed to understand why officials would be any less apt to favor their friends and cheat the general public than now.

Lastly and mostly, the consideration of the statement that those who possessed large landholdings would be compelled to relinquish or improve them; and that this improvement would stimulate business and give

employment to the idle, brought me to the realization that the land question could never be settled by itself; that it involved the settling of the problem of how the man who did not work directly upon the earth, but who transformed the raw material into the manufactured product, should get the fruit of his toil. There was nothing in this Single Tax arrangement for him but the same old program of selling himself to an employer. This was to be the relief afforded to the fellow who had no money to bid for the land. New factories would open, men would be in demand, wages would rise! Beautiful program. But the stubborn fact always came up that no man would employ another to work for him unless he could get more for his product than he had to pay for it, and that being the case, the inevitable course of exchange and re-exchange would be that the man *having received less than the full amount*, could buy back less than the full amount, so that eventually the unsold products must again accumulate in the capitalist's hands; again the period of non-employment arrives, and my landless worker is no better off than he was before the Single Tax went into operation. I perceived, therefore, that some settlement of the whole labor question was needed which would not split up the people again into land possessors and employed wage-earners. Furthermore, my soul was infinitely sickened by the everlasting discussion about the rent of the corner lot. I conceived that the reason there was such a scramble over the corner lot was because the people were jammed together in the cities, for want of the power to spread out over the country. It does not lie in me to believe that millions of people pack themselves like sardines, worry themselves into dens out of which they must emerge "walking backward," so to speak, for want of pace to turn around, poison themselves with foul, smoke-laden, fever-impregnated air, condemn themselves to stone and brick above and below and around, if they just didn't *have* to.

How, then, to make it possible for the man who has nothing but his hands to get back upon the earth the earth and make use of his opportunity? There came a class of reformers who said, "Lo, now, the thing all lies in the money question! The land being free wouldn't make a grain of difference to the worker, unless he had the power to capitalize his credit and thus get the wherewith to make use of the land. See, the trouble lies here: the possessors of one particular form of wealth, gold and silver, have the sole power to furnish the money used to effect exchanges. Let us abolish this gold and silver notion; let all forms of wealth be offered as security, and notes issued on such as are accepted, by a mutual bank, and then we shall have money enough to transact all our business without paying interest for the borrowed use of an expensive medium which had far better be used in the arts. And then the man who goes upon the land can buy the tools to work it."

This sounded pretty plausible; but still I came back to the old question, how will the man who has nothing but

his individual credit to offer, who has no wealth of any kind, how is he to be benefited by this bank?

And again about the tools: it is well enough to talk of his buying hand tools, or small machinery which can be moved about; but what about the gigantic machinery necessary to the operation of a mine, or a mill? It requires many to work it. If one owns it, will he not make the others pay tribute for using it?

And so, at last, after many years of looking to this remedy and to that, I came to these conclusions: –

That the way to get freedom to use the land is by no tampering and indirection, but plainly by the going out and settling thereon, and using it; remembering always that every newcomer has as good a right to come and labor upon it, become one of the working community, as the first initiators of the movement. That in the arrangement and determination of the uses of locations, each community should be absolutely free to make its own regulations. That there should be no such nonsensical thing as an imaginary line drawn along the ground, within which boundary persons having no interests whatever in common and living hundreds of miles apart, occupied in different pursuits, living according to different customs, should be obliged to conform to interfering regulations made by one another; and while this stupid division binds together those in no way helped but troubled thereby, on the other hand cuts right through the middle of a community united by proximity, occupation, home, and social sympathies.

Second: – I concluded that as to the question of exchange and money, it was so exceedingly bewildering, so impossible of settlement among the professors themselves, as to the nature of value, and the representation of value, and the unit of value, and the numberless multiplications and divisions of the subject, that the best thing ordinary workingmen or women could do was to organize their industry so as to get rid of money altogether. I figured it this way: I'm not any more a fool than the rest of ordinary humanity; I've figured and figured away on this thing for years, and directly I thought myself middling straight, there came another money reformer and showed me the hole in that scheme, till, at last, it appears that between "bills of credit," and "labor notes" and "time checks," and "mutual bank issues," and "the invariable unit of value," none of them have any sense. How many thousands of years is it going to get this sort of thing into people's heads by mere preaching of theories. Let it be this way: Let there be an end of the special monopoly on securities for money issues. Let every community go ahead and try some member's money scheme if it wants; – let every individual try it if he pleases. But

Let every community go ahead and try some member's money scheme if it wants; – let every individual try it if he pleases. But better for the working people let them all go. Let them produce together, co-operatively rather than as employer and employed; let them fraternize group by group, let each use what he needs of his own product, and deposit the rest in the storage-houses, and let those others who need goods have them as occasion arises.

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With our present crippled production, with less than half the people working, with all the conservatism of vested interest operating to prevent improvements in methods being adopted, we have more than enough to supply all the wants of the people if we could only get it distributed. There is, then, no fixed estimate to be put upon possibilities. If one man working now can produce ten times as much as he can by the most generous use dispose of for himself, what shall be said of the capacities of the free worker of the future? And why, then, all this calculating worry about the exact exchange of equivalents? If there is enough and to waste, why fret for fear some one will get a little more than he gives? We do not worry for fear some one will drink a little more water than we do, except it is in a case of shipwreck; because we know there is quite enough to go around. And since all these measures for adjusting equivalent values have only resulted in establishing a perpetual means whereby the furnisher of money succeeds in abstracting a percentage if the product, would it not be better to risk the occasional loss in exchange of things, rather than to have this false adjuster of differences perpetually paying itself for a very doubtful service?

Third: – On the question of machinery I stopped for some time; it was easy enough to reason that the land which was produced by nobody belonged to nobody; comparatively easy to conclude that with abundance of product no money was needed. But the problem of machinery required a great deal of pro-ing and con-ing; it finally settled down so: Every machine of any

complexity is the accumulation of the inventive genius of the ages; no one man conceived it; no one man can make it; no one man therefore has a right to the exclusive possession of the social inheritance from the dead; that which requires social genius to conceive and social action to operate, should be free of access to all those desiring to use it.

Fourth: – In the contemplation of the results to follow from the freeing of the land, the conclusion was inevitable that many small communities would grow out of the breaking up of the large communities; that people would realize then that the vast mass of this dragging products up and down the world, which is the great triumph of commercialism, is economic insanity; illustration: Paris butter carted to London, and London butter to Paris! A friend of mine in Philadelphia makes shoes; the factory adjoins the home property of a certain Senator whose wife orders her shoes off a Chicago firm; this firm orders of the self-same factory, which ships the order to Chicago. Chicago ships them back to the Senator's wife; while any workman in the factory might have thrown them over her backyard fence! That, therefore, all this complicated system of freight transportation would disappear, and a far greater approach to simplicity be attained; and hence all the international bureaus of regulation, aimed at by the Socialists, would become as unnecessary as they are obnoxious. I conceived, in short, that, instead of the workingman's planting his feet in the mud of the bottomless abyss of poverty, and seeing the trains of the earth go past his tantalized eyes, he carrying the whole thing as Atlas did the world, would calmly set his world down, climb up on it, and go gleefully spinning around it himself, becoming world-citizens indeed. Man, the emperor of products, not products the enslaver of man, became my dream.

At this point I broke off to inquire how much government was left; land titles all gone, stocks and bonds and guarantees of ownership in means of production gone too, what was left of the State? Nothing of its existence in relation to the worker: nothing but its regulation of morals.

I had meanwhile come to the conclusion that the assumptions as to woman's inferiority were all humbug; that given freedom of opportunity, women were just as responsive as men, just as capable of making their own way, producing as much for the social good as men. I observed that women who were financially independent at present, took very little to the notion that a marriage ceremony was sacred, unless it symbolized the inward reality of psychological and physiological mateship; that most of the who were unfortunate enough to make an original mistake, or to grow apart later, were quite able to take their freedom from a mischievous bond without appealing to the law. Hence, I concluded that the State had nothing left to do here; for it has never attempted to do more than solve the material

difficulties, in a miserable, brutal way; and these economic independence would solve for itself. As to the heartaches and bitterness attendant upon disappointments of this nature in themselves, apart from third-party considerations, – they are entirely a matter of individual temperaments, not to be assuaged by any State or social system.

The offices of the State were now reduced to the disposition of criminals. An inquiry into the criminal question made plain that the great mass of crimes are crimes against property; even those crimes arising from jealousy are property crimes resulting from the notion of a right of property in flesh. Allowing property to be eradicated, both in practice and spirit, no crimes are left but such as are the acts of the mentally sick – cases of atavism, which might well be expected occasionally, for centuries to come, as the result of all the repression poor humanity has experienced these thousands of years. An enlightened people, a people living in something like sane and healthy conditions, would consider these criminals as subjects of scientific study and treatment; would not retaliate and exhibit themselves as more brutal than the criminal, as is the custom to-day, but would "use all gently."

The State had now disappeared from my conception of society; there remained only the application of Anarchism to those vague yearnings for the outpouring of new ideals in education, in literature, in art, in customs, social converse, and in ethical concepts. And now the way became easy; for all this talking up and down the question of wealth was foreign to my taste. But education! As long ago as I could remember I had dreamed of an education which should be a getting at the secrets of nature, not as reported through another's eyes, but just the thing itself; I had dreamed of a teacher who should go out and attract his pupils around him as the Greeks did of old, and then go trooping out into the world, free monarchs, learning everywhere – learning nature, learning man, learning to know life in all its forms, and not to hug one little narrow spot and declare it the finest one on earth for the patriotic reason that they live there, And here I picked up Wm. Morris' "News from Nowhere," and found the same thing. And there were the new school artists in France and Germany, the litterateurs, the scientists, the inventors, the poets, all breaking way from ancient forms. And there were Emerson and Channing and Thoreau in ethics, preaching the supremacy of individual conscience over the law, – indeed, all that mighty trend of Protestantism and Democracy, which every once in a while lifts up its head above the judgments of the commonplace in some single powerful personality. That indeed is the triumphant word of Anarchism: it comes as the logical conclusion of three hundred years of revolt against external temporal and spiritual authority – the word which has no compromise to offer, which holds before us the unswerving ideal of the Free Man.

On the 1910 Philadelphia Strike

The Philadelphia Strike

Voltaireine de Cleyre

Mother Earth, March 1910

Ever since the trolley strike of last June, when the Philadelphia Rapid Transit Company was forced into the semblance of an agreement with its men, it has made systematic efforts to undermine, crush, and utterly destroy their union. The ink was scarcely dry before it began violating this agreement, and at last, feeling that it had acquired sufficient strength through the introduction of a rival union, an organisation of scabs, it began forcing the situation, by discharging its old men, men who had been in the service from ten to twenty years, "for the good of the service." In the middle of the winter, with the snows of the great blizzard yet on the streets, it endeavoured to precipitate a strike, thus creating in the public mind the idea that the union men were utterly reckless of the hardships of riders. Through the efforts of the careful men in the union, the strike was held back, until Saturday, the 19th of February, when by a sudden wholesale discharge of six hundred men, the Company forced a walk-out.

Rioting began promptly, and up till the Thursday following the declaration of the strike, success lay with the men. Few cars were operated, and practically no one rode in these except their scab crews and the "cops" who guarded them. The reason, of course, was very simple: people did not want their heads broken. For while it is true that many thousands of people voluntarily walk, or ride in any conveyance rather than a street car, the great majority of riders are indifferent both to the men and the company, and are occupied only with their own private concerns. These stayed off the cars only for prudential motives; and so long as brickbats were flying into windows, trolley poles pulled off and cars upset, tracks barricaded, and scabs put out of business, these people preferred to walk. The city police having proved ineffective, and the State Fencibles having made a rather funny exhibition of themselves by having their swords, guns, and shining

buttons taken away from them by the Germantown rioters, the State Constabulary were sent for. And there was peace: so the papers said. One reason they said so, was because the great merchants assembled and told the newspapers that unless they stopped printing riot scares, they, the merchants, would withdraw their "ads." Accordingly the papers minimised, where before they had maximised, and while rioting continued to an extent, and does still continue, it has been reduced; the

Company's scabs have resumed their courage; and a great number of people ride – many, indeed, who would like to see the men win, but who have not been able to endure the hardship of walking. According to the Company's statements they are now doing about 60 per cent. of their usual business, which is of course a lie; but they are doing entirely too much for the good of the trolley men.



Meanwhile there was much talk; the general strike, as a possibility, hove in sight within three days after the trolley strike began, and if on that critical Thursday it had been declared, the trolley strike would have been won. The people would have been in the streets, cars could not have run, scabs would have remained away, and the Company would have given in. But, O Procrastination, Procrastination! The precious conservatism, which always waits for its enemies to do something for it! The men have prayed for arbitration; the Company refuses; the business men have prayed for arbitration; the Company refuses; the ministers have consulted with God and then prayed the Company for arbitration; the Company refuses; the Mayor has been besought to urge arbitration; he refuses. At last the Central Labor Union makes good its talk on Sunday, the 27th of February, and in an enthusiastic meeting votes for a General Strike; when – ? O, Futility! On Saturday, March 5th, a week later! A whole week for the Company to re-establish its service, for Director Clay to swear in more police, for the bosses to post notices to

their workmen to remain or lose their jobs, for spies to canvass the shops, for business associations to pass resolutions, and newspapers to write editorials deploring the disgrace brought on the "fair fame of Philadelphia," and other patriotic drivel; for the weak-kneed to get weaker, and enthusiasm to cool; for lawyers to hunt up laws and courts of appeal! Oh, the idiocy of conservatism!

I write on Friday, the 4th of March; the strike order goes into effect at midnight, to-night. Undoubtedly it will be a great object lesson; even to have conceived a general strike is something for the workers of this curse-ridden city. But one feels poignantly the tactical mistakes of the unions, whereby the great struggle which would have been successful on the 24th of February, is now likely to be defeated.

At any rate, the working people have had an excellent demonstration of what police and soldiers are for, what

interests city officials serve, and what may be hoped by them from laws and courts. There have been many frightful sentences inflicted on rioters – some even to six years' prison; many painful murders of innocent people; brutal and utterly unprovoked assaults by the police upon mere bystanders. On the other hand, the mobs have not been gentle, and have manifested their hatred of scabs in clearly comprehensible language. If the authorities had any discernment (which they have not, being drunk with the idea of constituted force) they would realise the depth of the words of the United Business Men's resolutions, which say: "Superior brute force may quiet and quell, but it will not placate the people, convince the strikers, or satisfactorily and permanently end the struggle." Whoever wrote those lines undoubtedly saw something looming ahead, which neither Timothy O'Leary, Director Clay, nor Mayor Reyburn have eyes to see.

A Study of the General Strike in Philadelphia

Voltaire de Cleyre

Mother Earth, April 1910

A "condition" is always more interesting than a "theory." The general strike of organised labour in Philadelphia has been the most interesting and instructive phenomenon in the economic struggle which any American city has offered since Chicago in 1885-6. It has revealed many things, both to its friends and its

enemies, which no amount of theorising could have foreseen. Its direct consequences, while considerable, have been insignificant compared with indirect results. As I wrote in my last month's article, it was called some ten days later than it should have been; it was fixed for Saturday morning, March

5th, – Saturday being a blunder in itself, since most trades quit work at noon on Saturday anyhow. The general expectation was that the next Monday would be the test day, opponents contending it would collapse by Tuesday morning, while friends generally expected the

manifestation of solidarity to be greatest on that day. Both, however, were mistaken. The number of organised workers out began with 50,000 on Saturday, rose to 60,000 or 70,000 on Monday, increased Tuesday and Wednesday, the ranks of the strikers swelling by appeals to the unorganised until 135,000 workers were

out, according to the figures of the general strike committee, though some reports fixed the number at 160,000. The height of the strike was probably either Wednesday or Thursday, March 9-10. From then on the balance was about maintained by some going back and new ones going out for a week. Then the return tide



generally set in, and at the end of three weeks the general strike was declared off.

Let us inquire what happened. The natural feeling, both on the part of friend and enemy, was that with the withdrawing of 100,000 people from the factories, the

hostility of the city toward the car company would manifest itself in open demonstrations, – car-smashing, scab-smashing, parading, demanding, etc. Unfortunately, the fatal policy of procrastination which had originally delayed the calling of the general strike, had given the company and their agents at City Hall, the Mayor, the Director of Public Safety, the Superintendent of Police, and above all the courts which had been sentencing rioters to merciless punishments, an opportunity partially to denature the vital principle of the general strike, viz., active, open, and determined assertion of its demands.

Something, however, has to be said in extenuation, or at least in explanation, of this blunder of waiting. It was the policy of some of the participants in the car strike to play for public sympathy; to make it apparent to the half-awakes and the indifferents that they had no desire to inflict undue hardship upon anyone; that they waited as long as possible for the company to recede from its position; and that all blame for the general strike must rest with the P. R. T., which refused every overture for arbitration. It must be admitted that in this they succeeded. All newspapers, while attacking the principle of the general strike as tyranny, and, of course (word of conjuration) “un-American,” contended that right-thinking citizens must agree that the car men were right in the matter of being willing to arbitrate. That the support so gained was dearly bought by the devitalising of the spirit of the people, is probably apparent to them now. If not, they need the lesson again.

Another explanation, however, and even a more important one, is that, “They didn’t because they couldn’t” call the strike sooner. At least officially. Herein lies the great and fundamental problem for organised labour: Is it to go on trying to meet the conditions of industrial warfare with the old inadequate weapon of the isolated union? Here was a case where the spirit of the people had gotten out of control of its narrow bonds, and human nature was clamouring to “go out with the car men,” – ten or twelve days before. But the Central Labor Union had no power to make the declaration. Each union must vote on the question at its own special or regular meeting. And the days ran away. The police were clubbing and shooting. The cars were running. The generous spirit was already beginning to evaporate; men calculated. They said: “How can we afford to go on strike, when according to the Constitution of our Union it will be an illegal strike, and we shall receive no benefit from the international? We would believe in striking, if we could receive the support of our own treasury; but the consequence of striking in this way will be that those who cannot stand the financial strain will scab it; our own organisation will be disrupted, there will be victimisations; men will suffer for years for the action of a few days; and no one will be benefited.” Nevertheless, when the C. L. U. passed the resolutions calling for the strike, the wave swept up again. Ardent spirits talked, and careful spirits

kept their mouths shut, – which is a way careful spirits have, and then of blaming the other side for talking afterwards. Nevertheless, what the careful spirits foresaw, is precisely what has happened. Within two weeks some of the most ardent strike-talkers were scabbing it, – resting secure in the knowledge that any union man has a right to scab it in an illegal strike, and furthermore that the only way for them to atone to the bosses for their mischief-breeding talk was to get back to their jobs first. And a good many of the careful souls have been victimised along with the rest. From all of which two things must be apparent:

1. – That the unions must either break away from their old forms, to organise industrially; or they must devise some special means of responding to the call for the general strike in the future, by which they may order themselves out quickly, and maintain their members while on strike.
2. – That wholesale enthusiasm is a straw-fire which burns out quickly; therefore it must be utilised at once, if at all; therefore, those who seek to burn barriers away with it, must direct it to the barriers at once.

Now, the fact is that those who called for the general strike had very much mixed ideas of what they were going to do with it after they got it. They did call for a mass meeting, having secured the Ball Park (private property) for the occasion. The police closed the Ball Park. The people then marched, 50,000 strong, down Broad Street. You would think this was an occasion to express their convictions concerning the P. R. T., the rights of the car men, the rights of union men, the rights of workingmen, the rights of people, their detestation of the “dummy mayor,” the tsarism of Director Clay, the thuggery of “cop”-ism! Fifty thousand are a good many! But so little idea had anybody of saying or doing anything at all, that a few hundred cops (slightly more than were detailed to keep Emma Goldman from entering Odd Fellows’ Temple last September) waded into the marchers with their clubs, drove them right and left, knocked some of them down, arrested a few more, and – “the ball was over.” By the eternal gods, Dominique Donelli did better than that two years ago!

Strikers of Philadelphia! When the unemployed Italians marched to City Hall to ask for work, and received the club and the revolver, a lot of you said, “It served them right; they are dagoes.” When the Anarchists appealed to the Central Labor Union to support the right of free speech, denied by Director Clay to Emma Goldman, Ben Reitman, and Voltairine de Cleyre, you refused to protest against Clay’s action, because we were Anarchists.

Have you had a lesson now? Do you know now that you are no more to Clay than the “dagoes” and the Anarchists? Have you learned what a police club is for? Do you see whose “right of private property” is respected and protected? Do you know now who is

allowed to hold meetings and march on the streets? Do you know now that your place is with him whose liberty is attacked, be he who he will?

Now, a glance at unorganised labour, and a feature of the strike which is more gratifying. From personal conversations with a number of unorganised workers who struck, I have learned that in the mass they struck very unconsciously. Supt. Vauclain, of Baldwin's Locomotive Works, where the most satisfactory strike of the unorganised element took place, was right when he said that "the men could hardly help striking, – it was sort of in the air – they would come back in a few days." Unfortunately this was true, though not so much in his particular case. However deficient the unions, one thing is sure, – a union strike has more stamina than a non-union strike. Another reason to direct it quickly. People walked out of the shops with the sound of feet in their ears, pretty much as horses commence to mark time when they hear a band of music. Had they walked out with any definite purpose in their heads they might have accomplished it, and remained heroes in their own eyes ever afterward. I suspect that the Bastille was taken by some such a sleep-walking crowd. However, these had no intentions, and three days afterward they went apologetically to the boss and told him they didn't know why they had quit; and now they will remain foolish in their own eyes ever afterward. And the boss's too.

Notwithstanding this, and as a splendid offset to occasional disruption and victimisation, there has been a net gain of many thousands to the ranks of organised labour, as a side result of the strike. The Committee of Ten reports it as 20,000. This may be figuring too high, but it is certain that it approaches that number. The organisation of Baldwin's alone, with two-thirds of its skilled employees enrolled, is a great piece of work. Moreover, one element of the unorganised has been attracted, of which I have not spoken: that class of workers who were not in the unions because they were superior to the unions; because the narrowness and meanness of the trade union spirit disgusted them. Numerically, of course, these are few, but they are active and valuable spirits; and it was the sympathetic strike, the recognition of solidarity, which won them.

The failure of certain associations, such as the brewers, the typos, the musicians, and actors, to join in the strike, because of their contracts made through the national or international unions, puts another problem to labour men for settlement: How to modify the contract system so as to leave the local free in case of a local sympathetic strike? The bricklayers and builders stood by their class and broke their contracts; the brewers, etc., stood by their contracts and played traitor to their class. Of musicians and actors it was rather to be expected; they are, after all, hangers-on of the

Do they perceive, do the workers perceive, that it must be the strike which will stay in the factory, not go out? which will guard the machines, and allow no scab to touch them? which will organise, not to inflict deprivation on itself, but on the enemy? which will take over industry and operate it for the workers, not for franchise holders, stockholders, and office-holders? Do they?

bourgeoisie; but the brewers and typos have disgraced themselves.

Well, Philadelphia has set the first example, – a feeble example, lacking in purpose, wasting itself by reason thereof, and by reason of lack of organisation and delay. However, it forced the company to the semblance of compromise; it made the Mayor and the City representative on the Board of the P. R. T. do what they had loudly proclaimed they would not do, confer with the officers of the car men; and while the terms were not accepted by the car men, as being deceptive and a mockery, and they are still out, there is no doubt that the enemy recognises that the weapon of industrial warfare in the future will be the general strike, – and dreads it.

Do they perceive, do the workers perceive, that it must be the strike which will stay in the factory, not go out? which will guard the machines, and allow no scab to touch them? which will organise, not to inflict deprivation on itself, but on the enemy? which will take over industry and operate it for the workers, not for franchise holders, stockholders, and office-holders? Do they? Or will it take a few thousand more clubbings to knock it into their heads?

Philadelphia began a certain other fight one hundred and thirty-four years ago; she didn't win it on that 4th of July either. She was held by the British after that. But the fight went on, as this one will. What transportation company will be the next to precipitate the battle? Six different companies in as many cities have raised the trolley-men's wages since this strike began. Evidently they decline the battle, and are more after immediate profits than crushing unions. But in a year or two some other city will have the fight. Let them profit by our mistakes.

The Mexican Revolution

Voltairine de Cleyre

Mother Earth, December 1911, January and February 1912

A lecture delivered in Chicago October 29, 1911

That a nation of people considering themselves enlightened, informed, alert to the interests of the hour, should be so generally and so profoundly ignorant of a revolution taking place in their backyard, so to speak, as the people of the United States are ignorant of the present revolution in Mexico, can be due only to profoundly and generally acting causes. That people of revolutionary principles and sympathies should be so, is inexcusable.



It is as one of such principles and sympathies that I address you, – as one interested in every move the people make to throw off their chains, no matter where, no matter how, – though naturally my interest is greatest where the move is such as appears to me to be most in consonance with the general course of progress, where the tyranny attacked is what appears to me the most fundamental, where the method followed is to my thinking most direct and un-mistakable. And I add that those of you who have such principles and sympathies are in the logic of your own being bound, first, to inform yourselves concerning so great a matter as the revolt of millions of people – what they are struggling for, what they are struggling against, and how the struggle stands, – from day to day, if possible; if not, from week to week, or month to month, as best you can; and second, to spread this knowledge among others, and endeavour to do what little you can to awaken the consciousness and sympathy of others.

One of the great reasons why the mass of the American people know nothing of the Revolution in Mexico, is, that they have altogether a wrong conception of what “revolution” means. Thus ninety-nine out of a hundred persons to whom you broach the subject will say, “Why, I thought that ended long ago. That ended last May”; and this week the press, even the *Daily Socialist*, reports, “A new revolution in Mexico.” It isn’t a *new* revolution at all; it is the same revolution, which did not begin with the armed rebellion of last May, which has been going on steadily ever since then, and before then, and is bound to go on for a long time to come, if the

other nations keep their hands off and the Mexican people are allowed to work out their own destiny.

What is a revolution? and what is *this* revolution?

A revolution means some great and subversive

change in the social institutions of a people, whether sexual, religious, political, or economic. The movement of the Reformation was a great religious revolution; a profound alteration in human thought, – a refashioning of the human mind. The general movement towards political change in Europe and America about the close of the eighteenth century, was a revolution. The American and the French revolutions were only prominent individual incidents in it, culminations of the teachings of the *Rights of Man*.

The present unrest of the world in its economic relations, as manifested from day to day in the opposing combinations of men and money, in strikes and bread-riots, in literature and movements of all kinds demanding a readjustment of the whole or of parts of our wealth-owning and wealth-distributing system, – this unrest is the revolution of our time, the *economic revolution*, which is seeking social change, and will go on until it is accomplished. We are in it; at any moment of our lives it may invade our own homes with its stern demand for self-sacrifice and suffering. Its more violent manifestations are in Liverpool and London today, in Barcelona and Vienna tomorrow, in New York and Chicago the day after. Humanity is a seething, heaving mass of unease, tumbling like surge over a slipping, sliding, shifting bottom; and there will never be any ease until a rock bottom of economic justice is reached.

The Mexican revolution is one of the prominent manifestations of this world-wide economic revolt. It possibly holds as important a place in the present disruption and reconstruction of economic institutions, as the great revolution of France held in the eighteenth century movement. It did not begin with the odious government of Diaz nor end with his downfall, any more than the revolution in France began with the

coronation of Louis XVI, or ended with his beheading. It began in the bitter and outraged hearts of the peasants, who for generations have suffered under a ready-made system of exploitation, imported and foisted upon them, by which they have been dispossessed of their homes, compelled to become slave-tenants of those who robbed them ; and under Diaz, in case of rebellion to be deported to a distant province, a killing climate, and hellish labour. It will end only when that bitterness is assuaged by very great alteration in the land-holding system, or until the people have been absolutely crushed into subjection by a strong military power, whether that power be a native or a foreign one.

Now the political overthrow of last May, which was followed by the substitution of one political manager for another, did not at all touch the economic situation. It promised, of course; politicians always promise. It promised to consider measures for altering conditions; in the meantime, proprietors are assured that the new government intends to respect the rights of landlords and capitalists, and exhorts the workers to be patient and – *frugal!*

Frugal! Yes, that was the exhortation in Madero's paper to men who, when they are able to get work, make twenty-five cents a day. A man owning 5,000,000 acres of land exhorts the disinherited workers of Mexico to be frugal!

The idea that such a condition can be dealt with by the immemorial remedy offered by tyrants to slaves, is like the idea of sweeping out the sea with a broom. And unless that frugality, or in other words, starvation, is forced upon the people by more bayonets and more strategy than appear to be at the government's command, the Mexican revolution will go on to the solution of Mexico's land question with a rapidity and directness of purpose not witnessed in any previous upheaval.

For it must be understood that the main revolt is a revolt against the system of land tenure. The industrial revolution of the cities, while it is far from being silent, is not to compare with the agrarian revolt.

Let us understand why. Mexico consists of twenty-seven states, two territories and a federal district about the capital city. Its population totals about 15,000,000. Of these, 4,000,000 are of unmixed Indian descent, people somewhat similar in character to the Pueblos of our own southwestern states, primitively agricultural for an immemorial period, communistic in many of their social customs, and like all Indians, invincible haters of authority. These Indians are scattered throughout the rural districts of Mexico, one particularly well-known and much talked of tribe, the Yaquis, having had its fatherland in the rich northern state of Sonora, a very valuable agricultural country.

The Indian population – especially the Yaquis and the Moquis – have always disputed the usurpations of the invaders' government, from the days of the early conquest until now, and will undoubtedly continue to dispute them as long as there is an Indian left, or until their right to use the soil out of which they sprang *without paying tribute in any shape* is freely recognised.

The communistic customs of these people are very interesting, and very instructive too; they have gone on practising them all these hundreds of years, in spite of the foreign civilisation that was being grafted upon Mexico (grafted in all senses of the word); and it was not until forty years ago (indeed the worst of it not till twenty-five years ago), that the increasing power of the government made it possible to destroy this ancient life of the people.

By them, the woods, the waters, and the lands were held in common. Any one might cut wood from the forest to build his cabin, make use of the rivers to irrigate his field or garden patch (and this is a right whose acknowledgment none but those who know the aridity of the southwest can fully appreciate the imperative necessity for). Tillable lands were allotted by mutual agreement before sowing, and reverted to the tribe after harvesting, for reallocation. Pasturage, the right to collect fuel, were for all. The habits of mutual aid which always arise among sparsely settled communities were instinctive with them. Neighbour assisted neighbour to build his cabin, to plough his ground, to gather and store this crop.

No legal machinery existed, – no tax-gatherer, no justice, no jailer. All that they had to do with the hated foreign civilisation was to pay the periodical rent-collector, and to get out of the way of the recruiting officer when he came around. Those two personages they regarded with spite and dread; but as the major portion of their lives was not in immediate contact with them, they could still keep on in their old way of life in the main.

With the development of the Diaz regime, which came into power in 1876 (and when I say the Diaz regime I do not especially mean the man Diaz, for I think he has been both overcursed and overpraised, but the whole force which has steadily developed centralised power from then on, and the whole policy of "civilising Mexico," which was the Diaz boast), with its development, I say, this Indian life has been broken up, violated with as ruthless a hand as ever tore up a people by the roots and cast them out as weeds to wither in the sun.

Historians relate with horror the iron deeds of William the Conqueror, who in the eleventh century created the New Forest by laying waste the farms of England, destroying the homes of the people to make room for the deer. But his edicts were mercy compared with the action of the Mexican government toward the Indians.

In order to introduce “progressive civilisation” the Diaz regime granted away immense concessions of land, to native and foreign capitalists – chiefly foreign, indeed, though there were enough of native sharks as well. Mostly these concessions were granted to capitalistic combinations, which were to build railroads (and in some cases did so in a most uncalled for and uneconomic way), “develop” mineral resources, or establish “modern industries.”

The government took no note of the ancient tribal rights or customs, and those who received the concessions proceeded to enforce their property rights. They introduced the unheard of crime of “trespass.” They forbade the cutting of a tree, the breaking of a branch, the gathering of the fallen wood in the forests. They claimed the watercourses, forbidding their free use to the people; and it was as if one had forbidden to us the rains of heaven. The unoccupied land was theirs; no hand might drive a plough into the soil without first obtaining permission from a distant master – a permission granted on the condition that the product be the landlord’s, a small, pitifully small, wage, the worker’s.

Nor was this enough: in 1894 was passed “The Law of Unappropriated Lands.” By that law, not only were the great stretches of *vacant*, in the old time *common*, land appropriated, but the occupied lands themselves *to which the occupants could not show a legal title* were to be “denounced”; that is, the educated and the powerful, who were able to keep up with the doings of the government, went to the courts and said that there was no legal title to such and such land, and put in a claim for it. And the usual hocus-pocus of legality being complied with (the actual occupant of the land being all the time blissfully unconscious of the law, in the innocence of his barbarism supposing that the working of the ground by his generations of forbears was title all-sufficient) one fine day the sheriff comes upon this hapless dweller on the heath and drives him from his ancient habitat to wander an outcast.

Such are the blessings of education. Mankind invents a written sign to aid its intercommunication; and

forthwith all manner of miracles are wrought with the sign. Even such a miracle as that a part of the solid earth passes under the mastery of an impotent sheet of paper; and a distant bit of animated flesh which never even saw the ground, acquires the power to expel hundreds, thousands, of like bits of flesh, though they grew upon that ground as the trees grow, laboured it with their

hands, and fertilised it with their bones for a thousand years.

II

“This law of unappropriated lands,” says William Archer, “has covered the country with Naboth’s Vineyards.” I think it would require a Biblical prophet to describe the “abomination of desolation” it has made.

It was to become lords of this desolation that the men who play the game, – landlords who are at the same time governors and magistrates, enterprising capitalists seeking investments – connived at the iniquities of the Diaz regime; I will go further and say

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devised them.

The Madero family alone owns some 8,000 square miles of territory; more than the entire state of New Jersey. The Terrazas family, in the state of Chihuahua, owns 25,000 square miles; rather more than the entire state of West Virginia, nearly one-half the size of Illinois. What was the plantation owning of our southern states in chattel slavery days, compared with this? And the peon’s share for his toil upon these great estates is hardly more than was the chattel slave’s – wretched housing, wretched food, and wretched clothing.

It is to slaves like these that Madero appeals to be “frugal.”

It is of men who have thus been disinherited that our complacent fellow-citizens of Anglo-Saxon origin, say: “Mexicans! What do you know about Mexicans? Their

whole idea of life is to lean up against a fence and smoke cigarettes." And pray, what idea of life should a people have whose means of life in their own way have been taken from them? Should they be so mighty anxious to convert their strength into wealth for some other man to loll in?

It reminds me very much of the answer given by a negro employee on the works at Fortress Monroe to a companion of mine who questioned him good-humouredly on his easy idleness when the foreman's back was turned. "Ah ain't goin' to do no white man's work, fo' Ah don' get no white man's pay."

But for the Yaquis, there was worse than this. Not only were their lands seized, but they were ordered, a few years since, to be deported to Yucatan. Now Sonora, as I said, is a northern state, and Yucatan one of the southernmost. Yucatan hemp is famous, and so is Yucatan fever, and Yucatan slavery on the hemp plantations. It was to that fever and that slavery that the Yaquis were deported, in droves of hundreds at a time, men, women and children – droves like cattle droves, driven and beaten like cattle. They died there, like flies, as it was meant they should. Sonora was desolated of her rebellious people, and the land became "pacific" in the hands of the new landowners. Too pacific in spots. They had not left people enough to reap the harvests.

Then the government suspended the deportation act, but with the provision that for every crime committed by a Yaqui, five hundred of his people be deported. This statement is made in Madero's own book.

Now what in all conscience would any one with decent human feeling expect a Yaqui to do? Fight! As long as there was powder and bullet to be begged, borrowed, or stolen; as long as there is a garden to plunder, or a hole in the hills to hide in!

When the revolution burst out, the Yaquis and other Indian peoples, said to the revolutionists: "Promise us our lands back, and we will fight with you." And they are keeping their word, magnificently. All during the summer they have kept up the warfare. Early in September, the Chihuahua papers reported a band of 1,000 Yaquis in Sonora about to attack El Anil; a week later 500 Yaquis had seized the former quarters of the federal troops at Pitahaya. This week it is reported that federal troops are dispatched to Ponoitlan, a town in Jalisco, to quell the Indians who have risen in revolt again because their delusion that the Maderist government was to re-store their land has been dispelled. 'Like reports from Sinaloa. In the terrible state of Yucatan, the Mayas are in active rebellion; the reports say that "the authorities and leading citizens of various towns have been seized by the malcontents and put in prison." What is more interesting is, that the peons have seized not only "the leading citizens," but still more to the purpose have seized the plantations,

parcelled them, and are already gathering the crops for themselves.

Of course, it is not the pure Indians alone who form the peon class of Mexico. Rather more than double the number of Indians are mixed breeds; that is, about 8,000,000, leaving less than 3,000,000 of pure white stock. The mestiza, or mixed breed population, have followed the communistic instincts and customs of their Indian forbears; while from the Latin side of their make-up, they have certain tendencies which work well together with their Indian hatred of authority.

The mestiza, as well as the Indians, are mostly ignorant in book-knowledge, only about sixteen per cent, of the whole population of Mexico being able to read and write. It was not within the program of the "civilising" regime to spend money in putting the weapon of learning in the people's hands. But to conclude that people are necessarily unintelligent because they are illiterate, is in itself a rather unintelligent proceeding.

Moreover, a people habituated to the communal customs of an ancient agricultural life do not need books or papers to tell them that the soil is the source of wealth, and they must "get back to the land," even if their intelligence is limited.

Accordingly, they have got back to the land. In the state of Morelos, which is a small, south-central state, but a very important one – being next to the Federal District, and by consequence to the city of Mexico, – there has been a remarkable land revolution. General Zapata, whose name has figured elusively in newspaper reports now as having made peace with Madero, then as breaking faith, next wounded and killed, and again resurrected and in hiding, then anew on the warpath and proclaimed by the provisional government the arch-rebel who must surrender unconditionally and be tried by court-martial; who has seized the strategic points on both the railroads running through Morelos, and who just a few days ago broke into the federal district, sacked a town, fought successfully at two or three points, with the federals, blew out two railroad bridges and so frightened the deputies in Mexico City that they are clamouring for all kinds of action; this Zapata, the fires of whose military camps are springing up now in Guerrero, Oaxaca and Puebla as well, is an Indian with a long score to pay, and all an Indian's satisfaction in paying it. He appears to be a fighter of the style of our revolutionary Marion and Sumter; the country in which he is operating is mountainous, and guerrilla bands are exceedingly difficult of capture; even when they are defeated, they have usually succeeded in inflicting more damage than they have received, and they always get away.

Zapata has divided up the great estates of Morelos from end to end, telling the peasants to take possession. They have done so. They are in possession, and have already

harvested their crops. Morelos has a population of some 212,000.

In Puebla reports in September told us that eighty leading citizens had waited on the governor to protest against the taking possession of the land by the peasantry. The troops were deserting, taking horses and arms with them.

It is they no doubt who are now fighting with Zapata. In Chihuahua, one of the largest states, prisons have been thrown open and the prisoners recruited as rebels; a great hacienda was attacked and the horses run off, whereupon the peons rose and joined the attacking party.

In Sinaloa, a rich northern state, – famous in the southwestern United States some years ago as the field of a great co-operative experiment in which Mr. C. B. Hoffman, one of the former editors of the *Chicago Daily Socialist*, was a leading spirit, – this week's paper reports that the former revolutionary general, Juan Banderas, is heading an insurrection second in importance only to that led by Zapata.

In the southern border state of Chiapas, the taxes in many places could not be collected. Last week news items said that the present government had sent General Paz there, with federal troops, to remedy that state of affairs. In Tabasco, the peons refused to harvest the crops for their masters; let us hope they have imitated their brothers in Morelos and gathered them for them- selves.

The Maderists have announced that a stiff repressive campaign will be inaugurated at once; if we are to believe the papers, we are to believe Madero guilty of the imbecility of saying, "Five days after my inauguration the rebellion will be crushed." Just why the crushing has to wait till five days after the inauguration does not appear. I conceive there must have been some snickering among the reactionary deputies if such an announcement was really made; and some astonished query among his followers.

What are we to conclude from all these reports? That the Mexican people are satisfied? That it's all good and settled? What should we think if we read that the people, not of Lower but of Upper, California had turned out the ranch owners, had started to gather in the field products for themselves and that the Secretary of War had sent United States troops to attack some thousands of armed men (Zapata has had 3,000 under arms the whole summer and that force is now greatly increased) who were defending that expropriation? if

we read that in the state of Illinois the farmers had driven off the tax collector? that the coast states were talking of secession and forming an independent combination? that in Pennsylvania a division of the federal army was to be dispatched to overpower a rebel force of fifteen hundred armed men doing guerrilla work from the mountains? that the prison doors of Maryland, within hailing distance of Washington City, were being thrown open by armed revoltees?

Should we call it a condition of peace? Regard it a proof that the people were appeased? We would not: we would say that revolution was in full swing. And the reason you have thought it was all over in Mexico, from last May till now, is that the Chicago press, like the eastern, northern, and central press in general, has said nothing about this steady march of revolt. Even *The Socialist* has been silent. Now that the flame has shot up more spectacularly for the moment, they call it "a new revolution."

That the papers pursue this course is partly due to the generally acting causes that produce our northern indifference, which I shall presently try to explain, and partly to the settled policy of capitalised interest in controlling its mouthpieces in such a manner as to give their present henchmen, the

Maderists, a chance to pull their chestnuts out of the fire. They invested some \$10,000,000 in this bunch, in the hope that they may be able to accomplish the double feat of keeping capitalist possessions intact and at the same time pacifying the people with specious promises. They want to lend them all the countenance they can, till the experiment is well tried; so they deliberately suppress revolutionary news.

Among the later items of interest reported by *the Los Angeles Times* are those which announce an influx of ex-officials and many-millioned landlords of Mexico, who are hereafter to be residents of Los Angeles. What is the meaning of it? Simply that life in Mexico is not such a safe and comfortable proposition as it was, and that for the present they prefer to get such income as their agents can collect without themselves running the risk of actual residence.

Of course it is understood that some of this notable efflux (the supporters of Reyes, for example, who have



Emiliano Zapata (1879-1919)

their own little rebellions in Tabasco and San Luis Potosi this week) are political reactionists, scheming to get back the political loaves and fishes into their own hands. But most are simply those who know that their property right is safe enough to be respected by the Maderist government, but that the said government is not strong enough to put down the innumerable manifestations of popular hatred which are likely to terminate fatally to themselves if they remain there.

Nor is all of this fighting revolutionary; not by any means. Some is reactionary, some probably the satisfaction of personal grudge, much, no doubt, the expression of general turbulency of a very unconscious nature. But granting all that may be thrown in the balance, the main thing, the mighty thing, the regenerative revolution is the REAPPROPRIATION OF THE LAND BY THE PEASANTS. Thousands upon thousands of them are doing it.

Ignorant peasants: peasants who know nothing about the jargon of land reformers or of Socialists. Yes: that's just the glory of it! Just the fact that it is done by ignorant people; that is, people ignorant of book theories; but *not* ignorant, not so ignorant by half, of life on the land, as the theory-spinners of the cities. Their minds are simple and direct; they act accordingly. For them, there is *one way* to "get back to the land"; i. e., to ignore the machinery of paper land-holding (in many instances they have burned the records of the title-deeds) and proceed to plough the ground, to sow and plant and gather, and *keep the product themselves*.

Economists, of course, will say that these ignorant people, with their primitive institutions and methods, will not develop the agricultural resources of Mexico, and that they must give way before those who will so develop its resources; that such is the law of human development.

III

In the first place, the abominable political combination, which gave away, as recklessly as a handful of soap-bubbles, the agricultural resources of Mexico gave them away to the millionaire speculators who were to *develop the country* – were the educated men of Mexico. And this is what they saw fit to do with their higher intelligence and education. So the ignorant may well distrust the good intentions of educated men who talk about improvements in land development.

In the second place, capitalistic landownership, so far from developing the land in such a manner as to support a denser population, has depopulated whole districts, immense districts.

In the third place, what the economists do not say is, that the only justification for intense cultivation of the land is, that the product of such cultivation may build up the bodies of men (by consequence their souls) to richer and fuller manhood. It is not merely to pile up figures of so many million bushels of wheat and corn produced in a season; but that this wheat and corn shall

first go into the stomachs of those who planted it, – and in abundance; to build up the brawn and sinew of the arms that work the ground, not meanly maintaining them in a half-starved condition. And second, to build up the strength of the rest of the nation who are willing to give needed labour in exchange. But never to increase the fortunes of idlers who dissipate it. This is the purpose, and the only purpose, of tilling soil; and the working of it for any other purpose is *waste*, waste both of land and of men.

In the fourth place, no change ever was, or ever can be, worked out in any society, except by the mass of the people. Theories may be propounded by educated people, and set down in books, and discussed in libraries, sitting-rooms and lecture-halls; but they will remain barren, unless the people in mass work them out. If the change proposed is such that it is not adaptable to the minds of the people for whose ills it is supposed to be a remedy, then it will remain what it was, a barren theory.

Now the conditions in Mexico have been and are so desperate that some change is imperative. The action of the peasants proves it. Even if a strong military dictator shall arise, he will have to allow some provision going towards peasant proprietorship. These unlettered, but determined, people must be dealt with *now*; there is no such thing as "waiting till they are educated up to it." Therefore the wisdom of the economists is wisdom out of place, – rather, *relative unwisdom*. The people never *can* be educated, if their conditions are to remain what they were under the Diaz regime. Bodies and minds are both too impoverished to be able to profit by a spread of theoretical education, even if it did not require unavailable money and indefinite time to prepare such a spread. Whatever economic change is wrought, then,

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must be such as the people in their present state of comprehension can understand and make use of. And we see by the reports what they understand. They understand they have a right upon the soil, a right to use it for themselves, a right to drive off the invader who has robbed them, to destroy landmarks and title-deeds, to ignore the tax-gatherer and his demands.

And however primitive their agricultural methods may be, one thing is sure; that they are more economical than any system which heaps up fortunes by destroying men.

Moreover, who is to say how they may develop their methods once they have a free opportunity to do so? It is a common belief of the Anglo-Saxon that the Indian is essentially lazy. The reasons for his thinking so are two: under the various tyrannies and robberies which white men in general, and Anglo-Saxons in particular (they have even gone beyond the Spaniard) have inflicted upon Indians, there is no possible reason why an Indian should want to work, save the idiotic one that work in itself is a virtuous and exalted thing, even if by it the worker increases the power of his tyrant. As William Archer says: "If there are men, *and this is not denied*, who work for no wage, and with no prospect or hope of any reward, it would be curious to know by what motive other than the lash or the fear of the lash, they are induced to go forth to their labour in the morning." The second reason is, that an Indian really has a different idea of what he is alive for than an Anglo-Saxon has. And so have the Latin peoples. This different idea is what I meant when I said that the mestiza have certain tendencies inherited from the Latin side of their make-up which work well together with their Indian hatred of authority. The Indian likes to *live*; to be his own master; to work when he pleases and stop when he pleases. He does not crave many things, but he craves the enjoyment of the things that he has. He feels himself more a part of nature than a white man does. All his legends are of wanderings with nature, of forests, fields, streams, plants, animals. He wants to live with the same liberty as the other children of earth. His philosophy of work is, Work so as to live care-free. This is not laziness; this is sense, – to the person who has that sort of make-up.

Your Latin, on the other hand, also wants to live; and having artistic impulses in him, his idea of living is very much in gratifying them. He likes music and song and dance, picture-making, carving, and decorating. He doesn't like to be forced to create his fancies in a hurry; he likes to fashion them, and admire them, and improve and refashion them, and admire again; and all for the fun of it. If he is ordered to create a certain design or a number of objects at a fixed price in a given time, he loses his inspiration; the play becomes work, and hateful work. So he, too, does not want to work, except what is requisite to maintain himself in a position to do those things that he likes better.

Your Anglo-Saxon's idea of life, however, is to create the useful and the profitable whether he has any use or profit out of it or not and to keep busy, BUSY; to bestir himself "like the Devil in a holy water font." Like all other people, he makes a special virtue of his own natural tendencies, and wants all the world to "get busy"; it doesn't so much matter to what end this business is to be conducted, provided the individual – scrabbles. Whenever a true Anglo-Saxon seeks to enjoy himself, he makes work out of that too, after the manner of a certain venerable English shopkeeper who in company with his son visited the Louvre. Being tired out with walking from room to room, consulting his catalogue, and reading artists' names, he dropped down to rest; but after a few moments rose resolutely and faced the next room, saying, "Well, Alfred, we'd better be getting through our work."

There is much question as to the origin of the various instincts. Most people have the impression that the chief source of variation lies in the difference in the amount of sunlight received in the native countries inhabited of the various races. Whatever the origin is, these are the broadly marked tendencies of the people. And "Business" seems bent not only upon fulfilling its own fore-ordained destiny, but upon making all the others fulfil it too. Which is both unjust and stupid. There is room enough in the world for the races to try out their several tendencies and make their independent contributions to the achievements of humanity, without imposing them on those who revolt at them.

Granting that the population of Mexico, if freed from this foreign "busy" idea which the government imported from the north and imposed on them with such severity in the last forty years, would not immediately adopt improved methods of cultivation, even when they should have free opportunity to do so, still we have no reason to conclude that they would not adopt so much of it as would fit their idea of what a man is alive for; and if that actually proved good, it would introduce still further development. So that there would be a natural, and therefore solid, economic growth which would stick; while a forced development of it through the devastation of the people is no true growth. The only way to make it go, is to kill out the Indians altogether, and transport the "busy" crowd there, and then keep on transporting for several generations, to fill up the ravages the climate will make on such an imported population.

The Indian population of our states was in fact dealt with in this murderous manner. I do not know how grateful the reflection may be to those who materially profited by its extermination; but no one who looks forward to the final unification and liberation of man, to the incorporation of the several goodnesses of the various races in the one universal race, can ever read those pages of our history without burning shame and fathomless regret.

I have spoken of the meaning of revolution in general; of the meaning of the Mexican revolution – chiefly an agrarian one; of its present condition. I think it should be apparent to you that in spite of the electoral victory of the now ruling power, it has not put an end even to the armed rebellion, and cannot, until it proposes some plan of land restoration; and that it not only has no inward disposition to do, but probably would not dare to do, in view of the fact that immense capital financed it into power.

As to what amount of popular sentiment was actually voiced in the election, it is impossible to say. The dailies informed us that “in the Federal District where there are 1,000,000 voters, the actual vote was less than 450,000.” They offered no explanation. It is impossible to explain it on the ground that we explain a light vote in our own communities, that the people are indifferent to public questions; for the people of Mexico are not now indifferent, whatever else they may be. Two explanations are possible: the first, and most probable, that of governmental intimidation; the second, that the people are convinced of the uselessness of voting as a means of settling their troubles. In the less thickly populated agricultural states, this is very largely the case; they are relying upon direct revolutionary action. But although there was guerrilla warfare in the Federal District, even before the election, I find it unlikely that more than half the voting population there abstained from voting out of conviction, though I should be glad to be able to believe they did. However, Madero and his aids are in, as was expected; the question is, how will they stay in? As Diaz did, and in no other way – if they succeed in developing Diaz’ sometime ability; which so far they are wide from having done, though they are resorting to the most vindictive and spiteful tactics in their persecution of the genuine revolutionists, wherever such come near their clutch.

To this whole turbulent situation three outcomes are possible:

1. A military dictator must arise, with sense enough to make some substantial concessions, and ability enough to pursue the crushing policy ably; or
2. The United States must intervene in the interests of American capitalists and landholders, in case the

**And whether they be
victorious or defeated,
I, for one, bow my head
to those heroic
strugglers, no matter
how ignorant they are,
who have raised the cry
Land and Liberty, and
planted the blood-red
banner on the burning
soil of Mexico.**

peasant revolt is not put down by the Maderist power. And that will be the worst thing that can possibly happen, and against which every worker in the United States should protest with all his might; or

3. The Mexican peasantry will be successful, and freedom in land become an actual fact. And that means the death-knell of great landholding in this country also, for what people is going to see its neighbour enjoy so great a triumph, and sit on tamely itself under landlordism?

Whatever the outcome be, one thing is certain, it is a great movement, which all the people of the world should be

eagerly watching. Yet as I said at the beginning, the majority of our population know no more about it than of a revolt on the planet Jupiter. First because they are so, so, busy; they scarcely have time to look over the baseball score and the wrestling match; how could they read up on a revolution! Second, they are supremely egotistic and concerned in their own big country with its big deeds such as divorce scandals, vice-grafting, and auto races. Third, they do not read Spanish, and they have an ancient hostility to all that smells Spanish. Fourth, from our cradles we were told that whatever happened in Mexico was a joke. Revolutions, or rather rebellions, came and went, about like April showers, and they never meant anything serious. And in this indeed there was only too much truth it was usually an excuse for one place-hunter to get another one’s scalp. And lastly, as I have said, the majority of our people do not know that a revolution means a fundamental change in social life, and not a spectacular display of armies.

It is not much a few can do to remove this mountain of indifference; but to me it seems that every reformer, of whatever school, should wish to watch this movement with the most intense interest, as a practical manifestation of a wakening of the land-workers themselves to the recognition of what all schools of revolutionary economics admit to be the primal necessity – the social repossession of the land.

And whether they be victorious or defeated, I, for one, bow my head to those heroic strugglers, no matter how ignorant they are, who have raised the cry Land and Liberty, and planted the blood-red banner on the burning soil of Mexico.

The Commune is Risen

Voltairine de Cleyre

Mother Earth, March 1912

“They say ‘She is dead; the Commune is dead’;
That ‘If she were living her earthquake tread
Would scatter the honeyless hornets’ hive.’
I am not dead, nor yet asleep;
Nor tardy, though my steps seem slow;
Nor feeble from the centuries’ sweep;
Nor cold, though chill the north winds blow.
My legions muster in all lands,
From field, from factory, from mine,
The workers of the world join hands
Across the centuries and brine.”

Never since those lines were sung by the great unknown poet, whose heart shone red through his words, has the pulse of the world beat so true a response as it is beating now. We do not stand today as mourners at the bier of a Dead Cause, but with the joy of those who behold it living in the Resurrection.

What was it the Commune proclaimed? With what hope did it greet the world? And why did it fall?

The Commune proclaimed the autonomy of Paris. It broke the chain that fettered her to the heels of her step-mother, the State, – that State which had left her at the mercy of the Prussian besiegers, refusing to relieve her or allow her to relieve herself; that State which with a debt saddled upon the unborn bought off the Prussians, that it might revenge itself upon Paris, the beautiful rebel, and keep the means of her exploitation in its own hands.

The Commune was a splendid effort to break the tyranny of the centralised domination with which modern societies are cursed; a revolt at artificial ties, which express no genuine social union, the outgrowth of constructive social work, but only the union of oppression, – the union of those who seek to perfect an engine of tyranny to guarantee their possessions.

“Paris is a social unit,” said the communards; “Paris is, within itself, an organic whole. Paris needs no outside shell of coercion to hold it together. But Paris owes no

subservient allegiance to that traitorous tool at Versailles, which calls itself the government of France; nothing to those who have left us unaided to be mowed by the Prussian guns. And Paris repudiates Versailles. We shall fight, we shall work, we shall live for ourselves.”

This was the word of the Commune, spoken to the world in the wild morning of the year 1871.

And the hope it built upon was this: When France beholds Paris fighting, the dream of ‘48 will rise again; and all her communes will proclaim their freedom, even as we. And then we are bound to win, for the Versailles government cannot conquer a revolt which breaks out everywhere. And France once kindled, the peoples of other nations will likewise rise; and this monster, “the State,” which is everywhere devouring liberty, will be annihilated.



This was the hope that lit the eyes of the Commune with dreaming fire, that March day, forty-one years ago.

The hope was doomed to disappointment; within three months the glorious rebel fell. She had called, but the response did not come. Why? Because she had not asked enough. Because making war upon the State, she

had not made war upon that which creates the State, that to preserve which the State exists.

With the scrupulous, pitiful Conscience which Authority has cunningly bred in men, the Commune had respected property; had kept its enemy’s books, and duly handed over the balances; had starved itself to feed its foes; had left common resources in private hands. And when McMahon’s troops rode sabering through the streets of Paris, when Gallifet the butcher was dashing out children’s brains with his own devil’s hands upon her conquered pavements, the very horses they rode, the very sabres that cut, had been paid for by the murdered.

Every day, throughout the life of the Commune, the Bank of France had been allowed to transmit the sinews

of war to Versailles, the social blood been drained to supply the social foe.

What appeal could so suicidal a course make to downright human nature, which, even in its utmost ignorance and simplicity, would say at once: "Feed the enemy! And starve myself! For what then shall I fight?"

In short, though there were other reasons why the Commune fell, the chief one was that in the hour of necessity, the Communards were not Communists. They attempted to break political chains without breaking economic ones; and it cannot be done.

Moreover the Paris Commune was faced by a problem which will forever face revolting cities with a terrible question mark, – the problem of food supply. Only the revoltee in control of the food-sources themselves can maintain his revolt indefinitely. Never till the rebels of industrial fields have joined their forces with agrarian labour, – or seized the land and themselves made it yield – can industrial or political revolt be anything more than futile struggling for a temporary gain which will alter nothing.

And this is the splendid thing which we have lived to see, – the rebellion of the land-worker against the feudalism of Lord Syndicate; the revoltee maintaining himself upon that which he has wrested from the enemy; the red banner of the Commune floating no longer on the wall of a besieged city, but in the open field of expropriated plantations, or over the rock-ribbed, volcano- built forts, whereto the free-riding guerrilla fighter retreats after his dash against the lords of the soil.

I cannot speak for others. I cannot say how my comrades have felt during the long stagnant years, when spring after spring we have come together to repeat dead men's names and deeds, and weep over those whose bones lie scattered from Cayenne to New Caledonia. I know that for myself I often felt I was doing a weary and a useless thing, wearing out a habit, so to speak, – trying to warm my cold hands at a painted fire. For all these years since we of this generation have lived in America, there has been no stirring movement of the people of this continent to do a deed worth doing.

We have listened with curious fascination to our elders' stories of the abolition movement; we have welcomed the Russian revolutionists, and enviously listened to their accounts of deeds done or undone. We have watched the sharp crossing of weapons here and there in the ominous massing of Capital and Labour against each other all around us; but we have known perfectly well that there was little place for us in that combat, till it shall assume other lines than those which dominate it now, till it shall proclaim other purposes and other means.

All in vain it was for us to try to waken any profound enthusiasm in ourselves over the struggle of some

limited body of workers, asking for a petty per cent. of wage. We understand too well that such a fight determines nothing, is like the continuous slipping backward of the feet in an attempt to climb a hill of gliding sand.

But now has come this glorious year of 1911-12, this year of world-wide revolt. Out of the enigmatic East a great storm sweeps; and though but little of its real breadth and height is visible or comprehensible to us, we understand so much: the immemorial silence has been broken, the crouching figure has up-straightened. The sources of our information are such that we cannot tell whether the economic regeneration of enslaved China has actually begun, or the revolt is political merely as our reports make it appear. Whichever it may be, one thing is certain: China is no longer motionless; she is touched with the breath of life; she struggles.

Across the sea, in the island of our stolid forbears, a portentous sound has risen from the depths; in the roots of human life, in coal-caverns, Revolt speaks. And England faces Famine; faces the Property-system, faces a mighty army of voluntarily idle men; beholds the upper and the nether stone of economic folly, and feels the crunching of those merciless wheels, and underground the earthquake rumbles wide, – France, Germany, Austria – the mines growl.

And yet this mighty massing, inspiring and threatening as it is, is for a petty demand – a minimum wage! Such situations produce enlightenment; at any moment the demand may change to "The Mines for the Miners"; but as yet it has not come.

Only here in our America, on this continent cursed with land-grabbing syndicates, into whose unspoiled fatness every devouring shark has set his triple row of teeth, – this land whose mercenary spirit is the butt of Europe – only here, under the burning Mexican sun, we know men are revolting for something; for the great, common, fundamental economic right, before which all others fade, – the right of man to the earth. Not in concentrated camps and solid phalanxes; not at the breath of some leader's word; but over all the land, from the border to Yucatan, animated by spontaneous desire and resolution, in mutually gathered bands, as freemen fight, not uniformed slaves. And leaders come, and leaders go; they use the revolution and the revolution uses them; but whether they come or go, the land battle goes on.

In that quickening soil, the sower's response is ready; and the peasant uproots his master's sugar cane and tobacco, replanting corn and beans instead, that himself and the fighting bands may have sustenance. He does not make the mistake that Paris made; he sends no munitions to the enemy; he is an unlettered man, but he knows the use of the soil. And no man can make peace with him, unless that use is guaranteed to him. He has suffered so long and so terribly under the hell of land-

ownership, that he has determined on death in revolt rather than resubmission to its slavery.

Stronger and stronger blows the hurricane, and those who listen to the singing in the wind know that Senator Lodge was right when he said: "I am against intervention, but it's like having a fire next door."

That fire is burning away the paper of artificial land-holding. That fire is destroying the delusion that any human creature on the face of the earth has the right to keep any other from going straight to the sources of life, and using them. That fire is shooting a white illumination upon the labour struggle, which will make the futile wage war conducted in the United States look like baby's play.

Yes, honourable Senators and Congressmen, the house next door is on fire – the house of Tyranny, the house of Shame, the house that is built by Robbery and Extortion, out of the sold bodies of a hapless race – its murdered men, its outraged women, its orphaned babies.

Yes, it is on fire. And let it burn, – burn to the ground – utterly. And do not seek to quench it by pouring out the blood of the people of the United States, in a vile defence of those financial adventurers who wear the name American. They undertook to play the game; let them play it to a finish; let them stand man to man against the people they have robbed, tortured, exiled.

In short, though there were other reasons why the Commune fell, the chief one was that in the hour of necessity, the Communards were not Communists. They attempted to break political chains without breaking economic ones; and it cannot be done.

Let it crumble to the ground, that House of Infamy; and if the burning gleeds fly hitherward, and the rotten structure of our own life starts to blaze, welcome, thrice welcome, purifying fire, that shall set us, too, upon the earth once more, – free men upon free land, – no tenant-dwellers on a landlord's domain.

In the roar of that fire we hear the Commune's "earthquake tread," and know that out of the graves at Pere-la-chaise, out of the trenches of Satory, out of the fever-plains of Guiana, out of the barren burial sands of Caledonia, the Great Ghost has risen, crying across the world, *Vive la Commune!*

"Every person who ever thought he had a right to assert, and went boldly and asserted it, himself, or jointly with others that shared his convictions, was a direct actionist. Some thirty years ago I recall that the Salvation Army was vigorously practising direct action in the maintenance of the freedom of its members to speak, assemble, and pray. Over and over they were arrested, fined, and imprisoned; but they kept right on singing, praying, and marching, till they finally compelled their persecutors to let them alone. The Industrial Workers [of the World] are now conducting the same fight, and have, in a number of cases, compelled the officials to let them alone by the same direct tactics.

"Every person who ever had a plan to do anything, and went and did it, or who laid his plan before others, and won their co-operation to do it with him, without going to external authorities to please do the thing for them, was a direct actionist. All co-operative experiments are essentially direct action."

Voltarine de Cleyre, "Direct Action"

"The ordinary boss isn't in much dread of a "class-conscious vote"; there are plenty of shops where you can talk Socialism or any other political program all day long; but if you begin to talk Unionism, you may forthwith expect to be discharged, or at best warned to shut up. Why? Not because the boss is so wise as to know that political action is a swamp in which the workingman gets mired, or because he understands that political Socialism is fast becoming a middle-class movement; not at all. He thinks Socialism is a very bad thing; but it's a good way off! But he knows that if his shop is unionized, he will have trouble right away. His hands will be rebellious, he will be put to expense to improve his factory conditions, he will have to keep workingmen that he doesn't like, and in case of strike he may expect injury to his machinery or his buildings."

"Nearly all the laws which were originally framed with the intention of benefiting the workers, have either turned into weapons in their enemies' hands, or become dead letters, unless the workers through their organizations have directly enforced the observance. So that in the end, it is direct action that has to be relied on anyway."

Cornelius Castoriadis:

A Review

Nicolas Walter

Freedom, 15 August 1998

When Cornelius Castoriadis died, at the end of 1997, he received long and serious obituaries in his adopted France, just as his books had received long and serious reviews there, and he was acknowledged as a major figure of the left-wing intelligentsia. In Britain, it may be assumed, few people had even heard of him; but some attempts were made to introduce him to a wider English-speaking public, if only posthumously, through obituaries in a few papers (*The Times* and *Guardian*) and also reviews in a few others (*Times Literary Supplement*, *London Review of Books*, *New Statesman*). An obituary appeared in *Freedom*, and now here is a review

Castoriadis was a prolific writer for more than half a century, from the time he went to France from Greece in 1945. While he remained stateless he wrote under a series of pseudonyms in periodicals – especially in *Socialisme ou Barbarie* throughout its existence from 1949 to 1965—but after he obtained French citizenship in 1970 he produced a score of important books under his own name, first reprints of those earlier writings, and then collections of later writings. Some of his most important political writings had been published in English versions by the old Solidarity group, and later several of these and later writings were also published in English translations.

From the 1980s there have been American editions, either translations of individual books or new anthologies, and some of these are available in paperback. The most ambitious is the three volume collection of *Political and Social Writings* – Volume 1 (1988), “From the Critique of



Cornelius Castoriadis (1922-1997)

Bureaucracy to the Positive Content of Socialism,” 1946-1955; Volume 2 (1988), “From the Workers’ Struggle against Bureaucracy to Revolution in the Age of Modern Capitalism,” 1955-1960; Volume 3 (1993), “Recommencing the Revolution: From Socialism to the Autonomous Society” 1961-1979. These cover much the same ground as the cheap paperback collections published in France during 1973-9, and contain all the important writings – mostly first published in *Socialisme ou Barbarie* and including those published by Solidarity

– which trace his passage from Trotskyism through Marxism and socialism towards his eventual libertarian system.

The Imaginary Institution of Society (1987) is a translation of *L’Institution imaginaire de la société* (1975), which contains other writings dating from 1964 to 1975 and traces his passage onwards into psychoanalysis and linguistics. During the last twenty years of his life he produced a series of five books with the general title *Les Carrefours du labyrinthe* (1978-97), which collected his current writings and trace his passage onwards into mathematics, ancient history and pure philosophy. Only parts of these have appeared in English – *Crossroads in the Labyrinth* (1984) is a translation of the first volume; *World in Fragments* (1997) contains translations of items from the other four volumes. Meanwhile *Philosophy, Politics, Autonomy* (1991) contains translations of other writings dating from 1986 to 1991. Finally there is *The Castoriadis Reader* (1997) in the impressive “Blackwell Readers” series, a big British anthology

covering the whole range of his work from 1949 to 1996.

This work falls into three stages – or rather, states – as he wrote by turn in the persona of politician, psychologist, or philosopher. For ordinary readers, Castoriadis seemed to emerge from obscurity into clarity and return to obscurity again. The writings of his early period (roughly the 1940s and 1950s) are so dominated by Marxist terminology as to alienate non-Marxists, and those of his late period (roughly the 1980s and 1990s) are so dominated by esoteric terminology as to alienate non-academics, whereas those of his middle period (roughly the 1960s and 1970s) are more likely to appeal to a wider audience. The *Political and Social Writings* provide the most accessible if excessive introduction to the best of him, and *The Castoriadis Reader* provides the most convenient and comprehensive perspective of all his work.

One problem is that most of these books have been presented by David Ames Curtis, an American academic who is a totally dedicated impresario but not an entirely satisfactory editor or translator. (The leading figure in *Solidarity*, to whom the *Reader* is dedicated by way of his pseudonym “Maurice Brinton,” did better with the old versions of “Paul Cordon,” which were often improvements on the originals.)

Curtis has done an enormous amount of impressive work, supplying useful introductions and bibliographies as well as producing actual translations, but the combination of translatorial jargon and editorial schematism often seems to be in danger of burying the essential Castoriadis.

What is his essence? He reinterpreted Marx to argue that the essential division in modern society is a matter not of property or production but of power, between order-givers and order-takers. He

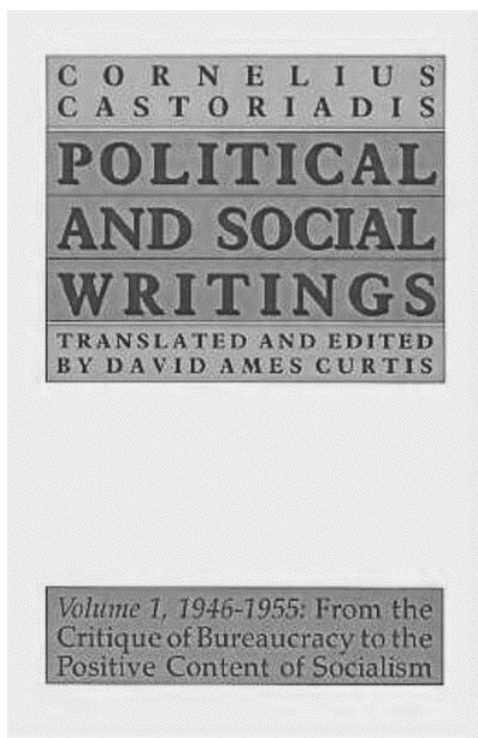
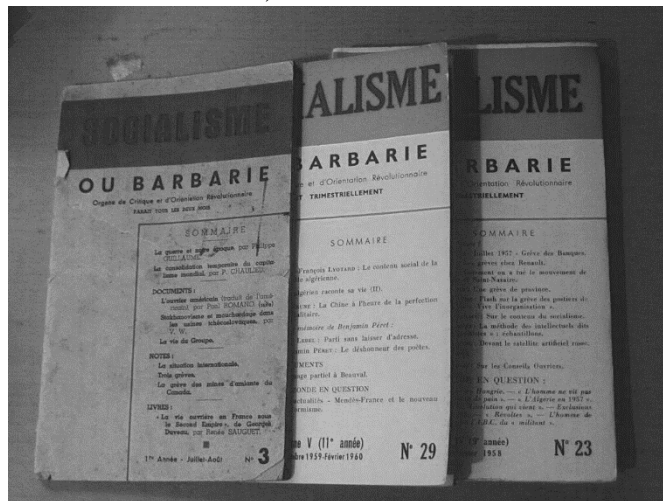
transcended Marx in arguing that this system is maintained by the emergence of ruling bureaucracies and that the solution is not a violent revolution or any kind of dictatorship, or perhaps even socialism at all. He emphasized the importance of individuality and imagination, of creativity and culture. He valued not so much liberty or equality as autonomy (self-direction) and

autogestion (self-management), private as well as public. And he looked forward to the development of genuinely free individuals in a genuinely free society. At the same time he looked backward to the thoughts and deeds of ancient Greece and inward at the nature of the human individual and outward at the principles of human society – like, as it

happens, his near contemporary libertarian Murray Bookchin who, as it happens, is the subject of *The Murray Bookchin Reader* also published in 1997.

When so many people pay superficial tribute to false prophets, how much better it would be to pay serious attention to this true thinker. Above all, perhaps, he recognized that the socialist project takes on a new meaning in a secular age. If nothing is safe or sacred, if there is nothing after death and nothing above humanity, if we are alone in time and space, it is up to us ourselves to make the best of our own lives, alone and together, here and now. He was in a way

his own worst enemy; he is never easy and often very difficult, and he was too clever for his own good and for his readers’ comfort, but he is always rewarding and sometimes inspiring. Yet what would such a person, so much aware of mortality, have thought of the fact that he is getting such attention only after his death, or, so much attached to the printed and spoken word, have thought that the quickest and simplest access to his work is now through the Internet?



What is Important?

Cornelius Castoriadis

Pouvier Ouvrier, March 1959¹

It is necessary to demolish the monstrously false idea that the problems that workers see are not important, that there are more important ones which only “theorists” and politicians can speak about.

In issue number three of *Worker's Power* [*Pouvier Ouvrier*] a schoolteacher asked the question: why don't workers write? He showed in a thorough manner that this is due to their total situation in society and also to the nature of the so-called “education” that is dispensed by the capitalist schools. He also said that workers often think that their experience “is not interesting”.

This last point appears fundamental to me and I would like to share my experience on it, which is not that of a worker but of a militant.

When workers ask an intellectual to talk to them about the problems of capitalism and socialism they find it hard to understand that we accord a central place to the workers' situation in the factory and in production. I have often had occasion to present the following ideas to workers:

- The way in which production is organised in a capitalist factory creates a perpetual conflict between workers and bosses around the production process.
- The bosses always use new methods to chain workers to the “discipline of production”
- Workers always invent new ways of defending themselves.
- This conflict often has more influence on the level of salaries than negotiations or even strikes do.
- The waste which results is enormous and for greater than that resulting from economic crises.
- Unions are always out of touch with and most often hostile to this kind of workers' struggle.
- Militants who are workers ought to spread all the important examples of this struggle outside the enterprise where they occur.
- Nothing is changed in this situation by the simple “nationalisation” of factories and “planning” of the economy.

- Socialism is therefore inconceivable without a complete change in the organisation of production in factories, without the suppression of the bosses, and the institution of workers' control.

These expositions were both concrete and theoretical – that is to say that each time they gave real and precise examples, but at the same time, far from being limited to description they tried to draw general conclusions. Here were facts of which workers evidently had the most direct and complete experience, and which also had profound and universal importance.

However, one could say that the listeners spoke little, and it appeared they felt deceived. They had come there to speak of or to hear important things, and it seemed difficult for them to believe that the important things were those that they did every day. They thought that they would be told about absolute and relative surplus value, of the decline in the rate of profit, of over-production and under-consumption. It seemed unbelievable to them that the evolution of modern society was determined more by the actions of millions of workers in all the factories of the world than by the grand economic laws, hidden and mysterious, which are discovered by theorists. They even disagreed that a permanent struggle between workers and bosses exists and that workers succeed in defending themselves; however, once the discussion got under way, what they said showed that they themselves fought such a struggle from the moment they entered the factory to the moment they left it.

The workers' belief that the way they live, what they do, and what they think “is not important” is not only something that prevents them from expressing themselves. It is the most serious sign of ideological servitude to capitalism. For, capitalism could not survive unless people were persuaded that what they do and know concerns only them, is unimportant, and that important things are the monopoly of the big shots and the specialists in various fields. Capitalism tries constantly to drum this idea into peoples' heads.

But it must also be said that it has been strongly aided in this task by workers' organisations. For a very long-time trade unions and leftist parties have tried to persuade workers that the only important questions concern either wages in particular, or the economy, politics and society in general. This is already false but there is worse to come. That which these organisations

¹ Translation: Tom McLaughlin, *Red Menace*, Winter 1979.

took to be “theory” on these questions and that which increasingly passed for such in the eyes of the public was not linked, as it should have been, to the experience of workers in production and social life, but became a so-called “scientific” theory increasingly abstract (and increasingly false). Certainly only the specialists – intellectuals and bosses – can and do speak of such a theory. The workers must simply keep quiet and try hard to absorb and assimilate the “truth” that the latter feed them. We thus reach two conclusions. The intense desire that many workers have to expand their knowledge and horizons, to gain a conception of society that will help them in their struggle is destroyed from the start. The so-called “theory” set before them seems to be in most cases a sort of higher algebra, inaccessible and frequently containing a litany of incomprehensible words that explain nothing. On the other hand, the workers have no verification of the content and truth of such a “theory”, its demonstration appears, they are told, in the four volumes of *Capital* and in the other immense and mysterious works possessed by the learned comrades in whom we must have confidence.¹

The roots and consequences of this situation go very far. It originates in a profoundly bourgeois mentality: just as

with the laws of physics, there are said to be laws of economics and society, “laws” which have nothing to do with the experience of workers. Rather, they are the property of the scientists and engineers who know of them. Just as only engineers can decide how to make a bridge, similarly only the engineers of society – leaders of parties and unions – can decide on the organisation of society. To change society is thus to change its “general” organisation, but that does not affect in the slightest what happens in the factories, since that “is not important”.

In order to move beyond this situation it is not enough to say to workers: speak, it is up to you to say what the problems are. It is necessary to demolish the monstrously false idea that the problems that workers see are not important, that there are more important ones which only “theorists” and politicians can speak about. We can understand society, but still less can we understand society if we do not understand the factory. There is only one way for this to happen: the workers must speak. To demonstrate this must be the first and permanent task of *Workers’ Power*.

Socialism and Capitalism

Cornelius Castoriadis

International Socialism (1st series), Spring 1961

It is a truly amazing fact how little discussion there is today among socialists about socialism. It is even more surprising that revolutionary Marxists claim that we ought to concern ourselves exclusively with the ‘practical’, ‘day-today issues’ of the class struggle, leaving the future revolution to take care of itself. This is disquietingly similar to Bernstein’s famous saying ‘the goal is nothing, the movement everything’. In fact, there is no movement except towards a goal, even if the goal has constantly to be re-defined as the movement develops; even if, for the working-class movement, the goal is not something as strictly defined as the bridge an engineer is planning to build.

Quotations from Marx against the Utopian socialists are frequently adduced for avoiding discussions about

To say, in 1960, that we can and should go no further than Marx amounts to saying that nothing has happened in the last eighty years. This is what some people – including many of our self-styled ‘Marxists’ – really seem to think

socialism. The use of quotations is, of course, not a proof. It is, in fact, the exact opposite: a proof that real proofs are lacking. No authority needs be quoted to prove that water, if left long enough on the fire, will boil. But what of the substance of the argument? Marx rightly polemicised against those who wanted to substitute minute and *unfounded* descriptions of the future for the actual class struggle. He did not, for all that, refrain

from stating his own conceptions about the programme of a proletarian revolution. In fact he appended the elements of such a programme to the *Communist Manifesto*. Neither did he miss any opportunity offered him, through the growth of historical experience or by the needs of the movement, to develop, elaborate or even modify his programmatic conceptions. Famous

¹ Only the first volume of *Capital* was published during Marx’s lifetime. The second and third were published after his death by Engels from his notes. Karl Kautsky the three-

part *Theories of Surplus Value* after Engels’ death and this is often referred to as its fourth volume. (*Black Flag*)

examples are his generalisation of the experience of the Paris Commune into the formula of ‘the dictatorship of the proletariat’ and his *Critique of the Gotha Programme*. To say, in 1960, that we can and should go no further than Marx amounts to saying that nothing has happened in the last eighty years. This is what some people – including many of our self-styled ‘Marxists’ – really seem to think. They will admit, of course, that many events have taken place; but nothing for them has *really* happened, in the sense that there are new lessons to be drawn from present experience. They see no need for changes in their programmatic conceptions. No wonder that theoretical and political stagnation go hand in hand, in this case, with organisational disintegration.

As a matter of fact, what has happened during the period we are discussing, and especially what has happened since 1917, is more important, we feel, than anything that has happened before in the whole of human history. The proletariat took power in an immense country. It victoriously withstood the attempts at a bourgeois counter-revolution. Then it gradually disappeared from the scene and a new social stratum, the bureaucracy, established its domination over Russian society and set out to ‘build socialism’ through the most ruthless methods of terror and exploitation. Contrary to all prognoses, including Trotsky’s, the Russian bureaucracy victoriously withstood the test of the biggest war in history. It is now disputing industrial and military supremacy with the USA.¹

After the war, the same bureaucratic regime established itself, without a proletarian revolution, in countries as diverse as Eastern Germany and Czechoslovakia on the one hand, and China, North Korea and North Vietnam on the other. If nationalisation of the means of production and planning are the ‘foundations’ of socialism, then obviously there need be no link between socialism and working-class action, except their sweating to build ‘socialist’ factories and to keep them running. Any local bureaucracy, granted favourable circumstances or some help from the Kremlin, could do the trick. But then, in 1956, the Hungarian workers undertook an armed revolution against the bureaucracy. They formed Workers’ Councils and demanded ‘workers’ management of production’. The question: ‘Is socialism nationalisation plus planning, or is it rather workers’ councils plus workers’ management of production?’ is no academic question. History posed it, four years ago, at the point of a gun.

Traditional ideas about socialism have in many ways been tested by events. There is no escape from the

result: if socialism equals nationalised property plus planning plus Party dictatorship, then socialism equals Khrushchev, his sputniks and his ‘butter in 1964’. In this case, the most you can do is to be an opponent within the regime, a critic in the Communist Party aiming at ‘democratising’ and ‘humanising’ these institutions! And why even do that? Industrialisation developed alright without democracy. A revolution, as Trotsky remarked, has its overhead costs. It is only natural for these costs to be reckoned in terms of heads. These developments are not only extremely relevant to any discussion about socialism; they are fundamental to our understanding of contemporary capitalism. In various capitalist countries basic sectors of production have been nationalised; in practically all of them, important degrees of State control and economic planning have been established. Capitalism itself – ‘orthodox’, western-type capitalism – has undergone tremendous changes. Most traditionally held ideas – for instance that capitalism can no longer develop production², that there is an inevitable perspective of booms and ever deeper slumps, that the material standards of living of the working-class cannot rise substantially and durably under capitalism, that a growing industrial reserve army is an unavoidable product of the system – all these still widely held ideas are disproved by the facts. Their supporters are forced to indulge in all sorts of verbal gymnastics in order to defend them. They daydream about the next big slump – which, for twenty years now, has been just around the corner – and which they feel will restore to them their mental comfort. These problems, posed by the evolution of capitalism, are intimately related to the programmatic conceptions of the socialist movement. The present ideological agony of the Labour Party (both ‘right’ and ‘left’) bears testimony to this fact. All this shows quite clearly that, as usual, it is the so-called ‘realists’ (who are reluctant to discuss socialism as it is obviously ‘a matter of the distant future’) who are blind in the face of reality, a reality which makes it imperative to re-examine here and now the fundamental problems of the movement. At the end of this article, we will try and show why it is impossible, without such a discussion, to take a correct stand on the most trivial day-to-day and down-to-earth practical problem. At this stage however it should be immediately obvious that no conscious movement can exist, which evades answering the question: what is socialism? This question is but the other side of another: what is capitalism? What are the real roots of the crisis of contemporary society?

¹ On the eve of the war, Trotsky was daily predicting that the bureaucracy would not be able to survive this supreme test, because of ‘the contradiction between the socialist foundations of the regime and the parasitic and reactionary character of the bureaucracy’. Today, the Trotskyists say that the increasing military power of Russia is the product of the ‘socialist foundations’. If you are unable to follow the logic,

apply this rule: when a sputnik is successfully put into orbit, it must have been launched right from the depths of the socialist foundations. When it explodes in mid-air, this is due to the parasitic character of the bureaucracy.

² This is stated in black and white in Trotsky’s *Transitional Programme*.

The traditional conception seems the crisis of capitalist society as the product of the private ownership of the means of production and of ‘the market’. A new stage of development of human society will start, it has repeatedly been claimed, with the abolition of private property. We can now see that this was an erroneous conception. In the countries of Eastern Europe there is no private property, there are no slumps and there is no unemployment, yet the social struggle is fought out no less fiercely than in the West.¹ Traditional thought had it that economic anarchy, mass unemployment, stagnation and miserable wages were both deep-rooted expressions of the contradictions of capitalism and the mainsprings of the class struggle. We see today that despite full employment and rising wages the capitalists have constant problems in running their own system and that the class struggle has in no way diminished.² People who, confronted with this situation, continue quoting old texts, can make no real contribution to the essential reconstruction of the socialist movement.

Traditional Marxism³ saw the contradictions and irrationality of capitalism at the level of the economy as a whole, not at the level of production. The defeat, in its eyes, lay in the market and in the ‘system of appropriation’, not in the individual enterprise or in the system of production, taken in its most concrete, material sense. The capitalist factory is of course affected by its relation to the market: it is absurd that it should produce unsaleable products or armaments. Traditional Marxism acknowledges, of course, that the modern factory is permeated with the spirit of capitalism: methods and rhythms of work are more oppressive than they need be, capitalism cares little about the life or physical health of the workers and so on. But *in itself*, the factory as it now stands was seen as nothing but efficiency and rationality. It is Reason in person, from the technical as well as from the organisational point of view. Capitalist technology is

Even in the society of the ‘freely associated producers’, Marx claims in volume III of *Capital*, man will not be free within production. The ‘realm of freedom’ will be established outside work, through the ‘reduction in the working day. Freedom is leisure, or so it would seem.

the technology – absolutely imposed upon humanity by the present stage of historical development, and relentlessly promoted and applied to production by these blind instruments of Historical Reason: the capitalists themselves. The capitalist organisation of production (division of labour and of tasks, minute control of the work by the supervisors and finally by the machines themselves) was seen as the organisation of production *par excellence*, since in its drive for profits it constantly had to adapt itself to the most modern technology and to ensure maximum

efficiency of production. Capitalism created, so to speak, the correct means, but used them to wrong ends. The overthrow of capitalism would gear this tremendously efficient productive apparatus towards the

right ends. It would use them for the ‘satisfaction of the needs of the masses’ instead of for the maximum profit of the capitalist. It would incidentally eliminate the inhuman excesses inherent in the capitalist methods of organisation of work. But it would not – it could not, according to this view – change anything, except perhaps in the very distant future, in the organisation of work and in productive activity itself, whose characteristics flow inevitably from the ‘present stage of development of the productive forces’.

Marx saw, of course, that the capitalist rationalisation of production contained a contradiction. It took place through the ever increasing enslavement of living labour by dead labour: man was alienated, in so far as his own products and creations – the machines – dominated him. He was reduced to a ‘mere fragment of man’ through the ever increasing division of labour. But this is, in Marx’s mind; an abstract, ‘philosophical’ contradiction: it bears on the fate of man in production, not on production itself. Production increases *pari passu* with the transformation of the worker into a mere cog of the machine, and *because* of this transformation. The objective logic of production has to roll over the subjective needs, desires and tendencies of men and has to ‘discipline’ them.

¹ Need we quote Eastern Germany, 1953, Poland and Hungary, 1956; China, 1957 and the echoes of daily struggles in Russian factories which find their way into the official Soviet press, including Khrushchev’s *published* report to the XXth Congress of the CPSU

² The *forms* of class struggle have changed, for deep-seated reasons, intimately linked up with the problems discussed in the text. But its intensity has not lessened. The interest of workers in traditional politics’, ‘left’ or otherwise, has declined. But unofficial strikes in Britain and ‘wildcats’ in the

USA are more and more frequent. Cf. P. Cardan in the current issue (No.31) of *Socialisme ou Barbarie*: “Revolutionary politics under modern capitalism.”

³ ‘Marxism’ here and later in the text is taken in its effective, historical sense of the ideas most prevalent in the revolutionary Marxist movement, and excluding philological subtleties and minute interpretations of one or other particular quotation. The ideas discussed in this text are rigorously those Marx propounded in *Capital*.

Nothing can be done about it: the situation flows inexorably from the present stage of technical development. More generally it flows from the very nature of the economy, which is still 'the realm of necessity'. This situation extends as far into the future as Marx cared to see. Even in the society of the 'freely associated producers', Marx claims in volume III of *Capital*, man will not be free within production. The 'realm of freedom' will be established outside work, through the 'reduction in the working day. Freedom is leisure, or so it would seem.

It is our contention that this 'philosophical' contradiction is the most real, the most profound and the most basic contradiction of capitalism. It is the source of the crisis of present society, both in the West and in the East. The 'rationality' of capitalist organisation is only apparent. All means are utilised to a single end: the increase of production for production's sake. This end in itself is absolutely irrational. Production is a means to human ends, not man a means to the ends of production. Capitalist irrationality has an immediate, concrete expression: to treat man in production as a means amounts to transforming him into a passive object, into a thing. But production is based upon man as an *active* subject – even on the assembly line. The transformation of the worker into a mere cog – which capitalism constantly strives towards but never succeeds in achieving comes into direct conflict with the development of production: were it ever fulfilled, it would mean the immediate breakdown of the productive process. From the capitalist point of view this contradiction expresses itself as the simultaneous attempt on, the one hand to reduce work into the mere execution of strictly defined tasks (or rather *gestures*) and on the other constantly to appeal to and to rely upon the *participation* of the worker, upon his capacity to understand and do much more than he is supposed to.

This situation is thrust upon the worker eight or more hours each day. He is asked, as one of our comrades in the Renault factory put it, to behave simultaneously 'as automaton and as superman'. It is the source of an unending conflict and struggle in every factory and workshop of the modern world. It is not affected by

'nationalisation' or by 'planning', by boom or by slump, by high wages or by low. This is the fundamental criticism socialists should today be levelling against the present organisation of society. In doing this, they would be giving explicit formulation to what *every* worker, in *every* factory or office, feels *every* moment of *every* day, and constantly expresses through individual or collective struggle.

In our society men spend most of their life at work – and work for them is both agony and nonsense. Work is agony because the worker is subordinated to an alien

and hostile power. This power has two faces: that of the machine and that of the management. Work is nonsense because the worker is confronted by his masters with two contradictory tasks: to do as he is told ... and to achieve a positive result! Management organises production with a view to achieving 'maximum efficiency'. But the first result of this sort of organisation is to stir up the workers' revolt against production itself. The losses in production brought about in this way exceed by far the losses produced by the profoundest slumps. They are perhaps of the same order of magnitude as total current production itself!¹

To combat the resistance of the workers, the management proceeds with an ever more minute division of labour and tasks. It rigidly

regulates procedures and methods of work. It institutes controls of the quantity and quality of goods produced and payment by results. It also proceeds by giving an increasingly pronounced class twist to technological development itself: machines are invented, or selected, according to one fundamental criterion: do they assist in the struggle of management against workers, do they reduce yet further the worker's margin of autonomy, do they assist in eventually replacing him altogether? In this sense, the organisation of production today, whether in Britain or in France, in the USA or in the USSR, is *class organisation*. Technology is predominantly *class technology*. No British capitalist, no Russian factory manager would ever introduce into his plant a machine which would increase the freedom of a particular worker or of a group of workers to run the job themselves, even if such a machine would increase production. The workers are by no means helpless in this struggle. They constantly invent methods of self-defence. They break the rules whilst officially keeping them. They organise informally,

Technology is predominantly *class* technology. No British capitalist, no Russian factory manager would ever introduce into his plant a machine which would increase the freedom of a particular worker or of a group of workers to run the job themselves, even if such a machine would increase production.

¹ See J.A.C. Brown, *The Social Psychology of Industry* (Penguin).

maintain a collective solidarity and discipline, create a new ethic of work. They reject the psychology of the carrot and the stick. Rate-busters as well as slackers are forced out of the shops.

With its methods of organising production, the management gets involved in an unending spiral of contradictions and conflicts, which go well beyond those caused by the resistance of the workers. The strict definition of tasks it aims at is nearly always arbitrary and irrational. Standards of work are impossible to define 'rationally' against the active opposition of the workers. Treatment of the workers as individual units contradicts the profoundly collective character of modern production. The formal and the informal organisation of the plant, of the flow of work, and of communications are permanently at variance with each other. Management of work is more and more separated from its execution. It is forced however to reproduce ideally within itself and *a priori* the whole process of production: on the one hand this is impossible; on the other it leads to the establishment of a huge bureaucratic apparatus within which, with the introduction of a further division of labour, the whole set of previous contradictions is repeated. Management separated from execution cannot plan rationally. It cannot correct in time the inevitable errors. It cannot compensate the unforeseeable; it cannot accept either that the workers should do these things or that they shouldn't! It is not properly informed, because the principal source of information – the workers at shop-floor level – organise a permanent 'conspiracy of silence' against the management. Management finally cannot really understand production because it cannot understand its principal spring: the worker. Let it be stated here briefly that this situation, this set of relations, is the prototype of all the conflicts in today's society. *Mutatis mutandis*, the above description of the constant chaos in a capitalist factory applies to the British government, to the European Common Market, to the CPSU, to the United Nations, to the American Army and to the Polish planning authorities.

The line taken by the management in the course of production is of course imposed on it by the fact that the organisation of production is today synonymous with the organisation of exploitation. But the converse is also

true: private capitalist or state bureaucracy are able to exploit because they manage production. The class division in modern society is increasingly stripped of its trappings and shown as the nucleus of class relationships in all societies: the division of labour between a stratum *directing* both work and social life, and a majority who merely *execute*. Management of production is not just a means for the exploiters to increase exploitation, it is the basis and essence of exploitation itself. Abstractly because as soon as a specific stratum takes over management, the rest of society is automatically reduced to the status of mere objects of this stratum. Concretely, because in the present social set-up, as soon as a dominating position is won, it is used to confer privileges (a polite name for the appropriation of surplus value). Privileges have then to be defended. Domination has to become more complete. This self-expanding spiral leads rapidly to the formation of a new class society. This (rather than backwardness and international isolation) is the relevant lesson for us of the degeneration of the October revolution. It follows inevitably from this that if the socialist revolution is to do away with exploitation and with the roots of the crisis of present society, it must immediately eliminate all distinct strata of specialised or permanent managers in various spheres of social life, and first and foremost in production itself. In other terms, it cannot confine itself to the expropriation of the capitalist; it must also 'expropriate' the directing bureaucracy from its present privileged positions. A socialist revolution will not be able to establish itself unless it introduces from its very first day workers' management of production.¹ The Hungarian workers confirmed this 1956. Workers' management of production was one of the main demands of the Hungarian Workers' Councils. Strangely enough, the achievement of working-class power has always been seen in the Marxist movement as the achievement of political power only. The fundamental power: power over production in day-to-day life, was always left out of the picture. Left opponents of Bolshevism correctly criticised the fact that the dictatorship of the party was replacing the dictatorship of the proletarian masses. But this is a small part of the problem, a secondary aspect. Lenin's 'programmatic conception' – as opposed to his practice² – was that political power should rest with the

¹ By 'socialism' we mean the historical period opening with the proletarian revolution and ending with communism. By thus defining Socialism we very strictly follow Marx. *This* is the *only* 'transitional period' between class society and communism. There is no other. It is not communism, insofar as some sort of 'state' and political coercion are maintained (the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'). There is also economic coercion ('he who does not work, neither does he eat'). But neither is it class society. Not only is the ruling class immediately eliminated, but also any sort of dominating social stratum. Exploitation itself is abolished. The confusion introduced by Trotsky and the Trotskyists in this field, through the insertion of an increasing number of 'transitional'

societies between capitalism and socialism (workers' states, degenerated workers' states, more degenerated workers' states etc. ...) must be exposed. The ultimate result of this confusion is to provide an ideological justification for the bureaucracy and to mystify the workers, by persuading them that they can be at one and the same time the 'ruling class' and yet ruthlessly exploited and oppressed. A society in which workers are not the ruling class in the proper and literal sense is not, and never can be, 'transitional' to socialism or to communism (except, of course, in the sense in which capitalism itself is 'transitional' to socialism).

² See the article "Socialism or Barbarism," in *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, No.1. (March 1949). A summary of this text has

Soviets, the most democratic of all institutions. But he was also relentlessly repeating, from 1917 until his death, that production should be organised along 'state-capitalist' lines. This was, and is, the most fantastic idealism. The proletariat cannot be slaves in production during six days of the week, and enjoy Sundays of political sovereignty. If the proletariat does not manage production, then necessarily somebody else does; and as production, in modern society, is the real locus of power, the 'political power' of the proletariat will rapidly be reduced to mere window dressing. Neither does 'workers control of production' offer any real answer to this problem. Either workers' control will rapidly develop into workers' management, or it will become a farce. Production, no more than the State, will tolerate long periods of dual power. The problem about what happens *after* the revolution has been proved by history to be of central importance to socialist thinking. It is right to say that almost everything depends upon the level of conscious activity and participation of the masses. It is almost axiomatic that a revolution does not take place unless this activity has reached extraordinary proportions. A bureaucratic degeneration only becomes possible if there is a reflux of this activity. But what causes this reflux? Here many honest revolutionaries lift their arms to heaven, saying they wish they knew.

One can offer no guarantees that a revolution will not degenerate. There are no recipes for maintaining a high level of activity among the masses. But one can firmly assert that certain factors will lead, and lead very quickly to a retreat of the masses from the scene. These factors are the emergence and consolidation, at the different points of social life, of individuals or groups who 'take charge' of society's common affairs.¹ An essential precondition for mass activity to be maintained at the necessary level is that the masses should see – not in speeches, but in the facts of their everyday life – that power really belongs to them, that they can change their practical conditions of existence. The first and most important field where this can be tested in their daily life is at work. Workers' management of production gives to the workers something which can be grasped immediately.

It is of immense relevance to themselves and to society; as a whole. It gives a concrete content to all political

recently been circulated in English under the title *Socialism Reaffirmed*.

¹ We do not intend to discuss here the developments in Russia after 1917, nor whether Lenin or the Bolsheviks 'could have done otherwise'. This is a perfectly void and sterile discussion. The important point to stress is the link between what was done and the final results. By 1919 the management of production and of the economy was already in the hands of

Workers' management does not mean, of course, that individuals of working-class origin are appointed to replace the present day managers. It means that the factory, at its various levels, is managed by the collectivity of the workers and other employees, including of course the technicians...

Workers' management will make it possible to start eliminating the fundamental contradictions of capitalist production.

issues. Without it, politics, even in a revolutionary society, will rapidly become what they are today: rhetoric and mystification. Workers' management does not mean, of course, that individuals of working-class origin are appointed to replace the present day managers. It means that the factory, at its various levels, is managed by the collectivity of the workers and other employees, including of course the technicians. Affairs affecting the shop or the department are decided by the assembly of workers of the shop or the department; routine or emergency problems are handled by stewards, elected and subject to instant recall. Co-ordination between two or more shops or departments is ensured by meetings of the respective stewards or by common assemblies. Co-ordination for the whole factory and contacts with the rest of the economy are the task of the Workers' Councils, constituted by delegates from the various departments. Basic issues are decided in general assemblies, comprising all the people working in the factory.

Workers' management will make it possible to start eliminating the fundamental contradictions of capitalist production. It will mark the end of labour's domination over man, and the beginning of man's domination over labour. It implies that each enterprise will be

'specialists'; management of political life was in the hands of the 'specialists in revolutionary politics', i.e. of the Party. No power on earth could under these circumstances have stopped the bureaucratic degeneration.

All these remarks are of direct relevance to the problem of the revolutionary organisation itself, and of its possible degeneration. All that is needed is to substitute in the text the word 'members' for the word 'masses'.

autonomous to the greatest possible degree, itself deciding all those aspects of production and work which do not affect the rest of the economy, and itself participating in those decisions which do concern the overall organisation of production and of the economy. The general plans of production will be decided by the whole working population.¹ These plans will ascribe to each enterprise the tasks to be accomplished in a given period, and the means will be supplied to it for this end. But within this general framework, workers of each enterprise will have to organise their own work. To anyone familiar with the roots of the crisis in contemporary industrial relations, to anyone who has examined the demands of workers and what their informal struggles are about, it is not difficult to see the lines which the re-organisation of production by the workers themselves will follow: externally imposed standards of work will certainly be abolished²; co-ordination of work will take place through direct contacts and co-operation; the rigid division of labour will start being eliminated through rotation of people between various departments and between various jobs.

Direct contact and co-operation between machine or tool-using departments and machine or tool-making department and factories will result in a change in the present situation of the worker in relation to the instruments of production. The main objective of today's equipment as we have already said, is to raise production through the increased subordination of the men to the machine. When the workers manage production, they will start adapting equipment not only to the needs of work to be done, but also and predominantly to the needs of the men who are going to do it: This will be the most important task confronting the socialist society: the conscious transformation of technology, so that man becomes for the first time history master of his productive activity. Work will cease to be 'the realm of necessity' and will become the very field where man exercises his creative power. Present science and technique offer immense possibilities in this direction, which lie fallow under capitalism. Of course, such a transformation will not take place overnight: but neither does it lie in a very distant and unpredictable future. It should not be left to take care of itself. It will have to be systematically undertaken as soon as working-class power is established. Its fulfilment will require a whole transitional period, which is nothing else but the socialist society itself (as distinct from the communist society).

This brings us to another fundamental point: the central *vales* of a socialist society, its basic orientation. Here

¹ Space does not permit us to discuss the problem of the general economic organisation of socialist society, of planning, etc. For those wishing a fuller treatment of these issues and of the problems of political organisation (workers'

again, we are not speaking about a misty future, but about the tasks a proletarian revolution will have to set itself immediately. We are not constructing *a priori* a new ethic or new metaphysics. We are simply endeavouring to formulate conclusions which to us seem to flow inevitably from the crisis of the values of present society, and from the attitudes of workers, both in the factory and outside.

It is our firm conviction that workers' management of production, the conscious transformation of technology, the government of society by Workers' Councils and democratic planning will tremendously increase the productive power and rate of growth of the economy. They will make possible rapid increases in consumption, the satisfaction of basic social needs and a reduction of the working day. But this is not, in our view, the substance of the matter; all these are but by-products, although important by-products, of the socialist transformation.

Socialism is not a doctrine about how to increase production as such. This is a fundamentally *capitalistic* way of looking at things. Neither is it true that the main preoccupation of the human race throughout its history has been to increase production at all costs. The fact that work is central to society, that relations of production are the main influence in shaping men's attitude to each other and to the world, is a very different matter.

Socialism is not about 'better organisation' as such, whether it be better organisation of production, of the economy or of society. Organisation for organisation's sake is the constant obsession of capitalism, both private and bureaucratic. And it is irrelevant *in this respect* that capitalism constantly meets with failure in this field.

The relevant questions, as far as Socialism is concerned are: more production, better organisation – at what costs? at whose cost? and to what end?

The usual reply we get today, whether it comes from Mr Nixon, Mr Khrushchev or the leaders of the Labour Party, is: more production and better organisation in order to increase both consumption and leisure. Let us look at the society around us. Men are subject to ever increasing pressures by those who organise production. They work like mad in factory or office, during the major part of their non-sleeping lives in order to get a three percent annual rise or an extra-day's holidays each year. In the end – and this is less and less of an anticipation – human happiness would be represented by a monstrous traffic jam, each family watching TV in

councils, etc.) see Pierre Chaulieu's article "On the content of Socialism" in *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, No.22 (July 1957).

² This was an explicit demand of the Hungarian Workers' Councils. It is the subject of constant struggle in every factory in the whole world.

its own saloon car¹ and sucking the ice-cream provided by the car's own refrigerator.

Consumption as such has no meaning for man. *Leisure as such* is empty. Nobody perhaps is more miserable in today's society than unoccupied old people, even when they have no material problems. An American and a French worker would agree that working-class Sundays reflect in themselves all the misery and emptiness of the working week which has just finished, and of that which is about to begin.²

Consumption today bears in itself all the contradictions of a disintegrating culture. 'Rising standards of living' are meaningless, for this rise has no end³ and society is organised to create more wants than people will ever be able to satisfy. 'Higher standards of living' are the mechanical rabbit used by capitalist and bureaucrat alike to keep people running. No other value, no other motivation is left to man in this inhuman, alienated society. But this stimulus also is contradictory and will sooner or later cease to function. This year's standards of living make last year's look ridiculous. Each income bracket is made to

look ridiculous by the one just above it. The content of present consumption is itself contradictory. Consumption, although full of social implications, remains anarchic (and no bureaucratic planning can take care of that) because the 'goods' are not goods-in-themselves, are not absolutes, but embody the values of *this* culture. People work themselves to a standstill to buy goods which, owing to this fact, they are unable to enjoy, or simply to use. Workers fall asleep in front of TV sets bought with overtime pay. Wants are less and less real wants. Wants have always been a *social* creation (we are not speaking now about biological needs, such as a certain number of dietary calories per day). Today's wants are increasingly synthesised by the ruling class. The serfdom of man has become manifest in consumption itself. Socialism is not, and cannot be,

¹ With current rates of increase in car sales, current degrees of immobilisation in traffic jams and the fall in TV production costs, it will certainly become an economic proposition for car manufacturers to install optional TV sets in cars, perhaps by 1970.

² See Paul Romano, "The American Worker," and D. Mothe, "The Workers and Culture," in *Socialisme ou Barbarie* (Nos. 1-6 and 30, respectively).

about more production and more consumption of the *present* type. This would lead, through innumerable links and casual connections, to simply more capitalism.

Socialism is about *freedom*. We don't mean freedom in a merely juridical sense, nor moral or metaphysical freedom, but freedom in the most concrete, down-to-earth sense: freedom of people in their everyday lives and activities, freedom to decide collectively how much to produce, how much to consume, how much to work and how much to rest. Freedom to decide, *collectively*

and individually, *what* to consume⁴, *how* to produce and *how* to work. Freedom to participate in determining the orientation of society, and freedom to direct one's own life within this social framework.

Freedom in this sense will *not* arise automatically out of the development of production. Freedom should not, for instance, be confused with leisure as such. Freedom for man is not idleness, but free activity. The precise content men give to their 'leisure time' is predominantly conditioned by what happens in the fundamental spheres of social life, and first and foremost in production. Leisure, in an alienated society, is in both form and content but one of the

expressions of alienation.

The 'increased possibilities of education for all' will not automatically produce freedom. Education *in itself* will solve nothing. In itself, education simply represents the mass production of individuals who are going to reproduce the same society, of individuals who are made to embody in their personalities the existing social structure and all its contradictions. Education today, whether in Britain or in Russia, whether given by the school or by the family, aims at producing people adapted to the present type of society. It corrupts the human sense of integration into society into a habit of subservience to authority. It corrupts the human sense of taking reality into account into a habit of worshipping established fact. It accepts a meaningless pattern of work, which separates, dislocates and distorts

³ This is exactly what Hegel used to call 'bad infinity' (*Schlechte Unendlichkeit*).

⁴ A genuine market for consumer goods, with 'consumers' sovereignty' will certainly be maintained or rather established for the first time in socialist society. See the previously quoted article by P Chaulieu.

physical and mental potentialities. The more education of the present type you supply, the more you will produce of the present type of man, with slavery built into him. The development of production as such, though it might induce 'material plenty' would not of itself bring about a change in man's social attitudes. It would not make the 'struggle of everybody against everybody' disappear. Generally speaking, this struggle is much harsher and more ruthless today in the USA than it is in an African village. The reasons are obvious: in contemporary society, alienation penetrates and destroys the meaning of everything, not only the meaning of work, but of all spheres of social and individual life. The only remaining value and motivation for men is higher (nor just high) and higher standards of material consumption. To compensate people for the increasing frustration they experience in work and in all other Social activities, society presents them with a new aim in life: the acquisition of ever more 'goods'. So the *distance* between what is effectively available to the worker and what society puts as the standard of consumption has been *increasing* with the rise in production and in actual living standards. This tendency and the corresponding 'struggle of everybody against everybody', will not stop until the present culture, its worship of consumption and its acquisitive philosophy – which have completely penetrated and dominated what passes as 'Marxism' today – are destroyed at their roots.

Private capitalism and bureaucracy alike use a common instrument to maintain people tied down to their work and in antagonism to one another. This is a systematic policy of wage differentials. On the one hand, of course, a monstrous income differentiation prevails as one moves up the bureaucratic pyramid, be it in the factory or in the State. On the other hand, artificial pay differentials, for people performing work very similar in regard to skill and effort required, are systematically

introduced in order to destroy class solidarity. When the class structure of society is destroyed, there will not be the slightest justification, economic or other¹ for retaining these differentials. No collective, democratic management of factory, economy or society can function among economically unequal people. The maintenance of income differentiation will immediately tend to recreate the present set-up. *Equal pay for all who work* must be one of the first rules a socialist society will have to apply. When, as revolutionary socialists, we try to define our *conception* of socialism we are doing no more than trying to define our

movement. Who are we? What do we stand for? On what programme do we want to be judged by the working-class? It is a matter of elementary political honesty. We state openly and without ambiguity or double-talk the goals we think the workers should fight for. But to speak openly on these matters is also of the greatest practical relevance – to the construction of a revolutionary organisation and to its development – and this for numerous reasons, only some of which can detain us here.

First of all: what is to be the relationship between the organisation and the working-class? If the object of the socialist revolution is to eliminate private property and the market in order to accelerate the development of

production, by means of nationalisation and planning, then the proletariat has no autonomous and conscious role to play. All means are good and proper that make of the proletariat an obedient and disciplined infantry, at the disposal of the 'revolutionary' headquarters. It is enough that the working-class be prepared – and induced – to fight capitalism to the death. It is irrelevant for it to know how, why, what for. The 'leadership' knows. The relation between party and class then parallels the relation between direction and execution. After the revolution, management and power rest with The Party which manages society 'on behalf of the workers'. This is the conception of Stalinists and

When, as revolutionary socialists, we try to define our *conception* of socialism we are doing no more than trying to define our movement. Who are we? What do we stand for? On what programme do we want to be judged by the working-class? It is a matter of elementary political honesty.

¹ It is impossible to discuss here the incredible sophistry with which so-called 'Marxists' have tried to justify income inequality whether in Russia or under 'socialism'. In this respect we would stress two points: a) the strict implementation of the 'pay-according-to-value-of-work-done' principle, advocated by Marx in the *Critique of the Gotha Programme* would lead at most to a pay differential of the order of 1 (unskilled manual work) to 1.25 or 1.5 (nuclear physicist). By 'value of the work done' we mean value in the

Marxist sense, as defined by the labour theory of value. b) inequality of wealth under socialism is usually justified on the grounds that society has to pay back to the skilled worker his training costs (including training years). The wage differentials in capitalist society pay this back many times over. The 'Principle' will be utter nonsense in a socialist society, because training costs will then not fall on the individual but will be paid by society itself.

Trotskyists alike.¹ The emergence of a bureaucracy is then absolutely inevitable.

But if the object of the socialist revolution is to institute workers' management of production, economy and social life, and to rule through the power of Workers' Councils, then the active and conscious *subject* of the revolution and of the whole subsequent social transformation can be none other than the proletariat itself. The socialist revolution can only take place through the autonomous action of the proletariat. Only if the proletariat finds in itself the will and consciousness necessary to bring about this immense transformation of society will this transformation take place. Socialism realised 'on behalf of the proletariat', even by the most revolutionary party, is wholesale nonsense. It follows that the revolutionary organisation is not, and cannot be, 'the leadership' of the class, but can only be an instrument in the class struggle. Its main task is, through word and deed, to help prepare the working-class for its historical role of managing society.

Secondly: how is the revolutionary organisation to function internally? Traditional parties are organised and function according to certain 'well proven' principles of efficiency, which are based on 'common sense': the division of labour between 'leaders' and 'rank and file', the control of the former by the latter at infrequent intervals and usually after the event (so that control, in fact, becomes ratification), specialisation of work, a rigid division of tasks, etc. This may be bourgeois common sense but it is sheer nonsense from a revolutionary point of view. This type of organisation is efficient only in the sense of efficiently reproducing a bourgeois state of affairs, both inside and outside the party. In its best and most 'democratic' form, it is nothing but a parody of bourgeois parliamentarism. In this field, the revolutionary organisation should apply principles created by the proletariat itself, in the course of its historic struggles: the Commune, the Soviets or

the Workers' Councils. There should be autonomy of the local organs to the greatest degree compatible with the unity of the organisation; direct democracy wherever it can be materially applied; eligibility and instant revocability of all delegates to central bodies having power of decision. Finally: what should be the attitude of the organisation regarding the day-to-day struggle? What should be its demands, both 'immediate' and 'transitional'? For the traditional organisations, whether these be reformist or 'Marxists', the struggle is viewed essentially as a means of bringing the class under the control and leadership of the party. For Trotskyists, for instance, what matters during a strike is to get the strike committee to apply 'the line' decided by the party executive. Strikes have often been doomed because the whole upbringing and mentality of party members makes them, quite unintentionally, see as their first objective their own control of the movement, and not its intrinsic development. These organisations see the struggle within the unions as primarily a struggle for the control of the union machine.

The demands advocated themselves reflect the reactionary ideology and attitude of these organisations. They do so in two ways. First, by talking *exclusively* about wage increases, about the fight against slump and unemployment, and about nationalisation, they focus the attention of workers onto reforms which are not only perfectly possible under capitalism, but are in fact increasingly applied by capitalism itself. These reforms are, in fact, the very expression of the bureaucratic transformation taking place in contemporary society. Taken as such, these demands tend merely to rationalise today's social structure. They coincide perfectly well with the programme of the 'left' or 'progressive' wing of the ruling classes. Secondly, by producing 'transitional' demands – sliding scales of wages and hours, workers' 'control', workers' militias, etc. – which are *deemed* to be incompatible with capitalism² but are not *presented* as such to the working-class, these

¹ This conception, scarcely camouflaged, can be found in the *Labour Review* (October-November 1960). An article by Cliff Slaughter entitled "What Is Revolutionary Leadership" contains, *inter alia*, an attack on the ideas of *Socialisme ou Barbarie*. The article contains nothing beyond the standard collection of platitudes on the 'necessity of iron-trained leadership', of the kind found in any Trotskyist article on the subject written in the course of the last twenty years. The author, moreover, follows the genuine tradition of Trotsky's epigones in carefully avoiding any attempt at understanding the ideas he criticises. The whole history of humanity, over the last forty years, is seen only in terms of the 'crisis of revolutionary leadership'. Not for a single moment does our author ask himself: what were the causes of this crisis? If the Party is the solution to this crisis and 'has to be built by those who grasp the historical process theoretically', why is it that the grasping Trotskyists have been unable to build it, during the last thirty years? Why have Trotskyist organisations disintegrated even in countries where, once upon a time, they had some force? Slaughter's 'refutation' of anti-bureaucratic

conceptions is based on the argument that consciousness is necessary for the overthrow of capitalism. Consciousness is then, quite naively, identified with the consciousness of the leaders of the party. The author finally betrays his basically bourgeois mentality by depicting the centralisation of bourgeois power, its organisation, its weapons, etc., and by demanding, in order to combat this 'a heightening of discipline and centralised authority to an unprecedented degree'. Not for a single moment does he suspect that *proletarian* centralisation and discipline – as exemplified for instance by a workers' council or a strike committee – represent a completely different thing from *capitalist* centralisation and discipline, of which he is constantly asking for more.

² In fact, some of them are not incompatible with capitalism: the sliding scale of wages is today applied in many industries and in various countries. But this manifestation of the Trotskyists' ability to live in an imaginary world is irrelevant to our main argument.

organisations tend to mystify and manipulate the working-class. The party, for instance, ‘knows’ or believes that it knows, that the sliding scale of wages will never be accepted by capitalism. It believes that this demand, if really fought for by the workers, will lead to a revolutionary situation and eventually to the revolution itself. But it does not say so publicly, – for if it did, it would scare the workers off, who are not ‘yet’ ready to fight for socialism as such. So the apparently innocent demand for a sliding scale of wages is put *forward* as feasible and ‘*known*’ to be unfeasible. This is the bait, which will make the workers swallow the hook and the revolutionary line; the party, firmly holding the stick, will drag the class along into the ‘socialist’ frying pan. All this would be a monstrous conception, were it not so utterly ridiculous. For a revolutionary organisation, there can be but one simple criterion in determining its attitude to the day-today struggles of the workers.

Does this particular form of struggle, this particular form of organisation *increase* or *decrease* the participation of the workers, their consciousness, their ability to manage their *own* affairs, their confidence in their *own* capacities, (all of which, by the way, are the *only* guarantees that a struggle will be vigorous and efficient, even from the most immediate and limited point of view)?

It follows that we stand unconditionally for *direct* decisions by assemblies of strikers on all the important issues, for strike committees *elected* and *subject to instant recall*,¹ and against the management of strikes by the union bureaucrats; for rank and file organisations; for the unconditional support of shop stewards and against all illusions of ‘reforming’ or ‘improving’ the bureaucratic apparatus of the trade unions.

It follows also that demands must be decided by the workers themselves, and not imposed on them by unions and parties. This of course does not mean that the revolutionary organisation has no point of view of its own on these demands or that it should abstain from defending this point of view when workers do not

accept it. It certainly does mean, however, that the organisation refrains from manipulating or forcing the workers into particular positions. The attitude of the organisation to particular demands is directly linked to its whole conception of socialism.

Let us give two examples: the source of oppression of the working-class is to be found in production itself and

The socialist revolution can only take place through the autonomous action of the proletariat. Only if the proletariat finds in itself the will and consciousness necessary to bring about this immense transformation of society will this transformation take place

socialism is about the transformation of these relations of production. Consequently, immediate demands related to *condition of work*, and more generally, to life in the factory, must take a central place, a place at least as important and perhaps even more important than wage demands.² In taking this stand, we not only express the deepest preoccupations of the workers today; we also establish a direct link with the central problem of the revolution, which is man’s place in the process of production. In taking this stand we expose the deeply conservative nature of all

existing unions and parties. Exploitation increasingly expresses itself in the hierarchical structure of jobs and incomes, and in the atomisation introduced into the proletariat through wage differentials. We must relentlessly denounce hierarchical conceptions of work and of social organisation; we must support such wage demands as tend to abolish or reduce wage differentials (e.g. *regressive* percentage increases, which give more to the man at the bottom, and less to the man at the top). In so doing, we increase, in the long run, the sense of solidarity within the working-class, we expose the bureaucracy, we directly attack the whole capitalist philosophy and all its values and we establish a bridge towards a fundamentally socialist rule.

These are the true ‘transitional demands’. Transitional demands in the sense given to the expression by Trotskyist mythology have never existed in history. In a given situation, demands which are otherwise ‘feasible’ within capitalism may become explosive and revolutionary (‘bread and peace’, in 1917, for instance); or immediate demands, supported by a vigorously waged class struggle, may undermine by their content the deepest foundations of capitalist society. The examples given above belong to this class.

¹ This might seem commonplace for Britain; it is certainly not on the Continent.

² It is of course no accident that unions and traditional political organisations remain silent on this problem, nor that

an increasing proportion of ‘unofficial’ struggles takes place in Britain and the USA around precisely these demands.

The Fate of Marxism

Cornelius Castoriadis

Socialisme ou Barbarie, April-June 1964¹

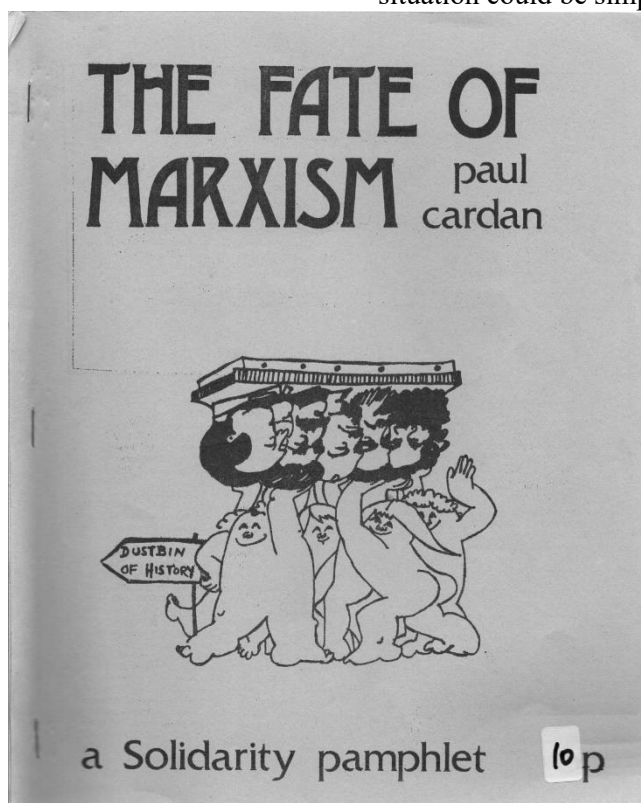
Which Marxism?

For anyone seriously concerned with the social question, an encounter with marxism is both immediate and inevitable. It is probably even wrong to use the word 'encounter', in that such a term conveys both something external to the observer and something that may or may not happen. Marxism today has ceased to be some particular theory or some particular political programme advocated by this or that group. It has deeply permeated our language, our ideas and the very reality around us. It has become part of the air we breathe in coming into the social world. It is part of the historical landscape in the backgrounds of our comings and goings.

For this very reason to speak of marxism has become one of the most difficult tasks imaginable. We are involved in the subject matter in a hundred different ways. Moreover this Marxism, in realizing itself, has become impossible to pin down. For with which marxism should we deal? With the marxism of Khrushchev or with the marxism of Mao Tse Tung? With the marxism of Togliatti or with that of Thorez? With the marxism of Castro, of the Yugoslavs, or of the Polish revisionists? Or should one perhaps deal with the marxism of the Trotskyists (although here too the claims of geography reassert themselves: British and French trotskyists, trotskyists in the United States and trotskyists in Latin America tear one another to pieces, mutually denouncing one another as non marxist). Or should one deal with the Marxism of the Bordighists or of the SPGB, of Raya Dunayevskaya or of CLR James, or of this or that of the still smaller group of the extreme 'left'? As I well know each of these groups denounces all others as betraying the spirit of 'true' marxism which

it alone apparently embodies. A survey of the whole field will immediately show that there is not only the abyss separating 'official' from 'oppositional' marxisms. There is also the vast multiplicity of both 'official' and 'oppositional' varieties each seeing itself as excluding all others.

There is no simple yardstick by which this complex situation could be simplified. There is no 'test of events which speaks for itself'. Both the marxist politician enjoying the fruits of office the marxist political prisoner find themselves specific social circumstances, and in themselves these circumstances confer no particular valid to the particular views of those who expound them. On the contrary, particular circumstances makes it essential carefully to interpret what various spokesmen for marxism say. Consecration in power gives no more validity to what a man says than does the halo of the martyr or irreconcilable opponent. For does not marxism itself teach us to view with suspicion both what emanates from institutionalized authority and what emanates from oppositions that perpetually fail to get even a toe hold in historical reality?



A Return To The Sources

The solution to this dilemma cannot be purely and simply a 'return to Marx'. What would such a return imply? Firstly it would see no more, in the development of ideas and actions in the last eighty years, and in particular in the development of social democracy, leninism, stalinism, trotskyism, etc, than layer upon layer of disfiguring scabs covering a healthy body of intact doctrine. This would be most unhistorical.

It is not only that Marx's doctrine is far from having the systematic simplicity and logical consistency that

¹ Translated by *Solidarity*, August 1966. Between 1964 and 1965 *Socialisme ou Barbarie* published (in its issues 36-40) an article by "Paul Cardan" entitled *Marxisme et Théorie Révolutionnaire*. *Solidarity* translated and published Part I ("La situation historique du marxisme et la notion d'orthodoxie" – "The historical fate of marxism and the notion of orthodoxy") as "The Fate of Marxism". Other sections were later published by *Solidarity*, Part II (which discussed "the marxist theory of history") appeared as the pamphlet "History and Revolution" (1971) and Parts III and IV as "History as Creation" (1978). (*Black Flag*)

certain people would like to attribute to it. Nor is it that such a 'return to the sources' would necessarily have something academic about it (at best it could only correctly re-establish the theoretical content of a doctrine belonging to the past – as one might attempt to do, say, for the writings of Descartes or St. Thomas Aquinas). Such an endeavour could leave the main problem unsolved, namely that of discovering the significance of Marxism for contemporary history and for those of us who live in the world of today.

The main reason why a 'return to Marx' is impossible is that under the pretext of faithfulness to Marx – and in order to achieve this faithfulness – such a 'return' would have to start by violating one of the essential principles enunciated by Marx himself. Marx was, in fact, the first to stress that the significance of a theory cannot be grasped independently of the historical and social practice which it inspires and initiates, to which it gives rise, in which it prolongs itself and under cover of which a given practice seeks to justify itself.

Who, today, would dare proclaim that the only significance of Christianity for history is to be found in reading unaltered versions of the Gospels or that the historical practice of various Churches over period of some 2,000 years can teach us nothing fundamental about the significance of this religious movement? A 'faithfulness to Marx' which would see the historical fate of marxism as something unimportant would be just as laughable. It would in fact be quite ridiculous. Whereas for the Christian the revelations of the Gospels have a transcendental and an intemporal validity, no theory could ever have such qualities in the eyes of a marxist. To seek to discover the meaning of marxism only in what Marx wrote (while keeping quiet about what the doctrine has become in history) is to pretend – in flagrant contradiction with the central ideas of that doctrine – that real history doesn't count and that the truth of a theory is always and exclusively to be found 'further on'. It finally comes to replacing revolution by revelation and the understanding of events by the exegesis of texts.

All this would be bad enough. But there is worse. The insistence that a revolutionary theory be confronted, at all stages, by historical reality¹ is explicitly proclaimed in Marx's writings. It is in fact part of the deepest meaning of Marxism. Marx's marxism did not seek to be – and could not be – just one theory among others. It did not seek to hide its historical roots or to dissociate itself from its historical repercussions. Marxism was to provide the weapons not only for interpreting the world but for changing it.² The fullest meaning of the theory

¹ By 'historical reality' we obviously don't mean particular events, separated from all others. We mean the dominant tendencies of social evolution, after all the necessary interpretations have been made.

² K. Marx. Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach.

was, according to the theory itself, that it gave rise to and inspired a revolutionary practice. Those who, seeking to exculpate marxist theory, proclaim that none of the historical practices which for 100 years have claimed to base themselves on marxism are 'really' based on marxism, are in fact reducing marxism to the status of a mere theory, to the status of a theory just like any other. They are submitting marxism to an irrevocable judgment. They are in fact submitting it, quite literally, to a 'Last Judgment'. For did not Marx thoroughly accept Hegel's great idea: 'Weltgeschichte ist Weltgericht'.³

Marxism As Ideology

Let us look at what happened in real life. In certain stages of modern history a practice inspired by marxism has been genuinely revolutionary. But in more recent phases of history it has been quite the opposite. And while these two phenomena need interpreting (and we will return to them) they undoubtedly point to the fundamental ambivalence of marxism. It is important to realise that in history, as in politics, the present weighs far more than the past. And for us, the present can be summed up in the statement that for the last 40 years Marxism has become an *ideology* in the full meaning that Marx himself attributed to this word. It has become a system of ideas which relate to reality not in order to clarify it and to transform it, but on the contrary in order to mask it and to justify it in the abstract.

It has become a means of allowing people to say one thing and to do another, to appear other than they are.

In this sense marxism first became ideology when it became Establishment dogma in countries paradoxically called 'socialist'. In these countries 'marxism' is invoked by governments which quite obviously do not incarnate working class power and which are no more controlled by the working class than is any bourgeois government. In these countries 'marxism' is represented by 'leaders of genius' – whom their successors call 'criminal lunatics' without more ado. 'Marxism' is proclaimed the ideological basis of Tito's policies *and* of those of the Albanians, of Russian policies *and* of those of the Chinese. In these countries marxism has become what Marx called the 'solemn complement of justification'. It permits the compulsory teaching of 'State and Revolution' to students, while maintaining the most oppressive and rigid state structures known to history. It enables a self-perpetuating and privileged bureaucracy to take refuge behind talk of the 'collective ownership of the means of production' and of 'abolition of the profit motive'.

³ 'Universal History is the Last Judgment'. Despite its theological form, this statement, expresses one of Hegel's most radically atheistic ideas. It means that there is nothing transcendental; that there is no appeal against what happens here and now. We are, definitively, what we are in the process of becoming, what we shall have become.

But marxism has also become ideology in so far as it represents the doctrine of the numerous sects, proliferating on the decomposing body of the 'official' marxist movement. For us the word sect is not a term of abuse. It has a precise sociological and historical meaning. A small group is not necessarily a sect. Marx and Engels did not constitute a sect, even when they were most isolated. A sect is a group which blows up into an absolute a single side, aspect or phase of the movement from which it developed, makes of this the touchstone of the truth of its doctrine (or of the truth, full stop), subordinates everything else to this 'truth' and in order to remain 'faithful' to it is quite prepared totally to separate itself from the real world and henceforth to live in a world of its own. The invocation of marxism by the sects allows them to think of themselves and to present themselves as something other than what they are, namely as the future revolutionary party of that very proletariat in which they never succeed in implanting themselves.

Finally marxism has become ideology in yet another sense. For several decades now it has ceased to be a *living* theory. One could search the political literature of the last 30 years in vain even to discover fruitful applications of the theory, let alone attempts to extend it or to deepen it.

We don't doubt that what we are now saying will provoke indignant protests among those who, while professing to 'defend Marx', daily bury his corpse a little deeper under the thick layers of their distortions and stupidities. We don't care. This is no personal quarrel. In analysing the historical fate of marxism we are not implying that Marx had any kind of moral responsibility for what happened. It is marxism itself, in what was best and most revolutionary in it, namely its pitiless denunciation of hollow phrases and ideologies and its insistence on permanent self-criticism, which compels us to take stock of what marxism has become in real life.

It is no longer possible to maintain or to rediscover some kind of 'marxist orthodoxy'. It can't be done in the ludicrous (and ludicrously linked) way in which the task is attempted by the high priests of stalinism and by the sectarian hermits, who see marxist doctrine which they presume intact, but 'amend', 'improve' or 'bring up to date' on this or that specific point, at their

convenience. Nor can it be done in the dramatic and ultimatic way suggested by Trotsky in 1940¹ who said, more or less: 'We know that marxism is an imperfect theory linked to a given period of history. We know that theoretical elaboration should continue. But today, the revolution being on the agenda, this task will have to wait'. This argument is conceivable – although superfluous – on the eve of an armed insurrection. Uttered a quarter of a century later it can only serve to mask the inertia and sterility of the trotskyst movement, since the death of its founder.

A Marxist 'Method'?

Some will agree with us so far, but will seek final refuge in the defence of a 'marxist method' allegedly unaffected by what we have just discussed. It is not possible, however, to maintain 'orthodoxy' as Lukacs attempted long before them (in 1919 1 precise), by limiting it to a marxist *method*, which could somehow be separated from its content and which could somehow be neutral in relation to its content.²

Although a step forward in relation to various kinds of 'orthodox' cretinism, Lukacs' position is basically untenable. It is untenable for a reason which Lukacs forgets, despite his familiarity with dialectical thinking, namely that it is impossible, except if one takes the term 'method' at its most superficial level, to separate a method from its content particularly when one is dealing with historical and social theory.

A method, in the philosophical sense, is defined by the sum total of the categories it uses. A rigid distinction between method and content only belongs to the more naive forms of transcendental idealism (or 'criticism'). In its early stages this method of thought sought to separate and to oppose matter or content (which were

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¹ In his 'In Defence of Marxism'.

² See the essay 'What Is Orthodox Marxism?' Lukacs' book 'History and Class Consciousness. An English translation of

this essay was recently published by *International Socialism*, Nos. 24 and 25. C. Wright Mills adopts a rather similar viewpoint in his book *The Marxists*.

infinite and undefined) to certain finite operative categories. According to this permanent flux of the subject matter could not alter the basic categories which were seen as the form without which the subject matter could not be grasped or comprehended.

But this rigid distinction between material and category is already transcended in the more advanced stages of 'criticist' thought, when it comes under the influence of dialectical thought. Formerly the problem arises: how do we determine which is the appropriate analytical category for this or that type of raw material? If the raw carries within itself the appropriate 'hallmark' allowing it to be placed in this or that it is not just 'amorphous'; and if it is genuinely amorphous then it could indifferently be in one category or in another and the distinction between true and false breaks down. It is precisely this contradiction which, at several times in the history of philosophy, has led from a 'criticist' type of thinking to thinking of a dialectical type.¹

This is how the question is posed at the level of logic. When one considers the growth of knowledge as *history*, one sees that it was often the 'development of the subject matter' that led to a revision of the previously accepted categories or even to their being exploded and superseded. The 'philosophical' revolutions produced in modern physics by relativity theory or by quantum theory are just two examples among many.²

The impossibility of establishing a rigid separation between method and content, between categories and raw material becomes even more obvious when one passes from knowledge of the physical world to understanding of history. A deeper enquiry into already available material – or the discovery of new material – may lead to a modification of the categories and therefore of the method. But there is, in addition, something much more fundamental, something highlighted precisely by Marx and by Lukacs themselves.³ This is the fact that *the categories through which we approach and apprehend history are themselves real products of historical development*. These categories can only become clear and effective methods of historical knowledge when they have to

some extent become incarnated or fulfilled in *real* forms of social life.

Let us give a simple example. In the thinking of the ancient Greeks the dominant categories defining social relations and history were essentially *political* (the power of the city, relations between cities, relations between 'might' and 'right', etc.). The economy only received marginal attention. This was not because the intelligence or insight of the Greeks were less 'developed' than those of modern man. Nor was it because there were no economic facts, or because economic facts were totally ignored. It was because in the social reality of that particular epoch the economy had not yet become a separate, autonomous factor (a

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factor 'for itself' as Marx would say) in human development. A significant analysis of the economy and of its importance for society could only take place in the 17th century and more particularly in the 18th century. It could only take place in parallel with the real development of capitalism which made of the economy the dominant element in social life. The central importance attributed by Marx and the marxists to economic factors is but an aspect of the unfolding of this historical reality.

It is therefore clear that there cannot exist a 'method' of approaching history, which could remain immune from the actual development of history. This is due to reasons far more profound than the 'progress of knowledge' or than 'new discoveries' etc. It is due to reasons pertaining directly to the very structure of historical knowledge, and first of all to the structure of its object: the mode of being of history. What is the object we are trying to know when we study history? What is history? History is inseparable from meaning. Historical facts are historical (and not natural, or biological) inasmuch as they are interwoven with meaning (or sense). The development of the historical world is, *ipso facto*, the development of a universe of meaning. Therefore, it is impossible radically to separate fact from meaning (or

¹ The classical example of such a transition is the passage from Kant to Hegel, via Fichte and Schelling. But the basic pattern can be discerned in the later works of Plato, or among the neo-Kantians, from Rickert to Last.

² It is obviously not just a question of turning things upside down. Neither logically nor historically have the categories of physics been 'simply a result' (and even less 'simply a reflection') of the subject matter. A revolution in the realm of

categories may allow one to grasp raw material which hitherto defied definition (as happened with Galileo). Moreover advances in experimental technique may at times 'compel' new material to appear. There is therefore a two-way relationship – but certainly no independence – between categories and subject matter.

³ See Lukacs *The Changing Function of Historical Materialism* (loc. cit.).

sense), or to draw a sharp logical distinction between the categories we use to understand the historical material, and the material itself. And, as this universe of meaning provides the environment in which the 'subject' of the historical knowledge (i.e. the student of history) lives, it is also necessarily the means by which he grasps, in the first instance, the whole historical material. No epoch can grasp history except through its own ideas about history; but these ideas are themselves a product of history and part and parcel of the historical material (which will be studied as such by the next epoch). Plainly speaking the method of the biologist is not a biological phenomenon; but the method of the historian is a historical phenomenon.¹

Even these comments have however to be seen in proper perspective. They don't imply that at every moment, every category and every method are thrown into question. Every method is not transcended or ruined by the development of real history at the very instant it is being utilized. At any given moment, it is always a practical question of knowing if historical change has reached a point where the old categories and the old method have to be reassessed. But this judgment cannot be made independently of a discussion of the content. In fact such an assessment is nothing other than a discussion on content which, starting with the old categories, comes to show, through its dealings with the raw material of history, that one needs to go beyond a particular set of categories.

Many will say: 'to be marxist is to remain faithful to Marx's *method*, which remains valid'. This is tantamount to saying that nothing has happened in the history of the last 100 years which either permits one or challenges one to question Marx's categories. It is tantamount to implying that everything will forever be understood by these categories. It is to take up a position in relation to content and categories, to have a static, non-dialectical theory concerning this

relationship, while at the same time refusing openly to admit it.

Conclusions

In fact, it is precisely the detailed study content of recent history which compelled us to reconsider the categories – and therefore the method of marxism. We have questioned these categories not only (or not so

much) because this or that particular theory of Marx – or of traditional marxism – had been proved 'wrong' in real life, but because we felt that history as we were living it could no longer be grasped through these traditional categories, either in their original form² or as 'amended' or 'enlarged' by post-marx marxists. The course of history, we felt, could neither be grasped, *nor changed*, by these methods.

Our re-examination of marxism does not take place in a vacuum. We don't speak from just anywhere or from nowhere at all. We started from revolutionary marxism. But we have now reached the stage where a choice confronts

Our re-examination of marxism does not take place in a vacuum. We don't speak from just anywhere or from nowhere at all. We started from revolutionary marxism. But we have now reached the stage where a choice confronts us: to remain marxists or to remain revolutionaries.

us: to remain marxists or to remain revolutionaries. We to choose between faithfulness to a doctrine which, for a considerable period now, has no longer been animated by any new thought or any meaningful action, and faithfulness to our basic purpose revolutionaries, which is a radical and total formation of society.

Such a radical objective requires first of all that one should understand that which one seeks to transform. It requires that one identifies what elements, in contemporary society, genuine challenge its fundamental assumptions and are in basic (and not merely superficial) conflict with its present structure. But one must go further. Method is not separable from content. Their unity, namely theory, is in its turn not separable from the requirements of revolutionary action. And anyone looking at the real world, must conclude that meaningful revolutionary action can no longer be guided by traditional theory. This has been amply demonstrated for several decades now both by the experience of the mass parties of the 'left', and by the experience of the sects.

modern world and of the means of changing it. The subject is discussed in detail in an article *Recommencer la Revolution* (published in January 1964 in issue No.25 of *Socialisme ou Barbarie*) of which we hope to publish extracts in forthcoming issues.

¹ These considerations are developed more on p. 20 et seq. of the French text.

² In the present article we cannot enter into a detailed discussion as to which of the concepts of classical marxism have today to be discarded for a real grasp of the nature of the

The Crisis of Modern Society

Cornelius Castoriadis

This pamphlet is based on a talk given by Paul Cardan at Tunbridge Wells, Kent, in May 1965

1. Introduction

The theme of the discussion today is ‘the crisis of modern society’. I would like to start by evoking what appears to be a fantastic paradox concerning modern industrial society and the way people live and act in it. It is the contradiction between the apparent omnipotence of humanity over its physical environment (the fact that technique is becoming more and more powerful, that physical conditions are increasingly controlled, that we are able to extract more and more energy from matter) and, on the other hand, the tremendous chaos and sense of impotence concerning the proper affairs of society, the human affairs, the way social systems work, etc.

Let me give one or two examples. Today a scientist can tell you roughly how many galaxies exist within a radius of 6 billion light-years from the solar system. But Mr Macmillan, then Prime Minister, did not know what was happening next door, during the Profumo affair. This may seem just a joke but it epitomizes the whole situation in a rather striking manner. In the same way we are able to extract enormous amounts of energy out of tiny bits of matter, yet if in a factory or any other organization bosses try to extract one additional movement from the workers there is tremendous resistance, and eventually they may not succeed.

This is not to say that from the point of view of what one might call the ‘internal environment’ of society there have not been changes, in some sense even big, progressive changes. So called prosperity is more general than it was (though one ought to see more precisely what this prosperity consists of). There is a spreading of culture. There is an expanding society. There is better health and so on. But here we meet a second paradox. It is that this society which produces so

much — and where the population has, to some extent, a share in this expansion of wealth — that this society which has apparently created less cruel living conditions for most of the people who live in it, does not present an image of greater satisfaction, of greater happiness for a greater number of people. People are dissatisfied, people are grumbling, people are protesting, constant conflicts exist. Even if dissatisfaction takes on different forms, this richer and

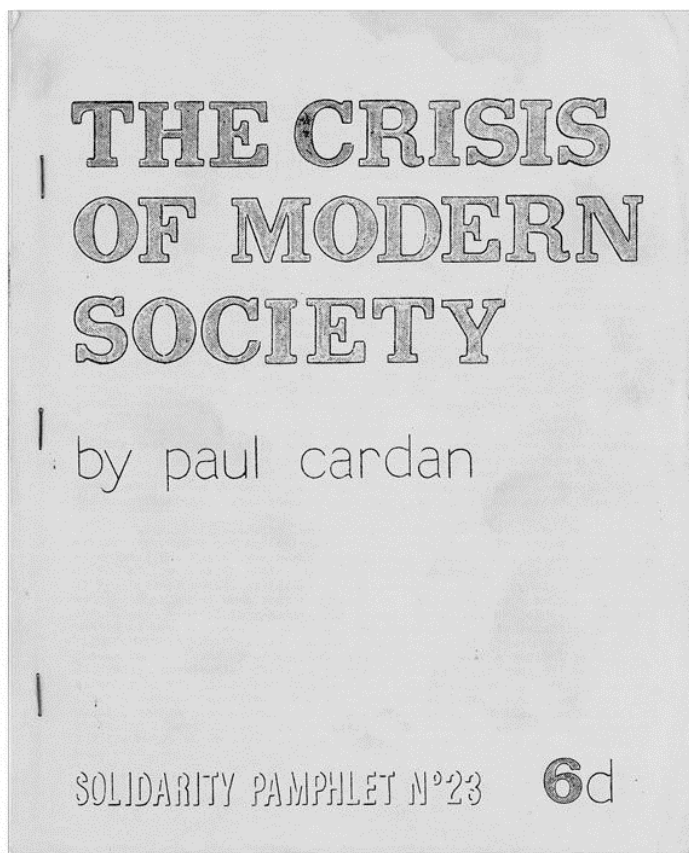
more prosperous society possibly contains more tensions within it than most other societies we have known in history.

These paradoxes offer a first way of defining the crisis of modern society. But this is a superficial way of looking at the phenomena which confront us. If we go a bit deeper, we’ll see that the crisis manifests itself at all levels of social life.

2. The Crisis of Values

Let’s start from an aspect which traditional Marxists consider just part of the ‘superstructure’ of society, as a derived and secondary phenomenon, but which we consider to be very important, i.e. the crisis of social and human values.

No society can exist without a set of values which are recognized in practice and adhered to by the quasi-totality of its members. The problem here is not to know if these values are right or wrong — or whether they conceal real mechanisms whereby some people succeed in exploiting others. For the cohesion, for the working of all the societies we have known — even of societies divided into classes — such a set of values has proved necessary. They are what constantly orients the actions and motives of people and makes them cohere into a social whole. This function cannot be ensured just by violence or coercion, nor even just by the penal law, which says ‘you ought not to do this, otherwise you go to prison’. There must be something more. After all the law only states what is prohibited. It cannot provide



positive motives, a positive orientation enabling people to fill the content of social life.

Now we all know (it has been said for a long time but this does not diminish the importance of the phenomenon) that such a set of values, such a system of accepted goals and common beliefs as to what is right and what is wrong, what ought to be done or not done (irrespective of what the penal law says) hardly exists any more in today's society.

There was a problem in all societies, in all historical phases, about the place of man in the world and about the meaning of life in society and of life in general. Every period of history attempted to give an answer to these questions. The problem here is not whether these answers were right or wrong but the mere fact that an answer was forthcoming gave a cohesion, a sense of purpose, a sense of meaning to the people living in these periods. But today there is no clear answer. We know very well that religious values are out, for all purposes practically finished. What used to be called moral values (inasmuch as they can be distinguished from religious values) are also practically finished. Are there really any accepted moral standards left in today's society?

At the level of officiality, of the powers that be, of the press, etc, there is just an official hypocrisy which almost explicitly recognizes itself as sheer hypocrisy, and does not even take its own standards seriously. And in society at large there is an extremely widespread cynicism, constantly fed by the examples provided by social life (scandals and so on). The general idea is that you can do anything and that nothing is wrong, provided you can get away with it, provided that you are not caught.

What in Western Europe had appeared for some time to be a sort of universal value welding society together, namely the idea of the nation, of national power, of national grandeur, is no longer an accepted value. What was after all its real basis — or the pretence of a real basis — has disappeared. In the past it was often a mystification when great nations pretended that they were playing important roles in world affairs. But today no nation can claim this except for America and Russia. And even for them this 'leading role in world affairs' is clearly seen as being just an entanglement in the impasse of nuclear power.

Could knowledge or art provide values for society today? First of all let us not forget that knowledge or art are important or have meaning, at least today, for only very limited strata of the population. More generally, in history, wherever art has played a role in social life, it has never been as an end in itself. It has been as part of a community which was expressing its life in this art. This was the case in the Elizabethan period. It was the case in the Renaissance. It was the case in Ancient Greece. The Greeks or the people during the

Renaissance did not live for art, but they put great value into their art because they recognized themselves and their problems in it. Their whole life had a meaning which was expressed in its highest form in this artistic creation.

What about knowledge? Again in the strict sense, it is limited today to a small minority. And there is a tremendous crisis developing in science. This has followed the increasing division within particular spheres of knowledge, the increasing specialization, the fact that a scientist today is necessarily someone who knows more and more about less and less. At least among scientists who take a broad view there is a deep feeling of crisis in relation to what even yesterday was considered to be the solid basis of factual knowledge. Newton thought he was discovering eternal truth, that he was reading a page out of the eternal book of nature or of God's creation. Today no scientist believes that in discovering a 'law' he is discovering an eternal truth. He only knows that he will perhaps be the object of three lines in a history of physics or of chemistry where it will be said 'attempts to explain the peculiarities of this experiment by W. in 1965, provided some hopes that led to theory X. This however was later superseded by the construction of theories Y and Z.'

Scientists themselves, like Oppenheimer for instance, are dramatically aware of yet another aspect of the crisis. It is that with this specialization they have not only isolated themselves from the whole of society but that they have also isolated themselves from each other. There is no longer any scientific community with a common language. As soon as you go beyond the limits of a speciality, people cannot really communicate, because there is so little common ground.

What is happening, in these circumstances? What values today does society propose to its citizens? The only value which survives is consumption. The acquisition of more and more, of newer and newer things is supposed completely to fill people's lives, to orient their efforts, to make them stick to work, etc. I won't dwell much on all this, which you all know very well. I'll only stress how much all this — even as a mystification — is only a partial and unsatisfactory answer. Already today people cannot fill their lives just by working to earn more money, in order to buy a more modern TV set and so on and so forth. This is felt more and more. The profound reason for this feeling is of course that in its content this consumption does not express organic human needs. It is more and more manipulated, so that purchases can become an outlet for the ever-growing mass production of consumer goods. This whole pattern of existence almost by definition becomes absurd. The value which having newer and more things can possess is caught up in a process of perpetual self-refutation. It has no end. The only point is to have something more, something newer. People become aware of what in the USA is now called the 'rat

race'. You just try to earn more so that you can consume more than the neighbours. You somehow value yourself more than the neighbours because you have a higher consumption standard, and so on.

3. Work

Now let us try to see how the crisis manifests itself in the sphere of people's activity. We can start first of all by examining what has happened to work.

Since the beginning of capitalism the permanent tendency has been to destroy work as a meaningful activity. What previously might have been the relation of say the peasant to his land, or of the artisan to the object he was making, has been progressively destroyed with the industrial revolution, with the division of labour, with the chaining of people to extremely partial aspects of the production process.

Together with this has developed the constant and ever growing attempt by capitalist firms, and now by the managerial bureaucracy, to intervene more and more deeply into the labour process. They seek to direct it from the outside, not only to direct the final results of the work, the ends and the methods of production, but even precisely to define the gestures of the workers through time study, through motion study, etc. This has been established practice now, in Western industry, for over half a century. The meaning of work has not only been destroyed so to speak from the objective side. Nobody any longer produces a thing, an object. People just produce components, the precise destination of which is often unknown to them. The meaning of work has also been destroyed on the subjective side, in the sense that even when producing a bit, at least in the system as it exists, you are not supposed to have a say as to how to produce this particular bit.

Now this development, this destruction of the meaning of work (which is a necessary concomitant of the whole system) has very important effects. It manifests itself as a subjective alienation of the worker from the work process, through the fact that the worker feels both like an outsider and at the same time like a manipulated person. It also manifests itself socially, one could almost say objectively, because, despite all, modern production requires the active participation of men both as individuals and as groups.

The real subject of modern production is less and less the individual worker. It is the group, the team of workers. Now at this level you again have the same

phenomenon. The existing management of production does not want to accept the fact that the real unit of the work is more and more a team, a collectivity, because the resistance of a group to imposed rules of work and to attempts to destroy the meaning of work is greater. It is much easier to manipulate people at the individual level. A contradiction is engendered.

The crisis of modern work is not only expressed as misery on the part of the worker, but as an objective impasse of the production process. Modern production requires the active participation of men both as individuals and as groups. Yet the methods which are necessarily established by the system as it functions today, seek to destroy this very participation at the same time as they require it. The manifestations of this phenomenon are both an immense waste in production and also a permanent conflict in industry, between people who merely carry out instructions and those who direct them.

4. Political Alienation

Now let us pass to another sphere: the sphere of politics. Everybody is familiar with the crisis of politics. It has been talked about for a long time, under the term 'apathy'. What is apathy and what are its roots?

After a certain historical development both the State and various other institutions (like local government) became increasingly bureaucratized, like everything else in modern society, Political organizations — not only the bourgeois, conservative political organizations, but the political organizations created by the working class to struggle against the ruling class and their State — and even the trade unions were involved in this process. Irrespective of its other aspects, this bureaucratization meant that people were excluded from running their own affairs.

The fate of trade unions is now more or less left to appointed officials, to people elected for long periods. These people act in such a way that the rank and file are prevented from expressing their views. They are prevented from having any genuine activity within the union. The rank and file serve as a sort of support, paying fees and obeying orders. From time to time they are even given orders to strike. But they aren't supposed to have a real say in all this. By a natural reaction the rank and file estranges itself from the organization, be it the trade union or the Party.

I don't know how far this has already gone in Britain, but on the Continent we are familiar with trade union

branch meetings where the two or three appointed officials turn up and perhaps half a dozen other persons, out of 200 people who were supposed to be there, Now, of course, when this happens a sort of vicious circle is set up. The bureaucracy argues: 'You see! We call upon people to come along and discuss their affairs. They don't! Somebody has to take over to solve all these problems. So we do it. We do it for them, not for our own sake.' This is partly propaganda and self-justification by the bureaucracy but it is also partly true, What is not usually seen is that this vicious circle always started at some specific point where the wish and tendency of people actively to participate, to take over their own affairs, was opposed and finally destroyed by the will of the bureaucracy, using all the means at its disposal.

The same thing happens in the purely political organizations. These are bureaucratized. They keep people away from active participation except in periods of 'crisis' when the rulers may suddenly call on people to help. This is exactly what de Gaulle did in France, in 1960. He appealed over the radio: 'Help me against the revolt in Algiers!' Of course he had previously produced a constitution, whereby the population would be kept firmly in place for 7 years. Then, just like that, when a crisis arose, he called for help. Did he expect people to take the equivalent of their Morris Minors to the airports, and help fight the parachutists from Algiers?

There is a growing consciousness in the population at large that politics today is just a manipulation of people, a manipulation of society to serve specific interests. The phrase 'they are all the same gang' (which you often hear 'apathetic' or 'non-political' people use) expresses first of all an objective truth. It also expresses, as a first approximation, a very correct attitude. It has been perceived, after all, that those who compete to rule society are all part of the same gang.

This was even recognized, during the 1959 General Election, by the serious bourgeois press (papers like the Economist and the Guardian). They complained that there was no discernible difference between the Tory and Labour programmes. This was very bad, because the beauty of British democracy was that it worked on a system of two parties. But in order to have two parties you must have something which makes the two parties really two, and not just two faces of the same gang. There must be some real differences, at least in what they say, if not in what they do. Today these 'differences' are less and less.

What is the end result? Parties (and, in the case of the USA, presidents) cannot claim support on the basis of ideas or of programmes. Presidents or parties are now sold to the population, like various brands of toothpaste. An 'image' of Kennedy, or of Johnson, or Sir Alec or of Wilson is created. Public relations experts ask themselves 'Isn't Wilson coming over as too much of

an egghead? Shouldn't he say something or other to correct this impression? What should he do to get support from that 5% sector of the electorate who really likes Sir Alec because he is rather stupid and who don't want a Prime Minister who is too clever? Shouldn't Wilson try to say something stupid next time?'

In the end politics becomes practically undistinguishable from any other form of advertising or sale of products. In this respect the products are immaterial, though they matter in other respects.

I will not dwell on the fact that all this does not just create a subjective crisis. It isn't just that we resent the fact that society is run this way. All this has objective repercussions. In an Italian town, during the Renaissance, a tyrant might have succeeded in keeping the population cowed. But a modern society, with its established rules and deep-going institutions, cannot be managed on this basis, even from the point of view of the rulers themselves. It cannot be run with the total abstention of the population from any intervention or any control in politics, for there is then no control by the reality on the politicians. They run amok and the result is, for instance, Suez. Here again the crisis impinges upon the workings of society itself.

5. Family Relationships

Another field in which the crisis manifests itself very deeply is that of family relationships. We all know the big changes which have been going on in this respect. The traditional standards, the morality, the behaviour which characterized the patriarchal family and which prevailed in Western Europe till the turn of the century are breaking down. The pivotal factor, namely the authority of the man, of the father, is breaking down. Sex morals, as they existed, are disintegrating. The relations between parents and children, as they existed traditionally, are being more and more disrupted. And in a certain sense nothing is put in their place.

We ought to stop for a minute and seek to understand what this really means. I would like to be clearly understood. Of course the patriarchal family and the corresponding morals were, from our point of view, absurd, inhuman, alienated. That's one level of discussion. But at a deeper level, the question is not of our judgment. A society cannot function harmoniously unless relations between men and women and the upbringing of children are somehow regulated (I don't mean, of course, a mechanistic, legal regulation) in a manner which allows people really to live their lives as individuals of one sex with the other, in a manner which allows new generations to be procreated and brought up without coming into conflict with the existing social arrangements.

This 'functional' aspect of the family existed in the patriarchal family. It existed, or could have existed, in a matriarchal family. It exists in a Moslem polygamic family. The question here is not of making judgments.

In these societies there were ways of solving — and not just legalistically solving — the problem of relations between man and woman, between parents and children. These methods combined the legal aspects, the economic aspects, the sexual aspects and deeper psychological (what one might call the Freudian) aspects of the creation of new human beings, more or less adapted to the existing form of social life. But today what was providing this type of cohesion, namely, the traditional patriarchal family, is more and more broken down. And with it are broken down all its concomitants: traditional sex morals, traditional relations between the father and mother, traditional relations between parents and children.

At first sight nothing emerges to replace the traditional concepts. This creates an enormous crisis which manifests itself in some readily discernible forms like the breaking-up of families, the homeless children, the tremendous problem of youth today, the 'blousons noirs' (mods and rockers), etc. All this goes extremely deep. In a certain sense what is at stake here is the very problem of the continuation of society. I don't mean just biological reproduction, but the reproduction of personalities, having a certain relation to their environment.

From the point of view of the whole nexus of problems that exist around the family, sex, parents, children, men and women and so on, nobody knows for certain what he or she is expected to do. What is his or her role? What, for instance, is the place of the woman in today's society? You can make her one of fifteen wives in a harem, you can make her the Victorian matron, you can make her the Greek woman in the gynaecium, but somehow or other she has to have a certain place in society. You can say, as Hitler did, that her place is in the kitchen with the children and/or in church. This is coherent. It is inhuman, it is barbaric, but it is coherent. But what is the place of the woman in today's society? Is it to be just like a man, with a small physical difference? Is she to be a person who has to work most of the time? Or is she primarily a wife and mother? Or is she both? And can she be both? Is it feasible? Is society creating the conditions whereby this would become feasible? Total uncertainty about these matters creates a tremendous crisis concerning the status and even the personality of women. It creates a complete disorientation which literally and immediately affects men. Men, have a sort of privilege in this respect, in the sense that they appear more or less to continue in their traditional role. They are outside, earning a living. But that's a fallacious appearance, because men and women in this respect are abstractions. What happens to women affects men. You can't define the two beings except in relation to each other.

The most dramatic effect of this uncertainty is upon the younger generations. Through largely unconscious mechanisms, about which we know something today,

thanks to Sigmund Freud, children take models, identify themselves with this or that parental figure according to sex. Perhaps they even do this in a wider family context than just in relation to the biological father and mother. But this presupposes that developing children find before them a woman-mother and a man-father with patterns of behaviour, attitudes and roles which even if not defined in black and white nevertheless correspond to something fairly clear and certain. Inasmuch as all this is more and more questioned in today's society, children cannot grow up with the help of this process of identification, a process which is partly necessary, though it can be seen as alienating as well. Development today is not, as before, helped by the parental figures.

The child was helped by these figures. In a certain sense it chose out of them what corresponded to its own nature. At any rate it used to find a structured character, a person in the deepest sense of the word, in front of it. The child used to develop in relation to these persons even if, as in previous generations, it struggled against them. But today the situation is like a haze. There is increasing uncertainty as to what a man and a woman really are, in their reciprocal polar definitions, as to what their roles are, as to what the relations between them should be.

An immediate consequence is, of course, the total uncertainty which dominates relations between parents and children. There are still families where the old autarchic, patriarchal attitudes and habits prevail, where the remnants of the old ideas persist, where parents have a sort of master power over the children. Even more, the family is still sometimes seen as an object in the possession of the father, of the paterfamilias. This was the attitude of the Romans but in fact it persisted in Western Europe for a very long time. In a certain sense, the children and even the wife existed for the father. He could do with them what he wanted, what he liked. With limitations, this attitude persists in some quarters. Of course it comes into conflict with the attitudes of children and young people today, of the teenagers, who are in revolt against it.

In other families, there is the opposite extreme: disintegration. Children just grow up. The parents play no role whatsoever, except perhaps providing pocket money, shelter and food. One doesn't see what on earth they are there for, once they have procreated the children. In these conditions one might as well say 'let us nationalize the children as soon as they are born'. In a certain sense the role of the parental couple in relation to the children has disappeared.

In the majority of instances conditions are somewhere in between. The parents are in perplexity, not knowing what to do and often giving brutal alternate strokes of the wheel to left or right, in their attempts to guide the education of the children. They are 'liberal' one day. And the next day they are shouting: 'This is enough.'

From tomorrow you will be in at 7 o'clock every evening.' Then, of course, there is a crisis. And after the crisis they make concessions. And so on and so forth.

Those who recognize the negative results of all this on the social fabric today will easily understand that unless something happens the effects will be multiplied to the nth degree, when the children of today will have to produce and bring up children of their own.

6. Education

There is an equivalent to all this in the problem of education. The traditional relationship, well expressed in the words 'master' and 'pupil', is being disrupted. It is less and less tolerated by young people. The teacher or professor is no longer in the real position of master towards the class, as he still was 30 years ago. But in the existing system it is impossible to shift over to another relationship. It is impossible really to admit a new relationship between adults and children.

Although the adult is necessary for the education of the children this relationship must be shaped in a completely new way. The children's community ought to be able to acquire the capacity to manage its own affairs, and even in a certain sense to manage its own process of education, only having adults there to learn from, to borrow from and, in a sense, to use. Some attempts at modern pedagogy recognize all this but their attempts are limited by the whole social framework. We have a crisis in education in this respect.

We also have a crisis in education in another respect, namely in relation to the content of education. This is not just the crisis in the relations between educator and educated. It is a crisis concerning what education is about.

In the 19th century there was something in the conduct and content of education which corresponded more or less to a neat division of society into classes. For the children of the 'higher' classes you had the humanities and secondary education. For the children of the 'lower' classes there was elementary education, just enough to enable them to understand factory work, the bare minimum. Today, both these objectives are in crisis.

In a certain sense the humanities are out of date. There has been a tremendous degradation of 'classical' education. No one is capable of showing the relevance of humanities to life today. Is there any relevance? Perhaps there is, but only a really living society could restore for itself the meaning of the past. Otherwise the meaning of the past becomes something completely external. It becomes: 'Let us look at the Renaissance, let us look at the Elizabethans or at the Greeks. They were living in a harmonious world, contrary to our own.' And that's all. It is not really possible to translate into today's terms the meaning of past cultures.

On the other hand, it is impossible for the expanding and exploding technology of today to leave general

education at the present level. People who are going to enter modern industry must have technical skills, must know more, even if only about techniques. Their educational needs are increasing at a tremendous rate. How is this to be dealt with? The solutions found in today's society are all internally contradictory. One solution consists in trying to give to the children an essentially technical education. For reasons which concern the whole set-up of society, and which are partly economic, you have to start this specialization very early. But this is not only extremely destructive for the personality of the children, it is also self-destructive. It is self-destructive in the sense that given today's rate of technological development and change you cannot have people whom you have so to speak allocated once and for all to a very limited speciality. This type of educational crisis expresses itself in industry through the increasing demand for programmes for adult re-education, in the demand for what's now called a 'permanent educational process'. But in order to be able to absorb in later life whatever this 'permanent educational process' may offer (if it ever materializes) you must have as general a grounding as possible. It is obvious that if the basis on which you start is extremely narrow, then further education becomes an impossible proposition. Here again there is a sort of internal conflict which illustrates the crisis of this level.

7. Some Conclusions

Let us try to sum up. All that we have discussed impinges upon the two basic concepts, the two polar categories which create society: the personality of man and the structure of the social fabric and its cohesion.

At the personal level the crisis manifests itself as a sort of radical crisis in the meaning of life and of human motives. It is no accident that modern art and literature are more and more, if I may use the expression, 'full of the void'. In the social attitudes of people, the crisis shows itself in the destruction and disappearance of responsibility. There is a tremendous crisis of socialization. There is the phenomenon which we call privatization: people are so to speak withdrawing into themselves. There is practically no community life, ties become extremely disrupted and so on. As a reaction to this there are new phenomena, for instance youth gangs, which express the need for positive socialization. But socialization in the more general sense, that is the feeling that what is going on at large is, after all, our own affair, that we do have to do something about it, that we ought to be responsible, all this, is deeply disrupted. This disruption contributes to a vicious circle. It increases apathy and multiplies its effects.

Now there is another very important side to all these phenomena of crisis. The time left does not allow me to do more than mention it. When we talk of crisis, we should understand that it is not a physical calamity which has fallen upon contemporary society. If there is a crisis, it is because people do not submit passively to

the present organization of society but react and struggle against it, in a great many ways. And, equally important, this reaction, this struggle of the people contains the seeds of the new. It inevitably produces new forms of life and of social relations.

In this sense, the crisis we have been describing is but the by-product of struggle.

Take for instance the changing position of women. Certainly, at the origin of the disruption of the old patriarchal order, there had been the technical and economic development of modern society, industrialization, etc. Capitalism had destroyed the old family pattern by drawing women into the factory, then talking them out of it, etc. But this is only part of the story. All this could very well have left the old order unchanged, if women had not reacted in a given way to the new situation. And that is precisely what happened. Women, after a while, started demanding another sort of place in society. They did not accept the old patriarchal state of affairs. And I don't mean the suffragettes, Lady Astor, etc. There has been a silent pushing and struggle going on over 50 years or more. Women have finally conquered a sort of equivalence to men in the home. Girls have conquered the right to do as they like with themselves without being considered 'prostitutes', etc.

The same is true about youth. The revolt of youth has been conditioned by the whole development of society. At a certain stage the teenagers no longer accepted to be treated as mere objects of the father, of the parents, of the persons who were their 'masters' till they were 21, till they married, till they earned a living, etc. Young people more or less conquered this position.

In these fields of the family, of relations between sexes and of the parent-child relationship, something new is emerging. People are struggling to define for themselves (although not in explicit terms) a sort of recognition of the autonomy of the other person, of the responsibility of each one for his own life. There is an attempt to understand the other person, to accept people as they are, irrespective of legal obligations or of the absence of legal obligations (of whether adultery is forbidden or not forbidden, for instance). People are trying to materialize this in their lives. They are attempting to construct the couple's relationship on the concrete reality of the two persons involved, on their real will and desires and not on the basis of external constraints.

So we see that the crisis of modern society is not without issue. It contains the seeds of something new, which is emerging even now. But the new will not come about automatically. Its emergence will be assisted by the actions of people in society, by their permanent resistance and struggle and by their often unconscious activity.

I think there are also hopes when you look at the development of relationships between parents and children. There is a sort of recognition that the children exist for themselves, now, and not only when they are 21. There is a gradual realization that if you have produced children you have not produced them only to extend your own personality, only in order to have a small family realm where you can dominate (just as you have been dominated all day by the boss at work), where you can say 'I am master here. Shut up.' There is an awareness that if you are

procreating children you are procreating them for themselves, that they have a right to as much freedom as they can exert at each and every stage, that you don't make them obey formal rules or your own arbitrary will.

The same thing is true about work. If there is a crisis in modern industry, it is not just because the system is irrational or even because it exploits people. It is because people react. They react in two ways. First of all they constitute what industrial sociologists have long known as 'informal groups and organisations'. That is they constitute teams of work, they establish informal connections in order to get the work done. These cut across official channels and undermine the official mechanisms for transmitting orders. Workers find ways and means of doing their work which are not only different from but often even opposed to the official ones. More and more, in modern industrial societies, workers react through open struggle. This is the meaning of the unofficial strikes concerning conditions of work, conditions of life in the factory, and control of the production process. However minor these issues may appear, they are really very important. Their meaning is that people refuse to be dominated, and that they manifest a will to take their lives into their own hands.

So we see that the crisis of modern society is not without issue. It contains the seeds of something new, which is emerging even now. But the new will not come about automatically. Its emergence will be assisted by the actions of people in society, by their permanent resistance and struggle and by their often unconscious activity. But the new will not complete itself, will not be able to establish itself as a new social system, as a new pattern of social life, unless at some stage it becomes a conscious activity, a conscious action of the mass of the people. For us, to initiate this conscious action and to help it develop, whenever it may manifest itself, is the real new meaning to be given to the words 'revolutionary politics'.

Wot? No Contradictions?

Cornelius Castoriadis

Solidarity: For Workers' Power, vol. 7, no. II (mid-1974)

In August 1971 *SOLIDARITY* (London) published 'History and Revolution'. This was a translation of part of a text by Paul Cardan ('Marxisme et Theorie Revolutionnaire') which had appeared several years earlier in the French journal *Socialisme on Barbarie*.

Our publication was preceded by an extensive and prolonged discussion within the group, in the course of which an Aberdeen comrade took issue with some of Cordon's basic ideas, namely the notion that there was no insuperable internal economic obstacle to capitalism's development of production. We here publish excerpts of Cardan's reply which, in our opinion, raise a number of interesting theoretical points.

When you say 'it is true that the present economic system is a barrier to adequate production', in spite of its expansion in the last 25 years (arms production, production for waste, etc.) you are, I am afraid, victim of a current confusion.

What is 'adequate' production? Adequate for whom, for what purpose, from what point of view? We are talking about capitalism and the (imaginary) 'incapacity' of the system to generate the conditions for its own continued expansion, qua capitalism. We are not speaking about the 'adequacy' of this production with regard to human needs or values. Production is adequate from the point of view of the capitalist system if it goes on expanding at 5 per cent per annum, producing junk, atom bombs or soap bubbles. thereby expanding the market for the same commodities. This is the true meaning of the term 'commodity' in *Das Kapital* and in political economy in general: use value is not discussed – it is just assumed.

There is no *internal economic barrier* to capitalism's functioning. That humanity may at the same time be starving, living like wild beasts, be persuaded to buy soap bubbles¹, etc., is totally irrelevant from this point of view. That a starving humanity might explode and destroy the system would be the result of socio-political human actions and reactions, *not* the effect of 'intrinsic economic contradictions'. The logic of capitalism - and here I am only quoting Marx - is production for the sake of production. Not production of something definite. Just production. Of anything. Of shit. It would even be wrong to say ('ultra-left moralistic con-fusionism') that the nearer production is to shit, the more capitalism approximates to its own essence. Shit or books, bombs or penicillin, pollutants or anti-pollutants - they are all gold. The point is: can they be produced and sold for a profit? This is the *only* point as far as capitalism and its economic functioning is concerned.

Sure, for them to be sold there must be a 'market' for them. This means two things; first, money (the incomes of those who would buy them). This capitalist expansion generates *ipso facto*. Secondly, 'social want',

i.e. the belief of the potential buyers that they 'need' or 'desire' the commodities offered (this has nothing to do with 'natural', 'genuine', 'normal' wants and desires!). Capitalism ensures that these 'needs' exist through various mechanisms which do not need to be described again.

There is a theoretical-historical movement here which is – to my mind – the essence of the matter. I do not know whether I will be able to convey it clearly without being too long. In the first place – in the first 'moment' as Marx would say when flirting with Hegel – capitalism embodies the absolute divorce between use-value and exchange-value. This is both its foundation and the foundation of the marxist analysis. What is produced does not matter in the least. To forget this is the usual sin of present day 'marxists'. This separation manifests itself in at least two ways:

- production is for profit, not for human needs. If production of soap bubbles is more profitable than production of food, soap bubbles and not food will be produced;
- production is for sale, not for human needs. If millions of tons of food, clothes, etc. are accumulated in the warehouses and cannot be sold, they will not be given away to the millions of unemployed, the starving, etc.

It is the *second* aspect with which Marx was mostly concerned in his economic analysis proper. It is here he thought he found an 'internal contradiction' in the mechanics of the capitalist economy. He believed it would be organically impossible for capitalism to generate the necessary purchasing power for its goods to be sold. This I have shown to be wrong.²

As for the first aspect Marx of course knew of it and mentioned it - on several occasions. At times (especially in his earlier works) he emphasized it very strongly. But this is not an 'internal contradiction' of the economy. Rather should it be seen as a (very profound) criticism levelled against the economy as such (more precisely against capitalism as the historical system which has

¹ Or – as Keynes seriously suggested – digging holes in the ground and filling them in again.

² See *Modern Capitalism and Revolution*.

tended to subordinate, and finally reduce, all human activities to 'economic' activities). Awareness of this is one of the reasons for the title *A Critique of Political Economy*, which remained a subtitle of *Das Kapital*.

In a sense Marx, the great politician, is against the economic universe as such, because this universe only exists (strictly speaking since before capitalism) on the basis of the *separation* between production and wants – a separation created by the fact that exchange-values necessarily interpose themselves between use-values. In a sense, for Marx, the only type of 'non-alienated' human work is the work of the savage, producing a tool or a weapon to fit his own body and skills and ways of doing things. It is Siegfried forging Nothung, or Ulysses and his bow – which nobody else can handle. It is this sort of relation, on another level, between the working collectivity, its work and its products which Marx envisages as the 'superior phase of communism' (about which I allowed myself to add, in the *Meaning of Socialism*, that it necessarily entails the destruction of capitalist technology and the conscious creation of a new technology. Present-day technology is precisely the embodiment of this estrangement of man from his own working activity).

Of course, in relation to the first and more profound aspect, the separation cannot be taken 'absolutely'. But then nothing ever can. Some food would have to be produced under any conditions. Machines have to be manageable by bipeds, even at the price of monstrous contortions of their bodies, etc. But all this is, in the

economic sense, peripheral and secondary. And this is precisely the monstrosity.

Now all this, the absolute separation of use-value and exchange-value, what I called the 'first moment' with its two forementioned aspects, is truly only a first moment. It is the first moment both logically-theoretically and really-historically. It is an abstraction. Not only cannot the separation be absolute; it has to be very relative indeed. Because the goods have to be sold, and because 60 or 70 per cent of final demand is 'consumer demand', the goods must have a use-value (in that proportion) for the population at large. This would not be a problem if society were at subsistence level (though this expression is hardly meaningful). But an ever-expanding economy ceases, after a while, to be at subsistence level. Thus the separation between exchange-values and 'use'-values has to be overcome. Modern capitalism seeks to achieve this precisely through the manipulation of 'use'-values, i.e. by creating consumption to fit the needs of production and of the disposal of the product.

It follows that in contemporary economies one cannot speak about the separation of 'use'- and exchange-values *sans phrase*. But then the question arises: what are 'use'-values? This question, ignored by Marx and the classical economists, cannot be handled within political economy. It requires another type of analysis and leads to the concept of the social imaginary which I tried to define in the final part of 'Marxisme et Théorie Révolutionnaire', (*Socialisme ou Barbarie*, no.40, June-August 1965).

Marx today: the tragicomical paradox

Cornelius Castoriadis

Solidarity: A journal of Libertarian Socialism, Summer 1988

Solidarity: The French thinker Cornelius Castoriadis finds the ideas of Karl Marx largely irrelevant to the world today. In this long interview, conducted by the French journal *Lutter*, he contends that marxism is irredeemably vitiated by a simple paradox which cannot but undermine any political movement adhering to it. Yet in the revolutionary 'dance of the seven veils', which is the shedding of illusions in labourism, trotskyism, stalinism and so on, it seems the hardest illusion to abandon is faith in the universal validity of marxism itself.

LUTTER: What is the use of Marx today for militants who want to fight against capitalism, be it Western capitalism or the bureaucratic societies of Eastern Europe?

CORNELIUS CASTORIADIS: It is not quite appropriate to speak in terms of usefulness, since an author is not a tool. That said, if one reads Marx as all great authors should be read (not in order to find in him

a dogma or ready-made truths, but critically) one understands what it means to think, one discovers new ways of thinking and of criticising thought. In this respect, Marx is a particularly difficult and even 'dangerous' author; indeed, he is so 'deceptive' that he managed to deceive himself. Marx has written a very great number of works, but his writings are neither homogenous nor consistent; Marx is a complex and ultimately antinomic author.

Why antinomic? Because Marx provides us with a relatively new idea or inspiration, namely that it is men who make their own history, and that the emancipation of the workers will be accomplished by the workers themselves. In other words, the source of truth, especially in the realm of politics, is not to be sought in heaven or in books, but in the living activities of people operating within society. This apparently simple and even commonplace idea implies a great number of extremely important consequences that Marx never managed to bring out. Why? Because at the same time,

that is to say since his youth, Marx was dominated by the ghost of a complete, total, fully accomplished theory. Not by the ghost of the obviously indispensable theoretical work, but by the ghost of the definitive system.

Thus, from *The German Ideology* onwards, he sets himself up as the theoretician who has discovered the law ruling society and history, the law of how society functions, the law of the order of appearance of social formations within history, the 'laws of capitalist economy', and so on.

This second element, which we are justified in calling the theoretical or speculative element, dominates Marx's thought and attitude from the very beginning. It relegates the first element to some lapidary and enigmatic expressions. This helps us understand why he spent thirty years of his adult life in an attempt to finish *Capital*, the book whose task was to prove theoretically, and on the basis of economic considerations, the inevitability of the collapse of capitalism. Marx would obviously fail in this attempt, and he could not finish *Capital*.

The second element is false, and at the same time incompatible with the first. Either history is really governed by laws, and in that case a truly human-activity is impossible, except perhaps in a technical sense; or human beings really make their own history, and then the task of theory will not be directed to discovering 'laws', but to the elucidation of the conditions with in which human activity unfolds, the regularity of their appearance, and so on.

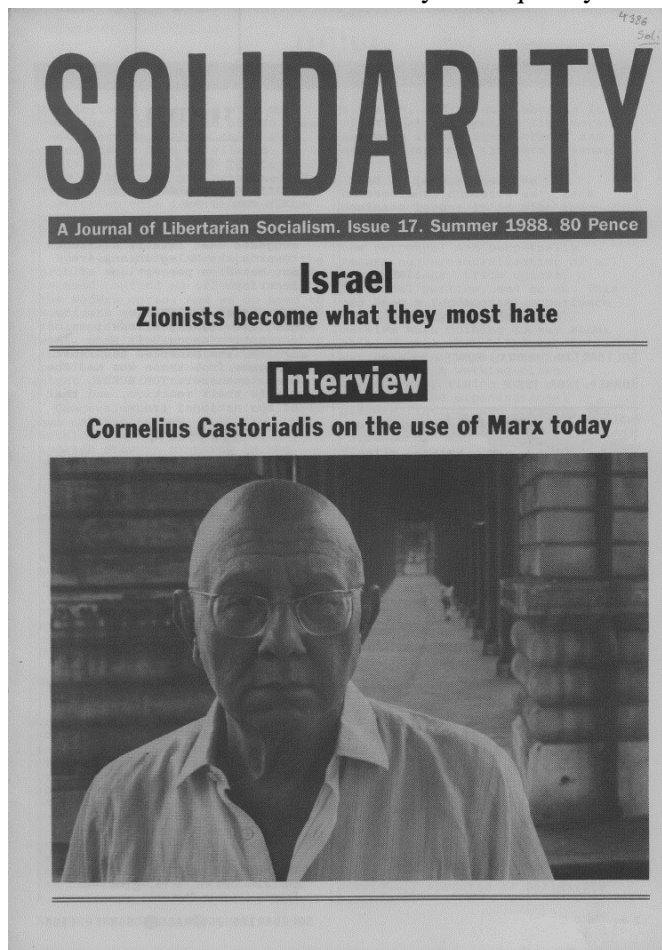
However, it is this second element which has enabled Marx and marxism to play such an important and catastrophic role in the working-class movement. In Marx, people have sought (and have believed they had found) a certain number of ready-made truths. They have believed that all truths, or in any case the most important truths, can be found in Marx, and that it is therefore not worthwhile, and even dangerous and suspect, to think for oneself. It is this second position which has legitimised the bureaucracies of the working-class organisations invoking Marx, and which has

helped them to become the official and authorised interpreters of socialist orthodoxy.

One must acknowledge that the success of the marxist claim to represent scientific truth has not done violence to people. It has, indeed, represented an answer to something which people were seeking and are still seeking. At a very deep level, this something corresponds to the alienation, the heteronomy of people. People need certainties, they need psychological and intellectual security.

They consequently tend to abdicate the task of thinking for themselves, and to entrust it to others.

And, of course, the theory is there to provide pseudo-guarantees. Our theory proves that capitalism is doomed to collapse and to be 'followed by socialism'. The nineteenth-century fascination with 'science' is obviously still alive, a fascination made stronger by the fact that this strange 'science' (marxism) claims to be 'objective', namely independent of the wishes and desires of those professing it. At the same time, like a magician pulling a rabbit out of a hat, the 'science' is able to 'produce' a future condition of mankind in full harmony with our wishes and desires, and 'historical laws' which guarantee that the society of the future will necessarily be a 'good society'.



Incidentally, it is funny to see marxists, interminably busy 'interpreting' such or such a point of Marx's theory, never asking themselves the marxist question par excellence: how has marxism really worked in real history, and why? This simple fact totally and irrevocably disqualifies them.

LUTTER: We can then find a totalitarian aspect within the very conception of theory, its nature and role, in Marx himself. But libertarians tend to condemn marxism globally and rather hurriedly, by claiming that it contains the theoretical foundations of what they call authoritarian socialism (leninism, stalinism, and so on). But don't you think that it is possible to find in Marx categories and theoretical notions that could be useful to the struggle for self-management?

CASTORIADIS: Marx's relationship with the birth of totalitarianism is a very complex question. I would not

talk about a totalitarian theory. The term 'totalitarianism' applies to social and political regimes. I do not think that Marx was totalitarian, nor that he was 'the father' of totalitarianism.

It is quite simple to prove it. Marxism did not only give rise to leninism-stalinism. First and foremost it gave rise to social democracy, which can be described in many ways but cannot be called totalitarian. Many historical ingredients were necessary to give birth to totalitarianism. Among the most important of these we can list the creation by Lenin of the very type of totalitarian organisation, the Bolshevik Party, and the role it was given with in the state and Russian society after 1917. From this point of view, Lenin is the real father of totalitarianism.

No doubt some of the ingredients can be traced back to Marx himself and to his theory. I have tried to discuss these in the texts published in *Socialisme ou Barbarie* in 1959 ('Proletariat and Organisation') and then in 1964 ('Marxism and Revolutionary Theory'), now republished as the first part of *The Imaginary Institution of Society*.

The first ingredient, to which I have already alluded, is the very position of theory as such. Just like Hegelian philosophy, Marx's theory is presented as the 'last theory': it takes the place of Hegel's 'absolute knowledge'. Naturally, marxists will protest and swear that they do not think in these terms. But we must consider what they actually do. They can chatter about 'dialectics', 'relativism', etc., but their work is always directed to interpreting (correcting, completing, improving, etc.) Marx's thought, as if, on the whole, one had to remain permanently submitted to that thought. In general their practice corresponds to the affirmation that the fundamental truth about our times was told by Marx. This has grotesque consequences, for instance in the realm of economics. More than a century after the conception and formulation of Marx's ideas and analyses marxists continue to want to prove at all costs that Marx was right, as if the important thing were to salvage some of Marx's statements, rather than to ascertain and understand what really happens in the economic field.

This concept of theory as 'the last theory' (in effect as 'absolute knowledge') is not something external, which could be discarded allowing the rest to be saved. It is

imperatively born out of and demanded by the very content of theory. The latter claims that on the one hand the proletariat is the 'last class' in history, and on the other hand that to each class there corresponds a conception that 'truly' expresses its interests or historical role. It follows that either marxism is nothing at all, or it is the theory, the only true theory of the proletariat, the 'last class' in history. And, if this theory is the theoretical expression of the historical situation of the proletariat, questioning it is tantamount to opposing the proletariat, to becoming a 'class enemy', and so on (these things have been said, and acted upon, millions of times).

But what happens if someone, you, me, a worker, does not agree? Well, he places himself outside his class. He joins the side of the 'class enemy'. We can thus see that one fundamental component of marxism is absolutely unacceptable to a democratic working-class movement, to a democratic revolutionary movement. Democracy is impossible without freedom and diversity of opinion.

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This is exactly what has happened, at the ideological level, within the leninist parties. The ruling bureaucracy of the working-class parties of the Second International legitimised itself in its own eyes and sought to legitimise itself in the eyes of the workers on the strength of this idea: we are those who hold the truth, marxist theory. But a theory merely consists of words and sentences, necessarily endowed with several possible meanings and thus requiring an interpretation. An interpretation itself still consists of words and sentences themselves requiring an interpretation, and so on. How can all that be stopped?

Churches found an answer long ago: they defined an orthodox interpretation, and above all, a real structure which incarnates, guarantees, and 'defends' orthodoxy. And it is never noted that this reactionary monstrosity, the idea of orthodoxy and of guardians of orthodoxy, seizes the working-class movement and enslaves it through marxism and thanks to marxism. At this level,

leninism has definitely been more consistent than social-democracy, hence its much greater success.

There is another example, another ingredient that has played a very great role in legitimising leninist-stalinist bureaucracy: the talk of crypto-stalinists and fellow-travellers aimed at covering up the horrors of the stalinist regime. Historical materialism maintains that each stage of the development of the productive forces is accompanied by a specific social regime, and that the establishment of socialism is therefore dependent upon a 'sufficient' degree of development of the productive forces. It follows that even though Stalin kept terrorising, murdering, sending millions of people to Siberia, factories were still being constructed, and also therefore the material bases of socialism. Thanks to a 'sufficient' development of the productive system, the other evils, which can be attributed to the 'backwardness' of the Russian productive forces, will finally disappear. Even today, if you scratch a Communist a little, he will talk exactly like this. This is the outcome of the content of marxist theory. Socialism is not seen as a political and historical project, the socially rooted activity of a great number of people who aim at modifying the institution of society, but as the result of an objective historical movement incarnated by the development of the productive forces.

LUTTER: But are there or are there not, in Marx, ideas that can be used in the struggle for self-management?

CASTORIADIS: I will use the example I know best, my own. When I began to write on self-management, on the collective management of production and of social life in 1949, as from the first number of *Socialisme ou Barbarie* I was a marxist. But once I began to develop this idea as from 1955 (in 'The Content of Socialism'), I rapidly realised that it was profoundly incompatible with Marx's conception and that in that respect Marx was useless.

In developing the idea of workers' management, of the management of production by the producers themselves, one rapidly comes up against the question of technology.

Marx has nothing to say on this issue. Marx and marxists have provided no critique of capitalist technology. What they criticise is the misappropriation in favour of capitalists of a technology which appears, as such, unquestionable.

And is there, in Marx, a critique of the organisation of capitalist factories? No, there is not. He does, of course, denounce its most cruel and inhuman aspects. But in Marx's view, this organisation is a true incarnation of rationality, because it is completely and necessarily

dictated by the state of technology. Nothing central to it can, therefore, be changed. This is why he thinks that production and the economy are destined to remain within the realm of necessity, and that 'the kingdom of freedom' can only be built outside the realm of necessity through the reduction of the working day. It is like saying that work, in itself, is slavery and cannot ever become a centre for the unfolding of human creativity.

When I began to write on self-management, on the collective management of production and of social life... But once I began to develop this idea... I rapidly realised that it was profoundly incompatible with Marx's conception and that in that respect Marx was useless.

In point of fact, contemporary technology is well and truly capitalistic; there is nothing neutral about it. It is modelled upon specifically capitalist objectives, which do not consist so much in the increase of profits as, above all, in the elimination of the role of human beings in production, in the subordination of producers in the impersonal mechanisms of the productive process.

Consequently, as long as this type of technology prevails, it is impossible to speak of self-management. The self-management of the assembly line by the assembly line workers is a sinister joke. To establish self-management, it is necessary to abolish the assembly line. I am not saying that all existing factories should be destroyed overnight. Nevertheless, a revolution which does not immediately tackle the question of a conscious transformation of technology in order to allow people, as individuals, as groups, as a working collectivity, to have access to the control of the production process; such a revolution would be condemned to a rapid death. People who work on the assembly-line six days a week cannot be expected to enjoy, as Lenin pretended, Sundays of soviet freedom.

Marx did not and could not develop such a critique of technology. The reason is profoundly bound to his conception of history. Like Hegel's 'Reason' or 'Spirit of the World', in Marx it is the 'rationality' incarnated by technology (the 'development of productive forces') which makes history advance. This explains why Marx and marxism could only be massive obstacles to a movement aiming at self-management, autonomy, or self-government.

LUTTER: However, in reading your writings, which have obviously developed in time and show fortunately a thought in a state of evolution, one gets the impression that, while you formulate a critique of marxism, you utilise a number of categories moulded or at least systemised by Marx. One example is when you show that the societies of Eastern Europe practise

exploitation. On the other hand, your critique of technology is quite valid. But in positing the elements of a revolutionary project, you too rely upon certain aspects of existing technology which in your opinion can be positively utilised. Data processing, for example, can be an element leading to the totalitarianisation of society, but can also be appropriately transformed and become an element of democracy throughout the world.

CASTORIADIS: Once again it must be said that Marx is a very important author. But in the history of Greek-western society, we can find about thirty or forty authors of equal importance, whose ideas, methods, etc., are being constantly utilised without anyone, for that reason, being called a Platonist, an Aristotelian, a Kantian, and I know not what. In this perspective, Marx enjoys no privilege.

Marx does hold a privileged position in relation to the first element of the antinomy I formulated earlier, to the extent that he sees that it is the living activity of human beings which creates social and historical forms (it is no accident that Marx does not express the concept in these terms). At the same time he does not simply decide to wait for the next stage of this activity, but he takes up a political stand. He wants to be an active part of the movement or take charge of it (in this last formulation we can see already the sinister ambiguity underlying this position). Having a historical project, and trying, at the same time, to understand to what extent this political project is nourished and borne by historical reality, by the workers' struggle against capitalism, therein lies Marx's originality, his absolute singularity. In so far as I still personally feel a specific link with Marx, it is through this element which he taught me (or which I found in him). But this does not mean 'being a marxist'.

Once we come to content, it is obvious that several notions put forward by Marx have now become incorporated in our thought. But even in these cases we are compelled to be critical and to move further. One example is my text 'The Social Regime in Russia' (*Esprit*, July-August 1978, republished by Editions Le Vent du Chemin), in which I summarise in the form of theses all I have written on Russia since 1946. The exposition begins with a somewhat educational part, intended for marxists, which makes use of the notions of the relations of production and of classes defined in terms of their positions within these relations, so as to say to them: if you are really marxists you must agree that the Russian regime is based on exploitation, that it is a class regime, and so on. But immediately after, I show that this analysis is quite unsatisfactory, because, for example, in Russia, the total political subjugation of the working-class totally transforms its position, even within the relations of production. This leads us very far. Independently of the concrete case of Russia, this situation carries deep implications both in respect to concepts and in respect to methodology. It means that I cannot define the position of a social category within

the relations of production solely by taking into consideration the relations of production. Consequently the concept of 'historical determinism' and the view that the base determines superstructures and that the economy determines politics begins to crumble.

As for technology, what I wish to say is that there is no neutrality as to how it is actually applied.

To give an example, television, as it is today, is a means of brutalisation. And it would be false to say that another society would use this television differently; there would no longer be this television in a different society. Many things would have to be modified in television, to allow it to be 'used differently'. This type of relationship, in which everybody is connected to a single actively emitting centre, whilst all the others hold the position of passive, horizontally unrelated, receivers, obviously constitutes an alienating political structure, incarnated within the applied technology. How all this could be changed is another issue, an issue which cannot be solved by a single individual, but partakes of social creativity.

What remains true is that in today's scientific and technical knowledge there is a potential which must be explored and exploited with a view to modifying present technology.

LUTTER: If we want to summarise your thought on Marx, we can say that you consider him an important author, useful in certain respects, but that it is useless to refer to marxism as if it were an accomplished system of thought. You consider the usefulness of Marx to be very relative indeed.

CASTORIADIS: There is something that has amazed and even shocked me for a long time. There is a tragicomical paradox in the spectacle of people who claim to be revolutionary, who wish to overthrow the world and at the same time try to cling at all costs to a reference system, who would feel lost if the author or the system which guarantees the truth of what they believe, were to be taken away from them. How is it possible not to see that these people place themselves by their own volition in a position of mental subjection to a work which is already there, which has mastered a truth which henceforth can only be interpreted, refined, patched up?

We must create our own thought as we advance; we must create it, of course, always in connection with a certain past, a certain tradition. We must stop believing that the truth was revealed once and for all in a work written a hundred and twenty years ago. It is essential to communicate this conception to people, especially to young people.

There is something else equally important. It is impossible to avoid drawing up a balance sheet of the history of marxism, of what marxism has actually become, of how it worked and still works in real history. There is first Marx himself, more than complex,

more than open to criticism. Then we have a marxism without inverted commas, a number of authors and trends claiming to derive from Marx, who make an honest and serious attempt at interpretation, (let us say Lukacs up to 1923, or the Frankfurt School). By the way, this type of marxism no longer exists today. And then we have ‘marxism’, the historically powerful and overwhelming ‘marxism’ of the bureaucratic states, of Stalinist parties, of their various appendages. It is a ‘marxism’ that plays an extremely important role; indeed, it is the only marxism to play a real role. It still continues (almost no longer in Europe, but still to a great extent in the Third World) to attract people who want to do something against the horrible situations prevailing in their countries. It continues to convince them to join movements that appropriate their activities and deflect them to the benefit of bureaucratic regimes.

This ‘marxism’ still continues to offer legitimacy to the Russian regime and its expansionist undertakings.

LUTTER: This is true, but we are still faced with a problem. Militants do need psychological security, but this is only one side of the story. A revolutionary who wants to transform the world needs a certain number of tools. One cannot just face the world, keep one’s eyes and ears wide open and try to understand in a subjective manner. I agree with your critical remarks, but I still think that the problem of the reference framework remains. It is the type of process that you got involved in, to some extent, when you wrote “The Imaginary Institution of Society”; the first third of the book is devoted to a critical assessment of marxism. Today there remains a real void, a real gap.

CASTORIADIS: I am not suggesting that everyone should start by making a tabula rasa. In any case, no one does it and no one can do it. Everyone carries along, at all times, an ensemble of ideas, convictions, readings, etc. The question is to get rid of the idea that there is, before one starts, a given theory in a privileged position. When I wrote the beginning of the text you mentioned, I aimed among other things at destroying this idea because I am convinced that it bars the way to lucid thinking.

But let us consider seriously the problem you raise. It is true that we need to find an orientation in the modern world. And we do need to elucidate our project for a future society, what we want, what people want, what the project implies, how it could be implemented, what new problems and contradictions it might give rise to, and so on.

Concerning all these things, Marx has nothing to say, strictly nothing, except that we must abolish private property in the means of production, which is right, provided that we know exactly what this means (after

Yet Marx and marxism have nothing to say about this. Worse: they blind us. It is not possible, within marxism, to conceive of a working-class bureaucracy, rising from a political and organisational differentiation, and pursuing its own objectives, becoming ‘autonomous’ and finally seizing power and the state for its own benefit.

all, don’t nationalisations continue to pass as socialism?). And there are other problems as well: all forced collectivisation is to be radically excluded. At bottom, all the essential ideas that still maintain some relevance for us as revolutionaries had already been formulated by the working-class movement before Marx, between 1800 and 1848, more exactly in the newspapers of the first English trade-unions and in the writings of the French socialists.

And if we want to find an orientation in the contemporary social world, our main object (in respect to power structures, economics and even culture) is obviously bureaucracy and bureaucratic apparatuses. What can Marx tell us on these issues? Nothing. Less than nothing, worse than nothing. It is by means of Marx’s ideas that trotskyists have sought for sixty years to eliminate the problem of the bureaucracy: “the problem is the ownership of capital, not the bureaucracy; the bureaucracy is not a class”, and so on – whereas it is clear that the problem lies more and more in the bureaucracy, and not in ‘capital’ (in Marx’s sense).

And it is not just the bureaucracy ‘opposite us’, as a dominant layer: it is also the bureaucracy ‘in us’, the enormous and anguishing questions raised by the perpetual and perpetually recurring bureaucratisation of all organisations, trade unions, political parties, and so on. This has been a fundamental experience for a century. Yet Marx and marxism have nothing to say about this. Worse: they blind us. It is not possible, within marxism, to conceive of a working-class bureaucracy, rising from a political and organisational differentiation, and pursuing its own objectives, becoming ‘autonomous’ and finally seizing power and the state for its own benefit. From a marxist viewpoint, such a bureaucracy must not exist, because it is not rooted in the ‘relations of production’. So much the worse for reality, since stalinism exists all the same.

Lucy Parsons: American Anarchist

Iain McKay¹

Lucy Parsons (c. 1853-1942) is worthy of a great biography. She took an active part in the American anarchist and labour movements from the 1870s to her death and should be better known to today's radicals. Anyone described by the Chicago Police Department as "more dangerous than a thousand rioters" is worthy of remembrance. So Carolyn Ashbaugh's biography *Lucy Parsons: American Revolutionary* should be welcomed by anarchists – except that the book is so terrible.²

Ashbaugh's right to note that "Lucy Parsons was black, a woman, and working class – three reasons people are often excluded from history." (6)

However, this would be more convincing if Ashbaugh could bring herself to believe Parsons when she proclaimed herself an anarchist! Simply put, this biography excludes Parsons own voice and instead states that while she may have called herself an anarchist for decades "in reality, she advocated a syndicalist theory of society" (174) and "her beliefs were syndicalist rather than anarchist." (201)

It gets worse. Not only was Parsons unable to understand her own politics, the Chicago Martyrs were equally confused about their own politics and we are informed that the "trade unionists of the International Working People's Association... had been more 'syndicalist' than 'anarchist.'" (181) Ashbaugh quotes two of the Martyrs last words invoking Anarchy (136) yet wants the reader to believe that they died not knowing what it meant.



Lucy Parsons (c. 1853-1942)

The reprinting of this deeply flawed work is not surprising. There seems to be a tendency within American Leninist circles these days to claim the Chicago Anarchists as Marxists. This is because for most Marxists "real" anarchists are individualists who do not believe in the class struggle. As Ashbaugh's book will reinforce their incorrect ideas on anarchism it is useful to reiterate the basic ideas of revolutionary anarchism and show just how wrong it is on anarchism, syndicalism and Emma Goldman.

Bakunin and Marx

Ashbaugh is very sure that Parsons was not an anarchist but a syndicalist. So sure she repeatedly puts anarchist into quotes and argues that the Haymarket Martyrs "were labelled anarchists" because "it was easy to assume that divisions in the American movement would follow" the European split between "Marxian 'socialists' and Bakuninist 'anarchists.'" (45) She rejects this because "Bakunin's theories were orientated to 'mass' rather than to 'class,' and the Chicago revolutionaries were orientated to class and trade unions. By 1885 Lucy Parsons held a position which could be called syndicalist. She rejected the need for a state or political authority, but felt that 'economic' authority would fall under the jurisdiction of the trade unions." (58)

The only flaw in this argument is that Michael Bakunin and the other revolutionary anarchists in the First International advocated syndicalist ideas.

¹ This is a revised and expanded version of "Lucy Parsons: American Anarchist", *Anarcho-Syndicalist Review* No. 60 (Summer 2013)

² Carolyn Ashbaugh, *Lucy Parsons: American Revolutionary* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Publishing: 1976; Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012).

We can easily show this by quoting Bakunin from sources that were available to Ashbaugh when she was writing her book.

Thus we find Bakunin arguing that workers can only free themselves by “the establishing of complete solidarity with their fellow-workers in the shop, in their own defence and in the struggle against their common master” and then “the extension of this solidarity to all workers in the same trade and in the same locality in their joint struggle against the employers – that is, their formal entrance as active members into the section of their trade, a section affiliated with the International Workingmen’s Association.” Socialism “can be attained” only “through the social (and therefore anti-political) organisation and power of the working masses of the cities and villages.” Like the later syndicalists, Bakunin argued that “unions create that conscious power without which no victory is possible” while “strikes are of enormous value; they create, organise, and form a workers’ army, an army which is bound to break down the power of the bourgeoisie and the State, and lay the ground for a new world.”¹

Bakunin also advocated other key syndicalist ideas. Ashbaugh notes that “Lucy Parsons discussed the general strike” which was “the syndicalist germ of thought which she had had in the 1880’s” (218) yet she makes no mention of Bakunin’s arguments from the late 1860s that “a general strike” will produce “a great cataclysm, which will regenerate society.”² Ashbaugh likewise states that for the Chicago anarchists the “radical unions which opposed wage labor were to be the building blocks of the future social order” (45) yet fails to mention that Bakunin had argued that the “organisation of trade sections, their federation in the International, and their representation by the Chambers of Labour... bear in themselves the living germs of *the new social order*, which is to replace the bourgeois world. They are creating not only the ideas but also the facts of the future itself.”³ Compare this to Parsons’ position that “[w]e hold that the granges, trade-unions, Knights of Labor

assemblies, etc., are the embryonic groups of the ideal anarchistic society.”⁴

This focus of economic struggle and union organisation was combined with a rejection of the “political action” urged by Marx, namely socialists standing in elections. Bakunin argued, rightly as history has shown, that the “inevitable result” of such a strategy “will be that workers’ deputies, transferred to a purely bourgeois environment, and into an atmosphere of purely bourgeois political ideas... will become middle class in their outlook, perhaps even more so than the bourgeois themselves.”⁵

If quoting Bakunin is not sufficient, perhaps a few words by Marx and Engels will help convince any Marxists still harbouring doubts about the facts of the matter. Marx attacked Bakunin for arguing that “working classes must not occupy itself with *politics*. They must only organise themselves by trades-unions” and would “supplant the place of all existing states” by the International.⁶ Engels dismissed the general strike as “the lever employed by which the social revolution is started” in the “Bakunist programme” while suggesting they admitted “this required a well-formed organisation of the working class.”⁷ Thus Marx and Engels, if not many of his followers, recognised the key aspects of Bakunin’s anarchism – aspects which Ashbaugh seems to think of as syndicalist rather than anarchist.

This shows the weakness of Ashbaugh’s claim that “Albert Parsons made it clear that he considered the I.W.P.A a Marxist, not a Bakunist organisation.” (58) We need only remember that quoting can be selective and that Parsons was a self-proclaimed anarchist whose book on anarchism (*Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Scientific Basis*) included the writings of such well known libertarians as Peter Kropotkin, Elisée Reclus, Dyer Lum and C.L. James. Moreover, Ashbaugh’s summation that “Chicago leaders, as early as 1883, were syndicalists” because “they had given up political work for work in the unions which they believed would provide the social organisation of the future” (45) refutes her own

¹ *The Political Philosophy of Bakunin* (New York: The Free Press, 1953), G.P. Maximov (ed.), 304-5, 300, 379, 384-5.

² *The Political Philosophy of Bakunin*, 383.

³ quoted by Rudolf Rocker, *Anarcho-Syndicalism: Theory and Practice* (Edinburgh/Oakland: AK Press, 2004), 50.

⁴ “Lucy E. Parsons on Anarchy”, *Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Scientific Basis* (Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 2003), Albert Parsons (Ed.), 110.

⁵ *The Political Philosophy of Bakunin*, 216.

⁶ Marx-Engels *Collected Works* 43: 490.

⁷ Marx-Engels *Collected Works* 23: 584-5.

claims as these positions on “political action” and unions are identical to Bakunin’s:

Toilers count no longer on anyone but yourselves. Do not demoralise and paralyse your growing strength by being duped into alliances with bourgeois Radicalism... Abstain from all participation in bourgeois Radicalism and organise outside of it the forces of the proletariat. The bases of this organization... are the workshops and the federation of workshops... instruments of struggle against the bourgeoisie, and their federation, not only national, but international... when the hour of revolution sounds, you will proclaim the liquidation of the State and of bourgeois society, anarchy, that is to say the true, frank people’s revolution.¹

As such, there were good reasons for the Chicago anarchists to take that name, for their Marxist opponents to use it to describe them and for Lucy Parsons to call herself one for decades. So while Ashbaugh states that the I.W.W. “offered what Lucy Parsons wanted: a militant working class organisation which fought at the economic level with strikes and direct action rather than engaging in political campaigns” (218) Parsons’ comrade Max Baginski was correct to point out that it was Bakunin’s “militant spirit that breathes now in the best expressions of the Syndicalist and I.W.W. movements” and these were “a strong world wide revival of the ideas for which Bakunin laboured throughout his life.”²

Anarchism and Syndicalism

So claims that Lucy Parsons’ “response was syndicalist” when she argued that “a trades union and the Knights of Labor are practical illustrations

of the feasibility of Anarchism” (173) simply show an ignorance of anarchist theory. Parsons was simply expressing the basic ideas of revolutionary anarchism. This can be seen when Peter Kropotkin expressed the exact same idea at a commemoration meeting for the Chicago anarchists:

No one can underrate the importance of this labour movement for the coming revolution. It will be those agglomerations of wealth producers which will have to reorganise production on new social bases. They will have to organise the life of the nation and the use which it will make of the hitherto accumulated riches and means of production. They – the labourers, grouped together – not the politicians.³

Thus Kropotkin shared the same “vision of a future society” as Parsons and so Ashbaugh was wrong to suggest that Parsons “chose to call this system ‘no government,’ but in reality, she advocated a syndicalist theory

of society. She advocated workers’ ownership and control over the means of production and distribution through their unions.” (174) As if anarchists like Bakunin and Kropotkin did not! Similarly, they opposed, like Parsons, those who “advocated state control of the means of production and distribution” and “working through the electoral process to achieve state power.” (174) As well as the same goal, Kropotkin shared the same means as Parsons and Bakunin. While Caroline Cahm’s excellent *Kropotkin and the Rise of Revolutionary Anarchism 1872-1886* is the best work on Kropotkin’s ideas on the labour movement, the Russian revolutionary ably summarised his position thusly in 1910:

the anarchists... do not seek to constitute, and invite the working men not to constitute, political parties in the parliaments. Accordingly, since the foundation of the International Working

there were good reasons for the Chicago anarchists to take that name, for their Marxist opponents to use it to describe them and for Lucy Parsons to call herself one for decades.

¹ quoted by K.J. Kenafick, *Michael Bakunin and Karl Marx* (Melbourne: 1948), 120-1.

² “Michael Bakunin (1814-1914)”, *Anarchy! An Anthology of Emma Goldman’s Mother Earth* (Washington D.C.: Counterpoint, 2001), Peter Glassgold (ed.), 71.

³ “Commemoration of the Chicago Martyrs”, *Freedom*, December 1892; *Direct Struggle Against Capital: A Peter Kropotkin Anthology* (Edinburgh/Oakland: AK Press, 2014), Iain McKay (ed.), 344.

Men's Association in 1864-1866, they have endeavoured to promote their ideas directly amongst the labour organisations and to induce those unions to a direct struggle against capital, without placing their faith in parliamentary legislation.¹

Unsurprisingly Kropotkin expressed his support for the Chicago anarchists' activities many times: "Were not our Chicago Comrades right in despising politics, and saying the struggle against robbery must be carried on in the workshop and the street, by deeds not words?"² Years later, he wrote in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* of "the execution of five Chicago anarchists in 1887" and considered "Spies, Parsons and their followers in the United States" as advocates of "anarchist-communist ideas."³ Given that the focus of the conflict between Bakunin and Marx in the First International was precisely on "political action" by parties versus economic struggle by unions, it is clear that Parsons, like the other Chicago Anarchists, rejected the ideas of the latter in favour of those of the former.

Significantly, when Lucy Parsons visited London in 1888 she did not visit Engels but Kropotkin (Engels never wrote more than a few words, publicly or privately, about the Haymarket events which should give those seeking to turn the Martyrs into Marxists pause for thought). Kropotkin also spoke at a meeting organised by anarchists in her honour, talking of how the Martyrs "had joined the Anarchist movement, they gave themselves to it, not by halves, but entirely, body and heart together" and how they had died "loudly proclaiming their Anarchist principles before the judges."⁴ How did Ashbaugh describe this event? Showing her complete ignorance of Kropotkin's ideas, she writes of how Parsons "shared the platform" with "the world famous geographer and gentle anarchist theoretician of non-violence"! (160) Similarly, she proudly recounted how Parsons was asked to write on the IWW and the American union movement for "the French paper *Les Temps Nouveau*" (221) yet somehow failed to mention this was France's

leading communist-anarchist journal and intimately associated with Kropotkin.

Yet more evidence on Parsons being an anarchist can be seen when Ashbaugh quotes the manifesto issued at the I.W.P.A.'s Pittsburgh Congress of 1883 which urged the "[d]estruction of the existing class rule, by all means, i.e. by energetic, relentless, revolutionary and international action," a "free society based upon co-operative organisation of production" with "all public affairs" regulated "by free contracts between autonomous (independent) communes and associations, resting on a federalistic basis." (44) While much of this is shared by anarchists and Marxists, the last reflects the ideas of Bakunin and Kropotkin and not Marx. As Bakunin stressed, a "truly popular organisation begins... from below" and so "federalism becomes a political institution of Socialism, the free and spontaneous organisation of popular life." Thus anarchism "is federalistic in character."⁵ If in doubt, here is Emma Goldman arguing that anarchy is "a society based on voluntary co-operation of productive groups, communities and societies loosely federated together, eventually developing into a free communism, actuated by a solidarity of interests."⁶

So we are left with one of two positions: either Lucy Parsons, the Chicago Martyrs and Peter Kropotkin were wrong about anarchism or Ashbaugh is. The evidence (and plain common sense) is clear that it is Ashbaugh who is wrong rather than world famous anarchists like Lucy Parsons or Peter Kropotkin.

Emma Goldman

Thus it is uncontroversial to note that the Chicago Martyrs were also syndicalists. This is because, being revolutionary anarchists, they like Bakunin and Kropotkin advocated revolutionary unionism as a strategy to create an anarchist (libertarian socialist) society. This can be seen by Goldman noting that "in this country five men had to pay with their lives because they advocated Syndicalist methods as the most effective in the struggle of labor against capital."⁷ Where Ashbaugh goes wrong is her assumption that anarchism and

¹ "Anarchism", *Anarchism: A Collection of Revolutionary Writings* (New York: Dover Press, 2002), Roger N. Baldwin (ed.), 287.

² "The Chicago Anniversary", *Freedom*, December 1891.

³ "Anarchism", *Anarchism*, 295, 297.

⁴ "Before the Storm", *Freedom*, December 1888.

⁵ *The Political Philosophy of Bakunin*, 273-4, 272.

⁶ "What I Believe", *Red Emma Speaks: An Emma Goldman Reader* (New York: Humanity Books, 1998), 3rd Edition, Alix Kates Shulman (ed.), 50.

⁷ "Syndicalism: Its Theory and Practice", *Red Emma Speaks*, 87.

syndicalism are mutually exclusive rather than the latter being a longstanding strategy of the former.

It must be noted that Ashbaugh's attempts to bolster her case by stating that "Lucy did not separate 'anarchist' from socialist thinkers" (58) falls for much the same reason. Familiarity with anarchist thinkers would show that "Kropotkin, Bakunin, Proudhon" (58) all considered themselves socialists along with the "Chicago 'anarchists'" – perhaps we can add *them* to the long list of "alleged 'anarchists' [who] also called themselves 'socialists'"? (157) Emma Goldman, likewise, argued along the same lines:

While it is true that I am an Anarchist. I am also a Socialist. All Anarchists are Socialists, but not all Socialists are Anarchists. Anarchism is the higher form of Socialism. All Socialists who think and grow will be forced to the Anarchist conclusion. Anarchism is the inevitable goal of Socialism. We Anarchists believe in the socialisation of wealth and of land and of the means of production. But the doing away with capitalism is not a cure-all, and the substitution of the Socialistic state only means greater concentration and increase of governmental power. We believe in the revolution. The founders of Socialism believed in it. Karl Marx believed in it. All thinking Socialists of today believe in it. The political Socialists are only trimmers and they are no different from other politicians. In their mad effort to get offices they deny their birthright for a mess of pottage and sacrifice their true principles and real convictions on the polluted altar of politics.¹

It should be noted that Goldman is repeating the comments of Haymarket Martyr Adolph Fischer who stated that "every anarchist is a socialist, but every socialist is not necessarily an anarchist."² Similarly, the Chicago Anarchists' respect for Marx's analysis of capitalism hardly automatically excludes them from anarchism – if it did then

Yet reading Goldman shows that she placed her feminism within a class context and recognised the need to end capitalism to ensure genuine liberty and equality.

Bakunin would join them given his praise for Marx's *Capital* and other contributions to socialist thought.

Similar comments can be made against the book's claims on Emma Goldman. It is clear that Ashbaugh assumes that the reader is not familiar with her ideas and works, otherwise how do you explain the continued distortions inflicted upon her? She proclaims that "Goldman became interested in the freedom of the individual" while "Parsons remained committed to the freedom of the working class from capitalism" (200) and "believed that women would be emancipated when wage slavery in the factories, fields, and mines of capitalism had ended." (202) Their differences "were the result of different backgrounds and social milieus". (203)

Yet reading Goldman shows that she placed her feminism within a class context and recognised the need to end capitalism to ensure genuine liberty and equality. This can be seen when she argued for "a complete transvaluation of all accepted values – especially the moral ones – coupled with the abolition of industrial slavery."³ Thus women's suffrage was of no use "to the mass of women without property, the thousands of wage workers, who live from hand to mouth."⁴ She rightly asked:

As to the great mass of working girls and women, how much independence is gained if the narrowness and lack of freedom of the home is exchanged for the narrowness and

¹ "Anarchists Socialists" *The Agitator*, 1 April 1911. This interview also appeared in "Anarchism and Socialism Defined", *Herald of Revolt*, April 1911.

² *The Autobiographies of the Haymarket Martyrs* (New York: Monad Press, 1977), Philip S. Foner (ed.), 81.

³ "The Traffic in Women", *Anarchism and Other Essays*, 194.

⁴ "Woman Suffrage", *Anarchism and Other Essays*, 201.

lack of freedom of the factory, sweat-shop, department store, or office?¹

So much for Goldman's feminism becoming "separate from its working class origins" and taking on "an abstract character of freedom for women in all things, in all times, and in all places"! (202) In reality, Goldman's critique of the contemporary "women's question" was rooted in its lack of understanding of the "social question" and so was "absolutely detached from the economic needs of the people" and was usually "not only indifferent but antagonistic to labor".² It limited itself to political equality (votes for women) and ignored how having the vote had not liberated working men:

The poor, stupid, free American citizen! Free to starve, free to tramp the highways of this great country, he enjoys universal suffrage, and, by that right, he has forged chains about his limbs. The reward that he receives is stringent labor laws prohibiting the right of boycott, of picketing, in fact, of everything, except the right to be robbed of the fruits of his labor.³

Having votes for woman would not change the fact that "women wage-earners" would simply "have the equal right with men to be exploited, to be robbed, to go on strike; aye, to starve even."⁴ Likewise, her advocacy of birth control reflected not only the importance of women to control their own bodies but also how large families benefited capitalism and militarism as well as being a hinderance for workers thinking of striking.⁵

As for the claim that there "was a major difference between Emma Goldman and Lucy Parsons on the basic question of class consciousness" (181) it is significant that Ashbaugh fails to explore Goldman's advocacy of syndicalism. She is aware of it, mentioning (in passing) that Goldman's

lectures included "Syndicalism, the Strongest Weapon of the Working Class, a Discussion of Sabotage, Direct Action and the General Strike."⁶ (233) Her article for *Mother Earth* on Syndicalism⁷ was reprinted as the pamphlet *Syndicalism: The Modern Menace to Capitalism*, with Goldman stating that in the First International "Bakunin and the Latin workers" forged ahead "along industrial and Syndicalist lines", that syndicalism "is, in essence, the economic expression of Anarchism" and that "accounts for the presence of so many Anarchists in the Syndicalist movement. Like Anarchism, Syndicalism prepares the workers along direct economic lines, as conscious factors in the great struggles of to-day, as well as conscious factors in the task of reconstructing society."⁸

This was not the only place Goldman expressed syndicalist ideas, arguing in her introduction to anarchism that it "stands for direct action" and that "[t]rade unionism, the economic arena of the modern gladiator, owes its existence to direct action." She noted approvingly how internationally "direct, revolutionary economic action has become so strong a force in the battle for industrial liberty as to make the world realise the tremendous importance of labour's power. The General Strike [is] the supreme expression of the economic consciousness of the workers... Today every great strike, in order to win, must realise the importance of the solidaric general protest."⁹ She mocked the Marxists of the time who rejected the general strike:

True, a leading German Socialist not long ago declared the General Strike to be general nonsense; and when asked if the workers of the world should prevent the possible coalition of European powers against the Russian Revolution by the declaration of a General Strike, he scornfully ridiculed the suggestion. How

¹ "The Tragedy of Woman's Emancipation", *Anarchism and Other Essays*, 216.

² "Woman Suffrage", 207.

³ "Woman Suffrage", 198.

⁴ "Marriage and Love", *Anarchism and Other Essays*, 232.

⁵ "The Social Aspects of Birth Control", *Mother Earth*, April 1916 (included in *Anarchy! An Anthology of Emma Goldman's Mother Earth*).

⁶ Goldman lectured on the following labour-related subjects between 1904 and 1914: "The Struggle Between Capital and Labour", "The General Strike", "Trade Unionism", "Direct Action as the Logical Tactics of Anarchism", "The Relation of Anarchy and Trade Unionism", "Trade Unionism's Relation to Anarchy", "The Relationship of Anarchism to

Trades Unionism", "Anarchism, the Moving Spirit in the Labor Struggle", "Anarchy and its Relation to the Workingman", "Syndicalism, the Hope of the Worker", "Syndicalism in Theory and Practice", "Syndicalism, the Modern Menace to Capitalism", "Syndicalism, the Strongest Weapon of Labor", "The Spirit of Anarchism in the Labor Struggle" (see volumes 2 and 3 of *Emma Goldman: A Documentary History of the American Years*).

⁷ "Syndicalism: Its Theory and Practice", *Mother Earth*, January and February 1913.

⁸ "Syndicalism: Its Theory and Practice", *Red Emma Speaks*, 89, 91, 90.

⁹ "Anarchism: What it Really Stands For", *Anarchism and Other Essays*, 65-6.

foolish the “Sage of Berlin” must feel in face of the fact that the General Strike has since proved such a tremendous weapon in the hands of labor.¹

Likewise, her report on the International Anarchist Congress of 1907 rightly noted that the “destructive, as well as the constructive, forces for a new life come from the working people. It, therefore, behooves us to keep in close contact with the latter. There was little diversity of opinion on this point. The various speakers merely considered whether syndicalism is to be looked upon as an aim or as a means.” Moreover, one of her motions to the Conference concluded that the “germ of such an [anarchist] organization can be found in that form of trades unionism which has done away with centralization, bureaucracy and [hierarchical] discipline, and which favors independent and direct action on the part of its members.”²

Thus, just like Parsons, Goldman argued that it was the “war of classes that we must concentrate upon” and those “who appreciate the urgent need of co-operating in great struggles... must organise the preparedness of the masses for the overthrow of both capitalism and the state” as this “alone leads to revolution at the bottom” which “alone leads to economic and social freedom, and does away with all wars, all crimes, and all injustice.”³ She was well aware of the need for the “liberation of the human body from the domination of property; liberation from the shackles and restraint of government.” Wealth “means power; the power to subdue, to crush, to exploit, the power to enslave, to outrage, to degrade”.⁴ Property was “not only a hindrance to human well-being, but an obstacle, a deadly barrier, to all progress” and meant that “man must sell his labour” and so “his inclination and judgement are subordinated to the will of a master.” Anarchism, she stressed, was the “the only philosophy that can and will do away with this

humiliating and degrading situation... There can be no freedom in the large sense of the word... so long as mercenary and commercial considerations play an important part in the determination of personal conduct.”⁵

So in terms of all the key issues – syndicalism, direct action, general strike, class struggle – Goldman and Parsons *were in agreement*. This can be seen from the awkward fact that Parsons sold “pamphlets by Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, the majority of Kropotkin’s works” (227) Likewise after economic crisis in 1907-08 and 1914-15, Parsons “now concentrated her work in unemployment organising” (232) as did Alexander Berkman.

Of course there are personal conflicts at work here which can distort the level of agreement between individuals and groups (see the conflicts between Leninist Parties, as an obvious example). Parsons and Goldman did not seem to get on so assuming, as Ashbaugh does, that the former is completely objective on the latter and her ideas is problematic, to say the least. If it is a case that Parsons

“wanted to remain the unquestioned leader of the anarchist movement, but the leadership changed and with it the direction of the movement” (206) then her comments against Goldman should be questioned, not accepted at face value. This becomes petty in the extreme at time, as can be seen when Ashbaugh quotes Parsons’ thoughts on Goldman’s *Living My Life* as a flawed book “beginning and ending with Emma, Emma” (254) – as if an autobiography could be anything else.

So Ashbaugh’s book is not a serious critique of Goldman’s ideas by any means. Its attempts to contrast the “free love” individualistic anarchists with Parsons’ no-nonsense syndicalism fails if you have even a basic awareness of Goldman’s politics.⁶ Luckily, Ashbaugh could rest easy as few

So in terms of all the key issues – syndicalism, direct action, general strike, class struggle – Goldman and Parsons were in agreement.

¹ “The Spanish Uprising,” *Mother Earth*, August 1909.

² “The International Anarchist Congress”, *Mother Earth* October 1907.

³ “Preparedness: The Road to Universal Slaughter”, *Red Emma Speaks*, 355-6.

⁴ “Anarchism: What it Really Stands For”, 62, 54.

⁵ “What I Believe”, *Red Emma Speaks*, 50.

⁶ It is interesting to note that Kropotkin – who suggest that the paper *Free Society* “would do more if it would not waste so much space discussing sex” – is *not* presented as a class struggle anarchist by Leninists. Then again, he had the sense to agree when Goldman argued that “All right, dear comrade,

Marxists know much about Goldman's ideas – as can be seen, for example, by *International Socialist Organisation* (ISO) member Lance Selfa's error-ridden article "Emma Goldman: A life of controversy"¹ which also fails to mention her syndicalism.

Mother Earth and the class struggle

As such, claims that Parsons' paper the *Liberator's* "message was of strikes and industrial conflict, orientated to the class struggle" while *Mother Earth* "dealt with all facets of life and social revolution – sex, women's emancipation, literature, art, theatre" and found its "readership in the avant garde of the literary and artistic world" (221) is simply inaccurate. In reality, *Mother Earth* covered the class struggle in articles like Max Baginski's "Aim and Tactics of the Trade Union Movement" and Voltairine de Cleyre's "A Study of the General Strike in Philadelphia".² It also reprinted "The Basis of Trade Unionism" by leading French syndicalist Emile Pouget. *Mother Earth* unsurprisingly explicitly linked itself to the Chicago Anarchists and, for example, twenty years after their judicial murder argued as follows:

Bitter experience has gradually forced upon organized labor the realization that it is difficult, if not impossible, for isolated unions and trades to successfully wage war against organized capital; for capital is organized, into national as well as international bodies, co-operating in their exploitation and oppression of labor. To be successful, therefore, modern strikes must constantly assume ever larger proportions, involving the solidaric co-operation of all the branches of an affected industry – an idea gradually gaining recognition in the trades unions. This explains the occurrence of sympathetic strikes, in which men in related industries cease work in brotherly co-operation with their striking bothers –

evidences of solidarity so terrifying to the capitalistic class.

Solidaric strikes do not represent the battle of an isolated union or trade with an individual capitalist or group of capitalists; they are the war of the proletariat class with its organized enemy, the capitalist regime. The solidaric strike is the prologue of the General Strike.

The modern worker has ceased to be the slave of the individual capitalist; to-day, the capitalist class is his master. However great his occasional victories on the economic field, he still remains a wage slave. It is, therefore, not sufficient for labor unions to strive to merely lessen the pressure of the capitalistic heel; progressive workingmen's organizations can have but one worthy object – to achieve their full economic stature by complete emancipation from wage slavery.

That is the true mission of trades unions. They bear the germs of a potential social revolution; aye, more - they are the factors that will fashion the system of production and distribution in the coming free society."³

To state that the success of *Mother Earth* "reflected the dissociation of anarchism from strictly class struggle movements" (225) is simply nonsense. How could it be when it printed articles like de Cleyre's which argued that "the weapon of the future will be the general strike" and is it not clear that "it must be the strike which will *stay in* the factory, not *go out*?"⁴ This was recognised at the time, with leading British syndicalist Tom Mann stating that *Mother Earth* "voiced in clear terms the necessity for 'working class solidarity,' 'direct action in all industrial affairs' and 'free association.' I subscribe to each of these with heart

when I have reached your age, the sex question may no longer be of importance to me. But it is now, and it is a tremendous factor for thousands, millions even, of young people." (*Living My Life* [New York: Dover Publications, 1970] I: 253).

¹ *International Socialist Review*, no. 34, March-April 2004.

² For a selection of articles on "The Social War", see *Anarchy! An Anthology of Emma Goldman's Mother Earth*, Peter Glassgold (ed.).

³ "The First May and the General Strike," *Mother Earth*, May 1907.

⁴ "A Study of the General Strike in Philadelphia", *Anarchy! An Anthology of Emma Goldman's Mother Earth*, Peter

Glassgold (ed.), 311. It should be noted that de Cleyre is repeating Parsons's words from the IWW's founding Conference in 1905: "I wish to say that my conception of the future method of taking possession of this Earth is that of the general strike... My conception of the strike of the future is not to strike and go out and starve, but to strike and remain in and take possession of the necessary property of production." ("Speeches at the Founding Convention of the Industrial Workers of the World", *Freedom, Equality & Solidarity: Writings & Speeches, 1878-1937* [Charles H. Kerr, 2003], 82-3)

and mind.” The journal was “labouring so thoroughly to popularise principles calculated, as I believe, to emancipate mankind, intellectually and economically.”¹

So either Ashbaugh summarised the contents of *Mother Earth* without looking at journal and instead relying on her assumptions and prejudices or she did consult it and decided to misrepresent it. Neither option befits a serious historian.

At best it could be argued that by not being totally focused on unions and labour struggles *Mother Earth* made a mistake, but that would be wrong. Indeed, few Leninist newspapers today would be so narrowly focused (as can be seen by the ISO’s own journal). So if Parsons were “outraged that an anarchist paper would deal with such questions” like free love “for her advancing the working class revolution came first at any cost” (203) then this showed a weakness in her politics rather than a flaw in the rest of the American anarchist movement. Worse, Parsons’ position meant siding with the State as Goldman noted:

We are well aware that a theoretical commitment to social equality by socialist organisations need not be reflected in practice while arguing that everything will be fine after the revolution will ensure that social hierarchies like sexism, racism and homophobia will *never* be addressed.

The success of the meeting was unfortunately weakened by Lucy Parsons who, instead of condemning the unjustified, vile arrest of the three comrades in Portland and the ever increasing censorship by Comstock and associates, took a stand against the editor of the *Firebrand*, H. Addis, because he tolerated articles about free love in the columns of the *Firebrand*. Apart from the fact that anarchism not only teaches freedom in economic and political areas, but also in social and sexual life, L. Parsons has the least cause to object to treatises on free love and in addition at a time when it is important to liberate

comrades from the claws of the moral zealots. I spoke after Parsons and had a hard time changing the unpleasant mood that her remarks elicited, and I also succeeded in gaining the sympathy and the material support of the people present for the Portland trio.²

Simply put, if it is a case that “Lucy did not share Emma’s ideological position on sexual freedom, and she had never considered women’s emancipation as important as class struggle” (255) then Goldman was right – the struggle against

patriarchy is as important as the struggle against capitalism and the state. This applies to other forms of social oppression like racism and homophobia as well. We are well aware that a theoretical commitment to social equality by socialist organisations need not be reflected in practice while arguing that everything will be fine after the revolution will ensure that social hierarchies like sexism, racism and homophobia will *never* be addressed.

This does not mean, of course, that social hierarchies can be ended

without ending capitalism and the state. As can be seen, Goldman was well aware of the limitations of women’s liberation within capitalism – being free to become a wage slave is not much of a step-up from being a slave to a husband. Similarly, all having the chance to be a boss may be a form of equality but it is a limited one. True social equality means no bosses.

As such, there is a kernel of truth in Parsons’ position – a kernel which Goldman shared. However, Parsons’ conclusions were flawed but this does not justify how Ashbaugh distorts Goldman’s ideas and the wider anarchist movement’s position. Taking the former, such an account expresses nothing less than an

¹ “*Mother Earth* and Labour’s Revolt”, *Mother Earth*, March 1915. For more on Mann, see “Tom Mann and British Syndicalism”, *Black Flag Anarchist Review* Vol. 1 No. 3 (Autumn 2021).

² “Letters from a Tour”, *Emma Goldman: A Documentary History of the American Years: Volume 1: Made for America, 1890-1901* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 2003), Candace Falk (ed.), 311-2.

unwillingness to learn about Goldman's ideas and life. As she recounts in *Living My Life*, Goldman was a worker and she took part in strikes and when she became a full-time anarchist activist, she continued to support strikes along with writing on and lecturing – in, amongst other places, union halls – about the class struggle and syndicalism. She simply rejected an *exclusive* focus on labour agitation as she indicated in reply to Voltairine de Cleyre:

I agree with our Comrade that our work should be among “the poor, the ignorant, the brutal, the disinherited men and women.” I for one have worked with them and among them for twenty-one years... my friend knows the masses mainly from theory. I know them from years of contact in and out of the factory. Just because of that knowledge I do not believe that our work should be only with them. And that for the following reasons:

The pioneers of every new thought rarely come from the ranks of the workers. Possibly because the economic whip gives the latter little opportunity to easily grasp a truth...

The men and women who first take up the banner of a new, liberating idea generally emanate from the so-called respectable classes...

Far be it from me to belittle the poor, the ignorant, the disinherited. Certainly they are the greatest force, if only they could be awakened from their lethargy. But I maintain that to limit one's activities to them is not only a mistake, but also contrary to the spirit of Anarchism. Unlike other social theories, Anarchism builds not on classes, but on men and women. I may be mistaken, but I have always been of the opinion that Anarchism calls to battle all libertarian elements as against authority.

That to limit oneself to propaganda exclusively among the oppressed does not always bring desired results, is borne out by more than one historical proof. Our Chicago comrades propagated only among the workers; in fact, cheerfully gave their lives for the oppressed. Where were the latter during the eighteen terrible months of

the judicial farce? Were not the Chicago Anarchists shamefully betrayed by the very organization which Parsons and Spies helped to build up – the Knights of Labor? And has not the spirit of that time drifted into conservative channels, as represented by the American Federation of Labor? The majority of its members, I am sure, would hesitate not a moment to relegate Voltairine or myself to the fate of our martyred comrades.

... The economic factor is, I am sure, very vital. Possibly that accounts for the fact that a great many radicals lose their ideals the moment they succeed economically. Voltairine surely knows as well as I that hundreds of Anarchists, Socialists, and rabid revolutionists who were ardent workers twenty years ago are now very respectable... That, however, should not discourage the true propagandist from working among the disinherited, but it should teach him the vital lesson that spiritual hunger and unrest are often the most lasting incentives.¹

There is a strange quality to the kind of diatribe Ashbaugh's work expressed and has inspired, namely that anarchists are portrayed as being unable to hold more than one idea in their heads at any one time, combined with similar monolithic approach to tactics. Thus anarchists are class struggle orientated (like Parsons, thus really “syndicalists”) and so good because they are nearly Marxists) or they are culture orientated (like Goldman, thus “individualists”) and express “anarchism”). In reality, anarchists are like everyone else, being able to hold multiple ideas and advocate multiple tactics. This means that Goldman advocated syndicalism along with personal transformation, recognising the importance of individual liberation along with having a class analysis of society and social change.

These positions are *not* mutually exclusive, in other words. Class struggle politics do not need to exclude a concern over other – non-economic – issues, nor exclude a desire to expand individual freedom in the here-and-now. It is only the impoverished politics of Leninism which thinks it must – at least in their polemics against anarchism, for elsewhere they are able to take a more balanced

¹ “A Rejoinder,” *Mother Earth*, December 1910.

perspective and can even be found attacking syndicalism for an alleged exclusive concern of shopfloor activity and an ignoring of wider social issues.

In short, it is untenable to suggest, as Ashbaugh does, that Goldman and Berkman were at the forefront of removing the class struggle focus of anarchism within the American movement. Looking at their works it is clear that they shared the same politics as Parsons – communist-anarchism.

On the Bolshevik Myth

Class analysis is also at the heart of another issue upon which Parsons and Goldman took radically differing positions, namely the Russian Revolution. Ashbaugh notes how Parsons “took a hard Communist Party line against Goldman’s and Berkman’s perceptions of Soviet Russia” (255) and ignored the persecution of anarchists and the destruction of the Kronstadt revolt. She presents a wonderfully self-contradictory discussion of Parsons’ position on the Soviet regime, that she thought the “workers had seized power in Russia” (255) before asserting that she “did not ask whether there was freedom or workers’ democracy under the new regime.” (255-6) That raises the question of how the workers could have “seized power” without there being any “freedom or workers’ democracy”? Indeed, the Bolshevik regime confirmed Parsons’ own warnings of the perils associated with a socialist State:

I learned by close study that it made no difference what fair promises a political party, out of power, might make to the people in order to secure their confidence, when once securely established in control of the affairs of society that they were after all but human with all the human attributes of the politician. Among these are: First, to remain in power at all hazards; if not individually, then those holding essentially the same views as the administration must be kept in control. Second, in order to keep in power, it is necessary to build up a powerful machine; one strong enough to crush all opposition and silence all vigorous murmurs of discontent, or the party machine might be smashed and the party thereby lose control.

When I came to realize the faults, failings, shortcomings, aspirations and ambitions of fallible man, I concluded that it would not be the safest nor best policy for society, as a whole, to entrust the management of all its affairs, with all their manifold deviations and ramifications in the hands of finite man, to be managed by the party which happened to come into power, and therefore was the majority party, nor did it then, nor does it now make one particle of difference to me what a party, out of power may promise; it does not tend to allay my fears of a party, when entrenched and securely seated in power might do to crush opposition, and silence the voice of the minority, and thus retard the onward step of progress.

My mind is appalled at the thought of a political party having control of all the details that go to make up the sum total of our lives. Think of it for an instant, that the party in power shall have all authority to dictate the kind of books that shall be used in our schools and universities, government officials editing, printing, and circulating our literature, histories, magazines and press, to say nothing of the thousand and one activities of life that a people engage in, in a civilized society.

To my mind, the struggle for liberty is too great and the few steps we have gained have been won at too great a sacrifice, for the great mass of the people of this 20th century to consent to turn over to any political party the management of our social and industrial affairs. For all who are at all familiar with history know that men will abuse power when they possess it. For these and other reasons, I, after careful study, and not through sentiment, turned from a sincere, earnest, political Socialist to the non-political phase of Socialism – Anarchism – because in its philosophy I believe I can find the proper conditions for the fullest development of the individual units in society, which can never be the case under government restrictions.¹

Goldman and Berkman were actually in Russia and saw that there was neither freedom nor democracy for the working class, that it was a party

¹ “The Principles of Anarchism”, *Freedom, Equality & Solidarity*, 29-30.

dictatorship (as happily admitted by such leading Bolsheviks as Lenin, Trotsky and Zinoviev) and drew the obvious conclusions. As Goldman summarised:

There is another objection to my criticism on the part of the Communists. Russia is on strike, they say, and it is unethical for a revolutionist to side against the workers when they are striking against their masters. That is pure demagoguery practised by the Bolsheviks to silence criticism.

It is not true that the Russian people are on strike. On the contrary, the truth of the matter is that the Russian people have been *locked out* and that the Bolshevik State – even as the bourgeois industrial master – uses the sword and the gun to keep the people out. In the case of the Bolsheviks this tyranny is masked by a world-stirring slogan: thus they have succeeded in blinding the masses. Just because I am a revolutionist I refuse to side with the master class, which in Russia is called the Communist Party.¹

Clearly it is a travesty to proclaim that “[m]any ‘anarchists’ who had been orientated to the class struggle came into Communist Party circles. Those with individualistic and libertarian views like Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, who became disillusioned with Soviet Russia, did not.” (250) Goldman and Berkman opposed Soviet Russia precisely *because* they were “orientated to the class struggle” and sided with the Russian workers and peasants against their new rulers. Moreover, many anarcho-syndicalists (“anarchists” like Carlo Tresca, Rudolf Rocker and Armando Borghi) saw through (to use Berkman’s title) *The Bolshevik Myth*. This applied to IWW members as well, as admitted by a former wobbly turned Leninist and then Trotskyist:

the Bolshevik victory was hailed with enthusiasm by the members of the IWW. In their first reaction, it is safe to say, they saw in it the completion and vindication of their

own endeavors. But this first impulse was not followed through.

Some of the leading Wobblies, including Haywood himself, tried to learn the lessons of the war and the Russian Revolution and to adjust their thinking to them. But the big majority, after several years of wavering, went the other way.²

In short, if Parsons “analysed society in terms of class struggle” (256) then she should have done so with regards the Bolshevik regime and, like Goldman and Berkman, have recognised that there was a new ruling class in Russia, the party and state bureaucracies and, like them, supported the strikes, protests and uprisings of the workers against their new masters. Like Goldman she should have also argued that in “the economic field” social transformation “must be in the hands of the industrial masses” as the “industrial power of the masses, expressed through their libertarian associations – Anarcho-syndicalism – is alone able to organise successfully the economic life and carry on production.”³

Suffice to say, it is Goldman and Berkman who were proved right by history not Parsons. The real question is why Parsons sided with the Bolsheviks? Sadly, Ashbaugh does not present much explanation for this (presumably because she thought Parsons was self-evidently right). Yet Parsons was not alone in this blindness. Even as late as 1925, Guy Aldred – for example – was attacking Emma Goldman and *Freedom* over their critiques of Bolshevik Russia as he simply refused to believe their accounts.⁴ Aldred, unlike Parsons, saw the error of his position and eventually acknowledged the evidence that the regime was a state-capitalist party dictatorship. While it may be understandable that Parsons would not want to appear to be siding with capitalist reaction as regards Bolshevik Russia – and Goldman expressed similar misgivings⁵ – ultimately, not recognising and exposing the mistakes of the regime would mean repeating them in any future revolution with the same disastrous outcomes. Goldman was right when she stated in 1938 that “the Communist Party in and out of Russia has

¹ *My Disillusionment in Russia* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1970), xlix.

² James P. Cannon, *The IWW: The Great Anticipation* (New York: Pioneer Publishers, 1956), 33. It should be noted that Haywood had been an active member of the Socialist Party of America and so his embrace of Leninism was consistent with his Marxism.

³ *My Disillusionment in Russia*, 253.

⁴ Mark A. S. Shipway, *Antiparliamentary Communism: The Movement for Workers' Councils in Britain, 1917-45* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1988), 112-3.

⁵ See, for example, Alice Wexler, *Emma Goldman: an intimate life* (London: Virago, 1984), 258-261.

done so much harm to the labor and revolutionary movement in the world that it may well take a hundred years to undo.”¹

(Political) Socialists and (State) Communists

Talking of the Communists, Ashbaugh claims that Parsons “join[ed] the Communist Party in 1939.” (261) Yet there is good reason to question this claim. Significantly, as Gale Ahrens notes, the Communist Party did not announce her membership in its press nor did its obituary make the claim that she had been a member, nor did the memoirs of various Party leaders.² Sam Dolgoff recalled that he had “met Lucy Parsons” when she attended an anarchist talk and that she “later became a Communist sympathiser, leading her name to their affairs, petitions, and causes” in the early 1970s.³ However, in the 1980s, he quotes her stating “[a]lthough I am not a Communist Party member, I do work with them because they are more practical” before adding that “[a]ccording to Carolyn Ashbaugh’s biography of Lucy Parsons, she became an outspoken member of the Communist Party”.⁴ So in spite of being an activist at the time, Dolgoff was not aware Parsons’ had joined the Communist Party and only mentioned it *after* Ashbaugh’s book made the claim. This surely confirms Ahrens’ analysis. As such, it is hard not to conclude that there is a reason why Ashbaugh’s comment had no supporting public evidence, namely that there is none and Parsons did *not* join the Communist Party at any time.⁵

Moreover, Ashbaugh did not ponder the illogical nature of her assertion. She notes that left-wingers in 1919 “found themselves expelled from the Socialist Party” and joining the Communist Parties “was the only route left open to them.” (247) However, Parsons did not join then (indeed, in 1930 she was still publicly proclaiming that “I am an anarchist: I have no apology to make to a single man, woman or child, because I am an anarchist, because anarchism carries the very germ of liberty

***Lucy stepped out of the platform,
bent with age, almost totally blind --
but still defiant, still hurling curses
at the powers-that-be, still calling
for the overthrow of capitalism.***

– Sam Dolgoff, “Recollections of Lucy Parsons & the 50th Anniversary of November 11th”, *Haymarket Scrapbook*

in its womb”⁶). Why wait 20 years to join the Stalinist Communist Party during its Popular Front phase? That goes against the class struggle nature of Parsons’ politics which Ashbaugh is so keen to praise everywhere else in her book. And why do neo-Trotskyists like the ISO point to this apparent support for Stalinists as a good thing? It seems strange, for example, to applaud how syndicalist William Z Foster became a Leninist and yet remain silent on how he became a Stalinist.

As well as a blindness to the Soviet Regime, Ashbaugh has a rosy view of Social Democracy. She does not seem that keen to learn the lessons of history. Yes, the Socialist Party of America may have become “a mass organisation rather than a small socialist sect” (209) but it became reformist, expelling the likes of Big Bill Haywood as part of a “break” with the IWW. (229) Parsons was right to argue that workers had “to strike and remain in and take possession of the necessary property of production” (218) and to mock those who believed in political action favoured by Marx and his followers like the Socialist Party: “Do you think the capitalists will allow you to vote away their property? You may, but I do not believe it... It means a revolution...” (218) She was understandably dismissive of the apparent success of Social Democracy once the First World War broke out:

Could wars ever be carried on were it not for that institutionalized credulity which manifests in reliance upon “The State”? Our

¹ *Nowhere at home: letters from exile of Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman*, Richard and Anna Maria Drinnon (eds.), (New York: Schocken Books, 1975), 269-270.

² “Introduction”, *Freedom, Equality & Solidarity*, 20.

³ *Anarchist Voices: An Oral History of Anarchism in America* (Edinburgh/Oakland: AK Press, 2005), 422.

⁴ *Fragments: A Memoir* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, 1986), 41-2.

⁵ For what it is worth, the *New York Times* reported the death of a “noted anarchist” on March 8th, 1942, while the same date saw the *Chicago Daily Tribune* write of the death of an “anarchist whose life has been one long battle against the established order of society.”

⁶ “I’ll be Damned if I go Back to Work Under Those Conditions! A May Day Speech”, *Liberty, Equality & Solidarity*, 147.

socialist friends often say: “We see Anarchism gets you nowhere.” Where did “scientific” political socialism get the millions of socialists in Europe? Frankly, could Europe be worse cursed than it is if there had never been a single speech delivered by a political socialist or a book written by one of them? Really, could it be worse?¹

It is also important to stress that it is pure assumption for Ashbaugh to proclaim that “the I.W.W. and the Socialist Party never fully cooperated with each other, a fact which limited both.” (218) There is little basis for such assertions and much evidence against it – look at the history of Social Democracy and contrast it with that of syndicalism. Many radicals embraced the latter precisely because of the reformism and bureaucracy of the latter and its tame unions. In other words, Bakunin was proven right.

So, in conclusion, while some anarchists will be sympathetic to comments about “restoring the working class movement called anarchism to the dimensions of 1886” and how Parsons “complained that anarchism had moved too far from the working class” (226), it is not the case that anarchism is somehow fundamentally different from syndicalism: revolutionary anarchism has advocated syndicalism since Bakunin.

Moreover, if it is the case that “[w]hile the anarchist movement became more and more involved with women’s emancipation, sexual freedom, and individual liberties, Lucy Parsons became involved in the Social Democracy” (200) then this is a mark against her (and Social Democracy!) rather than anarchism. And if Parsons “was a member of this new party” (209) (the Socialist Party) then it was for a very short-time and she quickly returned to anarchist ideas on direct action and revolutionary unionism.

To Conclude

This is a seriously flawed book. Lucy Parsons, for all her faults and mistakes, deserves better than this. Ashbaugh’s understanding of anarchism is

non-existent, yet she inflicted her ignorance onto the world. As well as showing a shocking ignorance of anarchism, Ashbaugh’s account also results in denying Parsons of agency and she ends up repeating the all-too-common suggestion that she lived in her husband’s shadow as well as adding that Parsons was unable to understand her own or her husband’s ideas:

Lucy Parsons had claimed to be an “anarchist” when the title was pinned on her by the bourgeois press and her state socialist enemies. She believed her husband had died for anarchism, and she was prepared to defend and die for anarchism. Although her beliefs were syndicalist rather than anarchist, she tried to cling to the “anarchist” movement as it changed shape. (201)

As well as belittling Parson, this nonsense has consequences as her book has been used by many Leninists to paint a distinctly false picture of American anarchism and Emma Goldman’s politics. Thus, a member of the ISO (Keith Rosenthal) used it as the basis of an article and pamphlet on Parsons which was little more than an attack on anarchism to try and draw activists away from it into Leninism (this plagiarised work embellished her numerous inaccuracies, including proclaiming Kropotkin a pacifist!). That this book is reprinted by a press associated with that sect and called Haymarket Books besmirches her and her husband twice fold.

So please do *not* buy this book. If you are interested in Lucy Parson then there is an excellent anthology of her writings edited by Gale Ahrens called *Freedom, Equality & Solidarity: Writings & Speeches, 1878-1937* (Charles H. Kerr, 2003). Allowing Parsons voice to be heard without commentary (although it does have a useful Introduction by Ahrens and a less useful Afterword by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz who repeats Ashbaugh’s claims on Goldman’s alleged “lifestyle” anarchism), it is a more reliable introduction to her life and ideas.

“We hold that the granges, trade-unions, Knights of Labor assemblies, etc., are the embryonic groups of the ideal anarchistic society.” – Lucy Parsons

¹ “Just a few stray observations on ‘Political’ Socialism, War, and the State”, *Freedom, Equality & Solidarity*, 150-1.

An Interview with Lucy Parsons on the Prospects for Anarchism in America

St. Louis Post-Dispatch, 21 October 1886

New York, October 21 [1886].—Mrs. Lucy Parsons, wife of the Chicago anarchist, who is one of the seven now under sentence of death for bomb throwing in the Haymarket riots in Chicago, has been stopping with friends in this city since Saturday night [Oct. 16, 1886]. Her abode has studiously been kept secret from reporters, and the most diligent search failed to discover her. After the meeting Sunday afternoon she withdrew to the seclusion of a house uptown. Yesterday she passed, in paying her respects to her anarchist friends, at the home of an East Side saloonkeeper, where the *Post-Dispatch* correspondent found her. Mrs. Parsons, who said she had not sought for newspaper notoriety since she came to New York, seated herself in an easy chair and chatted intelligently and earnestly about the cause she represented for a full hour. In reply to the reporter's inquiry as to the prospect of anarchy in this country and the world in general, the woman anarchist dropped her eyes for a moment in deep thought and said:

“This is the evolutionary stage of anarchism. The revolutionary period will be reached when the great middle classes are practically extinct. The great monopolies and corporations and syndicates, met with on every hand, are now rapidly extinguishing the middle classes, which we regard as the great bulwark between the monopoly and the great producing or working classes. There will come a time when there will be in this world only two classes, the possessing class and the non-possessing class, the middle classes having been forced into the wage class owing to the enormous capital now needed to remain in the field of production. These two classes will therefore find themselves arrayed against each other; a struggle in the revolutionary stage will come, and the order of things in the world will be changed by the people themselves.”

“Will the change come peaceably?”

“I think not, for all history shows that every attempt to wrest from the wealthy and powerful that which they have made by force. The vanguard of this struggling army will be found in America, because Americans will never submit to being forced to the conditions of the European masses. All the signs of the times show that the fight will begin here. Witness the strikes without number that have swept up and down this broad land like a great cyclone. Millionaires are made here in one generation whereas it takes centuries in Europe, and that is a fact that proves that Americans will respond to the call quicker. The wage system in this country has now reached its full development. It no longer satisfies the needs and wants of the people; facts

which are illustrated by the poverty and starvation to be met with in the midst of plenty.”

“When this struggle comes and culminates in the sovereignty of the people, what sort of a state will follow under anarchism?”

“Well, first let us look at the derivation of anarchism. It means ‘without rule.’ We presuppose that the wage system has been abolished. There wage-slavery ends and anarchy begins, but you must not confuse this state with the revolutionary period, as people are in the habit of doing. We hold that the trade unions are the embryonic group of the ideal groups, including all industrial trades, such as the farmer, shoemaker, hatter, printer, painter, cigarmaker, and others who will maintain themselves apart and distinct from the whole. We ask for the decentralization of power from the central government into the groups or classes. The farmers will supply so much of the land products, the shoemakers so much in shoes, the hatter so many hats, and so on, all of them measuring the consumption by statistics which will be accurately compiled. Land will be in common, and there will be no rent, no interest, and no profit. Therefore, there will be no Jay Goulds, no Vanderbilts, no corporations, and no moneyed power.

Drudgery, such as exists today, will be reduced to a minimum. The number of hours of labour will be reduced and people will have more time for pleasure and cultivation of the mind. We base all these results on natural reasons, believing that nature has implanted in every man, in common with all his fellows, certain instincts and certain capacities. If a man won't work, nature makes him starve. So in our State you must work or starve. But we claim that the sum of human happiness will be increased while the drudgery, poverty, and misery of the world today, all due to the powerful concentration of capital, will be done away with. It will be impossible for a man to accumulate Gould's wealth, because there would be no such thing as profit. There would be no overproduction, because only enough of any one article would be produced to meet the demand.”

“How is this change to be brought about?”

“That comes in the revolutionary stage and will happen, as I said, when the final great struggle of the masses against the moneyed powers takes place. The money and wages now found in the possession of the wage class represents the bare necessities of life; nothing over when the bills from one week to another are paid. The rest goes to the profit-taking classes and that is why we call the system wage slavery.”

“What criticism of the present form of government do you make?”

“All political government must necessarily become despotic, because all government tends to become centralized in the hands of the few, who breed corruption among themselves and in a very short time disconnect themselves from the body of the people. The American republic is a good illustration. Here we have a semblance of a republic, of a democracy, but it has fallen into the hands of a powerful few, who rule with a despotism absolutely impossible in Europe. I have but to refer you to the Carter Harrison interview not long ago in the [New York] *World*, in which he remarked that the atrocities committed by the Haymarket Anarchists in Chicago would not have been suffered in any monarchy in Europe, and would have overturned Victoria’s throne. We see in this Government a huge machine turned against the will of the people by those who control it. We see in this Government a huge machine turned against the will of the people by those who control it. Congressmen and Senators buy their seats of office, and are not in sympathy with the people. We claim these things are made possible because of our economic condition; in other words, people must be economically free before they are in condition to even have a choice as to a political form of government.”

“What have you to say of the Chicago troubles?”

“Regarding the sentence to death of the seven brave men, I must express my sense of its injustice. The evidence on trial did not show that they were guilty of bomb-throwing, but even if it did show the bomb was thrown by an anarchist, yet they were not violating any law of the Constitution, for that instrument expressly defines the free right of all men to meet in unmolested assemblage. Police interference was not warranted, yet even after the police did appear there was no unimpeachable witness who could swear that he saw the bomb thrown. The mad who did swear to the bomb-throwing was a bad chap, wrung in by the prosecution to aid their purposes. We produced a number of witnesses in the defence to prove that the man lied, and what is more, we have the best evidence in the world to show that the jury was bought for the price of \$100,000, and when the next hearing takes place we shall have some startling testimony. Already a strong public sympathy has been aroused in Chicago in favour of the doomed men. The case will come up in the Supreme Court in March [1887], and failing then to secure a new trial, we shall possibly be able to carry the case to the federal court.”

Mrs. Parsons will remain in this city about three weeks, during which time she will lecture a number of times. She is under engagement to speak in Brooklyn, Newark, Orange, Jersey City, New Haven, Boston, Pittsburgh, and Cleveland.

I am an anarchist

Lucy E. Parsons

The Kansas City Journal, 21 December 1886

I am an anarchist. I suppose you came here, the most of you, to see what a real, live anarchist looked like. I suppose some of you expected to see me with a bomb in one hand and a flaming torch in the other, but are disappointed in seeing neither. If such has been your ideas regarding an anarchist, you deserved to be disappointed. Anarchists are peaceable, law abiding people. What do anarchists mean when they speak of anarchy? Webster gives the term two definitions chaos and the state of being without political rule. We cling to the latter definition. Our enemies hold that we believe only in the former.

Do you wonder why there are anarchists in this country, in this great land of liberty, as you love to call it? Go to New York. Go through the byways and alleys of that great city. Count the myriads starving; count the multiplied thousands who are homeless; number those who work harder than slaves and live on less and have fewer comforts than the meanest slaves. You will be dumbfounded by your discoveries, you who have paid no attention to these poor, save as objects of charity and commiseration. They are not objects of charity, they are the victims of the rank injustice that permeates the system of government, and of political economy that

holds sway from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Its oppression, the misery it causes, the wretchedness it gives birth to, are found to a greater extent in New York than elsewhere. In New York, where not many days ago two governments united in unveiling a statue of liberty, where a hundred bands played that hymn of liberty, ‘The Marseillaise.’ But almost its equal is found among the miners of the West, who dwell in squalor and wear rags, that the capitalists, who control the earth that should be free to all, may add still further to their millions! Oh, there are plenty of reasons for the existence of anarchists.

But in Chicago they do not think anarchists have any right to exist at all. They want to hang them there, lawfully or unlawfully. You have heard of a certain Haymarket meeting.’ You have heard of a bomb. You have heard of arrests and of succeeding arrests effected by detectives. Those detectives! There is a set of men nay, beasts for you! Pinkerton detectives! They would do anything. I feel sure capitalists wanted a man to throw that bomb at the Haymarket meeting and have the anarchists blamed for it. Pinkerton could have accomplished it for him. You have heard a great deal about bombs. You have heard that the anarchists said

lots about dynamite. You have been told that Lingg made bombs.

He violated no law. Dynamite bombs can kill, can murder, so can Gatling guns. Suppose that bomb had been thrown by an anarchist. The constitution says there are certain inalienable rights, among which are a free press, free speech and free assemblage. The citizens of this great land are given by the constitution the right to repel the unlawful invasion of those rights. The meeting at Haymarket square was a peaceable meeting. Suppose, when an anarchist saw the police arrive on the scene, with murder in their eyes, determined to break up that meeting, suppose he had thrown that bomb; he would have violated no law. That will be the verdict of your children. Had I been there, had I seen those murderous police approach, had I heard that insolent command to disperse, had I heard Fielden say, 'Captain, this is a peaceable meeting,' had I seen the liberties of my countrymen trodden under foot, I would have flung the bomb myself. I would have violated no law, but would have upheld the constitution.

If the anarchists had planned to destroy the city of Chicago and to massacre the police, why was it they had only two or three bombs in hand? Such was not their intention. It was a peaceable meeting. Carter Harrison, the mayor of Chicago, was there. He said it was a quiet meeting. He told [Captain] Bonfield to send the police to their different beats. I do not stand here to gloat over the murder of those policemen. I despise murder. But when a ball from the revolver of a policeman kills it is as much murder as when death results from a bomb.

The police rushed upon that meeting as it was about to disperse. Mr. Simonson talked to Bonfield about the meeting.' Bonfield said he wanted to do the anarchists up. Parsons went to the meeting. He took his wife, two ladies and his two children along. Toward the close of the meeting, he said, 'I believe it is going to rain. Let us adjourn to Zeph's hall.' Fielden said he was about through with his speech and would close it at once. The people were beginning to scatter about, a thousand of the more enthusiastic still lingered in spite of the rain. Parsons, and those who accompanied him started for home. They had gone as far as the Desplaine's street police station when they saw the police start at a double

quick. Parsons stopped to see what was the trouble. Those 200 policemen rushed on to do the anarchists up. Then we went on. I was in Zeph's hall when I heard that terrible detonation. It was heard around the world. Tyrants trembled and felt there was something wrong.

The discovery of dynamite and its use by anarchists is a repetition of history. When gun powder was discovered, the feudal system was at the height of its power. Its discovery and use made the middle classes. Its first discharge sounded the death knell of the feudal system. The bomb at Chicago sounded the downfall of the wage system of the nineteenth century. Why? Because I know no intelligent people will submit to despotism. The first means the diffusion of power. I tell no man to use it. But it was the achievement of science, not of anarchy, and would do for the masses. I suppose the press will say I belched forth treason. If I have violated any law, arrest me, give me a trial, and the proper punishment, but let the next anarchist that comes along ventilate his views without

The day before the wage slaves in McCormick's factory had struck for eight hours labour, McCormick, from his luxurious office, with one stroke of the pen by his idle, be ringed fingers, turned 4,000 men out of employment. Some gathered and stoned the factory... The police were sent out and they killed six wage slaves.

hindrance.

Well, the bomb exploded, the arrests were made and then came that great judicial farce, beginning on June 21. The jury was impanelled. Is there a Knight of Labor here? Then know that a Knight of Labor was not considered competent enough to serve on that jury. 'Are you a Knight of Labor?' 'Have you any sympathy with labour organisations?' were the questions asked each talisman. If an affirmative answer was given, the talisman was bounced. It was not are you a Mason, a Knight Templar? O, no! [Great applause.] I see you read the signs of the times by that expression. Hangman Gary, miscalled judge, ruled that if a man was prejudiced against the defendants, it did not incapacitate him for serving on the jury. For such a man, said Hangman Gary, would pay closer attention to the law and evidence and would be more apt to render a verdict for the defence. Is there a lawyer here? If there is he knows such a ruling is without precedent and contrary to all law, reason or common sense.

In the heat of patriotism the American citizen sometimes drops a tear for the nihilist of Russia. They say the nihilist can't get justice, that he is condemned without trial. How much more should he weep for his next door neighbour, the anarchist, who is given the form of trial under such a ruling.

There were 'squealers' introduced as witnesses for the prosecution. There were three of them. Each and every one was compelled to admit they had been purchased and intimidated by the prosecution. Yet Hangman Gary held their evidence as competent. It came out in the trial that the Haymarket meeting was the result of no plot, but was caused in this wise. The day before the wage slaves in McCormick's factory had struck for eight hours labour, McCormick, from his luxurious office, with one stroke of the pen by his idle, be ringed fingers, turned 4,000 men out of employment. Some gathered and stoned the factory. Therefore they were anarchists, said the press. But anarchists are not fools; only fools stone buildings. The police were sent out and they killed six wage slaves. You didn't know that. The capitalistic press kept it quiet, but it made a great fuss over the killing of some policemen. Then these crazy anarchists, as they are called, thought a meeting ought to be held to consider the killing of six brethren and to discuss the eight hour movement. The meeting was held. It was peaceable. When Bonfield ordered the police to charge those peaceable anarchists, he hauled down the American flag and should have been shot on the spot.

While the judicial farce was going on the red and black flags were brought into court, to prove that the anarchists threw the bomb. They were placed on the walls and hung there, awful spectres before the jury. What does the black flag mean? When a cable gram says it was carried through the streets of a European city it means that the people are suffering – that the men are out of work, the women starving, the children

barefooted. But, you say, that is in Europe. How about America? The Chicago Tribune said there were 30,000 men in that city with nothing to do. Another authority said there were 10,000 barefooted children in mid-winter. The police said hundreds had no place to sleep or warm. Then President Cleveland issued his Thanksgiving proclamation and the anarchists formed in procession and carried the black flag to show that these thousands had nothing for which to return thanks. When the Board of Trade, that gambling den, was dedicated by means of a banquet, \$30 a plate, again the black flag was carried, to signify that there were thousands who couldn't enjoy a 2 cent meal.

But the red flag, the horrible red flag, what does that mean? Not that the streets should run with gore, but that the same red blood courses through the veins of the whole human race. It meant the brotherhood of man. When the red flag floats over the world the idle shall be called to work. There will be an end of prostitution for women, of slavery for man, of hunger for children.

Liberty has been named anarchy. If this verdict is carried out it will be the death knell of America's liberty. You and your children will be slaves. You will have liberty if you can pay for it. If this verdict is carried out, place the flag of our country at half-mast and write on every fold 'shame.' Let our flag be trailed in the dust. Let the children of workingmen place laurels to the brow of these modern heroes, for they committed no crime. Break the two fold yoke. Bread is freedom and freedom is bread.

Wild Talk of Anarchy

The Deseret News, 9 September 1893

Anarchy was talked at a mass meeting called for the unemployed at Metropolitan hall, Jefferson and O'Brien street, yesterday. There were 1500 or more persons present, a majority of whom were Jews. There were also many Germans, Poles and Italians there and some native Americans. L. S. Oliver presided. The meeting was called by the Chicago Tailors' union. Foremost among the speakers was

LUCY PARSONS,

who drew a terrible picture of misery and want, and urged united action against capital. Her hearers were roused to a high pitch of excitement by her speech.

As Mrs. Parsons appeared her dark face twitched with the excitement of the moment. The air was filled with waving arms and the windows rattled with the storm of applause. She held out an arm demanding silence, which was secured alter some minutes. She spoke, in substance, as follows:

"Again the capitalist faction has been tested and found wanting. Unwittingly have the multitudes bowed to what was regarded as necessity and submitted to the

rule of demagogues who promised better times. We have labored along through the years under protest, hoping against hope on the strength of bright promises never fulfilled. As an inevitable result of the machinations of the dominant power of the devils of finance the workingman again stares a calamity in the face. He has lifted his appealing countenance to the power that created his pitiable condition, and again dropped his gaze, chilled with the steady gaze cast at him from the nominal master. Gaunt famine is at the door or the masses, and we are being turned out like dogs to die in the streets. Life is a commodity all too cheap. I want these facts of your existence to stick like steel barbs into your souls. Now is my harvest time. I attempt no concealment of the fact that I, with other true, hearted anarchists, will take advantage of your present condition to teach you the principles of the true faith.

HUNGRY MEN UNDERSTAND ANARCHY.

"Hungry men think. Men with that unsatiable gnawing at their vitals can be made to understand the tenets of anarchy. I give a hungry man a tract on anarchy and

know that the truths it contains will find an eternal lodgment in his soul. Oh, it is men made desperate by hunger that are our proselytes. And now to the cause of your trouble. It lies with the capitalist. He is responsible individually, for who of you has gone to him in need and been succored? No; instead of bread you receive withering logic, and if the cries of a starving family drive you to take what belongs to you the capitalist calls in the minions of the law and has you shot. Thus it is that your children come into the world beggars, go through life paupers, and, hounded to the grave by their prosecutors, die criminals. The slaughter of the innocents of the great masses of trembling workingmen goes on forever.

“When will the worth turn? I say to hell with the gang of thieves, robbers, murderers, destroyers of our homes. Oh, my brothers, as long as a merciful God gives me strength to work will I stir you on to reciprocal destruction.”

The speaker trembled violently and leaned on the table for support. Her auditors were again beside themselves. Hats went into the air and the excited men rose in a body and cheered.

WHY SUBMIT TO ROBBERY?

Mrs. Parsons then proceeded:

“You are the sole producers; why should you not consume? Why do you submit so tamely to robbery?”

When your babes are in rags why will you see other children draped with silk? Why should one aristocratic brat vomit on silk that dozens of your children should go to bed hungry? We are getting tired of this game. I say ‘we’ because now that you are hungry I suppose you are willing to be anarchists. I tell you we must rid ourselves of these ruthless rulers. It is slavery when three men seek the same job. Liberty begins when one job seeks three men.

“I have a purpose in not showing you how to get bread. Your salvation lies in stirring you to desperate action. Want and extreme misery will drive you to united action. I will give you an absorbing subject for thought. The present social system is rotten from top to bottom. You must see this and realize that the time has come to destroy it. Wealth is in your reach. Oh, fools! fools! that you do not grasp it. Let our streets run with gore, but what we have justice. Capitalist lives swept away are so much gain to us. That is why I am a revolutionist. By force we were robbed by the people who coin your sweat into Gatling guns to kill you, and by force they must be dispossessed. You must no longer stink, die and rot in tenement houses when you possess the strength to wrest palaces from the oppressors. You are infamous curs; aye, infamous curs, if you continue to accept charity. Shoulder to shoulder with one accord you should rise and take what is yours.”

Speeches at the I.W.W.’s founding Convention

Lucy E. Parsons

28 June 1905, Afternoon Session

A great deal has been said here about the number of votes that the different delegates carry around in their pockets. I am not here for the purpose of raising a note of inharmony or disunion among these delegates. I am simply here in the interest of truth as I see it. Now, this idea of mere force of numbers sounds too much to me like “Might makes Right.” Mere force of numbers never made a right on Earth, and, thanks to justice, never can. What is right, what is just and justice, is simply the result of the best minds of all the ages. Whatever right we have in society is simply a heritage handed down to us by those who had only disinterested motives.

Now, I am one of those who entered my name as an individual delegate. I had to do so because I had to subscribe to the technicality of the clause that has been read by the delegate before the last. I entered myself as an individual delegate, but let me assure you that I for one had no such idea of entering my name as an individual delegate. Now a great many of you represent your unions, and I certainly do believe in organised

labour or I would not be here; organisation of a purely economic nature. I entered my name believing that I did not represent a mere body that met within the four walls of any hall, but that I represent that great body that has its face to the foremost ends of the Earth. Now, I entered my name here, and I think others did, because we had eyes to see the misery, we had ears to hear the cry of the downcast and miserable of the Earth, we had a heart that was sympathetic, and we believed that we could come here and raise our voice and mingle it with yours in the interest of humanity.

So that is the great audience I represent. I represent those people, those little children who, after my twenty-five years’ residence in Chicago, I know are in the factories. I entered here as a delegate to represent that great mass of outraged humanity, my sisters whom I can see in the night when I go out in Chicago, who are young and fair and beautiful, but who are compelled to sell the holy name of womanhood for a night’s lodging. I am here to raise my voice with them, and ask you to

put forth from this organisation a declaration of principles and a constitution that shall give them hope in the future, that they shall be enrolled under the banner of this organisation.

Had I simply come here to represent myself, I might as well have remained at home and not taken up the time of your deliberative body. Let me say to you – I will take but a few moments of your time – that it matters not to me personally what you shall finally decide. I am perfectly willing to leave my case in the hands of this convention as to whether I and the rest of the individual delegates shall be admitted. I wish simply to say to you, Godspeed you in your effort, and that there might come some good at least from your organisation.

I wish to state in conclusion that some of the delegates seem to lay some capital up, or put some stress upon, what some delegate or some people here have lost in the interest of labour. Let me say to you that I think that is

29 June 1905, Afternoon Session

I can assure you that after the intellectual feast that I have enjoyed immensely this afternoon, I feel fortunate to appear before you now in response to your call. I do not wish you to think that I am here to play upon words when I tell you that I stand before you and feel much like a pigmy before intellectual giants, but that is only the fact.

I wish to state to you that I have taken the floor because no other woman has responded, and I feel that it would not be out of place for me to say in my poor way a few words about this movement. We, the women of this country, have no ballot even if we wished to use it, and the only way that we can be represented is to take a man to represent us. You men have made such a mess of it in representing us that we have not much confidence in asking you; and I for one feel very backward in asking the men to represent me. We have no ballot, but we have our labour. I think it is August Bebel, in his *Woman in the Past, Present and Future* – a book that should be read by every woman that works for wages – Bebel says that men have been slaves throughout all the ages, but that woman's condition has been worse, for she has been the slave of a slave.

There was never a greater truth uttered. We are the slaves of the slaves. We are exploited more ruthlessly than men. Wherever wages are to be reduced the capitalist class use women to reduce them, and if there is anything that you men should do in the future it is to organise the women. And I say that if the women had inaugurated a boycott of the State Street stores since the teamsters' strike, the stores would have surrendered long ago. I do not stand before you to brag. I had no man connected with that strike to make it of interest to me to boycott the stores, but I have not bought one penny's worth there since that strike was inaugurated. I intended to boycott all of them as one individual at least, so it is important to educate the women.

the last stock in trade that any delegate should talk about in this hall. It matters not if there is a man in this hall who has lost a limb in the interest of labour – he has not lived in vain. If there are some here who have lost their liberty temporarily in the interest in labour, they have not spent their time in vain. And if there are some who have lost their dearest gift of all, life, in the interest of labour, that cause is justified and their lives have not been sacrificed in vain.

And so let me say to you brothers and sisters, don't engage in any personalities, but simply remember that we are here as one brotherhood and one sisterhood, as one humanity, with a responsibility to the downtrodden and the oppressed of all humanity, it matters not under what flag or in what country they happened to be born. Let us have that idea of Thomas Paine, that "The world is my country, and mankind are my countrymen."

Now, I wish to show my sisters here that we fasten the chains of slavery upon our sisters, sometimes unwittingly, when we go down to the department store and look around so cheap. When we come to reflect it simply means the robbery of our sisters, for we know that the things cannot be made for such prices and give women who made them fair wages. I wish to say that I have attended many conventions in the twenty-seven years since I came here to Chicago, a young girl, so full of life and animation and hope. It is to youth that hope comes; it is to age that reflection comes. I have attended conventions from that day to this, of one kind and another, and taken part in them. I have taken part in some in which our Comrade Debs had a part. I was at the organisation that he organised in this city some eight or ten years ago. Now, the point I want to make is that these conventions are full of enthusiasm. And that is right; we should sometimes mix sentiment with soberness; it is a part of life.

But when you go out of this hall, when you have laid aside your enthusiasm, then comes the solid work. Are you going out of here with your minds made up that the class which we call ourselves, revolutionary Socialists so-called – that class, is organised to meet organised capital with the millions at its command? It has many weapons to fight us. First, it has money. Then, it has legislative tools. Then, it has armouries; and last, it has the gallows. We call ourselves revolutionists. Do you know what the capitalists mean to do to you revolutionists? I simply throw these hints out that you young people may become reflective and know what you have to face at the first, and then it will give you strength. I am not here to cause any discouragement, but simply to encourage you to go on in your grand work.

Now, that is the solid foundation that I hope this organisation will be built on; that it may be built not like a house upon the sand, that when the waves of

adversity come it may go over into the ocean of oblivion; but that it shall be built upon a strong, granite, hard foundation; a foundation made up of the hearts and aspirations of the men and women of this twentieth century, who have set their minds, their hands, their hearts and their heads against the past with all its miserable poverty, with its wage-slaves, with its children ground into dividends, with its miners away down under the earth and with never the light of sunshine, and with its women selling the holy name of womanhood for a day's board. I hope we understand that this organisation has set its face against that iniquity, and that it has set its eyes to the rising star of liberty, that means fraternity, solidarity, the universal brotherhood of man. I hope that while politics have been mentioned here – I am not one of those who, because a man or woman disagrees with me, cannot act with them – I am glad and proud to say I am too broad-minded to say they are a fakir or fool or a fraud because they disagree with me.

My view may be narrow and theirs may be broad; but I do say to those who have intimidated politics here as being necessary or a part of this organisation, that I do not impute to them dishonesty or impure motives. But as I understand the call for this convention, politics had no place here; it was simply to be an economic organisation, and I hope for the good of this organisation that when we go away from this hall, and our comrades go some to the west, some to the east, some to the north and some to the south, while some remain in Chicago, and all spread this light over this broad land and carry the message of what this convention has done, that there will be no room for politics at all.

There may be room for politics; I have nothing to say about that; but it is a bread and butter question, an economic issue, upon which the fight must be made. Now, what do we mean when we say revolutionary Socialist? We mean that the land shall belong to the landless, the tools to the toiler, and the products to the producers. Now, let us analyse that for just a moment, before you applaud me. First, the land belongs to the landless. Is there a single land owner in this country who owns his land by the constitutional rights given by the constitution of the United States who will allow you to vote it away from him? I am not such a fool as to believe it. We say, "The tools belong to the toiler." They are owned by the capitalist class. Do you believe they will allow you to go into the halls of the legislature

and simply say, "Be it enacted that on and after a certain day the capitalist shall no longer own the tools and the factories and the places of industry, the ships that plough the ocean and our lakes?"

Do you believe that they will submit? I do not. We say, "The product belongs to the producers." It belongs to the capitalist class as their legal property. Do you think that they will allow you to vote them away from them by passing a law and saying, "Be it enacted that on and after a certain day Mr Capitalist shall be dispossessed?" You may, but I do not believe it. Hence, when you roll under your tongue the expression that you are revolutionists, remember what that word means. It means a revolution that shall turn all these things over where they belong – to the wealth producers.

I wish to say that my conception of the future method of taking possession of this Earth is that of the general strike... My conception of the strike of the future is not to strike and go out and starve, but to strike and remain in and take possession of the necessary property of production.

Now, how shall the wealth-producers come into possession of them? I believe that if every man and every woman who works, or who toils in the mines, the mills, the workshops, the fields, the factories and the farms in our broad America should decide in their minds that they shall have that which of right belongs to them, and that no idler shall live upon their toil, and when your new organisation, your economic organisation, shall declare as man to man and woman to woman, as brothers and sisters, that you are determined that you will possess these things, then there is no army that is large enough to overcome you, for you yourselves constitute the army.

Now, when you have decided that you will take possession of these things, there will not need to be one gun fired or one scaffold erected.

You will simply come into your own, by your own independence and your own manhood, and by asserting your own individuality, and not sending any man to any legislature in any State of the American Union to enact a law that you shall have what is your own; yours by nature and by your manhood and by your very presence upon this Earth. Nature has been lavish to her children. She has placed in this Earth all the material of wealth that is necessary to make men and women happy. She has given us brains to go into her storehouse and bring from its recesses all that is necessary. She has given us these two hands and these brains to manufacture them on a parallel with all other civilisations.

There is just one thing we lack, and we have only ourselves to blame if we do not become free. We simply lack the intelligence to take possession of that hope, and I feel that the men and women who constitute a

convention like this can come together and organise that intelligence. I feel that you will at least listen to me, and maybe you will disagree with it.

I wish to say that my conception of the future method of taking possession of this Earth is that of the general strike; that is my conception of it. The trouble with all the strikes in the past has been this: the workingmen, like the teamsters of our cities, these hard-working teamsters, strike and go out and starve. Their children starve. Their wives get discouraged. Some feel that they have to go out and beg for relief, and to get a little coal to keep the children warm, or a little bread to keep the wife from starving, or a little something to keep the spark of life in them so that they can remain wage-slaves. That is the way with the strikes in the past.

My conception of the strike of the future is not to strike and go out and starve, but to strike and remain in and take possession of the necessary property of production. If anyone is to starve – I do not say it is necessary – let it be the capitalist class. They have starved us long enough, while they have had wealth and luxury and all that is necessary. You men and women should be imbued with the spirit that is now displayed in far-off Russia and far-off Siberia where we thought the spark of manhood and womanhood had been crushed out of them. Let us take example from them.

We see the capitalist class fortifying themselves today behind their Citizen's Associations and Employers' Associations in order that they may crush the American labour movement. Let us cast our eyes over to far-off Russia and take heart and courage from those who are fighting the battle there, and from the further fact shown in the dispatches that appear this morning in the news that carries the greatest terror to the capitalist class throughout the world – the emblem that has been the terror of all tyrants through all the ages, and there you will see that the red flag has been raised.

According to the *Tribune*, the greatest terror is evinced in Odessa and all through Russia because the red flag has been raised. They know that where the red flag has been raised whoever enrol themselves beneath that flag recognise the universal brotherhood of man; they recognise that the red current that flows through the veins of all humanity is identical, that the ideas of all humanity are identical; that those who raise the red flag, it matters not where, whether on the sunny plains of China, or on the sun-beaten hills of Africa, or on the far-off snow-capped shores of the north, or in Russia or America – that they all belong to the human family and have an identity of interest. That is what they know.

So when we come to decide, let us sink such differences as nationality, religion, politics, and set our eyes eternally and forever towards the rising star of the industrial republic of labour; remembering that we have left the old behind and have set our faces toward the future. There is no power on Earth that can stop men

and women who are determined to be free at all hazards. There is no power on Earth so great as the power of intellect. It moves the world and it moves the Earth.

Now, in conclusion, I wish to say to you – and you will excuse me because of what I am going to say and only attribute it to my interest in humanity. I wish to say that nineteen years ago on the fourth of May of this year, I was one of those at a meeting at the Haymarket in this city to protest against eleven workingmen being shot to pieces at a factory in the south-eastern part of this city because they had dared to strike for the eight-hour movement that was to be inaugurated in America in 1886.

The Haymarket meeting was called primarily and entirely to protest against the murder of comrades at the McCormick factory. When that meeting was nearing its close someone threw a bomb. No one knows to this day who threw it except the man who threw it. Possibly he has rendered his account with nature and has passed away. But no human being alive knows who threw it. And yet in the soil of Illinois, the soil that gave a Lincoln to America, the soil in which the great, magnificent Lincoln was buried, in the State that was supposed to be the most liberal in the union, five men sleep the last sleep in Waldheim under a monument that has been raised there because they dared to raise their voices for humanity. I say to any of you who are here and can do so, it is well worth your time to go out there and draw some inspiration around the graves of the first martyrs who fell in the great industrial struggle for liberty on American soil.

I say to you that even within the sound of my voice, only two short blocks from where we meet today, the scaffold was erected on which those five men paid the penalty for daring to raise their voices against the iniquities of the age in which we live.

We are assembled here for the same purpose. And do any of you older men remember the telegrams that were sent out from Chicago while our comrades were not yet even cut down from the cruel gallows?

“Anarchy is dead, and these miscreants have been put out of the way.”

Oh, friends, I am sorry that I even had to use that word, “anarchy” just now in your presence, which was not in my mind at the outset.

So if any of you wish to go out there and look at this monument that has been raised by those who believed in their comrades' innocence and sincerity, I will ask you, when you have gone out and looked at the monument, that you will go the reverse side of the monument and there on the reverse side the words of a man, himself the purest and the noblest man who ever sat in the gubernatorial chair of the State of Illinois, John P. Altgeld. On that monument you will read the

clause of his message in which he pardoned the men who were lingering then in [the prison] Joliet.

I have nothing more to say. I ask you to read the words of Altgeld, who was at that time the governor, and had been a lawyer and a judge, and knew whereof he spoke, and then take out your copybooks and copy the words of Altgeld when he released those who had not been slaughtered at the capitalists' behest, and then take them home and change your minds about what those men were put to death for.

Now, I have taken up your time in this because I simply feel that I have a right as a mother, and as a wife of one of those sacrificed men, to say whatever I can to bring

the light to bear upon this conspiracy and to show you the way it was. Now, I thank you for the time that I have taken up of yours. I hope that we will meet again some time, you and I, in some hall where we can meet and organise the wage workers of America, the men and women, so that the children may not go into the factories, nor the women into the factories, unless they go under proper conditions.

I hope even now to live to see the day when the first dawn of the new era will have arisen, when capitalism will be a thing of the past, and the new industrial republic, the commonwealth of labour, shall be in operation. I thank you.

The Principles of Anarchism

Lucy E. Parsons

Pamphlet (1905-1910)

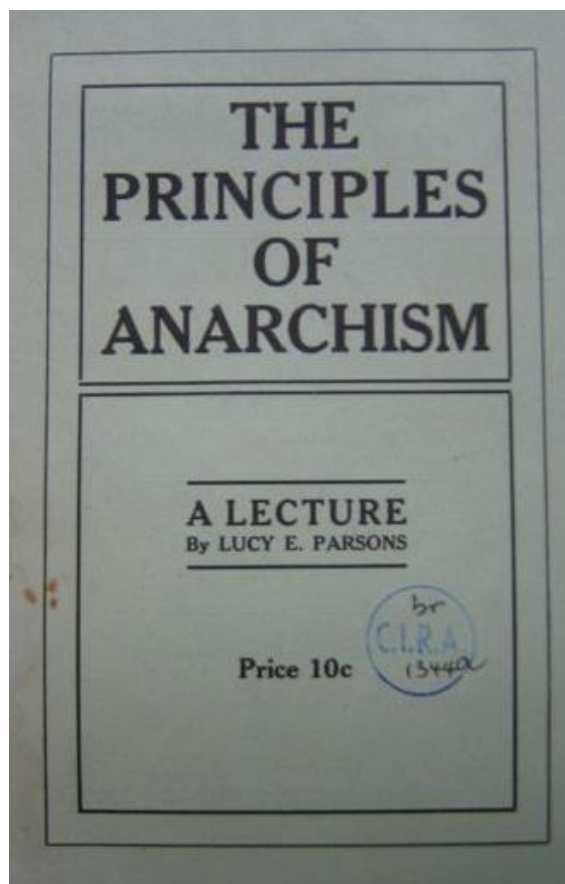
Comrades and Friends:

I think I cannot open my address more appropriately than by stating my experience in my long connection with the reform movement.

It was during the great railroad strike of 1877 that I first became interested in what is known as the "Labour Question." I then thought as many thousands of earnest, sincere people think, that the aggregate power operating in human society, known as government, could be made an instrument in the hands of the oppressed to alleviate their sufferings. But a closer study of the origin, history and tendency of governments convinced me that this was a mistake.

I came to understand how organised governments used their concentrated power to retard progress by their ever-ready means of silencing the voice of discontent if raised in vigorous protest against the machinations of the scheming few, who always did, always will and always must rule in the councils of nations where majority rule is recognised as the only means of adjusting the affairs of the people.

I came to understand that such concentrated power can be always wielded in the interest of the few and at the expense of the many. Government in its last analysis is this power reduced to a science. Governments never lead; they follow progress. When the prison, stake or



scaffold can no longer silence the voice of the protesting minority, progress moves on a step, but not until then.

I will state this contention in another way: I learned by close study that it made no difference what fair promises a political party, out of power, might make to the people in order to secure their confidence, when once securely established in control of the affairs of society that they were after all but human with all the human attributes of the politician. Among these are: First, to remain in power at all hazards; if not individually, then those holding essentially the same views as the administration must be kept in control. Second, in order to keep in power, it is necessary to build up a powerful machine; one strong enough to crush all opposition and silence all vigorous murmurs of

discontent, or the party machine might be smashed and the party thereby lose control.

When I came to realise the faults, failings, shortcomings, aspirations and ambitions of fallible man, I concluded that it would not be the safest nor best policy for society, as a whole, to entrust the management of all its affairs, with all their manifold deviations and ramifications in the hands of finite man, to be managed by the party which happened to come into power, and therefore was the majority party, nor did it then, nor does it now make one particle of

difference to me what a party, out of power may promise; it does not tend to allay my fears of a party, when entrenched and securely seated in power might do to crush opposition, and silence the voice of the minority, and thus retard the onward step of progress.

My mind is appalled at the thought of a political party having control of all the details that go to make up the sum total of our lives. Think of it for an instant, that the party in power shall have all authority to dictate the kind of books that shall be used in our schools and universities, government officials editing, printing, and circulating our literature, histories, magazines and press, to say nothing of the thousand and one activities of life that a people engage in, in a civilised society.

To my mind, the struggle for liberty is too great and the few steps we have gained have been won at too great a sacrifice, for the great mass of the people of this 20th century to consent to turn over to any political party the management of our social and industrial affairs. For all who are at all familiar with history know that men will abuse power when they possess it. For these and other reasons, I, after careful study, and not through sentiment, turned from a sincere, earnest, political Socialist to the non-political phase of Socialism – Anarchism – because in its philosophy I believe I can find the proper conditions for the fullest development of the individual units in society, which can never be the case under government restrictions.

The philosophy of anarchism is included in the word “Liberty,” yet it is comprehensive enough to include all things else that are conducive to progress. No barriers whatever to human progression, to thought, or investigation are placed by anarchism; nothing is considered so true or so certain, that future discoveries may not prove it false; therefore, it has but one infallible, unchangeable motto, “Freedom”: Freedom to discover any truth, freedom to develop, to live naturally and fully. Other schools of thought are composed of crystallised ideas – principles that are caught and impaled between the planks of long platforms, and considered too sacred to be disturbed by a close investigation. In all other “issues” there is always a limit; some imaginary boundary line beyond which the searching mind dare not penetrate, lest some pet idea melt into a myth. But anarchism is the usher of science – the master of ceremonies to all forms of truth. It would remove all barriers between the human being and natural development. From the natural resources of the Earth, all artificial restrictions, that the body might be nurtured, and from universal truth, all bars of prejudice and superstition, that the mind may develop symmetrically.

Anarchists know that a long period of education must precede any great fundamental change in society, hence they do not believe in vote-begging, nor political campaigns, but rather in the development of self-thinking individuals.

We look away from government for relief, because we know that force (legalised) invades the personal liberty of man, seizes upon the natural elements and intervenes between man and natural laws; from this exercise of force through governments flows nearly all the misery, poverty, crime and confusion existing in society.

So, we perceive, there are actual, material barriers blockading the way. These must be removed. If we could hope they would melt away, or be voted or prayed into nothingness, we would be content to wait and vote and pray. But they are like great frowning rocks towering between us and a land of freedom, while the dark chasms of a hard-fought past yawn behind us. Crumbling they may be with their own weight and the decay of time, but to quietly stand under until they fall is to be buried in the crash. There is something to be done in a case like this – the rocks must be removed. Passivity while slavery is stealing over us is a crime. For the moment we must forget that we are anarchists – when the work is accomplished we may forget that we were revolutionists – hence most anarchists believe the coming change can only come through a revolution, because the possessing class will not allow a peaceful change to take place; still we are willing to work for peace at any price, except at the price of liberty.

And what of the glowing beyond that is so bright that those who grind the faces of the poor say it is a dream? It is no dream, it is the real, stripped of brain-distortions materialised into thrones and scaffolds, mitres and guns. It is nature acting on her own interior laws as in all her other associations. It is a return to first principles; for were not the land, the water, the light, all free before governments took shape and form? In this free state we will again forget to think of these things as “property.” It is real, for we, as a race, are growing up to it. The idea of less restriction and more liberty, and a confiding trust that nature is equal to her work, is permeating all modern thought.

From the dark years – not so long gone by – when it was generally believed that man’s soul was totally depraved and every human impulse bad; when every action, every thought and every emotion was controlled and restricted; when the human frame, diseased, was bled, dosed, suffocated and kept as far from nature’s remedies as possible; when the mind was seized upon and distorted before it had time to evolve a natural thought – from those days to these years the progress of this idea has been swift and steady. It is becoming more and more apparent that in every way we are “governed best where we are governed least.”

Still unsatisfied perhaps, the inquirer seeks for details, for ways and means, and whys and wherefores. How will we go on like human beings – eating and sleeping, working and loving, exchanging and dealing – without government? So used have we become to “organised authority” in every department of life that ordinarily we cannot conceive of the most common-place avocations

being carried on without their interference and “protection.” But anarchism is not compelled to outline a complete organisation of a free society. To do so with any assumption of authority would be to place another barrier in the way of coming generations. The best thought of today may become the useless vagary of tomorrow, and to crystallise it into a creed is to make it unwieldy.

We judge from experience that man is a gregarious animal, and instinctively affiliates with his kind – co-operates, unites in groups, works to better advantage combined with his fellow men than when alone. This would point to the formation of co-operative communities, of which our present trades-unions are embryonic patterns. Each branch of industry will no doubt have its own organisation, regulations, leaders, etc.; it will institute methods of direct communication with every member of that industrial branch in the world, and establish equitable relations with all other branches. There would probably be conventions of industry which delegates would attend, and where they would transact such business as was necessary, adjourn and from that moment be delegates no longer, but simply members of a group. To remain permanent members of a continuous congress would be to establish a power that is certain sooner or later to be abused.

No great, central power, like a congress consisting of men who know nothing of their constituents’ trades, interests, rights or duties, would be over the various organisations or groups; nor would they employ sheriffs, policemen, courts or jailers to enforce the conclusions arrived at while in session. The members of groups might profit by the knowledge gained through mutual interchange of thought afforded by conventions if they choose, but they will not be compelled to do so by any outside force.

Vested rights, privileges, charters, title deeds, upheld by all the paraphernalia of government – the visible symbol of power – such as prison, scaffold and armies, will have no existence. There can be no privileges bought or sold, and the transaction kept sacred at the point of the bayonet. Every man will stand on an equal footing with his brother in the race of life, and neither chains of economic thralldom nor menial drags of superstition shall handicap the one to the advantage of the other.

Property will lose a certain attribute which sanctifies it now. The absolute ownership of it – “the right to use or abuse” – will be abolished, and possession, use, will be the only title. It will be seen how impossible it would be

for one person to “own” a million acres of land, without a title deed, backed by a government ready to protect the title at all hazards, even to the loss of thousands of lives. He could not use the million acres himself, nor could he wrest from its depths the possible resources it contains.

People have become so used to seeing the evidences of authority on every hand that most of them honestly believe that they would go utterly to the bad if it were not for the policeman’s club or the soldier’s bayonet. But the anarchist says, “Remove these evidences of brute force, and let man feel the revivifying influences of self-responsibility and self-control, and see how we will respond to these better influences.”

The belief in a literal place of torment has nearly melted away; and instead of the direful results predicted, we have a higher and truer standard of manhood and womanhood. People do not care to go to the bad when they find they can as well as not. Individuals are unconscious of their own motives in doing good. While acting out their natures according to their surroundings and conditions, they still believe they are being kept in the right path by some outside power, some restraint thrown around them by church or state. So the objector believes that with the right to rebel and secede, sacred to him, he would forever be rebelling and seceding, thereby creating constant confusion and turmoil.

Is it probable that he *would*, merely for the reason that he *could* do so? Men are to a great extent creatures of habit, and grow to love associations; under reasonably good conditions, he would remain where he commences, if he wished to, and, if he did not, who has any natural right to force him into relations distasteful to him? Under the present order of affairs, persons do unite with societies and remain good, disinterested members for life, where the right to retire is always conceded.

What we anarchists contend for is a larger opportunity to develop the units in society, that mankind may possess the right as a sound being to develop that which is broadest, noblest, highest and best, unhandicapped by any centralised authority, where he shall have to wait for his permits to be signed, sealed, approved and handed down to him before he can engage in the active pursuits of life with his fellow being. We know that after all, as we grow more enlightened under this larger liberty, we will grow to care less and less for that exact distribution of material wealth, which, in our greed-nurtured senses, seems now so impossible to think upon

carelessly. The man and woman of loftier intellects, in the present, think not so much of the riches to be gained by their efforts as of the good they can do for their fellow creatures.

There is an innate spring of healthy action in every human being who has not been crushed and pinched by poverty and drudgery from before his birth, that impels him onward and upward. He cannot be idle, if he would; it is as natural for him to develop, expand, and use the powers within him when not repressed, as it is for the rose to bloom in the sunlight and fling its fragrance on the passing breeze.

The grandest works of the past were never performed for the sake of money. Who can measure the worth of a Shakespeare, an Angelo or Beethoven in dollars and cents? Agassiz said, "he had no time to make money," there were higher and better objects in life than that.

And so will it be when humanity is once relieved from the pressing fear of starvation, want, and slavery, it will be concerned, less and less, about the ownership of vast accumulations of wealth. Such possessions would be but an annoyance and trouble.

When two or three or four hours a day of easy, of healthful labour will produce all the comforts and luxuries one can use, and the opportunity to labour is never denied, people will become indifferent as to who owns the wealth they do not need.

Wealth will be below par, and it will be found that men and women will not accept it for pay, or be bribed by it to do what they would not willingly and naturally do without it. Some higher incentive must, and will, supersede the greed for gold. The involuntary aspiration born in man to make the most of one's self, to be loved and appreciated by one's fellow-beings, to "make the world better for having lived in it," will urge him on to nobler deeds than ever the sordid and selfish incentive of material gain has done.

If, in the present chaotic and shameful struggle for existence, when organised society offers a premium on greed, cruelty, and deceit, men can be found who stand aloof and almost alone in their determination to work for good rather than gold, who suffer want and persecution rather than desert principle, who can bravely walk to the scaffold for the good they can do humanity, what may we expect from men when freed from the grinding necessity of selling the better part of themselves for bread? The terrible conditions under which labour is performed, the awful alternative if one does not prostitute talent and morals in the service of mammon; and the power acquired with the wealth obtained by ever-so-unjust means, combine to make the conception of free and voluntary labour almost an impossible one.

And yet, there are examples of this principle even now. In a well-bred family each person has certain duties, which are performed cheerfully, and are not measured out and paid for according to some pre-determined standard; when the united members sit down to the well-filled table, the stronger do not scramble to get the most, while the weakest do without, or gather greedily around them more food than they can possibly consume. Each patiently and politely awaits his turn to be served, and leaves what he does not want; he is certain that when again hungry plenty of good food will be provided. This principle can be extended to include all society, when people are civilised enough to wish it.

Again, the utter impossibility of awarding to each an exact return for the amount of labour performed will render absolute communism a necessity sooner or later. The land and all it contains, without which labour cannot be exerted, belong to no one man, but to all alike. The inventions and discoveries of the past are the common inheritance of the coming generations; and when a man takes the tree that nature furnished free,

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and fashions it into a useful article, or a machine perfected and bequeathed to him by many past generations, who is to determine what proportion is his and his alone? Primitive man would have been a week fashioning a rude resemblance to the article with his clumsy tools, where the modern worker has occupied an hour. The finished article is of far more real value than the rude one made long ago, and yet the primitive man toiled the longest and hardest.

Who can determine with exact justice what is each one's due? There must come a time when we will cease trying. The Earth is so bountiful, so generous; man's brain is so active, his hands so restless, that wealth will spring like magic, ready for the use of the world's inhabitants. We will become as much ashamed to quarrel over its possession as we are now to squabble over the food spread before us on a loaded table.

"But all this," the objector urges, "is very beautiful in the far off future, when we become angels. It would not do now to abolish governments and legal restraints; people are not prepared for it."

This is a question. We have seen, in reading history, that wherever an old-time restriction has been removed the people have not abused their newer liberty. Once it was considered necessary to compel men to save their souls, with the aid of governmental scaffolds, church racks and stakes. Until the foundation of the American republic it was considered absolutely essential that governments should second the efforts of the church in forcing people to attend the means of grace; and yet it is found that the standard of morals among the masses is raised since they are left free to pray as they see fit, or not at all, if they prefer it. It was believed the chattel slaves would not work if the overseer and whip were removed; they are so much more a source of profit now that ex-slave owners would not return to the old system if they could.

So many able writers have shown that the unjust institutions which work so much misery and suffering to the masses have their root in governments, and owe their whole existence to the power derived from government, we cannot help but believe that were every law, every title deed, every court, and every police officer or soldier abolished tomorrow with one sweep, we would be better off than now. The actual, material things that man needs would still exist; his strength and skill would remain and his instinctive social inclinations retain their force and the resources of life made free to all the people that they would need no force but that of society and the opinion of fellow beings to keep them moral and upright.

Freed from the systems that made him wretched before, he is not likely to make himself more wretched for lack of them. Much more is contained in the thought that conditions make man what he is, and not the laws and penalties made for his guidance, than is supposed by careless observation. We have laws, jails, courts, armies, guns and armouries enough to make saints of us all, if they were the true preventives of crime; but we know they do not prevent crime; that wickedness and depravity exist in spite of them, nay, increase as the struggle between classes grows fiercer, wealth greater and more powerful and poverty more gaunt and desperate.

To the governing class the anarchists say: "Gentlemen, we ask no privilege, we propose no restriction; nor, on the other hand, will we permit it. We have no new shackles to propose, we seek emancipation from

shackles. We ask no legislative sanction, for co-operation asks only for a free field and no favours; neither will we permit their interference. It asserts that in freedom of the social unit lies the freedom of the social state. It asserts that in freedom to possess and utilise soil lie social happiness and progress and the death of rent. It asserts that order can only exist where liberty prevails, and that progress leads and never follows order. It asserts, finally, that this emancipation will inaugurate liberty, equality, fraternity. That the

existing industrial system has outgrown its usefulness, if it ever had any, is, I believe, admitted by all who have given serious thought to this phase of social conditions.

The manifestations of discontent now looming upon every side show that society is conducted on wrong principles and that something has got to be done soon or the wage class will sink into a slavery worse than was the feudal serf. I say to the wage class: Think clearly and act quickly, or you are lost. Strike not for a few cents more an hour, because the price of living will be raised faster still, but strike for

all you earn, be content with nothing less.

* * * *

Following are definitions which will appear in all of the new standard dictionaries:

Anarchism

The philosophy of a new social order based on liberty unrestricted by man-made law, the theory that all forms of government are based on violence – hence wrong and harmful, as well as unnecessary.

Anarchy

Absence of government; disbelief in and disregard of invasion and authority based on coercion and force; a condition of society regulated by voluntary agreement instead of government.

Anarchist

1. A believer in Anarchism; one opposed to all forms of coercive government and invasive authority. 2. One who advocates Anarchy, or absence of government, as the ideal of political liberty and social harmony.

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The Development of the American Labour Movement

Lucy E. Parsons

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Communism, February 1912

The McNamara case for almost a year past has been the magnet which has drawn all eyes, one might say, toward itself: But the sudden termination of this case has, in a sense, stunned us all to such an extent that we shall have to wait for future developments before we can pass judgment on the merits of its abrupt termination. There are many speculations as to the cause or causes which led to the sudden ending, but they are at the most only speculations.

As I have been in the American Labour movement for almost thirty years, I think I may claim to have had experience enough to be a competent judge of that movement. I trust, therefore, I may not be regarded as an alarmist when I say that I believe it is nearing a crisis. Perhaps a short sketch of the development of Labour organisations over here may not prove uninteresting to the readers of FREEDOM.

Compared with the Labour movement in Europe, the movement here, like everything else, is young. Not by any stretch of the imagination is it more than forty or forty-five years old. There are good reasons why it is not older. A country so vast in territory, so rich in natural resources, and so thinly populated could not from the very nature of the case feel the effects of poverty as did the countries of Europe. From the Ohio River to the Pacific Ocean, and from the boundary lines of Canada to the Gulf of Mexico, there was as rich land as anywhere on the earth, to be had merely for the settling on it. In this way all the Middle was settled.

Prior to the Civil War of 1861 there was no Trade Union movement worth-mentioning, though, to be sure, attempts had been made to form one, but these for the most part had proven abortive. The Typographical Union had been organised; a few carpenters, tailors and shipbuilders had also been organised. But these Unions were very weak in numbers: There was no organisation west of Chicago, Illinois. About 1855 war clouds, dark and threatening, began to gather. In 1861 they burst, and the storm, once let loose, began to rage. The Civil War begun, half a million men-were taken from the peaceful paths of industry and thrown on to battlefields. For four long years these young men, in the flower of manhood, were engaged in mutual destruction. Finally, when Peace was declared, the young men were turned, back into the channels of industry; to undertake the task of repairing the waste and loss of the war.

At that time steam began to play a very important part in production, making the division and sub-division of labour both practical and possible. By this means the factory system, which has grown into the huge institution visible today, was commenced. Then it was that men and women working side by side, in large

numbers did what was the most natural thing in the world, and-what mankind has always done under similar circumstances: they formed into groups, and in this instance the groups were called Trade Unions or Craft Unions, which, at that stage of capitalistic development, were both practical and beneficial. So the Trade Union movement, once launched, grew with wonderful rapidity in America.

About 1870 the Knights of Labour were organised in the city of Philadelphia. This was the first national body of Labour in America. From the outset it taught the workers that their interests as a class were distinct from those of the employing class. The Knights of Labour was essentially a revolutionary organisation. It went to the root of things, and taught the workers that direct action was the way-to attain their-ends. It carried on the most aggressive strikes ever waged in this country. The growth of this organisation between 1875 and 1885 was marvellous. In 1886 it contained about 800,000 members: Then it began to decline, and its disintegration was as rapid as had been its growth,

What caused such a splendid organisation to become extinct? Many reasons have been advanced; some sound plausible, others the reverse. To give even a bare synopsis of them all would be to make this article much too long. I was myself a member of the Knights of Labour, yet I can hardly offer an adequate explanation of its passing away. However, I will state what I regard as one very potent cause.

Being a mass organisation, it could not or did not change its form to suit the changing conditions on the industrial field; As a mass -organisation it could hardly adapt itself to the minute sub-divisions of labour then taking place in industry. On the other hand, the American Federation of Labour, on account of its flexibility, easily adapted itself and its methods to the craft form of organisation – the best at this stage of capitalistic production. This fact, I think, explains why it was able to supplant the Knights of Labour. And now the time has come in capitalistic development when these same Craft Unions cannot meet successfully the trustified capitalist organisations. The Trade Unions in this country are more and more frequently defeated in their strikes.

The crisis has come between Capital and Labour. The day for Industrial Unionism is here. It is in the line of evolution; it is the logic of events and of conditions over the development of which no man or set of men have had control. The workers must at once organise industrially to meet the new conditions or they and theirs will be threatened with the fate of becoming hopeless slaves!
Chicago.

The Eleventh of November, 1887

Lucy E. Parsons

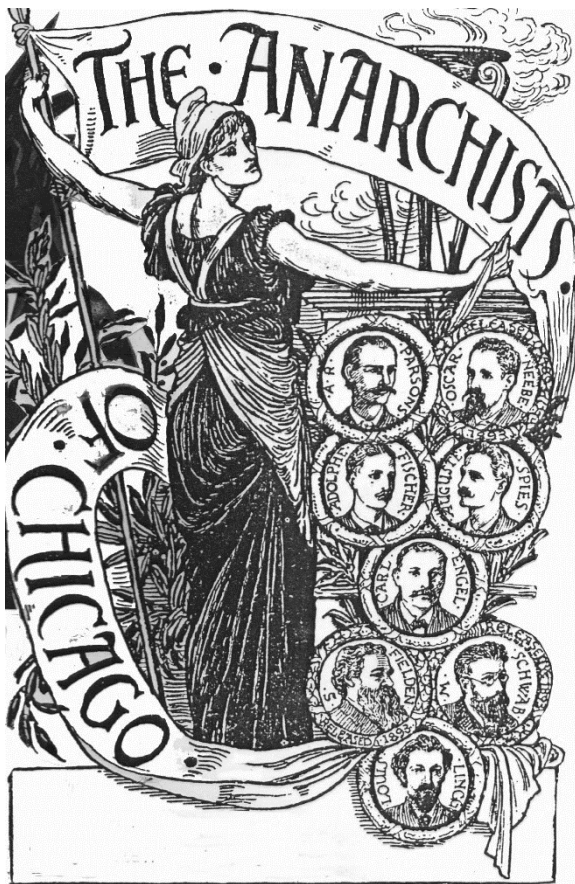
Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Communism, November 1912

The Eleventh of November has become a day of international importance, cherished in the hearts of all true lovers of liberty, as day of martyrdom. On this day were offered upon the cruel gallows-tree martyrs as true to their high ideals as were ever sacrificed in any age.

The writer will assume that the present generation is but superficially informed regarding the details that led up to the Eleventh of November, for in this busy age twenty-five years are a long time to remember the details of any event, however important.

In 1886 the working class of America for the first time struck for the reduction of the hours of daily toil to eight per day. It was great strike, Chicago was, the storm centre of that strike because of the activities of the martyrs of the Eleventh of November, 1887.

The working class practically tied up the city of Chicago, Illinois, for three days. On the afternoon of May 3, 1886, the police shot several strikers and clubbed many most brutally. The next evening, May 4, the historic Haymarket meeting was held; This meeting was absolutely peaceable and quiet. The Mayor of Chicago, who was present, subsequently took the stand as the first witness for the defence at the trial, and gave the following testimony: — “I went to the meeting for the purpose of dispersing it, in case I should feel it necessary for the safety of the city... There was no suggestion made by either of the speakers looking toward the calling for immediate use of force or violence towards any person that night ; if there had been, I should have dispersed them at once. I went to the police station during [Albert] Parsons’ speech, and I stated to Captain Bonfield that I thought the speeches were about over; that nothing had occurred or looked likely to occur to require interference, and that he had better issue orders to his reserves at the stations to go home. Bonfield replied that he had reached the same conclusion from reports brought to him... During my attendance I saw no weapons at all upon any person... In listening to the speeches, I concluded that it was not an organisation to destroy property. After listening a



little longer, I went home.” This extract is here given from the mayor’s testimony because this meeting is referred to very often, even by radicals, as the “Haymarket Riot.”

Had the inspector of police obeyed the mayor’s orders there would have been no trouble. Instead, as soon as the mayor left, the inspector rushed a company of blue-coats to the meeting; they began clubbing the men and women and scattering them in every direction. Upon this onrush of the police, someone threw a bomb. Who threw that bomb, no one, to this day knows, except he who threw it. He has never been identified, never been arrested, consequently could never have been tried; but my husband and his comrades were put to death on November 11, 1887, as co-

conspirators with the bomb-thrower. Our comrades were not murdered by the State because they had any connection with the bomb-throwing, but because they had been active in organising the wage-slaves of America thirty years ago. The capitalist class didn’t want to find the bomb-thrower; they foolishly believed that by putting to death the active spirits Of the Labour movement of that time, they could frighten the working class back to their slavery.

The so-called trial, which began on June 21, was the great travesty of justice of modern times. The bailiff who selected the jury, a creature named Ryce, boasted thus: — “I am managing this , case, and I know what I am about. These fellows [our comrades] are going to bang as certain as death. I am calling such men as the defendants will have to challenge peremptorily and waste their time and challenges. Then they will have to take such jurymen as the prosecution wants.”

The jury that tried the case were out less than three hours. They left the court-room after four o’clock on August 23, and before seven reached their astounding verdict, sending seven men to the and the eighth man to the penitentiary for fifteen years. The had lasted some sixty-three days. Think of the mass of testimony that the jury would have had to go over in order to give them even the semblance of a fair trial. Then think of the

audacity of a jury being out less than three hours, and of the brutality of a community putting men to death on such a verdict, and never allowing them a new trial!

Albert R. Parsons, my husband, never was arrested. On May 5, the day after this Haymarket meeting, when he saw the men with whom he had been organising Labour for the past ten years of his life being arrested and thrown into prison, and treated generally as criminals, he left Chicago. On the day the trial began he walked into the court-room, unrecognised by the police and detectives, and surrendered himself, he having been indicted during his absence, and a reward of \$5,000 having been offered for his arrest. He asked the Court to grant him a fair trial that he might prove his absolute innocence. He was never granted the shadow of a fair and impartial trial, and was put to death with the rest of his comrades.

The men were asked if they had anything to say-as to why sentence of death should not-be passed upon them, and one after the other they arose in the court-room on the days of October 7, 8 and 9, 1886, and delivered their now famous speeches asking for a new trial. They called the judge's attention to the fact that the leading capitalistic paper in Chicago had opened up its columns to receive subscriptions to a fund of \$100,000 to be paid the jury as a present for the verdict it had rendered against them. But they were never granted a new trial. They were, instead, railroaded to the gallows at the command of the Money Power.

There could be no other result in a matter that had already been fixed in advance. On October 10 the infamous Judge "Jeffries" gave out his reasons for denying a new trial, and afterwards sentenced them to death. No more remarkable scene than that could well be imagined. The hot, stifling court-room, crammed to its utmost capacity by an eager crowd quite in sympathy with the capitalistic ideas, and breaking at times into clapping, which was idly and hypocritically repressed by the only too gratified Court. The little, ugly, hard-visaged judge, with nut-cracker bald head and cunning eyes, one could fancy his tender mercies – if ever they existed – dried up and long since fallen to dust. Then the coarse, brutal State's attorney, with the ferocious howl of an infuriated, blood-hungry wild beast, who continually bellowed for the lives of the men before him. And the little cunning, red-headed lawyer, who made the most telling speech that the State gave out, a cruel, crafty effort that misrepresented everything absolutely, and did it so foxily that each point drew blood like the slash of a claw.

Forever will live in the minds' eyes of those who had the sad privilege of witnessing this strange and terrible scene, the calm and noble countenances of the accused, who showed no feeling except when an occasional flicker of fine scorn passed over their countenances as they sat and heard their every act, deed, thought, meaning, however innocent, misrepresented and

twisted, and their lives going to certain destruction at the hands of their enemies' tools and minions. All the way through, and especially on the last day, detectives, police, plain-clothes men, and others of that ilk, filled the courtroom. When the sentence of death was being pronounced, these fellows stood up and pointed their revolvers right into the faces of our comrades, evidently fearing an attempt at rescue on the part of friends, on this the last appearance of the prisoners outside the gaol. But no such attempt was made, and sentence was passed, the date of the execution being set for December 3. One instant to give a passing hand-shake to sorrowing relatives and indignant friends, and they were' marched back again to their dungeons.

Then began the long, tedious period that lasted for over a year our comrades languishing in their living tombs. The attorneys for the defence began occupying themselves with their preparations for taking the case to the Illinois Supreme Court, and on November 25 an appeal was made to a judge of that body, who granted a supersedeas and admitted that error had been made. Many friends believed that this meant that our comrades would eventually walk out free men, but those who had seen the working of the trial knew better. They know that the supersedeas, as well as, every other step of the proceedings, was carefully taken with a view to giving the world an idea of the "impartiality" of the absolutely hellish conspiracy, the animus of which was to do away with certain Labour leaders whose intelligence, honesty, and fearlessness had made them objects of the fear and hate of the capitalistic "Robber-Baron" element.

This appeal, went to the Illinois Supreme Court on March 18, had the same hypocritical examination, the "honourable" judges deciding that no errors had been made of any gravity, and the decision of the lower court was sustained, the day of execution being again set, this time for November 11, 1887.

So month after month dragged along, our comrades suffering acutely for want of exercise and fresh air – when the old gaol was subsequently torn down to make way for a new one, a black lake of putrid filth was found, fully explaining why our comrades had their teeth decay and fall out. The relatives friends, the Defence Committee, and many persons of recognised position, writers, lecturers, and poets, held meetings, distributed circulars and brochures, and wrote articles for the radical press – the capitalistic press was solidly closed against one word of the truth – and the public would have finally seen at least something of what was being done had not the police, ever vigilant in their hate, counteracted it all by "finding" bombs at regular intervals, under side-walks, in alleys, etc. Made by the police themselves, placed there in the night, these bombs were solemnly "found" in the morning, and served as the subject of blazing editorials, and solemn life-sized pictures in the leading capitalistic papers, for the hirelings of the high and mighty scoundrels who

were putting through this judicial murder fully meant to so befuddle the public on facts as to get its backing and consent.

In the autumn the attorneys for the defence took the case to the United States Supreme Court. These scoundrelly big-wigs; in solemn conclave, decided that no Constitutional right had been violated, although two of the main points in the Constitution had been grossly trodden under foot – namely, the right to free speech and free assembly at the Haymarket meeting, and the right to a free and impartial trial at the hands of the law, which was absolutely wanting. It is a matter of conjecture as to how much capitalist gold went to animate that decision.

Finally, at the last moment, an appeal was made to the Governor for executive clemency. This meant a sort of pilgrimage to the city of Springfield by hundreds of persons, including scores of friends and some of the relatives. Thousands of others wrote letters, our comrades themselves, except in the cases of Fielden and Schwab, positively refusing to admit that they had committed any misdemeanour, or to ask for any mercy. They protested that they wished merely for justice.

The city was at this time in a state of martial law. Several regiments were camped with cannon close to the City Hall, and sleuths and armed police were everywhere.

Our comrades in the meantime were subjected to every outrage and humiliation. Their clothing and even their persons were continually searched; the daily papers were denied them; they were no longer allowed the freedom of the corridors for a moment's exercise; relatives and friends no longer admitted to see them. They were even forced to the horrid task of willing their bodies to their families, to keep them from being desecrated by the police, after death.

The weather had turned very cold, and those members of the families who had not gone to Springfield gathered in a pitiful group in the corridor of the gaol vestibule, and, beginning in the early morning, begged for a last word of farewell with their loved ones. This was flatly denied, and all the livelong terrible day these people, mostly women, had to stand in the bitter cold and witness the preparations for the execution. At midnight a very few of the relatives were taken in, one at a time, by a turnkey, with a lantern in his left hand and a revolver in the other. After a few seconds of agonised parting, each poor woman was marched back and left in the dark corridor.

The decision of the Governor was not announced until after midnight, in order to keep down any attempt at rescue by friends and sympathisers. The Governor simply refused interference, except in the cases of Schwab and Fielden, who received life-sentences in the penitentiary. (Afterwards they were pardoned).

The morning of the 11th found our dear comrades composed, smiling, noble, firm without bravado. I, who had been denied admission on Thursday evening, went again in the morning, accompanied by a woman friend and comrade and my two children, to say a last farewell to my beloved husband, and that the children might have a father's blessing and last remembrance. A cordon of police armed with Winchesters surrounded the gaol. Pressing against this was a crowd of thousands of persons. To one policeman after another I appealed without effect, until one told us to come around the corner and he would let us in, which he proceeded to do by hustling us into a patrol wagon and taking us to the stationhouse, where we were stripped naked, searched, and locked up all day, until three in the afternoon – that is, three hours after the execution. The city was in the hands of the people and drunken police. The rich men had gone away for a few days' vacation, terrorised by their own black consciences.

The execution itself was put through as swiftly as possible. Our comrades were not permitted the usual speech accorded doomed men. They had, however, foreseen this, and each had prepared a sentence to express his last feelings. This, they said just as the caps were being adjusted. Their clear voices rang out in those sentences now become classics. Let us pass over the agonising scenes at the homes of the men, when wives, children, mothers, sisters, brothers, friends, received back the bodies of their dear ones, from whom life had been crushed, and all only because they dared to tell the workers the simple truth.

On Sunday morning, November 14, the funeral took place, and no more remarkable sight will ever be witnessed than that precession of countless thousands that filed past the dead as they lay in their homes, and then the procession of five black hearses that passed through the city, accompanied by bands playing dirges and carriages bearing the friends and sympathisers. Past the offices of the newspapers that Parsons and Spies had edited, to the North-Western train in waiting, went the cortege, which bore, them to Waldheim Cemetery. The streets along which this remarkable procession wended its way were solidly packed with human faces, and as the hearses passed hats were taken off by thousands, instinctively as it were., They did not-know it, but they somehow *felt* that they were in the presence of great dead-who had died nobly.

At the cemetery a way had to be cleared through the dense throng for the procession. Four addresses were made in English and German, the most notable being the oration pronounced by Captain Black, leading attorney for the defence. And so beneath mountains of floral offerings, before sorrowing relatives and friends, all that was left of our beloved comrades was consigned to their last resting place on the banks of the Desplaines River.

An Anarchist Guide to *The Communist Manifesto*

Wayne Price

The *Manifesto of the Communist Party* – or *Communist Manifesto* (*CM*) – was written in 1848, by Karl Marx, using material from Frederick Engels. It was written for the Communist League, composed of revolutionary Germans, mostly emigre workers living in London. (In those days, “party” usually meant what we would today call a “tendency” or “movement.”) It has since become a classic for socialists and communists, translated into virtually all the languages of earth. Huge movements of hundreds of thousands of workers, peasants, and others have regarded it as a foundational text, a call for human emancipation. Mass-murdering dictatorships have treated it as a holy text, while in Western capitalist democracies, it has been regarded as a Satanic tract.

The mainstream of anarchism is also socialist and communist (libertarian socialist or communist). What should anarchists make of this *Manifesto*? The revolutionary anarchism of Mikhail Bakunin and his allies developed about two decades later, in the late 1860s and early 1870s, culminating in a split in the First International. There could be no discussion of not-yet-existing revolutionary anarchism in the *CM*. It has one sentence referring to Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, the first person to identify as an anarchist (to be discussed below). Anarchists published their own translations of the *CM* in the U.S., Britain, and Russia. (Draper 1998) It might be useful to review the *CM* from an anarchist's viewpoint. Revolutionary anarchists tend to agree with most of its class analysis, while rejecting much of its political and economic programme. (The only other review of the *CM* by an anarchist I have found is Bookchin 1998.)



**Manifesto of the Communist Party
First German Edition (1848)**

While the *Manifesto* outlines basic concepts of Marx's world view, which he maintained for the rest of his life, it was written early in his career. Engels and he had not yet gone through the 1848 European-wide revolution and its defeat, nor closely observed the 1871 Paris Commune uprising, nor participated in the First International, among various experiences. Especially, Marx had not begun his massive studies of political economy, which culminated in *Capital* and other writings. Therefore we must be careful in interpreting the *CM*, since Marx and Engels modified specific opinions over their lifetimes.

(There are many republications and

translations of the *Communist Manifesto* and a great many books interpreting it. I am relying especially on annotated versions by Hal Draper [1998] and Phil Gasper [Marx & Engels 2005]. Rather than citing page numbers, I will cite the *CM*'s sections and its numbered paragraphs, using Marx & Engels 2005.)

The Main Concept

The basic theme of the *Manifesto* is working class revolution. There have been many who called themselves “Marxists” but did not believe in either the importance of the working class nor in revolution, yet that was the central idea of the Marxism of Marx and Engels. (Similarly the mainstream of anarchism, as it later developed, believed in working class revolution. See van der Walt & Schmidt 2009.)

“The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.” (section I; paragraph 1) In a footnote to this passage, Engels added later that this only applied to societies after the end of “primitive communistic societies” (hunter-gatherers). There were various minority ruling classes, supported by their states, which forced a majority to toil. They squeezed a surplus from the labouring and oppressed majority. Lords and aristocrats lived off the work of slaves, serfs, artisans, tenant farmers, heavily-taxed villages, etc., who survived on the minimum their masters left them. (Such a class analysis of social development, basing itself in relations of production and exploitation associated with different types of society, has been called “historical materialism.”)

We live under the latest form of class society: capitalism (the *CM* mostly called it “bourgeois society”). Whatever there is of middle sectors, overall society is polarized “into two great classes directly facing each other: bourgeoisie and proletariat.” (I; 5)

Once broken out of feudal constraints, capitalism was driven by competition and class conflict to expand and grow, to accumulate ever more profits, to concentrate and centralize its enterprises. It created the industrial revolution, more productive than ever in human history. It developed an integrated world market, connecting international humanity. Marx became positively lyrical in describing the marvels of capitalist development. “The bourgeoisie, during its rule of scarce one hundred years, has created more massive and more colossal productive forces than have all preceding generations together....Machinery, application of chemistry to industry and agriculture,...whole populations conjured out of the ground – what earlier century had even a presentment that such productive forces slumbered in the lap of social labour?” (I; 24)

Bourgeois commentators like such passages in the *CM*. They are pleased that Marx recognised the productive, industrialising, and once progressive nature of capitalism. They point out that these trends have not ceased, as we know in our globalised world of smart phones, artificial intelligence, and biotechnology.

However, they do not accept Marx’s view that the further development of mass production overwhelms the limitations of private property and competitive markets. “The history of industry and

commerce is but the history of the revolt of modern productive forces...against the property relations that are the conditions for the existence of the bourgeoisie and of its rule. It is enough to mention the commercial crises that by their periodical return, put on its trial...the existence of the entire bourgeois society.” (I; 27) In the repeated recessions and depressions, large amounts of commodities as well as means of production are destroyed, while workers are faced with unemployment and poverty. All this due to overproduction: too many goods have been produced to be sold; excessive wealth turns capitalist society into a pool of poverty and destitution. (There are other ways in which the capitalist drive toward accumulation threatens “the existence of the entire bourgeois society,” such as wars or ecological catastrophes. These are only implied in the *CM*, but raised elsewhere in Marx’s work.) A fuller analysis of why capitalism overproduces, including the tendency toward a falling rate of profit, would not be made by Marx until later.

Of all the productive forces created by the bourgeoisie, the greatest is in the working class. These proletarians are not defined by the type of work they do nor by the machines they use. They are defined by their need to sell to capital their ability to labour. “A class of labourers who live only so long as they find work, and who find work only so long as their labour increases capital. These labourers, who must sell themselves piecemeal, as a commodity like every other article of commerce.” (I; 30) (This was written before Marx made a distinction between the labour process and workers’ “labour power,” the commodity of their ability to do work.)

“The bourgeoisie forged the weapons that bring death to itself; it has also called into existence the men [and women – WP] who are to wield those weapons – the modern working class – the proletarians.” (I; 28) “With the development of industry, the proletariat not only increase in number, it becomes concentrated in greater masses, its strength grows, and it feels that strength more....The workers begin to form combinations (trade unions) against the bourgeois....” (I; 38)

This class is different from all other labouring populations in history. Unlike peasants or artisans, its men and women have no private property nor likelihood of getting any. In its working conditions it is collective and cooperative. The goal of

The End of the Middle Class?

individual workers is not to own three feet of an assembly line or five square feet of an office. Due to the nature of modern production, any proletarian goal must be cooperative, social, and democratic. Their existence is part of a level of technology which could – for the first time in human existence – produce enough for a comfortable life for all, distributed equally, with plenty of leisure, and with toil replaced by creative labour.

Passages of the *Manifesto* indicate that capitalism will drive down the standard of living of the workers to that of biological subsistence. This is taken to support the idea that Marx had a “theory of immiseration.” Actually he was repeating the then-current orthodoxy of the political economy of David Ricardo and others. This stated that the competitive labour market must drive down the price of the workers’ labour to that of bare subsistence. Later, Marx was to modify this concept. In times of prosperity (between the depressions) wages tended to go up. Most of all, the standard price (value) of workers’ labour power depends on historical and cultural conditions. It depends on the standard of living which a nation’s working class has won through past struggle. It is a constant conflict between capital and labour.

The class conflict is reflected in the bourgeois state, which is not a neutral institution between classes. “The executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie.” (I; 12) “This sentence is doubtless the most succinctly aphoristic statement by Marx of his theory of the state.” (Draper 1998; 207) It does not say that the state is a passive puppet of the bourgeoisie; it says that its executive branch manages the bourgeoisie’s affairs. It does not deny that the state may have its own relatively autonomous interests as an institution, within its overall task of supporting capitalism. In his later political writings, Marx was to expand on these issues. As a condensed statement of the class theory of the state, anarchists may also accept the sentence. (Price 2018)

The goal of individual workers is not to own three feet of an assembly line or five square feet of an office. Due to the nature of modern production, any proletarian goal must be cooperative, social, and democratic.

Because the *CM* describes a society dividing essentially into two poles, Marx is often interpreted as predicting the end of the middle class. (This is aside from his use of “middle class” to mean the bourgeoisie. This was done then because businesspeople were historically between the feudal aristocracy and the working people.) This supposed prediction of Marx has been held as “disproved” by the huge growth of management and bureaucracy in business and government, as

well as by the temporary rise to a ruling class of the bureaucracy in the former Soviet Union and other Stalinist states.

Marx did predict that “small tradespeople, shopkeepers,... handicraftsmen and peasants – all these sink gradually into the proletariat, partly because their diminutive capital does not suffice for the scale on which modern industry is carried on....” (I; 35) He saw this as a tendency, not as something

about to be completed immediately. “In countries where modern civilisation has become fully developed, a new class of petty bourgeois has been formed, fluctuating between proletarian and bourgeoisie....” (II13)

He expected that the growth of large scale production would require ever more middle level employees – a new middle class. “Masses of labourers, crowded into the factory, are organised like soldiers. As privates of the industrial army, they are placed under the command of a perfect hierarchy of officers and sergeants...” (I; 32) The old petty bourgeoisie tends “to be replaced in manufactures, agriculture, and commerce by labour overseers and stewards.” (II. 13)

In later works, Marx wrote more about the increased role of management and bureaucracy in expanding capitalist enterprises and of the increasingly autonomous bureaucracy of the national state. However, unlike Proudhon, Bakunin, and other anarchists, he never foresaw the danger of a collective bureaucracy taking state

power as an agent of capital accumulation (state capitalism).

The *CM* expects that part of the bourgeoisie and those associated with it will be forced down into the proletariat, where it will “supply the proletarians with educational elements.” (II; 142) Politically, “a small section of the ruling class cuts itself adrift and joins the revolutionary class, the class that holds the future in its hands.” (II; 143) Karl Kautsky and Vladimir Lenin later claimed that intellectuals from the upper classes were essential to bring socialism to the working class – although Marx and Engels made it clear that communist revolution came from the proletariat. Probably this passage was just acknowledging the reality that a few revolutionary intellectuals from upper classes had split from their backgrounds and enriched the mass movement theoretically and practically. Marx and Engels themselves came from the bourgeoisie. (Of the “founders” of anarchism, Proudhon was originally a poor artisan, but Bakunin and Kropotkin had been Russian aristocrats.) Even so, the *Manifesto* does not recognise the danger of these ruling class “educational elements” dominating the workers’ movement and riding it to power.

The Proletariat Alone?

The *Manifesto of the Communist Party* may be read as saying that only the working class matters in making a revolution. “Of all the classes that stand face to face with the bourgeoisie today, the proletariat alone is a genuinely revolutionary class.” (I; 44) Marx lists “the shopkeeper, the artisan” and even “the peasant” as “not revolutionary, but conservative,” even “reactionary.” (I; 45) This view was undemocratic, not to say strategically unwise, considering that at that time peasants were the majority of every European country and every other country in the world, except for Britain. Even today, peasants are a large proposition of the world’s population.

“One of the most distinctive characteristics of the *Manifesto* was its almost complete neglect of the peasantry....The view is wholly negative....The *Manifesto* reached the very end of Marx’s inattention to the peasant class. The picture changed immediately after the outbreak of the revolution in 1848....” (Draper 1998; 211)

However, there are passages which point in another direction, that the interests of the working class overlap with every other oppressed group and every other progressive issue. “All previous historical movements were movements of minorities, or in the interest of minorities. The proletarian movement is the self-conscious, independent movement of the immense majority, in the interests of the immense majority. The proletariat, the lowest stratum of our present society, cannot stir, cannot raise itself up, without the whole superincumbent strata of official society being sprung into the air.” (I; 49) For such reasons, “the Communists everywhere support every revolutionary movement against the existing social and political order of things.” (IV; 8) In any case, the working class itself, as a class, includes

the *Manifesto* does not recognise the danger of these ruling class “educational elements” dominating the workers’ movement and riding it to power.

members of every oppressed grouping (half being women, of all “races,” many from peasant families, immigrants from all nations, LGBT people, etc.).

Of issues which are not simply proletarian-socialist, the *Manifesto* raises the need to fight for bourgeois-democracy (liberal democracy), against the then-dominant aristocratic-bureaucratic-feudal states of Europe. Communists “labour everywhere for the union and agreement of the democratic parties of all countries.” (IV; 10) It proposes that the working class align with other classes, including the bourgeoisie, in democratic revolutions – while maintaining its political independence.

By the end of the 1848 revolution, Marx and Engels had modified their views from the *CM*. They learned that the bourgeoisie could not be relied on even to fight for its own historical democratic programme. The bourgeoisie feared what Marx had hoped for, that the bourgeois-democratic revolution might be followed by a working class revolution. Therefore it pulled back from its democratic cause and capitulated to the aristocratic-bureaucratic regimes. The proletariat itself would have to lead the struggle for democracy as part of the struggle for socialism (which Marx and Engels were to call “permanent

revolution”). This required alliances with all the oppressed and exploited of every section of society.

Aside from this, the *CM* refers to the oppression of women – who are treated as commodities in the bourgeois family and as super – exploited workers in the proletarian families. It speaks of the need for children to have an integral, progressive, education, integrating appropriate labour with education.

Advocating world revolution, the *CM* opposed nationalism as an ideology or programme. But the *Manifesto* advocated national liberation: “The exploitation of one nation by another will also be put an end to.” (II; 56) The *CM* supported the national movement of Poland, linking the class interests of the peasants with the national issue. “Among the Poles, [communists] support the party that insists on an agrarian revolution as the prime condition for national emancipation” (IV; 4) (Similarly the internationalist Bakunin asserted his “strong sympathy for any national uprising against any form of oppression...” – in van der Walt & Schmidt 2009; 309)

The *CM* proposes, “The bringing into cultivation of waste lands and the improvement of the soil generally in accordance with a common plan.” (II; 72; no. 7) “Combination of agriculture with manufacturing industries; gradual abolition of the distinction between town and country by a more equitable distribution of the population over the country.” (II; 72; no. 9) This is a programme of radical ecology and ecosocialism.

Rather than only calling for a working class revolution, many Marxists and anarchists advocate a revolution “by the working class and its allies among all the oppressed” or some such expression. This is not counterposed to the major importance of the working class. Unlike all other oppressed groups, even the peasants, proletarians are immediately central to the workings of the capitalist economy. Their exploited labour directly produces surplus value. This becomes the profits which maintain the capitalist class, its state, and all its other institutions. The working class is central to a socialist revolution, but this includes supporting

and working with every oppressed group and on every progressive issue.

The *CM* indicates that communists should participate in all the struggles of the working class. At the time this meant particularly the struggle for democracy, in which the proletariat should support petty-bourgeois forces against the aristocratic-bureaucratic states. It included the fight for labour unions, in which communists were allied with reformist workers. The communists should not hide their views but advocate them as the fulfilment of the limited struggles.

The *Manifesto* considers the relationship between the revolutionary minority and the (as yet) non-revolutionary majority (in section II). This is a necessary topic. But if the minority believes that it

has all the answers and knows the final truth, it will be authoritarian – and Marxism tends in that direction. Instead, a libertarian socialist approach requires dialogues between the revolutionary minority and the various views of the majority, where each learns from the other.

A basic problem of the *CM* is its telescoping of its predictions. Marx and Engels wrote as if every European country already had a proletarian majority, as if the

peasants and artisans of Germany and France had already dissolved into the working class. They were sure that bourgeois-democratic revolutions in Europe would immediately be followed by working class revolutions. They saw European capitalism as dominated completely by huge enterprises. They pictured the world economy as already being closely tied together by international trade. All these were real tendencies, but by no means as near to completion as they thought.

Fifteen years after the *CM*, Marx wrote to Engels, “The easy-going delusions and the almost childish enthusiasm with which, before February 1848, we greeted the era of revolution have gone to the devil.” (in Draper 1998; 321) Compared to Marx’s time, today the proletariat is a much larger proportion of the world population and the global market is much more integrated. In many ways the *CM* is more relevant today than it was when written.

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The Marxist Programme

The goal is communism (or the broader term, socialism). “The theory of the communists may be summed up in the single sentence: Abolition of private property.” (II: 13) “Capital is converted into common property, into the property of all members of society.” (II; 20) (But the common ownership of the means of production will not affect “personal property.”) (II; 20) “In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.” (II: 74)

So far, there is nothing here with which an anarchist-communist would disagree – or with which a liberal could agree! But Marx never went much beyond such generalities. He rejected developing “the best possible plan of the best possible state of society” (III; 51) or drawing “fanciful pictures of future society.” (III; 53) These were merely “castles in the air” (III; 55) rather than based in “the material conditions for the emancipation of the proletariat.” (III; 48) All very well, but when the “material conditions” of the historical process present us with mass-murdering totalitarian states, calling themselves “socialist,” ruled by “Communist” Parties, with collectivised economies without bourgeois private property – most Marxists accepted them as being “socialist.” They did not have a clear vision of what socialism was supposed to be.

What Marx focused on was not a new society but the working class taking state power. Once the proletariat replaced the bourgeoisie in state power, it would work out its political and economic programme. “The first step in the revolution by the working class is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class.” (II: 68) For Marx, this meant the workers taking over the state, which he called “to win the battle for democracy.” (II: 68) This worker-controlled government he called “the state, i.e., of the proletariat organised as the ruling class.” (II: 69) (The *CM* does not use the phrase “dictatorship of the proletariat.”) This sounds very democratic, but at the time he wrote it he meant that the working class would democratise the authoritarian bureaucratic-aristocratic governments that dominated Europe (thus winning “the battle for democracy”). And it would take over these democratically-modified states, by election or revolution.

(To clarify the issue, revolutionary anarchists might also say that they are for the working class – and its allies – taking power. This is in the sense of overturning the capitalist class and its states, and replacing them with other institutions – such as federations of workplace councils, popular committees, and voluntary associations. But they are not for taking *state* power, that is, not for setting up a new bureaucratic-military elite agency over the rest of society. They are for the self-organization of the proletariat and all oppressed people.)

At the end of section II, the *CM* lays out a ten-point transitional programme to be carried out by the proletariat once it takes state power. Twenty-five years later, Engels wrote in a preface that “the general principles laid down in this *Manifesto* are, on the whole, as correct as ever...[but] no special stress is laid on the revolutionary measures proposed....” (Marx & Engels 2005; 118-9) Despite this caveat, the basic approach of the *Manifesto*'s programme would continue to dominate Marxism: “The proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralize all instruments of production in the hands of the state....” (II: 69)

This includes: “5. Centralization of credit in the hands of the state....6. Centralization of the means of communication and transport in the hands of the state. 7. Extension of factories and instruments of production owned by the state....8. Equal liability of all to labour. Establishment of industrial armies....” (II; 72)

The *CM* predicts that this centralized state economy will lead to the end of the state! “When...class distinctions have disappeared, and all production has been concentrated in the hands of a vast association of the whole nation, the public power will lose its political character. Political power...is merely the organized power of one class for oppressing another.” (II; 73) This is also described as “the conversion of the functions of the state into a mere superintendence of production....” (II: 54) The repressive, class-dominated, state will supposedly evolve into a benevolent “public power” which is a centralized “vast association” in whose hands “all production has been concentrated.”

It should be clear what is being proposed here. The democratic, worker-controlled, state, supposedly “the proletariat organized as the ruling class”, will take over the whole economy and concentrate it all. On the way to becoming a classless “public power,” it will include forced labour for everyone in its industrial armies. How long could it be expected to remain democratic? How much will it promote “the free development of each”? How would the conscripted workers democratically control the state organizers and effect the overall plans? Suppose workers went on strike; would they be forced back to work by some recreated police force? Wouldn't the managers become the new state-capitalist masters, with a drive to accumulate profits and power?

In later prefaces, Marx and Engels made only one important change in the *Manifesto*. Referring to the experience of the 1871 Paris Commune, Engels quoted Marx's *The Civil War in France* as saying that the existing states cannot be democratized and taken over by the working class. They were developed to serve a minority ruling class and, in essence, that is all they can do. The bourgeois states must be overturned and replaced by other institutions, such as the ultra-democratic Commune. “One thing especially was proved by the Commune, viz., that ‘the working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made state machinery and wield it for its own purposes.’” (Marx & Engels 2005; 119)

In principle, revolutionary anarchists agree with this (without further examination of the Paris Commune). However, it is somewhat difficult to know what Marx and Engels meant by it. Immediately after the defeat of the Commune, they fought to make every national branch of the First International support a workers' electoral party. They demanded that all branches support parties that sought to get elected to state power. It was this policy (which seems to contradict the above “one thing” that was “proved by the Commune”) which led to the split in the International between Marx and the anarchists. (Price 2017) Marx and Engels even stated, repeatedly, that in a few countries it was possible for the workers to take power peacefully through elections; they named Britain, the U.S., and France. (Although they added that

On the way to becoming a classless “public power,” it will include forced labour for everyone in its industrial armies. How long could it be expected to remain democratic? How much will it promote “the free development of each”? How would the conscripted workers democratically control the state organizers and effect the overall plans?

this would provoke counterrevolutionary rebellions and civil wars; so even this was not likely to be a peaceful revolution).

In any case, even having an ultra-democratic commune at the top of a centralized and nationalized (and inevitably bureaucratic) economy would not prevent the rise of authoritarianism, class division, and state capitalism.

Years later, Peter Kropotkin wrote that in the anarchist programme, “voluntary associations... would... substitute themselves for the State in all its functions. They would represent an interwoven network... for all possible purposes: production, consumption, and exchange,... mutual protection, defence of the territory, and so on.” (Kropotkin 2002; 284) These would include federated worker-managed industries, consumer cooperatives, agri-industrial communes, as well as democratic popular militias (an armed people) so long as deemed necessary for “mutual protection [and] defence of the territory.”

“The anarchists consider, therefore, that to hand over to the State all the main sources of economic life – the land, the mines, the railways, banking, insurance, and so on – as also the management of all the main branches of industry, in addition to all the functions already accumulated in its hands... would mean to create a new instrument of tyranny. State capitalism would only increase the powers of bureaucracy and capitalism.” (Kropotkin; 286) This was written in 1905, after

the *Communist Manifesto* but before the experience of state-capitalism in the Soviet Union.

Determinism and Morality

Marx is often accused of advocating a mechanical, stagist, view of history, a rigid teleological determinism: first slavery, then feudalism, then capitalism, then the lower stage of communism (socialism), and finally, automatically, full communism – like a slinky toy going down stairs. While the *CM* indicates that human development, since early classless society, has been a series of exploitative class systems, it does not lay out any such inevitable pattern. In their preface to an 1882 Russian edition of the *CM*, Marx and Engels discussed whether Russia would have to go through the same stages as Western Europe. Could its “primeval common ownership of land pass directly to the higher form of communist common ownership” without going through a capitalist stage? (Marx & Engels 2005; 120). They declared that if a Russian revolution were to ignite a European proletarian revolution, then this was possible – a non-determinist answer.

Near the beginning of the *Manifesto*, it declares that class conflicts in every society “each time ended either in a revolutionary reconstruction of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes.” (I; 2) (They were referring to the collapse of the Western Roman Empire.) Draper interprets this as meaning that bourgeois “society is faced with the alternatives later tagged [by Rosa Luxemburg – WP] ‘socialism or barbarism’ – either a revolution that remakes society or the collapse of the old order to a lower level.” (Draper 1998; 200) He also quotes Engels as later writing that capitalism faced “ruin or revolution.” (same) (The same basic idea was expressed by Murray Bookchin as “anarchism or annihilation.”)

Yet the last line of section I declares of the bourgeoisie, “Its fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable.” (I; 53) In their preface to the Russian edition, Marx and Engels summarized, “The *Communist Manifesto* had as its object the proclamation of the inevitably impending dissolution of modern bourgeois property.” (Marx & Engels 2005; 120)

So which is it? A possible choice between two very different outcomes (“revolutionary reconstruction” or “common ruin;” “socialism or barbarism”) or an “inevitable” outcome of proletarian revolution? Draper denied that “Marx believed in some sort of

metaphysical ‘inevitability of socialism,’ according to which socialist victory is...fatefully predestined....” (Draper 1998; 200) Gasper calls the *CM*’s final declaration “a rhetorical flourish” to cheer on the workers. (Marx & Engels 2005; 57) But the sentence in the preface to the Russian edition seems to rule that out.

Before World War I, the mainstream of social-democratic orthodox Marxism interpreted Marxism in a mechanically deterministic fashion. So did the later Stalinist version of Marxism. Today most Marxists take a more flexible view. It would be hard to insist that a proletarian revolution will definitely, inevitably, happen before capitalism destroys industrial civilization with a nuclear war or with climate collapse. While this is what revolutionaries work for, it simply cannot be known. . At best we can say that there are tendencies pushing toward a socialist revolution, identified in great part by Marx, as well as tendencies resisting it. As for what Marx “really meant,” perhaps he was confused and contradicted himself. (Peter Kropotkin also believed in the inevitability of anarchist-communist revolution.)

If revolution is inevitable, then it is something which happens to people, not which they do. But if there are alternative possible outcomes, then people have to make a choice. The issue is not only a socio-economic analysis but one of moral choice. This insight is lacking in the *Communist Manifesto*. Undoubtedly, Marx and Engels were driven by ideals and values, but this does not appear in their system. Nowhere in the *CM* (nor anywhere else in their writings over the years) did they say that people should, morally, be for socialism or that communism is a good goal. Instead they sneered at those socialists who raised moral values as the basis for socialism (in section III). Undoubtedly they were right to reject those whose socialism was rooted solely in abstract morality without an objective, materialistic, analysis of how capitalism develops. They also countered the bourgeois critics of communism, who often raised ethical objections (in section II). Here they were correct in exposing the hypocrisy behind the moralism of the bourgeoisie – as amoral and cynical a class as has ever existed. Yet that did not require a silence on ethics.

Their case for communism could have been much stronger. They could have clearly rooted it in the interaction between humanistic values and objective developments, as expressed in the

revolutionary movements among the working class and all oppressed. (Kropotkin sought to demonstrate an evolutionary base for a naturalistic ethics.) Instead, their nonmoral perspective only laid the basis for accepting Stalinist authoritarianism. The Russian dictatorship had its flaws, many said, but it had to be accepted as “really existing socialism,” after all.

Anarchism and Marxism

As mentioned, the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* does refer to Pierre-Joseph Proudhon. He was the first to declare himself an “anarchist,” although the *CM* does not refer to this. Section III, “Socialist and Communist Literature,” has a subsection on what it calls “Conservative or Bourgeois Socialism.” Here it says, “We may cite Proudhon’s *Philosophie de la Misere* [*Philosophy of Poverty*] as an example of this form.” (III; 37)

Apparently, “bourgeois socialism” seeks “to secure the continued existence of bourgeois society.” (III; 36) “The socialistic bourgeoisie ... wish for a bourgeoisie without a proletariat....Bourgeois socialism develops...into various more or less complete systems....It but requires that the proletariat should remain within the bounds of existing society, but should cast away all its hateful ideas concerning the bourgeoisie.” (III; 39)

This is an extremely distorted view of Proudhon’s opinions. (For a balanced and insightful summary of his views, including a criticism of Marx’s portrayal of them, see McKay 2011.) Proudhon’s “more or less complete system” (called “mutualism”) proposed a stateless version of what today we would call “market socialism.” There would continue to be small workshops and artisans, competing on the market. Larger enterprises would be democratically run by those working in them. Peasants would “possess” the land they farmed. Overall coordination would be through a non-profit association, essentially a national credit union. There would be neither a profit-making bourgeoisie nor a wage-earning proletariat.

While not capitalist, this programme had elements of capitalism: a market, competition, and a sort-of private property. Proudhon proposed to achieve it by gradual and peaceful growth within capitalist society. He was a reformist, opposing revolution or even strikes. These elements were abandoned by revolutionary anarchists, including Bakunin and Kropotkin, who further developed the ideas of Proudhon. They favoured a collective, cooperative, and communal vision (possibly influenced by

Marxism). But they continued important ideas raised by Proudhon: decentralization, federalism, direct democracy, anti-statism, anti-electoralism, and, above all, workers’ self-management of industry. These concepts were and remain central to revolutionary anarchist-socialism. They do not appear in the *Manifesto*.

Conclusion

In the twenty-first century, many ideas are still true and even valuable in the *Communist Manifesto*. These include the class analysis of capitalist society and understanding it as polarized between two fundamental classes, the proletariat and the bourgeoisie. Even as the bourgeoisie has created great technological and scientific wonders, it has led the world toward terrible disasters: economic decline, increased inequality, wars (including the threat of nuclear war), ecological catastrophes (including virulent plagues and looming climate collapse) – along with many forms of oppression and suffering. “The bourgeoisie is unfit any longer to be the ruling class in society.” (I; 52)

Instead, the proletariat, the modern working class in all its variegated aspects, needs to overturn and replace the capitalist class, its state, and its other institutions. It has the necessary potential power and strategic location at the heart of capitalism. But to do this, it must ally with all the oppressed in society and raise every issue possible, something on which the *Manifesto* is ambiguous.

The *CM* was written early in the political careers and studies of Marx and Engels. They underestimated the resilience of capitalism and overestimated the nearness of revolution. This especially comes out in an apparent certainty in the imminent coming of proletarian revolution. But just as they were wrong then, in the short term, so we today would be wrong to believe in the inevitability of the failure of socialism or of the survivability of capitalist society.

Yet Marx’s positive programme has to be rejected. While meant to create a socialist democracy, it is a programme for state capitalism.

Socialism/communism should be an “association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.” That cannot be built by using a bureaucratic-military socially-alienated institution standing over the rest of society – that is, a state. This is true whether it is a bourgeois-democratic state mastered through elections or a new state replacing the old one through revolution. A centralized and nationalized

economy, even in the hands of the most democratic state (let alone a one-party dictatorship) can only result in further oppression, suffering, inefficiency, rebellion, and repression. As Kropotkin (among other anarchists) warned, “State capitalism would only increase the powers of bureaucracy and capitalism.”

Marx and Engels wrote in their 1872 preface, “The *Manifesto* has become a historical document.” (Marx & Engels 2005; 119) The *Manifesto of the Communist Party* remains a classical statement of revolutionary proletarian socialism. As such it is still well worth reading by anarchists and others, and thinking about, but never uncritically.

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Parish Notices

Prisoner support is as important as ever. We'll continue to list Anarchist Black Cross and other groups, as we hear about them.

- Belarus ABC: abc-belarus.org
- Derry ABC: abcireland.wordpress.com

Scottish Community & Activist Legal Project (SCALP) is a collective of activists from social and environmental justice groups in Scotland who are collaborating on community and activist legal support. They attend protests to challenge police abuse and support people in case of arrest, and provide legal information to activists: scottishactivistlegalproject.co.uk

Wildcat is a monthly newsletter of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales. From October 2021, current editions are available here: iww.org.uk/wildcat

SolFed has launched the Solidarity Federation Education Union (SFEU), which welcomes all workers within the sector - from nursery to primary to higher education, and all roles within the industry, from caretakers, classroom assistants, through to teachers: solfed.org.uk/solfed-education-union

Local newsletters & bulletins continue to be at the heart of Anarchist organising -

- Derry (‘Barricade Bulletin’): derryanarchists.blogspot.com
- Liverpool: liverpoolanarchist.wordpress.com

From local to global, the International of Anarchist Federations (IFA-IAF) are now publishing a magazine, *IFA*: i-f-a.org/magazine

No matter what nonsense is bumbled from 10 Downing Street, the COVID-19 pandemic is not over. In February 2022, the WHO estimated that we are probably about half-way through. ‘Mutual Aid’ is a list of local support groups that have been established during the coronavirus pandemic. Whether you're self-isolating and are in need of help, or you have time available and want to help others you can use this website to find a group local to you. There are currently 2065 groups listed: mutual-aid.co.uk

What Freedom Means

The Liberator, 8 October 1908

The change from the present method of obtaining one's living is inevitable, because it has become a necessity. We now live under the pay system, in which if you can't pay you can't have. Everything has a price set upon it; earth, air, light and water, all have their price. And he who hasn't worked, let him starve. Love, honour, fame, ambition, all the noblest and holiest aspirations and sentiments of humanity are bought and sold. Everything is upon the market for sale; all is merchandise and commerce. Land, the prime necessity of existence, is held for a price, and the homeless millions perish because they cannot pay for it. Food, raiment and shelter exist in super-abundance, but are withheld for the price.

The productive and distributive forces of nature, united with the power and ingenuity of man are reserved for a price. And humanity perishes from disease, crime and ignorance because of its enforced, artificial poverty. The mental, moral, intellectual and physical qualities are dwarfed, stunted and crushed to maintain the price. This is slavery, the enslavement of man to his own powers: Can it continue? The change is inevitable because necessary. Free access to all the productive and distributive forces will alone free the minds and bodies of men. There are certain things that are priceless. Among



these are life, liberty and happiness, and these are the things which the society of the future, the free society, will guarantee to all for the return of a few hours labour per day.

When labour is no longer for sale, society will produce free men and women, who will think free, act free, and be free. Crime and criminals will flee from such a society, because the incentive for crime will be gone.

– Lucy E. Parsons