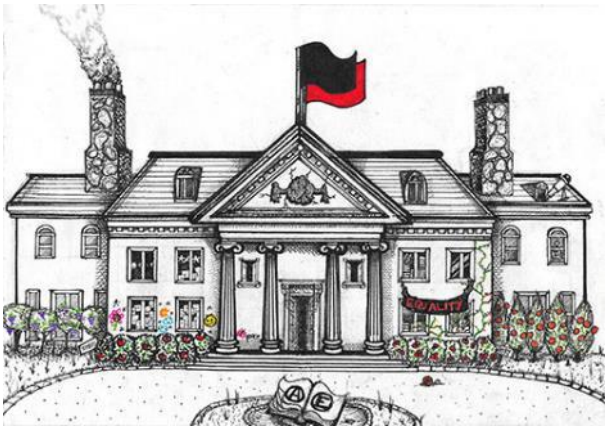
Black Flag

Anarchist Review

Trotsky's limited anti-Stalinism

Anarchism and Utopia



Kropotkin: *Justice and Morality*

And much more...

Autumn 2023

Volume 3 **Number 3**

Contents

This issue of *Black Flag* starts with Trotsky as this year marks the 100th anniversary of his "The New Course" which marked the beginning of his dissent with developments within the Soviet Union. We begin with a lengthy discussion of the limited nature of Trotsky's dissent and how it was one which did not question the necessity of party dictatorship nor recognise that the Bolsheviks had created state-capitalism in Russia. We include contemporary articles by libertarian Marxist Paul Mattick and anarchists. Wayne Price then discusses Trotsky's *Transitional Program*.

We mark the 70th anniversary of the death of Harry Kelly, a stalwart of the American anarchist movement (and, for a number of years, the British one). Yet while he worked closely with Emma Goldman on *Mother Earth* none of his articles appeared in *Anarchy! An Anthology of Emma Goldman's Mother Earth* (2001/2012). We rectify that here.

We then turn to anarchism and utopia, specifically the ideas of utopian writer Edward Bellamy whose work, as is well known, inspired William Morris to write his utopian novel, *News from Nowhere*. We include Marie Louise Berneri's account of Bellamy's ideas from her *Journey Through Utopia*, Morris' review as well as Kropotkin's articles on Bellamy. Robert Graham then discusses utopian writings from the lead up to the French Revolution which contrasted the hierarchical insanities of Europe with the freer societies in North America. These show that utopian fiction can popularise the critique of current society, show possible solutions to social issues and inspire societal change.

This year marks the 100th anniversary of the birth Chris Pallis, better known as Maurice Brinton. While not an anarchist (and retaining his former Marxist antipathy to anarchism), he was a libertarian socialist whose ideas remain important. Here we include reminiscences of Pallis by a member of *Solidarity* as well as articles not included in the essential anthology *For Workers' Power: The Selected Writings of Maurice Brinton* (AK Press, 2004/2020).

We also include a translation (unfortunately, from the Spanish of a Russian edition) of an 1893 speech by Kropotkin on *Justice and Morality* which, while in English, has never been published in that language. Given a few years after he had published in *The Nineteenth Century* the first of the articles which would become *Mutual Aid*, it summarises key aspects of his evolutionary ethics and should be of interest to anarchists and scientists today. We end with two reviews, our usual news of the movement and the obituary of Karl Marx which appeared in *Le Révolté*. Our back page is graced with a letter from Kropotkin to a commemoration for the Paris Commune.

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

The Bureaucracy in Exile:
Trotsky's limited Anti-Stalinism
Iain McKay

This year marks the 100th anniversary of Trotsky's "New Course" articles which saw the beginnings of his opposition to developments within the USSR which led to the rise of Stalin, his exile in February 1929 and eventual assassination in 1940.[1] We can expect a raft of articles from what remains of the Trotskyist sects across the world marking the event and suggesting it represented more than it actually did. Here, we will clarify the nature of Trotsky's opposition to Stalinism and debunk the exaggerations and selectiveness of previous hagiographies – not to mention the distortions and inventions.

Trotsky and Stalin bearing the coffin of Felix Dzerzhinsky (founder and head of the Bolshevik secret police) in 1926

Trotsky's "Left Opposition" of 1923-7 is undoubtedly the best known of the various dissident groupings within the Russian Bolsheviks which developed after 1917. This is mainly because it spawned numerous Trotskyist sects across the globe as well as the "Fourth International". It is also the one most lauded by subsequent dissident Leninists – unsurprisingly, as earlier ones developed when Lenin and Trotsky held the reins and so are either ignored or dismissed in passing.[2]

An American Trotskyist suggests that it was only "[a]fter Lenin's death" that "the Russian Revolution's goal of soviet democracy and the commitment to a liberating revolution worldwide gave way to a bureaucratic dictatorship under Joseph Stalin".[3] Chris Harman likewise argued that it was after "Lenin's illness and subsequent death" when the "principles of October were abandoned one by one." He adds that "there was always an alternative to Stalinism. It meant, in the late 1920s, returning to genuine workers' democracy and consciously linking the fate of Russia to the fate of world revolution." The "historical merit of the 'Left Opposition'" was that it "did link the question of the expansion of industry with that of working-class democracy and internationalism."[4]

Other Leninists make similar claims. Victor Serge, a member of the "Left Opposition" in Russia and then Trotskyist in exile, stated that its programme was "the reform of the Soviet State by a return to working-class democracy."[5] Discussing attempts to rehabilitate Trotsky in the 1980s, Hillel Ticktin asserted that "[a]lthough the left opposition is

[1] These articles were published in *Pravda* in December 1923 and issued, with additional material appended, as a book in January 1924.

[2] Space excludes discussing these oppositions beyond noting that they tended to focus their critique on the economic policies of the regime and supported the party's monopoly of power. This includes the best known of these earlier groups, the "Workers' Opposition".

[3] Paul Le Blanc, *Left Americana: The Radical Heart of US History* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2017), 218.

[4] *Bureaucracy and Revolution in Eastern Europe* (London: Pluto Press, 1974), 14, 19.

[5] *Memoirs of a Revolutionary, 1901-1941* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 256.

history, a working-class critique is not, and the left opposition produced the first such critique."[1] David McNally proclaims its importance in rousing rhetoric:

> Grouped around Leon Trotsky were the forces known as the 'Left Opposition'… By the mid-1920s, the programme of the Left Opposition had two central planks. First, democracy had to be re-established in the Bolshevik party and in the mass organisations such as the trade unions and the soviets. Secondly, the Soviet government had to abandon all such retrograde notions as socialism in one country…
>
> During the terrible decades of the 1920s and 1940s when Stalin was committing barbarous crimes in the name of 'socialism', the lone voice of Leon Trotsky kept alive some of the basic elements of socialism from below… It was Trotsky's great virtue to insist against all odds that socialism was rooted in the struggle for human freedom… Throughout the 1920s and until his death at the hands of Stalinist agent in 1940, Trotsky fought desperately to build a revolutionary socialist movement based on the principles of Marx and Lenin… Trotsky's contribution to keeping alive the socialist flame during the 1930s… insured him a lasting place in the history of international socialism[2]

Unfortunately, such claims are not true. As Serge himself noted elsewhere, Trotsky may have "ever since 1923 [been] for the renovation of the party through inner party democracy and the struggle against bureaucracy" but "the greatest reach of boldness of the Left Opposition in the Bolshevik Party was to demand the restoration of inner-Party democracy, and it never dared dispute the theory of single-party government".[3]

Here we show that this was, indeed, the case and that Trotsky was no advocate of freedom or "Socialism from Below". He did not question the fundamental features of the Soviet Union and sought a change in who was in charge rather than its class structure. This should be unsurprising as he was a leading Bolshevik who, like others (and before Stalin) had had two towns named after him: Ivanshchenkovo from 1919 until 1929 and Gatchina between 1923 and 1929.[4]

Before *The New Course*

Space precludes discussing the Bolshevik regime in detail nor its onslaught on workers' democracy – in the soviets, factory committees and armed forces – which started in early 1918.

Trotsky – just appointed as People's Commissar of Army and Navy Affairs – ended democracy within the armed forces in mid-March 1918: "the principle of election is politically purposeless and technically inexpedient, and it has been, in practice, abolished by decree."[5] The following month saw him arguing that once elected the government was to be given total power to appoint people as required as it is "better able to judge in the matter than" the masses. The workers were expected to simply obey their public servants until such time as they "dismiss that government and appoint another." Trotsky raised the question of whether it was possible for the government to act "against the interests of the labouring and peasant masses" and answered no for "there can be no antagonism between the government and the mass of the workers, just as there is no antagonism between the administration of the union and the general assembly of its members".[6] The weakness of this can be seen from the history of trade unionism which is full of

[1] *Origins of the crisis in the USSR: essays on the political economy of a disintegrating system* (London: M.E. Sharpe, 1992), 78.

[2] *Socialism from Below* (Chicago: International Socialism Organization, 1984). This pamphlet is mostly a rehash of Hal Draper's *The Two Souls of Socialism* (1966), including Draper's diatribe on anarchism based on distorted account of the ideas of Proudhon and Bakunin (the former based on J.S. Schapiro's knowingly misleading account of Proudhon's ideas – see "Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, Harbinger of Anarchism", *Black Flag Anarchist Review* Volume 1 Number 2 [Summer 2021]).

[3] *The Serge-Trotsky Papers* (London: Pluto Press, 1994), 201, 181.

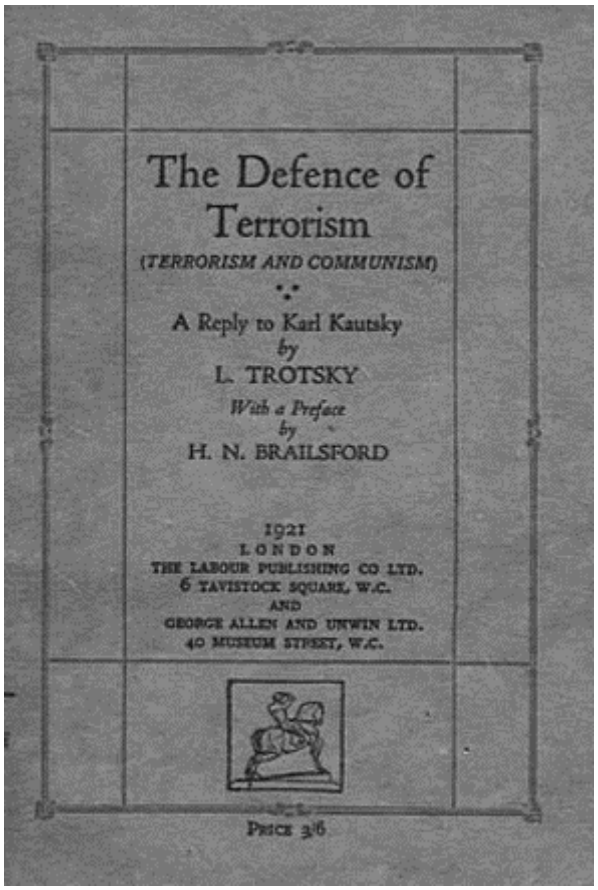
[4] G.R.F. Bursa, "Political Changes of Names of Soviet Towns", *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol. 63, No. 2 (April 1985), 165, 169. Ivanshchenkovo served as a base for secret military production until the dissolution of the USSR in 1991. This renaming after Trotsky was quite fitting, as he had sanctioned the use of chemical warfare against the Kronstadt rebels in 1921. (Paul Avrich, *Kronstadt 1921* [New York: W.W. Norton and Company Inc., 1970], 211-2).

[5] *How the Revolution Armed: the military writings and speeches of Leon Trotsky* (London: New Park Publications, 1979) 1: 47.

[6] *Leon Trotsky Speaks* (New York: Pathfinder, 1972), 113.

examples of committees betraying their membership.[1]

Within months of these comments, the regime had become a state-capitalist party dictatorship with the imposition of "one-man management" within industry and the gerrymandering, packing and dissolving of the local soviets in the spring of 1918 as well as the packing of the 5th All-Russian Soviet Congress of early July 1918 which denied the Left-SRs their rightful majority. With the building of a new State and a centralised vision of "socialism" based on State ownership and control, the numbers, power and privileges of the bureaucracy rose and rose. The new regime met with worker and peasant resistance which – like the State repression protest faced – started before the outbreak of the Civil War at the end of May 1918 nor linked to its phases nor did it end with the defeat of Wrangel in November 1920 for its continued well into the 1920s.[2]



Ideology soon followed practice, with Victor Serge later recalling how "at the start of 1919 I was horrified to read an article by Zinoviev… on the monopoly of the party in power."[3] He failed to mention how well he hid that horror.[4] Trotsky, as a leading Bolshevik, embraced the party's political and economic policies. This can be seen in his infamous book, *Terrorism and Communism*. Written in 1920 to refute Karl Kautsky's critique of Bolshevism from a pre-war Marxist orthodox position, Trotsky has no qualms defending the party's dictatorship:

> In the hands of the party is concentrated the general control… it has the final word in all fundamental questions… the last word belongs to the Central Committee of the party … Such a regime is possible only in the presence of the unquestioned authority of the party, and the faultlessness of its discipline…
>
> The exclusive role of the Communist Party under the conditions of a victorious proletarian revolution is quite comprehensible… The revolutionary supremacy of the proletariat pre-supposes within the proletariat itself the political supremacy of a party, with a clear programme of action and a faultless internal discipline …
>
> We have more than once been accused of having substituted for the dictatorship of the Soviets the dictatorship of our party. Yet it can be said with complete justice that the dictatorship of the Soviets became possible only by means of the dictatorship of the party. It is thanks to the clarity of its theoretical vision and its strong revolutionary organisation that the party has afforded to the Soviets the possibility of becoming transformed from shapeless parliaments of labour into the apparatus of the supremacy of labour. In this "substitution" of the power of the party for the power of the working class there is nothing accidental, and in reality there is no substitution at all.[5]

[1] Interestingly, Marx dismissed Bakunin's prophetic warnings that the "dictatorship of the proletariat" would become the "dictatorship *over* the proletariat" by asking: "Can it really be that in a trade union, for example, the entire union forms its executive committee". (*The Marx-Engels Reader* [London: W.W. Norton & Co, 1978], 544)

[2] See section H.6 of *An Anarchist FAQ* (Edinburgh: AK Press, 2008). This is summarised in "The State and Revolution: Theory and Practice", *Bloodstained: One Hundred Years of Leninist Counterrevolution* (Edinburgh/Chico: AK Press, 2017).

[3] *The Serge-Trotsky Papers*, 188. In his memoirs, Serge dates the article as January 1919 and notes its title: "The Monopoly of Power". (*Memoirs of a Revolutionary*, 69)

[4] See: "Victor Serge: The Worst of the Anarchists", *Anarcho-Syndicalist Review* 61 (Winter 2014); "The Trotskyist School of Falsification", *Anarcho-Syndicalist Review* 79 (Spring 2020).

[5] *Terrorism and Communism*: *a reply to Karl Kautsky* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1961), 107-9.

He argued against those who suggested that the dictatorship should be carried out by the whole class: "It is not easy to understand what actually they imagine when they say this. The dictatorship of the proletariat, in its very essence, signifies the immediate supremacy of the revolutionary vanguard, which relies upon the heavy masses, and, where necessary, obliges the backward tail to dress by the head."[1] This rejection of democracy also applied to the workplace:

> our Party Congress… expressed itself in favour of the principle of one-man management in the administration of industry… It would be the greatest possible mistake… to consider this decision as a blow to the independence of the working class… It would consequently be a most crying error to confuse the question as to the supremacy of the proletariat with the question of boards of workers at the head of factories. The dictatorship of the proletariat is expressed in the abolition of private property in the means of production… and not at all in the form in which individual economic enterprises are administered… I consider if the civil war had not plundered our economic organs of all that was strongest, most independent, most endowed with initiative, we should undoubtedly have entered the path of one-man management in the sphere of economic administration much sooner and much less painfully.[2]

the workers were excluded from economic power which rested in the hands of the State (that is, its bureaucrats) and, as under private capitalism, had two roles – follow orders and work hard.

Thus the workers were excluded from economic power which rested in the hands of the State (that is, its bureaucrats) and, as under private capitalism, had two roles – follow orders and work hard. In this, as with party dictatorship, he was simply repeating Bolshevik orthodoxy – Lenin had been arguing for state-appointed one-man management (armed with "dictatorial" authority) since the spring of 1918.[3] Trotsky did not deny how authoritarian this regime was:

> Both economic and political compulsion are only forms of the expression of the dictatorship of the working class in two closely connected regions… the road to Socialism lies through a period of the highest possible intensification of the principle of the State… Just as a lamp, before going out, shoots up in a brilliant flame, so the State, before disappearing, assumes the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat, i.e., the most ruthless form of State, which embraces the life of the citizens authoritatively in every direction… No organisation except the army has ever controlled man with such severe compulsion as does the State organisation of the working class in the most difficult period of transition. It is just for this reason that we speak of the militarisation of labour.[4]

An example of this regime was provided in early 1920 when Trotsky argued that the working class "cannot be left wandering round all over Russia. They must be thrown here and there, appointed, commanded, just like soldiers" and that "[d]eserters from labour ought to be formed into punitive battalions or put into concentration camps".[5] It would be churlish, but essential, to note the links of this draconian regime to the "[e]stablishment of industrial armies" and the need to "centralise all instruments of production… of credit… of the means of communication and transport in the hands of the State" advocated by Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto*.[6]

Such a regime was beneficial in all aspects of life for "the striving of the military organization to

[1] Trotsky, 110.
[2] Trotsky, 161-3.
[3] Maurice Brinton, "The Bolsheviks and Workers' Control", *For Workers' Power: The Selected Writings of Maurice Brinton* (Chico: AK Press, 2020).
[4] Trotsky, 169-170.
[5] Quoted by Brinton, 451.
[6] *Marx-Engels Reader*, 490.

bring clearness, definiteness, exactness of relations and responsibilities, to the highest degree of development" meant that "every class prefers to have in its service those of its members who, other things being equal, have passed through the military school... This experience is a great and valuable experience. And when a former regimental commissary returns to his trade union, he becomes not a bad organizer."[1]

Against those who argued that by "[d]estroying or driving underground the other parties, you have thereby prevented their political competition with you, and consequently you have deprived yourselves of the possibility of testing your line of action" Trotsky replied by pointing to the efficiency of Bolshevik repression: "In a period in which... the political struggle swiftly passes into a civil war, the ruling party has sufficient material standard by which to test its line of action, without the possible circulation of Menshevik papers. Noske crushes the Communists, but they grow. We have suppressed the Mensheviks and the SRs – and they have disappeared. This criterion is sufficient for us." From this he concluded that Bolshevism "expresses the interests of historical development."[2] Needless to say, he did not repeat this "might-makes-right" criteria when the Stalinists made the Trotskyists disappear in the 1920s and 1930s.

Of course, this was written during the Civil War and may be excused in terms of the circumstances in which it was written. However, this ignores the awkward fact that Trotsky's arguments reflected the theoretical conclusions required to produce what was considered as a *successful* revolution by him and other leading Bolsheviks.

This dismissal of working-class democracy was party orthodoxy, as can be seen from the awkward fact that Trotsky continued to argue for party dictatorship after the end of the civil war in November 1920. Thus we discover him in early in 1921 arguing again for Party dictatorship at the Communist Party's Tenth Congress:

> The Workers' Opposition has come out with dangerous slogans, making a fetish of democratic principles! They place the workers' right to elect representatives above the Party, as if the party were not entitled to assert its dictatorship even if that dictatorship temporarily clashed with the passing moods of the workers' democracy. It is necessary to create amongst us the awareness of the revolutionary birth right of the party, which is obliged to maintain its dictatorship, regardless of temporary wavering even in the working classes. This awareness is for us the indispensable element. The dictatorship does not base itself at every given moment on the formal principle of a workers' democracy.[3]

It should be noted that Trotsky was being too generous to the Workers' Opposition, for "while demanding more freedom of initiative for the workers" in economic matters, "it was quite content to leave untouched the state of affairs in which a few hundred thousand imposed their will on many millions" and it "had no wish to disturb the communist party's monopoly of political power."[4] So even limited industrial democracy was considered too much by Trotsky:

> Formally speaking this [the creation of factory committees] is indeed the clearest line of workers' democracy. But we are against it. Why? For a basic reason, to preserve the party's dictatorship, and for subordinate reasons: management would be inefficient[5]

Note well, the necessity to secure the party dictatorship was paramount and even a slight increase in worker democracy (rigorously controlled by the party) was a danger. In terms of his "subordinate" reason, it should suffice to note the waste and inefficiency (not to mention corruption) in the economy which occurred after he and Lenin imposed "one-man management" and the "militarisation of labour".[6]

[1] Trotsky, 172-3.
[2] Trotsky, 109-110.
[3] Quoted by Samuel Farber, *Before Stalinism: The Rise and Fall of Soviet Democracy* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1990), 209.
[4] Leonard Schapiro, *The Origin of the Communist Autocracy: Political Opposition in the Soviet State: The First Phase, 1917-1922* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1965), 294.
[5] Quoted by Alec Nove, "Trotsky, collectivization and the five year plan", *Socialism, Economics and Development* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1986), 100.
[6] Not to mention that the vast majority of studies on workers' control have concluded it leads to increases in efficient and productivity (these experiments have usually been ended by management fearful of losing their power and privileges, not because of economic considerations).

Trotsky re-iterated this position In late March 1921, in relation to the crushing of the Kronstadt revolt for soviet democracy by asserting that the "economic, political, and national independence of Russia is possible only under the dictatorship of the soviets. The backbone of this dictatorship is the Communist Party. There is no other party that can play this part, nor can there be."[1] The following year saw him stating that "we maintain the dictatorship of our party!"[2]

In April 1923, he argued that "[i]f there is one question which basically not only does not require revision but does not so much as admit the thought of revision, it is the question of the dictatorship of the Party, and its leadership in all spheres of our work." He stressed that "[o]ur party is the ruling party… To allow any changes whatever in this field, to allow the idea of a partial… curtailment of the leading role of our party would mean to bring into question all the achievements of the revolution and its future." He indicated the fate of those who *did* question this: "Whoever makes an attempt on the party's leading role will, I hope, be unanimously dumped by all of us on the other side of the barricade."[3]

In this he just expressed party orthodoxy for in March 1923 the Central Committee of the Communist Party (of which he was a leading member) summarised the lessons gained from the Russian revolution, namely that "the party of the Bolsheviks proved able to stand out fearlessly against the vacillations within its own class, vacillations which, with the slightest weakness in the vanguard, could turn into an unprecedented defeat for the proletariat." Vacillations are expressed by workers' democracy and so this was rejected: "The dictatorship of the working class finds its expression in the dictatorship of the party."[4]

This was also the case in the economic domain and so we find him arguing in 1923 that the "system of actual one-man management must be applied in the organisation of industry from top to bottom. For leading economic organs of industry to really direct industry and to bear responsibility for its fate, it is essential for them to have authority over the selection of functionaries and their transfer and removal" as well as "appointment."[5]

For Trotsky, economic democracy was not an issue and so it played no role in determining the socialist nature of a society. Consequently, he did not question one-man management in the workplace nor the capitalist social relationships it generated.

For Trotsky, economic democracy was not an issue and so it played no role in determining the socialist nature of a society. Consequently, he did not question one-man management in the workplace nor the capitalist social relationships it generated. For Trotsky, it *was* "necessary for each state-owned factory, with its technical director and with its commercial director, to be subjected not only to control from the top – by the state organs – but also from below, by the market which will remain the regulator of the state economy for a long time to come." In spite of the obvious fact that the workers did not control their labour or its product, Trotsky asserted that "[n]o class exploitation exists here, and consequently neither does capitalism exist." Moreover, "socialist industry… utilises methods of development which were invented by capitalist economy." Ultimately, it was not self-management that mattered, it was "the growth of Soviet state industry [which] signifies the growth of socialism itself, a direct strengthening of the power of the proletariat".[6]

Whether on political or economic matter he was repeating arguments made during the civil war to

[1] Lenin and Trotsky, *Kronstadt* (New York: Monad Press, 1986), 73.
[2] *The First Five Years of the Communist International* (London: New Park Publications, 1974) 2: 255
[3] *Leon Trotsky Speaks*, 158, 160.
[4] "To the Workers of the USSR", included in Grigorii Zinoviev, *History of the Bolshevik Party: A Popular Outline* (London: New Park Publications, 1973), 213, 214.
[5] Quoted by Robert V. Daniels, *A Documentary History of Communism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1960) 1: 237.
[6] *The First 5 Years of the Communist International* 2: 237, 245

defend the regime but by 1923 even he could not fail to see that something was going wrong.[1]

The New Course

This is the context of the launching of *The New Course* – an ideological commitment to party dictatorship and one-man management. Yet *The New Course* – while generally accepted as being the first public expression of his opposition to the developing Stalinist regime – did not challenge any of this, quite the reverse, as he stated that "[w]e are the only party in the country, and in the period of the dictatorship it could not be otherwise" for this was "an epoch when the Communist Party is obliged to monopolize the direction of political life." Moreover, it was "incontestable that factions [within the party] are a scourge in the present situation" and so the party "does not want factions and will not tolerate them."[2]

However, confusion creeps into accounts of Trotsky's Opposition to Stalin because of his use of the words "workers' democracy". However, a close reading of his argument soon clarifies this issue: he simply redefined "workers' democracy" to mean "party democracy" and so could talk about "party dictatorship" and "workers' democracy" without contradiction. As his supporter Max Eastman noted a few years later, Trotsky was in favour of the "programme of democracy within the party – called 'Workers' Democracy' by Lenin." This "was not something new or especially devised… It was part of the essential policy of Lenin for going forward toward the creation of a Communist society – a principle adopted under his leadership at the Tenth Congress of the party, immediately after the cessation of the civil war."[3] The "New Course Resolution" passed in December 1923 stresses this:

> Workers' democracy means the liberty of frank discussion of the most important questions of party life by all members, and the election of all leading party functionaries and commissions by those bodies immediately under them. It does not, however, imply the freedom to form factional groupings, which are extremely dangerous for the ruling party, since they always threaten to split or fragment the government and the state apparatus as a whole.
>
> Within a party, which represents a voluntary union of people on the basis of definite ideals and practice, it is obvious that there can be no toleration of the formation of groupings whose ideological content is directed against the party as a whole and against the dictatorship of the proletariat, as for instance the Workers' Truth and Workers' Group.[4]

These two groups, it should be noted, actually advocated *genuine* workers' democracy – that is, they opposed the party's monopoly of power and supported multi-party elections.

So there was talk of "workers' democracy" but the "New Course Resolution" was clear that that term in fact meant only internal party democracy as per the current orthodoxy. Likewise with the banning of factions *within* the Communist party, with Trotsky keen to stress at the 13th Party Congress in 1924 that "party democracy in no way implies freedom for factional groupings which are extremely dangerous for the ruling party, since they threaten to split or divide the government and the state apparatus as a whole. I believe this is undisputed and indisputable". He re-iterated his position for the decisions of the Tenth Party Congress: "I have never recognized freedom for groupings inside the party, nor do I now recognise it".[5] He even went so far as to declare his faith in the party in spite of the corruption long manifesting itself due to its social position:

> Comrades, none of us wants to be or can be right against the party. In the last analysis, the party is always right, because the party is the sole historical instrument that the working class possesses for the solution of its fundamental tasks. I have already said that nothing would be simpler than to say before the party that all these criticisms, all these declarations, warnings, and protests – all were mistaken from beginning to end. I

[1] For a good discussion of the similarities between the Stalinists and the Trotskyist Opposition and the latter's limitations, see John Eric Marot, "Trotsky, the Left Opposition and the Rise of Stalinism: Theory and Practice", *Historical Materialism* Vol. 14 No. 3 (2006).
[2] "The New Course", *The Challenge of the "Left Opposition" (1923-25)* (New York: Pathfinder, 1975), 78, 79, 80, 86.
[3] *Since Lenin Died* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1925), 35.
[4] "The New Course Resolution", 408.
[5] "Speech at the Thirteenth Party Congress," Op. Cit., 153, 154.

> cannot say so, however, comrades, because I do not think it. I know that no one can be right against the party. It is only possible to be right with the party and through it since history has not created any other way to determine the correct position.[1]

He did acknowledge that *"*even the party itself can make occasional mistakes" but argued that the duty of a party member was to follow its decisions if they could not convince the party that it had made one of these.[2] He seemed unaware of how these arguments gave his opponents weapons they happily later used against him and other members of the opposition.

As can be seen, Trotsky's opposition was a loyal one, initially accepting defeats and following party discipline. In fact, he made a great deal of being the true heir of Lenin and so not only did not question Bolshevik orthodoxy but instead championed it in every detail:

> Of course, the foundation of our regime is the dictatorship of the class. But this in turn assumes that it is the class not only "in itself" but also "for itself," that is, that it is a class that has come to self-consciousness through its vanguard, which is to say, through the party. Without this, the dictatorship could not exist. To present matters as though the party were only the teacher, while the class puts the dictatorship into effect, is to prettify the truth of the matter. Dictatorship is the most highly concentrated function of a class, and therefore the basic instrument of a dictatorship is a party. In the most fundamental respects a class realizes its dictatorship through a party. That is why Lenin spoke not only of the class dictatorship but also of the dictatorship of the party and, *in a certain sense*, made them identical.[3]

This was the basis of his critique of Stalin, seizing upon such incredulous comments as "[p]eople often say that we have a 'dictatorship of the Party'... some comrades think that ours is a dictatorship of the Party, not of the working class. But that is sheer nonsense, comrades... If the contention about 'dictatorship of the Party' were correct, there would be no need for the Soviets... very little thought is required to realise the utter absurdity of substituting the dictatorship of the Party for the dictatorship of the class."[4]

Stalin was wrong not because he denied the reality of the Bolshevik regime and its ideology but because he was undermining both

This, Trotsky argued, meant that Stalin's policies were, in fact, a ploy to substitute the dictatorship of the party apparatus for the dictatorship of the party. Such a substitution had its roots in a "disproportion" between the workers and peasants. As long as there were "proper 'proportions'" between the two and "the advance of democratic methods in the party and working class organizations," then "the identification of the dictatorship of the class with that of the party is fully and completely justified historically and politically." Trotsky did not bother to ask how much democracy (of *any* kind) was possible under a party dictatorship nor how a class could run society or have democratic organisations if subjected to such a dictatorship. For him it was a truism that the "dictatorship of a party does not contradict the dictatorship of the class either theoretically or practically, but is an expression of it."[5] Stalin was wrong not because he denied the reality of the Bolshevik regime and its ideology but because he was undermining both:

> Stalin's way of putting the question of the dictatorship of the class, counterposing it to the dictatorship of the party, leads inevitably to the dictatorship of the apparatus, because a class with a

[1] Trotsky, 161.
[2] Trotsky, 162.
[3] "Party bureaucratism and party democracy", *The Challenge of the "Left Opposition" (1926-27)* (New York: Pathfinder, 2014), 86.
[4] Stalin, "The Results of the Thirteenth Congress of the RCP(B)", *Works* 6: 270
[5] "Party bureaucratism and party democracy", Op. Cit., 86-7.

> disorganized vanguard (and the lack of free discussion, of control over the apparatus, and of election rights means a disorganized vanguard) cannot help but become a mere object in the hands of the leadership of a centralized apparatus, which in turn removes itself further and further from the party and is more and more bound to come under the pressure of hostile class forces.[1]

This – "on the question of the dictatorship of the party" – was just one of a whole series of mistakes by Stalin, although "the most serious of all, which he is making now, is his theory of socialism in one country."[2] This was because "[w]e can get through this difficult period only on the condition… of the capacity of the proletarian party to manoeuvre decisively, for which absolute concentration of the dictatorship in its hands is necessary."[3] This was the case internationally as well, with Trotsky commenting upon events in China in 1927 by stressing that "[w]ith us the dictatorship of the party (quite falsely disputed theoretically by Stalin) is the expression of the socialist dictatorship of the proletariat… The dictatorship of a party is a part of the socialist revolution".[4]

Platform of the Opposition

Party dictatorship *was* Bolshevik orthodoxy and it had existed in reality and in theory under Lenin. It is unsurprising, then, that the "Left Opposition" raised it in the 1927 *Platform of the Opposition*.

Alongside demands for the "consistent development of a workers' democracy in the party, the trade unions, and the soviets" and the need to "convert the urban soviets into real institutions of proletarian power", it attacked the "growing substitution of the apparatus for the party [which] is promoted by a 'theory' of Stalin's which denies the Leninist principle, inviolable for every Bolshevik, that the dictatorship of the proletariat is and can be realized only through the dictatorship of the party." The "dictatorship of the proletariat imperiously demands a single and united proletarian party as the leader of the working masses and the poor peasantry." The Opposition would "fight with all our power against the idea of two parties, because the dictatorship of the proletariat demands as its very core a single proletarian party. It demands a single party."[5]

The Platform did not bother to explain how workers' democracy *could* develop within a party dictatorship nor how soviets could become institutions of power when real power would, obviously, lie with the party. But, then, it did not have to as by "workers' democracy" the Platform meant inter-party democracy as can be seen when it "affirm[s]" the "New Course Resolution" definition.[6] So, again, "workers' democracy" had a very specific meaning, namely one limited to within the party and *not* a call for *genuine* democracy in the unions or soviets. Such a definition, obviously, in no way undermines the dictatorship of the party – but it does allow the use of quotations by Leninists to bolster a false narrative on the nature of Bolshevism.

Unsurprisingly, Trotsky gets the process by which Stalinism arose wrong. "The dying out of inner-party democracy," the Platform asserts, "leads to a dying out of workers' democracy in general – in the trade unions, and in all other nonparty mass organizations."[7] Rather, the destruction of workers' democracy under Lenin in the soviets, trades unions and other mass organisations means that political disputes had to be raised in the party, leading to the dreaded factions and groupings within it. The same necessity which saw workers' democracy destroyed – there was no passive "dying out" caused by some kind of natural force! – by the Bolsheviks to secure their rule arose in the party itself, so necessitating the banning of factions just as it had other parties and groups. In such, the causality flows in the opposite direction than that asserted by Trotsky.[8]

Politically, then, the opposition urged the benevolent dictatorship of an internally democratic party. Economically, it was for a benevolent state capitalism, one which exploited the workers less harshly while they toiled for the party dictatorship. This can be seen by the Platform arguing that "nationalization of the means of production was a

[1] Trotsky, 88.
[2] "Speech to the Seventh Plenum of the ECCI", Op. Cit., 227
[3] "Thesis on Revolution and Counterrevolution", Op. Cit., 215.
[4] *Leon Trotsky on China* (New York: Monad Press, 2002), 251.
[5] "The Platform of the Opposition", *The Challenge of the "Left Opposition" (1926-27)*, 440, 441, 453, 503, 506.
[6] "The Platform of the Opposition", 461.
[7] "The Platform of the Opposition", 453.
[8] This was later admitted by Trotsky: "A struggle of groups and factions [within the ruling party] to a certain degree replaced the struggle of parties." (*The Revolution Betrayed: What is the Soviet Union and where is it going* [London: Faber and Faber, 1937], 251).

decisive step toward the socialist reorganization of the entire social system based on the exploitation of some by others" and that the "appropriation of surplus value by a workers' state is not, of course, exploitation." However, it also acknowledged that "we have a workers' state with bureaucratic distortions" and a "swollen and privileged administrative apparatus devours a very considerable part of our surplus value" while "all the data indicate that the growth of wages is lagging behind the growth of labor productivity." This, however, is not linked to the recognition that "[n]ever before have the trade unions and the working mass stood so far from the management of socialist industry as now" and that "[p]re-revolutionary relations between foremen and workmen are frequently found."[1]

It is hardly surprising that the new master class sought their own benefit; what is surprising is that the "Left Opposition" could not see the reality of state-capitalism.

The Platform noted that the "present rate of industrialization and the tempo indicated for the coming years are obviously inadequate" and so it argued for an acceleration of industrialisation for the "Soviet Union must not fall further behind the capitalist countries in the years ahead, but must catch up with them." Thus industrialisation "must be sufficient to guarantee the defense of the country and in particular the adequate growth of the war industries."[2] Thus the surplus appropriated from labour was to increase and directed by the party to its ends – not least building up the forces which had been regularly used against worker and peasant protest.

Trotsky, then, considered an economic regime marked by one-man management by state-appointed bosses under a party dictatorship as without exploitation even though someone other than the workers controlled both their labour and how its product (and any surplus) was used. That *capitalist* class relations would result in both accumulation directed by the few and that few enriching themselves at the expense of many is not recognised, presumably because Bolshevik ideology excluded acknowledging that workers becoming wage-slaves to the state machine equated to state capitalism rather than "socialism". Likewise, it did not discuss what would happen if the workers, in pursuing their class interests, struggled to lower the rate of accumulation decided upon by the party dictatorship – undoubtedly a repeat of previous Bolshevik repression of strikes and other protests.

It is hardly surprising that the new master class sought their own benefit; what is surprising is that the "Left Opposition" could not see the reality of state-capitalism. Rather, it paid lip-service to the living standards of the working class while seeking to increase industrialisation and so extract more surplus from its labour; it paid no attention to the relations of production in the workplace and raised no proposals nor demands about establishing workers' control of industry; it did not question the party dictatorship. Given its self-proclaimed role as defender of Leninist orthodoxy and the social relations it had created, perhaps this is not so surprising after all.

In Exile

As is well known, the Opposition was crushed and Trotsky forced into exile. This did not lead to a fundamental re-evaluation of what caused the degeneration of the revolution nor the need for genuine soviet and economic democracy.

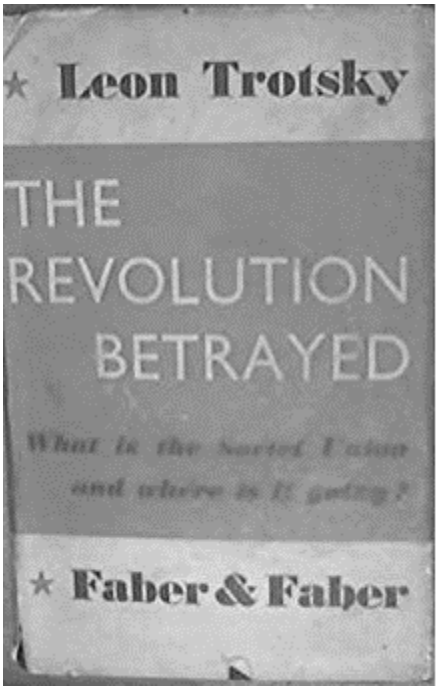
A key task was "[t]o stop the dissolution of the party into the class in the USSR" and so Soviet democracy went unmentioned.[3] Repeating previous arguments, Trotsky was fundamentally concerned about the dangers "if the vanguard is dissolved into the amorphous mass" for "the party is not the class, but its vanguard; it cannot pay for its numerical

[1] "The Platform of the Opposition", 398, 399, 401, 406, 405.

[2] "The Platform of the Opposition", 423-4. Harman's party – the British SWP – argues that the USSR under Stalin was "state capitalist" due to "international arms competition." (Harman, 17) He does not explain why Trotsky not an advocate of state capitalism in the 1920s nor why Lenin's regime during the civil war was not. Suffice to say, explaining Russia's State capitalist nature without reference to its internal social relations is doomed to failure, although understandable as to do so would mean concluding that it had been so under Lenin.

[3] *Writings 1930* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 2003) 148.

growth by the lowering of its political level". There was "the demand of party democracy" for the dictatorship of the proletariat "is inconceivable without a ruling proletarian party" but nothing on working class freedom or democracy. Perhaps this is unsurprising: "What we mean by the restoration of party democracy is that the real revolutionary, proletarian core of the party win the right to curb the bureaucracy and to really purge the party". In other words, the first act of the successful Opposition would have been the reduction in numbers of those who had some kind of meaningful vote. Rest assured, though, because the new party regime "means that the party directs the proletarian dictatorship but does not strangle the mass organisations of the toilers" and the secret ballot is "one of the most important means to discipline the entire apparatus and subordinate it to the party".[1]



In 1932, he was arguing that the "same class can rule with the help of different political systems and methods according to circumstances. So the bourgeoisie on its historical road carried through its rule under absolute monarchy, bonapartism, parliamentary republic and fascist dictatorship… the Soviet regime means the rule of the proletariat, irrespective of how broad the stratum on whose hands the power is *immediately concentrated*." This was justification for his denial that there was "a small group in the Kremlin who exercise oligarchical powers" ("No, that is not so").[2]

Trotsky seemed to have forgotten that the bourgeoisie was a minority class which controlled the economic life of a country. Given this, it is not surprising that it could still be the ruling class under dictatorships. The same cannot be said of the working class – particularly if, as under Lenin and Trotsky, its democratic control of work and so the economy was replaced by one-man management. Yet Trotsky had no alternative than to make such an obviously wrong assertion – to acknowledge the truth, that socialism needs meaningful workers' social and economic democracy to qualify as genuinely socialist – would have meant raising questions over the nature of the Bolshevik regime between 1918 and 1923 when he was at its commanding heights. Hence clearly incorrect assertions like the "dictatorship of a class does not mean by a long shot that its entire mass always participates in the management of the state" and "[s]o long as the forms of property that have been created by the October Revolution are not overthrown, the proletariat remains the ruling class" under Stalin's brutal regime (presumably proletarians in the forced-labour camps had imprisoned themselves).[3]

The Revolution Betrayed

In 1936 Trotsky finally appeared to revise his ideas in *The Revolution Betrayed*, although his revisionism in terms of democracy was combined with revisionism in the events of the Russian Revolution. It would be fair to suggest that Trotskyist account of Trotsky's ideas may be based solely on this work for in stark contrast to his early arguments he now stated that when "the Soviet bureaucracy is overthrown by a revolutionary party having all the attributes of the old Bolshevism" then it "would begin with the restoration of democracy in the trade unions and the Soviets" and it "would be able to, and would have to, restore freedom of Soviet parties."[4]

Given his previous comments on the matter, the reader would be justified in wondering whether, rather than a sincere change of heart, Trotsky's position was a limited and temporary aberration. Indeed, Victor Serge, who later broke with Trotsky over this issue, stated that he "had prevailed on him to include in" this book "a declaration of freedom for all parties accepting the Soviet system."[5]

The evidence suggests the latter, that it was a temporary aberration – particularly given the book's misleading account of the rise of the Bolshevik dictatorship. Thus we find Trotsky suggesting that it was 1924-26 that saw "the complete suppression of party and Soviet democracy" when, as noted above, he publicly

[1] *Writings 1930-31* (New York: Pathfinder, 2002), 241, 244, 247, 255-6, 70, 130.
[2] *Writings 1932* (New York: Pathfinder, 1999) 217.
[3] *Writings 1933-34* (New York: Pathfinder, 2003), 124, 125.
[4] *The Revolution Betrayed*, 238-9.
[5] *Memoirs of a Revolutionary*, 348.

acknowledged the reality of party dictatorship in 1920. Unsurprisingly, the acknowledgement of party dictatorship as a principle of Leninism was overlooked in favour of the suggestion that the civil war resulted in the opposition parties being "forbidden one after the other" and while this was "obviously in conflict with the spirit of Soviet democracy, the leaders of Bolshevism regarded [it] not as a principle, but as an episodic act of self-defence."[1] It would be churlish to note that it *was* considered a principle (a "Leninist principle", no less!) and that the final abolition of opposition parties – like factions within the ruling party – occurred *after* the end of the civil war.

It would be remiss to not note that Trotsky's position was limited to the Soviet Union and so does not automatically negate his previous arguments on party dictatorship made to the international socialist movement. Indeed, a close reading of his argument suggests that this argument can be reconciled with his previous ones.

"Bureaucratic autocracy must give place to Soviet democracy", proclaimed Trotsky, and that meant "freedom of Soviet parties, beginning with the party of the Bolsheviks".[2] So, initially, only *his* party would be free and in power – and we would again have the dictatorship of the party which would, at its leisure and whim, decree which other groupings constitute true "Soviet parties" and be allowed to exist and participate in elections. If the opposition parties gain influence – as the Mensheviks did under the Bolsheviks – then the party can decide they are no longer "Soviet parties" and so it maintains its rule. As such, there is no guarantee that once the Bolsheviks had been revived (i.e., his faction took over) they did not conclude, as before, that none of the other parties were, in fact, Soviet parties after all – "freedom of Soviet Parties" could begin and end with his faction.

In this manner the apparent Soviet democrat of 1936 can be reconciled with the advocate of party dictatorship of the previous years. After all, did he not suggest that the "dictatorship of the Bolshevik party proved one of the most powerful instruments of progress in history"?[3]

Worse, the economic structure of the regime appears to present no qualms to Trotsky. There is no discussion of workers' management of production although there is a comment about the "restoration of democracy in the trade unions". For Trotsky – reflecting Marxist orthodoxy stretching back to at least *The Communist Manifesto* which likewise made no comment about workers' control – the "nationalization of land, the means of industrial production, transport and exchange" shows "the nature of the Soviet Union as a proletarian state". Trotsky artificially divided distribution and production, seeing the bureaucracy as a *gendarme* which appears in the process of distribution, controlling the distribution of goods and "[n]obody who has wealth to distribute ever omits himself". There was a "contrast between forms of property and norms of distribution", the first being a "socialist property system" and the second reflecting "bourgeois" norms.[4]

the bureaucracy did not only control the product (distribution) but also the workplace (production)… if the relations of distribution in Russia were not socialist then neither were the relations of production.

Yet the bureaucracy did not only control the product (distribution) but also the workplace (production). Trotsky acknowledged that "the transfer of the factories to the State changed the situation of the worker only juridically" and that "means of production belong to the state. But the state, so to speak, 'belongs' to the bureaucracy". He also admitted the reality faced by the worker in Stalinist Russia: "In the bureaucracy he sees the manager, in the state, the employer." The bureaucracy was "in the full sense of the word the sole privileged and commanding stratum" in the society and that state property under its command

[1] Trotsky., 34, 96.
[2] Trotsky, 273.
[3] Trotsky, 104.
[4] Trotsky. 239, 235**,** 111, 231-2.

was "the source of its power and income", yet bizarrely concluded that it was "this aspect of its activity" which meant it "remains a weapon of proletarian dictatorship".[1]

Yet, if the relations of distribution in Russia were not socialist then neither were the relations of production. The reason why he failed to recognise the class nature of the regime is obvious enough – to do so would mean recognising that this class structure existed when he was in power and that Bolshevism created the very bureaucracy Trotsky denounced as betraying the revolution.[2]

The revisionism of Trotsky's work is also of note. For example, he asserts that the "commanding staff needs democratic control" and that the "organizers of the Red Army were aware of this from the beginning"[3], apparently forgetting that he had abolished soldier's committees and elected officers in March 1918 when he organised the Red Army. He noted the wider impact of this decision with the "demobilisation of the Red Army of five million played no small role in the formation of the bureaucracy. The victorious commanders assumed leading posts in the local Soviets, in economy, in education, and they persistently introduced everywhere that regime which had ensured success in the civil war."[4] That he praised the introduction of such a regime everywhere in 1920 went unmentioned – along with the fact that the bureaucracy existed and grew from the moment the Bolsheviks seized power.

Ironically, then, "the social conquests of the proletarian revolution"[5] he points to in order to justify his view that the USSR should be defended were the very source of the power and privileges of the bureaucracy he denounced (and which made it a "degenerated workers' State" rather than a state-capitalist regime). Ultimately, the limitations of his critique are rooted in the fact that any serious analysis of the class structure of the USSR would see its roots in the regime of Lenin and… Trotsky. The same can be said of neo-Trotskyist suggestions (like Tony Cliff's) that Stalinism was "State capitalist" – indeed it was but, by whatever criteria used, so was the Leninism which preceded it.

the limitations of his critique are rooted in the fact that any serious analysis of the class structure of the USSR would see its roots in the regime of Lenin and… Trotsky

Reiterating Orthodoxy

Any apparent support for Soviet Democracy expressed in *The Revolution Betrayed* was short-lived.

Writing in 1937, Trotsky was again reiterating the privileged position of the party. In his essay "Bolshevism and Stalinism" he argued quite explicitly that "the proletariat can take power only through its vanguard" and that "the necessity for state power arises from an insufficient cultural level of the masses and their heterogeneity." Only with "support of the vanguard by the class" can there be the "conquest of power" and it was in "this sense the proletarian revolution and dictatorship are the work of the whole class, but only under the leadership of the vanguard." Thus, rather than the working class as a whole seizing power, it is the "vanguard" which takes power – "a revolutionary party, even after seizing power… is still by no means the sovereign ruler of society." Note, the party is "the sovereign ruler of society," *not* the working class and state power is required to *govern the masses***,** who cannot exercise power themselves as "[t]hose who propose the abstraction of Soviets to the party dictatorship should understand that only thanks to the Bolshevik leadership were the Soviets able to lift themselves out of the mud of reformism and attain the state form of the proletariat."[6]

---

[1] Trotsky, 228, 229, 235-6.

[2] Trotsky's attempt to refute the state-capitalist analysis of the Soviet Union in *The Revolution Betrayed* rested on the notion that capitalism is marked by individual ownership and as the members of the bureaucracy did not own nor bequeath to its children the means of production, it could not be a ruling class. As this ignored the bureaucracy's socio-economic position and role, it completely missed the point.

[3] Trotsky, 211.

[4] Trotsky, 89-90.

[5] Trotsky, 249.

[6] *Writings 1936-37* (New York: Pathfinder, 1978), 490, 488, 495.

Later that same year he repeated this position clearly and unambiguously:

> The revolutionary dictatorship of a proletarian party is for me not a thing that one can freely accept or reject: It is an objective necessity imposed upon us by the social realities – the class struggle, the heterogeneity of the revolutionary class, the necessity for a selected vanguard in order to assure the victory. The dictatorship of a party belongs to the barbarian prehistory as does the state itself, but we can not jump over this chapter, which can open (not at one stroke) genuine human history… The revolutionary party (vanguard) which renounces its own dictatorship surrenders the masses to the counter-revolution… Abstractly speaking, it would be very well if the party dictatorship could be replaced by the 'dictatorship' of the whole toiling people without any party, but this presupposes such a high level of political development among the masses that it can never be achieved under capitalist conditions.[1]

His advice on what to do during the Spanish Revolution followed this pattern: "Because the leaders of the CNT renounced dictatorship for themselves they left the place open for the Stalinist dictatorship."[2] He repeated this plea for party power the year before his murder by Stalinist agents:

> The very same masses are at different times inspired by different moods and objectives. It is just for this reason that a centralised organisation of the vanguard is indispensable. Only a party, wielding the authority it has won, is capable of overcoming the vacillation of the masses themselves... if the dictatorship of the proletariat means anything at all, then it means that the vanguard of the proletariat is armed with the resources of the state in order to repel dangers, including those emanating from the backward layers of the proletariat itself.[3]

Yet everyone, *by definition*, is "backward" when compared to the "vanguard of the proletariat." As it is this "vanguard" which is "armed with the resources of the state" and *not* the proletariat as a whole we are left with one obvious conclusion, namely party dictatorship rather than working class freedom. This is because such a position means denying exactly what workers' democracy is meant to be all about – namely that working people can recall and replace their delegates when those delegates do not follow the wishes and mandates of the electors. If the governors determine what is and what is not in the "real" interests of the masses and "overcome" (i.e., repress) the governed, then we have dictatorship, not democracy.

Trotsky, of course, made no attempt to reconcile this with his passing comment in *The Revolution Betrayed* that a workers' state required "active control by the masses".[4]

International implications

It is considered a truism amongst dissident Leninists that the failure of the Russia Revolution to spread to the West ensured its degeneration. Without a wider Revolution then the shoots of socialism planted by the Bolsheviks were doomed by an inhospitable environment.

Yet, the *nature* of any such revolution is what counts. If Trotsky's Opposition had succeeded, it would have encouraged revolutions which followed (to re-quote its Platform) the "Leninist principle" ("inviolable for every Bolshevik") that "the dictatorship of the proletariat is and can be realised only through the dictatorship of the party." It would have urged centralisation. It would have opposed workers' self-management in favour of nationalisation and one-man management. And so on.

In short, the influence of the "Left Opposition" would have been as detrimental to the global workers' movement and other revolutions as Stalin's was (or, for that matter, Lenin's) although, of course, in different ways. Generalising Lenin's state capitalism would not have resulted in socialism, no matter how many revolutions in the west the "Left Opposition" encouraged. Hence Ida Mett:

> Some claim that the Bolsheviks allowed themselves such actions (as the suppression of Kronstadt) in the hope of a forthcoming

[1] Trotsky, 513-4.
[2] Trotsky, 514.
[3] "The Moralists and Sycophants against Marxism", 53-66, *Their Morals and Ours* (New York: Pathfinder, 1973), 59.
[4] *The Revolution Betrayed*, 62.

> world revolution, of which they considered themselves the vanguard. But would not a revolution in another country have been influenced by the spirit of the Russian Revolution? When one considers the enormous moral authority of the Russian Revolution throughout the world one may ask oneself whether the deviations of this Revolution would not eventually have left an imprint on other countries. Many historical facts allow such a judgement. One may recognise the impossibility of genuine socialist construction in a single country, yet have doubts as to whether the bureaucratic deformations of the Bolshevik regime would have been straightened out by the winds coming from revolutions in other countries.[1]

This is indeed the case – from the start, the Bolsheviks were considered by many socialists across the globe as showing the correct path in terms of revolutionary strategy and actions. This included the dogma on the necessity of party dictatorship which had become Bolshevik orthodoxy by the start of 1919 at the latest (reflecting its practice by mid-1918).

Thus we see, for example, during the Hungarian Revolution which had seen libertarians form the first workers' councils in December 1917 by 1919 they "felt that the powers of the [Communist] Revolutionary Governing Council [of Bela Kun] were excessive… For the syndicalists the legitimate holders of proletarian sovereignty were the workers councils… It was not long before they saw their cherished ideals defeated by the united party's oligarchy. On April 7, 1919, elections were held for the Budapest Council of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies. The syndicalist controlled Budapest Eighth district elected a slate consisting solely of syndicalist and anarchist write-in deputies in place of the single-party ticket. The Revolutionary Governing Council voided the results of the election and a week later the official slate 'won'".[2] As in Russia, the "wrong" people had been elected to the soviets and so the Communist regime simply nullified workers' democracy.

At the Second Congress of the Communist International, held in July-August 1920, leading Bolshevik Grigory Zinoviev told the assembled revolutionaries that "people like Kautsky come along and say that in Russia you do not have the dictatorship of the working class but the dictatorship of the party. They think this is a reproach against us. Not in the least!… the dictatorship of the proletariat is at the same time the dictatorship of the Communist Party."[3] Trotsky repeated the argument when he told the delegate from the Spanish anarcho-syndicalist union the CNT who made the important decisions during a Revolution:

the Bolsheviks were considered by many socialists across the globe as showing the correct path in terms of revolutionary strategy and actions. This included the dogma on the necessity of party dictatorship

> We have the Council of People's Commissars but it has to be subject to some supervision. Whose supervision? That of the working class as an amorphous, chaotic mass? No. The Central Committee of the party is convened to discuss… and to decide… Who will solve these questions in Spain? The Communist Party of Spain.[4]

This perspective was repeated in other countries. In Italy the pro-Bolsheviks raised the necessity of party dictatorship and were being opposed by the libertarians during the revolutionary crisis in 1920:

> Up to now, when we said that what the socialists call the *dictatorship of the proletariat* is in reality nothing other than the dictatorship of a few men who, with the assistance of a party, place themselves above the proletariat and impose

[1] "The Kronstadt Commune", *Bloodstained*, 203.
[2] Rudolf L. Tokes, *Bela Kun and the Hungarian Soviet Republic*: *The Origins and Role of the Communist Party of Hungary in the Revolutions of 1918-1919* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1967), 38, 151-2
[3] *Workers of the World and Oppressed Peoples, Unite* 1 :151-2.
[4] *Workers of the World and Oppressed Peoples, Unite: Proceedings and Documents of the Second Congress 1920* (New York: Pathfinder, 1991) 1: 174.

themselves on it, we have been treated as slanderers… Moscow has become the Mecca of the proletariat; the source of light, and… peremptory orders concerning the ideas that those who, with permission from their superiors, wished to call themselves communists ought to profess and the conduct they should follow… the official journal of the Italian Socialist Party, the most important organ authorised, so far, for the voice of Moscow,… *Avanti!* of the 26th [September, 1920]… writes:

'In Russia, under the soviet regime, the Party really directs all State policy and all public activities; individuals as well as groups being utterly subordinated to the decisions of the Party, so that *the dictatorship of the proletariat is really the dictatorship of the party and, as such of its central committee.*'

So now we know what awaits us: the dictatorship of the leadership of the Socialist Party, or of the as yet unborn Communist Party… a revolution made with an authoritarian outlook with dictatorial objectives… by measures arbitrarily imposed from above.[1]

This was reflected in the defences of the suppression of the Kronstadt Revolt of early 1921, which was used as evidence for the necessity of party dictatorship in any revolution. Thus leading German Communist Karl Radek expounded the lesson that the mass "may well hesitate in the days of great difficulties, defeats, and it may even despair of victory and long to capitulate" and so "there can arise situations where the revolutionary minority of the working class must shoulder the full weight of the struggle and where the dictatorship of the proletariat can only be maintained, provisionally at least, as the dictatorship of the Communist Party." The party's "firm decision to retain power by all possible means" is "the greatest lesson of the Kronstadt events, the international lesson." He linked this lesson to "our discussions with that faction of Communists [in Germany] who wished to oppose… the dictatorship of the Communist Party" as it illuminated "the problem of the relationship between the Communist Party and the mass of the proletariat and the form of the dictatorship: dictatorship of the Party or dictatorship of the class".[2] Radek significantly referred to the resolutions on the role of the party made at the Second Comintern Congress and his argument reflected Lenin's comments in *"Left-Wing" Communism: An Infantile Disorder*.

These positions were held by Trotskyists across the globe. The first issue of the official American Trotskyist journal, for example made its position clear by seeking to refute the notion that the dictatorship of the party was an alien concept brought into Bolshevism by Stalin. It did so by "quotations from Lenin, Trotsky and others so as to establish… the dictatorship of the party is Leninist" rather than "a Stalinist innovation".[3] The very American Trotskyists whom Paul Le Blanc proclaimed were "standing as a beacon" for the "revolutionary-democratic ideals of early Communism against the corruptions, cynicism, and murderous authoritarianism of Stalinism."[4]

any Bolshevik-style revolution in Western Europe or America…would have followed Bolshevik ideology with regards to the necessity of the dictatorship of the party, nationalisation, one-man management and … also resulted in the political and economic dispossession of the working class by "its" party.

Thus the reality was that any Bolshevik-style revolution in Western Europe or America – and least we forget, Trotskyists are convinced that only a Bolshevik-style revolution can succeed – would have followed Bolshevik ideology with regards to the necessity of the dictatorship of the party, nationalisation, one-man management and so. In so

[1] Errico Malatesta, "*At Last! What is the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'?", Anarchistes, Socialistes et Communistes* (Annecy: Group 1er Mai, 1982), 208-10.
[2] Karl Radek, "Cronstadt", *Bulletin communiste* (12 May 1921), 324-5.
[3] Max Shachtman, "Dictatorship of Party or Proletariat? Remarks on a Conception of the AWP... and Others", *New International*, July 1934.
[4] *Left Americana*, 218.

doing, it would have also resulted in the political and economic dispossession of the working class by "its" party. As such, a successful revolution in the West would *not* have seen the Russian dictatorship over the proletariat ended but rather reinforced as the non-Russian Leninist parties would have simply repeated the "lessons" learned by the Bolsheviks and communicated internationally via the Comintern.

To Conclude

Trotsky's "opposition" in no way presented any real alternative to Stalinism. At no time did he question the fundamental social relationships within Soviet society. He saw Stalinism as the victory of the state bureaucracy over the party and *its* dictatorship. While he, like Lenin, railed against bureaucracy, he did not question the Bolshevism ideology and policies which increased its numbers, powers and privileges.

Trotsky's "opposition" in no way presented any real alternative to Stalinism. At no time did he question the fundamental social relationships within Soviet society.

This explains his continual self-imposed role after his exile of loyal opposition to Stalinism in spite of the violence applied to him and his followers. It also explains the lack of excitement by the Russian working class over the "Left Opposition" for their choice was between two factions within the master class. As Serge acknowledged, the bureaucrats were "[o]utraged by the Opposition, [as] they saw it as treason against them; which in a sense it was, since the Opposition itself belonged to the ruling bureaucracy."[1]

Like Lenin, the "Left Opposition" did *not* question the Bolshevik's monopoly of power and explicitly supported the idea of party dictatorship. This fact helps explains what Harman was puzzled by, namely that Trotsky "continued to his death to harbour the illusion that somehow, despite the lack of workers' democracy, Russia was a 'workers' state.'"[2] Strangely, Harman does not explain why Russia was a "workers' state" under Lenin and Trotsky, given its "lack of workers' democracy" from mid-1918 onwards. Like Trotsky, he avoided looking at the social relations under Lenin in case obvious similarities were noticed to those under Stalin. Yet this is a common feature of Leninists – who somehow manage to combine statements on how socialism *has* to be democratic to count as socialist with support for the Bolshevik dictatorship under Lenin and Trotsky because it was "socialist". Such double-think is allowed because of nonsense by their party's leading members about the regime only abandoning the "principles of October" after Lenin's death.[3]

For Trotsky like the rest of the Communist Party including its "Left Opposition", *genuine* workers' democracy was *not* considered important and, in fact, was applicable *only* within the party. The privileged place of the party explains Trotsky's unwillingness to call on social forces outside it to resist the bureaucracy (which existed in spite of the Bolshevik regime's longstanding repression of strikes and other protests). Likewise with the capitulation of many of the "Left Opposition" to Stalin once he started a policy of industrialisation. As Ante Ciliga saw first-hand in the prison camps:

> the majority of the Opposition were… looking for a road to reconciliation; whilst criticising the Five Year Plan, they put stress not on the part of exploited class played by the proletariat, but on the technical errors made by the Government *qua* employer in the matter of insufficient harmony within the system and inferior quality of production. This criticism did not lead to an appeal to the workers against the Central Committee and against bureaucratic

[1] *Memoirs of a Revolutionary*, 225.

[2] Harman, 20.

[3] Likewise with notions that there was state-capitalist "counter-revolution" only when Stalin came to power in 1928, an event which was "not violent in the classic sense" due to the working class having "few forces with which to resist the growing power of the bureaucracy." (Harman, 14) In reality, the Bolsheviks had been repressing working class resistance (strikes, protests) from 1918 onwards which reached a climax with the martial law imposed across Russia in early 1921 – a counter-revolution in the "classic sense" of troops in the streets which secured the bureaucracy in its position against the only force which could displace it, the working class. The regime continued to repress workers' strikes and protests after 1921 and so the "few forces" Harman bemoans was not a natural occurrence but rather the product of ten years of Bolshevik rule. That Stalinist repression was undoubtedly worse does not mean the class structure of the regime somehow changed.

> authority; it restricted itself to proposing amendments in a programme of which the essentials were approved. The socialist nature of State industry was taken for granted. They denied the fact that the proletariat was exploited; for "we were in a period of proletarian dictatorship."[1]

As Serge noted, "[f]rom 1928-9 onwards, the Politbureau turned to its own use the great fundamental ideas of the now expelled Opposition (excepting, of course, that of working-class democracy) and implemented them with ruthless violence." While acknowledging that the Stalinists had applied these ideas in a more extreme form than the Opposition planned, he also acknowledged that "[b]eginning in those years, a good many Oppositionists rallied to the 'general line' and renounced their errors since, as they put it, 'After all, it is our programme that is being applied.'" Nor did it help that at "the end of 1928, Trotsky wrote to [the Opposition] from his exile… to the effect that, since the Right represented the danger of a slide towards capitalism, we had to support the 'Centre' – Stalin – against it."[2]

Serge's comments on "working-class democracy" are somewhat incredulous, given (as noted above) that he knew fine well that the Opposition did not stand for it. This conviction was so strong that, even in the prison camps, "almost all the Trotskyists continued to consider that 'freedom of party' would be 'the end of the revolution.' 'Freedom to choose one's party – that is Menshevism,' was the Trotskyists' final verdict." The similarities did not stop there, for the Trotskyists "who were in prison for anti-Stalinism could find nothing better to do than to indulge in Stalinism themselves [in their political groups] while in prison. This absurdity was only apparent; it merely served to prove that between Trotskyism and Stalinism there were many points in common". The outlook of the Trotskyist majority "was not very different from that of the Stalinist bureaucracy; they were slightly more polite and human, that was all."[3]

These similarities reflect that both shared the same Bolshevik ideological legacy and same class position. Yet even within these limits, Trotsky's opposition was by far the weakest politically as it questioned far fewer things. As Cornelius Castoriadis points out:

> From the beginning of 1918 until the banning of factions in March 1921, tendencies within the Bolshevik party were formed that, with farsightedness and sometimes an astonishing clarity, expressed opposition to the Party's bureaucratic line and to its very rapid bureaucratisation. These were the 'Left Communists' (at the beginning of 1918), then the 'Democratic Centralist' tendency (1919), and finally the 'Workers' Opposition' (1920-21)… these oppositions were defeated one by one… The very feeble echoes of their critique of the bureaucracy that can be found later in the (Trotskyist) 'Left Opposition' after 1923 do not have the same signification. Trotsky was opposed to the *bad policies* of the bureaucracy and to the excesses of its power. He never put into question its essential nature. Until practically the end of his life, he never brought up the questions raised by the various oppositions of the period from 1918 to 1921 (in essence: 'Who manages production?' and 'What is the proletariat supposed to do during the 'dictatorship of the proletariat,' other than work and follow the orders of 'its' party?').[4]

While previous oppositional groups like the "Left Communists" and "Workers' Opposition" had challenged Lenin's state capitalist economic policies while upholding the Bolshevik monopoly of power (implicitly or explicitly), Trotsky did not even manage that. His opposition was firmly limited to internal reforms to the party which he hoped would result in wider participation in the soviets and trade unions. Just as he did not bother to explain why continuing party dictatorship would reinvigorate the soviets or unions, he did not explain how benevolent dictatorship was possible nor why an economic regime marked by wage-labour employed by the state rather than by capitalists would not be exploitative. Instead, these positions were simply asserted – for they were, after all, Leninist orthodoxy. That the Bolshevik vision of socialism was simply state-capitalism was

[1] Ante Ciliga, *The Russian Enigma* (London: Ink Links Ltd, 1979), 213.
[2] Serge, 252, 253.
[3] Ciliga, 280, 218, 263.
[4] "The Role of Bolshevik Ideology in the Birth of the Bureaucracy", *Blood-Stained,* 289.

something he could never see and this produced a limited critique:

> When Trotsky wrote (6 September 1935): "The historical absurdity of an autocratic bureaucracy in a 'classless' society cannot and will not endlessly endure," he was saying an absurd thing about the "historical absurdity". In history there is no absurdity. An autocratic bureaucracy is a class, therefore it is not absurd that it should exist in a society where classes remain: bureaucratic and proletarian. If the USSR were a "classless" society, it would also be a society without a bureaucratic autocracy, which is the natural fruit of the permanent existence of the State... The bureaucratic wound has not been opened and infected by Stalinism: it is contemporaneous with the Bolshevik dictatorship.[1]

It may have been that if the Trotskyists had won the inter-bureaucracy struggle in the mid-1920s then the Soviet Union could have avoided the horrors of Stalinism but it would have remained a state capitalist party dictatorship and, as such, a class system in which the few exploit, oppress and repress the many. That this few would have exploited the many less ruthlessly and aimed to impose similar regimes internationally rather than concentrating on building "socialism in one country" does not mean much. As Emma Goldman noted:

> In point of truth I see no marked difference between the two protagonists of the benevolent system of the dictatorship except that Leon Trotsky is no longer in power to enforce its blessings, and Josef Stalin is… Stalin did not come down as a gift from heaven to the hapless Russian people. He is merely continuing the Bolshevik traditions, even if in a more relentless manner... I admit, the dictatorship under Stalin's rule has become monstrous. That does not, however, lessen the guilt of Leon Trotsky as one of the actors in the revolutionary drama[2]

This was hidden by various Left Oppositionists – including Trotsky himself – who revised history to exclude their own role in creating the evils they now denounced. All that they could argue is that their industrialisation would have been less brutal, less oppressive and with fewer privileges for the bureaucracy... yet a nicer ruling class is still a ruling class.

if the Trotskyists had won the inter-bureaucracy struggle in the mid-1920s then the Soviet Union could have avoided the horrors of Stalinism but it would have remained a state capitalist party dictatorship and, as such, a class system in which the few exploit, oppress and repress the many.

Given this, it is easy to understand why we will ignore as fundamentally meaningless the pseudo-scientific comments on the relative weight of "social forces" (such as Russian "economic backwardness") in the rise of the bureaucracy so beloved by certain Trotskyists. This is because, ultimately, it is speculation on what could be the "objective" conditions required for a benevolent (party) dictatorship and state-capitalist economy to exist – a pointless task, for obvious reasons. While popular resistance and protest can make a ruling class less oppressive and exploitative, it is something else completely to suggest that it can stop a ruling class being exploitative and oppressive *as such*. However, as Trotsky refused to recognise the class nature of the bureaucracy – and the identical social relations that existing under Lenin and which Trotsky did not question – perhaps this is unsurprising after all. Indeed, perhaps all the talk of "social forces" and such like is just an attempt to obscure the real issue – the actual, objective, class relationships under the Bolshevik regime (the state bureaucracy as a class in itself with its own interests).

In addition, it should be basic materialism that it is a person's real social position which shape their

[1] Camillo Berneri, "The State and Classes", *The State – Or Revolution: Selected Works of Camillo Berneri* (London: Freedom Press, 2023), 87.

[2] "Trotsky Protests Too Much", *Writings of Emma Goldman: Essays on Anarchism, Feminism, Socialism, and Communism* (St. Petersburg, Florida: Red and Black Publishers, 2013), 251-2

consciousness. As such, it is illusory to expect the rulers of a party dictatorship, the managers of state-capitalist firms or bureaucrats in a highly centralised apparatus to act in any other fashion than according to their social position – yet Trotsky does so. Apparently being part of the vanguard party – or being part of an immense social institution policed by this small body – negates the objective pressures created by such hierarchies and the authoritarian (and so inevitably exploitative) social relations they produce.

As such, Trotsky failed to understand the "social forces" at work in Russia for he failed to understand the class nature of the bureaucracy. He failed to understand that the bureaucracy overcame the party because the party itself was – inevitably – corrupted by the social position it held. Moreover, it *does* matter if workplaces are run by their workers for if they do not then someone else does – replacing capitalists with state bureaucrats just changes the face of the boss as anarchists have been arguing since Proudhon. That the political power of the party could not withstand the economic power given to the bureaucracy by that party's policies should not come as a surprise.

Given the identical social relations between Leninism and Stalinism, all that is left to the supporters of Leninism seeking to differentiate it from Stalinism is to focus on the regime within the Communist Party itself. It is stressed that the Bolshevik party under Lenin was far more democratic than under Stalin and, moreover, the repression of the late 1920s onwards simply did not exist. True, although the suppression of opposition currents within Bolshevism did not start under Stalinism for it had existed to some degree from the start. Indeed, "Left Opposition" faced the same bureaucratic manoeuvres used under Lenin and Trotsky to weaken oppositional groups within the party.

Of course, the Stalinists did not stop there. Its members experienced the same repression by the secret police faced by non-Bolshevik groups as well as the dissident Bolsheviks of the Workers Group and Workers Truth in 1923 (as sanctioned by Trotsky[1]). Some were simply murdered, many more arrested and joined anarchist, Menshevik, Social Revolutionary and other dissidents in prison camps from which few returned. Outside the USSR, the same slanders made against earlier anarchist critics of Bolshevism were now made against Trotsky and his followers, often by the very same people.[2] When they had power, such as in Spain, they murdered their critics whether anarchists or dissident Leninists like the POUM. Which shows a difference between Lenin's and Stalin's regime: under Lenin, the opposition *outside* the party was brutally repressed, under Stalin these methods were applied to oppositions *within* it.

Finally, it must be stressed that anarchists like Emma Goldman had no difficulty in recognising that Stalin's Russia was "an absolute despotism politically and the crassest form of state capitalism economically" and had been under Trotsky when a "bureaucratic machine was created, appalling in its inefficiency, corruption, brutality."[3] Indeed, her accounts of the regime are more useful to understanding its degeneration than Trotsky's *post hoc* apologetics for they were informed by Bakunin's prescient polemics with Marx and the critiques of Marxism raised by later anarchists like Kropotkin and Malatesta. As Kropotkin said: "We have always pointed out the effects of Marxism in action. Why be surprised now?"[4]

[1] "Trotsky, in the very letters to the politburo in which he fired his first broadsides against the 'unhealthy regime' and lack of internal party democracy, supported repressive action against the far left." Indeed, he "welcomed an instruction by Dzerzhinskii to party members immediately to report 'any groupings within the party', i.e. the Workers Group and Workers Truth, not only to the CC [Central Committee] but also to the GPU [the secret police], and emphasized that making such reports was 'the elementary duty of every party member'." (Simon Pirani, *The Russian revolution in retreat, 1920-24: Soviet workers and the new Communist elite* [New York: Routledge, 2008], 215)

[2] Emma Goldman recounts how she was accused of being well-paid by the capitalist press for her warnings and she had "receiving support from the American Secret Service Department" while in Russia (*Living My Life* [New York: Dover Books, 1970] 2: 938, 954). The source of the latter claim, William Z Foster (a former anarchist-syndicalist) later denounced Trotsky, "a petty bourgeois individualist intellectual", for making a "bargain with the fascists", being "paid highly for his writings by the bourgeois press" and becoming "one of [the] hired capitalist slanderers of the Soviet Union." Foster compared him to Goldman, who he said was "reaping a golden harvest from Hearst for her counter-revolutionary attacks" upon the Soviet Government and who, "like Trotsky, covered [her] political surrender with a cloud of revolutionary phrases." (*Questions and Answers on the Piatakov-Radek Trial* [New York City: Workers Library Publishers, 1937], 10, 11, 30, 16-7)

[3] "There Is No Communism in Russia", *To Remain Silent is Impossible: Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman in Russia* (Atlanta: On Our Own Authority!, 2013), 226, 220.

[4] Quoted by Goldman, *My Disillusionment in Russia* (London: Active Distribution, 2017), 58.

A Talk with Lenin in Stalin's Prison

Anton Ciliga

Politics, August 1946 [1936-7[1]]

AUTHOR'S NOTE: *The following article is the original text of the ninth chapter, "You too, Lenin," of my book, THE RUSSIAN ENIGMA. The publisher of the first (French) edition of my book thought that it was too long and compelled me to end the manuscript in a rather abrupt manner. I had to reduce the chapter on Lenin to about one-fourth of the original text. I felt that under these circumstances I should confine myself to* posing *the problem of Leninism and the* twofold role of Lenin *in the Russian revolution. Therefore, I was only able to hint at the answer to this tremendously important question. I could not give this answer, even less was I able to give the basis for arriving at it (as I had in the original unabbreviated text). For this reason, the separate publication of this chapter may be of interest.*

Revolution in the sense of the real social liberation of the toiling masses of mankind as individuals cannot be achieved by becoming absorbed in or continuing one of the decadent phases of the last great revolution – the Russian revolution. It must take as its starting point the highest stage of this revolution, its past apex, its still unachieved aims….

Verkhne-Uralsk Politisolator

The problems of "workers' democracy" – political as well as economic – impelled the extreme Left Communist groups of the Russian Opposition (The "Workers' Opposition," the "Workers' Group," the "Democratic Centralism" Group) to submit to a critical analysis the entire experience of the Russian revolution, and not only its post-Leninist stage as the Trotskyite opposition did. These problems were: freedom for political parties versus the one-party-system; democratic versus bureaucratic management of nationalised industry; guarantees for the control of the government by the working class. All these extreme groups which were formed in the early years of the revolution, from 1919 to 1921, had, moreover, originated as movements which opposed, more or less distinctly, precisely the leadership of Lenin. During my stay in the Verkhne-Uralsk Isolator prison (from 1930 to 1933), the problem of the role of Lenin in the revolution was the subject of lively debate among the different opposition groups.

The Trotskyites

The Trotskyite opposition defended – officially and outside its own ranks – the thesis that "Lenin was always right." In order not to contradict this dogma, Trotsky for a long time "recognised" that Lenin had been right in all the past discussions in which he differed with him. Trotsky also accepted the proposal of Zinovyev to call their opposition group "Bolshevik-Leninists." Afterwards Trotsky made one correction in this dogma: namely, that so far as the theory of Permanent Revolution was concerned he, Trotsky, had been right and not Lenin. (This was, undoubtedly, Trotsky's most valuable conception.) Trotsky, it is true, pointed out that, essentially, Lenin also had been for permanent revolution and that their differences, therefore, were rather a matter of nomenclature and, accordingly, not of great importance. From that time, the Trotskyite opposition adopted a new point of view: they maintained that there never had been any profound differences between Lenin and Trotsky, that essentially Lenin always wanted the same thing that Trotsky did and that, therefore, there had been only differences regarding details or nomenclature.

The Trotskyite Opposition thus reconciled historical Leninism and historical Trotskyism by renouncing a critical approach to both of them and by covering the most outstanding and valuable characteristics of both tendencies with the varnish of officialdom. To the Stalinist legend they opposed not a serious historical evaluation but another legend.

Some Trotskyites went even farther: the Bohemian part of the "Militant Bolsheviks," the pure Trotskyites,

[1] Ciliga's account of his time in the Soviet Union (and its prisons) was originally written in 1936-37 and published in 1938 in Paris under the title *Au Pays du Grand Mensonge* (*In the Land of the Big Lie*). An incomplete translation appeared in 1940 under the title *The Russian Enigma* and the complete text was published under the same title in 1979 (*The Russian Enigma* [London: Ink Links Ltd, 1979]). The 1979 edition included different translation of this article as the chapter "Lenin, Also…" (*Black Flag*)

asserted that the differences between Lenin and Trotsky had always been profound but that Trotsky had always *been* right in these discussions. It was significant that the Trotskyites who were so prone to quote authorities always only quoted Trotsky on all questions of the present and the past. Lenin was not quoted at all – except in extremely rare instances.

The "Detsists"

For the "Democratic Centralism" group," the attitude towards Lenin was a very painful problem. Unlike the Trotskyites, this group had been created by old (pre-1917) Bolsheviks. It was, therefore, "Leninist" in its general outlook and in its methods. When it made its appearance, in 1919, it was considered an opposition of the local apparatus (an "opposition of provincial governors") to the central authorities. It opposed the bureaucratic centralism of Lenin's Central Committee in the name of "Democratic Centralism." The Detsists considered that Lenin was deviating from his own platform or was not drawing the necessary conclusions from his own principles. The group thus was formed on the basis of a defence of Leninism against Lenin. Unconsciously it opposed the Lenin of the period of the greatest revolutionary upheaval to the Lenin of the decadence of the revolution. It criticised Lenin's practices from the point of view of the principles of his *State and Revolution.* However, in spite of all its profundity, this work which was written by Lenin in 1917 did not provide any answers to the new problems which had arisen during the subsequent course of the revolution. As a result, during the decade from 1919 to 1929 this group moved in a circle – either capitulating before Lenin's ultimata, or submitting to the Trotskyites in their struggle against Stalin. Their attitude which was "plus royaliste que le roi" proved to be sterile.

The Five Year Plan completely shattered the group. Its majority capitulated like most Trotskyites. Timofey Sapronov, one of the outstanding Bolshevik workers of Russia and a leading Detsist, characterised the attitude of the capitulators: "Their explanation is. We have been wrong since the NEP [New Economic Policy], classes are being liquidated and, therefore, the construction of socialism has been under way . . . That the worker has been getting hell in the American way – is considered by them as only the chips which are falling while such a gigantic job of woodcutting as the construction of full-fledged socialism is being effected; these they say, are the inevitable costs of the ultimate and most difficult stage of the liquidation of the last capitalist class – the petty bourgeoisie."

From the Leninist point of view, the reasoning of those who capitulated had some logical foundation. Lenin's entire post-October strategy was based upon the thesis that the only dangers for the proletariat and for socialism were the petty bourgeoisie and private capitalism. Lenin used a "hot iron" to eliminate all opposition forces who said that a self-sufficient bureaucracy and state capitalism were a menace to the working class. Following in the steps of Lenin, the Detsists declared on the eve of the Five Year Plan that "petty bourgeois counterrevolution" had been victorious and that the USSR had become a "petty bourgeois State." Any other kind of counterrevolution was unthinkable from the point of view of Lenin's conception...

it was necessary to choose between remaining faithful to Lenin's conception and recognising that the Five Year Plan was the fulfilment of the socialist program and, on the other hand, listening to what was actually happening and recognising, in spite of Lenin, the triumph of a "third force," namely the bureaucracy and state capitalism.

And then suddenly came the Five Year Plan with its war against the petty bourgeoisie and its liquidation of this class. In this situation it was necessary to choose between remaining faithful to Lenin's conception and recognising that the Five Year Plan was the fulfilment of the socialist program and, on the other hand, listening to what was actually happening and recognising, in spite of Lenin, the triumph of a "third force," namely the bureaucracy and state capitalism. Those Detsists, who did not capitulate, adopted the last-mentioned point of view.

However, a reconsideration of values which rejected the essence of Lenin's entire post-October conception and doubted the infallibility even of the pre-October Lenin, was necessarily slow and painful. As a result of the discussion of these problems, the small body of Detsists in the Isolator prison, which numbered 20 men, split into 3 or 4 groups. Some Detsists continued to assume that there were only occasional errors in Lenin's attitude after the October revolution and that the party line as a whole became wrong only after the ascent of Stalin; others thought that even during Lenin's lifetime, namely, at the time of the introduction of the New Economic Policy the bourgeois-democratic tendency of the revolution defeated its socialist tendency and that Lenin was not fully aware of what he was actually doing. A third group insisted that, in spite of its formal victory, the socialist tendency of the revolution had always been weaker than the petty bourgeois one.

The revision of Lenin's theories affected not only the problem of state capitalism but also the problem of party dictatorship. Originally, when Lenin, in 1920, proclaimed the principle of party dictatorship and the

"single party" system, the Detsists accepted this principle, in contrast with the Workers' Opposition, which rejected it at once.[1] However, the entire experience of party dictatorship induced them to break with their former conceptions. They now began to understand that without democracy for the workers there can be no democracy within the party. This revision of Lenin's political theories was even more painful than that of his economic theories: later, when I was in exile, I had an opportunity to follow the various stages of this revision for two years. The final result of the revision was a profoundly critical – if not directly negative – attitude towards Lenin's practices and theories during the period after the October revolution.

The "Workers' Group"

The "Workers' Opposition," or, more precisely, its extreme wing, which in 1922 formed an independent organisation called the "Workers' Group," called the tune for a critical approach to the Lenin period of the revolution. Usually the adherents of this organisation were called "Myasnikovtsi" – after Myasnikov, a prominent Bolshevik worker who was the leader of the group and who had been one of the most colourful personalities of the Bolshevik revolution. The Workers' Opposition and the Workers' Group had also been created by "old" [pre-1917] Bolsheviks. Unlike the Detsists, however, they criticised from the first the policies of Lenin not only in particulars but in their entirety; the Workers' Opposition opposed Lenin's economic policy from 1919-1920; the Workers' Group went even farther and also rejected the political "single-party" regime established by Lenin when the New Economic Policy was introduced. In the Isolator prison, the Workers' Group had a well-educated, very active and firm leader in the person of Sergey Tiunov; incidentally, he was not totally without some Nechayev characteristics.

The Workers' Group adopted as the basic principle of its platform the slogan of the First International formulated by Marx – "That the emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves"; from the very beginning the group declared war on Lenin's conceptions of dictatorship by the party and of a bureaucratic organisation of production which the latter had developed as decadence began to infect the revolution. Against Lenin's policies, the Group demanded the organisation of production by the masses themselves, beginning with the workers of each factory. They demanded the control of the governmental power and of the political parties by the masses of the workers, who, as the real political masters of the country, were to have the opportunity to remove any party from power, including the Communist Party, if they considered that the party in question did not represent their interests any longer. In contrast with the Detsists and the majority of the Workers' Opposition who limited the demand for "democracy for the workers" practically to the economic field and attempted to combine this demand with the "single-party" system, the Workers' Group widened its struggle for "democracy for the workers" by demanding free political self-determination for the workers and free competition of political parties among the working people, believing that socialism could only come as the result of free creative work of the toilers. The Workers' Group, therefore, from the very beginning considered that the alleged socialism which was being constructed under compulsion, was actually bureaucratic state capitalism.

In 1923, at the height of a wave of large strikes which were directed by the Workers' Group, it addressed the Russian and the international working class by a special Manifesto in which it expounded its attitude in a clear and bold manner. This Manifesto condemned degenerating Bolshevism and its orientation away from the working class towards "Vozhdism" [rule by leaders, leadership principle]. This Manifesto was one of the most remarkable documents of the Russian revolution. Issued at the time of the internal collapse of the Russian revolution it sounded like the Manifesto of Babeuf's "Equals" – at the moment of the internal collapse of the French revolution.

"Why So Excited, Comrade Ciliga?"

During the long time I spent in the Isolator prison, I kept away from these prison disputes about Lenin. I belonged to the younger generation of Communists who were educated to bow unquestioningly to Lenin's authority and I considered it a matter of course that Lenin "always was right." The results--the conquest and the preservation of revolutionary power – were in his favour. I *and* my generation concluded that, consequently, his tactics and means were correct.

After I arrived in the Isolator, I defended this point of view. I was quite disturbed by the critical remarks which the Detsist worker Prokopeni made during one of my first walks in the prison yard.

"Why are you so excited, comrade Ciliga, about Lenin's fight against bureaucratism? In what way did he fight against bureaucratism? You refer to his article on the

[1] It should be noted that the Workers' Opposition did not reject the idea of party dictatorship. In the revised version of this chapter (Chapter 9 of Book 3, "Lenin, Also") published in *The Russian Enigma* (London: Ink Links Ltd, 1979) this sentence is translated as: "In the beginning, when Lenin, in 1920, upheld the thesis of the single party and the dictatorship, the *Decemists* had approved and had then broken with the Workers Opposition, who at once denounced them." The later translation better reflects the actual politics of these oppositions. It should also be noted that Lenin and other leading Bolsheviks had been justifying – and practicing – party dictatorship years before 1920. This is indicated by Ciliga later in this this article. (*Black Flag*)

reform of the Workers' and Peasants' Inspection which he wrote shortly before his death. Did he, however, in this article call for an organisation of the masses against bureaucratism? Not at all: he proposed there the organisation of a special board with highly paid officials. A top bureaucratic institution was to lead the struggle against bureaucratic methods."

"No, my foreign comrade," continued Prokopeni, "at the end of his life Lenin was imbued with mistrust of the masses of the workers. At that time he was putting his stakes on the bureaucratic apparatus; since, however, he was afraid that the apparatus would go too far, he wanted to prevent mischief by the control of one part of the apparatus by another." After a short silence, he added: "Of course, it is not necessary to shout it from the housetops. We don't want to provide Stalin with extra arguments. But actually this is the truth."

I was also prevented from studying the discussions of the past by the fact that my interest centred entirely in the problems of the present. In so far as I had, nevertheless, to deal with problems of history, it seemed to me that these groups exaggerated the importance of their old disputes with Lenin. In my opinion, the fate of the revolution was decided by the relation of class forces and not by the adoption of some formula or blueprint regarding problems of organisation.

The Organisational Problem – New Theories

With the carrying out of the Five Year Plan, the problems of the forms of organisation – both political and economic – suddenly again became a matter of immediate interest. Problems which, apparently, had been solved by history long ago, unexpectedly and with increased vigour became questions of the day. The elimination of the petty bourgeoisie and of private capitalism left only proletariat and bureaucracy on the scene. The question of the relationship between them and the question of "What is socialism and how can it be brought about" was now being solved through the medium of forms of organisation. Problems regarding the techniques of organisation were discovered to be social problems. The struggle of the toiling masses against bureaucratic oppression was now possible only as a struggle against the forms of organisation which were forced on society by the bureaucracy. These forms, however, were not invented by Stalin but were inherited by him from Lenin. With all its contradictions and somersaults, the Russian revolution was to some extent an organic whole. Therefore, it had become impossible to avoid a discussion of Lenin's policies any longer.

Problems regarding the techniques of organisation were discovered to be social problems. The struggle of the toiling masses against bureaucratic oppression was now possible only as a struggle against the forms of organisation which were forced on society by the bureaucracy. These forms, however, were not invented by Stalin but were inherited by him from Lenin.

In answer to the newly arising questions, the follower of Myasnikov, Tiunov, wrote several studies devoted to the historical debate on *the* problem of bureaucratic or socialist organisation of production. The studies centred in a criticism of the militarisation methods which Trotsky applied while organising the economy during the period of war communism [1918-1921] A young Detsist, Yasha Kosman, wrote a brilliant piece of historical research on the so-called "trade union discussion." He arrived at the conclusion that Lenin's approach to the problem of the organisation of industry completely delivered the latter into the hands of the bureaucracy. The results were disastrous – by taking away the factories from the workers, the bureaucracy took the revolution away from them.

Another Detsist, Misha Shapiro, wrote a reply to this article in which he defended the traditional attitude of the Detsists, namely, that the debates on the different systems of the organisation of production did not affect any question of principles. According to Shapiro, the Workers' Opposition represented the interests not of the workers but of the trade union bureaucracy. If their demand that the management of industry should be handed over to the trade unions had been fulfilled, the result would have been that the factories would be directed by trade union bureaucrats instead of party bureaucrats.

In order that the workers might have an opportunity to fight the bureaucracy they needed liberty: liberty of organisation, press, assembly. Through this reasoning, however, they arrived at the conclusion that there must be liberty for political parties, i.e., they agreed with the demand which had been raised by Myasnikov and condemned at the time by Lenin as well as by Trotsky and the Detsists. Even then a considerable number of Detsists and almost all Trotskyites continued to assume that "liberty for political parties means the downfall of the revolution." "Liberty for political parties is Menshevism" – this assertion was considered unchallengeable by the Trotskyites. "The working class is socially homogenous and, therefore, its interests can be represented only by one party" – wrote the Detsist Davidov. "Why was it impossible to combine democracy within the party with an outside dictatorship of the party?" the Detsist Nyura Yankovskaya asked in astonishment. Dora Zak replied to Davidov: "Very well,

the Paris Commune perished because there were many parties, but we have only one party left; why did our revolution perish?" The young Detsist Volodya Smirnov was, as the saying goes, consistent to the point of absurdity. His opinion was: There has never been either a proletarian revolution or a dictatorship of the proletariat. There has been only a "popular revolution" from below and a bureaucratic dictatorship from above. Lenin never had been an ideological representative of the proletariat. He was, from the beginning to the end, an ideological representative of the intelligentsia. Smirnov combined these evaluations with a general conception to the effect that a "new social formation" – state capitalism in which bureaucracy is the new ruling class is coming to the fore throughout the world, along different ways. He thus reduced to a common denominator Soviet Russia as well as Kemalist Turkey, the Italy of Mussolini, Hitler Germany and the America of Hoover and Roosevelt. In an article, "Communist Fascism," he wrote that Communism was radical Fascism, and Fascism – moderate Communism. In this conception the forces and prospects of socialism remained somewhere in the clouds.

The majority of the Detsist faction (Davidov, Shapiro, etc.), found that the heresies of young Smirnov went too far and expelled him with much noise from the group.

subjecting the "Epoch of Lenin" to a critical analysis, I necessarily penetrated the holy of holies of Communism and of my own ideology. I subjected Lenin to criticism – the leader and prophet who was surrounded not only by the immortal glory of revolution but by the legend and myth of post-revolutionary mystification

"You Too, Lenin?"

Once I understood the importance of the old problems both for the understanding of the present and for the determination of the tasks of the future, I concentrated on studying them. The shades of interpretation in regard to these problems which existed among the various elements of the extreme Left, stimulated a critical and independent approach. I began to study these problems after the practical experience of the revolution and, therefore, my approach was necessarily different from that of the comrades who had split over these questions 10 years earlier. Having the opportunity of observing the results of 15 years of revolutionary history, I was able to judge the past with greater certitude and firmness. However, subjecting the "Epoch of Lenin" to a critical analysis, I necessarily penetrated the holy of holies of Communism and of my own ideology. I subjected Lenin to criticism – the leader and prophet who was surrounded not only by the immortal glory of revolution but by the legend and myth of post-revolutionary mystification. In spite of all the critical attitude of the milieu in which I lived, I could only timidly advance in this temple, obeying an inner voice which told me: the understanding of the experience and the lessons of the revolution must not stop before any obstacle, it must be as reckless as the revolution itself which did not stop before anything.

The farther I advanced in this temple the more often – for days, weeks, and months – I was overwhelmed by the fatal question:

> "*You too, Lenin? Is it true that you too were only great as long as the revolution and the masses were great, and that your revolutionary spirit was exhausted as soon as the strength of the masses failed and it became even weaker than they? Were you too able to betray the social interests of the masses in order to retain power? How your ability to retain power once impressed us naive people! Were you too able to prefer the bureaucratic conquerors to the conquered masses, to help this new bureaucracy to mount on the backs of the Soviet working masses, to suppress these masses when they were reluctant to acquiesce in the new submission, to slander them, to pervert the sense of their most legitimate aims? Lenin, Lenin – what is greater, your merits or your crimes?*
>
> *"I am little impressed by your attempts at justification: that it is better that the bureaucrats sat on the back of the masses than that the former oppressors – the bourgeoisie and the landowners – returned to replace them. For the bureaucrats this is possibly very important, whether they or the bourgeoisie sit on the back of the masses; for the masses, however, this is not so very essential.*
>
> *"I am little moved by the reasoning of your advocates, Lenin, who assert that, subjectively, you had the best intentions. It was you, Lenin, who told us to judge people not according to their subjective intentions, but according to the objective significance of their actions, according to what social groups profit by their activities and what social stratum is represented by the ideology which is reflected in their speeches . . . And, incidentally, in your own statements which, on the whole, are certainly very cautious, I find the proof that you were perfectly aware, even subjectively, of what you did objectively. Worse than that: at the moment when the bureaucratic dictatorship was being stabilised, you consciously slandered the masses when they resisted the triumphant bureaucracy (this fact can be proven!) This*

resistance, however weak, however trampled by the bureaucracy and perhaps necessarily doomed to defeat at that time – is the supreme legacy *of the Russian revolution. And a* new revolution *– in Russia or anywhere else in the world – can* begin *only by carrying out the program of this workers' opposition which had been crushed.*

"This is the call from the past to the present, this is the continuity of human history, of its really progressive tendencies.

"Yes, your personal role in the revolution, your relation to the working masses and, in general, the relations between leaders and masses in the revolution were actually different from the way they were pictured by the official legend to which I was loyal for such a long time ..."

The sun is setting behind the distant ranges of the Urals and sheds its last rays into the window of my cell across the barren steppe which extends from the mountain ranges to the prison. It is difficult . . . I look avidly through the bars . . . Mountains, sun, air, freedom, freedom . . . I am alone in my cell, my cellmate is in the hospital . . . I feel lonesome . . . I am burying Lenin.

What am I doing? Is this not an exaggeration, a delusion engendered by prison?

Let us see...

Lenin as a Counter-Revolutionary

Of course, in 1917, the situation looked like a competition between the masses and Lenin, which of them would advance farther, faster, bolder. Like a tornado they attacked and addressed their uncompromising challenge to all that was old, rotten, and mendacious in Russia and in the world. Yes, those were the days "which shook the world." Russia was making its own and world history. And Lenin gained forever a place of honour in the hearts of the working people, in the pantheon of history because he had been able to sense the beating of the heart of humanity at the moment of its great liberating impulse, because he was on the side of the masses and gave them leadership in those days of their great daring and creativeness. This place is assured to him even if he, like Cromwell, were to be delivered to public contempt for a moment of history, to be, like the dead Cromwell, carried out of the grave to the gallows or trampled in the streets of Moscow – in retribution for the crimes he committed against the masses during the period of the decadence of the revolution or for the crimes committed by his successors...

Nevertheless, as soon as the old regime was overthrown and Lenin had taken power, a tragic gulf opened between him and the masses of the people. Imperceptible in the beginning, this gulf grew and widened and finally its consequences became fatal.

The masses of the workers instinctively aim at their full liberation, at the fulfilment of their final objectives. It is in the name of these objectives that the masses accomplish revolutions. Everything and at once. Now or never. This is the difference between a revolutionary period and a period of reform. The working masses of Russia went farther in smashing the old social order and in constructing a new one than had been originally intended by Lenin. The pressure of the masses was so strong, the situation so tense, that the masses pulled Lenin along. Such was the relationship between leader and masses at the moment when the revolution reached its highest flood.

Let the facts speak. After the October revolution, Lenin aimed not at the expropriation of the capitalists, but only at "workers' control": the control of the capitalists, who were to retain the management of their enterprises, by the organisations of the workers in the factories. The spontaneous class struggle defeated this plan of Lenin for class collaboration under his power: the capitalists answered by sabotage, the workers collectively took over one factory after the other... Only after the expropriation of the capitalists had been practically completed by the workers, did the Soviet government recognise it *dejure* by issuing a decree on the nationalisation of industry...

Later, in 1918, Lenin opposed to the drive of the workers towards socialism an entire system of state capitalism ("after the pattern of war-time Germany"), with most extensive participation by former capitalists in the new Soviet economy. Lenin did not stand for the complete destruction of the old, but for some equilibrium of the new and the old, for their co-existence. Lenin, who formerly denounced "class collaboration", had then become its advocate . . . After he became the representative of power, he began to experience the pressures of various social forces on him and not of the workers alone as before; he became rather the spokesman of the statics of the moment than of the dynamics of the epoch.

The spread of the civil war brought a new correction to this rear-guard philosophy of revolution. The downfall of the German and the Austrian Empires gave new fuel to the maximalist expectations of the popular masses: the task of immediate transition to socialism won official recognition. The year 1919 began, the apex of the Russian revolution, its 1793. And as we have seen, it also began thanks to the initiative of the masses and not to that of Lenin.

There is only one step from the apex of the revolution to its downfall and there, at that historical moment, Lenin played a most deplorable role. If it was characteristic of the period of social upheaval and the deepening of the revolution that the masses succeeded in pulling Lenin along, the decadence and the downfall of the revolution were marked by the open opposition of Lenin to the masses of the workers, by his victory over the masses.

Focus of Struggle: The Factories

Where did the struggle centre at that time? In the basic nucleus of socialist initiative – in the fate of the factories taken away from the bourgeoisie. It was here that the break occurred between Lenin and the working class. This is also the key to understanding the twofold role of Lenin in the revolution.

The workers took over individual factories and organised production collectively in these factories. However, the connections between the individual factories, the organisation of production on a national scale began, thanks to the central government, to become the business of the apparatus of the nascent bureaucracy. This was already a dangerous sign of the weakness of the working class. The fate of socialism in Russia depended upon the ability of the working class to win control over the general direction of production. In order to effect a socialist organisation of society, in order to reorganise agriculture along socialist lines, the working class had first to achieve socialist organisation "at home" – in industry.

It would seem that this is an elementary truth. Nevertheless, as a rule it is forgotten when people discuss the fate of socialism and of the revolution.

After he had become the head of the apparatus, Lenin looked at this problem through the spectacles of the apparatus. This was keenly noted by the worker Milonov, a delegate to the 10th Congress of the Communist Party of Russia, who said: "Psychologically Lenin's behaviour is quite comprehensible. Comrade Lenin is the chairman of the Council of the People's Commissars, he directs our Soviet policies. Obviously every movement, regardless of where it originates, which hampers this work of direction is considered a petty bourgeois and extremely harmful movement!" During the civil war the central bureaucracy actually increased its power, continuously taking over the management also of individual factories. Factory management which originally was appointed by the workers and employees of the factories was increasingly made up of appointees of the central authorities. Simultaneously management which in the beginning had been collective was surreptitiously transformed into one-man-direction. The workers began to lose their grip on the factories. This process continued on the initiative of Lenin against a sharp opposition by the working class portion of the Communist party, and by all prominent Bolshevik leaders of working class origin. At that time Tomsky was punished for this opposition by being exiled to Turkestan, for "party work" in that district; and earlier Sapronov had been sent to the Ukraine for "Democratic Centralism".

After the end of the civil war, the struggle between bureaucracy and working class for the control of industry was renewed with redoubled vigour. It entered its decisive phase. It was this struggle which exploded the system of War Communism. The ideological leader of the Workers' Opposition, Shlyapnikov, in an article published in *Pravda* during the discussion on the trade union problem before the 10th Congress of the Communist Party of Russia, openly characterised the essence of the conflict in the following words: "In our industry there is a system of dual rule – by the workers and by the bureaucrats. It is paralysing production. The way out can only be found through a radical decision, through the single power either of working class socialism or of bureaucratic capitalism".

The fate of socialism in Russia depended upon the ability of the working class to win control over the general direction of production. In order to effect a socialist organisation of society, in order to reorganise agriculture along socialist lines, the working class had first to achieve socialist organisation "at home" – in industry

Lenin's Position

How did Lenin act at that moment? He also stood, like Shlyapnikov, for an uncompromising decision, only different from Shlyapnikov, he was for the single power of the bureaucracy. In a slip of his tongue Lenin once admitted that, under the surface of the "discussion on the trade union problem", the real fight was for the elimination of the working class from the control of production. The statement of Lenin to which we refer reads: "If the trade unions, *nine-tenth of whose membership are workers not affiliated with the party*, were to appoint the management of industry what would then be the purpose of the party?" However, even the remaining tenth of the working class, the Bolshevik workers (workers who were party members) had the same demands as the workers who were not party members... A clear delimitation along class lines thus characterised this decisive debate: on the one hand the workers, whether affiliated with the party or not, who stood for working class socialism, and on the other hand the bureaucrats – party members or not – who were for bureaucratic state capitalism.

Lenin promised the workers the right to strike as a compensation for taking the factories away from them. As if the workers had made the October Revolution in order to obtain the right to strike...

The attitude of Lenin towards the "liberals" in his own, the bureaucratic, camp was also significant. When the groups of Trotsky, Bukharin and Sapronov, who maintained an intermediary position between Lenin and

the Workers' Opposition, proposed a mitigation of the exclusive bureaucratic control by the admission of workers to the organisation of production in a consultative capacity, Lenin opposed this proposal in the most categoric manner and applied very harsh "organisational measures" against them for their "vacillations" (at the 10th Congress of the Communist Party in March 1921).

Lenin indeed did not vacillate. After he had become the mouthpiece of the desires of party and Soviet bureaucracy, Lenin with unswerving firmness took away the factories from the workers, their basic revolutionary conquest, the sole lever with which the workers were able to advance the cause of their liberation, the cause of socialism. The Russian workers again became hired manpower in factories which did not belong to them. After that there was nothing left of socialism in Russia but words.

Many people will object by asking: "What about Kronstadt?"[1] The essential decision on the fate of industry, i.e., actually the problem of socialism, had occurred before Kronstadt. Kronstadt was the attempt of an alliance of workers and peasants to react against the bureaucracy. Lenin and his bureaucracy were very much frightened by this alliance. After the crushing of the Kronstadt insurrection, the NEP (New Economic Policy) was the completion of an alliance between the bureaucracy and the (upper strata of) peasantry against the working class. Only at the time of the Five Year Plan the bureaucracy had become ready to attack its temporary ally – the middle stratum of peasantry and the kulaks Having liquidated socialism in the economy, the power of the workers in the factories, bureaucracy faced its last task – the liquidation of the political power of the workers and the toiling masses. The organ of this power had been a special organisation which originated in the revolutionary process – the Soviets. The bureaucracy opposed to the political organisation of the masses – the Soviets – and to the economic organisation of the masses – the trade unions – the organisation in which there was least mass participation and in which the new bureaucracy was stronger than anywhere else – *the party.* On the initiative of Lenin, in addition to the prohibition of all political parties in the country except the Communist Party, all opinions and groups opposed to the bureaucratic leadership of the party were prohibited in order to prevent the possibility of a struggle for the interests of the masses within the party itself (Resolution of the 10th Congress of the Communist Party of Russia). The party became a subsidiary organ of the bureaucratic Caesar, just as the Soviets and trade unions had become a subsidiary organ of the party. A Bonapartist dictatorship over the party, the working class and the country was taking shape.

"Do It – But Don't Say It"

I was startled when I found out that the leaders of the Communist Party were conscious of this at times. In 1920, Bukharin presented in his book, *The Economics of the Transitional Period* (page 115 of the Russian edition), a full-fledged conception of "proletarian" Bonapartism ("personal regime"). Lenin commented on this idea of Bukharin (see *Leninskye Sborniki* ["Leniniana"], volume 11, 1930), calling it: "Correct . . . but not the right word." Do it, but don't be so frank – this is the entire Lenin of that epoch, the epoch of his moving away from the working class into the camp of the bureaucracy. And Lenin knew how to disguise bureaucratic Bonapartism. "It is impossible to organise the dictatorship of the proletariat by universal organisation of the proletariat", Lenin wrote, "because the proletariat is still so divided, so humiliated and here and there bribed". The dictatorship of the proletariat could "consequently be carried out only by the vanguard which has concentrated the revolutionary energies of the class – the party". The subsequent experiences of the revolution have unmasked the entirely bureaucratic essence of this conception of the dictatorship of the party over the class, the dictatorship of a chosen minority over the "backward majority" of the working class. Once again history confirmed the truth of the old workers' hymn:

We want no condescending saviours,

No God, no Caesar and no Pope,

We workers ask not for their favours –

Ourselves alone can bring us hope!

(*The Internationale*, second stanza)

And of the old slogan of the labour movement: "The emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves". Modern revolutions must achieve integral socialism or become transformed by necessity into anti-proletarian, anti-socialist counter-revolutions.

The liquidation of the political power of the working class required, however, a solid "ideological basis". The direct way – to call things by their names – was not practical: it was not convenient in a revolution which began in the name of the achievements of socialism to say suddenly: Here we are, the new masters and exploiters. It was much better to call the taking away of the factories from the workers a victory of the socialist type of production, the suppression of the working class by the bureaucracy – a strengthening of the dictatorship

[1] Ciliga discusses the Kronstadt Revolt in a later article entitled "The Kronstadt Uprising and the fate of the Russian Revolution", in *La Révolution Prolétarienne* (September 1938). This was translated and published as *The Kronstadt Revolt* by Freedom Press in 1942. It was republished in *The Raven: Anarchist Quarterly* 8 (October 1989) and *Black Flag Anarchist Review* Vol. 1 No. 1 (Spring 2021). (*Black Flag*)

of the proletariat and to proclaim that the new exploiters of the working class were its vanguard. When the feudal lords could be the fathers of the peasants, the bourgeoisie – the vanguard of the people, why could the bureaucracy not become the vanguard of the working class? Exploiters consider themselves always the vanguard of the exploited...

The Workers Go Into Opposition

Lenin justified his policy by asserting that the working class was weak. He declared that by handing over the revolution to the bureaucracy he was saving it for the working class. The fruits of the future were to justify the concessions of the present. Today these fruits are ripe and their social significance is well known. The Russian working class must be given credit for having grasped at the time something. It understood that Lenin acted as if he were saying: "You, the workers, are being illogical, you want to achieve socialism immediately, but have not the necessary strength to do so. Since, however, you cannot be the masters of society, you must become its servants; this is the law of class struggle in class society. By submitting to the inevitable you will obtain from us everything that is possible."

The workers had their conception of class struggle and acted as if they were answering Lenin: "No, it is you, comrade Lenin, who are illogical. If we don't have the strength to become the masters of society, we must become an opposition. A class does not capitulate, but fights."

The spontaneous working class resistance against bureaucratic encroachments showed that the working class was not so weak as was asserted by Lenin. If Lenin still had been at heart on the side of the workers he would have supported the working class opposition which arose in the country. Lenin, however, was already thinking and acting in the spirit of the bureaucracy and sensed in this strength of the working class a menace to the bureaucracy; he taught the working class a lesson of class struggle: a class which does not capitulate is suppressed by the conquerors. To the applause of the new bureaucracy of the entire country, Lenin exclaimed at the conclusion of the 10th Party Congress: "The opposition is now done and finished, now we have had enough of opposition". As a matter of fact, this was the end of legalised opposition; instead, prison bars and places of exile *were* opened and, later, scaffolds erected for it.

In spite of these fundamental changes, the revolution continued to be called a "proletarian" and "socialist" one. Moreover, Lenin himself showed how to combine radical phraseology with actual suppression of the working class. When real workers who were the victims of bureaucratic pretensions protested against the bureaucratic mystification of socialism and demanded that their real interests be attended to, Lenin, unhesitatingly, declared that their demands were "petty bourgeois", "anarchic", "counter-revolutionary". The vital interests of the working class were denounced as reflecting the narrow-minded point of view of the craft. The interests of the bureaucracy, on the contrary, were declared to be the "class interests of the proletariat". The totalitarian bureaucratic regime which was being established in the country stigmatised everything that was socially and politically progressive as "counter-revolution" and initiated an era of monstrous lies, insinuations, and falsifications which, now, in its Stalinist – completed and perfected – phase is strangling all of Russia and poisoning the entire international, democratic public life.

Disturbed by this evolution, Shlyapnikov exclaimed at the end of the 10th Congress, speaking on Lenin's resolution against the Workers' Opposition: "Never in my life, during my 20 years of membership in the party did I hear or see anything more demagogic and more distorting of facts". These words of Shlyapnikov sound like an angry echo of the words of Thomas Muenzer who denounced Doctor Luther as "Doctor Luegner" (Doctor Liar) for his pamphlets defending the cause of the Protestant princes against the Protestant peasants.

> *"This is what you, Lenin, had become at the end of your historical career!"*

I look searchingly and with anger at the portrait of Lenin which is hanging above the table of my prison cell.

Before me there are two Lenins, as there are two Luthers and two Cromwells: the ones who bring about the ascent of the revolution and the ones who effect its decline. And this entire decisive historical change occurred within a period of two to three years of revolutionary turmoil – in the Russian revolution as in the revolutions which preceded it. And we, like the contemporaries of the preceding revolutions, have continued to discuss 10 or 20 years later whether this decisive change occurred or not!

> *"And, Lenin, your timid opposition during the last year of your life against unrestrained Stalinism was perhaps a personal tragedy for yourself, but, politically, it did not go beyond vacillation between Stalinism and Trotskyism, i.e., between the Black Hundreds and the liberal varieties of bureaucratism."*

The fate of the Bolshevik party, the fate of Lenin and Trotsky, confirmed once more that the most advanced parties and the greatest leaders are limited by conditions of place and time and, therefore, inevitably become, at a certain moment, conservative and deaf to the new requirements of the epoch. The legend of Lenin has unfolded itself to my eyes as the sanctification of the lies and crimes of the bureaucracy.

> *"In order to destroy the power of the bureaucracy, which was created by your hands,*

it is necessary to destroy you, Lenin, the legend of your infallible proletarian nature…"

"You did not help a weakened proletariat in the hour of its last ordeal, but hit it on the head. If the world needed one more lesson, you taught it: When the masses cannot save the revolution nobody else can save it in their place… Your experience, Lenin, shows that the proletarian revolution can be saved only by pursuing it to its conclusion, to the achievement of the complete liberation of the entire working people. A revolution which has not been continued to its goal inevitably degenerates into the domination of a majority of the working people by a new privileged minority. Modern revolutions must achieve socialism or inevitably become anti-socialist, anti-proletarian counter-revolutions.

"No gods, no icons", I whispered quietly to myself…"

The portrait of Lenin which was suspended above the table of my cell is flung on the floor, torn to pieces...

It is dark in the prison cell ... Outside, in the free spaces, there is night. The mountains and the steppes of the Urals are immersed in sombre slumber. I feel sad and dejected...

For six months I was unable to speak, to talk aloud and describe what I thought and felt during the hour when I bid farewell to the legend of Lenin . . .

Anarchists on Trotskyism

A Hollow Appeal

Senex

Vanguard: a libertarian communist journal, April-May 1936

The NEW MILITANT of February 1st contains an appeal by Leon Trotsky on behalf of the persecuted revolutionists of Soviet Russia. The appeal is based upon the startling revelations made by Dr. Ciligia[1] – one of the victims of the terrorist policy of Stalin's government.

As is to he expected by all those familiar with Trotsky's writings his appeal has great stirring power, conveying in simple language the depth of revolutionary indignation of one who is aroused by the fascistic methods employed by Stalin's government in crushing the party opposition. But, strangely enough, while making his appeal in the name of general revolutionary principles and directing it to all revolutionists, Trotsky fails to make even a single reference to revolutionists outside of his camp. He omits entirety the numerous cases of maltreatment of anarchists and social revolutionists so frequently cited by Dr. Ciligia in his disclosures. The impression given is that only members of the Communist Opposition are persecuted in Soviet Russia.

Is it just a case of narrow loyalty, stopping short at the gates of one's party? But why then appeal in the name of universal principles of revolutionary democracy? Or is it the troubled conscience of one who was chiefly responsible for inaugurating the reign of terror and persecution against the revolutionists outside the Communist Party that inhibited Trotsky from extending the range of his appeal? But a troubled conscience can be easily allayed by acknowledging one's guilt. Why not take the opportunity of openly declaring that it was a political error to persecute revolutionists of such heroic stature and unquestionable revolutionary integrity as Maria Spiridonova or numerous others who devoted their whole lives to the furtherance of the cause of social revolution. Or is their case of finding themselves savagely persecuted on the second year of the October revolution by those very people with whom they fought side by side to bring it about, less stirring and ominous than the hounding of Communist oppositionists on the eighteenth year of October?

In vain would we seek in Trotsky's later writings even an inkling of a change of heart in this matter. Contrary to the expectations of many a liberal the years of political adversity have not taught Trotsky any new principles of revolutionary toleration. (And that, of course, bolds true of his followers as well. The same issue of the NEW MILITANT contains the report of a meeting of protest held by the Workers Party against political persecutions in Soviet Russia. Again we have the same complete silence about the many revolutionists in the prisons of Soviet Russia who do not happen to belong to the party opposition.) And this is not only due to the notions of infallibility which are inculcated into

[1] Dr. Ciligia was one of the leaders of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. Together with a number of other foreign communists suspected of Trotskyite sympathies he fell into the clutches of the G. P. U. with the consequent chain of sentences condemning him for a life term in the various prisons and concentration camps of Soviet Russia. He succeeded in getting away from this living hell only because of the threat of an international scandal raised by his attempt at suicide.

any communist leader of importance or to a mere, humanely pardonable, reluctance to acknowledge one's mistakes on such a serious matter. There is a much more important reason for this inhibition in regard to making an appeal that would be on a par with the issues raised in it. And that is the underlying premises of Trotsky's political philosophy, the idea of party dictatorship upheld as the cornerstone of his tactics and policies in a revolutionary period. This is the logic of the seemingly illogical procedure of appealing in the name of universal principles of revolutionary tolerance and shamefacedly ignoring the most crying outrage of those principles perpetrated by him when he was in power.

For to accept the principles of party dictatorship is to renounce any right to protest against the logic of such dictatorship embodied in the persecutions of revolutionists.

For to accept the principles of party dictatorship is to renounce any right to protest against the logic of such dictatorship embodied in the persecutions of revolutionists. It is Stalin's policies in that matter that exemplify the true spirit of party dictatorship and not Trotsky's protests against such a policy. Revolutionary democracy and party dictatorship are incompatible. The pure idea of socialism and the will to realise it, allegedly embodied in the Communist Party, do not stand in need of any democratic channels of expression of the revolutionary will and opinion. Hence follows the self-assumed right to persecute and terrorise any form of revolutionary opposition, whether it goes by the name of communism or any other consecrated name.

Trotsky did not reject this fundamental idea. He talks of Soviet dictatorship, but he still conceives it in the form of an inverted pyramid such as took shape in the first period of the October revolution as a result of a configuration of forces incidental only to the Russian situation. The familiar model of an all powerful Central Committee of the Party forming the base of the new power, with the party serving as the transmission link from that source of power to the obedient mass organisation – this dictatorship pattern still hovers before his eyes whenever he broadcasts his ringing appeals on behalf of political prisoners. Can there be any room in such a political system for collaboration of revolutionary forces? And where such a collaboration is rejected on principle, even though admitted here and there as the temporary political expediency, what validity, what power of conviction can there be to any protest against political persecutions? That is exactly why, all the brilliance and convincing power of language notwithstanding, Trotsky's appeals leave the revolutionary world cold. The impression gotten from reading them is that Trotsky speaks with his tongue in his cheek. The principles of revolutionary democracy in the name of which the appeal is made sound hollow and flat, and the deliberate omission of mention of other persecuted revolutionists takes on the same ominous character as the united front appeals of the official wing of the communist movement.

An Open Letter to Leon Trotsky

David Lawrence

Vanguard: a libertarian communist journal, February-March 1937

February 23, 1937

Leon Trotsky

Mexico, D. F.

Dear Comrade Trotsky

Just two short decades have passed… twenty years ago you shared with Lenin a place on the revolutionary horizon surpassed by none… today, you flee from country to country, a hounded man, finding for the moment a temporary haven in Mexico, Sorrow, bitterness and the weight of years have greyed your hair and stooped your military shoulders. Even your life hangs by the barest of threads, for Stalin and his gang of international hoodlums will not cease their scurrilous attacks upon your person until they have completely silenced your talented, excoriating pen and your voice that serves so well to uncover the evil thing that masquerades under the cloak of Socialism.

Libertarian opinion. the world over feels a. deep sympathy for your plight and indignation at the horrible predicament in which your Russian followers find themselves, caught in the snares of Stalin who hunts them as the Czarist nobility hunted the beasts of the Taiga.

And yet, Comrade Trotsky, despite our devotion to the cause of Freedom; despite our deep hatred for all that Stalin represents… our knowledge of previous Russian events, our experience with a Trotsky who ruled, forces us to pause in our anger to pose a few queries. For, in the true historic sense, are you not more responsible than Stalin for the conditions which exist in Russia today? Did you not beget Stalin? We maintain that without a Trotsky there could have been no Stalin… that Stalin is your creation, your Frankenstein [Monster]!

What makes possible the activities of the Stalin machine if not the concentration of power in the hands of one

political group? And who insists more strenuously than Leon Trotsky (even today) that such a dictatorship is necessary.

Conditions in. Russia today horrify you Were things different when you were in power? Let us see…

Stalin is betraying the Revolution, you claim, when he connives and makes treaties with Imperialist nations; the Franco-Soviet military pact is an abomination, making French gendarmes of the French Communist Party. Granted that this is true, you must admit surely, that such a policy did not originate in the unimaginative mind of Stalin. A former Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Leon Trotsky, set a worthy precedent for Stalin when he made a treaty with the Kaiser, the Brest-Litovsk Treaty. Did this shameless capitulation to Imperialist Germany make you a gendarme of the Kaiser? Let the facts testify. The peasants in the territories that you gave to Germany did not intend to let a scrap of paper wrest from them the freedom that they had won with their blood during the Civil War. When the left Socialist-Revolutionists called for peasant uprisings to oppose the German invaders, workers and peasants all over Russia rose to the aid of their brothers in Ukrainia and White Russia. But the Communist Party of Russia had made a treaty with the Kaiser, so Leon Trotsky ordered the Russian army to pursue and suppress these partisan units. Who was the gendarme then?

And when the emissary of Imperialist Germany, Mirbach, was slain, as a warning to the Junkers that the revolutionary working class of Russia was not ready to sacrifice itself for a treaty, were you not once again forced to act the police spy.

You demanded that the man who committed the deed, a Left Socialist-Revolutionist, be denounced by his party and delivered into the hands of the police. It would seem that, in condemning the Stalinist foreign policy, you forget that he might very well have learned it from you.

You are the Father, Stalin the Son, and Lenin the Holy Ghost. How can you with consistency ask for freedom and tolerance in Russia. Lenin, the only man you call Master, said of Freedom that it is a "bourgeois prejudice". After the October Revolution yours was the hangman's duty of suppressing those who protested the concentration of power into the hands of the Bolshevik Party. Were you tolerant when you "liquidated" all those who opposed the rule of your clique? Were you less ruthless than Stalin when you smashed the groups of Left Socialist-Revolutionists, the Anarchists, and the nonpartisans, with whom you had fought side by side against the Russian bourgeoisie. Do you remember your campaign of vilification and slander against Nestor Makhno, Anarchist leader of the Ukraine partisan troops who drove the hordes of the intervention from the Ukrainian steppes, "Bandit", you called him, when he demanded free Soviets. These tactics are mirrored today by Communist brats who go about in the New York Subways pasting up little arsenic green labels that read simply *Trotsky-Poison.* Character assassination has always been a Bolshevik weapon.

Today you cry out to the four corners of the world about the cruelties suffered by your followers in Russian jails and concentration camps. How were political prisoners treated when you were the bright star on the Russian horizon and Stalin was still the "grey spot of the Revolution?" How did you deal with those who opposed the regime of Lenin and Trotsky when the trail was being blazed that Stalin could later follow with such ease?

Do you remember Maria Spiridonova? Of course you do; her life symbolized the social revolution. In 1906, when she was only 18 years old, she committed an *attentat* against the detested Gen, Lukhanovsky, Gov. of Tambov Province. Her punishment for this act included rape, burning with cigarettes, beatings, and other Czarist niceties, But through it all she remained contemptuous of her tormentors, a true heroine of the Russian people. Her death sentence was commuted to life imprisonment and she was exiled to Siberia where she remained until twelve years later the Revolution opened the prison door for her. Despite delicate health (tuberculosis contracted in the Siberian wastes) she threw all her energies into the work of the Revolution, However, her freedom was short lived; the Revolution meant too much for her to see it turned into a mere tail to the Bolshevik dog; and so in 1919 the prison doors once again closed behind her… not as a prisoner of the Czar but as a prisoner of Trotsky.

Do you remember Ekatrina Bulatova whom you exiled to Siberia for being a member of the Left Socialist-Revolutionists? Perhaps you recall that she was treated so humanely by your Teheka that she committed suicide there...

Do you remember, Leon Trotsky, your written answer to the group of foreign revolutionists who visited Lenin after the 10th Congress of the C.P.S.U. to protest that political prisoners, with which your jails were full to overflowing, were being horribly mistreated.

You spoke of the "stern law of revolutionary expediency" (Doesn't Stalin sing the same tune?) *"as being your supreme law above all other considerations".* Political prisoners, both men and women, were on a hunger strike in the Taganka prison. Protests poured into your office from workers organizations all over the world. You answered them: "The hunger strike is actually kept up by the false hope that the Soviet Government will, under the influence of the intervention of insufficiently informed foreign delegates, commit the error, approaching a crime, and release its irreconcilable enemies…" A short time ago in the New York *Times* you wrote with contempt of the

Stalin government because it forces political prisoners to "their last refuge, the hunger strike". From a man of your mental qualities, one might expect, at least, consistency... Comrade Trotsky!

Look back through the years, Leon Trotsky; it is 1921 in the city of Petrograd. The civil war is over. Wrangel, the last hope of the intervention, had been defeated. Now the people are preparing to reap some of the fruits that they had sown with their blood and toil. But the Communist Party had its grip on the country and its fear of losing state power brought misery and bitterness to the people. The revolutionary workers of Petrograd rose in a huge spontaneous strike movement. At this time you were offering compromises to all the Capitalist governments of Europe. But you had no thoughts of compromise for the revolutionary workers of Petrograd. You put down their strike movement by the use of Kurstonti, Communist students from the military academy, oy wholesale arrests, by lock-outs by suppressing labor organisations, by "extraordinary martial law". This dirty work you put in charge of none other than Comrade Zinoviev (who also learned something about Frankensteins).

But the Communist Party had its grip on the country and its fear of losing state power brought misery and bitterness to the people... At this time you were offering compromises to all the Capitalist governments of Europe. But you had no thoughts of compromise for the revolutionary workers of Petrograd.

Not far off was the Kronstadt fort and naval base. The sailors of Kronstadt, who had been the backbone of your fighting forces were dismayed at your treatment of the Petrograd workers for, while they were the staunchest supporters of the Soviet system, they were wholeheartedly opposed to the dictatorship of a political party. The sailors of Kronstadt passed a resolution demanding free elections to the Kronstadt Soviet and at the same time a committee of sailors was sent to Petrograd to study the situation there. When the committee returned a public meeting was caned by the first. and second battalions of the Baltic Fleet. Sixteen thousand sailors, red army men, and workers attended. The chairman of the meeting was the Communist Vassiliev. The President of the RSFR, Kalinin, and the Communist Commissar of the Baltic Fleet, Kuzmin, were present and addressed the meeting. At this meeting a resolution was drawn up and passed by a tremendous majority. According to your Communist commissars the Kronstadt sailors were counter-revolutionary rogues. What were their "counter-revolutionary" demands? Refresh your memory... they were: elections for new Soviets by secret ballot… freedom of speech and press for workers and peasants… freedom of assembly for labor unions and peasants organizations… liberation of political prisoners of Socialist parties.. the election of a commission to review the cases of those held in prisons and concentration camps… to abolish political bureaus because no one party should be given special privileges in the propagation of its ideas or receive financial support of the Government for such purposes... to equalize the rations of all who work… Are these the demands of the counter-revolution ?

How did you answer these heroes? Did you really believe that these men who had faced death time without number would cringe before the threats of your Communist Commissar? "If you want open warfare" your spokesman said, "you shall have it, for the Communists will not give up the reins of government. We will fight to the bitter end," The Kronstadt sailors were not old women. After such provocation they simply sent the communists on their way and retained your two commissars as hostages. They then elected a new Kronstadt Soviet and proceeded to defend themselves,

Do you remember the campaign of slander and prevarication that you started. Do you remember the *prikhaz* you signed with Lenin in which you denounced the Kronstadt movement as a mutiny inspired by White Guard and Interventionist forces. (How closely Stalin follows your example when he accuses you, of plotting with foreign militarists).

Lenin in a truthful moment let the cat out of the bag, however, when he said "The Kronstadt sailors did not want the counter-revolution but neither did they want us".

How you hated these men who opposed the dictatorship of the Communist party! Do you remember how you boasted (to your everlasting shame!) *"I'll shoot them down like partridges!"*

Pitiless history reminds us that you carried out your threat, The Kronstadt garrison consisted of 14,000 men, 10,000 of them being sailors. They died under your guns – but not like partridges. They fought against your mass of picked troops with the same courage that distinguished them throughout the Revolution. The odds were too heavy. Soon the streets of Kronstadt ran rivers of blood. Do you speak with contempt of Thiers! Do you shout of Thermidor!

History has a way of playing practical jokes even on its most favored children. In 1921 you mowed down the Kronstadt sailors whose "counter-revolutionary" activity consisted largely in the demand for a secret ballot. In 1928, when Stalin was crushing your

opposition mercilessly, do you remember how you shouted for a secret ballot. Do you remember how those who sided with you in open voting became marked men and how soon none would take the chance? Clever Karl Radek (who apparently was not quite clever enough) said to you at this time: "Who should know better than you, Comrade Trotsky, that the secret ballot is a counter-revolutionary instrument?" The inference, 1 think, is clear.

There is no need to go more completely into the history of political persecutions in the Soviet Union when Trotsky was top dog and not Stalin. Such material is readily available elsewhere. It is sufficient to note that whenever a hand was raised in dissent you were quite as merciless in your reaction as Stalin is today. The Social-Democrats, the Socialist-Revolutionists and the Anarcho-Syndicalists felt the terrible weight of your mailed fist. The list of your victims makes Stalin's recent excesses seem like the maneuvering of a Boy Scout Troop.

You manufactured the rope for Stalin's hangmen. *You* gave them the right and the power. Even today, after all the terrible years, you still insist that the Russian people need the dictatorship of a political party (led by Trotsky, of course, instead of Stalin... that will make all the difference). The Russian Communist for of authoritarianism is quite all right with you. You reiterate that Russia today is a "Workers' State". You hang on to this contention like a drowning man to a straw. Why do you constantly repeat such manifest nonsense? Face the truth, Comrade Trotsky!

You ascribe the social inequalities in the "Socialist Fatherland", (where a literary hack may receive 10,000 rubles for a single "Ode to Stalin" while a simple worker toils for 100 rubles a month) to the Stalinist bureaucracy. Was there equality under Lenin and Trotsky? In your time were the Russian people not divided into 39 categories for receiving rations and wages? Do you still feel such objections are expressions of "petty-bourgeois equalitarianism"?

Trotsky was the teacher; Stalin the faulty pupil. You speak with righteous contempt of the "confessions" that dominate the present trials in Russia. Do you remember a little incident of confessions in a previous trial?

In 1923, twelve Socialist-Revolutionists were on trial for their lives before a Bolshevik court, The charges against them were very much like those framed against the defendants in the present Moscow trial: espionage, wrecking, terrorism, plotting with. foreign powers, etc. The "twelve who were to die" covered themselves with honor and your court with shame by their have principled defense (so different from your Bolshevik comrades), After they were sentenced to death the verdict was submitted for examination to a convention of the Bolshevik Party which was sitting in Moscow at the time. The convention voted almost to a man to change the sentence to banishment from Russia; *with but three exceptions; Trotsky, Stalin and Bukharin who insisted that before* any *such mercy could be shown the defendants must first sign "confessions" negating all the principled statements that they made at the trial so that the name of your party might be whitewashed in the eyes of the international Socialist movement,* Apparently you too believed in the political efficacy of "confessions".

You contend that severe) of the defendants in the present Moscow Trial were stoolpigeons. Should this surprise you? In 1921, a check was made of the prisoners in the Butirki prison... of 190 prisoners, 140 admitted that they had been offered freedom if they would spy upon and bear witness against their fellow political prisoners.

What pitiful, craven creatures, your erstwhile comrades showed themselves to be during the recent court proceedings. You spoke of them as completely demoralized men, lickspittles of the Stalinist bureaucracy... Certainly, these poor creatures, were demoralized men, *but the acid that corroded their more manly fibers was not Stalin, but the political philosophy that guided their lives. Bolshevism,* is a system without a morality, built on expediency, with the end always justifying the means, with political power its only ideal, with freedom and truth "bourgeois prejudices". If one were to seek for the most perfect prophet of this amorality he would have to travel as far, perhaps, as Mexico City.

In 1919, Enrico Malatesta, the beloved Italian Anarchist, wrote words that are particularly pointed today:

> "Lenin, Trotsky and their companions are certainly sincere revolutionists – as they understand the revolution, and, they will not betray it, but they prepare governmental methods (*quadri governativi* – governmental pictures, literally) that will serve those that will come, who will profit from the revolution and kill it. They will be the first victims of their own method, and with them I fear will fall the revolution. And history will repeat itself, *mutatis mutandis; it* was the dictatorship of Robespierre that brought Robespierre to the guillotine and prepared the way for Napoleon."

This was not a bad piece of prophesying for an unfortunate man (whom you classed with the "anti-parliamentary cretins") forced to blunder through life without the beacon light of Marxism to light his path.

In short, Comrade Trotsky, if a man builds a guillotine for someone else's neck, we cannot be expected to weep too bitterly if he gets caught under it himself.

With revolutionary greetings,

David Lawrence

Regarding Trotsky – A Rebuttal

David Lawrence

Vanguard: a libertarian communist journal, June 1937

The open letter to Leon Trotsky which appeared in our last issue provoked quite a flurry of comment. People actually troubled to write to us or get in touch with us at the office. It appeared that everybody (everybody, that is, with the exception of Leon Trotsky and his ordained ministers in America) had a word or two, or a volume or two, to say about our "Open Letter".

All the comments had one thing in common… their pungency. Apparently you feel STRONGLY about Leon Trotsky (pro or con) or you don't feel at all.

The comments can be divided roughly into three classes: Class I: (who have our undying gratitude) thought that it was a perfect gem of an open letter and the best writing since Dante and if only they lived closer than 'Frisco or Denver they would blow the Editorial Board to a whopping big dinner and wouldn't we please write more of the same. Class II: chose the middle of the road and although they liked the piece, this was hardly the time or the place to write it and wasn't Stalin the greater danger and shouldn't we concentrate all our energy on attacking the self-professed leader of the world proletariat.

We believe in a number of ridiculous abstract principles like freedom, equality, revolutionary morality, justice, etc. The Marxists assure its that this is due to the petty-bourgeois origins of Anarchism.

Class III: minced no words. Not only was the article historically incorrect in every detail but it was written in a tone that reeked with malice and was I not a stooge of the Third International attacking Trotsky via the circuitous route of the First International and would we please go to Hell but first cancel their subscriptions.

Class I is easily answered: Thanks, Comrades and if you ever come to New York drop in and tell us what excellent fellows we are because by that time our present popularity (sic) will have worn off and having had a taste of fame we shall be doubly lonely in our accustomed neglected state.

Class II, the middle-of-the-readers, have a very weak position indeed, for if you once grant the correctness of our accusations against Trotsky it should be a comparatively easy matter to convince you that this is the best of all possible times to remind Trotsky that the gangster-Socialism that controls one sixth of the world's surface is not the product of an immaculate conception. It role was mapped out for it in 1917 and Trotsky was godfather at the christening. Now, should such an article appear in the *Vanguard*? Where else.... if you please. We believe in a number of ridiculous abstract principles like freedom, equality, revolutionary morality, justice, etc. The Marxists assure its that this is due to the petty-bourgeois origins of Anarchism. Regardless of the cause, the disease is there, and only we have the right to attack a man who builds his fife and political doctrines on amorality and expediency. Comrades of Class II, negate yourselves, and either jump back one class or forward into the ranks of the forthright antagonists of our open letter. Your present position lacks logic.

The weightiest and most outspoken communications came from our Class III. They were almost unanimous in assuring me that what I knew about history could be conveniently placed in the corner of one eye. But when it came to *pointing out* exact mistakes not one could take issue with any of my statements except that section which treated of Trotsky and his role at Brest-Litovsk. The way I fashioned my remarks about Trotsky at Brest-Litovsk was unfortunate. I neglected to mention that Trotsky, on principle, had fought bitterly against signing the Treaty and for this omission I owe him an apology. His eventual disregard of his principles and his capitulation to the wishes of his political boss, Lenin, is to my mind almost as base a deed. However, for the sake of accuracy and fairness be informed that Trotsky abstained from voting against the Treaty although his better judgement told him it was a betrayal.

Then there was much ado about the *tone* of the article. Many of my own comrades felt that it was a bit too strong. Apparently I am at odds with the majority of Anarchist opinion in America in my attitude toward Trotsky. Anarchists have always been in the forefront in the fight for the rights of political asylum and fair trial and several Anarchists may be found in the American Committee for the Defence of Leon Trotsky. I wonder what their attitude would be if Stalin, Hitler or Mussolini were to be deposed and as political refugees come seeking asylum? Apparently the line must be drawn somewhere.... and I draw it at Leon Trotsky! For the part he played in detouring the Russian revolution; for my comrades who died in Kronstadt; for the thousands of beautiful men and women he condemned to a living death in Russian prisons… I reserve the right to *detest* Leon Trotsky, It would be laughable for me to

demand that he be given shelter or a trial.[1] If some of this bitterness crept into my open letter, although I strove for a maximum of objectivity, I would not be greatly surprised; nor will I make excuses for it!

Am I a stooge of the Third International? In regard to this matter a gentlemen whose brilliance I admire and whose ethics I distrust called me in to see him to tell me how rotten he thought the article was. I listened, faintly amused, to his criticism until he assured me that the Stalinists were buying up copies of the *Vanguard* and sending them to people whose faith in Trotsky they wanted to shatter. The thought of this horrible possibility brought me up short and had me in a state of jitters for days. That my article should be used as ammunition for Stalinist activities caused me more real distress than I have felt in years. After checking up I found that my informant was quite correct. A small number of copies had been purchased by Stalinite zealots and mailed out to people whom they suspected were in danger of being bitten by the Trotsky bug. Such an act is so typical of the great Communist rank and file, the imbeciles for whom Stalin is the Lord and Trotsky the current Anti-Christ, that it should occasion little surprise. The world is a very simple place to live in for these nitwits.... it is divided into two hemispheres, one half occupied by these who defend bourgeois democracy and the Soviet Union and the other half composed of Trotskyites who spend their lives in plotting how to dispose of Comrade Stalin, Earl Browder, Israel Amter and proceed to the nationalization of Gurley Flynn. Starting with this simple premise it follows that anyone who takes issue with Leon Trotsky must in one way or another be in the employ of Joe Stalin. Hence their glee about the open letter. One could hardly expect them to read the letter (illiteracy among the C. P. adherents must be at about the same level as among Kentucky hillbillies). Stalinites read only what is prescribed by their beloved leaders. Let us only hope that those to whom they sent copies of the *Vanguard* will really read the letter, for if they possess the intelligence of the average grammar school tot they must realize that the letter is not only a condemnation of Trotsky and his principles but is also a damning document against Stalin who is a caricature made up of all Trotsky's worst faults, with a number of gruesome additions of his own invention (such as shooting all one's lifetime comrades in respect for the ancient dictum "there is only one crown but it would fit many heads") at the same time lacking the saving grace of Trotsky's amazing intellect.

The world is a very simple place to live in for these nitwits.... it is divided into two hemispheres, one half occupied by these who defend bourgeois democracy and the Soviet Union and the other half composed of Trotskyites who spend their lives in plotting how to dispose of Comrade Stalin

To those who complained that my criticism applied only to the Trotsky of two decades ago and that the present-day Trotsky had lived and learned by his experience I recommend a perusal of the testimony of the recent commission of inquiry in Mexico. The sections that interest us are not those that deal with his refutation of Stalin's puerile accusations; no reasoning human being who knows what Trotsky stands for believes him to be in league with Japanese and German Fascism to return the old, less subtle form of exploitation to the Soviet Union. To believe that sort of thing one has to be the type of person who would send out copies of the *Vanguard* hoping to convert the consignees to Stalinism, But his statements still reveal the old opportunist Bolshevik: it appears that for Trotsky the Soviet Union is still a "Worker's Republic", he advises in case of war that the workers of the world take up arms in its defence; if given the opportunity he would collaborate with Joseph the First in governing the Russian workers (he has no quarrel with personalities, you see), the good old dictatorship of the proletariat is still dear to his heart, etc.

Sorry we had to be. so rude to Trotsky, and sorry indeed are we that so many took offense. It has never been our policy to compromise with truth to win a friend or to lose an enemy,

Trotsky would be amused to know that Anarchists in droves rose to his defence, and not one of his followers had the guts to attempt to answer our accusation although they were invited to do so as individuals and as a group.

[1] It is not to defend Trotsky's opportunist Bolshevism that most Anarchists favour asylum for him and an impartial inquiry into the Moscow trials. Precisely because Stalin's charges are not true and do not reveal the real nature of Bolshevism, because we want to shed as much light as possible on the truth regarding the Russian revolution, we desire to bring all available facts into the open. On the question of asylum to political refugees the editorial board of *Vanguard* is in agreement with "the majority of Anarchist opinion" in differing with comrade Lawrence. (Ed. note)

The Trotsky School of Falsification

Senex

Vanguard: a libertarian communist journal, November 1937

During the entire period of his struggle against Stalin, Leon Trotsky studiously avoided touching upon one of the cardinal problems in the analysis of the present Soviet regime, To what extent is Stalinism rooted in the recent past of the Communist Party, that is, in the general course pursued by the Bolshevik leaders of that period – Lenin and Trotsky – during the formative years of the new social system born out of the October upheaval? This question, which arises at once before anyone desiring to obtain an historical perspective of the ominous drifts and tendencies of the Stalin regime was until recently ignored by Trotsky. Whatever historic reasons were adduced by him in order to explain the degeneration of the Russian Revolution, they failed to touch upon a period which had the most powerful effect in shaping the course of the Russian Thermidor.

That there is a close relationship between the policies of the first, so called heroic, phase of Bolshevism and its Thermidorian finale should be clear to anyone who has given some thought to this matter. Stalinism grew imperceptibly out of the institutions and social patterns set up in the first years of the Revolution. Unlike the French Thermidor, it did not come via political explosions of a pronounced counter-revolutionary nature. There were no sharp breaks and gaps in the continuous process of the Thermidorian degeneration of the Russian Revolution. This staking fact of continuity between the Leninist and Stalinist phases of the Revolution cannot be explained away by references to Russian backwardness or the perfidious role of the emerging bureaucracy in adopting for its own ends the social and political forms evolved in the first period of the October Revolution. The question remains as to why those forms lent themselves so readily to this bureaucratic transformation.

Were there any implicit contradictions between those forms and the Thermidorian aims of bureaucracy, the latter would have been forced to resort to a political upheaval, it would have east about for a more fitting Instrument for its needs than the dictatorship shaped during the so-called heroic period of Bolshevism.

At last Trotsky has been forced to break his silence in regard to those matters. Persistence won out and as a result we have several remarkable documents fully revealing the limitations of his views. He still will not revalue the course of the October Revolution in the light of the later tragic developments. On August 21st, in the *Socialist Appeal*, Trotsky set out to answer a few questions put to him by Wendelin Thomas.

Trotsky at last has deigned to cope with moral problems and humanitarian values! Trotsky today has need for the liberal conscience of the world, and so, bolstering ap his spirits with a few sneers at the "moralizers", he proceeds nevertheless to unbend to the extent of admitting that there must be some compatibility between the "means" and the "end". He writes, "if the aim (of Socialism) is the liberation of mankind, theft falsehood and treachery can in no way be appropriate means..." "In the period," he writes further, "when the revolution fought for the liberation of the oppressed masses it called everything by its right name and was in no need of forgeries."

That the Bolshevik party, headed by Lenin and Trotsky, refrained from using falsehood and betrayal in dealing with other revolutionary movements, is itself a prize falsehood among falsehoods. It takes a Stalinist to believe this sort of "history".

So apparently Trotsky has not been won over to the side of revolutionary ethics.

He proceeds further to give the lie to his statement by cramming his pamphlet full with the grossest slanders against Makhno and the Kronstadt sailors.

That deliberate falsification is the basis for his accusations against Kronstadt, we believe you may adduce from the reactions of Victor Serge, one of the most sincere men in the Left Communist movement an ardent partisan of Trotsky and his cause, and an eye-witness to the events.[1]

But what about Makhno? The Makhno movement is not as well documented as the Kronstadt rebellion. It did not unfold in the full glare of publicity that followed the Kronstadt events. But 1937 is not 1919. Enough has been revealed about this movement to make even Trotsky think twice before falling back upon the Chekist fabrications of the year 1919.

"The Makhno movement was a kulak movement" – Trotsky repeats his old accusations against the libertarian movement of the Ukrainian peasants. How near in spirit is this accusation to the one now spread by

[1] On Kronstadt see: Ida Mett, "The Kronstadt Commune", *Bloodstained: One Hundred Years of Leninist Counterrevolution* (Edinburgh/Chico: AK Press, 2017); Voline, *The Unknown Revolution* (Oakland: PM Press, 2022); Alexander Berkman, "The Kronstadt Rebellion" and Emma Goldman, "Trotsky Protests Too Much", *To Remain Silent is Impossible: Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman in Russia* (Atlanta: On Our Own Authority!, 2013); Israel Getzler, *Kronstadt 1917-1921: The Fate of a Soviet Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

the Spanish Communists against the Anarchist land-workers of Spain and their collectives! But by now we have a number of data which shows up these assertions for what they are worth: rancorous outbursts of old partisanship having as little to do with a genuine revolutionary attitude as the similar ranting of the Stalinists against their oppositionists.

The Makhno movement was primarily a movement of the poorer peasants. This can be seen from the fact that the Makhnovites were the first to start building collectives in that part of Southwest Russia. Tho rich peasants were hostile to these collectives while the middle peasantry maintained an attitude of benevolent neutrality. A perusal of the brief biographical sketches of the most active figures of this movement (given in P. Archinov's "History of The Makhno Movement" – French and Spanish translations[1]) will show that the preponderant majority of them, beginning with Makhno himself, came from the poorer, semi-proletarianised layers of the peasantry: And it is because the social aspirations of the poorer sections of the village were given full expression by the Makhno movement, that the Bolshevik authorities, with Trotsky as the keynoter, opened their campaign against this movement. The monstrously absurd agrarian polity carried out at that time by the Communist Party (the later Bolshevik writers on the Makhno movement like Kabanin had to admit that the strength of the Makhno army lay in the sympathies of the peasant population driven to exasperation by the absurd policy of a State monopoly of grain and the attempt to militarize the peasant economy) was bitterly resented by the bulk of the peasantry (and city workers as well) and it is the manifestations of this resentment that were dubbed as kulak intrigues.[2]

That the legitimate resistance to this monstrous regime of a militarised economy. now considered by all leading Bolsheviks to have been based upon illusions and dangerous fallacies (Trotsky himself admits as much in "The Revolution Betrayed"). should he branded, even now, almost two decades after the rejection of this system, as counter-revolutionary manifestations is in itself the beat proof of how little Trotsky has learned from his tragic experience. and how dangerously close he is in his approaches, attitudes end totalitarian mentality to his most bitter political adversary.

Left Movements and the War: IV. The Fourth International

J.H.

War Commentary, December 1940[3]

The Fourth International forms part of the left Communist Opposition. It was founded by Leon Trotsky after Stalin's declaration that the policy of the Third International in Germany during the period of Hitler's rise to power, had been historically correct. Trotsky finally concluded at that time that the Third International, as a force for world revolution, was now dead. Within the movement there are many trends: the most important are the 'official' group of Trotsky and Cannon — the majority group in the American Socialist Workers' Party — and the minority group or opposition, led by Max Schachtman and Martin Ahern. These latter were expelled from the party in the spring of this year, and have formed independently the Workers' Party within the Fourth International. The policy regarding the USSR was the cause of the split.

In *War and the Fourth International*, published in 1934, the nature and causes of war between conflicting imperialisms are brilliantly set out. The forces which drive capitalism on to rearmament and war were analysed in the light of contemporary history and the conclusions arrived at have been largely borne out by the course of events in the last six years. In addition, the attitude of the parties of the left were examined, "The best criterion of the tendencies of a given organisation", it stated in Section 82, "is its attitudes in practice, in action, toward national defence and toward colonies, especially in those cases in which the bourgeoisie of a given country owns colonial slaves." These criteria can usefully be applied to the left wing organisations in this country during the present war. It is a valuable document and leaves one in no doubt about the stand of the Fourth International towards the bourgeoisie in a war situation. Nevertheless, certain inconsistencies, already present in 1934, have come to a head in 1939-40, culminating in the spring expulsions from the party in America.

In Section 48, the political conclusions of the analysis of war are stated: proletarian revolution in the west, independent of the Soviet bureaucracy, and

[1] An English translation did not appear until 1974 – the most recent edition is: Peter Arshinov, *The History of the Makhnovist Movement* (London: Freedom Press, 2005). (*Black Flag*)

[2] The best account of the Makhnovist movement (and which utilises "the later Bolshevik writers") is: Alexandre Skirda, *Nestor Makhno Anarchy's Cossack: The struggle for free soviets in the Ukraine 1917-1921* (Edinburgh/Oakland: AK Press, 2004). (*Black Flag*)

[3] Included in *The Left and World War II: Selections from the Anarchist Journal War Commentary 1939-1943* (London: Freedom Press, 1989). (*Black Flag*)

"unconditional support of the USSR against the imperialist armies". This latter "must go hand-in-hand with revolutionary Marxian criticism of the war and the formulation inside the USSR of a real revolutionary party of the Bolshevik-Leninists."

The policy of the Fourth International in this war is outlined in a manifesto — Trotsky's last work — *War and the World Revolution*, which was adopted at the Emergency Conference of 19th-26th May, 1940. This covers much of the ground of the previous documents, and brings it up to date. (It employs to a greater extent, however, that abuse and misrepresentation, which is to be expected from any party accepting and founding its propaganda on Lenin's exceedingly pragmatic view of truth. Lies and half truths are freely used, in particular against the Spanish anarchists; these will not be taken seriously, however, by anyone who knows anything about the Spanish Revolution.) Their war policy consists briefly in unconditional defence of the USSR, but revolutionary defeatism elsewhere, even in those countries which are allied with the USSR. Although Trotsky condemned the invasions of Poland id and Finland as 'shameful' and 'criminal', he called on the American workers to support the Red Army on the grounds that it was defending the Soviet Union from imperialist attack. He ascribes the Soviet-Nazi pact of August 1939 to "the weakness of the USSR and the Kremlin's panic in face of Germany", instead of attributing it to identity of interests existing between them and expressing itself in politically similar regimes. "Responsibility for this weakness", he says, "rests with this same Kremlin, its international policy which opened up an abyss between the ruling caste and the people, its foreign policy which sacrificed the interests of the world revolution to the interests of the Stalinist clique." (*War and the World Revolution*, page 19.) In spite of all this, however, Trotsky still regards the USSR as degenerated, but still a workers' state, and thereby defends his position.

The Schachtman-Abern-Burnham group, who claim to number 40% of the party proper, 80% of the Young Peoples' Socialist League, and a majority of the active members of the Executive Committee of the Fourth International, deny that the USSR is a workers' state, and therefore reject the defence of the USSR, declaring instead for "the third camp of the masses against both warring imperialist camps" (statement of the Workers' Party, New York, 25th April 1940). They have been expelled from the party by the Cannon group, but do not regard themselves as disaffiliated from the Fourth International.

One wonders what the Trotskyist does if revolutionary defeatism is successful to such an extent among Russia's allies that the Soviet Union were isolated. Soft pedalling on World Revolution would inevitably follow.

Unconditional Defence of the USSR

"Unconditional defence of the USSR, but revolutionary defeatism in all other countries, even though allied to the USSR." One wonders what the Trotskyist does if revolutionary defeatism is successful to such an extent among Russia's allies that the Soviet Union were isolated. Soft pedalling on World Revolution would inevitably follow. If Russia gets involved in the war, Trotsky wants the Soviet workers to support the war, while at the same time striving to overthrow the bureaucracy. Yet in 1934 in Section 47 of *War and the Fourth International* we read ". . . in case of a protracted war accompanied by *passivity of the world proletariat*, the internal social contradictions in the USSR not only might lead but would have to lead to a *bourgeois-Bonapartist counterrevolution*" (their emphasis). The position is similar in essence to that of the so-called left parties in the bourgeois states who support the war and yet claim to be the defenders of the democracy which they are busily undermining.

Trotsky bases his demand that the world proletariat should defend the Soviet Union on two grounds:

> "First, the defeat of the USSR would supply imperialism with new colossal resources and could prolong for many years the death agony of capitalist society. Secondly, the social foundations of the USSR, cleansed of the parasitic bureaucracy, are capable of assuring unbounded economic and social progress, while the capitalist foundations disclose no possibilities except further decay." (*Balance Sheet of the Finnish Events*, Fourth International, June 1940.)

There is not space here to consider at length the question whether decaying capitalism, with Africa, South America and China to exploit, would be able to prolong its death throes significantly by exploiting the USSR. It is doubtful whether capitalism in the western sense could be re-introduced in the USSR. Capitalism everywhere is in the grip of its own contradictions — the more so as the war proceeds and terminates. But it is interesting that Trotsky, who organised the Red Army for the defence of the USSR in the interventionist wars, at one time on 36 fronts, at a period when the USSR was weak, seems now to be remarkably doubtful of the ability of those same Soviet workers to defend themselves against war weakened capitalist powers. He

further neglects a factor which elsewhere he and his followers were at pains to stress: namely, that the Kremlin through the Comintern already performs inestimable service to world capitalism, freely exploiting the prestige and authority of Lenin's Third International to misdirect and sabotage the revolutionary efforts of the workers all over the world. It was his conviction that the Third International as a revolutionary force was dead that led Trotsky to found the Fourth International. Revolutionary defeatism is as necessary (especially in view of the coming "bourgeois-Bonapartist revolution") in the USSR as elsewhere.

We can agree that "capitalist foundations disclose no possibilities except further decay", but it is not so clear that "the social foundations of the USSR, cleansed of the parasitic bureaucracy,[1] are capable of assuring unbounded economic and social progress." It is the bureaucracy which has produced the existing division into classes in Russia: but its growth is an inevitable development of the Bolshevik insistence on dictatorship of the party, and inside the party on dictatorship of. the Central Committee — an insistence fully endorsed by both the leadership and the Opposition in the Fourth International. The recent expulsions from the American party indicate, however, the fate of opposition factions inside the party, and form an ironical example of history repeating itself with Trotsky now occupying Stalin's role!

In *War and the World Revolution* (page 20) Trotsky points out that the campaign of indignation which the world bourgeoisie launched against the USSR over the Soviet-Finnish war, was due to their fear at the "prospect of a social overturn in Finland upon the pattern of the one engendered by the Red Army in eastern Poland. What was involved was a fresh threat to capitalist property ."[2]

He goes on, however, to state that "the anti-Soviet campaign, which had a class character through and through, disclosed once again that the USSR by virtue of the social foundations laid down by the October revolution, upon which the existence of the bureaucracy itself is dependent in the last analysis (!) still remains a workers' state, terrifying to the bourgeoisie of the whole world." Expropriation of the capitalist class is naturally terrifying to "the bourgeoisie of the whole world", but that does not prove anything about a workers' state. In such a state the workers themselves would expropriate the land and the means of production. In Stalinist Russia expropriation is carried out, however, by, and ultimately for the benefit of, the bureaucracy, not by the workers at all. The bourgeoisie are afraid of expropriation, of power passing out of their hands, whoever seizes it from them. They will defend their property against any class or clique. The fact that they are indignant proves their fear — it tells us nothing at all about the agents inspiring that fear. There is good reason for supposing that the bourgeoisie are being gradually expropriated in Germany: but this would scarcely make Germany a workers' state.

Expropriation of the capitalist class is naturally terrifying to "the bourgeoisie of the whole world", but that does not prove anything about a workers' state. In such a state the workers themselves would expropriate the land and the means of production. In Stalinist Russia expropriation is carried out, however, by, and ultimately for the benefit of, the bureaucracy, not by the workers at all. The bourgeoisie are afraid of expropriation, of power passing out of their hands, whoever seizes it from them.

Trotsky and the workers

Trotsky's attitude towards the Comintern is clear; he regards it as wholly reactionary, even counter-revolutionary. The Soviet-Nazi pact "Socialism in one country" joining hands with "National Socialism", underlines this position for everyone except the obedient Stalinists. His demand for unconditional defence of the USSR therefore rests entirely on this insistence that it is still, though degenerated, a workers' state. Nationalisation (under state control) of industry and agriculture is much more important to Trotsky than

[1] How is this cleansing to be effected, if not by a workers' revolution in Russia? Trotsky realises that only revolution will overthrow the bureaucracy, hence the necessity to form "inside the USSR a real revolutionary party of the Bolshevik-Leninists" insisted on in Section 48 of *War and the Fourth International* of June 1934. He does not, however, advocate revolutionary defeatism in the USSR. It is difficult to see how national defence — in Russia — can be reconciled with advocacy of revolution by Bolshevik-Leninists, so that Trotsky presumably thinks that revolution to overthrow the bureaucracy in the USSR must be deferred. Which brings us back to "how is this cleansing to be effected?"

[2] One may disagree with this latter contention. Schachtman points out — "the crisis in the American Party; an open letter in reply to Comrade Trotsky" *The New International*, March 1940 — that the programme of the Kuusinen government insisted "explicitly not only on its non-Soviet, bourgeois democratic political character", (cf. Spain) "but on the fact that it does not propose to expropriate and nationalise property."

the fact of bureaucratic terrorism and the tyranny of Stalin, even though he has suffered under it himself; for him the economic gains of the October revolution are far more significant than workers' control and freedom from slavery, in defining a workers' state. The truth is that Russia never has been a workers' State. Lenin believed that the workers must be led by (i.e., submit to) the dictatorship of the Bolshevik party; that the party must submit to iron discipline; and that all other parties of the left or right must be ruthlessly liquidated. Trotsky accepts all this — one remembers Kronstadt. But it is astonishing to recall that his long struggle with Lenin from 1903 to 1917 was on this very point of democracy or discipline within the party. Lenin gave in to Trotsky on the issue of the permanent revolution, but Trotsky abandoned his insistence on freedom of discussion within the party. In view of the history of the USSR it is extraordinary that Trotsky should still submit to Lenin's opinion on this point. What it indicates is that he has little or no faith in the revolutionary potentiality of the masses — they must be led by a disciplined band of professional revolutionaries. We have seen that he considers that revolutionary defeatism within the USSR would open the door to capitalist aggression, forgetful of the resistance of the Soviet workers in the interventionist period.

The Fourth International has closed its eyes to the principal lesson of the history of the USSR. Accepting the same Bolshevik premises (and they are equally accepted by the Schachtman group), it is compelled to regard the development of the "parasitic bureaucracy" and the "degeneration of the revolution" not as the inevitable outcome of the iron discipline with its consequent suppression of opposition within, as well as outside, the party, and the toadying, sly mentality it encourages; instead these phenomena are attributed to the evil genius of one man — Joseph Stalin. Trotskyism merely promises socialism by adopting the same methods, and mistakes, which have produced Stalinism. The necessity for the total destruction of the state, and all its instruments, and the organising of the revolution with special care to prevent the emergence of a new privileged class; these considerations find no place in the programme of the Fourth International. Libertarianism forms no part of its outlook. One cannot feel any confidence that given the same power and control, it would not follow exactly the same road as the Third International.

U.S.S.R. – Anarchist Position

War Commentary, July 1941[1]

For anarchists the war between Germany and Russia does not create a fresh problem. It is therefore necessary to give only a brief outline of the important features of the new war situation. Our programme published in the May issue of *War Commentary* declared: "We oppose the war as the outcome of the clashing interests of rival imperialisms." It is rivalry of interests between the rulers of Russia and the rulers of Germany that has brought them to armed conflict. Germany does not wage war on Russia for fear of revolution, but to reap the economic gains of victory. Stalin is defending not the revolution, but the economic foundations of the Soviet ruling bureaucracy. This new phase in the world war cannot be interpreted as though the Reichswehr fought for the capitalist ruling class, while the Red Army defended working class interests. In this sense Churchill was quite correct when he portentously declared in his broadcast speech of June 22nd, that: "This is no class war."

Those who have hitherto opposed the imperialist war but believe that Russia is not an imperialist state, have now .to revise their attitude, but it is clear enough that the U.S.S.R. has always pursued an imperialist foreign policy, and that it is the state and not the workers which owns and controls the whole life of the country.

As the Bolsheviks settled down to establish their industry and increase their trade with foreign capitalist countries, the idea of extending the revolution abroad gradually disappeared. In Hungary, in Italy, three times in Germany, and most glaringly of all in Spain in 1936 and '37 revolutionary situations were neglected and even sabotaged. Those who believe that the Communist International existed to produce revolution abroad, must face the fact that its record, in spite of several opportunities, has been one of absolute and total failure. Even after the Spanish Revolution of 19th July, 1936 was an established fact over Catalonia and a large part of Spain, as a result of the efforts of the workers of the Anarcho-Syndicalist C .N .T., the "Daily Worker" (6th August, 1936) declared that those who said that the Spanish people were fighting for social revolution, or anything other than bourgeois democracy, were " downright lying scoundrels." Stalin's agents then proceeded mainly by economic strangulation, to crush the achievements of the Spanish Revolution. The world revolution was abandoned in favour of alliances with capitalist countries. Like the bourgeois states the U.S.S.R. took part in the manoeuvrings to establish a balance of power in Europe – in reality the encirclement of Germany. Those were the glorious days when the powerful French Communist Party became the most

[1] Included in *The Left and World War II: Selections from the Anarchist Journal War Commentary 1939-1943* (London: Freedom Press, 1989). (*Black Flag*)

nationalistic and patriotic party on the left advocating rearmament and a larger army to make war on Germany. Stalin's somersault in August, 1939, came as a surprise only to those who thought of Russia as outside the imperialist game. Those who recognised that the Soviet Union fully entered into international power politics, saw in it nothing more surprising or immoral than the alliance with imperialist France or semi-fascist Turkey; or than the trade pact with Mussolini's Italy. The crude lack of preparation of public opinion, the rapidity of the change over in policy were the only causes of astonishment though Hitler had done just the same kind of volte-face before.

It is obvious that Russia's aim in foreign policy was not to help revolution in Europe but to avoid isolation by lining up with capitalist states. Indeed the behaviour of the Comintern in Spain revealed the apparent paradox that revolution in Europe was a greater menace to Stalin and his imperialist aim than the European imperialist rivalries!

The regime is not a Communist one in which the workers own and control the means of wealth production. On the contrary, these are owned by the state which represents, as always, a privileged class – the bureaucracy… The workers in the Soviet Union… sell their labour power to the employer, in this case the State.

Although Stalin had attempted to deny it by means of his doctrine of Socialism in a single country," it is obvious that a state which pursues an imperialist foreign policy cannot itself be revolutionary. We have briefly indicated that Soviet foreign policy proves this. But there is also abundant information regarding the internal life of the U.S.S.R. which makes it even more clear. The regime is not a Communist one in which the workers own and control the means of wealth production. On the contrary, these are owned by the state which represents, as always, a privileged class – the bureaucracy – controlled by the Bolshevik party under the supreme dictator Stalin. The workers in the Soviet Union do not, either individually or collectively own anything, and so, as elsewhere, are compelled to sell their labour power to the employer, in this case the State. Moreover the concentration into its own hands of the means of production, the control of the army, the huge police organisation, the Party and the bureaucracy, renders the state extremely powerful... Hence the dictatorship is far more efficient, all-pervading, and oppressive than for example, the British capitalist state. Thus, no party but the Bolshevik party is allowed, no opposition within the party tolerated; there is no liberty of thought or speech; nor are the workers allowed any liberty of association or even of assembly. Inequality of income and privilege is extreme, and is the more offensive because of the hypocritical reiteration that the workers hold power.

The true nature of Stalin's regime is known to all but the ignorant and those blinded by Communist Party propaganda. One can concur with Mussolini's remark after the purges in the party: "Stalin is a good fascist but too barbarous." Nevertheless, it remained for the German attack on Russia to expose to the gaze of all the contradictions in the supposedly anti-war attitude of the Stalinists and Trotskyists. The former, of course, now have to abandon their propaganda for a People's Peace. They must demand the fullest possible support for the Government's military and economic aid to Russia. The wheel of August 1939 has come full circle, and they are back at the Popular Front. To avoid the humiliation of an about turn once more as ridiculous as that of October 2nd, 1939 they are driven to such shifts as pretending a distrust of the Churchill government (at first) and warning their followers of the "treacherous sections of the government who even now would switch the war." But the switch the war bogey has rather lost its point seeing that the former interventionist Churchill evidently has no fears about sending aid to the supposed "workers state," represented by the Stalinists as "the spearhead of the attack on world capital." Evidently Churchill, who, as leader and champion of British capitalist imperialism, should know what he is about, regards German fascism as offering a much more serious threat to British Capitalism, than the Moscow leaders of the "Communist" International. Roosevelt apparently shares his contempt for the "Red danger of Moscow."

The Trotskyists also have now to face the consequences of their belief in the socialist content of the U.S.S.R. The necessity to defend the workers' state has driven them also into the pro-war camp. Their support for the Anglo-American-Soviet bloc is not however, quite so unqualified "in theory" as the Stalinists; they urge the defence of the U.S.S.R. but attack "the decadent bureaucracy of Stalin." This theoretical qualification however can make no difference to the practical support for the war effort which their hallucinations regarding the working-class structure of the Soviet state compels them to demand from the British workers.

The anarchists by opposing themselves to all imperialist wars have adopted the only logical position. They refuse to side with any enemy of the working class. They concentrate all their energies in fighting against the State, now becoming more and more powerful in all the countries of the world. Only when it will be crushed will the workers be able to organise themselves in complete economic and political freedom.

Paul Mattick on Trotsky

The 'Hero' of Kronstadt Writes History

Paul Mattick

One Big Union Monthly, November 1937

The Revolution Betrayed, by Leon Trotsky

To those readers who are already acquainted with Trotsky's ideas and the publications of his movement, his present book will be a disappointment as it contains little new material. In this review we shall therefore limit ourselves to those portions of the volume which indicate that even in the mind of the party-intellectual changes do take place. But, it must be said, even such changes as Trotsky sees are only matters of emphasis – an effort to adapt his "theoretical line" to the new situation which has obviously contradicted previous postulates of his theory.

Any serious student of Soviet Russia must admit that Trotsky's factual material gives an accurate picture of the real situation in Russia. It may also be said that, on the whole, he has paid due regard to the high-lights in the history and present policy of the Third International even though he still tends to account for the counter-revolutionary role of that institution and its sponsor, the Soviet state, by referring to the stupidity and viciousness of Stalin and his associates. The subjective "errors" and "crimes" of these leaders seem to play, according to Trotsky, a more significant part in the general development than the objective factor of economic-social necessity.

Stalinism can be explained only by way of Bolshevism. If Leninism was the revolutionary stage of Bolshevism, Stalinism is its phase of consolidation. The two are inseparable and a criticism of one is of small value without an analysis of the other.

Hazy History

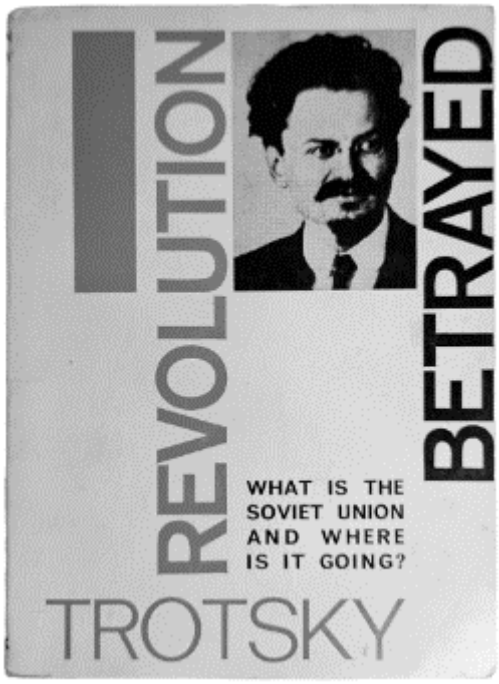
The farther Trotsky searches back into the past of Bolshevism and Russia, the more meagre are the fruits of his investigation. It is regrettable that the period during which Lenin and Trotsky held sway is dealt with in such a cursory manner as not to admit of a critical evaluation. It should be evident that to explain Stalin's triumph it is necessary to refer back to pre-Stalinist conditions in Russia and it is precisely these important years that preceded Stalin's rise which meet with no criticism at the pen of Trotsky. Stalinism can be explained only by way of Bolshevism. If Leninism was the revolutionary stage of Bolshevism, Stalinism is its phase of consolidation. The two are inseparable and a criticism of one is of small value without an analysis of the other.

Trotsky writes: "Socialism has demonstrated its right to victory, not on the pages of *Das Kapital*, but in an industrial arena comprising a sixth part of the earth's surface – not in the language of dialectics, but in the language of steel, cement and electricity." (p. 8). This sentence, accepted at its face value, vitiates all criticism of Stalinism for certainly, this "right" of "Socialism" has been better demonstrated in the period of Stalin than before. Only with Stalin has this "right" been demonstrated at all "in the industrial arena." Lenin himself did not think it possible to do more than vindicate the "right" of *state capitalism* after the Bolshevik seizure of power. Can it be that when Trotsky innocently states that the "term 'state capitalism' has the advantage that nobody knows exactly what it means," he is expressing a hope that his readers are unacquainted with Lenin's position on this question which dominated the ideas of the Bolsheviks prior to Stalin's ascendancy?

Lenin, at the eleventh party congress, stated clearly his line: "*State capitalism* is that form of capitalism which we shall be in a position to restrict, to establish its limits; this capitalism is bound up with the state – that is, the workers, the most advanced part of the workers, the vanguard is ourselves. And it is we on whom the nature of this *state capitalism* will depend." But it was necessary to camouflage the state capitalist character of Russian economy before the Russian masses. As Bukharin expressed it at a government conference toward the end of 1926: "If we confess that the enterprises taken over by the State are state-capitalist enterprises, if we say this openly, how can we conduct a campaign for a greater output? In factories which are not purely socialistic, the workers will not increase the productivity of their labour." This plainly reveals that the Bolsheviks did not think it convenient to tell the

workers that Russia is a state capitalist system. Of course the international bourgeoisie understood that they could deal quite as well – if not better – with the One Big Corporation which was Soviet capitalism as they had done formerly with the multitude of individual capitalists.

Frequently Lenin identified state capitalism and socialism.. In *Towards the Seizure of Power*, he writes: "Socialism is nothing but *state capitalist monopoly* made to benefit the whole people; by this token it ceases to be capitalist monopoly." In spite of the unmistakable meaning of Lenin's words Trotsky nevertheless writes that his analysis of the concept of state capitalism "is sufficient to show how absurd the attempts are to identify capitalist state-ism with the soviet system." (p. 248)



Russian State Capitalism

Trotsky denies the state capitalist character of Russian economy by reducing the term state capitalism to a meaningless phrase. That is, he sees in the concept no more than was seen in it prior to the Russian revolution, or than is seen in it today with reference to the state capitalist *tendencies* of the fascist countries.

Since it is clear that Russia today is dominated by an economy different from what is implied by the term state capitalism in fascist or general bourgeois society, Trotsky is enabled to win his argument by posing the question to suit his convenience. But a full-fledged state capitalist system is surely something other than *state capitalist tendencies*, or state enterprises, or even state control in an otherwise bourgeois society. State capitalism as a social system presupposes the expropriation of the individual capitalists, that is, a revolution in property relations.

While the capitalist *mode of production* grew up historically on the basis of individual ownership of the means of production, the Russian revolution has shown that under certain conditions the capitalist *mode of production* can continue to exist even though the individual proprietors are eliminated and replaced by a collective exploiting apparatus where factories are not owned by capitalist "X" or "Y" but are "controlled" (i.e. *owned*) by the State (i.e. the controlling classes).

The Russian revolution changed property relations, replacing individual proprietors by the Bolsheviks and their allies, substituting new "revolutionary" phrases for the old pep slogans, erecting the hammer and sickle over the Kremlin where the Czarist Eagle once stood, but the Bolshevik seizure of power did not change the capitalist mode of production. That is to say, under the Bolsheviks, there remains, as formerly, the system of wage labour and the appropriation by the exploiting class of surplus value which is profit. And, what is done with such profit is exactly what was done with it under the system of individual capitalists, allowing, of course, for the special character of state capitalism.

Such surplus value is distributed according to the needs of the total capital in the interests of further capital accumulation and to safeguard the state capitalist apparatus by increasing its power and prestige.

Only a change in the mode of production can bring about socialism; otherwise, as far as the workers are concerned, they will have only exchanged one set of exploiters for another. Under the conditions of state capitalism the process of accumulation, the development of the productive forces by wage labour is bound up, as in the case of "regular" capitalism, with an increased appropriation of surplus value, with further exploitation, and hence with the development of new classes, of new vested interests in order to continue this process since the working class cannot exploit itself.

This capitalist necessity serves to explain Russian development; no other "line," no other "policy" could have essentially changed this development. By failing to recognise the state capitalist character of Russia, by regarding its present economy as a transitional step to socialism, Trotsky merely indicates his readiness to precipitate a new state capitalist revolution which must lead to a new Stalinism – another betrayal of the Revolution.

Advocates A New Machine

Trotsky describes the contradictions of the Russian economic situation as follows: "To the extent that, in contrast to a decaying capitalism, it develops the productive forces, it is preparing the economic basis of socialism. To the extent that, for the benefit of an upper stratum, it carries to more and more extreme expression bourgeois norms of distribution, it is preparing a capitalist restoration. This contrast between forms of property and norms of distribution cannot grow indefinitely. Either the bourgeois norms in one form or another spread to the means of production, or the norms of distribution must be brought into correspondence with the socialist property system." (p. 244)

The solution, according to Trotsky, lies in the replacement of the present parasitical bureaucracy by a non-parasitical apparatus. Nothing else in his opinion needs to be changed as the Soviet economic system is

fully qualified to proceed toward socialism in combination with the world-revolutionary trend. This new bureaucracy, essential in Trotsky's transitional stage, will, according to Trotsky, introduce a greater equality of income. But Trotsky must remember that the present bureaucracy started out with the same idea, originally limiting salaries to Communists, etc. It was the circumstances enveloping the economy which not only enabled but obliged the present bureaucracy to adopt a programme of ever increasing economic inequality in its favour. This was in harmony with the need of a faster accumulation to secure the system as a whole. There is no guarantee that a hypothetical Trotskyist bureaucracy would be any different in this respect from Stalin's machine.

Under the prevailing mode of production Russia cannot develop the productive forces higher than the old familiar brand of capitalism in the western world was able to do. Because it cannot do so its system of distribution can never exceed the norms of capitalist distribution. Such a contradiction between forms of property and norms of distribution as Trotsky envisions does not exist. The Russian method of distribution is in perfect harmony with its state capitalist method of production.

It is only necessary to reflect on the paramount role which Trotsky played in the first thundering years of Bolshevik Russia to understand why he cannot admit that the Bolshevik revolution was only able to change the form of capitalism but was not able to do away with the capitalist form of exploitation. It is the shadow of that period that lies in the way of his understanding.

Leon Trotsky

Paul Mattick

Living Marxism, Fall 1940

With Leon Trotsky there passed away the last of the great leaders of bolshevism. It was his activity during the last fifteen years that kept alive some of the original content of the Bolshevik ideology – the great weapon for transforming backward Russia into its present state-capitalistic form.

As all men are wiser in practice than in theory, so also Trotsky by his accomplishments achieves far greater importance than through his rationalisations that accompanied them. Next to Lenin, he was without doubt the greatest figure of the Russian Revolution. However, the need for leaders like Lenin and Trotsky, and the effect these leaders had, brings to light the utter helplessness of the proletarian masses to solve their own real needs in face of a merciless unripe historical situation.

The masses had to be led; but the leaders could lead only in accordance with their own necessities. The need for leadership of the kind practiced by bolshevism finally indicates nothing else than the need to discipline and terrorise the masses, so that they may work and live in harmony with the plans of the ruling social group. This kind of leadership in itself demonstrates the existence of class relations, class politics and economics, and an irreconcilable opposition between the leaders and the led. The over-towering personality of Leon Trotsky reveals the non-proletarian character of the Bolshevik Revolution just as well as the mummified and deified Lenin in the Moscow Mausoleum.

In order that some may lead, others must be powerless. To be the vanguard of the workers, the elite has to usurp all social key positions. Like the bourgeoisie of old, the new leaders had to seize and control all means of production and destruction. To hold their control and keep it effective, the leaders must constantly strengthen themselves by bureaucratic expansion, and continually divide the ruled. Only masters can be leaders.

Trotsky was such a master. At first he was the masterly propagandist, the great and never tiring orator, establishing his leading position in the revolution. Then he became the creator and master of the Red Army, fighting against the *Right* and the *Left*, fighting for bolshevism, which he hoped to master too. But here he failed. When leaders make history, those who are led no longer count; but neither do they disappear. Trusting in the force of grand historical spectacles, Trotsky neglected to be the efficient opportunist behind the scenes of bureaucratic development that he was in the spotlight of world history.

Today, great men are no longer necessary. Modern propaganda instruments can transform any fraud into a hero, any mediocre personality into an all-comprehending genius. Propaganda actually transforms through its collective efforts any average, if not stupid, leader, like Hitler and Stalin, into a great man. The leaders become symbols of an organised, collective, and really intelligent will to maintain given social institutions. Outside of Russia, Trotsky was soon reduced to the master of a small sect of professional revolutionists and their providers. He was "the Old Man," the indisputable authority of an artificial growth upon the political scene, destined to end in absurdity. To become the master of a *Fourth International*, as his adversary Stalin was master of the *Third*, remained the illusion with which he died.

There is here no need to retrace Trotsky's individual development; his autobiography suffices. Neither is it necessary to stress his many qualifications, literary and

otherwise. His works, and most of all his *History of the Russian Revolution*, will immortalise his name as a writer and politician. But there is a real need to oppose the development of the Trotsky legend which will make out of this leader of the Russian state capitalist revolution a martyr of the international working class – a legend which must be rejected together with all other postulates and aspects of bolshevism.

Louis Ferdinand Céline has said that revolutions should be judged twenty years later. And in doing so, he found only words of condemnation for bolshevism. To us, however, it seems that a present-day re-evaluation of bolshevism could well do without any kind of moralising. In retrospect it is quite easy to see in bolshevism the beginning of a new phase of capitalist development, which was initiated by the first World War. No doubt, in 1917, Russia was the weakest link in the capitalist world structure. But the whole of capitalism in its private property form was already on the verge of stagnation. To erect and expand a workable economic system of the laissez-faire type was no longer possible. Only the force of complete centralism, of dictatorial rule over the whole of society, could guarantee the establishment of an exploitative social order capable of expanding production despite the declining world-capitalism.

But there is a real need to oppose the development of the Trotsky legend which will make out of this leader of the Russian state capitalist revolution a martyr of the international working class – a legend which must be rejected together with all other postulates and aspects of bolshevism.

There can be no doubt that the Bolshevik leaders by creating their state-capitalistic structure – which has, within twenty years, become the example for the further evolution of the whole of the capitalist world – were deeply convinced that their construction conformed to the needs and desires of their own and the world proletariat. Even when they found that they could not alter the fact that their society continued to be based on the exploitation of labour, they sought to alter the meaning of this fact by offering in excuse a theory that identified the rule of the leaders with the interests of the led. The motive force of social development in class society – the class struggle – theoretically was done away with; but practically, an authoritarian regime had to be developed masked as the dictatorship of the proletariat. In the creation of this regime, and in the attempt to camouflage it, Trotsky won most of his laurels. He rested on those laurels to the very last. It is only necessary to reflect on the paramount role which Trotsky played in the first thundering years of Bolshevik Russia to understand why he could not admit that the Bolshevik revolution was able only to change the form of capitalism but was not able to do away with the capitalistic form of exploitation. It was the shadow of that period that darkened his understanding.

In the general backwardness that prevailed in Czarist Russia, the intelligentsia had little opportunity to improve its position. The talent and capacities of the educated middle classes found no realisation in this stagnating society. Later this situation found its parallel in the middle-class conditions in Italy and Germany after Versailles and in the wake of the following world crisis. In all three countries, and in both situations, the intelligentsia and large layers of the middle classes became politicised and counter-poised to the declining economic system. In the search for ideologies useful as weapons, and in the search for allies, all had to appeal to the proletarian layer of society, and to all other dissatisfied elements. The leadership of the Bolshevik as well as of the fascist movements was not proletarian, but middle class: the result of the frustration of intellectuals under conditions of economic stagnation and atrophy.

In Russia, before 1917, a revolutionary ideology was developed with the help of western socialism – with Marxism. But the ideology served only the act of revolution, nothing more. It had to be altered continuously and re-fitted to serve the developing needs of the state-capitalist revolution and its profiteers. Finally, this ideology lost all connection with reality and served as religion, a weapon to maintain the new ruling class.

With this ideology, the Russian intelligentsia, supported by ambitious workers, were able to seize power and to hold it because of the disintegration of Czarist society, the wide social gap between peasants and workers, the undeveloped proletarian consciousness, and the general weakness of international capitalism after the war. Coming to power with the help of a russified Marxian ideology, Trotsky, after he lost power, had no choice but to maintain the revolutionary ideology in its original form against the degeneration of Marxism indulged in by the Stalinists. He could afford this luxury, for he had escaped the iron consequences of the social system he had helped to bring about. Now he could lead a life of dignity, that is, a life of opposition. But had he suddenly been brought back to power, his actions could have been none other than those of Stalin's which he so despised. After all, the latter is himself no more than the creature of Lenin's and Trotsky's policies. As a matter of fact, "Stalinists" as a particular type are, so long as

they are controllable, just that type of men which leaders like Lenin and Trotsky need and love most. But sometimes the worm turns. Those Bolshevik underlings elevated into power positions understand to the fullest that the only insurance for security lies in imprisonment, exile, and murder.

In 1925 oppressive methods were not far enough advanced to secure absolute power for the great leader. The dictatorial instruments were still hampered by the traditions of democratic capitalism. Leadership remained after Lenin's death; there was not yet the Leader. Though Trotsky was forced into exile, the unripeness of the authoritarian form of government spared his life for fifteen years. Soon both old and new oppositions to Stalin's rule could easily be destroyed. Hitler's overwhelming success in the "night of the long knives," when he killed off with one bold stroke the whole of the effective opposition against him, showed Stalin the way to handle his own problems. Whoever was suspected of having at one time or another entertained ideas unpleasant to Stalin's taste and absolute rule, whoever because of his critical capacities was suspected of being able in the future to reach the willing ears of the underdogs and disappointed bureaucrats, was eliminated. This was done not in the Nibelungen manner in which the German fascists got rid of Roehm, Strasser and their following, but in the hidden, scheming, cynical manner of the Moscow Trials, to exploit even the death of the potential oppositionists for the greater glory of the all-embracing and beloved leader, Stalin. The applause of those taking the offices emptied by the murdered was assured. To make the broad masses happily accept the miserable end of the "old Bolsheviks" was merely a job for the minister of propaganda. Thus the whole of Russia, not only the leading bureaucratic group, finished off the "traitors to the fatherland of the workers."

Though secretly celebrating Trotsky's death at studio parties, the defenders of Stalinism, affecting naïveté, will ask why Stalin should be interested in doing away with Trotsky. After all, what harm could Trotsky do to the mighty Stalin and his great Russia? However; a bureaucracy capable of destroying thousands of books because they contain Trotsky's name, re-writing and again re-writing history to erase every accomplishment of the murdered opposition, a bureaucracy able to stage the Moscow Trials, is certainly also capable of hiring a murderer, or finding a volunteer to silence the one discordant voice in an otherwise perfect harmony of praise for the new ruling class in Russia. The self-exalting identification with his leader of the last pariah within the Communist Party, the idiotic fanaticism displayed by these people when the mirror of truth is held before their eyes, permits no surprise at Trotsky's murder. It is surprising only that he was not murdered sooner. To understand the assassination of Trotsky, it is only necessary to look at the mechanism and the spirit of any Bolshevik organisation, Trotsky's included.

What harm could Trotsky do? Precisely because he was not out to harm his Russia and his workers' state was he so intensely hated by the ruling Bolshevik bureaucracy. For the very reason that the Trotskyites in countries where they had a foothold were not out to change in the least the party instrument devised by Lenin, that their spirit remained the spirit of bolshevism, they were hated by the proprietors of the separate Communist Parties.

The swift steps of history make possible any apparent impossibility. Russia is not immune to the vast changes the present world experiences. In a tottering world, all governments become insecure. No one knows where the hurricane will strike next. Each one has to reckon with all eventualities. Because Trotsky insisted on defending the heritage of 1917, because he remained the Bolshevik who saw in state capitalism the basis for socialism and in the rule of the party the rule of the workers, because he wanted nothing but the replacement of Stalin and the Stalin-supporting bureaucracy, he was really dangerous to the latter.

That he had other arguments, such as that of the "permanent revolution" against the slogan of "socialism in one country," etc., is rather meaningless, because the permanence of the revolution as well as the isolation of Russia, is dependent not upon slogans and political decisions, but on realities over which even the most powerful party has no control. Such arguments serve only to disguise the quite ordinary interests for which political parties struggle.

It was the non-revolutionary character of Trotsky's policies with regard to the Russian scene that made him so dangerous. The Russian bureaucracy knows quite well that the present world situation is not given to revolutionary changes in the interests of the world proletariat. Dictators and bureaucrats think in terms of dictatorship and bureaucracy. It is pretenders to the throne they fear, not the rabble of the street. Napoleon found it easy to control any insurrectionary crowd; he found it far more difficult to deal with the machinations of Fouché and Talleyrand. A Trotsky, living, could be recalled with the help of the lower layers of the Russian bureaucracy whenever an opportune moment arose. The chance to replace Stalin, to triumph finally, depended on Trotsky's restricting his criticism to Stalin's individual, brutal moroseness, to the sickening, newly-rich attitudes of the Stalin satellites. He realised that he could return to power only with the help of the greater part of the bureaucracy, that he could take his seat in the Kremlin again only in the wake of a palace revolution, or a successful Roehm putsch. He was too much of a realist – despite all the convenient mysticism of his political program – not to realise the silliness of an appeal to the Russian workers, those workers who must have learned by now to see in their new masters their new exploiters, and to tolerate them out of fear and necessity. Not to tolerate, and not to approve the new situation means to surrender the chance to improve

one's own situation; and as long as Russian economy is expanding, individual ambitions and individual apologia will rule individuals. The suckers make the best of a situation which they feel is beyond their power to alter. Precisely because Trotsky was not a revolutionary, but merely a competitor for leadership under existing Russian conditions – ever ready to follow the call of a bureaucracy in re-organisation should a national crises demand the abdication of Stalin – he became increasingly more dangerous to the present ruling clique engaged, as it is, in new, vast imperialistic adventures. Trotsky's murder is one of the many consequences of the re-birth of Russian imperialism.

Today Bolshevism stands revealed as the initial phase of a great movement which, expected to perpetuate capitalistic exploitation, is slowly but surely embracing the whole world and changing the no longer functioning private property economy into greater state capitalistic units. The rule of the bolshevist commissar finds its logical conclusion in fascistic dictatorships spreading over the globe. Just as little as Lenin and Trotsky knew what they were actually doing when they were fighting for socialism, just as little do Hitler and Mussolini know today what they are doing in fighting for a greater Germany and the Roman Empire. In the world as it is, there is a wide difference between what men want to do, and what they are actually doing. Men, however great, are very small before history, which steps beyond them and surprises them always anew with the results of their own surprising schemes.

In 1917, Trotsky knew as little as we ourselves knew that the Bolshevik revolution would have to end in an international fascistic movement and in the preparation and execution of another world war. If he had known the trend of development, he would either have been murdered twenty years ago, or today he would occupy Stalin's place. As it is, he ended as a victim of the fascist counter-revolution against the international working class and the peace of the world.

Nevertheless, despite the fact that Stalin murdered Trotsky, despite the displacement of all forms of bolshevism by fascism, a final evaluation of Trotsky's historical role will have to place him in line with Lenin, Mussolini, Stalin and Hitler as one of the great leaders of a world-wide movement attempting, knowingly and unknowingly, to prolong the capitalist exploitation system with methods first devised by bolshevism, then completed by German fascism, and finally glorified in the general butchery which we are now experiencing. After that – the labour movement may begin.

Bolshevism and Stalinism

Paul Mattick

Politics, March-April 1947

The alleged purpose of Trotsky's biography of Stalin[1] is to show "how a personality of this sort was formed, and how it came to power by usurpation of the right to such an exceptional role." The real purpose of the book, however, is to show why Trotsky lost the power position he temporarily occupied and why his rather than Stalin's name should follow Lenin's. Prior to Lenin's death it had always been "Lenin *and* Trotsky"; Stalin's name had invariably been near or at the end of any list of prominent Bolsheviks. On one occasion Lenin even suggested that he put his own signature second to Trotsky's. In brief, the book helps to explain why Trotsky was of the opinion "that he was the natural successor to Lenin" and in effect is a biography of both Stalin and Trotsky.

All beginnings are small, of course, and the Bolshevism of Lenin and Trotsky differs from present-day Stalinism just as Hitler's brown terror of 1933 differed from the Nazism of World War II. That there is nothing in the arsenal of Stalinism that cannot also be found in that of Lenin and Trotsky is attested to by the earlier writings of Trotsky himself.[2] For example Trotsky, like Stalin, introduced *compulsory labour service* as a "socialist principle." He, too, was convinced "that not one serious socialist will begin to deny to the Labor State the right to lay its hands upon the worker who refuses to execute his labor power." It was Trotsky who hurried to stress the "socialistic character" of inequality, for, as he said, "those workers who do more for the general interest than others receive the right to a greater quantity of the social product than the lazy, the careless, and the disorganizes." It was his opinion that everything must be done to "assist the development of rivalry in the sphere of production."

Of course, all this was conceived as the "socialist principle" of the "transformation period." It was dictated by objective difficulties in the way of full socialisation. There was not the desire but the need to

[1] *Stalin. An appraisal of the man and his influence. Edited and translated from the Russian by Charles Malamuth*. (Harper, $5) The first seven chapters and the appendix, that is, the bulk of the book, Trotsky wrote and revised himself. The last four chapters, consisting of notes, excerpts, documents, and other raw materials, have been edited.

[2] See for instance, L. Trotsky's "Dictatorship vs. Democracy," New York, 1922; particularly from page 135 to page 150. [Better known as *Terrorism and Communism*: *a reply to Karl Kautsky* (1920) – *Black Flag*]

strengthen party dictatorship until it led to the abolishment of even those freedoms of activity which, in one fashion or another, had been granted by the bourgeois state. However, Stalin, too, can offer the excuse of necessity.

In order to find other arguments against Stalinism than his personal dislike for a competitor in intra-party struggles, Trotsky must discover and construct political differences between himself and Stalin and between Stalin and Lenin in order to support his assertion that without Stalin things would have been different in Russia and elsewhere.

There could not have been any "theoretical" differences between Lenin and Stalin, as the only theoretical work bearing the name of the latter had been inspired and supervised by Lenin. And if Stalin's "nature craved" the centralised party machine, it was Lenin who constructed the perfect machine for him, so that on that score, too, no differences could arise. In fact, as long as Lenin was active, Stalin was no trouble to him, however troublesome he may have been to "The Number Two Bolshevik."

Still, in order for Trotsky to explain the "Soviet Thermidor," there must be a difference between Leninism and Stalinism, provided, of course, there was such a Thermidor. On this point, Trotsky has brought forth various ideas as to when it took place, but in his Stalin biography he ignores the question of time in favour of the simple statement that it had something to do with the "increasing privileges for the bureaucracy." However, this only brings us back to the early period of the Bolshevik dictatorship which found Lenin and Trotsky engaged in creating the state bureaucracy and increasing its efficiency by increasing its privileges.

Competitors for Power

The fact that the relentless struggle for position came into the open only after Lenin's death suggests something other than the Soviet Thermidor. It simply indicates that by that time the Bolshevik state was of sufficient strength, or was in a position, to disregard to a certain degree both the Russian masses and the international bourgeoisie. The developing bureaucracy began to feel sure that Russia was theirs for keeps; the fight for the plums of the Revolution entered its more general and more serious stage.

All adversaries in this struggle stressed the need of dictatorship in view of the unsolved internal frictions between "workers" and "peasants," the economic and technological backwardness of the country as a whole, and the constant danger of attack from the outside. But within this setting of dictatorship, all sorts of arguments could be raised. The power-struggle within the developing ruling class expressed itself in policy-proposals either for or against the interests of the peasants, either for or against the limitation of factory councils, either for or against an offensive policy on the international front. High-sounding theories were expounded with regard to the estimation of the peasantry, the relationship between bureaucracy and revolution, the question of party generations, etc. and reached their climax in the Trotsky-Stalin controversy on the "Permanent Revolution" and the theory of "Socialism in one Country."

It is quite possible that the debaters believed their own phrases; yet, despite their theoretical differentiations, whenever they acted upon a real situation they all acted alike. In order to suit their own needs, they naturally expressed identical things in different terms. If Trotsky rushes to the front – to all fronts in fact – he merely defends the fatherland. But Stalin "is attracted by the front, because here for the first time he could work with the most finished of all the administrative machines, the military machine" for which, by the way, Trotsky claims all credit. If Trotsky pleads for discipline, he shows his "iron hand"; if Stalin does the same, he deals with a "heavy hand." If Trotsky's bloody suppression of the Kronstadt Rebellion was a "tragic necessity," Stalin's suppression of the Georgian independence movement is in the manner of a "great-Russian Russifier, riding roughshod over the rights of his own people as a nation." And *vice versa*: suggestions made by Trotsky are called false and counterrevolutionary by Stalin's henchmen; when carried out under Stalin's auspices, they become additional proof of the great leader's wisdom.

It simply indicates that by that time the Bolshevik state was of sufficient strength, or was in a position, to disregard to a certain degree both the Russian masses and the international bourgeoisie. The developing bureaucracy began to feel sure that Russia was theirs for keeps; the fight for the plums of the Revolution entered its more general and more serious stage

To understand Bolshevism, and in a narrower sense Stalinism, it is not enough to follow the superficial and often silly controversies between Stalinists and Trotskyites. After all, the Russian Revolution embraces more than just the Bolshevik Party. It was not even initiated by organised political groups but by spontaneous reactions of the masses to the breakdown of an already precarious economic system in the wake of military defeat. The February upheavals "started" with hunger riots in market places, protest strikes in factories, and the spontaneous declaration of solidarity with the rioters on the part of the soldiers. But all

spontaneous movements in modern history have been accompanied by organised forces. As soon as the collapse of Czarism was imminent, organisations came to the fore with directives and definite political goals.

If prior to the Revolution Lenin had stressed organisation rather than spontaneity, it was because of the retarded Russian conditions, which gave the spontaneous movements a backward character. Even the politically advanced groups offered only limited programs. The industrial workers desired capitalistic reforms similar to those enjoyed by the workers in more capitalistically advanced countries. The petty-bourgeoisie and important layers of the capitalist class wanted a Western bourgeois democracy. The peasants desired land in a capitalist agriculture. Though progressive for Czarist Russia, these demands were of the essence of bourgeois revolution.

The new liberalistic February government attempted to continue the war. But it was the conditions of war against which the masses were rebelling. All promised reforms within the Russian setting of that time and within the existing imperialistic power relationships were doomed to remain empty phrases; there was no way of directing the spontaneous movements into those channels desired by the government. In new upsurges the Bolsheviks came into power not by way of a *second revolution* but by a forced change of government. This seizure of power was made easy by the lack of interest that the restless masses were showing in the existing government. The October *coup*, as Lenin said, "was easier than lifting a feather." The final victory was "practically achieved by default . . . Not a single regiment rose to defend Russian democracy . . . The struggle for supreme power over an empire that comprised one-sixth of the terrestrial globe was decided between amazingly small forces on both sides in the provinces as well as in the two capital cities."

The Bolsheviks did not try to restore the old conditions in order to reform them, but declared themselves in favour of the *concrete results* of the conceptually backward spontaneous movements: the ending of the war, the workers' control of industry, the expropriation of the ruling classes and the division of land. And so they stayed in power.

The pre-revolutionary demands of the Russian masses had been backward for two reasons: they had long been realised in the main capitalist nations, and they could no longer be realised in view of existing world conditions. At a time when the concentration and centralisation process of world capitalism had brought about the decline of bourgeois democracy almost everywhere, it was no longer possible to initiate it afresh in Russia. If *laissez faire* democracy was out of the question, so were all those reforms in capital-labour relations usually related to social legislation and trade-unionism. Capitalist agriculture, too, had passed beyond the breaking up of feudal estates and production for a capitalist market to the industrialisation of agriculture and its consequent incorporation into the concentration process of capital.

If one wants to use the term at all, the "counter-revolution" possible in the Russia of 1917 was that inherent in the Revolution itself, that is, in the opportunity it offered the Bolsheviks to restore a centrally-directed social order for the perpetuation of the capitalistic divorce of the workers from the means of production

The Bolsheviks & Mass Spontaneity

The Bolsheviks did not claim responsibility for the Revolution. They gave full credit to the spontaneous movements. Of course, they underlined the obvious fact that Russia's previous history, which included the Bolshevik party, had lent some kind of vague revolutionary consciousness to the unorganised masses and they were not backward about asserting that without their leadership the course of the Revolution would have been different and most probably would have led to a counterrevolution. "Had the Bolsheviks not seized power," writes Trotsky, "the world would have had a Russian name for Fascism five years before the March on Rome."

But counter-revolutionary attempts on the part of the traditional powers failed not because of any conscious direction of the spontaneous movements, not because of Lenin's "sharp eyes, which surveyed the situation correctly," but because of the fact that these movements could not be diverted from their own course. If one wants to use the term at all, the "counter-revolution" possible in the Russia of 1917 was that inherent in the Revolution itself, that is, in the opportunity it offered the Bolsheviks to restore a centrally-directed social order for the perpetuation of the capitalistic divorce of the workers from the means of production and the consequent restoration of Russia as a competing imperialist power.

During the revolution, the interests of the rebelling masses and of the Bolsheviks merged to a remarkable degree. Beyond the temporary merger, there also existed a deep unity between the socialising concepts of the Bolsheviks and the *consequences* of the spontaneous movements. Too "backward" for socialism but also too advanced" for liberal capitalism, the Revolution could end only in that consistent form of capitalism which the

Bolsheviks considered a pre-condition of socialism, namely, state-capitalism.

By identifying themselves with the spontaneous movement they could not control, the Bolsheviks gained control over this movement as soon as it had spent itself in the realisation of its immediate goals. There were many such goals differently reached in different territories. Various layers of the peasantry satisfied, or failed to satisfy, divergent needs and desires. Their interests, however, had no real connection with those of the proletariat. The working class itself was split into various groups with a variety of specific needs and general plans. The petty-bourgeoisie had still other problems to solve. In brief, there was a spontaneous unity against the conditions of Czarism and war, but there was no unity in regard to immediate goals and future policy. It was not too difficult for the Bolsheviks to utilise this social division for building up their own power, which finally became stronger than the whole of society because it never faced society as a whole.

Like the other groups which asserted themselves within the revolution, the Bolsheviks, too, pressed forward to gain their particular end:— the control of government. This goal reached farther than those aspired to by the others. It involved a never-ending struggle, a continuous winning and re-winning of power positions. Peasant groups settled down after dividing the land, workers returned to the factories as wage-laborers, soldiers, unable to roam the country-sides forever, returned to the life of peasant and worker, but for the Bolsheviks the struggle only really began with the success of the Revolution. Like all governments, the Bolshevik regime involves submission of all existing social layers to its authority. Slowly centralising all power and control into their hands, the Bolsheviks were soon able to dictate policy. Once more Russia became thoroughly organised in the interests of a special class – the class of privilege in the emerging system of state-capitalism.

The Party "Machine"

All this has nothing to do with Stalinism and "Thermidor" but represents Lenin's and Trotsky's policy from the very day they came to power. Reporting to the Sixth Congress of Soviets in 1918, Trotsky complained that "Not all Soviet workers have understood that our administration has been centralised and that all orders issued from above must be final . . . We shall be pitiless with those Soviet workers who have not yet understood; we will remove them, cast them out of our ranks, pull them up with repressions." Trotsky now claims that these words were aimed at Stalin who did not co-ordinate his war-activity properly and we are willing to believe him. But how much more directly must they have been aimed at all those who were not even "second-rate" but had no rating at all in the Soviet hierarchy. There already existed, as Trotsky relates, "a sharp cleavage between the classes in motion and the interests of the party machines. Even the Bolshevik Party cadres, who enjoyed the benefit of exceptional revolutionary training were definitely inclined to disregard the masses and to identify their own special interests with the interests of the machine on the very day after the monarchy was overthrown."

Trotsky holds, of course, that the dangers implied in this situation were averted by Lenin's vigilance and by objective conditions which made the "masses more revolutionary than the Party, and the Party more revolutionary than its machine." But the machine was headed by Lenin. Even before the Revolution, Trotsky points out, the Central Committee of the Party "functioned almost regularly and was entirely in the hands of Lenin." And even more so after the Revolution. In the Spring of 1918 the "ideal of 'democratic centralism' suffered further reverses, for in effect the power within both the government and the Party became concentrated in the hands of Lenin and the immediate retinue of Bolshevik leaders who did not openly disagree with him and carried out his wishes." As the bureaucracy made headway nevertheless, the emerging Stalinist machine must have been the result of an oversight on the part of Lenin.

To distinguish between the ruler of the machine and the machine on the one hand, and between the machine and the masses on the other implies that only the masses and its top-leader were truly revolutionary, and that both Lenin and the revolutionary masses were later betrayed by Stalin's machine which, so to speak, made itself independent. Although Trot^ sky needs such distinctions to satisfy his own political interests, they have no basis in fact. Until his death – disregarding occasional remarks against the dangers of bureaucratisation, which for the Bolsheviks are the equivalent of the bourgeois politicians' occasional crusades for a balanced budget – Lenin never once came out against the Bolshevik party machine and its leadership, that is, against himself. Whatever policy was decided upon received Lenin's blessing so long as he was at the helm of the machine; and he died holding that position.

Lenin's "democratic" notions are legendary. Of course state-capitalism under Lenin was different from state-capitalism under Stalin because the dictatorial powers of the latter were greater—thanks to Lenin's attempt to build up his own. That Lenin's rule was less terroristic than Stalin's is debatable. Like Stalin, Lenin catalogued *all* his victims under the heading "counter-revolutionary." Without comparing the statistics of those tortured and killed under both regimes, we will admit that the Bolshevik regime under Lenin and Trotsky was not strong enough to carry through such Stalinist measures as enforced collectivisation and slave-labour camps as a main economic and political policy. It was not design but weakness which forced Lenin and Trotsky to the so-called *New Economic*

Policy, that is, to concessions to private-property interests and to a greater lip-service to "democracy."

Bolshevik "toleration" of such non-bolshevik organisations as the Social Revolutionists in the early phase of Lenin's rule did not spring, as Trotsky asserts, from Lenin's "democratic" inclinations but from inability to destroy all non-bolshevik organisations at once. The totalitarian features of Lenin's Bolshevism were accumulating at the same rate at which its control and police power grew. That they were forced upon the Bolsheviks by the "counter-revolutionary" activity of all non-bolshevik labour organisations, as Trotsky maintains, can not of course explain their further increase after the crushing of the various non-conformist organisations. Neither could it explain Lenin's insistence upon the enforcement of totalitarian principles in the extra-Russian organisations of the Communist International.

Trotsky, Apologist for Stalinism

Unable to blame non-bolshevik organisations entirely for Lenin's dictatorship, Trotsky tells "those theoreticians who attempt to prove that the present totalitarian regime of the U.S.S.R is due . . . to the ugly nature of bolshevism itself," that they forget the years of Civil War, "which laid an indelible impress on the Soviet Government by virtue of the fact that very many of the administrators, a considerable layer of them, had become accustomed to command and demanded unconditional submission to their orders." Stalin, too, he continues, "was molded by the environment and circumstances of the Civil War, along with the entire group that later helped him to establish his personal dictatorship." The Civil War, however, was initiated by the international bourgeoisie. And thus the ugly sides of Bolshevism under Lenin, as well as under Stalin, find their chief and final cause in capitalism's enmity to Bolshevism which, if it is a monster, is only a reluctant monster, killing and torturing in mere self-defence.

Trotsky's Bolshevism, despite its saturation with hatred for Stalin, leads in the end merely to a defence of Stalinism as the only possible self-defence for Trotsky

And so, if only in a round-about-way, Trotsky's Bolshevism, despite its saturation with hatred for Stalin, leads in the end merely to a defence of Stalinism as the only possible self-defence for Trotsky. This explains the superficiality of the ideological differences between Stalinism and Trotskyism. The impossibility of attacking Stalin without attacking Lenin helps to explain, furthermore, Trotsky's great difficulties as an oppositionist. Trotsky's own past and theories preclude on his part the initiation of a movement to the *left* of Stalinism and condemned "Trotskyism" to remain a mere collecting agency for unsuccessful Bolsheviks. As such it could maintain itself outside of Russia because of the ceaseless competitive struggles for power and positions within the so-called "communist" world-movement. But it could not achieve significance for it had nothing to offer but the replacement of one set of politicians by another. The Trotskyist defence of Russia in the Second World War was consistent with all the previous policies of this, Stalin's most bitter, but also most loyal, opposition.

Trotsky's defence of Stalinism does not exhaust itself with showing how the Civil War transformed the Bolsheviks from servants into masters of the working class. He points to the more important fact that it is the "bureaucracy's law of life and death to guard the nationalization of the means of production and of the land." This means that "in spite of the most monstrous bureaucratic distortions, the class basis of the U.S.S.R. remains proletarian." For a while – we notice – Stalin had Trotsky worried. In 1921, Lenin had been disturbed by the question as to whether the *New Economic Policy* was merely a "tactic" or an "evolution." Because the NEP released private-capitalistic tendencies, Trotsky saw in the growing Stalinist bureaucracy "nothing else than the first stage of bourgeois restoration." But his worries were unfounded; "the struggle against equality and the establishment of very deep social differentiations has so far been unable to eliminate the socialist consciousness of the masses or the nationalization of the means of production and the land, which were the basic social conquests of the revolution." Stalin, of course, had nothing to do with this, for "the Russian Thermidor would have undoubtedly opened a new era of bourgeois rule, if that rule had not proved obsolete throughout the world."

The Result: State Capitalism

With this last statement of Trotsky's we approach the essence of the matter under discussion. We have said before that the *concrete* results of the revolution of 1917 were neither socialistic nor bourgeois but state-capitalistic. It was Trotsky's belief that Stalin would destroy the state-capitalist nature of the economy in favour of a bourgeois economy. This was to be the Thermidor. The decay of bourgeois economy all over the world prevented Stalin from bringing this about. All he could do was to introduce the ugly features of his personal dictatorship into that society which had been brought into existence by Lenin and Trotsky. In this way, and despite the fact that Stalin still occupies the Kremlin, Trotskyism has triumphed over Stalinism.

It all depends on an equation of state-capitalism with socialism. And although some of Trotsky's disciples have recently found it impossible to continue making the equation, Trotsky was bound to it, for it is the beginning and the end of Leninism and, in a wider

sense, of the whole of the social-democratic world-movement of which Leninism was only the more realistic part. Realistic, that is, with regard to Russia. What was, and still is, understood by this movement under "workers' state" is governmental rule by the party; what is meant by "socialism" is the nationalisation of the means of production. By adding control over the economy to the political control of the government the totalitarian rule over all of society emerges in full. The government secures its totalitarian rule by way of the party, which maintains the social hierarchy and is itself a hierarchical institution.

This idea of "socialism" is now in the process of becoming discredited, but only because of the experience of Russia and similar if less extensive experiences in other countries. Prior to 1914, what was meant by the seizure of power, either peacefully or violently, was the seizure of the government machinery, replacing a given set of administrators and lawmakers with another set. Economically, the "anarchy" of the capitalistic market was to be replaced by a planned production under the control of the state. As the socialist state would by definition be a "just" state, being itself controlled by the masses by way of the democratic processes, there was no reason to expect that its decisions would run counter to socialistic ideals. This theory was sufficient to organise parts of the working class into more or less powerful parties.

The theory of socialism boiled down to the demand for centralised economic planning in the interest of all. The centralisation process, inherent in capital-accumulation itself, was regarded as a *socialistic* tendency. The growing influence of "labour" within the state-machinery was hailed as a step in the direction of socialism. But actually the centralisation process of capital indicated something else than its self-transformation into social property. It was identical with the destruction of *laissez-faire* economy and therewith with the end of the traditional business-cycle as the regulator of the economy. With the beginning of the 20th century the character of capitalism changed. From that time on it found itself under permanent crisis conditions which could not be resolved by the "automatic" workings of the market. Monopolistic regulations, state-interferences, national policies shifted the burden of the crisis to the capitalistically under-privileged in the world-economy. All "economic" policy became imperialistic policy, culminating twice in world-wide conflagrations.

In this situation, to reconstruct a broken-down political and economic system meant to adapt it to these new conditions. The Bolshevik theory of socialisation fitted this need in an admirable way. In order to restore the national power of Russia it was necessary to do in a radical fashion what in the Western nations had been merely an evolutionary process. Even then it would take time to close the gap between the Russian economy and that of the Western powers. Meanwhile the ideology of the socialist movement served well as protection. The socialist origin of Bolshevism made it particularly fitted for the state-capitalist reconstruction of Russia. Its organisational principles, which had turned the party into a well-functioning institution, would re-establish order in the country as well.

The Bolsheviks of course were convinced that what they were building in Russia was, if not socialism, at least the next best thing to socialism, for they were completing the process which in the Western nations was still only the main *trend* of development. They had abolished the market-economy and had expropriated the bourgeoisie; they also had gained complete control over the government. For the Russian workers, however, nothing had changed; they were merely faced by another set of bosses, politicians, and indoctrinators. Their position equalled the workers* position in all capitalist countries during times of war. State-capitalism is a war-economy, and all extra-Russian economic systems transformed themselves into war-economies, into state-capitalistic systems fitted to the imperialistic needs of modern capitalism. Other nations did not copy all the innovations of Russian state-capitalism but only those best suited to their specific needs. The second world war led to the further unfolding of state-capitalism on a world-wide scale. The peculiarities of the various nations and their special situations within the world-power frame provided a great variety of developmental processes towards state-capitalism.

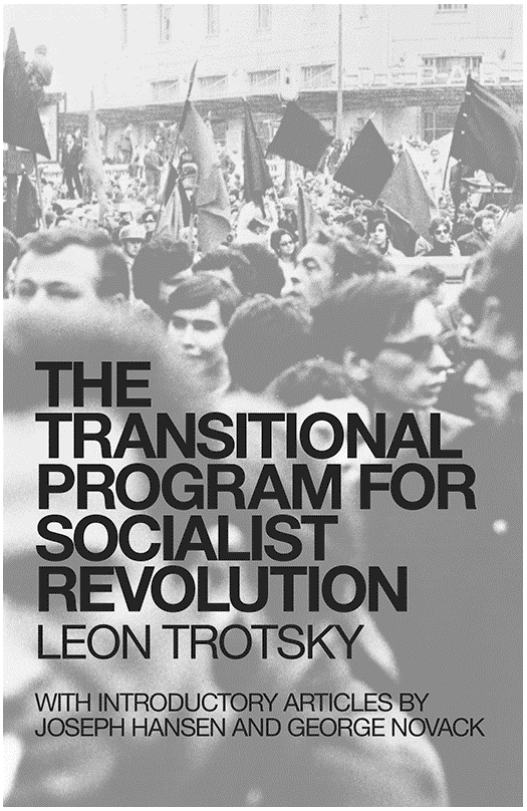
The fact that state-capitalism and fascism did not, and do not grow everywhere in a uniform manner provided Trotsky with the argument of the basic difference between bolshevism, fascism and capitalism plain and simple. This argument necessarily stresses superficialities of social development. In all essential aspects all three of these systems are identical and represent only various stages of the same development – a development which aims at manipulating the mass of the population by dictatorial governments in a more or less authoritarian fashion, in order to secure the government and the privileged social layers which support it and to enable those governments to participate in the international economy of today by preparing for war, waging war, and profiting by war.

Trotsky could not permit himself to recognise in Bolshevism one aspect of the world-wide trend towards a fascist world economy. As late as 1940 he held the view that Bolshevism prevented the rise of Fascism in the Russia of 1917. It should have long since been clear, however, that all that Lenin and Trotsky prevented in Russia was the use of a non-Marxian ideology for the fascist reconstruction of Russia. Because the Marxian ideology of Bolshevism merely served state-capitalistic ends, it, too, has been discredited. From any view that goes beyond the capitalist system of exploitation, Stalinism and Trotskyism are both relics of the past.

An Anarchist View of Trotsky's *Transitional Program*

Wayne Price

This is a discussion, from the viewpoint of revolutionary anarchism, of Leon Trotsky's *Transitional Program*, perhaps the central text of Trotskyism. (Trotsky 1977)



There are huge differences between anarchism and Trotskyism, centred on the state. Yet there is also a significant overlap. Both are on the far-left, opposed to Stalinism, in all its hideous varieties, as well as to social-democracy ("democratic socialism"). Both propose the overturn of the existing state and capitalism, by the working class and all oppressed, to be replaced by alternate institutions. There are many varieties of Trotskyism as of anarchism, some more in agreement than others.

Given this overlap, there have been quite a few Trotskyists who have become anarchists, of one sort or another – and anarchists who have become Trotskyists. Personally, I have done both. In high school I became an anarchist-pacifist, and then in college turned to an unorthodox version of Trotskyism. Eventually I became a revolutionary class-struggle anarchist-socialist. However, I still remain influenced by aspects of unorthodox-dissident Trotskyism (also by libertarian – "ultra left" – Marxism, and other influences.)

This is not a discussion of Trotsky's earlier years in politics, when he opposed Lenin's authoritarian approach (similar to Rosa Luxemburg's views). Nor of Trotsky's collaboration with Lenin in leading the October Revolution of 1917. Following which they created a one-party police state, the foundation for Stalinism. The *Transitional Program* is from the last period of Trotsky's life, when he fought against the totalitarian bureaucracy. This was until he was murdered by a Stalinist agent – about a year after the document was written. (For a critical overview of Trotskyism, from a libertarian socialist perspective, see Hobson & Tabor 1988.)

Anarchism and Trotskyism have certain things in common as well as major distinctions. It may be useful to explore these similarities and differences, from the perspective of analysing Trotsky's *Transitional Program*. In my opinion, it is an important historical document of socialism, but remains deeply flawed.

The Programme's Expectations

This document was adopted in 1938, as the founding programme of the new "Fourth International" of Trotsky's followers. Its official title was "The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International." It became known as the *Transitional Program*. Mostly written by Trotsky, he held extensive discussions about it beforehand. (Trotsky 1977)

Of course, a work written this long ago, before the upheavals of World War II, must be out of date in various ways. There is a section on the "fascist countries," although the explicitly fascist regimes are now gone. Another section is on the USSR, a country which no longer exists. One is on "colonial" countries, but the colonial empires of Britain, France, and so on have been mostly destroyed. Yet fascism, Stalinism, and imperialism are still with us.

We can judge the *Transitional Program* by comparing what it predicted to what actually happened. Trotsky's programme is based on a belief that the world was going through "the death agony of capitalism." Aside from the Marxist analysis of capitalist decline, empirically there had

been the First World War, the Great Depression, a series of revolutions (mostly defeated), the rise of Stalinism, and the rise of fascism. It was widely expected that a Second World War would break out soon – as it did within a year. The state of world capitalism looked pretty dismal.

Trotsky had expected the war to be followed by a return to Depression conditions. So did most bourgeois economists as well as most Marxist theorists. Under such conditions, he believed, there would be continuing revolutionary upheavals throughout the world. The Soviet Union would either be overthrown in a workers' revolution or would collapse back into capitalism. These developments would give the Trotskyists, although few at first, a chance to out-organise the Stalinists, social democrats, and colonial nationalists, and lead successful socialist revolutions.

In fact, there were upheavals and revolutions following the world war – from the huge wave of union strikes in the United States, to the election of the Labour Party in the U.K., to the big growth of Communist Parties in Italy and France, to the Communist-led revolutions in eastern Europe (Yugoslavia, Albania, and Greece – the last failed) to the independence won by India and the great Chinese revolution, among other Asian revolutions. These were followed by decades of revolutionary struggles throughout Asia, Africa, and Latin America.

Despite the Trotskyists' best intentions, almost all the upheavals and attempted revolutions were led by liberals, social democrats, and "Third World" nationalists but worst of all was the disastrous mis-leadership of the Communists. In places where they had a working-class base, such as France and Italy, they followed reformist programmes. In other countries they channelled the popular revolutions into one-party, authoritarian, state-capitalisms (as in Yugoslavia and China, and later Cuba).

This could happen because the "developed" countries did not collapse into a further Depression. Instead they blossomed in a period of prosperity, often referred to as "Capitalism's Golden Age." The world war had reorganised international imperialism, with the U.S. now at its centre. There had been an expanded arms economy, a concentration of international capital, and a major looting of the environment.

This period of high prosperity (at least for white people in the imperialist countries) lasted until about 1970. The Soviet Union had difficulties after this too, but lasted until about 1990. Then it finally fell back into a traditional capitalist economy.

In discussions before the international conference, Trotsky considered the possibility of a temporary period of prosperity. "The first question is if a conjunctural improvement is probable in the near future….We can theoretically suppose that [a] new upturn…can give a greater, a more solid upturn….It is absolutely not contradictory to our general analysis of a sick, declining capitalism….This theoretical possibility is to a certain degree supported by the military investment….A new upturn will signify that the definite crisis, the definite conflicts, are postponed for some years." (Trotsky 1977; pp. 186-7, 189) At one point he even speculated that the U.S. might have "a period of prosperity before its own decline …[for] ten to thirty years." (p. 164)

In other words, there might be a period of apparent prosperity within the general epoch "of a sick, declining capitalism." This possibility does not seem to have been taken very seriously by the Trotskyists. In any case, the prosperous period was not brief or brittle, as the Trotskyists expected, but lasted for decades.

In my opinion, Trotsky (and other Marxists and anarchists) were correct to conclude that we are living in the general epoch of capitalist decline. Developments since the 1970s have supported this belief. But he downplayed the probability of the results of the world war creating an extensive period of prosperity within the overall epoch of decline.

In particular, he overlooked the possible effects of the technological and ecological effects of the war and its aftermath. Of course, he could not foresee the nuclear bomb and nuclear power. Also, he did not realise that the massive use of "cheap" petroleum would provide a boost to the capitalist economy. And then its aftereffects would create the ecological disasters of global warming, international pollution, species extinction, and pandemics. These are all signs "of a sick, declining capitalism."

Few radicals of Trotsky's generation focused on ecology. This is even though Marx and Engels had considered the negative effects of capitalism on the natural world (as has been examined by John Bellamy Foster and other ecological Marxists). Among anarchists, Kropotkin and Reclus had explored ecological issues. More recently, so has Murray Bookchin, even before the eco-Marxists.

In the current period, conditions of crisis and pre-revolutionary situations may be recurring – economically, politically, and ecologically. These conclusions imply that at least some of Trotsky's proposals for a revolutionary programme may still be useful for anarchists to consider, even as other aspects are rejected.

The Most Oppressed

Perhaps the most libertarian part of the *Transitional Program* is its insistence on revolutionaries reaching out to the most oppressed and super-exploited layers of the working class. Trotsky is not against better-off unionists, not to mention intellectuals, but he most wants to win the worse-off workers.

During militant struggles, he writes, factory committees may stir workers whom the unions do not reach. "…Such working-class layers as the trade union is usually incapable of moving to action. It is precisely from these more oppressed layers that the most self-sacrificing battalions of the revolution will come." (p. 119) "The Fourth International should seek bases of support among the most exploited layers of the working class, consequently among the women workers." (p. 151) "The unemployed…the agricultural workers, the ruined and semi-ruined farmers, the oppressed of the cities, women workers, housewives, proletarianized layers of the intelligentsia – all of these will seek unity and leadership." (P. 136) "Open the road to the youth!" (p. 151) (Elsewhere, in his discussions with U.S. Trotskyists, he criticised them for not reaching Black workers.) Bakunin, who always looked to the most oppressed, could agree!

Anarchists might agree that society should be organised through radically democratic committees. But anarchists would disagree with the notion that all committees should be representative. The *Transitional Program* does not mention face-to-face direct democracy.

Councils and Committees

When the working class was in a militant and rebellious temper, Trotsky advocated that revolutionaries advocate the formation of councils and committees – not instead of existing unions but in addition to them. In particular, he called for "factory committees" which would be "elected by all the factory employees." (p. 118) These would begin to oversee the activities of the bosses and their managers. They would organise regular meetings with each other, regionally, industrially, and nationally – laying the basis for a democratic planned economy. He also writes of "committees elected by small farmers" as well as "committees on prices." (pp. 126-7)

This focus on democratic committees of workers and others does not (to Trotsky) necessarily contradict a belief in governmental economic action. He is all for "a broad and bold organization of public works." But this should be done under "direct workers' management." (p. 121) Further, "Where military industry is 'nationalized,' as in France, the slogan of workers' control preserves its full strength. The proletariat has as little confidence in the government of the bourgeoisie as in an individual capitalist." (p. 131) This last sentence is certainly one with which an anarchist would agree!

The *Transitional Program* considered how a new workers' revolution in the Soviet Union would change the economy. It would have a "planned economy" but in a democratic form – managed by committees. "[To] factory committees should be returned the right to control production. A democratically organized consumers' cooperative should control the quality and price of products." (p. 146)

Anarchists might agree that society should be organised through radically democratic committees. But anarchists would disagree with the notion that all committees should be representative. The *Transitional Program* does not mention face-to-face direct democracy. Perhaps, in Trotsky's concept, the workers will gather together in order to elect the factory committee, and then go back to their work stations, waiting for orders from the committee? Anarchists are not against choosing delegates to go to meetings with other committees

or to do special jobs. But an association of committees must be based in directly-democratic participatory assemblies, if people are really to control their lives.

A society of democratic committees should culminate in an association of overall councils or "soviets" (Russian word for "council"). "The slogan of soviets, therefore, crowns the program of transitional demands." (p. 136) Under capitalism, these soviets would be a centre of power which would be an alternative to the state – a "dual power." In the course of a revolution, the soviets would replace the bourgeois state as the centre of society. To Trotsky, this would make it the basis of a "workers' state" – "the dictatorship of the proletariat."

Instead, anarchists work towards the federation of councils and committees, of the workers and all oppressed, federated with all voluntary associations. They would form overall councils (although we probably would not use the term "soviet"!). This federation would be the alternate to capitalism and the state.

The *Transitional Program* states that the soviets must be pluralistic. "All political currents of the proletariat can struggle for leadership of the soviets on the basis of the widest democracy." (p. 136) Democracy would include "the struggle of various tendencies and parties within the soviets." (p. 185) Presumably this would include anarchists as a "political current" or "tendency."

Trotsky proposed the competition of various parties and tendencies within the soviets, implying that one would eventually win the "struggle for leadership." He does not mention the possibility of mergers, alliances, and united fronts – as if one tendency could have all the best militants and all the right answers. Yet the October Russian Revolution was carried out by a coalition of Lenin's Communists, Left Social Revolutionaries (peasant-populists), and anarchists. The first Soviet government was an alliance of the Communists and the Left SRs, supported by the anarchists. It was the Leninists whose policies created the one-party state, and made it a matter of principle.

In the *Transitional Program*, Trotsky never explains why Lenin and himself established the Soviet Union as a one-party state. In all his writings, he never explained why they made a principle out of it. Within the USSR, the Trotskyists opposed Stalin, bravely going to their deaths, but still advocating a one-party state. It was only in the mid-thirties that Trotsky came out for multi-party soviets in *The Revolution Betrayed*.

once accepting that your goal is a "state," then you are not limited to a radically-democratic council system. Trotsky continued to call the Soviet Union under Stalin a "workers' state" – if a "degenerated workers' state."

A federation of soviets and of committees in workplaces and neighbourhoods would be able to take care of overall problems, including economic coordination, collective decision-making, settling of disputes, setting up a popular militia to replace the police and army (managed through committees), and so on. But anarchists insist that it would not be a state. A "state" is a bureaucratic, centralised, institution, over the rest of society. Inevitably it would serve a ruling minority. The Trotskyists regard a soviet-council system as the basis of a new ("workers'") state, once it is led by (their) truly revolutionary party.

This might seem like an argument over phrases. But once accepting that your goal is a "state," then you are not limited to a radically-democratic council system. Trotsky continued to call the Soviet Union under Stalin a "workers' state" – if a "degenerated workers' state." He fully recognised that the Russian working class (not to speak of the peasant majority) had absolutely no power under Stalin's bureaucratic dictatorship. Nevertheless, Russia kept "nationalization, collectivization, and monopoly of foreign trade." (p. 143) That, to Trotsky, is what made Russia still a "workers' state" – however much "degenerated." Trotsky advocated the revolutionary overthrow of the Stalinist bureaucracy, but meanwhile it had to be defended from Western imperialism.

To Trotsky then, the key criteria for a state of the working class was not that the "state" was the self-

organisation of the workers, but that property was nationalised, etc.

Following this logic, the "orthodox" Trotskyist majority regarded the new Communist states after World War II as "deformed workers' states." The countries of eastern Europe, China, etc., all had nationalised property and monopolies of foreign trade. So they too were "workers' states" – just "deformed." And Cuba and maybe Vietnam were "healthy workers' states."

A minority dissented. They regarded the Soviet Union (like its imitations) as a class-divided society, ruled by a collectivised bureaucratic class, which exploited the workers and peasants. Some called it "state capitalism," others a "new class" system. Anarchists agree overall with this view – but believe the system's roots lay in Lenin and Trotsky's policies.

The key question is not so much the analysis of the Soviet Union, a country which no longer exists (replaced by Putin's Russia). It is: What is meant by socialism (or a "workers' state" or a society moving toward socialism)? Is socialism defined by nationalisation of industry, or by the freedom and self-management of the working people – the anarchist view?

What is meant by socialism (or a "workers' state" or a society moving toward socialism)? Is socialism defined by nationalisation of industry, or by the freedom and self-management of the working people – the anarchist view?

National Self-Determination

Most of the world was (and is) the victims of imperialism. Therefore the *Transitional Program* expected "colonial or semicolonial countries to use the war in order to cast off the yoke of slavery. Their war will be not imperialist but liberating. It will be the duty of the international proletariat to aid the oppressed nations in their war against the oppressors." (p. 131)

Historically many anarchists similarly supported wars of oppressed peoples "against the oppressors": Bakunin, Kropotkin, Malatesta, and many others. (See Price 2022; 2023) But today quite a number do not. They do not accept that imperialism divides the world between imperialist and exploited nations. They reject all wars between states without distinguishing between oppressor and oppressed countries.

This issue has divided anarchists over the Ukrainian-Russian war. Yet to many of us, the situation seems clear: the Ukrainian people are waging a defensive war of national self-determination, while the Russian state is engaged in imperialist aggression. Anarchist-socialists must be on the side of the oppressed, especially when they fight back.

It is possible that another imperialist government – in competition with the one oppressing the rebellious country – might give aid to that country (as the USA is aiding Ukraine). The *Transitional Program* says that revolutionaries should not give support to that "helpful" imperialist state. "The workers of imperialist countries, however, cannot help an anti-imperialist country through their own government…. The proletariat of the imperialist country continues to remain in class opposition to its own government and supports the non-imperialist 'ally' through its own methods…." (p. 132)

At the same time, "…the proletariat does not in the slightest degree solidarize…with the bourgeois government of the colonial country…. It maintains full political independence…. Giving aid in a just and progressive war, the revolutionary proletariat wins the sympathy of the workers in the colonies…and increases its ability to help overthrow the bourgeois government in the colonial country." (p. 132) This is not nationalism but internationalism. "Our basic slogan remains: Workers of the World Unite!" (p. 133)

In contemporary terms, revolutionaries should be in solidarity with the Ukrainian workers and oppressed people in their military struggle – "giving aid in a just and progressive war." (Interestingly, several current Trotskyist groupings do not support Ukraine against Russian imperialism, despite their formal belief in "national self-determination." This says something about the present state of Trotskyism.) Yet revolutionary

socialists do not give political support to Biden's US government nor to the Zelensky Ukrainian government. Our goals are the eventual revolutionary overturn of these states, as well as that of Putin's Russia. The same approach goes for other anti-imperialist national struggles around the world, most of which are directed against the U.S. and its allies.

An anarchist perspective on national self-determination would be in agreement with that of the *Transitional Program* – with one important difference. Like Trotsky, the anarchists' ultimate goal of supporting a nation's struggles is to "overthrow the bourgeois government," in both the imperialist and oppressed countries. For Trotsky, this is to be followed by establishing "workers' states." But anarchists want to replace all bourgeois governments with non-state associations of councils, committees, assemblies, and self-managed organisations.

Like Trotsky, the anarchists' ultimate goal of supporting a nation's struggles is to "overthrow the bourgeois government," in both the imperialist and oppressed countries. For Trotsky, this is to be followed by establishing "workers' states." But anarchists want to replace all bourgeois governments with non-state associations of councils, committees, assemblies, and self-managed organisations.

The Transitional Method

Trotsky objects to the traditional Marxist approach to programme, as developed by the social democratic parties (especially in pre-World War I Germany). That approach had two parts: a "maximal" and a "minimal" programme. The maximal programme was the ultimate goal of socialism. It was raised in speeches at yearly May Day parades. Like the Christian's hope of heaven, it had little to do with day-to-day living. The minimal programme was one of union recognition, better wages and conditions, public services, and democratic rights. These demands were limited to what could be achieved under capitalism.

Trotsky was concerned with the wide gap between the objective crises of capitalism in decay and the consciousness of most workers and oppressed people. He proposed a "bridge" between the crises and workers' thinking. These demands would offer a "transition" from the old minimal, partial, and democratic demands to socialist revolution.

"This bridge should include a system of transitional demands, stemming from today's conditions and from today's consciousness of wide layers of the working class and unalterably leading to one final conclusion: the conquest of power by the proletariat." (p. 114)

For example, to deal with the effects of inflation on wages, he proposed "a sliding scale of wages." All wages, salaries and public benefits should be attached to the level of prices. Wages would automatically rise when prices rose (judged by committees of working-class consumers).

Unemployment should be dealt with through a "sliding scale of hours." The more unemployment, the shorter hours should be overall, without losses in pay – as in "Thirty Hours Work for Forty Hours Pay." These are essentially socialist principles: the total amount of wealth produced should be divided among those working and dependents; the total amount of work that needed to be done should be divided among those able to work. The title of one section in the *Transitional Program* pretty much summarises the method: "The picket line/defense guards/workers' militia/the arming of the proletariat".

Unlike the minimal programme of liberal union bureaucrats or of social democratic politicians, transitional demands are not limited to what the capitalists can afford – or say they can afford. The transitional demands start with what people need. If the capitalists are able to pay this (in wages or public services), then they must be forced to do so. If they cannot pay what people need, then they should no longer be allowed to run society for their private benefit. Let the working people take over and run the economy to satisfy everyone's needs. "'Realizability' or 'unrealizability' is in the given

instance a question of the relationship of forces, which can be decided only by the struggle." (p. 116)

The revolutionary implications of this method were clearer in a period of severe economic crisis, when basic needs could not be met for most working people. This was the case in the depths of the Great Depression. But in a period such as the 1950s post-war boom, there was an even greater gap between immediate, limited, demands and the need for revolution. A large proportion of white workers and newly middle-class people were living better than ever before (in the U.S., and then in other imperialist countries). The underlying threats (of nuclear extermination or ecological destruction) could be downplayed. The transitional method had less usefulness.

Now the post-war prosperity is over. With periodic ups and downs, world capitalism has overall been stagnating and declining. Wars are continuing and ownership of nuclear bombs is spreading. Despite efforts by climate reformists to find ways of limiting the damage, global warming is crashing through the veneer of capitalist stability. Something like the *Transitional Program* – or at least the method of transitional demands – is needed more than ever.

Along with the Trotsky's demands, there need to be **a programme of ecological transitional demands**: democratic ecological-economic planning; worker's control/management of industry to transition to non-polluting, green, useful production; expropriation of the oil-gas-coal corporations; socialisation of the energy industry under workers' and community control; public subsidising of ecologically-balanced consumer coops and producer coops; support for organic farms in the country and in towns and cities; etc., etc.

Revolutionary Organisations

The "Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International" was written as a programme for a specific organisation, intended to be an international revolutionary party. It was hoped that this body, beginning small, would replace the Second (Socialist) International and the Third (Communist) International (or "Comintern"). And thereby save the world.

It begins: "The world political situation as a whole is chiefly characterized by a historical crisis of the leadership of the proletariat." (pp. 111)

The fundamental crisis of decaying capitalism periodically inspires the mass of the working class to rebel. This shows the possibility of successful revolutions. But, during the preceding non-revolutionary periods, the leaderships of the main workers' parties and unions have "developed powerful tendencies toward compromise with the bourgeois-democratic regime." (p. 117-8) The anarcho-syndicalist unions were included in this. As a result, the unions and parties (which the workers had previously come to trust) hold back the revolution. They lead the people to defeat.

"In all countries…the multimillioned masses again and again enter the road of revolution. But each time they are blocked by their own conservative bureaucratic machines." (p. 112)

This generalisation was most observable during the revolutionary years after World War I, up to the rebellions following World War II. During the post-war prosperity, there was less likelihood of the "multimillion masses" becoming revolutionary. Therefore, even the best revolutionary party (or organisation) would have had difficulty overcoming bureaucratic "tendencies toward compromise."

Yet there were revolutions and almost-revolutions. As mentioned, there were upheavals in poorer Southern countries, including the Vietnam war of national liberation, the Cuban revolution, and the South African struggle against apartheid. In eastern Europe there were attempted revolutions, such as the 1953 East Berlin workers' revolt and the 1956 Hungarian revolution. Western Europe had the almost-revolution of France's May-June 1968, among others. In all these cases, a revolutionary leadership might have made a difference (perhaps preventing the victory of Stalinism in Vietnam and Cuba).

Among anarchists, many have also advocated revolutionary organisation. This includes Bakunin's Brotherhood, the St. Imier anarchist continuation of the First International, the syndicalists' "militant minority," the views of Errico Malatesta, the *Platform* of Makhno, Arshinov, and others, the Spanish FAI, and Latin American *especifismo*.

These conceptions agree only somewhat with Trotsky's perspective of a political organisation, composed of revolutionaries who are in general agreement. An anarchist grouping does seek to coordinate activity, to develop theories and practice, and to influence bigger organisations and

movements (such as unions, community associations, anti-war movements, etc.). They try to win the workers and others from the influence of their political opponents, including reformists and Stalinists.

Trotsky sought to build a centralised ("democratic centralist") Leninist party internationally. While supposedly democratic, the International and the national parties would be managed from the top down. Anarchists have proposed organisations which are internally democratic and organised in a federal fashion. And, unlike political parties, no matter how radical, their aim would not be to take power, to rule over the councils and committees. They want to inspire, organise, and urge the oppressed and exploited to free themselves.

Anarchism and Trotskyism

In the *Transitional Program*, Trotsky mentions anarchism (or anarcho-syndicalism) only a few times. In France, he points out that the union federation once organised by anarcho-syndicalists had turned into a business union (and had supported World War I). During the 1936-39 Spanish Civil War, the leaders of the anarchist federation – and the union federation they led – had betrayed the revolution by joining the capitalist government. From the viewpoint of revolutionary anarchism, his criticisms in these situations are legitimate.

Trotsky lumps the anarchists overall with the social democrats and Stalinists as "parties of petty-bourgeois democracy…incapable of creating a government of workers and farmers, that is, a government independent of the bourgeoisie." (p. 134)

If the term "government" is used as a synonym for "state," then anarchists have had no interest in creating any kind of "government." However, the word could be used to mean democratic coordination of popular councils and workers' organisations. This is what the Friends of Durruti Group advocated during the Spanish Civil War. In that sense, the question is whether anarchists can lead in organising society "independent[ly] of the bourgeoisie."

An anarchist grouping does seek to coordinate activity, to develop theories and practice, and to influence bigger organisations and movements (such as unions, community associations, anti-war movements, etc.). They try to win the workers and others from the influence of their political opponents, including reformists and Stalinists.

Trotsky ignores the revolutionary anarchists who denounced the French and Spanish union officials for betraying the programme and principles of libertarian socialism. It is such anarchists, eco-socialists, syndicalists, internationalists, anti-state communists, and true revolutionaries on whom an up-to-date revolutionary programme depends.

The *Transitional Program* has virtues and insights, which have been pointed out here. The "method of transitional demands" remains valuable – even more valuable now than in the recent past. The vision of a federation of councils, committees, and assemblies is important, if we leave out Trotsky's conception of a centralised "workers' state." To anarchists, the *Transitional Program* remains as an important document in the history of socialism, but one which still has serious flaws.

References

Hobson, Christopher Z., & Tabor, Ronald D. (1988). *Trotskyism and the Dilemma of Socialism*. NY: Greenwood Press.

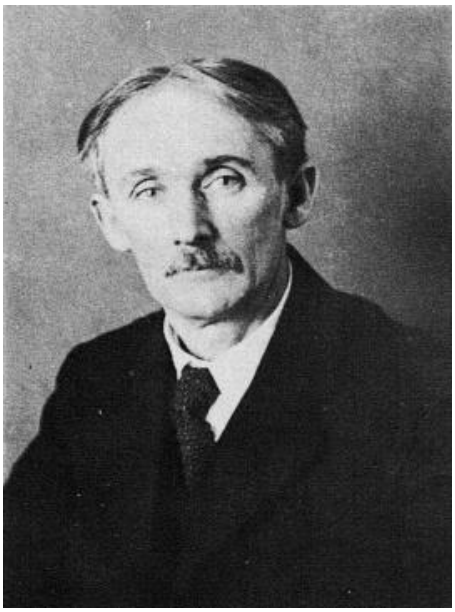
Price, Wayne (2022). "Malatesta on War and National Self-Determination" https://www.anarkismo.net/article/32666

Price, Wayne (2023). "Anarchists Support Self-Determination for Ukraine; What Did Bakunin Say?" https://www.anarkismo.net/article/32774

Trotsky, Leon (1977). *The Transitional Program for Socialist Revolution.* (Eds.: George Breitman & Fred Stanton.) NY: Pathfinder Press (Includes**:** *The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International* pp. 109-152; *Discussions with Trotsky,* pp. 73-108; *Preconference Discussions*, pp. 153-199).

Harry Kelly (1871–1953)

Barry Pateman



Harry Kelly (1871-1953)

Henry May (Harry) Kelly was a man of many talents who often kept in the background but deserves his time in the spotlight for his unwavering commitment to anarchism through good and bad times. He played a noticeable role in fostering relationships between UK and American anarchists, was a key figure in the creation of American anarchist colonies such as Stelton and Mohegan, recognised the importance of education in creating anarchists and free thinkers, always fought for anarchist victims of the state and perhaps, most importantly, he never gave up, however battered by the events of life, in attempting to create a world of mutual aid, equality and freedom from economic exploitation and emotional hurt.

Living in Boston in 1894 Kelly was involved in the trade union movement and saw a leaflet advertising a meeting by the English anarchist Charles Mowbray. He went, and from that moment on the commitment to anarchism took over his life. The following year, he visited London and met Kropotkin whose anarchist communism would prove to be a major part of Kelly's anarchist philosophy and practice.

As a printer by trade, he helped to print two Boston anarchist papers *The Rebel* (1895-96) and *The Match* (1896) with Charles Mowbray and others. While in Boston Kelly was financial secretary for the Central Labor Union and introduced a motion calling for the commutation of Alexander Berkman's sentence for the attempted assassination of Henry Clay Frick in 1892. This resolution passed and was sent to the Governor of Pennsylvania. That act would lead to a close, lifelong friendship with Emma Goldman and Berkman. Later he went to Pittsburgh where he lobbied labour organisations to support a reduction in Berkman's sentence.

Returning to England in 1898, Kelly met many of the prominent anarchists there, became a member of the *Freedom* group and stayed in the country until 1904. He still contributed articles to US papers such as *Free Society*. On his return to America, he was part of the group that produced *Mother Earth* and together with Berkman worked for the Workingmen's Circle (Arbeiter Ring) between 1906 and 1909 as a Sunday school teacher.

It was Kelly and Goldman who were the prime movers in creating the New York Modern School at 104 East 12th Street in October 1911. The building was big enough to host a school and adult classes as well as meeting areas. Based on the writings of Francisco y Guardia Ferrer who was executed by the Spanish state in 1909, it became an important anarchist centre. one of a number of Modern Schools created in America after Ferrer's death the New York Modern School became the most prominent. Kelly was a founding member of the Modern School and played an important role in developing its policies.

In 1912 the Syndicalist Education League was founded after a meeting at the Ferrer Centre with Hippolyte Havel as secretary and Kelly as treasurer. The aim of the group was to spread the ideas of syndicalism among employed and unemployed. Its program stated that the role of the League was to educate the workers in the need for "effective, revolutionary action." Also in 1912 in response to the brutal treatment of Goldman and IWW members in San Diego he sent a statement to the press signed by himself, Berkman and Havel claiming that anarchists and social rebels would "answer violence with violence"

Tension increased in and around the Modern School during the Colorado Strike of miners against the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company in 1913 and brutal attacks by police on Unemployed demonstrations (often organised at the Modern School) in New York in the spring of 1914. Things grew worse after the Ludlow massacre of April 20th

1914 where a number of miners and family members were murdered by the National Guard in Colorado. The owner of the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company-John D. Rockefeller lived in nearby Tarrytown in New York. Demonstrations, organised in the Modern School, took place regularly outside his estate and culminated in an explosion in Lexington Avenue on July 4th 1914 which killed three anarchists- all of whom attended events and meetings in the Modern School. The bomb was meant for Rockefeller's estate. Police eyes focused on the Modern School and a number of police spies were activated there.

Together with others Kelly thought the Modern School no safe place for children now and it was Kelly who discovered Stelton as a new centre for the Modern School. He and others worked out the practicalities of the move from New York and through their efforts the colony grew as did the educational opportunities for the children. As far as Kelly was concerned the importance of Stelton was that it was organised around the children who were not an add-on but the very reason for the colony's existence.

Kelly initially supported Kropotkin's attitude to World War 1 seeing the German state as a massive threat to freedom. He quarrelled bitterly with American anarchists who were opposed to the war. These included his close comrades Berkman and Goldman. Eventually he appears to have had a change of position and signed the 1915 "International Anarchist Manifesto on the War" which opposed any support for the war at all. Even after the war, though, Kelly was still ambivalent about the position anarchists should have taken. He fought against the Red Scare after America entered the war and attempted to support Berkman, Goldman and others in their struggle against deportation. 1919 saw Kelly involved with launching a new anarchist journal called *Freedom*.

In 1920 with Roger Baldwin and Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Kelly helped form the League for Mutual Aid which provided interest free loans for those associated with labour unions and libertarian causes. In 1921 Kelly travelled to Berlin as a delegate to the second of international anarchist-syndicalist conferences which would lead to the creation of the syndicalist International Working Men's Association in the December of the next year,

In 1923 Kelly found a tract of land forty or so miles from New York City and the Mohegan Colony was quickly formed, "based on the broadest liberal or libertarian principles". A school was set up there based on Modern School practice and the colony become a haven for older militant anarchists such as Rudolf Rocker who arrived there in 1937. There were, as we might expect, regular tensions in the colony which Kelly did not shy away from!

Kelly campaigned for the release of Sacco and Vanzetti and was devastated when they were executed. Like many anarchists of his generation, he had been deeply affected by the events at Haymarket and saw no improvement in America as the two Italian anarchists were murdered by the State as were Albert Parsons and his comrades forty years before. We can probably trace his growing tiredness and his doubts on the effectiveness of revolution as a result of this period of struggle for the lives of Sacco and Vanzetti.

If Kelly did spend a lot of time out of the spotlight it shouldn't detract from his writing. He wrote a regular Letter from America for *Freedom* and contributed to British papers such as *Voice of Labour* as well as American papers such as *Free Society* and *Mother Earth*. He would go on to help edit *The Modern School* and contributed to many more anarchist papers. A close friend of Emma Goldman, his writings for *Mother Earth* were often done under the pseudonyms Henry May or HMK. His writings were often commentaries on what was happening around him and contained practical solutions to problems delivered in a clear and straightforward style, and this is often how his comrades saw him. He saw problems, solved them and made things happen. He could be stubborn and awkward but was seen as a person who took anarchism off the page and put it into real life. For Kelly anarchism was something real and tangible.

He kept going vacillating between hope and pessimism. He remained in contact with Berkman and Goldman during their French exile and in 1939 was honoured with a testimonial dinner for his work in attempting to bring about a better world. The outbreak of World War Two plunged him into despair. He tried to up correspondence with his comrades but now very few were left alive. He died in May 1953 and was buried in Chicago's Waldheim cemetery near Emma Goldman , Voltairine de Cleyre and the Haymarket men who had so profoundly influenced him. His epitaph states that "He shared his life with humanity".

Articles from *Mother Earth*

A Socialist Editor

H. K.

Mother Earth, April 1907

> "If there are any more in our party who wish to counsel assassination, let them get out quickly and line up along with Emma Goldman, where they belong." – Apropos Moyer and Haywood, in "*The Worker*," March 16th, 1907.

Certain good friends of ours, who happen to be Socialists, are eternally asking us why we do not bow to the inevitable and – work with the Socialists.

The "inevitable" in this case is the State-Socialist wave that is at present rising in the United States, and which will, in due course of time, carry us, willing or unwilling, into the Collectivist Utopia.

In the first place, we fail to see the "inevitable," in spite of the wave of pseudo-Socialism; in the second, we must decline to co-operate with people – however well-meaning they may be – who circulate such slanderous statements as the above quotation. Apparently, one may reasonably assume that a spirit of investigation, tolerance of another's opinions, and a due regard for truth in discussing the views of an opposing school of thought are among the qualifications necessary for the editorship of a Socialist paper. In reality, however, we find such an assumption quite ungrounded, as our quotation from "*The Worker*" proves.

Any man so ignorant or morally obtuse as to claim that Miss Emma Goldman – Mr. Editor of "*The Worker*," Miss Emma Goldman, if you please – counsels assassination, is unfit to edit a paper which advocates the regeneration of society – the correctness of the re-generation process aside for the moment.

To Our Comrades

Mother Earth, September 1907

Friends

We are living at a time of great social unrest. The simple democracy of former days has been changed by capitalism into a despotic imperialism. The people feel their bondage growing daily more unendurable, but fail as yet to understand the cause or the cure.

Social quacks and professional politicians are busy exploiting popular dissatisfaction for their personal aggrandizement; they seek to pacify the people by palliatives, in order to continue safely riding on their backs.

Dissatisfaction with existing conditions is finding its strongest expression among the working class. The man of toil begins to understand that there is no hope for a radical change under the capitalist régime. He is gradually realizing that the methods heretofore employed by labour are ineffectual and not designed to improve his economic position. He is embittered by the regularity of his defeats. He is fast losing confidence in his so-called leaders, in whom he is beginning to see the friends of labour's enemies.

Comrades! Let us not fail to properly appreciate this crucial period in the history of American labour, and let us prove our appreciation *actively*. We have an all-important work before us. It is for us, as Anarchists, to point out to the workingman the real cause of his dissatisfaction, misery and oppression; to impress upon him the inefficiency of trades unionism, pure and simple; to convince him of the dangerous uselessness of parliamentary methods. We must discover to him his natural weapons and the powerful means at hand to make himself free; we must point out to him the methods so successfully being used by his European brothers: the revolutionary tactics whose final destiny it is to free labour from all exploitation and oppression, and usher in a free society; the modern, efficient weapons of direct action and general strike.

The best medium for introducing these battle methods to the workingman is a weekly revolutionary paper. Our magazine, *Mother Earth*, is doing excellent work. But it is a monthly, and, as such, it must deal with the various manifestations of our social life; it cannot devote itself exclusively to one particular phase. The projected weekly, however, is to deal entirely with labour, its battles, hopes and aspirations.

To *Mother Earth*, whose work is theoretical, literary and educational, must be added a practical weekly, a fighting champion of revolutionary labour. We must carry our ideas to the men that toil.

Therefore we appeal to you, comrades. If you have the cause of Anarchism seriously at heart; if you want the

workingmen to learn our ideas; if you realise how all important is the propaganda of direct action and the general strike, then come to our aid by financing the project of a weekly revolutionary paper.

Comrades! It is for you to decide whether we, as Anarchists, should take our stand in the midst of throbbing life or remain on the philosophic by-ways.

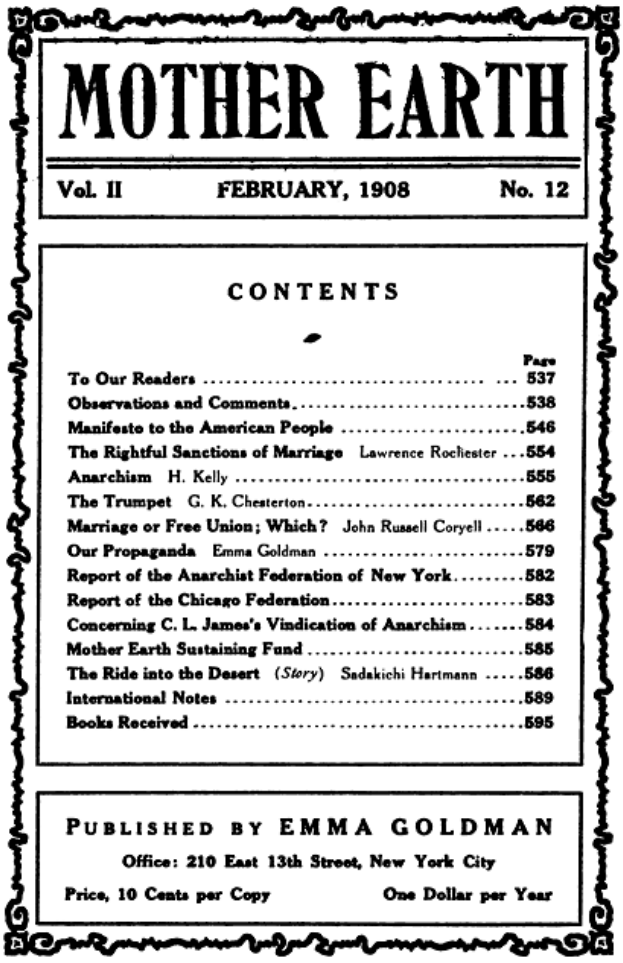
ALEXANDER BERKMAN.
HARRY KELLY.
VOLTAIRINE DE CLEYRE.
EMMA GOLDMAN.
HIPPOLYTE HAVEL.
GEORGE BAUER.

P. S. — The comrades are urgently requested to act without delay. For obvious reasons it were desirable to begin the publication of the weekly paper on the 11th of November. All communications and contributions for this purpose should be addressed to Alexander Berkman, Box 47, Station D, New York.

Anarchism – A Plea for the Impersonal

Harry Kelly

Mother Earth, February 1908



MOTHER EARTH

Vol. II FEBRUARY, 1908 No. 12

CONTENTS

PUBLISHED BY EMMA GOLDMAN
Office: 210 East 13th Street, New York City
Price, 10 Cents per Copy One Dollar per Year

The student of Anarchism must often ask himself why, in this most Anarchistic of all countries, the Anarchist movement has made, and is making, such slow progress. That Anarchism concerns itself with the individual, and that America is the most individualistic of all civilized countries, is hardly debatable; and yet the Anarchist movement, which in itself represents the definite, concrete expression of the Anarchist philosophy, is almost where it was twenty years ago. The Mutualist wing, which found its ablest exponent in Dyer D. Lum is extinct; the Individualist wing has lost so much ground that it can hardly be called a movement; and the Communist wing, the only one of the three that shows any signs of growth, has – as a movement – made but little progress. To those who may be disposed to question the above statements, I will say right now that

First, – As to the Mutualist section, during twelve years' active work as an Anarchist propagandist I have seen or heard no signs of it.

Second, – If a theory which, after thirty years' active work by such an able man as Benj. R. Tucker, can show nothing better than one small publication, *Liberty*, that appears but once in two months, and probably one or two public speakers who lecture once or twice a year, can be called a movement, then our statement may not be believed. Further, it is well known that even *Liberty* would not exist, were it not that its editor and publisher – a man of means – foots the deficit. In short, Mr. Tucker is the "movement."

Third, – The Communist wing has a number of papers in different languages and carries on a more or less energetic oral propaganda throughout the country in Yiddish, English, Italian, German, Bohemian, and Spanish; but if compared with the growth of Anarchist ideas, sentiments, and methods at large, the development of the movement has been slow indeed. I am not concerned in this paper with the very important fact that Anarchist ideas and even methods have been very much clarified and systematized since the Pittsburgh convention, in 1883; it is important and encouraging, but why has the numerical increase been so small?

Many and diverse reasons will no doubt be given, if the facts are accepted, as I believe they will be. Chief among those reasons will be the desire for ease and comfort, lack of moral courage, the spirit of compromise, environment, and so forth. All of these can be and will be given with considerable justification, but in so doing, do we not admit the unfitness of Anarchist ideas to the modern man? It seems so to us; but believing in those ideas, we seek farther afield.

Men may be moral cowards, desire ease and comfort more than liberty of thought and expression, have the spirit of compromise deeply rooted in them and be unable to rise superior to their surroundings; but, after all, they have the privilege of rejecting any theory which, in their opinion, puts too great a restraint upon their desire to live and be happy.

At the risk of appearing heretical, I venture to say that the brake upon the wheel of development of Anarchism is the adulation of the individual. The mass of people in this or any other country are not self conscious egoists, but I am bold to say that egotistic principles rule this country, and they also make themselves felt in the Anarchist movement. It is a truism that society is an aggregation of units, and that it requires free units to make a free society – a fact which Socialists overlook: our meaning is quite different. Take the average man, aristocrat, bourgeois, or worker, and advance the following theory: Here is a proposition which, if applied to life, will do away with the necessity of exploitation and its evils. You, Mr. Aristocrat or Mr. Bourgeois, will be able to do healthy, useful work and do away with the anxiety of the present. The earth is as fertile as it was, and with modern scientific methods you will have more than sufficient, and be respected and loved by that large portion of your fellow-men who now hate and despise you. And you, Mr. Workingman, "you have a world to win and nothing to lose but your chains." – Or you appeal to them on the basis of personal freedom, self-expression, and so forth. This is putting it upon a purely personal basis; let us see how it works. The three classes appealed to soon find that it is more than probable that these ideas will not be realized in their time and generation; at least there is the possibility; so the reward for their labours, if any, is a spiritual one, and the loss a material one. They were appealed to on a material basis, material even in the sense that working for the realization of an ideal is spiritual; it has to do with the future; the right to express yourself in sex and other personal matters is material, because it deals with the present. It is as with the successful politician, before and after election. Perhaps he had ideals before he got the office, but after his arrival his ideals assume a personal bias. John Burns was an idealist and revolutionist before he was elected to Parliament; he was convinced that *society* must be reconstructed; but after he was elected he said that "the day of the agitator has passed, the day of the legislator has arrived." What need of a revolution! Have *I* not been elected? The revolution is here – for me. The capitalist who wanted Anarchism because it promised him comforts, without the anxiety of business, strikes, etc., finds himself slipping down in the social scale, as he devotes his time to propagating beautiful, but unpopular theories; and that not being what he expected, he quits. The workingman who attached himself because he wanted more comforts, finds that the best way to obtain them is by adapting himself to things as they are, Instead of trying to reconstruct society; and he thus withdraws.

We are all egoists in the sense that the mainspring of our actions is the desire to obtain happiness and avoid pain. There are higher and lower forms of happiness, as there are higher and lower forms of art, and it is as true now as it was in Aristotle's time that the man who places his talents, genius, time, and energy at the service of humanity represents a higher type than he who simply strives for himself or his immediate family. Self-interest is the most potent of propelling forces with many of our actions, but that very self-interest is what deters most people from declaring themselves the enemies of the existing social order and its conventional lies. He who proclaims himself a reformer or revolutionist because he wishes to better his economic condition, or desires freedom in his personal relations, rests his faith on uncertain ground, and a slight change in either is enough to turn the scale and make a defender instead of an enemy of present conditions. Concern yourself with yourself, and your desire to change social conditions soon crystalizes into a desire to change *your* condition, and your career as a social reformer has seen its finish. Some might urge that what I say is an admission that Anarchism is not coming in our time. To such let me reply that I neither affirm nor deny; prophecy is not in my line; but I do insist that, to speed Anarchism or make it possible, it must become more humanitarian and less personal. I am convinced that Anarchism, like every other social or political theory, must have an economic basis; it must become more a mass movement and less an individual one. This is not to question, much less deny, the desire for personal liberty or self-expression, or that Communism, Collectivism, or Mutualism must be *the* system. Anarchism does not concern itself with any special theory of economics, but an economic base there must be, unless it is to become an abstraction. Personal liberty and self-expression will always appeal with greater force to certain individuals than the why's and wherefore's of obtaining a living; it may well be that they are the pioneers of humanity in its march to higher things. We feel of them and akin to them, but mankind, as a whole, is much more concerned with its own

I am convinced that Anarchism, like every other social or political theory, must have an economic basis; it must become more a mass movement and less an individual one.

present than with the future of coming generations, and comfort is a more potent factor in determining our lives than theories of liberty.

The sex question is probably more in evidence in the American Anarchist movement than in the European. In fact, the Individualist section – if we except *Liberty* – has almost merged itself into the movement for sex reform; certainly most of those we know make that question their touchstone. This is not because the Europeans desire freedom in matters of sex or sex discussion less than we do, but because their Anarchism is less introspective than ours. They concern themselves more with the mass movement than we do; they fight the capitalist; we fight Comstock. Instead of participating in the trade unions, organizing the unemployed, or indulging in soap-box oratory, we rent comfortable halls and charge ten cents' admission. Added to that are, in many cases, ten cents carfare, and Anarchism has become a luxury. Instead of inspiring the workers with revolutionary ideas we teach them speculative theories of liberty, with the result that our Mrs. Grannis's and "Little Tim" Sullivans' are increasing the number of oppressive laws on the statute books. "The right to be born well" is surely worth fighting for, more especially because it means fighting for the unborn; but In the midst of inequality of opportunity it must apply largely to those whose progenitors are economically well situated; in other words, the exploiting classes; and being such, they do not immediately concern us. It may be and probably will be said that in fighting for sex freedom we fight for the present and future generations; all that is quite true, yet it does not gainsay our point that there is not enough idealism in the desire for self expression to maintain a strong, healthy movement.

The Socialists and Single Taxers do precisely the same thing in the economic field as the Anarchists do in matters pertaining to personal freedom. Priding themselves on their practicability and common sense – whatever the latter may mean – they appeal to man's self-interest, with results that would be amusing if they were not pathetic. The Single Taxers, as a party, have distinctly lost ground during the past ten years; yet our dear old Bolton Hall, most charming and idealistic of men, repeats the same old cry in his "Three Acres and Liberty," while the Socialists are at this moment distributing a leaflet to the unemployed, asking them to vote for Socialism and get a job, though it must be apparent to even the most superficial mind that voting for Socialism is a very roundabout way of getting a "job," and working for the single tax is not likely to improve the individual's position for a long time to come. The Anarchist movement in America alone furnishes plenty of examples of those who came here from Europe revolutionists, idealists – and poor men. Accumulating a little money, they invested it in tenement houses or other forms of "business," and as the "business" absorbed them more and more, they gradually shed their radical ideas, becoming doctrinaires or plain philistines. Some sought to harmonize the idealist and practical by becoming Marxian Socialists, for according to latter day interpretations of the materialistic conception of history they can be class-conscious Socialists and tenement house proprietors at the same time. With these people Anarchism was a personal thing. They were the centre of gravity; they rebelled against conditions because the latter restricted *their* actions and *their* liberty. Liberty with them had to do with material things, and finding not only no immediate chance of improving their economic condition in the struggle for freedom, but every possibility of jeopardizing what position they did have, they promptly withdrew.

There is still a third class of propagandists; but as they are but few in America, I shall deal briefly with them. I refer to those whom, for lack of a better description, I shall call "Tolstoyans." They hold largely to the theory of non-resistance, (some more strongly than others) and believe that by getting back to the land and engaging in useful, productive labour they set an example for others to follow. This almost invariably leads to sophistry, for they are unable to live except by adapting themselves to the methods of those around them, selling their produce at the highest price obtainable, or by assistance from those "who live in the system," as the saying is. I have in mind a colony of people holding these ideas, located at Perleigh, Essex, England. They lived, some twenty or more of them, in a large barn and, true to their humanitarian instincts, gave shelter to a tramp one night; unfortunately, the tramp had the small-pox, and so the entire colony became afflicted. As a matter of self-protection the villagers were forced to quarantine them, furnish them with doctors, nurses, etc., and before they were over the trouble this small village of poor people were saddled with a debt of nearly three hundred pounds sterling. Hairs might be split over this very interesting question: Had the colonists a right to express themselves and get the small-pox, and by so doing force other people to pay for that self-expression or get the small-pox themselves? I am concerned here with but one phase of the question, as with all those who seek to live their own lives. That they had a right to live their own lives goes without question; but that it is humanitarian or idealistic, I deny. To live one's life in one's own way is a fascinating thing; propaganda by example is often more effective than the written or spoken word; but if there are any who believe that to bury ourself on a farm or in a colony is to spread libertarian or humanitarian ideas, a study of such ventures will soon undeceive them. Liberty to do that which one feels himself or herself best fitted for is essential to all progress, but let us not deceive ourselves into the belief that, because we desire a particular form of life, it is necessarily the best one to live. It is not sufficient to do what you want; rather want to do the best thing. In short, if interest in freedom centres around

our personality, that interest disappears in proportion as our liberty and well being are increased. Philosophic speculations as to freedom do not make for vitality in a movement; activity is wanted, and the one place for activity is among the people. Mock and insult the masses because of their seeming supineness in allowing themselves to be exploited; but remember it is death to one's enthusiasm and an end to activity to separate from them.

We feel the "call of the wild" as keenly as those who think humanity will be saved, or at least appreciably helped, if they sell butter and eggs instead of paper napkins; but we are under no illusions about it. We shall probably succumb in the end; but we at least have made a fight, and we go, knowing that we go not to further an ideal, but to live our own life, – something we have not done these many years. If the Anarchist movement in America is to again have vitality it must return to first principles: To make of Anarchism a humanitarian theory, rather than a desire for self-expression. The latter must indeed not be lost sight of, but the former must be the keynote. To urge upon our readers and hearers that if it be glorious to struggle for freedom and self-expression for oneself, it were still more glorious to struggle for freedom and self-expression for others. To urge upon the young to interest themselves in a movement to save the millions of children slaving out their childish lives in factory, mill, and mine, to save those thousands upon thousands of unfortunate men and women who are killed or maimed every year by preventable accidents; to restore to happy homes the millions of tramps and hundreds of thousands of prostitutes; these and many other things. If we appeal to a man upon this basis and win him, he will stay with us – not for a day or an hour – but till the end.

Socialists and Politics

H. Kelly

Mother Earth, August 1909

If man were not so divinely inconsistent, the world would be a dull and uninteresting place to live in; which is an excellent reason why we should extoll consistency.

Socialists all over the world advocate the "conquest of political power" as the one and only method of destroying capitalism and the inauguration of the Co-operative Commonwealth. It is true Socialists differ in their methods of electioneering, some indulging in phrases sweet to the ear, as "voting a means of gauging their strength," "serving notice on the capitalist," and so on, to differentiate them from their – to them – less revolutionary brethren; but as the needle turns to the pole, so do all Marxians in the end turn to the "conquest of political power" by parliamentary methods. And here let us say that by "political" methods the Socialists really mean parliamentary methods. Acts of regicide, General Strike, or armed uprising may be, and usually are, political in character, but they are decidedly not parliamentary. It may safely be assumed that not more than one per cent. of the Socialists mean anything but electioneering when they speak of the conquest of political power, as a visit to their meetings or perusal of their publications will prove.

The strength of the Socialist movement is computed at eleven million, which means that in countries where there is full or partial suffrage eleven million adults *voted* for Socialist candidates for office. With this in mind, we are sometimes amused, but more often impatient, at their fulminations against the inevitable result of their tactics, the case of M. Briand being the latest in point.

The advent of M. Briand, former revolutionary Socialist and anti-militarist, to the place of Prime Minister of France is not surprising and should not give rise to congratulation or condemnation. It was the natural and logical conclusion of a policy and that thing the Socialists dilate on so strongly – environment. It is true, M. Lepine, Prefect of Police of Paris, will still continue to suppress, wherever possible, revolutionary demonstrations; anti-militarists will be condemned by "Comrade" Briand as by his capitalistic predecessors; private plunder protected with due diligence; in short, things will continue precisely as they did under the "red republican" and former revolutionist M. Clemenceau. Why? The answer is obvious. France is still a prey to the fetich of property, church, government, patriotism, and other superstitions, and M. Briand accepts office with the tacit, if not outspoken, recognition of this fact and an in formal promise to his employers not to run counter to them. In this respect he is no different from any man elected or appointed to office. While a member of the Combes Cabinet, Clemenceau brought a storm of censure upon his head for temporising with strikers and marching under the red flag. He *did* temporise with them, and if his previous struggles for liberty count for anything in our estimation of his character, he was doubtlessly quite sincere in his promises to try and remedy the strikers' grievances. The strikers had been tricked so often they declined to accept his promises. Thus he was face to face with two problems, resign from office or call out the troops to crush them. He chose the latter, with results well known. It was the same with Millerand, when he ordered out troops to suppress strikers, and we assume he will act the same as a member of Briand's Cabinet as of Waldeck-Rousseau's. The same with John Burns in his attack on the unemployed. When a man is elected or appointed to a governmental office, his position is analogous to the

man hired by a private capitalist. His business is to look after the interests of his employer. The Socialists see this quite clearly as long as it relates merely to what may be defined as a cabinet of a capitalistic government; but they cannot see it from any other angle. If a Socialist were elected governor of New York State in November he would be expected to obey the laws; if he did not, he would be impeached. If called on for troops to suppress strikers, he would be compelled to furnish them or prove they were not needed. It's true, Altgeld refused to call out troops in the Pullman strike, but his reasons were those of any honest man, a believer in capitalism. That is, they were not needed because the strikers were not committing acts of violence. The action of Briand, Viviani, and Millerand in entering a "Republican Cabinet" is no more and no less inconsistent than any Socialist Mayor in France – there are a number of them – who is at present defending capitalistic interests by enforcing capitalistic laws on behalf of property and sending people to jail for disobeying those laws. Parliamentarians are aware that Socialism will never hinge on one bill in Congress or the Legislature; and until such time as they would be in full power, and able and willing to change the laws they found on the statute books, they would be supposed to enforce them. If a Socialist were elected Mayor of New York it would be his duty to jail (through his Commissioner of Police) hungry women who stole bread, and strikers who "slugged" "scabs" for taking their jobs; and in this respect he would be no worse than those who enter a "capitalistic cabinet." Life is a compromise, true enough; but if a modicum of purity and self-respect is to be maintained, politics must be eschewed. It is as certain as anything can be that the Socialists now denouncing Briand – and rightly so – as a traitor, for co-operating with capitalists in the formation of a Republican cabinet, will at the next election make promises equally dishonest because equally impossible of realisation. It may be honest and to the best interests of Socialism to flirt with Prohibition and restriction of immigration; but in the light of the Communist Manifesto they make strange bed-fellows, and we have no doubt many a Socialist will have to wrestle with his con science before swallowing the platform adopted by the last Socialist convention. Our own opinion of platforms was voiced by Horace Greely, who said: "Platforms were made to spit on."

First of May

H. Kelly

Mother Earth, May 1910

> The workingmen who march today, or who come together in meetings, will gain all those things to which they aspire just as soon as they make an equally effective demonstration at the ballot box.
>
> – N. Y. *Call*, April 30, 1910.

It is twenty-one years since the resolution, proposed by a Knights of Labor delegate to the International Socialist Congress at Paris, that May First be set aside as a day when labour all over the world should show its solidarity, was adopted. Proposed and accepted as labour's declaration of independence, it was a revolutionary step; at least it was so recognized by the Anarchists and, we believe, by a very large section of the general labour movement.

That the workers must win their freedom from capitalism and wage slavery on the economic battlefield, instead of the political, is a truism. And yet, owing to the false prophets of Socialism, a large section of the workers are hoodwinked into believing that the contrary is the case. Men capable of reasoning logically on matters pertaining to man's other activities, reason like children when discussing the efficacy of putting pieces of paper into ballot boxes. It matters not that we live ten years after the time promised by Marx as the date when the bourgeoisie shall have disappeared, and that they are with us in increased numbers. With the pontiffs of Socialism it is merely a pleasure deferred, and the facts and figures of daily life are denied with a vigour worthy of a better cause. To call attention to the fact that the Standard Oil Co. had half a million shareholders and shares, just prior to the panic, selling at $750 each, has no effect on this type of mind. Blinded by Rockefeller's millions, the Social Democrat refuses to admit that a man holding a share of stock valued at $750, paying high dividends, is a capitalist and exploiter. He says that the trusts are crushing the middle class out of existence and, the Standard Oil Co. being a trust, it cannot manufacture exploiters; it must destroy them. To admit otherwise is "agin his principles."

The department store is another superstition with him. He points with pardonable pride to it as a proof of that wonderful discovery of Marx which ranks the latter with Darwin. That the said department store is a series of small shops under one roof and owned by a large number of shareholders, all parasites plundering the people proportionately to the number of shares held, is lost on him similarly with his belief in politics. In fact, the Social Democratic theory of politics and that of the concentration of capital stand and will fall together. If the middle class were being squeezed out and dropped into the ranks of the workers, they would in all probability augment the working class vote; if not, they

would swell the capitalist vote. The latter is what they are doing, and while the political Socialists deny this fact, their principles have grown so emasculated as to become more and more acceptable to the bourgeoisie.

1 — Home rule for the city.
2 — Initiative and referendum.
3 — Better schools.
4 — Municipal ownership.
5 — Penny lunches.
6 — Street car company to sprinkle streets.
7 — Trade union conditions of labour.
8 — A seat for every passenger in the street cars, lifting jacks, automatic brakes, and fenders.
9 — Three cent streetcar fare.
10 — Eight hour day for labour.
11 — Cheaper gas.
12 — Cheaper ice by means of municipal plant.
13 — Cheaper coal and wood by means of municipal coal and wood yards.
14 – Cheaper and better light, and more of it, by means of municipal plant.
15 — Corporations to pay their full share of taxes.
16 — Clean streetcars. Glasgow cleans and disinfects cars every day, it is pointed out.
17 — Street closets and comfort stations.
18 — Work for the unemployed at union wages and eight-hour days.
19 — Widows who do washing for support of families to have water rates remitted by city.
20 — Cheap bread, by requiring standard weight in every loaf.

Not one of the above reforms, promised by the new Social Democratic administration at Milwaukee, is objectionable to the bourgeoisie as a class. Of course we know that many of these reforms will not even be attempted, as for instance, Home Rule for the city and Initiative and Referendum are matters determined by the State government; while the reforms promised in the street car service, such as three cent fares, are mere talk, since the company has its franchise from the State, granted for some fifty years. “Comrades must not expect the impossible of us,” says Mayor Seidel. “We feel sure the intelligent ones will not.” Victor Berger, the most reactionary force in the American Socialist movement, is in the saddle at Milwaukee, and the very most that may be expected is an honest attempt to conduct the affairs of the city along constitutional, i. e. bourgeois lines. It may be urged that an honest official is better than a dishonest one. Yes, but what of the “class war,” the “working class kept down to the point of mere subsistence”? If these theories are true, of what value to the starved and stunted wage slave and the “jobless worker” are these so-called reforms. It cannot be urged too strongly that it is no part of the Anarchist or Socialist to administer bourgeois government more efficiently. It is their business to destroy capitalism, and on the ruins of that system found the Free Commune or Socialist Commonwealth. With Mayor Gaynor at the head of the New York City government, the city bids fair to have the best administration in its history; but the bread line is still with us, and the capitalist’s right to exploit his wage slaves is still unquestioned. Politics will not, because it cannot, touch fundamental questions, and if the “Milwaukee Victory” were duplicated in every city in America, the capitalist question would remain unsolved, *unless* the exploited themselves rose in revolt against their oppressors and took possession of the land, railways, factories, etc.

It cannot be urged too strongly that it is no part of the Anarchist or Socialist to administer bourgeois government more efficiently. It is their business to destroy capitalism, and on the ruins of that system found the Free Commune or Socialist Commonwealth.

In due time the “Milwaukee Victory” will become a legend like the “three million Socialists in Germany,” and-like all legends – interesting as such, but disappointing when tested in the furnace of fact. After “Comrade” Seidel and the Socialist administration have become a part of Milwaukee history, our query will be in regard to the “three million Socialists, ” What have they done ? We have been asking that about the German Social Democratic party for some years, and the answer has invariably been: “Well, we are in the minority yet, but when we are in the majority–”

Socialists all over the world will be interested in one reform Mayor Seidel inaugurated immediately after assuming office. He *increased* the hours of labour for municipal employees from six to eight a day. Every capitalist paper in the country has applauded this “Socialist reform,” as well they might, for this is “efficiency in government” with a vengeance, and has no doubt brought the Co-operative Commonwealth several laps nearer. True to the party platform, which calls for eight hours a day even when it means increasing the hours instead of decreasing them.

Hard on the news of Milwaukee comes the announcement that Karl Kautsky, “scientific theorist,” as the press calls him, has considerable hopes the

German Social Democrats will double their vote at the next election and gain a majority over all parties in the Reichstag. He supplements this hope with another, that the party will not jeopardize their chances by acting rashly and advocating a general strike. We have no fear of such a thing happening. There are too many reactionary forces in the party, on the one hand, and too large and varied a membership on the other. If we thought for a moment there was the slightest possibility of such a victory (?) at the polls, we would join our prayers to Kautsky's against that rashness (?) of a general strike, that the world might witness on a gigantic scale the impotence of voting. Nothing short of such a miracle will convince some people. Kautsky in his "Social Revolution and the Day After" is careful to distinguish between "scientific Socialism" and "Utopian Socialism," the latter being "the day after," which is mere prophecy. His *hopes* of victory belong to "Utopian Socialism," and should not be taken more seriously than Upton Sinclair's dream of a national Socialist victory in America in 1912. It were easy to extend the date and still maintain a reputation as a prophet.

The First of May is but a symbol, the germinating of spring, the awakening of labour. The emancipation of labour which it portends will come because labour is becoming conscious of its strength and its rights. Emancipation is its goal; Direct Action its method. That is the real significance of the First of May.

It is now about a year since the Social Democrats fulminated against Briand for forming a "Capitalist Ministry" in France; traitor was a mild term for him. The fulminations were due to the fact that he had gone back on his principles and was lending himself to a perpetuation of capitalism, in so far as that is possible with a system doomed to death in accordance with Marx's theory. We had occasion to point out then, and repeat it now, that in so far as he lent himself to the upholding of the present system, by enforcing laws defending private property, he was not one whit different from any elected official. We have not heard that the man or woman out of employment through no fault of their own is immune from punishment for expropriating the necessaries of life in cities governed by Socialists. We "do not expect the impossible" from Comrade Seidel at Milwaukee, and we are sure that private property will be defended with as much zeal and vigour against the starving man or woman as in a stronghold of capitalism. To assert they must govern according to the laws or, as Victor Berger would say, "to an antiquated charter," is begging the question. No one forced M. Millerand to order out troops to shoot down strikers; no one forced M. Briand to form a "Capitalist Ministry," and no one forces "Comrade" Seidel to assume an office wherein he will be compelled to defend capitalist institutions, which he began doing the moment he assumed office. Of course, Socialism is inevitable (?), and to assert that the individual plays any part in the history of man is to indulge in "hero worship," a form of heresy against "Scientific Socialism." We are of the opinion that the club of "Comrade" Seidel's policeman will be found as hard as M. Lepine's, and sweat shops, slum dwellings, unemployment, and all the evils attendant on capitalism will be equally abhorrent to the victims whether the government be called Socialist or Capitalist.

There are two ways of breaking down the present system, and two only. One, by active revolutionary opposition; the other, by refusing to co-operate in any way whatsoever with the governing classes or their supporters. The latter is only a theory; but, while it has never been tested to the limit, as a theory it seems impregnable. The former has been tested on many a battlefield, and when the fulcrum is great enough, existing governments or institutions fall.

This brings us back to the First of May, and our recent epoch-making general strike at Philadelphia. Many bourgeois writers have tried to picture the struggle as a failure, and now comes that erstwhile "Anarch of Art," Mr. James Huneker, to prove that the general strike is impossible and the Philadelphia affair a fiasco. Reviewing the book called "La Vague Rouge" (the Red Wave), by J. H. Rosny, Sr., in a two column article in the N. Y. *Sun* of April 27th, our art critic proves to his entire satisfaction that the general strike is a hopeless, impracticable dream and a pernicious idea causing "discomfort, misery, crime, etc." Says our art critic, turned sociologist for the nonce: "We hope to see slain some day that silliest of superstitions, the general strike." To those who would glean in unfamiliar fields we would say, Beware of the ditches and pitfalls. For the benefit of amateur sociologists like Mr. Huneker, we would say: First, the Philadelphia strike was *not* a general strike; it was a sympathetic strike of various trades of one city to obtain certain concessions for the members of one union It had no definite revolutionary aim, but was a spontaneous outburst of sympathy of labour for members of a downtrodden trade, and, as such, it was magnificent. Second, far from being a failure it was a brilliant, scintillating success, as was pointed out in MOTHER EARTH for April, in an article by Voltairine de Cleyre, from which we quote: "Six different companies in as many cities have raised the trolley men's wages since

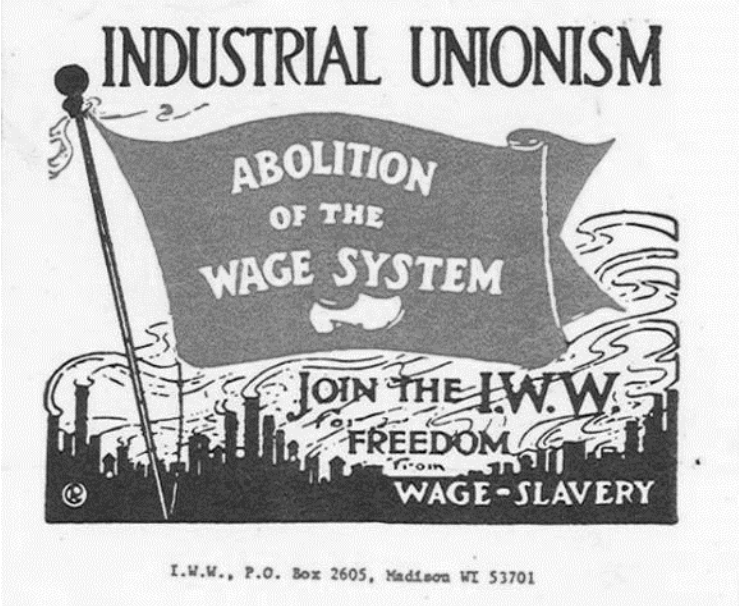
this strike." To those who, like our art critic, are in receipt of comfortable incomes, the loss of ten or a dozen lives may seem too high a price to pay for a mere rise in wages; but who can tell how many lives have been saved by this mere raising of wages in six cities as the result of a strike in one, or how many years have been added to the trolley men' s lives by the increased comforts obtained. The Socialist administration of Milwaukee has, as the first fruits of a twenty-five-year agitation, *raised the hours of labour*, while the strike of Philadelphia *raised wages*. The general strike, purely as an idea, has inspired millions of working people all over the world to resist oppression and has wrung concessions from exploiters everywhere. It is a great inspirational force, not only for the direct tangible benefits it has won, but as a great moral neutraliser of the poisonous and fatally noxious influence of politics in the revolutionary movement throughout the world. Slowly but surely the idea of the First of May spreads, an idea which spells solidarity of labour and the direct, conscious revolutionary defy of the exploiter. We do not claim the workingman is turning from politics; we do not know. But we *do* say that side by side with this flirting with old superstitions there grows a revolutionary spirit of which the Philadelphia strike stands forth as a beacon light. The First of May is but a symbol, the germinating of spring, the awakening of labour. The emancipation of labour which it portends will come because labour is becoming conscious of its strength and its rights. Emancipation is its goal; Direct Action its method. That is the real significance of the First of May.

A Syndicalist League

Harry Kelly

Mother Earth, September 1912

The necessity of a Syndicalist League in this country becomes more and more apparent every day. And yet, when this assertion is made, it brings the usual rejoinders. First, we are laughed at and patronised for having "discovered" Syndicalism, and are compared to the German who suddenly awoke to the existence of a writer by the name of Goethe. Second, the Industrial Workers of the World are already in existence, and offer the same opportunities for effective work along syndicalist lines as a Syndicalist League, so why form another organisation? Third, we must stand outside and aloof from all such organisations for fear of becoming demoralised and compromising the ideal of Anarchism. Taking the above statements or objections in their order given, we will endeavour to answer them , and give our reasons for the formation of a Syndicalist League.



It is unimportant – even if true – that we have suddenly discovered Syndicalism. As one who has been long in the Anarchist Movement and read whatever was available on the subject in the English language, we are tolerably familiar with direct action and the general strike. For those of us who are unfortunate enough not to know any other language but English, the conception of Syndicalism is comparatively new. Five or six years ago, the term meant nothing more than our own trade unionism. The word "Syndicate" meant a body, not a policy, and signified much the same thing as trade union. At the present time Syndicalism means much more than unionism; it means a distinct form of unionism, a revolutionary, anti-parliamentary form of economic organisation, which seeks to supplant the present system of production and distribution with another based upon the principle of free cooperation. This is entirely different from English and American trade unionism, and yet as we have stated, Syndicalism some five or six years ago was nothing more or less than French Trade Unionism – at least this was our conception and understanding. The fact that the thing we now know as Syndicalism was written and talked about as the General Strike, Direct Action and so on, for some years, is not in our opinion an argument against the formation of such a league as we have in mind. The question is: is it advisable, or necessary?

It is difficult to express disagreement with a political idea, without being called an enemy of the working class, reactionary, ignoramus and so on. This, however, we must expect; and while it is difficult to arrive at any intelligent understanding under such conditions, the zeal of the partisans often has its good effects in that they focus attention on their ideas. We have read whatever

came our way, discussed the subject with leading members of the organisation, and tried diligently to get a correct understanding of the principles of the I.W.W. Tried, because the principle of solidarity which it embodies has a fascination for us, and yet it does not – for us – fill the bill. The principle of "one big union," to be effective, means perfect unanimity or conception of immediate interest, or centralisation. In the Lawrence strike tyranny and misery were so universal, it was comparatively easy to unite the different elements. Ettor, Giovannitti, and Haywood, all did splendid work, but when it is remembered that the highest paid labour averaged but $9. 00 a week, and the poorest considerably less, it can easily be seen that human suffering was the chief factor in uniting the different elements into a compact fighting mass. In dealing with the element known as skilled labour, we are face to face with an entirely different proposition. Where the stress of poverty is not great, we must perforce appeal to the idealistic side of man, and it requires a high degree of class consciousness to bring about such a reapproachment as at Lawrence. Every organisation or social theory worthy of consideration seeks to improve the immediate condition of labour. The goal is freedom, as each understands the term; but while striving for that end, settlements and compromises are inevitable. To deny this is to deny life. The fundamental weaknesses of the now defunct Knights of Labor – with which form of organisation the I.W.W. has many points in common – were two, lack of autonomy of trades and the power it gave the officials. In the settlement of trade disputes, carpenters, bricklayers, and cigar makers ofttimes negotiated settlements for printers, and vice versa. Inability to understand conditions, in trades other than their own created all kinds of trouble, and was one of the forces that ultimately disrupted the organisation. Centralisation means power in the hands of a few; and as power is demoralising to those who use it, the result was corruption, as it would be in any organisation.

"One big union" is an attractive phrase. It implies immediate action based on the theory of "an injury to one is the concern of all." As previously stated, however, it means a perfect unanimity of interest and understanding, or power in the hands of one or two leaders to get that immediate action. The latter is distinctly to be condemned; the former an ideal to strive for.

a Syndicalist League… would not seek the destruction of existing craft unions… It would endeavour to broaden their spirit and inculcate a greater degree of solidarity amongst them, leaving them at the same time local or trade autonomy

The I.W.W. has, to us, a future only with the unskilled; and while that class of labour is of equal importance to the skilled in society, it is not more important. And here let us say, that we have no sympathy with, or desire to divide labour into classes other than revolutionary and reactionary; when we speak of skilled and unskilled labour, it is to use expressions common to the understanding; and nothing more. While craft unionism, as exemplified by the American Federation of Labor form of organisation, has very grave defects and has left much undone, it has accomplished a great deal for its members – this notwithstanding that its principle of solidarity is limited to its own members and even there not deep. It is, however, unreasonable to ask men to desert that form of organisation for another that in their opinion is weaker. Men are in the unfortunate position of having to live-or so they think – and however idealistic the worker may be, his immediate interests are very important to him. Much has been said by De Leon and others about the A. F. of L. men scabbing on their fellow workers. Not in the sense of taking another's job, but on the principle that the six-dollar-a-day plasterer gets his living at the expense of the dollar-and-a half or two-dollar-a-day longshoreman, who has to pay higher rent in order that the plasterer may get his wage. This is but partially true, as the plasterer himself has to pay the higher rent; but if he is scabbing, so is every one of us who receives more than the longshoreman. The Anarchist or Socialist editor, writer, lawyer and all who command high salaries contribute to the increased cost of living of the very poor; and merely because their tactics differ from the high paid trade unionist, it does not lessen the offence, if offense it be. No workingman, the plasterer not excepted, gets more than a living, and his right is as legitimate as any in society – and more than many – to improve his condition. The I. W. W. cannot hope to make converts in the large cities where the higher paid labour is well organised, except in the case of a few idealists. They can, however, do much good work among the poorly paid organised workers, and we wish them all success in their efforts.

To stand outside the labour movement or such organisations as the I.W.W. or Syndicalist League – such as we have in mind – for fear we would become officials and get demoralised, is in our opinion to play the part of pedants. We have been outside the labour movement so long we have lost almost all our vitality. It is understood that each man or woman will work along

lines most agreeable to them, but as a general rule of propaganda we should not limit ourselves to any one class, not even the working class. It is a fact, however, that the propaganda of Anarchism in the English language has been carried on largely among the small middle class. If Anarchists have not sufficient faith in their own strength to prevent demoralisation, and lack the character to refuse an office that may corrupt them, they are indeed in a bad way. Certain individuals are fitted by nature for the role of philosopher, but they are few and far between – America is a poor breeding ground for such individuals – even if we had, that applies to individuals and not to a movement which seeks to vitalise con temporary movements.

Syndicalism is a combination of craft unionism and I.W.W. solidarity. It seeks the destruction of capital ism and the replacing of it by free cooperation, carried on by federated groups. It is Socialism in the large sense, economic but distinctly anti-parliamentary. Such a Syndicalist League as we have in mind would not seek the destruction of existing craft unions and their incorporation in "one big union." It would endeavour to broaden their spirit and inculcate a greater degree of solidarity amongst them, leaving them at the same time local or trade autonomy. Its business would be to organise the unorganised upon a distinctly revolutionary and anti-parliamentary basis. It would also endeavour to organise the large and ever growing number of the smaller middle class, writers, teachers, doctors, lawyers, etc., and furnish an outlet for their activity. When one stops to consider the number of individuals engaged in these and similar occupations, hanging onto life by an eyelash, and what they might do if organised, it is inspiring. Mixed assemblies on the order of the K. of L. bodies of those who have no union to belong to, can be formed until a sufficient number of a trade or calling can be found to make a separate union. For the present the main work of the league should be to spread the doctrines of Syndicalism and to organise the unorganised. Speakers and lecturers sent to various unions to explain that Syndicalism does not mean the destruction of their organisations, but merely to deepen and extend their usefulness. Direct action and sabotage with their enormous potentialities can be set forth so as to prepare the workers in their strikes. The principles of Syndicalism are in the air and the number of people seeking an outlet from the political morass must be apparent to all. Syndicalism combines the wisdom of Aristotle who said that the best way to do things well was to *do* them well, and the philosophy of Ibsen who pointed out that the real joy of life lies in the struggle and not the attainment of the object striven for. Repeated struggle and failure to attain a higher standard of life will not only eventually cause the breakdown of present society, but fit us to enter the promised land – Free Society.

The winter of 1894 and '95 saw me living in Boston. An activity of some five or six years in the trade union movement in three large cities had given me some insight into labour conditions, and stimulated a vague revolutionary feeling. It must have been latent, for the great battles of Homestead and the railway strike at Chicago in '93 had created a feeling of exultation, with out, however, any very definite understanding. Passing through Washington Street one evening, my attention was drawn to a common handbill fluttering from above a doorway. The heading was fairly prominent and the words "Anarchist Communist" stood out quite clearly. Reading further, it was seen that Charles W. Mowbray, an English Anarchist Communist, would speak that evening on his theory. A moment's hesitation; then - why not?

The meeting was interesting, novel and vital. The ideas were illuminating and the ease with which Mowbray bowled over his opponents and answered questions was brilliant and stimulating; so much so that it stirred me to ask a question or two, and although not convinced by the answers, my self-assurance was considerably shaken. Several meetings followed in quick succession and all were attended, enthusiasm growing with each and a greater appreciation of the immense power behind the idea.

Harry Kelly, "An Anarchist in the Making", *Mother Earth*, April 1913

The Labour War in America

H.K.

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Communism, June-July 1900

That the British public are nine-tenths fools, as Carlyle put it, can be readily seen in the way they accept without reserve all of the lies that the daily press feed them on from day to day. As an example: the news we receive here from America from "our own correspondent" and "our special correspondent", is sometimes so misleading that an American in London can but rub his eyes and say to himself, "Have my fellow countrymen changed so greatly, or have I been drinking?" The reports of the Croton Dam strike in New York and the street-car strike in progress now at St. Louis are two glaring examples of how inaccurate "our own correspondent" and "our special correspondent" can be when they really try. The strike at what is known as the Croton Dam, was a strike of some Italian workingmen against the exactions of the contractors, who not only exploit these poor workers by starvation wages, but in the price they have to pay for board, and in other ways. This is comparatively easy; for they speak little English as a rule and so fall an easy prey to these vultures. The contract system is bad enough at its best; but with these poor Italians there is not one vulture to feast off them but two, for there is the *second* contractor or Padrone, as he is called, who gets the men for the contractor; so the poor wretch is exploited twice over.

It sometimes happens that the contractor prefers to deal with the men direct. When this happens, the Padrone comes around, stirs up trouble with the men to get them to strike, then he goes to the contractor and points out that had he furnished the men there would have been no trouble. So the next time the Contractor gives the Padrone the job of furnishing the men. From the information we have regarding this Croton Dam affair we believe it was tormented by the Padrones and afterward got beyond control. The men intrenched themselves and threatened a Spion Kop affair; the Militia was sent for and for several days there was a "hot time in the 'ole town;" a Militiaman was killed; the contractors made some concessions, and the strike was over; some fifteen of the strikers were arrested and the leaders will, undoubtedly, have to serve long terms of imprisonment. Long live the strikers!

The Tram Strike at St. Louis seems to me to be one of the fiercest. and most successful strikes of its kind that has ever taken place in America. "Our own correspondent," who lives in New York, is reporting a strike that is taking place nearly eleven hundred miles away with all the accuracy that usually characterizes him; even the Radical *Morning Leader* had an hysterical leader last week, written on the strength of "our correspondent's" cable in which we were informed that the strikers had pulled two women off the cars, stripped them naked and so drove them through the streets for having patronised the car companies. My opinion was then, that, were this act really done, it was done, not by the strikers (who were men), but by women; and this view has proved to be correct, for in a letter from St. Louis (dated May 30th) I am informed that women were doing this very thing and not the strikers as reported here. A tram strike in America is usually of short duration. The strike is declared. By the end of the first day all the men have left work. The first night there is a little excitement; a few cars are stopped. The second day things get a little warm: cars are stopped, blacklegs are beaten, and some property is damaged. By the third or fourth day riots are in progress, the militia is called out, a few strikers or sympathisers are killed, numbers are wounded and innumerable heads are broken, a great many are arrested; and in another two or three days the strike is over and the strikers are beaten. It is short, sharp, and bloody.

The St. Louis strike seems an exception – and indicates development. It has been on a month now and, from the amount of dynamite they are using and the property they are destroying, one could almost imagine them to be United States troops engaged in civilising the Filipinos or British troops establishing "equal rights for white men in South Africa." It is certainly to be regretted that a struggle must need be so fierce as to result in women being stripped naked and beaten while they are driven through the streets, but we live in an age of brutality; and then we Americans soon forget. At present we are reminded of our duty by a virtuous press (à la *Daily Mail*) and the righteous indignation of the tram companies.

The women of St. Louis are but emulating the example of their sisters at Homestead in 1892; they in turn, but followed the methods of their French sisters of 1792. In 1892, when the Homestead strikers defeated the 400 Pinkerton thugs sent to kill them and compelled them to surrender, it was the women who, when the Pinkertons were marched as prisoners through the town, attacked them with the fierceness of revenge – and this in spite of all the men could do to prevent them.

If you like it was brutal; but it was the natural result of the vicious treatment the capitalists mete out to the

workers every day of their lives, and it shows them what a merry time is in store for them on the morrow of the revolution. But then we are in England, and we have it upon the authority of Ben Tillett, that to destroy property is to play into the capitalists' hands, – and Ben knows what he is talking about (???). And the *Daily News* said it was inspiring to think of the wholesome respect British workers show the Constitution. So it is; so it.

The Francisco Ferrer Association and Syndicalism

Harry Kelly

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Communism, August 1912

Each country has a preference for certain methods in the working out of social problems, and a favourite one here (U.S.A.) is to dine and afterwards discuss. All countries have such clubs; but here – and particularly in New York – they are growing to such an extent that soon they will be the rule, and not the exception. The "Twilight," "Sunrise," "Intercollegiate" (Socialist), "Collectivist," "Socialist," "Heretics," and scores of others meet at stated intervals. All have talks or discussions, and while some are inane, others are quite serious, and have a real beneficial effect. One of the best features, perhaps, is the humanising effect they have on those who attend, in the sense that various elements are brought together on neutral platforms with free speech as the basis of discussion. That there is usually some limitation to the free speech goes without saying, but while it impairs, it does not destroy the club's usefulness. The most advanced, because most free from party influence, has been the "Sunrise." Originally started by Benj. R. Tucker, Eugene Smith, E. C. Walker, and a few others, some sixteen or eighteen years ago, its attendance has grown from thirteen to over six hundred diners. Walker says the club was stinted "to discuss Philosophic Anarchism" – whatever that is – and as he has been the secretary since its inception, he ought to know. It has long since adopted the policy of discussing various questions of human interest, with a preference for "sex," and a decided antipathy to anything suggesting revolutionary action, the term "revolutionary" meaning the overthrow of existing institutions by physical force or violence, as, for instance, the Boston Tea Party. In these days, when Revolutionary (?) Socialism may mean electing Socialist Mayors and Congressmen by ballot-box methods, this definition is far from being superfluous.

A common characteristic of these dining clubs is that one person invariably rules a certain club, and determines who the speakers shall be and what the subject for discussion. Walker rules the destinies of the "Sunrise Club," and increasing age has made him so philosophical that he has become an American patriot, and, as is befitting a patriot, he draws the line at anyone who adopts the old patriotic method of redressing wrongs. Men like Alex. Berkman may dine at the club and listen to the discussion, but they are debarred from participation in it because they have been too closely connected with Direct Action. Theorists like Emma Goldman and myself are not under the ban; in fact, E. G. is more than welcome, as she is the best drawing card the club ever had. Some months ago she addressed the club on "Woman's Inhumanity to Man," and all previous records of attendance were smashed to smithereens. Six hundred and four people sat down to dinner, and the gathering suggested a mass meeting rather than a dinner at a dollar a plate. The average attendance is about two hundred and fifty, and the highest previous to this was four hundred and twenty-five. "Bill" Haywood was among the diners, and although the biggest figure in the American Labour movement, Walker disregarded the usual courtesies extended to visitors, and failed to call on "Bill." As a real manly type of man, he probably had very little to say on the subject ; but the insult was deliberate, and the audience protested. For the first time in the history of the club, Walker's rule was challenged by the audience; a real revolution broke out, the Autocrat was forced to back water, and "Bill" spoke.

The Ferrer Dining Club was organised shortly after the foregoing, and with it the principle laid down that *no* subject be barred, and the more unpopular the speaker's views, the more welcome he should be. Several dinners took place at the Ferrer Headquarters, and one of the pleasant features was that they were cooked and served by our own comrades. It was decided to celebrate the second anniversary of the Francisco Ferrer Association, and as the Centre was too small, the affair was arranged and carried out on June 14th at the Café, Boulevard, New York City. The subject selected for the dinner was one very much to the fore in radical circles all over the world, and one tabooed by all the radical dining clubs last winter. "Syndicalism" was the topic for discussion, and the speakers were Wm. English Walling, Hippolyte Havel, Leonard D. Abbott, Alexander Berkman, Louis Levine, Moses Oppenheimer, H. Simpson, and the writer. Walling, Oppenheimer. and Simpson represented the Socialist line of thought; Havel, Berkman, and Kelly, the Anarchist: with Abbott and Levine sympathetic to the latter.

Over two hundred sat down to dinner, which, considering the warm weather, was a striking tribute to

the subject. Had it been held iu the winter, at least four hundred would have attended. No soul-inspiring addresses were made, but it was a thoughtful gathering appreciative of the good points brought out by the speakers. It is difficult to wax enthusiastic or evoke any expressions of deep human sympathy over the wrongs of the proletariat after speakers and audience have dined well, if not sumptuously. For this reason academic subjects, or those that lend themselves to the humorous, are the most popular. Gatherings such as these are not ideal places for awakening the consciences of the people, or redressing great wrongs; they are, however, as has been said, a form of American life, and serve a useful purpose.

In connection with the above, it is not inappropriate to recall that the Socialist Party of this country at its recent convention incorporated a clause in its rules of membership that "any member who advocates sabotage or crime" (?) as a form of propaganda or retaliation in the class war will be expelled from the patty. This is, of course, a triumph for the Bergers and Hillquitts, gentlemen who make their living – and a good one – at practising law or politics; and a direct slap at Haywood and the Direct Action wing. Perhaps the politicians of the party intended to clear the air, and on the face of things it looks as if Haywood and his friends should have resigned from the party. What really happened is that which always happens when attempts are made to abridge speech and stifle free thought: it has generated a great deal of hypocrisy. The Socialist papers have had and are having numerous letters from party members discussing the question, and the methods whereby a member may conform to the letter and violate the spirit of the law are manifold. The most striking of the suggestions is that the party does not forbid a man *committing* sabotage or crime, it forbids him *advocating* it. Truly a distinction fit for a Jesuit. So far Haywood and his Socialist friends remain in the party, but whether they are still advocating Direct Action I cannot say. These things, small as they are, are part of the disintegration of our political life. The line of cleavage is everywhere manifest, and any student can see the realignment of forces and parties going on.

Direct Action and Revolutionary Syndicalism are growing factors, and will have to be reckoned with more and more as time goes on. How far it will resemble the Syndicalism of Europe and affect the Labour movement here is for the future to decide. An ever-growing interest is everywhere to be seen, and the more dismission on the subject the better. It was fitting that the Francisco Ferrer Association should be the first organisation to attempt to set before the American people the ideas that are exerting such a profound influence in Europe.

The Miners' War in Colorado

Harry Kelly

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Communism, June 1914

To write adequately about the war in Colorado, one should be a poet or a scientist. The latter could have his feelings sufficiently under control to analyse the matter coldly and dispassionately, and convince his readers by reason; the former could stir men's passions and make them act quickly, blindly perhaps, but, as so often happens in life, with an intuition that would be as unerring as it would be effective. Being neither poet nor scientist, the mass of material that confronts me is enough to fill a more trained writer with dismay.

The coal miners of Colorado have been striking off and on for seven years, but the present struggle began in September last, and has grown fiercer and fiercer, until it culminated in the terrible Ludlow massacre, with which, no doubt, all Europe is now familiar. The demands of the men which led to the strike were seven in number:

1. The eight-hour day.
2. Pay for narrow and dead work.
3. A checkweighman without interference of company official.
4. The right to trade in any store they pleased.
5. The abolition of the criminal guard system.
6. Ten per cent. advance in wages.
7. Recognition of the Union.

Professor Edward R. A. Seligman, of Columbia University, writing in the *Annalist*, a magazine of finance, commerce, and economics, of May 4, says:

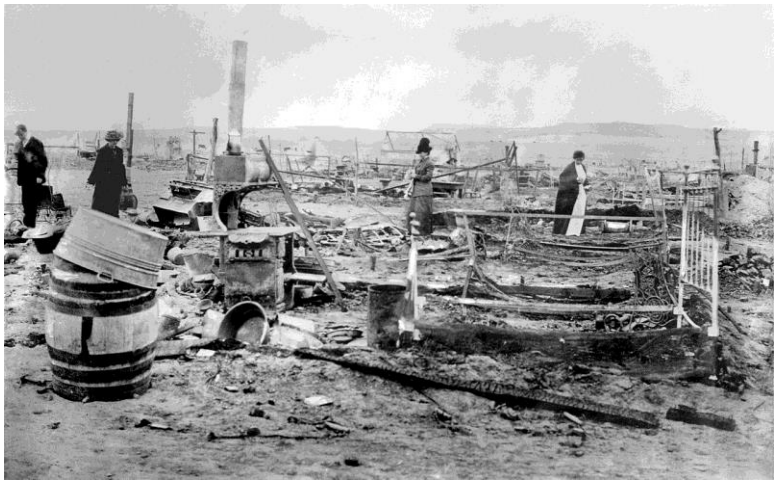
"Of these seven demands, five are guaranteed under severe penalty by the laws of the State of Colorado. It is claimed by the Union that had these laws been enforced there would never have been any strike. Whether or not this is so, is it not a remarkable commentary on the state of American civilisation that individuals should be compelled to resort to a strike in order to enforce a series of laws which it is the obligation of the employers to obey and the State to enforce That these laws were habitually and persistently disregarded is claimed by the Unions, and is virtually substantiated by the official statements in the reports of the factory inspectors in Colorado."

He says a great deal more that is well worth quoting were we writing for a different set of readers and had more space at our disposal.

Each day brings with it fresh evidence of the savagery of the coal barons of Colorado and their chief here in New York – John D. Rockefeller, Jr. It compares with, if it does not surpass, the stories of the grand ladies of Paris poking their parasols into the wounds of the

Communard. as they lay helpless after the fall of the Commune. The New York *Daily Globe*, the oldest daily paper in the city, writes editorially as follows:

"In regard to the Ludlow massacre, the Senate of Colorado, in a formal resolution, declares: 'Blame for the horror rests on the imported assassins who masqueraded as sons of Colorado in the uniform of the National Guard.' This. declaration coincides with and emphasises previous findings by the coroner, jury and the Federal grand jury, and the practical confession of guilt by the military court that endeavoured to whitewash the tragedy. It is established that murder was committed at Ludlow – that the guardians of society, whose sworn duty was to protect the sheep, turned wolves and devoured their charges. In one of the companies of alleged militia that shot down and burned women and children were thirty mine guards—that is, mercenaries of the mining companies—and seventy were clerks, bosses. engineers, and others in the employ of the mining companies. This 'National Guard' company was never mustered into the State's service, never held a drill. never elected any officers, and never was paid by any one except the mining companies. Is it strange civil war broke out when government expressed itself in such form?"



Ruins of the Ludlow Colony in the aftermath of the massacre

As is customary in all such struggles, the coal capitalists of Colorado have lied persistently and deliberately about the strike; they lied to alienate sympathy from the strikers and cut off supplies, and when that failed, murdered their wives and children ; and now lie to save themselves from the condemnation being vented upon them. few weeks ago John D. Rockefeller, Jr., swore before a Congressional Committee that the strike was one of principle and could not be arbitrated. The principle was the "open shop," or, to put it another way, the right to keep the men divided so that they could be exploited more easily. The miners swear that recognition of the Union has not been the main issue; that they have been willing to arbitrate their differences ever since the strike began, and the employers have steadily refused.

Where the spirit of brutality has been as rampant as it is in Colorado, it would be idle to lay the blame entirely upon one man : but it is all but universally admitted that Rockefeller, Jr., is more responsible for the murder of innocent women and children, to say nothing of men, than all the other forces combined. From the date of his declaration before the committee at Washington. the struggle has grown in intensity, reaching its climax with the firing of the tent colony at Ludlow, where two women and ten children were burned or smothered to death. It was his insistence on unconditional surrender, and his statement that they – the Standard Oil interests – were prepared to lose all they had invested in Colorado rather than treat with the men on any other basis, that touched the magazine that lay ready for the match.

Wm. T. Stead once said the United States was so anxious to lead the world in everything, that it was leading it in crime. This was true, and it is equally true with regard to the bitterness and savagery displayed in its Labour struggles. Life here in the United States isn't worth a pound of powder, and it grows cheaper every day. Strikes have always been more brutal here than in Europe : but just as the brutality in the treatment of the negro has grown worse in the last twenty years, so the treatment of men who dare to strike for better conditions has grown barbarous beyond belief.

In this case there is indisputable evidence that the tents were deliberately fired without regard to the safety of the women and children. When the coroner's jury, the Federal grand jury, and the Senate of Colorado find the militia guilty. they must be, without the faintest shadow of a doubt. Federal grand juries and State Senates have never been composed of working men or sympathisers with working men, and the evidence against this "National Guard" must have been so overwhelming that no other verdict was possible.

According to Press despatches from Colorado, and reports of investigating committees, more than one hundred lives have been lost up to date, which far surpasses any Labour struggle on this continent, and it makes even such struggles as Homestead and Hazleton pale into insignificance. As we see it, there are several very encouraging features in connection with the strike, and at least two very discouraging ones. One of the first is the perfectly open and frank manner in which the miners armed themselves, and even allowed themselves to be photographed with guns in hand and cartridge belts strapped around their waists. It must cheer the

heart of every revolutionist to know the actual fighting was done largely by Greeks and Bulgarians fresh from the Balkan War. Bitter enemies a few months ago over what they conceived to be national rights, they stood side by side in the mountains of Colorado and fought the common enemy to a standstill. How strange is human nature, after all! Another very inspiring feature is the way the Colorado Unions responded with money, arms, and recruits. This last must be supplemented by the money sent from other parts of the country to Colorado.

The discouraging features are the failure of the Miners' Convention at Indianapolis to declare in favour of a general strike in support of their Colorado comrades, and the attitude of the Socialist Party over the affair. The failure of the miners to declare the general strike is due, no doubt, to the fact that they have no real conception of the class struggle. To protest against wage-slavery and capitalism in all forms is at present beyond them. The officials of the United Mine Workers have long been recognised as the most astute politicians in the Labour movement, and with an ex miner (Secretary Wilson) in the Cabinet of President Wilson, it is more than possible that politics played its part in the report of the committee of the Convention against the general strike.

At the present writing, Federal troops are in control in the mine districts of Colorado, and a demand has been made on both miners and mine owners to surrender their arms. It is not expected that either side will surrender all their arms, and as the Federal troops cannot remain for ever, the fighting may be resumed as soon as they leave.

The mines in the disturbed districts are closed at present; for how long it is impossible to say. But the Rockefeller interests will soon be brought to bear on the Government, and under Federal surveillance an attempt will be made to open the mines, and it is a question of how far the miners will be awed by the fact that they are fighting the central Government instead of the local authorities. Libertarians know full well the heavy price that must be paid when Labour rebels against its exploiters, and it grieves us to think of the lives lost in this struggle; certain gains have been made, however, and for that we feel grateful. For the first time in the history of this country, and perhaps of any great nation, has the President of chief ruler sent openly to a capitalist and asked him to settle a strike, as President Wilson did to John D. Rockefeller Jr. That fact will assist in striking the scales from the eyes of many men.

The Socialists have disavowed all connection with the movement to send money, arms, and recruits to the assistance of the rebellious miners. They insult the dead in Colorado by telling the living that had they voted the Socialist ticket this would not have happened. Every form of activity except speech-making and voting is strictly taboo with the Socialists here, and their demoralisation is so complete that the German Socialist Party looks revolutionary beside them. The yeast is fermenting, however, and the revolutionary spirit grows in spite of the reactionaries. The immensity of the country makes it difficult to have united action on any subject, and more particularly revolutionary action on the part of the working class. The struggle grows more intense each day, and the sporadic revolts more and more frequent, and the final crash may be nearer than many of us dare hope for. That unrest on a gigantic scale exists even the dullest reactionary is forced to admit, and that society is being revolutionised is apparent to all. The coal strike of Colorado is but one of the many symptoms that the day of reckoning is fast approaching, the day when Labour will come into its own.

New York

The Labour Movement in America

Harry Kelly

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Communism, October 1914

It is surely a platitude to say that each country must create its own forms and methods of emancipation, but, platitude or no platitude, we are compelled to say it. Even when artificial boundaries separate countries, as is the case with the United States, Canada, and Mexico, there is a difference that must be reckoned with, although hers an almost imperceptible levelling process is taking place. The Labour movement of the United States and Canada (and by the term Labour movement we mean the economic organisation of the workers manifested in Trade Unions) has one great difficulty to contend with that is either non-existent or at least a negligible factor in the movement in Europe. It is admitted by all who have made a study of the situation, that the class issue is much clearer in Europe than it is here, clearer because there are fewer things to cloud the relation of Capital and Labour. With rare exceptions, working men there remain working men, and there is much less of that gambling spirit that makes men believe in the possibility of rising out of their class. The rise of the Parliamentary movement in Europe has opened avenues for more remunerative employment for the leaders of Labour, removing some of them from the real Labour struggle; but even where this is the case, they find it necessary to retain some connection with the masses. In America there are many things of a purely capitalist nature that wean the ablest men and women away from the class struggle. This has its good and its

bad features: by the time men have reached the highest position in their respective organisations they have acquired middle-class tastes, habits, and inclinations that the Labour movement is unable to gratify; but when their removal is accomplished a certain deadening influence has been eliminated.

Most of the influential Labour leaders of this country started their careers as radicals, and some even as revolutionists, and their "sane, practical methods of organisation" came with increasing years and incomes – chiefly incomes. The bastard Individualism of this continent has narrowed the spirit of solidarity to such an extent that craft Unionism has for thirty years retarded the growth of a conscious revolutionary movement. The Knights of Labour fell before this principle, and the American Federation of Labour rose and prospered on its ruins, with the result that a tighter and tighter form of organisation has developed among the skilled trades. They have on many occasions shown a real fighting spirit and high form of solidarity among their own ranks, but it has been narrowed to the point of brutality when displayed against those outside the breastworks. Entrance fees of one hundred, and even five hundred dollars are not uncommon, and the members of such Unions have been and are quite outspoken in their determination to corner their particular labour market, and exclude others who wish to join them. The fear of poverty, a desire for a higher plane of material well-being, and the knowledge that the scrap-heap will shortly claim them – with, of course, many subsidiary factors – are responsible for this. We may lament or condemn the lack of solidarity, but failure to recognise it will not help the situation. Men and ideas change, however, and the leaven is working here ae elsewhere. Solidarity and the feeling that revolutionary action is necessary are growing to a degree quite undreamed of a few years ago. The highest and finest expressions of solidarity have been shown by the less skilled trades, such as the mill workers of Lawrence and Paterson, and the miners of McKees Rocks, West Virginia, and Colorado. It would be unfair, however, to assume that the spirit is entirely lacking in the ranks of the skilled workers. Conditions are different with them, and the necessity for a wider solidarity was not required. They are better organised, and are usually better able to fight their own battles.

The actual number of Anarchist propagandists is small, but there is a spirit of fraternisation growing between them and members of the I.W.W. This is due, we think, to the fact that the theories and tactics of the latter are really based upon the principles of Anarchism as advocated here and elsewhere for many years. The organisation is not Anarchist, but Anarchistic

Violence in the Labour struggle is more prevalent among the workers engaged in hazardous occupations, as the bridge and structural iron workers, moulders, miners, timber workers, etc., while the sedentary trades or callings, as printers, cigarmakers, etc., are usually quite peaceful. The railway workers are so strongly organised that violence is unnecessary to the accomplishment of reforms: the mere threat of a strike is sufficient to bring the railroads to terms. Holding the key to modern commerce, they are in a position to dictate terms to an extent hardly any other trade possesses. The skilled trades of the West are more revolutionary than those of the East, and, paradoxical as it sounds, while less clear on revolutionary economics, they are far more practical in their application to real life of those they do hold. Co-operation and common action against the enemy exist to a far higher degree in the West than in the East.

Organisation exists everywhere and is growing rapidly in all ranks of Labour. It exists primarily and almost exclusively for the bringing about of immediate reforms as applied to particular trades or occupations; but it widens the horizon of organised Labour, and has a good effect. The force that propels the general Labour movement along more revolutionary lines and gives it impetus comes from outside its ranks. Property rights have never really been questioned by the American Federation of Labour, and the most they have ever claimed has been "a larger share of our product," side-stepping any claim to the full product.

The Industrial Workers of the World is a great factor in revolutionising the Labour movement of the country. A fact of the greatest importance to be noted here, and one that should be carefully considered, is the difference between the acts of the organisation and the power of the idea behind it. It is not claimed by leaden of the organisation that there are more than twenty thousand actual members, which, if compared with the two million members of the Federation of Labour, would, on the face of things, make it insignificant. But it would be a mistake to so regard it, and we are not awe that the claim of half a million sympathisers is overdrawn. Certain it is that the name or expression, "I.W.W.," has become a symbol for revolutionary action and a fighting proletariat, and it has wielded great influence in many

parts of the country, although quite often they have received credit for movements of protest and of sympathy where little or no credit was due. This happened in New York last winter, where the organisation was credited with the unemployed and free speech fights, when in reality it had little or nothing to do with them. It is unimportant who gets the credit for such things, and it is mentioned merely to clarify the issue for those unfamiliar with the facts. If such a small organisation can symbolise the hopes of such a large number of people, it deserves to grow – as it surely wall.

The actual number of Anarchist propagandists is small, but there is a spirit of fraternisation growing between them and members of the I.W.W. This is due, we think, to the fact that the theories and tactics of the latter are really based upon the principles of Anarchism as advocated here and elsewhere for many years. The organisation is not Anarchist, but Anarchistic; and it is from our armoury that it has gathered weapons to do battle with the enemy. The I.W.W. is unique as a Labour organisation here, and it is like and unlike both Trade Union and Socialist Party. Unlike the former in that it stands for the abolition of Capitalism, and unlike the latter in that none but wage-earners can become members. It differs from both because it stands for direct action, the general strike, and sabotage. Anarchistic principles have exerted a big influence over the I.W.W., and it, in turn, has influenced both the Trade Unions and the Socialist Party.

It is too much to expect cohesive action in a short time among such a large number of people as live on the North American continent, but libertarians are attacking the present system from all sides, and it is but a question of time when it will succumb. It is no longer possible for the capitalist to do what he did twenty-five years ago. We do not know when the workers will fully come into their own, but the first grey streaks of dawn are discernible, and that means progress. It also means the day of emancipation is not far off.

National Guilds

H.K.

Freedom: a Journal of Constructive Anarchism (New York), August 1919

When the news first came to me about a year and a half ago that a movement was growing and spreading in the British Isles under the name "Guild," I instinctively associated it with the name of William Morris and wanted to know more about it. The censorship made that impossible for a time, but when the literature began to come in it showed my intuition was correct, and each new book on the subject that arrives confirms it. A. J. Penty, originator of the Guild idea showed it very strongly, S. G. Hobson who wrote the first series of articles on the subject of National Guilds as distinct from Local Guilds, advocated by Mr. Penty, showed it even if he failed to mention it and now G. D. H. Cole and Messrs. Reckitt & Bechhofer pay their tributes to Morris. All of which goes to show that a poet can be a philosopher even if it takes thirty years to prove it.

There is a vigour and freshness about the three books[1] that lie before me that is warranted to revive the flagging enthusiasm of those striving for a better social order. The reading of them will clear away quite a few cobwebs from the minds of many who have been advocating theories without being very sure of their practicability. They possess too much meat for any review to do them justice, and they must be read to be appreciated. The authors do not stress the idea of the destruction of industrialism as does Mr. Penty, but there is little doubt that this cancer of modern life would be profoundly modified by the introduction of National Guilds such as they advocate. Mr. Penty is the only bona-fide craftsman of this group, and this may account for his intense hatred of industrialism. But since he has accepted National Guilds as a means to his end, the difference between them need not now be emphasised. The authors of the books to hand differ with each other and even with Mr. Hobson, thus indicating that the idea is growing and developing. This is a healthy sign. All of the men emphasise the urgent necessity of freedom for the individual and so are building the theory upon a bed rock foundation. Cole who is the ablest of the official guildsmen – Bertrand Russell is in a class by himself – says, "Poverty is the symptom: slavery the disease. The extremes of riches and destitution follow inevitably upon the extremes of license and bondage. The many are not enslaved because they are poor, they are poor because they are enslaved. Yet Socialists have all too often fixed their eyes upon the material misery of the poor without realising that it rests upon the spiritual degradation of the slave." So he and his fellow guildsmen want to establish "Self-Government in Industry," and being intelligent men, they know full well it cannot be done while the present system lasts. Speaking of William Morris, he says, "I have dwelt thus upon the Socialism of William Morris because I feel that he, more than any other prophet of revolution, is of the same blood as National Guildsmen. Freedom for self-expression, freedom at work as well as at leisure, freedom to serve as well as to enjoy – that is the guiding

[1] *Self Government in Industry*, by G. D. H. Cole, G. Bell & Sons, London.; *The Meaning of National Guilds*, by Reckitt & Bechhofer, MacMillan, New York; *Proposed Roads to Freedom*, by Bertrand Russell, Henry Holt, New York.

principle of his work and of his life. That, too, is the guiding principle of National Guilds. We can only destroy the tyranny of machinery – which is not the same as destroying machinery itself – by giving into the hands of the workers the control of their life and work, by freeing them to choose whether they will make well or ill, whether they will do the work of slaves or of free men."

It is not sufficient, however, to wish a thing or even to express it, valuable as these things may be, so Mr. Cole has set to work to show how the modern trade union can be transformed from an organisation of combat into a producing guild, and so doing has produced a constructive work of a very high order. He has sketched a plan explaining how these trade guilds, organised on the basis of industry with the widest possible local autonomy, will take over industry and operate it.

Mr. Cole has set to work to show how the modern trade union can be transformed from an organisation of combat into a producing guild, and so doing has produced a constructive work of a very high order. He has sketched a plan explaining how these trade guilds, organised on the basis of industry with the widest possible local autonomy, will take over industry and operate it

All the writers under consideration differ markedly with Mr. Hobson and Mr. Penty in their desire to curtail the power of the State, for they would make the Guild Congress equal in power with it. The latter would be a congress of producers, whereas parliament would be a congress of consumers. As to how these two bodies will operate we leave the reader to decide when he consults the books on the subject, suffice it to say, that a very plausible and convincing case is made out for the proposal by Messrs. Cole, Reckitt & Bechhofer and Mr. Russell.

The greatest service performed by the National Guildsmen, in our opinion, is their clarification of the idea of Self Government in Industry. Students and well wishers of Socialism have often complained. of the obscurity of the phrase, "The instruments of production, distribution and exchange, controlled and regulated by a democratic State" and they have not been satisfied with "The philosophy of the heap" theory of the Anarchist-Communist. When Socialists have been asked to explain their theory they were unable to do it except in terms that conveyed the impression of wages and government ownership. To accuse them of these things was to bring upon oneself the charge of misrepresentation. Even so great an authority on theoretic Socialism as Karl Kautsky talks of remuneration in the sense of wages and keeps calling it Communism when it is pure and simple Collectivism. The National Guildsmen set forth in plain and unmistakable terms what they mean by Self Government in Industry; it is simply the control of *each industry by the workers of that particular industry*. Not by parliaments, however democratic, but by the workers of the industries they are engaged in. How simple and how logical the idea that men who have spent their lives working on railroads are much better qualified to operate them than Mr. McAdoo or Mr. Hines or the telegraph workers better fitted to run the telegraph system of the country than Mr. Burleson. Is it not one of the most elemental of facts that carpenters know more about carpentering, printers about printing, and railroad men about railroading, than people whose only interest in such things is to cut coupons or provide them-selves soft jobs as Ministers of Railroading, etc. Just think, no dividend hunters and no bureaucrats holding political jobs to interfere in the management and no high-brows making plans for others to follow, but rather managers and members of the administrative forces generally selected on the same principle as general officers are selected now by trade unions! Of course there are many who will insist the plan will not work, but the idea is taking root in the minds of an ever increasing number of working people. Since they are after all the ones chiefly concerned, the opinions of the others don't matter very much.

Bertrand Russell does not outline the Guild idea in detail or treat economics at length as do the others, but he has produced a work that can best be expressed in terms of that staunch Tory organ, the *London Times* as "A remarkable book by a remarkable man." He gives the fairest and best short summary of Marxian Socialism, Syndicalism and the Anarchism of Bakunin and Kropotkin that it has been my good fortune to read in twenty-five years of study. He thinks that Socialism offers too much chance for bureaucracy and a consequent curtailment of freedom of the individual; that Syndicalism will have to reconstruct some central authority to avoid a clash of rival producers; and that Anarchism is too idealistic for our present stage of social development. Therefore he accepts in Guild Socialism. He accepts the facts of Kropotkin as given in *Fields, Factories and Workshops* to show the ease wherein mankind can be fed if industry is properly organised. Kropotkin has shown there that during the Nineteenth Century the productivity of man in Europe has increased 400%, whereas the population has merely doubled. In other words the increase in productivity of man has been in a ratio of 4 to 1 over the population. With this as a basis he assumes it would be possible to give to everyone a "Vagabond's Wage," that

is to say, "a certain small income, sufficient for necessaries, should be secured to all, whether they work or not, and that a larger income, as much larger as might be warranted by the total amount of commodities produced, should be given to those who are willing to engage in some work the community recognises as useful." He thinks, and an ever-increasing number of thinkers agree with him, that the best way to avoid wars and fratricidal strife is to so organise society that justice will be assured to everyone and the creative instinct given a chance to develop. In proportion to the development of the creative instinct there is a decline in the possessive instinct which does so much to foster strife between man and man. It is a book fertile with ideas, and though it lacks that one touch of sublime faith that Kropotkin possesses, it is a book that no thinking person can afford to miss. The concluding passages, however, make me feel that to appreciate such a book, or for the matter of fact, the books of Messrs. Cole or Reckitt & Bechhofer, it is necessary to have some faith in social progress for otherwise the books will be meaningless. Says Russell:

> "The system we have advocated is a form of Guild Socialism, leaning more, perhaps, toward Anarchism than the official Guildsman would wholly approve. It is in the matters that politicians usually ignore—science and art, human relations, and the joy of life—that Anarchism is strongest, and it is chiefly for the sake of these things that we included such more or less Anarchist proposals as the 'vagabond's wage' It is by its effects outside economics and politics, at least as much as by effects inside them, that a social system should be judged. And if Socialism ever comes, it is only likely to prove beneficent if non-economic goods are valued and consciously pursued.
>
> "The world that we must seek is a world in which the creative spirit is alive, in which life is an adventure full of joy and hope, based rather upon the impulse to construct than upon the desire to retain what we possess or to seize what is possessed by others. It must be a world in which affection has free play, in which love is purged of the instinct for domination, in which cruelty and envy have been dispelled by happiness and the unfettered development of all the instincts that build up life and fill it with mental delights. Such a world is possible; it waits only for men to wish to create it.
>
> "Meantime, the world in which we exist has other aims. But it will pass away, burned up in the fire of its own hot passions; and from its ashes will spring a new and younger world, full of fresh hope with the light of morning in its eyes."

The habit of censorship and qualification is persistent among American dispensers of culture and ideas. The title of Bertrand Russell's book in England is *Roads to Freedom*, a plain statement of fact. The American publishers added a qualifying word, thus, *Proposed Roads to Freedom*, making it an uncertain hypothesis by an irresponsible idealist. Quite flattering to the American intelligence, is it not?

From Anarchism to "Communism" (State Socialism)

Harry Kelly

The Road to Freedom, April 1925

The first question one puts to oneself after reading the article by Jay Fox in the February issue of the Workers' Monthly is, how could a man call himself an anarchist for nearly thirty years when he understands so little of its principles. Then one is impressed with the age-old truism that none are so bitter as the apostate. After that one reads the editor's introduction and says – save us from our friends.

In introducing Fox to the readers of the *Workers' Monthly*, the editor has the following among other things to say: "Jay Fox was the principle proletarian leader of the anarchist movement in America for the past thirty years. . . . Emma Goldman- represented the petty bourgeoise wing, and in recent years devoted herself merely to lecturing upon sex, the drama and such subjects." *Such* subjects is good! "In recent years he took an active part in the I. W. W., the Syndicalist League of North America, the T. U. E. L., and the Farmer-Labor Party. He joined the Workers' Party in 1924."

Those familiar with the career of Jay Fox know that while calling himself an anarchist for many years he was at best never more than a Syndicalist and this article proves it beyond any serious doubt. Still it was a bit unkind of the editor to tell us that an anarchist "leader" was a member of the Trade Union Educational League and the Farmer-Labor Party before joining the Workers' Party. The first is the wing of the -so-called Communist Party of this country which has been busily engaged for the past few years in trying to disrupt the trade unions of this country. The Farmer-Labor Party is – a well – it is- just the Farmer- Labor Party – that's all. So after skating around for a number of years trying to find where he belongs, brother Fox lands with both

"feet in the "Workers' " Party, which like all political parties is composed of doctors, lawyers, dentists and small business men as well as workers.

It sounds strange to hear a man who was a Syndicalist, a man who read Kropotkin's "Conquest of Bread," wherein certain definite methods of organisation were laid down for organising production and distribution *after* the revolution, ask "how once the workers got control of industry, how was the revolution going to protect itself against the counter-revolution from without and within would set upon it?" For a man claiming to know the function of trade unions this question should answer itself. But then if the trade unions are to be the defenders of the revolution, where would Lenin, Trotsky, Zinoviev and the other bosses of the party in Russia come in. They are not members of trade unions and have done everything possible to destroy them and failing that make them subordinate to the State. Is it possible Fox has never read the speech of Kollontai, suppressed in Russia, but published here by the I. W. W. where she sets forth the idea of the role the unions should play in reconstructing Russian industry and Russian life. Her advocacy of Syndicalism under the name of Communism got her nowhere and she was banished in approved imperialistic fashion by being made Ambassador to Norway.

It sounds strange to hear a man who was a Syndicalist, a man who read Kropotkin… ask "how once the workers got control of industry, how was the revolution going to protect itself against the counter-revolution from without and within would set upon it?" For a man claiming to know the function of trade unions this question should answer itself. But then if the trade unions are to be the defenders of the revolution, where would Lenin, Trotsky, Zinoviev and the other bosses of the party in Russia come in.

"My experience as a trade unionist had taught me that men must have organisation and leadership." Strange words these for a man whom the editor of the *Workers' Monthly* calls the "principal proletarian leader of the Anarchist movement in America for thirty years." Brother Fox has been hiding his light under a bushel for these many years in Home Colony, for many of us never heard of him leading anyone but himself – which by the way is as it should be. Let a man lead himself with credit and he may become an inspiration to others. But then Jay believes in leadership, so it would seem that after many peregrinations in the I. W. W., Syndicalist League of North America, T. U. E. L. *and* the Farmer-Labor Party, he has found a resting place at last.

"For the first time in the history of the world a group of workers came into their own." Answer: Lenin, Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kameneff and other "Workers."

Louis Fisher, the pro-bolshevik correspondent of New York *Nation* recently wrote – everything published or written in Russia is, as is well known, censured, so Fisher's article represents the official point of view – that while the governing forces of Russia were *considering* asking the trade unions to co-operate with the government in developing industry. Syndicalism was anathema to them. Of course Syndicalism *is workers'* control and this is just what the present rulers of Russia don't want. Every impartial observer in Russia has stated that the so-called Soviets are a farce and the workers have no voice whatever in the management of the affairs of the country. Any man who does not know this should not undertake to write on Russian affairs. The Russian Government is a government of bureaucrats like any other government; they have introduced certain principles of State Socialism and those principles are working out as inefficiently and as despotically as the anarchists have always said they would. Without a single book, newspaper, pamphlet or publication issued in the entire country except under government control it is unthinkable that abuses or tyranny can be corrected and this patter about the workers coming into their own is stuff to feed babes and not adults.

"A study of the Russian revolution has been of infinite value to me as a revolutionist, and far from joining the reactionaries in the counter-revolution because some Anarchists were imprisoned", I raised my feeble voice in its behalf . . . then I did not know that if I and my comrades were at the helm we should not find our theories unworkable and be compelled to modify them in order to cope with the situation arising out of the conflict." No great harm has been done perhaps by a man advocating theories for thirty years without knowing if they would work, but for such a man to be held up as "the proletarian leader of the Anarchist movement in America" is really too much. No man should advocate a social theory if he has any doubts about it working.

The "Communist" International raises the cry: "All power to the Workers, and it has a most efficient program for the fulfilment of that aim." Yes, it raises such a cry and then denies the workers in the shops any voice or control in industry and again we refer to the speech of Kollontai published by the I. W. W. "Under capitalism political power is the watchdog of the exploiters... it suppresses strikes and all forms of discontent." Exactly and having learned that trick from

the capitalists, that is just what has been done and is still being done by this so-called "Workers" government."

"The Communists propose the very practical and sensible idea of a united front. Why not all workers' organisations get together and agree upon line of action wherein they can go forward in one solid phalanx to meet the united front of imperial capitalism." As a member of the late and much lamented Farmer-Labor Party, Fox should know why other organisations cannot get together with these so-called Communists and Sidney Hillman of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers knows it also. He should have known it three or four years ago, but better late than never. At least it is our sincere hope that this organisation torn with factionalism may not be beyond recovery.

"The trade unions are the most important of all existing economic organisation, in fact the only ones, that can carry over into the new industrial society." Fox probably doesn't realise that men are in jail in Russia for saying this very thing. Of course it is good tactics to advocate Syndicalism before the revolution and put people in jail who try to practice it after the revolution. It has been said many times by different writers that to advocate Syndicalism is more dangerous in Russia than to advocate-a return to Czarism. The latter is dead where Syndicalism has an appeal to the workers and must be suppressed by the bureaucrats first through the Cheka and now the G.P.U.

"I have no fear that it – the Russian government which Fox calls the Workers' State – will imbed itself and become permanent." Such faith is really very touching but it is hardly the attitude for an anarchist.

"It grieves me to learn that Emma Goldman and other prominent Anarchists are among the worst enemies of the revolution." If Trotsky, Zinoviev and others who according to Alexander Berkman – a fairly good revolutionist and anarchist – caused the death of 14,000 persons in Kronstadt, many of them, called previously by Trotsky, "the flower of the revolution," were *the* revolution, then god save us from the revolution.

"Emma Goldman will be written down in Labour history as a revolutionary scab." It depends on who writes the labour history. If it is an honest man or woman trying to present the facts fairly he will say here was a woman who all her life fought tyranny and oppression no matter under what name or label. When she saw men and women who had fought and suffered for the revolution thrown into jail because they protested against the broken promises of the "leaders", and tried to apply the ideals they stood for, she protested as she had always protested and as such stood for the ideals she had always stood for. It is more than probable that brother Fox will be overlooked in that labour history he talks of, but if he is mentioned it might be something like this. Jay Fox, a man who advocated anarchism for nearly thirty years, but when the test came he spiked his guns and fled to the enemy. He deserted his comrades in their hour of need and in order to justify his desertion spatters them with mud.

Here are a few facts for Jay Fox, the apostate, to remember when next he writes.

A Soviet Government is a government based on the principle of industrial representation and no such thing exists in Russia as every intelligent student of Russian affairs knows. The government in Russia is precisely the same kind of government as exists in this country. It is a government based on party lines and those outside the party have nothing to say. It is State Socialism of the kind Kropotkin wrote about thirty, years ago and the kind that Herbert Spencer had in mind when he wrote "The Coming Slavery," with its reptile press extolling every act of the ruling clique and denouncing every act that they think may imperil their power. The case of Trotsky, which by the way fails to move us to tears for he would do exactly the same if he were in power, is a case in point.

The opposition has been shot, imprisoned or deported in Russia and to add salt to the wounds of the sufferers they have been slandered in the vilest and most venomous manner. The capitalists of this country want the lives of Sacco and Vanzetti, but they do not want them to be martyrs, so they are trying to put them to death as bandits and not labour men. This is the method pursued by the so-called "Communists" who have stolen a name that Jay Fox once honoured.

The Bolshevik Myth

Harry Kelly

The Road to Freedom, May 1925

This book of Berkman's is really a great piece of literature, and as such it will live and be regarded by future historians of the Russian Revolution and its aftermath. It is the day-by-day story of a man who went to the Revolution full of enthusiasm and lost that enthusiasm bit by bit until with the Kronstadt revolt and the death of little Fania Baron it reached a climax which decided him to leave Russia.

Psycho-Analysis serves many purposes these days; one of its results has been a pseudo-scientific explanation of the workings of such minds as those of Berkman and his comrade, Emma Goldman, in their attitude toward this State Socialist experiment. A Dorothy Brewster wrote an article which recently appeared in the New York *Nation* she supposedly reviewed Comrade Goldman's book, offering as an explanation of Comrade Goldman's

antagonism toward the Russian Government the theory that having opposed all government for many years she subconsciously found a great deal of satisfaction in the failure of the Bolsheviki to achieve Communism because it confirmed her own settled beliefs. Instead of being a profound reflection this is a very superficial one, for the real and poignant tragedy of such individuals as Comrades Goldman and Berkman lies in the fact that subconsciously they had always hoped that their Anarchist theories were wrong. In other words, it was a battle between the emotions and the intellect, and, as so often happens, the intellect was right, but reason finally triumphing, there was left the inevitable sadness that must follow such a struggle. How many times must Emma and Berkman have cried out in the night that the men and women who had suffered for years in exile were different from the ruling classes of other countries; that *they* could not deport people in the dead of night in a leaky old tub like the Buford and risk their lives in such callous manner as the officials of this glorious republic of ours had done. It was unthinkable, impossible. A government, if not of the workers, at least of men and women who had suffered the tortures of hell for the ideals they held, how could they be classed with the Palmers, the Daugherties, the Wilsons with their sham liberalism and humanitarianism? We were prejudiced and our Anarchism was faulty in its too sweeping generalisation that all governments are corrupt and tyrannical. Surely these were some of the subconscious reactions of Berkman as he suffered and sweat on the Buford when the Captain warned him of danger and told him of the lifeboats that had been set aside for use in case of the shipwreck he feared. If Miss Brewster understood the mental struggle of such as Berkman or Emma Goldman in attempting to work with even a government which they believed was striving to establish a proletarian state when their entire intellectual life had taught them the futility of all government she would realise how superficial her generalisations are.

Berkman begins his diary with the spiriting away at night of the 250-odd prisoners from New York by officials of the U. S. Government and their deportation on the water-logged tub Buford. Of the long trip under conditions that would shame savages, but as what a politician once said of trusts is equally true of governments, that they have neither bodies to be kicked nor souls to be damned, there is no sense of shame for the horrible treatment that was meted out to those helpless prisoners. Yet under these trying conditions Berkman was buoyed up by the hope he had found in his cell at Atlanta when the news first came to him of 'the Russian Revolution and what he believed was the dawn of a new day. That rising sun pictured so often in radical or revolutionary press and in paintings that it had become a joke seemed at last to loom on the horizon and he, with the other deportees, looked forward to it with a certainty that was pathetic.

They arrived in the promised land, and at once we got a picture of bureaucracy with its endless red tape and its stultification of the creative forces. The deportees were eager to get to work to do something, but weeks passed by while they fretted and fumed at their failure to gain the necessary permission. With this fretting came a gradual disappearance of enthusiasm which finally developed into downright hostility on the part of many.

They arrived in the promised land, and at once we got a picture of bureaucracy with its endless red tape and its stultification of the creative forces.

To those readers who are unable to visualise this let me say that I remember well a group of four young men who conducted a cooperative printing office in Harlem who came to me for advice regarding the shipment of their little plant to Petrograd. I advise them to do that rather than to sell it to dealers, for they would get but little for it and it would cost a great deal to buy a similar plant there which would likewise have to be shipped from here. They were young workmen with little or no experience in executive or administrative positions, but the seriousness with which they discussed their intention to help build the new society in Russia was touching. I envied them their faith and the opportunity vouchsafed them, and wished I might be so fortunate. Poor boys, I wonder where they are now, and, if alive, what are their feelings?

Partly because Berkman is a man of many resources and partly because of his career and reputation he found many opportunities denied the others which made him less critical than they and even rather sympathetic to the government. In fact, more than once he tells us that the younger comrades who came with him called him "Sovietsky Anarchist" because of his many attempts to excuse the delays and to find justification for the government oppression. So the record goes, day by day, without malice, but with a growing sense of sadness and disillusionment, first at the antagonism of the younger comrades and the bitterness which developed against the Bolsheviki, and then because the thrill that had come over him in his cell at Atlanta and the faith that had come with it were slowly being sapped by the things he saw around him.

Bolshevik critics will surely not be tolerant because this book lacks bitterness, but there is not an unkind word nor an ungenerous criticism in it. It is the record of a

man who, thirty-odd years ago, threw his life into the balance on behalf of his principles and his indignation over, the brutality of H.C. Frick and the Carnegie Steel Company, who suffered fourteen years in prison for that gesture and later another two years for his opposition to the war, active revolutionary, opposition to the government for conscription – a lifetime spent working for the right of the worker to regulate his own life, to enjoy the fruits of his labour; long lean years fighting against the terrific odds any man with his views must meet. And then his growing disillusionment and bitter disappointment that his own theories proved to be correct. He tells of the many promises of Lenin, Zinovieff, and the others that were never kept; of how Radek tried to persuade him to translate a pamphlet of Lenin's called "The Infantile Sickness of 'Leftism' in Communism," which would have been rank treachery against his principles, for it made statements against anarchism which no Anarchist could allow to go unchallenged – his refusal and after that a growing coldness on the part of those who had formerly been most cordial. The half-sneers of Zorin and Radek as they called him a "sentimentalist" – as though it were a badge of dishonour merely because he did not see things as they saw them and was unable to He and act in an unprincipled manner as they did.

There are touches of poetry in the book that remind one of the seasons; Spring with its budding hopes and Autumn when the leaves fall and one's hopes with them." There are also unforgettable passages dealing with the Pogroms that will live long after Berkman and the revolution have passed into history. Does not the perfect sentence out-live governments, nations, institutions.'' The Jewish "Elder" standing amid the ruins of what had once been a store telling of the women and children raped before his eyes, some of them afterwards actually disembowelled and the men murdered before them. Set down simply as it is, this story is enough to make the strongest man weep and grow sick at heart over man – the marvellous – reduced to a level far below that of the beasts.

In the concluding chapter, "The Anti-Climax," which has been printed separately because the publisher of the book thought it not really an organic part of the diary, Berkman deals directly with the revolution and generalises as to its failure. He shows clearly how authority grows by what it feeds on, and that, even if one -granted the premise of the Communists as to the necessity of the state in the transitional period, the practical result is that the state is ruled by an Executive Committee of a party. Dictators in whatever shape or form must fight and use every weapon, scrupulous or otherwise, at their command if they wish to retain power. Tchekas are as inevitable in a Socialist tyranny as they are in any other. If men are to be free they must practise freedom. This is impossible where the state exists. In crushing the opponents of the state the noblest and the healthiest are crushed too. Berkman's faith in freedom as the only remedy remains as strong as ever, but with it arises a question – and I am inclined to think that he is subconsciously aware of it: Does not revolution bring out the primitive instincts in man and even though temporarily restore primitive conditions.'' If this is true does it not give opportunity to the cunning and the crafty to establish themselves in power and tyrannise over and to exploit the mass of mankind.'' This is and must remain for some time to come a disputed question. Certain it is that on the critical side the Anarchist has been more than justified by events in Russia, for there the men and women – though more often men than women – who suffered in exile for years and devoted themselves without stint or hope of reward to the pursuit of their ideals have climbed into power over the bodies of the bleeding proletariat and have treated them much the same as did their previous exploiters. It is a great book, a book to buy and keep on one's shelves, to read and re-read for its analysis of a man's soul and how with the crushing of the soul of the revolution the man's soul was crushed with it.

American Letter

Harry Kelly

Spain and the World, 8th September 1937

The rise of the C.I.O. and the spread of Industrial Unionism in this country is probably the one hopeful note in an otherwise discouraging situation. It is at the same time one of the many examples that illustrate the truth of the contention that a long and painful struggle is inevitable in laying the foundation for a movement that can come only when social and industrial conditions are ripe for it.

Robert Owen's theory of self- government by the producers as expressed in his Grand National Federation of Trade Unions in 1834 was the forerunner of modern socialism and syndicalism and these in turn precursors of what is now called Industrial Unionism. Guild Socialism also could be added even though its advocates felt that self-government by the producers was insufficient and supplemented that theory by advocating an organisation of the consumers to deal with what they called public matters: education, roads, sanitation, etc.

The rise of anarcho-syndicalism in France and the Knights of Labor in the U.S.A. followed in turn by the American Federation of Labor all prepared the way for the I.W.W., and that organisation in turn laid the foundation for the present C.I.O. movement. The

Syndicalist and I.W.W. movement may be regarded as militant trade unionism dedicated to revolutionary ends whereas the present C.I.O. movement has so far advocated nothing but organisation of the workers on an industrial basis although its leaders do stand for a more equitable distribution of wealth. President Roosevelt does the same and claims such redistribution will save capitalism.

It is an old saw that facts are stubborn things and while the technocrats have been laughed down and perhaps out there are certain basic truths in their claims that can neither be laughed out nor down. These basic truths are that the fiercer the competition for trade the greater the increase in machinery to cheapen product and the more machinery is used the more difficult it is for those displaced to buy the product produced. It is a vicious circle for when men need wages most the employer, trying desperately to get what little trade there is, installs more machinery to displace more labour and destroy more purchasing power.

The Syndicalist and I.W.W. movement may be regarded as militant trade unionism dedicated to revolutionary ends whereas the present C.I.O. movement has so far advocated nothing but organisation of the workers on an industrial basis although its leaders do stand for a more equitable distribution of wealth. President Roosevelt does the same and claims such redistribution will save capitalism.

Industrial unionism is the natural corollary to this development of machinery, for skilled workers are getting as scarce as the proverbial hen's teeth and a peep into an automobile factory for instance will show every walk of life represented from clergymen to bartenders and tennis players. Craft unionism, as exemplified in the American Federation of Labor, grows more outmoded every day and the leaders of that body know it but are fighting a rearguard battle, holding on to their jobs as long as they can. With leaders of unions like the carpenters, teamsters (truckmen) and others as well as Green, president of the Federation, receiving salaries around $20,000 a year, principle plays a very minor part in this fight against the C.I.O. Certain it is that the methods employed by the leaders of the A.F. of L. against them have been as unscrupulous as that of any corrupt political party and the issue is as simple as the following:

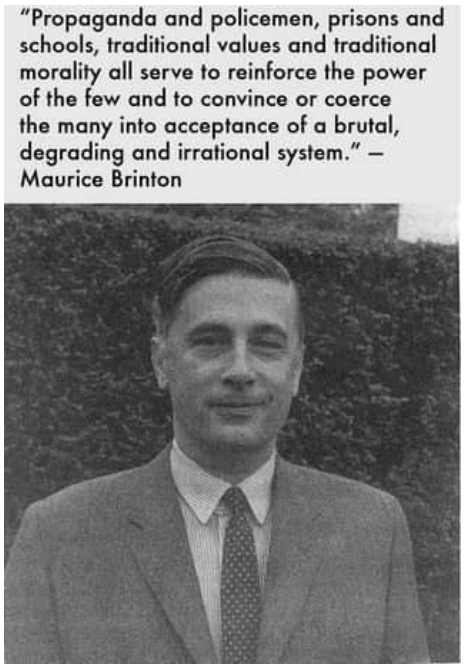
The rules of the Federation state clearly that no union can be expelled except by a two-thirds vote of that body and as the ten unions under fire had about twelve hundred thousand members, or more than one-third, that was impossible. The Executive Board, however, was controlled by the reactionaries, and that group suspended them from membership some four months before the convention met, and as suspended members have no right to vote it was easy to have the convention endorse their action. Conditions are different from the days of the I.W.W. for while that organisation played a magnificent part in the history of labour in the U.S. it was a little ahead of its time and was really trying to "put over" an ideal. They made their appeal for the most part to unskilled labour and having little or no money back of them, were at a disadvantage, and unable to cope with war hysteria, brutal capitalism, and a corrupt labour movement, and the war all but destroyed the organisation. The C.I.O. started out with the backing of ten powerful unions, money for organising purposes, and an intelligent leadership, and perhaps most important of all, modern industrialism had prepared the way for them and the tide is rolling their way.

It is too early to say how the organisation will develop for it is in the formative stage, but the idea of industrial unionism is sweeping the country and great masses of men and women, hitherto unorganised, are being gathered in the fold. Mass industries like Auto and Textile are being organised probably for the first time; Steel, a hollow shell for forty-five years or ever since the days of the Homestead strike, is reorganising, and coal and garment workers are organised almost 100% with new groups like retail clerks (shop assistants), office workers and government workers numbering from two and a half to three million are awakening and organising. Even groups like school teachers and newspaper writers are showing more activity than ever before. Gains in wages, shortening of hours of labour and improved shop conditions are being made daily and let no revolutionary decry or despise these ameliorative ends for when men preach ideals they want to see them carried out, and in the long struggle to translate these ideals into reality certain ameliorative ends are achieved. In fact they must be, for just as man cannot live by bread alone neither can he live by ideals alone. The C.I.O. has so far made no declaration as to ends other than to urge an ever higher standard of living for the masses and to attain that they know and say there must be a better and more equitable distribution of wealth but they are inspiring and organising the mass and it may well be that this is far more important than all the political fiddle-faddle in the shape of new legislation passed or contemplated by the present administration at Washington. It is too bad we cannot report a real revolutionary movement in this country, but as we said at the beginning, facts are stubborn things and these are the facts.

Chris Pallis, *a memoir*

KM

When I first heard that Maurice Brinton was a pen name, I assumed that Chris Pallis was too. After all there is Crystal Palace, the football team being my reference point.



Chris Pallis
(aka Maurice Brinton)
1923-2005

In the land of Wikipedia you can discover the Pallis ancestry in an Anglo-Greek dynasty so no need to replicate that here[1] – suffice to say it was comfortably well off middle class who fled France and settled in London with the young Chris starting at Balliol College in Oxford in 1940, and being quickly expelled from the Communist Party, being recruited into Trotskyism. Later becoming an internationally renowned Neurologist, an expert on brain stem death[2]. There was a persistent rumour that he had operated on the shot German student radical Rudi Dutschke, but this may be another urban myth.[3]

The first wave of those who identified as members of Solidarity were, at least in Clydeside, drawn from those politicised by *Ban the Bomb and the Labour Party Young Socialists*. I wasn't one of those early 'Soly' members, being a schoolkid at the time and being miles away in Dundee, whereas in Aberdeen there were members. By the mid-70s and being keen on an updated version of libertarian socialism, not rooted primarily in 19th century anarchism, I was drawn to Solidarity pamphlets, the 3 key publications being *Strategy for Industrial Struggle by Mark Fore*, an alias of Ken Weller, employed at Ford Dagenham and two by Maurice Brinton. *The Bolsheviks & Workers Control* provided those on the libertarian left with a detailed critique of the Bolsheviks in power, while *The Irrational in Politics* moved on to new territory including sexuality, avoided by the 'Trad Left'. These publications have maintained their relevance, unlike some of those penned by 'fellow Greek', Cornelius Castoriadis under the pen name Paul Cardan, promoted ardently by Chris Pallis.

Unlike the 60s Solidarity members who produced their own publication and a few pamphlets[4], the two later three members in Glasgow did not achieve much, editing one issue, much criticised of the Solidarity journal. One attempt to distribute the Motor Bulletin at Linwood learned that copies had been posted to the Shop Stewards Committee and binned by the Communist Party recipient only to be retrieved by others, some in I.S. (International Socialists). We received an enquiry from a young woman who we found out was an enthusiast for Gaddafi's Green Revolution!

Around 1976/7, the GAG, Glasgow Anarchist Group, invited Chris Pallis up to Glasgow to address a meeting held in the St Bride's Centre in Partick. It was well attended and proceeded without much incident. Some of the Anarchist group lived in a squatted tenement in Great George Street, and held an after-party. I recall leaving whilst it was still in full swing around midnight, The next morning I called round to collect a child I was looking after - his mother in hospital for a short stay. To my horror, I discovered that something terribly irrational had occurred. A woman who had been a squatter, but wasn't an anarchist. had 'taken a shine' to Chris and removed him to a room for intimacy. The trouble was she ventured into a room with 5 sleeping kids and the couple caring for 4 of them took exception, and dragged the 'wrongdoers' from the room and set about them. So by the morning Chris had departed, with a bruised face,

[1] See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chris_Pallis
[2] See: https://www.bmj.com/content/330/7496/908.full
[3] See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rudi_Dutschke
[4] See https://archivesautonomies.org/spip.php?rubrique559; https://libcom.org/article/solidarity-pamphlets; https://libcom.org/article/solidarity-journals-libcom

unhappy memories of his trip and with a story to tell to his wife Jan back in Muswell Hill.

Outside Solidarity meetings, which moved around places where the group had members and later with the merger with *Social Revolution*, a few other locations, the only other meting I had face-to face with Chris was in his home in late1978. I had arranged to take some time out from the Claimants Union Conference in east London. I recall sitting in a study with a spotlight largely obscuring his face. Next door a dinner party was ongoing. I told him about the packed bus of Claimants, and how in the early hours of a Saturday morning the bus arrived in London, only to find out that one of the Blackhill CU members had died sometime during the night and couldn't be revived. Then a Gorbals member with wheelchair took off narrowly dodging traffic nearly resulting in a second fatality. Hearing this, Chris rushed next door summoned a few others and asked me to recount the morbid tale! I then with a consignment of pamphlets made my way back to the CU social miles away.

Apologies to those who were looking for a scholarly rather than biographical appreciation. There is no doubt that in his writings, as with Ken Weller, Dave Lamb, Liz Wilis and others, Pallis made a significant contribution, even though the Solidarity group project fizzled out.

Glasgow, July 2023

Review: Solidarity Forever?

by J. Sullivan and T. Hillier

Maurice Brinton

June 1969[1]

"Seven years with the wrong woman is more than any man can stand" runs the chorus of an old ditty which then went on to list the strains and stresses in many a "happy home". The same kind of tensions can develop in a small revolutionary group and result in a noisy chucking about of the political cutlery. But whereas matrimonial disputes can be settled in the civil courts, the tribunal for political differences is of necessity the wider movement itself.

Two members of *Solidarity* (John Sullivan and Tom Hillier) have recently made a noisy exit from the organisation. They have been welcomed into International Socialism (I.S.), with whom they had in fact been having a tepid liaison for at least a year. If their ideas are now the ideas of I.S., their action would be logical, and their departure require no further comment from us, except perhaps to stress the tremendous pull still exerted by traditional politics and traditional organisations even in this period of disintegration of the traditional left.

> Two members of the group (Tom Hillier and John Sullivan) have recently 'dropped out' of libertarian politics, and are now members of International Socialism, one of them already well up in the hierarchy. On leaving Solidarity they produced a singularly inaccurate pamphlet ('Solidarity Forever') in which they criticized us for various alleged actions and shortcomings. We have decided that these 'criticisms' should be answered and the record set straight. Afficionados of this sort of thing may order our reply-pamphlet now (10d., post free). An excerpt of this reply-pamphlet, giving the September 1968 views of T.H. on J.S. is published below.
>
> "No mere debating society consisting of John Sullivan and his 'chosen few' of intellectuals who with two exceptions, have never produced an article with political theory as its subject — indeed Cde Sullivan has so far written two short articles on Vietnam and several book reviews. Something more positive than this is expected from someone as anxious to get theoretical discussion going within the group. His contributions to the Industrial Ctte are in all honesty even more meagre."
>
> – *Solidarity for Workers' Power*, June 1969

But in leaving *Solidarity* Sullivan and Hillier thought fit to produce and widely to circularise to *Solidarity* subscribers and others the pamphlet under review. The pamphlet is written as a kind of political obituary for *Solidarity* ("Why *Solidarity* failed", "What *Solidarity* will be remembered for" etc.). Unfortunately the "corpse" refuses to lie still. And it is precisely because the ideas we put forward are invoking an increasing echo (Vol. V No.10 reached the top circulation over 1900 copies) that we will depart from our usual practice of debating only real issues and deal with some of the puerile accusations made.

The aim of the Sullivan-Hillier pamphlet was not simply to clarify their own ideas – badly though some might consider this to be needed. There was a wider objective. I.S., the organisation they have joined, is at present

[1] https://libcom.org/article/solidarity-forever-john-sullivan-and-tom-hillier-and-maurice-brintons-reply

wracked by a fissiparous discussion on the "organisational question". One of the functions of the pamphlet is to side-track the wide discussion about libertarian socialist ideas – including *Solidarity* ideas now taking place within I.S., by diverting attention from the main issues and seeking to focus it on the alleged incoherences and malpractices of a minute group, whose "threat" to I.S. resides solely in the ideas which it disseminates. About these ideas, however, the pamphlet remains discreetly silent.

It says nothing, for instance, about our analysis of modern capitalism and the nature of its crisis,[1] nothing about our conceptions of manipulation in consumption and leisure,[2] nothing about our emphasis on the need for a *total* critique of how capitalism affects people's lives,[3] nothing about our conception of socialism[4] as workers' self-management plus the rule of workers' councils (rather than nationalisation plus the rule of the Party), nothing about our description of the regimes in Eastern Europe as societies[5] in which the working class never really held power in production (i.e. societies in which the basic class relations of production were never really overthrown), nothing about our attempts to re-establish the historical record,[6] or to assess the role of Bolshevik ideology and practice in preventing the revolution from going on beyond a mere expropriation of the bourgeoisie, on to full workers' management of production[7] – nothing finally about our explanation of the degeneration of the traditional left seen by us today as one of the main repositories and disseminators of bourgeois ideology and bourgeois organisational conceptions.[8]

Instead we get a crude and rather pathetic misrepresentation of the practices of *Solidarity*, compounded of half-truths, gutter gossip, malicious distortions and downright falsehoods. The pamphlet adopts the political method – widespread among the traditional left – of continually using labels as a substitute for discussing ideas, and of smearing individuals whose arguments they feel impotent to deal with politically. At this level we can recommend it to all our readers. It epitomises a method in politics.

Our record, we feel, speaks for itself. Comrades who were active in the direct action wing of the anti-bomb movement, in the tenants' movement, in industry or those in the universities who have heard our speakers will have their own ideas, based on their own experience, as to whether we are "pacifists", "anarchists", "syndicalists" or any of the other beasties unearthed by Sullivan and Hillier during their rummaging in the terminological garbage cans. What these comrades will lack however is inside knowledge with which to refute some of the wilder allegations made in the Sullivan-Hillier pamphlet. The purpose of this pamphlet is to deal with some of these allegations.

1. "Ideological fuzziness"

Relative to its size and resources, *Solidarity* has probably produced more serious theoretical material than any other group on the left today. Our ideas may be different from those of I.S. or from those of other groups. They may be right or they may be wrong. But they are certainly not "fuzzy".

This is perhaps the most absurd of all the charges. Relative to its size and resources, *Solidarity* has probably produced more serious theoretical material than any other group on the left today. Our ideas may be different from those of I.S. or from those of other groups. They may be right or they may be wrong. But they are certainly not "fuzzy". Texts like *Socialism or Barbarism* are an explicit formulation of a coherent world outlook. We have attempted to analyse *Modern Capitalism* and to give some idea of what, for us, is *The Meaning of Socialism*. There is an intimate connection between these texts which only the politically presbyopic will fail to perceive.

Our historical material is also intimately related to this total analysis. And so is our industrial material. If we focus attention on certain forgotten areas of history or on certain aspects of modern industrial disputes it is because they are related to a certain vision of socialism: workers' management of production and the rule of the workers' councils.

The charge of "ideological fuzziness" comes rather oddly from members of an organisation that comprises both Labour Party members and very orthodox Trotskyists, that changed the name of its journal from *Labour Worker* to *Socialist Worker* without any real analysis of fifteen years of "entrist" experience, that can oscillate from a position where in 1964 it called on people to vote Labour and later proclaimed that its "support for the Labour Government was not conditional on its having socialist policies" to a position where it's anybody's guess what they will do next time,

[1] See *Modern Capitalism and Revolution*, a Solidarity book
[2] See "Mommy in Toyland", Vol.III No.8.
[3] See *Socialism or Barbarism*, pamphlet No.11, and *The Crisis of Modern Society*, pamphlet No.23.
[4] See *The Meaning of Socialism*, pamphlet No.6.
[5] See *Hungary '56*, a Solidarity book.
[6] See *The Workers' Opposition*, pamphlet No.7; "Kronstadt 1921", by Victor Serge, Vol. I No.7, available as a reprint, or *The Kronstadt Commune*, by Ida Mett, pamphlet No.27.
[7] See *From Bolshevism to the Bureaucracy*, pamphlet No.24.
[8] See "Working Class Consciousness", Vol.II, Nos.2 and 3, and "The Fate of Marxism", Vol.III No.7.

that can denounce Russia as State Capitalist and yet advocate measures over here which lead straight to State Capitalism, that can talk (in one and the same leaflet) of "defending the trade unions" and of "workers' power", etc., etc. People who live in ideological swamps can only throw mud.

2. The Committee of 100

It is true that between 1961 and 1963 comrades around *Solidarity* played an active part on the Industrial Sub-committee of the Committee of 100. But it is quite wrong to identify this with "immersion" in an unspecified "peace milieu" as the Sullivan-Hillier pamphlet does. The work carried out by *Solidarity* during this period included systematic work on the docks and in relation to a number of factories; our *Appeal to Trade Unionists*, distributed in tens of thousands of copies, stands up to critical examination seven years later; the famous *Against All Bombs* leaflet was distributed in July 1962, *in the streets of Moscow*;[1] to say nothing of various other activities which cannot yet be "declassified".

During our association with the Committee of 100, our refusal to endorse "non-violence" as a principle stood out like a sore thumb in everything we said or did. Our editorials "From Civil Disobedience to Social Revolution" (Vol. I No.8), "Civil Disobedience and the Working Class" (Vol. I No.9) and "Civil Disobedience and the State" (Vol. I No.10) made our position crystal clear. We in fact specifically denounced bourgeois pacifism in an article (Vol. I No.10) entitled "Down with the Army: Down with the pacifism of leaders and bosses!" During the period we published such pamphlets as *The Standard-Triumph Strike*, *The B.L.S.P. Dispute*, and *The Meaning of Socialism* – hardly "understressing the ideas of class division". As for "making concessions to pacifism", this is best rebutted by a text written by Sullivan himself, in December 1968, as a draft letter to those seeking more information about *Solidarity*. His words are reproduced on the opposite page.[2]

Now he can't have it both ways. Either the passage quoted opposite is true – in which case the charge of "concessions to pacifism" falls. Or the charge of "pacifism" is true – in which case this passage is dishonest bunk. Whichever one chooses! Sullivan seems to have created a credibility gap for himself. But readers' doubts, if any, should be resolved by a glance at our *Death of CND as performed by the Grosvenor Square demonstrators under the direction of themselves alone*.[3] If this is "pacifist" then Enoch Powell is a leading spokesman for Black Power. To return to the charge of pacifism after our publication of such a pamphlet is worse than flogging a dead horse – it is an act of positive political necrophilia.

3. Industry

The Sullivan-Hillier pamphlet claims that "*Solidarity* never attempted to work out an industrial strategy". It acknowledges the seriousness of our industrial reportage but goes on to make the amazing statement that an accurate description of things as they were contained the likelihood (sic!) of leaving them unchanged, and that for *Solidarity* "the system itself remained inviolate because it was not understood". One might be dreaming! To any sane person it might appear more likely that *not* describing things as they were contained a far greater likelihood of leaving them unchanged. To seek to influence an imaginary world is no mean task (although admittedly many on the traditional left are engaged in just such a practice).

For us only the truth is revolutionary. And to understand the truth one must begin by seeing things as they are (and not as one would like them to be – or as they were when described by Marx, towards the end of the last century). The validity of our industrial coverage (which Sullivan and Hillier understand) stems directly from this conscious attempt at demystification (which Sullivan and Hillier do *not* understand).

But describing things as they are has never been the be all and end all of our approach to industry. It has always been our hope that understanding would be the prelude to action. Accurate descriptions highlight areas of managerial weakness; they focus attention on the nature of the union bureaucracies; they suggest meaningful methods of intervention; they bring to workers techniques of struggle improvised by other workers; and they seek to develop self confidence and self reliance.

In our article "For a socialist industrial strategy" (Vol. IV, No.10) we start by reiterating and documenting what should by now be known to all socialists, namely that the unions cannot be reformed, captured, or even made systematically or seriously to defend the elementary interests of their members. We *expose the false solutions* of "industrial unionism", of "changing the union leadership", or of creating "break away" or "revolutionary" unions. We stress the need to concentrate on job organisation, on building up links

[1] "The most direct challenge to official Soviet policies and ideas to have been presented to the Soviet man in the street since freedom of speech died under Stalin." *The Guardian* July 12, 1962.

[2] "The founding of Solidarity coincided with the peak of the anti-war movement. We were active within this movement, particularly around the Committee of 100. The Group was never pacifist, we did not originate from the Peace Movement. We participated in it because it was the only place where methods of direct action were being carried out. The titles of some of our pamphlets show our interests at that time. We combined activity around the peace movement with industrial activity and argued that both were facets of the same struggle." (Passage written by Sullivan mentioned in the review – *Black Flag*)

[3] Pamphlet No.28.

between militants (within various unions if possible, but outside them if necessary). We urge the use of *new methods* of struggle (for instance, those that can be used within the factory), methods which are cheap and effective for the men and damaging to the employers. We stress the *type of issue* that involves job control, that challenges managerial prerogatives, and that therefore has an implicitly socialist content. In many other publications dealing with industrial topics we have stressed that how a demand is won is just as important as what is won. We have never contributed to the sowing of illusions concerning the union bureaucracy, which we have described unambiguously as a social stratum with interests of its own, different from those of the working class. We have stressed that the struggle for "workers' control" starts here and now, with control over their own organisations and over their own disputes.

To describe this painstaking and difficult work as "mindless militancy" or as just "glimmerings of an industrial strategy" is only a comment on the factional bad faith of the authors of the pamphlet. It comes strangely from members of an organisation which over the years has continuously equivocated on all these issues, never really understanding the social basis of the trade union bureaucracy, being mealy-mouthed about the union officials, welcoming some as better than others, failing to grasp the real implications of "unofficial action", sowing illusions in the unions as such, tail-ending the Communist Party as often as not, and always "intervening" in industrial dispute with a main eye to recruiting, rather than to helping men in struggle to win.

We urge the use of *new methods* of struggle (for instance, those that can be used within the factory), methods which are cheap and effective for the men and damaging to the employers. We stress the *type of issue* that involves job control, that challenges managerial prerogatives, and that therefore has an implicitly socialist content.

4. Greece

Over a quarter of the Sullivan-Hillier pamphlet is devoted to discussing *Solidarity*'s attitude to the Colonels' coup and to the occupation of the Greek Embassy in London, on April 28th, 1967.[1] Two years later one ought to be able to assume that they considered this attitude worthy of a serious political critique. If they have such a critique, we are as unaware of it as ever. In fact falsification and smearing reach their height in this section of the pamphlet. They write "the anarcho-pacifist wing of *Solidarity* were at one with the readers of the *Times* in feeling outrage at the murder of Greek democracy. Out of this feeling came the break-in at the Greek Embassy".

It will be difficult for present supporters of *Solidarity* to appreciate the dishonesty of this allegation. The links between *Solidarity* and sections of the Greek left go back *long before* the Colonels' coup. And they were scarcely of a kind that readers of the *Times* would approve of!

During Easter 1963 an anti-bomb march in Athens had been smashed by the police. 2,000 people had been arrested. Some British Committee of 100 participants – including people who had worked closely with *Solidarity* – had been beaten up and deported. In June 1963 the "Save Greece Now Committee", on which several of our supporters were represented, decided to call a big demonstration in the streets of London during the proposed Greek Royal Visit. The Communist Party and other sections of the traditional left, fearing "adventurist" civil disobedience, opted out. But the "Save Greece Now Committee" was determined to show real solidarity with their Greek comrades who were then in no position to demonstrate. This determination provoked a political crisis in Greece, The Greek Premier resigned when his advice to the Greek royals to defer their visit to London was disregarded. On July 9th the Greek King and Queen arrived in London to a "police state welcome" (*Evening Standard*, July 9th 1963). On July 10th the Greek and British royal families went to the Aldwych theatre and were loudly booed and hissed as they entered. The Home Secretary did his nut. So did the police. The Challenor brick planting episode followed. The police image took the biggest knock it had for decades. The Establishment hit back. In December 1963 our comrade Terry Chandler was sentenced to nine months prison for his role in organising the demonstration. Neither Sullivan or Hillier were closely associated with *Solidarity* at the time, but their deeply ingrained ignorance about these matters does not excuse their smearing.

The occupation of the Greek Embassy in April 1967 is described as a "brilliantly executed but politically ambiguous venture" (*Solidarity Forever?* p.12). It was certainly a venture of a new kind. While the traditional left passed its customary resolutions "denouncing the coup", some people had tried to show practical solidarity with the muzzled people of Greece. A number of *Solidarity* supporters (and some rank and file members of I.S.) participated in this "venture". But this

[1] For background information see "Bobby Idar", Vol. III No.2, and "Police mob seize Embassy", Vol. IV No.8.

had nothing to do with support for Greek bourgeois democracy. To associate those who occupied the Embassy with "those who wrote indignant letters to the *Times*" because they saw Greece as the "cradle of Western civilisation and the birthplace of democracy" is – at one level – a vicious amalgam. At another level it is utterly ridiculous. The *Times* had had its own comments to make about those who had organised the Queen Fred "riots" in July 1963.

Following the occupation of the Embassy differences of opinion arose in relation to the trial. We do not propose to argue here the pros and cons of the different tactics considered. A pamphlet written by a *Solidarity* member[1] and published by him on behalf of a number of the defendants deals with this matter and provides an interesting description of the collusion between Prosecution and "Defence" counsels in manipulating defendants "in the interests of the court". Sullivan and Hillier refer to this pamphlet as "one of the most shameful episodes in the history of any left group". If they had been referring to the behaviour of certain I.S. members who were involved in the case (as described in the pamphlet) the accusation might have been comprehensible. But it was precisely the exposure of this behaviour which so upset Sullivan and Hillier. They were no less annoyed when *Solidarity* (Vol.IV No.10) quoted part of a statement which had appeared in the "shameful" pamphlet. The statement had been made in court by counsel for the I.S. members, C.L. Hawser, Q.C., and *Solidarity* reported it as follows:

> "My Lord, of the six I represent, my instructions are that none were either leaders or organisers of the demonstration – they were not responsible, not any of these six, for bringing the implements, the wedges and so forth for the demonstration."

Was Mr. Hawser *really* instructed to say this? If not, when will his clients publicly repudiate him? *Revolutionary leadership?*

Sullivan and Hillier referred to this as "hatchet work" and "comment of a scurrilous nature". What term would they use for "comrades" who in court have their counsel say that *they* were not ringleaders or organisers (implying that their co-defendants were)? We are still waiting for an explanation. Pending its arrival we will continue to call it "ratting".

As for the "thoroughly dishonest" collection sheet entitled "Save Greece Now", it was not produced by the "pacifist wing" of *Solidarity* (as unidentified, in the Sullivan-Hillier pamphlet, as the "anarcho-pacifist wing") but by members of the resurrected "Save Greece Now Committee", which had organised the July 1963 demonstrations. There was nothing "dishonest" about the sheet. It is moreover quite untrue that "most of the resources of *Solidarity* were being devoted to the aftermath of the Embassy affair". On this issue the bad faith of the authors is only equalled by their ignorance.

'History and Revolution' – On Unhistorical Materialism

Maurice Brinton

History & revolution - Solidarity Discussion Bulletin 1 (1972)

Unlike Bob Potter, I have enjoyed writing this article. Firstly because the discarding of an illusion is like the shedding of a load — one moves about more freely without it. Secondly because to help demystify others, far from being 'barren', is in my opinion a fruitful activity in itself.

Since its first issue *Solidarity* set itself a difficult task: the systematic critique of every aspect of the dominant ideology (a task we have more recently come to realise included a critique of certain aspects of marxism). Marxism, with its heavy emphasis on the 'development of the productive forces', is now officially espoused by the ruling strata of Russia and China. It is becoming the ideology of the emerging state capitalist regimes in the Third World. This is no accident — and makes it more than ever necessary for libertarian revolutionaries to take a long cool look at every strand of the doctrine.

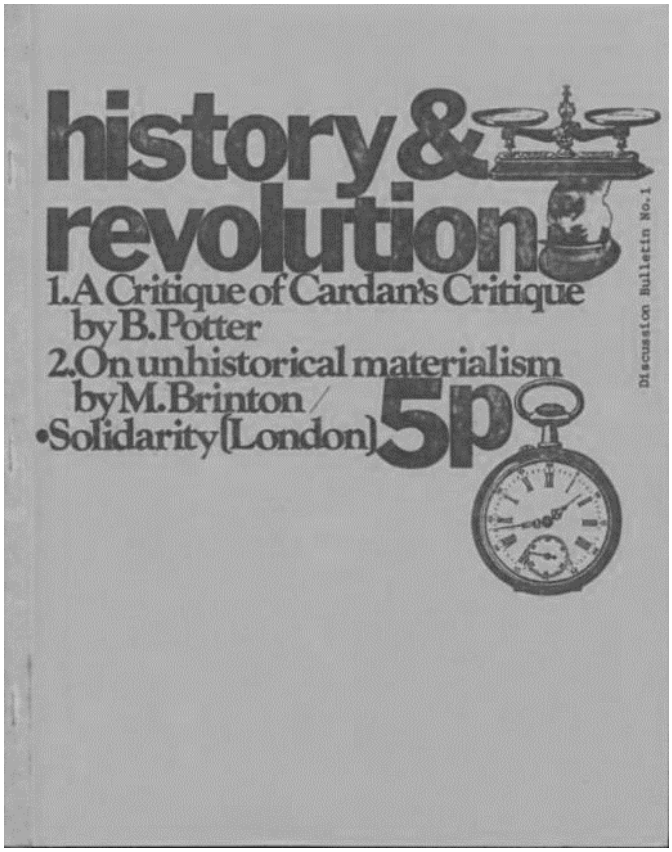
I agree with Bob that Marx 'very much bears the birthmark of his age'. But I disagree with him that Marx therefore needs 'revision'. In the past revolutionaries have only interpreted (or revised) Marx — the point today is to transcend him.

In such an endeavour, misrepresentation would not only be pointless. It would be self-defeating. I will seek to show in this article that far from misrepresenting Marx and Engels (as Bob alleges) Cardan's pamphlet *History and Revolution* brings into focus certain socio-centric aspects of their thought, of which many traditional revolutionaries are still blissfully unaware. In my opinion these deformations viciate the claims to universality put forward on behalf of 'historical materialism', first by Engels and later by every variety of marxist. In relation to 'historical materialism', I am asking for the baby to be thrown away with the bath

[1] *Inside the Greek Embassy Case*, by Andy Anderson.

water. The infant has been dead for many years and the putrefaction in the bathroom is now threatening the water supply of the whole district.

The object of *History and Revolution* was critically to examine historical materialism as presented by Marx and Engels. To do this we inserted various quotes, emphasising some of their more outrageously inadequate formulations. Alas! there is no satisfying some people. On the one hand BP denounces us because he thinks Cardan's text fails to fulfil our promise that Cardan would 'take up the argument with the founders of scientific socialism themselves', (BP's point here seems to be that Cardan's text proper only contained a single quote from Marx. Adding insult to injury the said quote didn't even run to half a dozen lines.) At the same time Bob attacks *Solidarity* (London) for peppering Cardan's text with 'ridiculous vulgarisations' . . . from the writings of Marx and Engels. The fire is misdirected. Our quotes are, of course not vulgarisations. They are the genuine, original product, grotesque as it may seem. What makes our quotes appear 'ridiculous' (and incidentally helps us use them for purposes of 'desacralisation') is our deliberate juxtaposition of their inflated claims to universality . . . with a variety of concrete, specific situations. (We know of no better way of testing the validity or puncturing the pretensions of even the broadest of generalisations.)



***

The first half of Bob's article is not really a critique of *History and Revolution* at all. It is a critique of another of Cardan's texts, namely *Modern Capitalism and Revolution*. Over half-way through his article (p. 3) BP announces that we now 'approach the field of historical materialism'. This circuitous approach presents major problems to someone attempting a serious reply. To follow Bob on his spiral, interesting and necessary as (in another context) it might be? Or to restrict the discussion to the original terms of reference (the pamphlet *History and Revolution*)? I have chosen a third course, namely to indulge in a deliberate digression aimed at stressing the *relation* between the two discussions.

In both *Modern Capitalism and Revolution* and in *History and Revolution* Cardan demands that revolutionaries apply to marxism itself one of the most profound of Marx's insights, namely that the dominant ideas of each epoch are the ideas of its ruling class. Marx wrote in a period of full bourgeois ascendancy. It would have been a miracle (and Marx was a man, even a great man, . . . but not a miracle merchant) if some bourgeois ideas had not permeated his own writings. Unlike others, Cardan does not just pay lip service to this as a theoretical possibility. He dissects each of the various components of marxism (economics, history, philosophy) in a search for such a bourgeois core. He seeks to discover, in each strand of marxism, the 'unmarxist in Marx'.

In *Modern Capitalism and Revolution* Cardan seeks to identify the alien (bourgeois) element in *marxist economics*. He sees' it as Marx's attempt *to treat labour power as an integral commodity*. ('Labour power, therefore, is a commodity neither more nor less than sugar. The former is measured by the clock, the latter by the scales'.[1]) In doing this, according to Cardan, Marx is treating labour power in theory much as the bourgeoisie would like to treat it in practice. Both endeavours fail — and for the same reason.

Labour power is not an integral commodity. It is 'unique in that it is embodied in human beings. Like other commodities it has a use-value and an exchange-value. But unlike other commodities the extraction of its use-value and the determination of its exchange-value are not simple technical operations. They are profoundly influenced by the struggle of workers, both as individuals and as a class. The exchange-value of labour power, unlike that of other commodities, is therefore not solely determined by its cost of reproduction.[2] According to Cardan, Marx's treatment of labour power as an integral commodity leads to an

[1] K. Marx. *Wage Labour and Capital*, Selected Works, Vol. I, p. 81. (Foreign Languages Publishing House, Moscow 1958.)

[2] Bob here misses the point altogether. The question is not whether the action of men can influence the price of sugar. The question is whether sugar itself can influence *its own* exchange value, as labour power can.

erroneous theory of wages, which in turn has historically led to many erroneous economic prognostications.

In *History and Revolution*, Cardan seeks to identify the alien (bourgeois) element in the *marxist view of history*. He sees it in the attempt by Marx and Engels to apply to the whole of human history certain categories and relationships which are *not* transcendental (contrary to what is implied in so much of the writing of Marx and Engels) but which are *themselves* the product of historical development and more particularly of the rise of the bourgeoisie. Among such *historical* (non-transcendental) categories and relationships, Cardan stresses two: the notion of the primacy of the economy and the concept of a certain pattern of interaction (determination) between economic 'infrastructure' and ideological 'superstructure'. The retrojection of these categories and patterns onto other areas of history – with a view to constructing a universal and 'scientific' theory of history (which Engels repeatedly claimed 'historical materialism' to be) can only be achieved, according to Cardan, through a systematic rape of the facts.

***

To turn now to the substance of the matter: the discussion of 'historical materialism' itself. Here I must confess to nothing but disappointment. BP does not discuss *any* of the new and interesting ideas developed in Cardan's text. These are rather patronisingly dismissed as 'some general views on history and philosophy that are not basically at variance with Marx'. (The same Cardan, incidentally, is accused of 'falsifying' and 'misrepresenting,' Marx's ideas on history.)

In the concluding pages of this text I will take up the question of 'falsification' and 'misrepresentation'. At this point I would only like to stress how the defence of orthodoxy can render people blind to what is new. Does Bob not recognise as new (whether right or wrong) Cardan's attempted proof of the fact that 'the materialist conception of history' is basically monist (unifactorial) in its' approach, and that it is moreover idealist (the driving force for social change being the growth of technological ideas)? What does BP think of Cardan's attack on the logical sloppiness of allegedly 'scientific' explanations that have to take refuge behind such formulae as 'economic factors being *in the last analysis* determinant'? What does he have to say about Cardan's assertion that profoundly *different* cultures may develop on the basis of very *similar* technological infrastructures? Can one take *that* without batting an eyelid, and still call oneself a 'historical materialist'? Won't B.P. even respond to Cardan's assertion that vast areas of history including modern history (the emergence of the new ruling classes in the Third World) cannot be satisfactorily interpreted according to the models proposed by 'historical materialism'? Why does B.P. not deal with the core of Cardan's critique, namely that the materialist conception of history (with its belief that the same 'forces', acting in various societies, will by and large have the same 'effects') presupposes *constant* human motivations (and in particular the characteristically bourgeois motivations of constantly increasing production and consumption) whereas in fact human motivations are themselves very much the products of historical development.

What does BP think of Cardan's attack on the logical sloppiness of allegedly 'scientific' explanations that have to take refuge behind such formulae as 'economic factors being *in the last analysis* determinant'? What does he have to say about Cardan's assertion that profoundly *different* cultures may develop on the basis of very *similar* technological infrastructures? Can one take *that* without batting an eyelid, and still call oneself a 'historical materialist'?

What does BP think of Cardan's argument that the different meanings with which concepts, institutions and economic categories are vested in various societies imply the need for *different* types of articulation between economic and other factors? Didn't Marx and Engels deal with this articulation in a largely static (and on the whole unidirectional) ways: the way it undoubtedly operated at a certain stage in the growth of bourgeois society – and then seek to retroject this ('ultimately') deterministic relationship between economic infrastructure and ideological superstructure onto other periods of history?

Also worthy of discussion would have been Cardan's claim that the technico-economic categories cannot 'always have been the determinant ones, for during long periods of history they neither existed as materialised categories of social life, nor as poles or values' (they in fact only assumed this dominant role with the emergence of the bourgeoisie). Isn't BP provoked beyond endurance by Cardan's claim that even the 'class struggle' strand in marxism is deterministic in that it denies an autonomous (nonpredetermined) role to the struggle of social classes? And why doesn't BP go through the roof when Cardan makes his most challenging statement of all, namely that 'the activity of classes and social groups may bring about new elements that are neither predetermined nor predeterminable'. Isn't this a negation of everything Marx and Engels' stood for, in the realm of the philosophy of history?

Does it not make of the materialist conception of history (with its promise of a key to help unravel past, present and future) not so much something that is wrong (although it *is* wrong in parts) as something which is meaningless and hence irrelevant?

Does BP really believe that all this is 'not basically at variance with Marx'? How elastic is his Marx? How much that is embarrassing can be swept under the carpet before people notice a bump? How much can its tenets be stretched without altering the original system of ideas? One is reminded of the Hindus who, when confronted with Buddhism, responded by claiming that Gautama was but the 11th incarnation of Yishnu!

***

A debate on the forementioned points would have made for a genuinely interesting discussion. It could have marked the beginning of a collective endeavour to cover *new* ground. We hope this discussion will still take place. Instead we now have to descend from the sublime to the ridiculous.

BP's real objections to Cardan's pamphlet is that it 'falsifies' and 'misrepresents' the views of the founders of scientific socialism. It allegedly does so in three main areas:

(a) In that it presents 'historical materialism' as a 'system' (whereas Marx and Engels apparently had no such intention).

(b) In that the famous passage of the *Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* in which Marx talks of the 'material forces of production coming into conflict with the existing relations of production' (a statement which Marx himself described as the 'guiding thread' to all his historical studies) was only intended as a very general statement. BP implies that this statement of Marx's was not intended to apply to other forms of society (i.e. presumably to slave society, Asiatic society, feudal society). It would be a crude simplification, he believes, to suggest that marxism saw contradictions between 'forces of production' and 'relations of production' in all societies — or that these contradictions generated the driving force for social change.

(c) In that Cardan imputes to Marx and Engels an over-emphasis on the role played by economic factors in the determination of the cultural and intellectual productions of various phases of history.

Let us look, in turn, at each of these objections.

Did Marx and Engels, the founders of 'scientific' socialism, seek to present the development of history as governed by coherent 'laws' (such as governed for instance the natural sciences)? They undoubtedly did — and it is childish to pretend the opposite! Engels speaks of the 'Great Law of Motion of History (discovered by Marx) which ... has the same significance for history as the law of transformation of energy has for natural science'. If this isn't describing a 'system', I don't know what is. Prom thermodynamics, we pass to biology. 'Just as Darwin discovered the law of development of organic nature so Marx discovered the law of development of human history'. Marx himself speaks of the 'evolution of the economic formation of society' as a '*process of natural history*'. He describes how '*Asiatic*, *ancient feudal* and *modern* bourgeois modes of production were progressive epochs in the economic formation of society' (clearly perceived as a process) and proclaims that 'with the inevitability of a law of nature capitalist production begets its own negation'.

Marx and Engels didn't mention anywhere that the 'laws' they believed they had discovered (and to which they repeatedly refer) were only to be related to a limited range of historical phenomena (limited geographically and limited in time). They don't say that their 'laws' were only intended to apply to the functioning of bourgeois society — or that they had little relevance to other periods of history. On the contrary. The appeal of the marxist view of history (as can be ascertained by anyone who examines any textbook by any marxist economic historian) is its claim to universality, 99.9% of the marxists of today (and that may include comrade Potter himself) would subscribe to the view that 'the economic structure of society *always* furnishes the real basis, starting from which we can *alone* work out the ultimate explanation of the *whole* superstructure of judicial and political events'. They would also subscribe to the proposition that 'every other form of production' (i.e. forms of production that *antedated* bourgeois production) 'Has its peculiar inherent laws . . . They work themselves out *independently of the producers* and in antagonism to them as inexorable natural laws'.[1]

Engels' repeated references to natural science in fact becomes quite meaningless if not seen as universal. Just imagine us speaking of a second law of thermodynamics that had only operated during the last three centuries — or of laws of gravitation, the effects of which had only manifested themselves in Western Europe!

A critical reading of Marx and Engels will show that BP's *second objection* is no more tenable than the first. (We are not discussing here, let us repeat, whether Marx and Engels were right or wrong. BP has not chosen to take the discussion up at this level. We are discussing

[1] BP must have read this quote (emerging from the jaws of Death on p. 5 of our pamphlet). I am genuinely amazed that he can nevertheless write that 'no one, certainly not Marx or Engels, would disagree with Cardan's proposition that economic relations cannot be construed into an autonomous system whose functioning would be governed by its own laws, independently of the social relations'. But perhaps he thought our quote was only a 'vulgarisation'?

whether — as BP alleges — Cardan has misrepresented them).

Boldly proclaiming the universality of his analysis Marx says: 'the relations of production, in their totality, constitute . . . a society at a definite stage of historical development . . . *Ancient* society, *feudal* society, *bourgeois* society (emphases — and sequence — in Marx) are such totalities of productive relations, each of which denotes a special *stage* of *development* in the history of mankind'.[1] What conflicts were there within these societies? Why was one form of relations of production to be superseded by another? How, in general, do relations of production change? Marx is quite explicit on the point. In the same paragraph (and therefore clearly referring to *all* the forementioned stages of society) he says 'they change, they are transformed with the change and development of the material means of production'. In other words in *all* known societies changes in technology bring about changes in the material means of production. These in turn, through their development, revolutionise the relations of production. Changes in culture, law, ideas, etc., follow.

Here again, an honest reading of the overwhelming majority of the texts of Marx and Engels, the texts which have been translated into dozens of languages and reproduced in millions of copies can leave one in no doubt that there is no misrepresentation. Most of the classical writings stress the *profound* determinant effect of the economic infrastructure on the ideological superstructure.

This theme that changes in the forces of production (the result of technological development) provide the driving force of history recurs again and again in the writings of Marx and Engels. It would serve little purpose to give dozens of quotes. Let one suffice: 'As a result of technological change '*ancient* property relations found their doom in *feudal* property relations, and these in *bourgeois* property relations' (emphases in Marx). 'History itself', continues Marx, 'has practiced its criticism upon past property relations'.[2] Note again the historical sequence, unequivocally showing the intended *scope* of what Marx was talking about. Note also the virtual personification of History, whose *objective* seems to be the development of the productive forces and whose *method* seems to be the successive transcending of all relations which prove obstacles in her path.

The clearest example, however, of the fact that Marx and Engels saw the conflict between 'forces of production' and 'relations of production' as an important factor moulding the evolution of *pre*-capitalist societies (and that this is *not* therefore a 'crude' extrapolation by Cardan) is to be found in the *Communist Manifesto* itself. Marx and Engels are discussing *feudal* society, and conjure up the very 'model' which, according to BP, they only intended to apply to capitalist society. 'At a certain stage in the development of the means of production and exchange . . . the feudal organisation of agriculture and manufacturing, in a word the feudal relations of property, become no longer compatible with the already developed productive forces. They become so many fetters. They had to be burst asunder: they were burst asunder'.[3] It isn't a question of Cardan accusing Marx of *personally* attempting to rewrite the past (as BP rather naively alleges). It is something much more subtle and much less personalised. It is a question of Marx and Engels defining a framework and then claiming that through this framework alone can the meaning of the past be genuinely grasped.

Let us turn finally to BP's third point. Is Cardan misrepresenting 'the founders of scientific socialism' in attributing to them the view that the ideological superstructure of any society ultimately derives from its economic base?

Here again, an honest reading of the overwhelming majority of the texts of Marx and Engels, the texts which have been translated into dozens of languages and reproduced in millions of copies can leave one in no doubt that there is no misrepresentation. Most of the classical writings stress the *profound* determinant effect of the economic infrastructure on the ideological superstructure. There is no mention in Marx or Engels that the primacy of the economy is *itself* a historical category, related to the rapid technological development occurring in bourgeois society or that this *therefore* viciates any analyses of pre-capitalist societies, which made of the economy the ultimate determinant. One has to turn to a certain letter written by the ageing Engels, nearly a decade after Marx's death, to find even the hint of a serious discussion of the 'retroactive' effects of the

[1] *Wage Labour and Capital*. Selected Works, Vol. I, p. 90, Note the clear and unambiguous formulation about 'a development in the history of mankind'.
[2] K. Marx. On Proudhon, Selected Works, Vol. I, p. 39.
[3] The similarity of this description to Marx's famous anticipation of the end of bourgeois society is worth recalling. In *Capital*, Marx says that 'new forces and new passions spring up in the bosom of society. But the old social organisation fetters them and keeps them down. It must be annihilated: it is annihilated.' From mechanism to metaphor the similarity is striking.

ideological and cultural superstructure on the development of the economic base. And even here, Engels seeks refuge in phrases such as the economic infrastructure being 'ultimately determining', (I personally consider Cardan's demystifying attack on this intellectually slipshod formulation to be one of the most telling points of his pamphlet.)

In his letter to Bloch (1890) Engels complains that if someone were to take his phrase about 'the ultimately determining element in history' being 'the production and reproduction of real life' and distort it 'into saying that the economic element is the *only* determining one', that person would be transforming an important proposition 'into a meaningless, abstract, senseless phrase'. Is there really all that difference between 'ultimate' — and 'only' in a chain of causal links? Isn't this tantamount to saying that the non-economic, non-predetermined influences can have no fundamental effect? And anyway, wasn't it Engels himself who proclaimed that '*all* the social and political relations, *all* religious and legal systems, *all* the theoretical outlooks which emerge in history are to be comprehended *only* when the material conditions of life of the respective corresponding epochs are understood'. Why? Because 'the former are derived from these material conditions.[1] Could the ideological Frankenstein's monster created by Marx and Engels really be stopped in its track by five lines in the letter to Bloch?

***

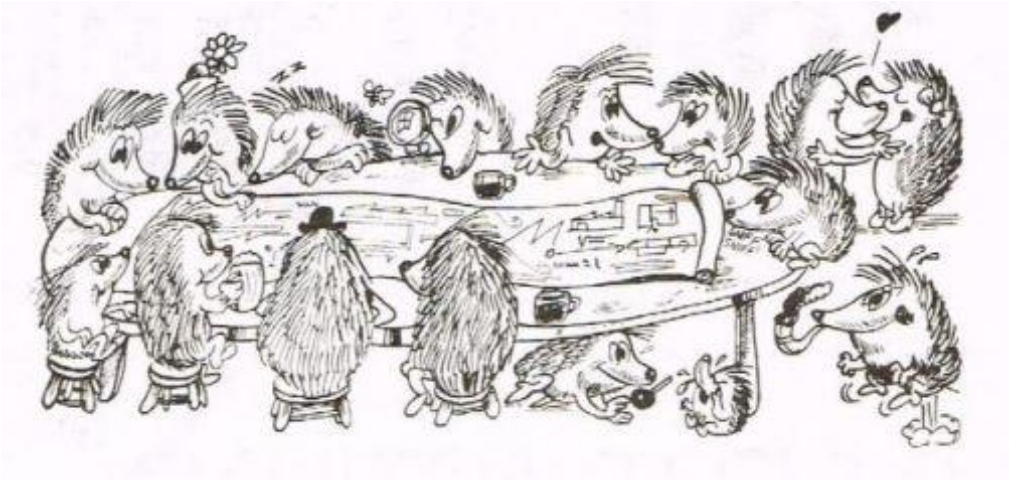
Marxism, in its day, gave us many profound insights, some of which (the class struggle, the concept of surplus value, the theory of alienation, the importance of economic factors in historical development, the need ruthlessly to demystify all ideologies) are still valid today. Other aspects of marxism are today of lesser value. Marxist economics and the materialist conception of history are suspect, because deeply permeated in their most fundamental conceptions by the capitalist mentality prevailing at the time they were written.

As more and more revolutionaries begin to see through these tainted areas, we can anticipate a quasi-religious reaction by residual marxists (even by those who now like to call themselves 'anarchists'). They will refer to increasingly esoteric writings of the Founding Fathers in an attempt to defend the faith, (For instance, BP in his text refers to writings that Marx did not see fit to have published in his lifetime!) I wouldn't be surprised if within a short while Engels himself wasn't cast to the wolves as 'never having been a proper marxist'.

They will refer to increasingly esoteric writings of the Founding Fathers in an attempt to defend the faith, (For instance, BP in his text refers to writings that Marx did not see fit to have published in his lifetime!) I wouldn't be surprised if within a short while Engels himself wasn't cast to the wolves as 'never having been a proper marxist'.

This deep, innate conservatism has profound psychological causes, the nature of which I have hinted at elsewhere[2] and which I cannot here discuss. In an epoch where every realm of knowledge is being challenged more thoroughly and criticised more deeply than at any other time in history, it is sad to see revolutionaries cling pathetically to the past, in the futile belief that today the only thing that isn't in need of thorough revolutionising is . . . revolutionary theory itself!

In his major work on capitalism, Marx defined the organic composition of capital as the ratio of 'dead labour' to 'living labour'. Let us compare capital with the theory that guides our action. The doctrine of most marxist revolutionaries unfortunately comprises a very high ratio of 'dead theory' to 'living theory'. Isn't it time we began to move forward?



[1] F. Engels, Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Selected Works, Vol. I, p, 368.

[2] *The Irrational in Politics*, Solidarity pamphlet No, 35

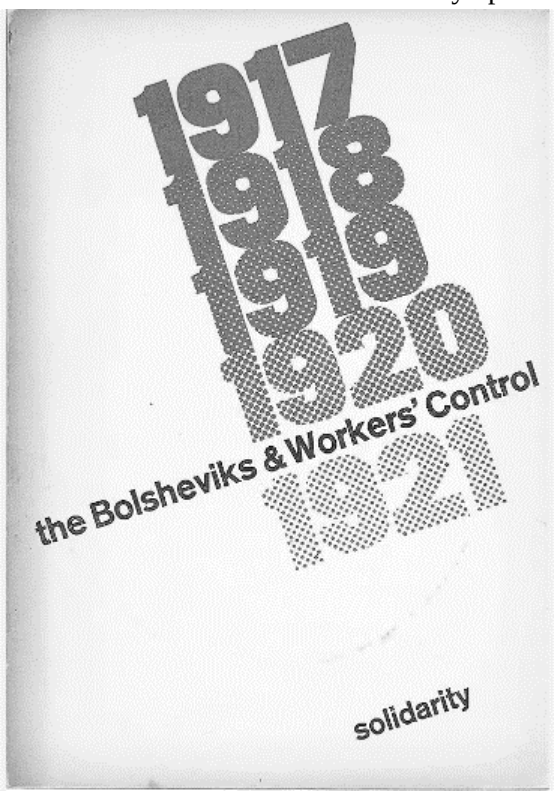
Letter to *International Socialism*

International Socialism (1st series), July-September 1972

Dear Comrades,

In his review of my book *The Bolsheviks and Workers Control* (*International Socialism* 49), Chris Harman states:

> 'He (Brinton) distorts the meanings of discussions and conceals facts. For example one small instance which typifies his whole approach: Brinton quotes as a critic of the Bolshevik line on workers' control the anarchist Shatov; however his account deliberately omits to mention that Shatov later joined the Bolsheviks, accepting their discipline as necessary to defend the revolution. Such distortion means that Brinton's work is little help to serious revolutionaries trying to come to terms with how the revolution was eventually lost.'



One could scarcely find a better illustration of my claim that the essence of Stalinism is to be found in the methods of Leninism and Trotskyism. Chris Harman, your Editor, provides unsolicited support for my contention (drawn in this instance from the field of historiographic falsification). The Stalinists, as I am sure your readers know, became past masters in this art.

I mention Vladimir Shatov once in my book. On the page in question (p.31) I state, in a footnote, that he 'later became a member of the Petrograd Military Revolutionary Committee and an officer of the 10th Red Army'. I point out that 'in 1919 he played an important role in the defence of Petrograd against Yudenich'. I also bring to the attention of readers the fact that 'in 1920 he became Minister of Transport in the Far Eastern Soviet Republic'.

If I don't mention that Shatov 'later joined the Bolsheviks' it is because I honestly don't know whether this is a fact (even were it true, so what? Does the fact that a Parvus, a Plekhanov, a Kautsky, or for that matter even a Trotsky, eventually advocated things different from what they had argued for in their youth invalidate their early opinions?).

That Shatov *supported* the Bolsheviks, I would have thought my footnote made abundantly clear to even the dimmest. That he actually *joined* them, as Chris Harman alleges (and alleges that I 'deliberately omitted to mention') is doubtful. I have not found the fact mentioned by Lenin, Trotsky, Deutscher, Carr, Daniels, Serge or Avrich. In 1920 Shatov in fact assured Emma Goldman that 'he had not joined the Communist Party and never would'.

As Chris Harman, your editor (at the relevant time) has himself selected this episode as 'typifying my whole approach' and is 'of little help to serious revolutionaries trying to come to terms with how the revolution was lost', it is surely incumbent upon him to produce some factual evidence that Shatov 'joined the Bolsheviks'. If he can, I will withdraw, pleading inadequate information, but not bad faith. If Harman cannot produce the evidence, however, he should publicly retract, pleading the habitual bad faith of the political hack.[1]

I await developments with interest. So no doubt will a number of your readers.

Yours fraternally

M. Brinton

[redacted]

[1] In his reply to this letter, Harman did not provide any evidence that Shatov joined the Bolsheviks, proclaiming he "may or may not have actually taken out a Bolshevik party card, but there can be no doubt that by 1919 he recognised the discipline enforced by that party as essential for saving the revolution." As Brinton's letter suggests, his footnote obviously showed this but Harman insisted that it "might indicate as much to a few initiates, but I doubt it." Harman, needless to say, blamed Bolshevik authoritarianism on "the overwhelming economic and military needs of the situation" and so absolved Bolshevik ideology for it in spite of Brinton's book showing that it played a key role in losing the revolution. Harman asserted – in spite of all evidence – the party was responsible "for saving the revolution". (*Black Flag*)

“Solidarity, the Market and Marx”: A Reply

Maurice Brinton

1973

Early in 1973 an article was published in a discussion bulletin produced by some comrades who had recently left the SPGB. The article was entitled “Solidarity, the Market and Marx”. The discussion bulletin later became *Libertarian Communism* (and later still *Social Revolution* [*SR*]).

The article in question was an ill-informed attack on *Solidarity* and a gross misrepresentation of our viewpoint. The matter would not be worth taking up were it not for two facts. The first is that the author of the article (Adam Buick) has recently circulated members of *SR* with copies of this text - probably with a view to preventing the fusion.[1] The second is that there still seems to be a widespread idea in *SR* that *Solidarity* stands for something which the article called ‘market socialism’.

Adam Buick’s article was essentially a critique of Cardan’s *Workers Councils and the Economics of a Self-managed Society*. Such a critique, however hostile, would be perfectly legitimate. What is not legitimate, in my opinion, are the inferences

a) that any Solidarity pamphlet represents THE *Solidarity* viewpoint on the matter;

b) that there was something dishonest about us publishing the *Workers Councils* pamphlet in its present form;

c) more specifically that *Solidarity* stands for something called ‘market socialism’.

It is necessary to take up these matters – and also the main political content of the article itself -- With a view to clearing the air and of ensuring that any possible fusion takes place under conditions of clarity and mutual trust.

Adam Buick starts with a false assumption. It is the assumption that every pamphlet (and every formulation, in every pamphlet) that any *Solidarity* group has ever published, of necessity reflects THE viewpoint of Solidarity as a whole. This is not the case. It has never been the case, and the belief that it might be the case reveals a sadly traditional and monolithic attitude to the question of the publications of a revolutionary group. We know that in the SPGB no document or leaflet could ever be produced without ‘vetting’ by the Executive Committee. This whole approach reflected a deep belief that there was only *one*, marxist, truth (detained by the SPGB). It found expression in the famous formulation: “the SPGB therefore enters the field of political action determined to wage war against all other political parties” – a formulation which incidentally shows that such authoritarian attitudes have not only appeared historically in leninist organisations (which is widely known) but have also flourished within-the ‘marxist’ movement (which is less widely known).[2]

We hold, on the contrary, that an honest discussion of differing opinions can only contribute to understanding. Misrepresentation does not contribute to such understanding and that is why it is politically sterile as well as intolerable among comrades.

Once more – and for the record – *Solidarity* has never been obsessed with the doctrinal purity of everything it publishes. We are not political nit-pickers and we hope this pastime will not become the main concern of the ‘fused’ organisation. We have published articles and pamphlets which, in our opinion, had something interesting, or new, or challenging to say. Some people (the ‘marxist faction’—now *World Revolution*) disagreed strongly with some aspects of what B: Dent wrote in *LSE: a question of degree*. We published the text all the same, although not as a numbered *Solidarity* (London) pamphlet. Not everyone in the group agreed with everything in *The Lump* pamphlet. Many of us had doubts about *Vietnam: Whose Victory?* (we even published a specific disclaimer about some of the more contentious formulations in this text). We did the same about *Bureaucrats and Women Cleaners*. Authoritarians cannot understand this attitude (see *World Revolution* no. 12 p. 7) attributing it, in their simple-mindedness, to ‘confusion’. We hold, on the contrary, that an honest discussion of differing opinions can only contribute to understanding. Misrepresentation does not contribute to such understanding and that is why it is politically sterile as well as intolerable among comrades.

[1] He is claimed to have the perspective of reorganising the SPGB – on a ‘modernist’ basis

[2] Another 'marxist' organisation in which dogmatic authoritarian views flourished was the old SDF. Its founding father had written: “a slave class cannot be freed by the slaves themselves. The leadership, the initiative, the teaching, the organisation, must come from those comrades in a different position…” H.M. Hyndman, *Record of an Adventurous Life* (London, 1911), p. 432

The article "Solidarity, the Market and Marx" points out that there are a number of differences between the formulations used in the *Workers Councils* text (published by *Solidarity* – London, in March 1972) and the text *Sur le Contenu du Socialisme* (published by *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, in 1957). This is not denied. But it does not have the sinister implications made by Adam Buick.

The alterations were made (as in all other Cardan texts we have published) with the knowledge and consent of the author. Our introduction mentioned (without perhaps stressing the specific differences sufficiently) that our text was not always a literal translation of the French original. If Adam Buick wants further examples (this time of much more profound differences between. the English versions of Cardan texts and their French originals) We would refer him to *Modern Capitalism and Revolution* and to *History and Revolution*. Many in the movement seem to be under a profound misapprehension as to the nature of our relationship with Cardan (Castoriadis) and about our attitude to his writings. We are not in the hagiography business. We are not Cardanists to use the term coined by *World Revolution*, or addicted to 'Cardan-worship", to use Adam Buick's term. Our political aim in life is neither archivism nor the dissemination of textually immaculate translations of the Master's work. We have repeatedly stressed this in our publications, which are conceived in a very different spirit. We are not 'Cardanists' – or any other kind of '-ists' for that matter. We are ourselves. We publish material in a form and with a content which we think will be of use to our own constituency. We have on several occasions publicly expressed reservations or disagreements with some of Cardan's formulations. Incidentally how could we be both 'Cardan-worshippers' and deliberate distorters of Cardan's writings, as Adam Buick contends? What would be the purpose of such-an exercise - apart from a machiavellian plot deliberately to confuse unfortunate ex-SPGBers?

MARX, ADAM BUICK AND THE MARKET

Let us now turn to the substance of the matter: Adam Buick's contention that the *Workers Councils* pamphlet describes something called 'market socialism' which is quite different from what Marx had in mind.

Just a comment to start with to put the discussion in proper perspective. Today, it is surely only of historical interest how the 'fathers' of 'scientific socialism' (or William Morris, or the Utopians, or Kropotkin for that matter) envisaged the structure of the new society. Adam Buick constantly argues as if a reference to what Marx said in the *Poverty of Philosophy* or in *Value, Price and Profit* was the knock-out blow, the final court of appeal, the ultimate yardstick in deciding whether something was feasible or not, desirable or not, in the second half of the 20th century. This is a religious, not a creative attitude. But some of us are interested in the study of religion (as a manifestation of human alienation), in a way that only agnostics can be. It is worth spending a few minutes (but not much more) putting the record straight.

It will be argued a) that Cardan's *Workers Councils* text is very much in the marxist tradition; b) that its emphasis on equality avoids some of the cruder errors made by Marx and Engels in this area; c) that Adam Buipk's claim that Marx had something very different in mind – in relation to the 'transition period', to 'money', to the exchange of goods according to their labour value – just doesn't stand up to informed examination; d) that the very orthodoxy of Cardan's text, in terms of marxist categories, is today a source of weakness rather than of strength.

1. Marx and Engels certainly believed in the inevitability of a 'transitional' society between capitalism and the 'higher phase of communist society'.

Marx refers to such a society as "a communist society, not as it has developed on its own foundations but, on the contrary, just as it emerges from capitalist society".[1] He speaks of the period of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" as "the transition to the abolition of classes and to a classless society".[2] In other words there are still classes in Marx's "lower form of communism": One is entitled to ask 'on what are these classes based, since the means of production are no longer privately owned'? Or are they? True, Marx refers to this as a "political transition period".[3] But he clearly has more than just politics in mind. He sees the "lower form of communism" as "in every respect, economically, morally and intellectually still stamped with the birthmarks of the old society". Please note the "economically". It is just playing with words to say, as Adam Buick does, that Marx "never spoke of a transitional society at all" but only – wait for it – of a "political transition period".

2. Marx and Engels held that during the transition period work would be a) compulsory; b) remunerated (possibly unequally).

Engels in his introduction to *Wage labour and Capital* describes compulsory labour as extending even beyond the 'transition period'. He states "a new social order is possible in which the present class differences will have disappeared and in which – perhaps after a short transition period involving some privation, but at any rate of great value morally (sic!) – through the planned utilisation and extension of the already existing enormous productive forces of all members of society,

[1] *Critique of the Gotha Programme* (*CGP*). *Selected Works* (*SW*), FLPH, Moscow 1955, vol. II, p.23.

[2] Letter to Weydemeyer, ibid. , p.452.

[3] *CGP*, ibid. , p. 32

and *with uniform obligation to work*"[1] the promised land would come. (See section 4 for how Engels, the factory owner, conceived of the organisation of production under socialism.) Marx even speaks of the positive aspects of child labour (in achieving the 'new' society). He wrote (in 1875) "a general prohibition of child labour is incompatible with the existence of large-scale industry and hence an empty pious wish. Its realisation – if it were possible – would be :reactionary, since with a strict regulation of the working time according to the different age groups and other safety measures for the protection of children, an early combination of productive labour with education is one of the most potent means for the transformation of present--day society".[2] No wonder the bourgeois work ethic is so deeply implanted, if even the 'opponents' of the bourgeoisie seem so deeply committed to it. Cardan at least avoids pitfalls of this kind.

There is no doubt whatsoever that for Marx labour was to be remunerated dui-in the transition period. "The individual producer receives back from society --after the deductions have been made - exactly what he gives to it. What he has given to it is his individual quantum of labour... with this certificate he draws from the social stock of means of consumption as much as costs the same amount of labour. The same amount of labour which he has given to society in one form he receives back in another".[3] Again, note the formulation "as much as *costs* the same amount of labour."

What is wrong with calling a spade a spade? Why beat about the bush? There is a short word for remuneration for compulsory labour time. It is wages. And there is a short word for certificates which quantitatively reflect this remuneration. It is money. I am NOT arguing in favour of this system. I firmly believe that with the vast development of the productive forces that has taken place since Marx's time it may be possible to by-pass it almost immediately. What I am arguing is that it is downright dishonest to claim that Marx believed that the 'transition' period would be something quite different. The virtue of Cardan's text is that he states explicitly that 'wages', as long as they are necessary, should be *equal* for different kinds of labour (i.e., for intellectual and manual labour). Marx hints at this when he equates an "equal performance of labour" with "an equal share in the social consumption fund".[4] But he spoils it all by going off at a tangent and saying that all this, in fact, is inequality, because "one worker is married, another not; one has more children than another".[5] He claims that with the same remuneration 'one worker will be richer than another'. He was clearly writing before the days when society started making provisions for inequalities of this kind.

Cardan's *insistence* on equality is leagues ahead of Marx's vision of a new society. Dealing with "the elimination of all social and political inequality", Marx denounces "the idea of socialist society as the realm of equality" as "a one-sided French idea resting upon the old 'liberty, equality, fraternity' – an idea which was justified as a stage of development in its own time and place but which, like all the one-sided ideas of the earlier socialist schools, should now be overcome".[6] This is done through a disingenuous statement to the effect that "alpine dwellers will have different conditions of life from those of people living on plains". The argument, however, is about "social and political equality not about warmer wind-jackets or stronger boots! It would be interesting to hear whether Adam Buick and other self-professed marxists agree with this reactionary, anti-equalitarian rubbish. Marx states that "ideas of equality only produce confusion in people's heads".[7] Is that why our marxists are so stridently silent on the matter?

I cannot conclude this section without reference to the nonsensical claim that *Solidarity* has "inherited" the notion of "equal wages" from its "trotskyist past". Those of us who were in the trotskyist movement have abundantly repudiated this period of our political life. But we challenge Adam Buick to provide a shred of evidence that *any* strand of Trotskyism, in *any* part of the world, at *any* time, has ever stood for this kind of equalitarianism. Trotsky, in this a faithful disciple of Marx, always repudiated such notions as anarchist utopianism – often at the point of a gun.

3. Marx held that, during the transition period, goods (means of consumption) would exchange with one another according to their labour value.

This proposition seems to have outraged Adam Buick. He writes that Cardan "has the cheek to claim that Marx held that under socialism goods would exchange at their values". Cheek or no cheek, this is exactly what Marx believed would occur "in the first phase of communist society". This is made quite explicit in his *Critique of the Gotha Programme*. Speaking about the exchange of the famous "certificates" for "means of consumption" (i.e. in plain language, about *buying* things) Marx wrote "here obviously the same principle prevails as that

[1] *SW*, vol.1, p.78
[2] *CGP*, *SW*, vol. II, p.36.
[3] ibid., p.23.
[4] ibid., p.24.
[5] ibid., p.24.
[6] ibid., p.43.
[7] ibid., p.43.

which regulates the exchange of commodities, as far as this is an exchange of equal values". And what about the "distribution of goods among the individual producers"? According to Marx the "same principle prevails as in the exchange of commodity-equivalents: a given amount of labour in one form is exchanged for an equal amount of labour in another form". If the *SPGB* went beyond. Marx in this respect it was all to their credit. What doesn't help anyone, however, not even Marx's memory (which has no need of such 'defenders') is to pretend that Marx held other views about the economics of the transition period (sorry, of the "political transition period") than he in fact did.

4.The founders of 'scientific socialism', as soon as they got down to brass tacks, saw the organisation of socialist production in extremely authoritarian terms.

The main 'culprit' here was undoubtedly Engels, although there is no evidence that Marx ever disagreed with Engels, or ever dissociated himself from Engels' views.

What is needed now is to break with the marxist blinkers altogether, and to start thinking creatively - together. Maybe Cardan does not go far enough (he was writing over 20 years ago). But he was at least trying to give *practical* answers to *real* problems, to envisage the structure and functions of institutions that people could both understand and control

Engels defined "authority" as "the imposition of the will of another upon ours". He asked "is it possible to have organisation without authority?"[1] And, in typical bourgeois manner, he answered in the negative.

Engels chooses cotton mills as his (no doubt familiar) example. "All the workers, men, women and children, are obliged to begin and finish their work at the hours fixed by the authority of the steam, which cares nothing for individual autonomy... the will of the single individual will always have to subordinate itself,[2] which means that questions are settled in an authoritarian way. The automatic machinery of a big factory is much more despotic than the small capitalists who employ workers have ever been ... wanting to abolish authority in large-scale industry is tantamount to wanting to abolish industry itself, to destroy the power loom in order to return to the spinning wheel".[3] This was unavoidable and 'independent of all social organisation' (i.e., socialism could do nothing about it).

This shows a remarkable conceptual poverty as to how a socialist society might set about reorganising its technology and its productive base. The alternatives are not the power loom *or* the return to the spinning wheel. A vastly enhanced area of freedom *within production itself* will be an immediate concern of socialist society. This is not beyond the competence of human creativity. The notion that technology itself is socially neutral, objectively determined by developments in science, and that what is the matter with capitalism is that it uses this 'neutral' technology for reactionary purposes (to fill the pockets of cotton mill owners, for instance) whereas socialism would use the same 'neutral' technology for beneficial ends (production for use) is a typical 'objectivist', 'scientistic', marxist fallacy – and incidentally one that reflects many deep, but unformulated bourgeois assumptions.

In Dante's mind the entrance to Hell (the *Inferno*) was surmounted by an inscription 'lasciate ogni speranza, voi che entrate' (Abandon all hope, ye that enter). Engels cynically parodies this with the statement that "at least with regards to the hours of work, one may write upon the portals of these (modern) factories: Lasciate ogni autonomia, voi che entrate." This need to abandon all autonomy in large-scale production is, remember, "independent" of how socialism may seek to organise production.

Isn't it time that those who talk so much of 'working class autonomy' realised the sort of hell that their ideological forefathers reserved for the working class (mentally, for 'marxists' had nowhere yet acceded to power). Isn't it time they started thinking of these problems? The problems are real ones. Cardan's text on the *Workers Councils* takes them up, and looks at them in a very positive way. Where does Adam Buick stand on these matters?

CONCLUSIONS

There is an enormous void in revolutionary theory as to how production and distribution might be organised in a free society. There have been some admirable science-fiction texts, but the revolutionary movement itself has produced virtually nothing. It is true that Pannekoek in his *Workers Councils*, and *ICO* (in their collection of texts called *Fondements de l'Economie Communiste*) sought to tackle some of these problems. But the whole approach in both is largely 'theoretical'. It is largely in the 'what-Marx-really-meant-or-really-said' tradition, or in the only slightly better 'how-Marx-should-be-interpreted-in-the-conditions-of-today' tradition. Even the *SPGB* never really went beyond parrot-cries of 'free

[1] *On Authority*. *SW*, vol. I, p. 636.

[2] Interesting echoes of this can be found in Lenin's statement that "large-scale machine industry – which is the material productive source and foundation of socialism – calls for absolute and strict unity of will... how can this unity of will be achieved? By thousands subordinating their will to the will of one".

[3] *SW*, vol. I, p.637.

access' and the production of exegetic texts such as "Marx's conception of socialism" (*Socialist Standard*, December 1973). Adam Buick's "The Myth of the Transitional Society" (*Critique* No.5, 1975) is in exactly the same style. Can't we do better?

What is needed now is to break with the marxist blinkers altogether, and to start thinking creatively - together. Maybe Cardan does not go far enough (he was writing over 20 years ago). But he was at least trying to give *practical* answers to *real* problems, to envisage the structure and functions of institutions that people could both understand and control, to discuss such questions as the flow of relevant information, to deal without cant with the difficult problems of direct democracy and of centralisation, to look at how modern computer and matrix techniques cc' In vastly simplify the calculations of a free society (and enable it to predict the various repercussions its various decisions would have upon one another). He may have got it wrong. He may not have gone far enough. In discussing *The Content of Socialism* Cardan may still have laid too heavy an emphasis on the economy (as most marxists still do). He may have dealt too little with life outside of work, with problems of education, culture and everyday life (incidentally, he has dealt at length with these matters in other writings). But to dismiss *Workers Councils and the Economics of a Self-managed Society* as "market socialism" is just arrogant impudence, especially from someone who, as far as I know, has produced nothing original in this area. A display of having (rather selectively) read Marx doesn't, in my opinion, come under this heading.

All this is not what the problem is at, today. *SR*, and *Solidarity* have enormous new tasks to tackle together, both practical and theoretical. In tackling these tasks we will find an obsession with the past, with its categories and with its jargon, to be a hindrance, not a help. To the extent that marxism is today an important part of the dominant ideology (and to the extent that it reflects, in many contradictory ways, the deepest essence of bourgeois ,thought) we will have to transcend it. It will be difficult. There is nothing as painful as the birth of new, liberatory, ideas. But neither is there anything which, in the long run, will prove quite as rewarding.

Suicide for Socialism?

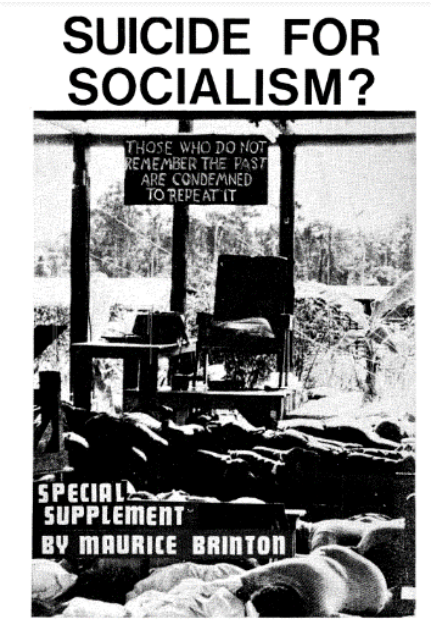
Maurice Brinton

Special Supplement to *Solidarity*, March-April 1979

Part One

THE RELEVANCE OF JONESTOWN

'We're gonna die for the revolution. We're gonna die to expose this racist and fascist society. It's good to die in this great revolutionary suicide.' The words uttered by two young men in Jonestown (Guyana) a few minutes before they, together with hundreds of others, poisoned themselves were reported in the *Los Angeles Times* (November 26, 1978) by Charles Garry of San Francisco, attorney for the Peoples Temple. Garry was no critic of this particular cult. He was the trendy leftist lawyer who, referring to the Guyana commune, had written in the *Peoples Forum*, journal of the Temple: 'I have seen Paradise'.



For those who think that socialism is about life and reason (and not about giving cyanide to babies... whether in Paradise or elsewhere) the events of last November are deeply disturbing. Let's not quibble about how many died. The latest reports put it at 921 (912 in the Jonestown commune, 5 at Port Kaituma airport, and 4 in the Peoples Temple in Georgetown). Or about the complicities (both in the USA and in Guyana) which led 900 American 'socialists' to this particular part of the South American rain forest. Or about the relations of the Jonestown commune with Soviet Russia (to whose Embassy in Georgetown two survivors sought to hand over a vast amount of money). On all these matters a lot more information will come to light in the months to come.

What is of concern to us as libertarians is how the monstrosity of Jonestown, where people were drugged and beaten, brainwashed and forced to indulge in slave labour, sexually manipulated and annihilated as individuals, ever came to be associated with the name of socialism. Jim Jones' own 19 year old son, Stephen, said of his father after the mass suicide: 'I now see him as a fascist'. It would he easy to forget it all, as most of the 'left' doubtlessly will, or to sweep it all aside as some trivial or insignificant event: a lot of religious nuts bumping themselves off in some far away jungle. But this isn't good enough. Nor is it enough to comment, as did *Socialist Worker* (Dec. 2, 1978) that the tragic end of those who followed Jim Jones was 'a reminder of the irrationality and ultimate hopelessness

of religious forms of protest'. Or to blame 'the oppressiveness, brutality and mindless profiteering of the society from which they fled'. All this is true. But what it needed is to relate these truths to the specifically 'socialist' content of the Jonestown rhetoric and to the 'socialist' support which the Temple movement mobilised, from Angela Davis to the self-proclaimed 'socialist' government of Guyana.[1]

We also need to relate all this to many phenomena and tendencies we see daily in the socialist movement around us. We mean the systematic cult of leadership, the manipulation of information, the abdication of critical judgment, the substitution of rhetoric for argument and of slogans for the serious discussion of complex issues. We mean the belief in 'activity' at any cost – with little questioning as to its content – the mythologising and the voluntarism, the intimidation of dissidents, the almost universal application of double standards, the systematic generation of paranoia and the retreat, on a very wide front indeed, from rationality in general.

The Jim Jones story bears so many similarities to what we see around us that it is worth telling in some detail... We hope this will help some of those who find themselves bewildered (or trapped) by their experiences in the unreal world of various marxist sects.

The Jim Jones story bears so many similarities to what we see around us that it is worth telling in some detail. Not out of any necrophiliac concern but as an elementary gesture of socialist sanitation. We hope this will help some of those who find themselves bewildered (or trapped) by their experiences in the unreal world of various marxist sects.

JIM JONES, RELIGION AND POWER

James Warren Jones (JJ) was born in Lynn, Indiana, in 1931. His father, gassed in World War I, was unemployed but an active member of the local Ku-Klux-Klan. His mother worked in a factory, at below average wage rates. When Jim later became involved in the struggle against racism he claimed he was 'biracial', his mother being a Cherokee Indian. Other members of the family dispute this contention. The relevant records are unavailable.

At a very early age JJ became interested in religion. Erstwhile schoolmates have confirmed that this interest centred more around the pomp and ceremonial, the banners and songs, than around questions of doctrine. JJ would 'play church games' with the other kids, games in which he always landed the role of preacher. As an adolescent he went in for social work of various kinds, organising sporting competitions. He apparently never indulged in any sport himself. Bill Morris, one of his classmates, says JJ was never interested in anything of which he was not the centre, the organiser. So racist was the Lynn environment that JJ claimed never to have seen a black until he was 12 years old. He realised there was something very wrong and became actively interested in the issue of racism.

In 1949, while working as a medical auxiliary in the Reid Memorial Hospital in Richmond, some 15 miles away, he married Marceline Baldwin, a nurse 4 years older than himself. About this time he was already critical of all the churches he had come up against and was already talking of one day forming a Church of his own. He moved to Indianapolis where he experienced many difficulties in finding a racially-integrated religious environment. He kept ends together by selling monkeys imported from Latin America and Africa, at 29 dollars a piece. Although not ordained he started systematic work in penetrating 'progressive' and 'Christian' circles. His dynamism and charisma made him many friends. By 1956 he was influential enough to found his own Church: the Peoples Temple. It was a converted synagogue in a run-down section of Indianapolis.. He adopted several black, white and yellow children as tangible evidence of his deeply felt views.

A turning point in JJ's career was his meeting with Father Divine, the legendary black pastor from Philadelphia. Jones was vastly impressed both by his spell-binding preaching techniques and by the total control he still exerted on his congregation (which consisted mainly of elderly black women). From Divine Jones he learned all about 'organising congregations', about how to use an 'Interrogation Committee'. He saw the Committee as the logical extension of his grip on his flock. In Indianapolis Jones started to surround himself with a group of 'totally loyal' men and women, black and white. They would watch and report to Jones on the other parishioners. This was probably the first instance in history of a totally integrated, 'non-racist', 'non-sexist' Secret Police. Thomas Dixon, one of the early

[1] According to the *Los Angeles Times* (Dec. 14, 1978) 'Burnham described himself five years ago as a socialist but not a marxist. Today he calls himself a marxist who does not yet lead a marxist administration'. According to a veteran member of Georgetown's diplomatic corps 'Jones professed to believe in a socialism based on a multiracial kind of communal life. That's what Mr Burnham is aiming for. That's what may have drawn the Peoples Temple to the 'Cooperative Republic of Guyana'. (Whether Forbes Burnham was a 'marxist' or not, it did not prevent him speaking on an SLL – now WRP – platform in Trafalgar Square in 1958.)

members of the Temple, broke with JJ on this issue. 'The Committee' he said, 'was primarily to deal with those who disagreed with Jones. Whoever was summoned by the Committee was grilled for hours on end with questions such as "Why are you against the Reverend?". 'For all his socialist talk' Dickson concluded, 'Jones will end up like Hitler'.

JJ's uphill struggle for racial equality in Indianapolis earned him many enemies. They called him 'nigger-lover', broke his windows, spat on his wife, threw dead cats into his church. Jones, whose physical courage was indisputable, was not deterred. In liberal circles, his image began to harden. He was the protector of blacks and orphans. His influence increased. He is given space in the local paper. In 1960 the mayor of Indianapolis, Charles Boswell, nominated JJ 'President of the Indianapolis Commission of Human Rights'... .at a salary of $7000 a year. The Peoples Temple began to distribute soup. Several survivors of the later mass suicide stressed the impact all this was to have on their lives. They were 'looking for a way to make their lives meaningful and found it at the Peoples Temple, with its communal kitchen, work with juveniles and senior citizens, and activism in support of a plethora of causes ranging from aid to jailed journalists to picketing for elderly Philipinos threatened with eviction by a large corporation'. (*Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 10, 1978.)

Jones then read a satirical article (in *Esquire*, of all places) about the threat of nuclear war. The magazine listed the 'ten surest places for escaping the holocaust'. Among them were listed Bello Horizonte in Brazil, and Ukiah (north of San Francisco). JJ claimed he had had a similar divine revelation. He visited Brazil (making his first acquaintance with Guyana en route). But he finally opted for California.

MIRACLES AND THE LONG MARCH

At this stage of his life JJ discovers he can resurrect the dead, treat cancer and heart disease by the laying of hands, promote the healing of wounds, etc. In 1963 he organises the 'exodus' of his followers to the Promised Land. Like Moses or Mao, JJ too has his Long March ... through the southern regions of the Mid-West. His congregation moves in a convoy of small buses. There is much proselytising and faith-healing en route. The 'flock' enlarges. 'Deceived' disciples later described how bits of chicken innards would be used to simulate the tumours he would 'extract' from suggestible women on the way. In 1965 JJ is eventually ordained among the 'Disciples of Christ'.

The 'Chosen People' eventually settle in Redwood Valley, north of San Francisco. The locals are alarmed at the proportion of blacks in Jones' following. The liberals are impressed by his 'sincerity' and by the number of orphanages, convalescent homes and other 'good works' the Temple is involved in. Big money begins to come in. The local conservatives are more sceptical, especially in view of the increasingly socialist verbiage now being used. In 1970, at the height of the Vietnam war, JJ reassures them. He organises an important collection 'to help the families of policemen killed or injured during the exercise of their duties'. He stresses that 'those who are against this war and who are fighting for social justice aren't – by that very fact – enemies of the police'. This is music to the ears of the local bigwigs, who favour a well organised police force. Donations double within months. Membership increases. Jones is elected President of the Grand Jury of Mendocino County.

The Inner Staff (a kind of Central Committee) was meanwhile being systematically 'consolidated' through the incorporation of individuals whose loyalty to Jones seemed beyond doubt. Ex-cultist Linda Dunn gave a graphic account of events in the *Los Angeles Times* (Dec. 15, 1978). Between 1966 and 1973 she had been a member of the Inner Staff. She had spied for Jones and kept files on fellow cult members. 'Members had to give up 25% of their wages to the Peoples Temple'. 'Jones surrounded himself with intelligent but gullible white women as his chief assistants. He built them up with praise, telling one she was "Harriet Tubman" reincarnated, while at the same time keeping them isolated and spreading rumours about each of them to break down trust'.

At Temple meetings the same thing took place, although in a much cruder way. People had to 'confess' to patterns of sexual behaviour that were not theirs ... and would be publicly upbraided for it. Their self-confidence was being systematically sapped. Children were often beaten, for minor misdemeanours. After the beating they had to say 'Thanks, Father' into a microphone.

Below the Inner Circle there was a Planning Commission comprising about 100 people. Within this group there was a closed [one] of 'secretaries' and 'counsellors' directly responsible to Jones. Although 80% of the members of the Temple were black, two thirds of the membership of the upper echelons were white.

FROM PRINT SHOP TO 'REAL POLITICS'

Later in 1970 the cultists left Redwood Valley and moved into San Francisco itself. For $122,000 the Temple acquired an 'auditorium' (at 1859 Geary Boulevard). The congregation now numbered 7500. The Temple again purchased a disused synagogue (at 1366 South Alvarado St.). JJ bought a printshop and published a periodical called the '*Peoples Forum*'. He claimed a circulation of 300,000. Others put it at 60,000. It was no mean achievement. The miracle cures meanwhile continued. Advertising material was distributed in the streets. In September 1972 the *San Francisco Examiner* eventually took up the issue of the Temple. In a series of articles its 'specialist in religious

affairs', Lester Kinsolving, expressed doubts about the '43 resurrections' and 'surprise at the fact that this performer of miracles should have his church constantly guarded by men with revolvers and shotguns'. Jones sent some of his henchmen to picket the *Examiner*.

But these things blow over. JJ is soon in the big time again. Having burnt his fingers with the *Examiner* he tries a new tactic. He makes money gifts to a dozen local papers and to a local television station for the defence of a 'free Press'. The recipients included the *San Francisco Chronicle* and the *Los Angeles Times*. He travels by air all over the country, with an escort of bodyguards. He creates a company to sell 'Brotherhood' gramophone records. He then enters the vote-trading business. During the mayoral elections of December 1975 he mobilises 800 Temple members to work full-time for George Moscone. No Trot has ever done as much for the Labour Party. Moscone won easily. During the 1976 Democratic presidential primaries Rosalynn Carter takes the chair at a Temple meeting. JJ's 'socialism' melts. He promises that his flock will vote 'to a man' for the Democratic Party. He packs the meeting with 750 of his supporters, brought up in specially chartered buses. Mrs Carter's bodyguards are impressed by the size of the audience. But they are also alarmed at the fact that they don't seem to be the only ones with weapons. Several 'lambs of the flock' seem to be carrying sawn-off shotguns. In September 1976 Jones organises a great Festival in his own honour. Among the guests are Mervyn Dymally, Governor-General of the state, Congressmen John and Phil Burton and Mayor Moscone. Congressman Willie Brown of the state of California declared that 'San Francisco needs 10 more Jim Joneses'. Tom Hayden, a radical, commented that Jim Jones was 'no ordinary populist. When I came to address a Temple meeting I was searched with metal detectors. Then I understood the crowd was there for Jim, not for Tom'.

One good turn deserved another. After Carter's election Moscone appoints JJ President of the San Francisco Housing Authority Commission. Yet despite the increasing influence rumours begin to spread. There is talk of disciples being terrorised and of a great deal of sexual manipulation of his entourage. Jeannie Mills, Mike Cartmell and Deborah Layton Blakey, all ex-devotees, claim that JJ would 'boast for hours of his sexual exploits while forbidding all sexual relations between members of his flock'.. JJ had learned from Father Divine the importance of himself becoming the object of sexual desire of the whole congregation. But the Temple meetings are well attended. They provide a platform for stalinist hatchet-woman Angela Davis (see *Solidarity London*, vol. VII, no.4) and for Allende's widow. Together with Dennis Banks, leader of the American Indian Movement, they gave rousing talks about 'liberation struggles' being waged both near and far away. The third worldist rhetoric flourished. Religion was now playing a lesser role in the cult's ideology. Two survivors, Clancy and Silver, stated that for Jones 'the Church was the means, not the end'.. Asked if Jones gave primacy to Marxism or Christianity Silver answered 'Jim was a socialist first and an atheist second'. Silver also stated (and, I believe, without cynicism) that the holocaust had made him aware of 'how tenuous life is for most people who don't have an organisation to depend on. The Temple proved it could take care of people from the cradle to the grave'. (*Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 10, 1978.)

THE GUYANA COMMUNE

The decision to move to Guyana and create a 'commune' had first been mooted towards the end of 1973. Temple documents reveal that Jones was impressed by the 'socialist' nature of the regime there. Other considerations seemed to have been the need to move from San Francisco where things were hotting up, the favourable exchange rate (sic!) and the fact that the 'local people spoke English'.

The financial and legal arrangements have not yet all come to light. Few of the transactions took place through orthodox channels. Jones was suspicious of official mechanisms and preferred to resort to trusted messengers. Members of his inner circle would fly from San Francisco to Georgetown, carrying sums of up to $50,000 on them. The annual budget of the Temple had by now reached a figure of $600,000. Those in the know claimed that much larger amounts were salted away in Switzerland and Panama.

Dan Phillips, who accompanied Jones when he and twelve of his top committee visited Guyana in December 1973, stated 'We each of us had $5000 on us in notes. We also had a bank draft draw-able on Barclays Bank (Canada) for $600,000. This was deposited with the Bank's branch in Georgetown'.

After initial parleys Jones and his colleagues flew over the jungle in a plane provided by the Guyana government to choose a suitable site for the new 'agricultural colony'. Jones insisted it be remote. The Guyanese stressed it should have development potential.[1] A site some six miles from Port Kaituma was finally selected. It spread over 5000 acres (with an option for a further 27,000 acres) and was to be rented

[1] Despite these differences of emphasis, agreement proved possible among these 'fellow socialists'. When important visitors later visited the commune (such as California's Lt. Governor Mervyn Dymally), they and Jones were often greeted by Guyana's Prime Minister Forbes Burnham and his Deputy Prime Minister Ptolemy Reid. And it was Viola Burnham (the President's wife) and Ptolemy Reid who transported the Jonestown treasure (amounting to more then $1 million in currency, gold and jewellery) 'back to government headquarters in Georgetown' as early as November 20. (*International Herald Tribune*, Dec. 26, 1978.)

to the Temple for . . . $300 a year (sic!). There was a small airstrip at Port Kaituma. The little town could also be reached by a long journey up river. Port Kaituma was 140 miles from Georgetown and about as isolated a spot as could be wished. It was only a few hundred miles northwest along the Atlantic coast from the site of the old French penal colony of Devil's Island, where the French used the jungle and isolation as a deterrent to escape by criminals and political prisoners.

There were immediate problems. Some were due to climate, others to the pilgrims' almost total ignorance of the first principles of tropical agriculture. The first to arrive denuded slopes of trees, allowing heavy rainstorms to wash away important areas of fertile land. In the jungle the local trees proved so hard that planks had to be imported. In November 1974 the Reverend Jones arrived with 50 members of the inner set (by turbo-jet from Mexico) to christen the place 'Jonestown'. To impress the representatives of the local government Jones arranged for one of his followers, Timothy Stoen, to simulate a severe attack of gastric pain. Stoen complied but later declared 'I've never had much taste for this kind of game. The Reverend proceeded to 'cure' me through a laying of hands'. The visitors seemed sceptical.

People who have been through the harrowing experience of life in some of the 'left' sects at times of 'crisis' will know exactly what she meant. Emotionally and physically exhausted people can vote that black is white without batting an eyelid.

In May 1977 there were only 70 'communards' in Jonestown. An idealised recruitment poster was produced, showing Jones kneeling among trees heavy with bananas, grapefruit and oranges. An intensive recruitment drive was started among the politically (and botanically) naive members of the congregation in San Francisco. They were urged to make over all their worldly goods (houses, furniture, cars, etc.) to the Temple, and to take part in the great work of 'building socialism' in Jonestown.

Rosemary Williams was one of those who followed JJ. She gave up her job as a clerk in a San Francisco bank. Her husband Harry, a plumber employed by the San Francisco municipality, was about to go with her, but at the very last minute changed his mind – 'so as not to loose his pension'. The decision not only saved his pension – it almost certainly saved his life.

SELF- CRITICISM AND 'BEHAVIOUR MODIFICATION'

Within a short while of reaching Jonestown Rosemary discovered 'the place was a living hell'. People worked from 12 hours or more a day – after which they had a right to 'self-criticism' sessions. Whoever expressed doubts as to the success of the enterprise – or whoever had failed to fulfil norms – was punished. He (or she) either had the head shaved, or had to wear a yellow hat or a special badge to signal 'dishonour'. 'Culprits' would not be spoken to for several days. Damage or loss had to be 'repaid' by those found guilty. As money had been abolished the 'repayment' took the form of deprivation of food until the 'debt' had been settled. 'Behaviour modification' charts were put up on the walls and everyone's 'progress' was duly monitored. Even after the disaster, some of those who had escaped were still trying to justify the methods used. Jean Brown, one of the survivors, had once worked with Jones as an aide at the San Francisco Housing Authority, when Jones was its Chairman. She had been 'politicised as a graduate student at Berkeley in the late 1960's'.. Asked about reports of harsh internal discipline, Ms Brown, a former schoolteacher, said 'the Temple used criticism/self-criticism, a technique advocated by Mao Tse-tung and others to raise questions about the way a group is functioning. People need discipline if an organisation is to function effectively'. (*Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 10, 1978.)

There certainly was an all-pervading and very rigid discipline. Children who wet their pants were submitted to 'reconditioning' with electric shocks administered through cattle prods. A 16 year old girl was made to clean out a septic tank from 10pm to 6am as punishment for having taken some corrugated metal in an attempt to seek some privacy. Meanwhile the diet in the commune was grossly inadequate (mainly rice and beans) despite the Temple's now obvious wealth. People slept in noisy, dirty dormitories.

There was never any hot water, even for washing purposes. The enclosure was 'guarded' by armed men. The loudspeakers were on for hours on end, exhorting the faithful to greater efforts, talking of the 'fascist threat from America', of the numerous enemies of the Temple, keen on destroying 'this socialist experiment' and of the terrible fate that awaited anyone who sought to return to America. 'Every defection', he stressed, 'would only be used by the enemies of the commune'.

COMPLICITIES IN 'SOCIALIST' GUYANA

Jones meanwhile was consolidating and manipulating his external political contacts. In September 1977 Sharon Amos, Jones' top aid in Georgetown, sought to get former Guyana Cabinet Minister Brindley Beon to drop proposed Guyanese police investigations about what was going on to Jonestown. But Jones went even

further. A memo dated March 7, 1978 was found among the dead bodies. This said that 'at the request of the Peoples Temple the Cuban Embassy (in Georgetown) has asked Prime Minister Forbes Burnham to reinstate fired Foreign Minister Frederick H. Wills, who was a cult confidant'. (*Los Angeles Times*, Dec. 3, 1978.)

There were soon some alarming developments. Maria Katzaris, one of the inner circle and one of Jones' girlfriends, wrote to her father in the USA asking him to come and visit the commune. She enthused about Jonestown and spoke of the threats confronting the place. 'A society based on economic inequality cannot allow an organisation such as ours, which advocates racial and economic equality to exist. They will seek to destroy us', she said. As the father, a psychologist, was preparing to come, he received a number of letters from his daughter, putting off the visit. Worried, he wired Jones, via the San Francisco Temple (with which Jonestown was in constant short wave radio communication) telling him he would be coming all the same.

On arrival in Georgetown Katzaris was handed a letter by the American Embassy to the effect that Maria no longer wanted to see him. To 'justify' the letter Paula Adams, a Jonestown spokeswoman, had apparently 'revealed' to the American authorities in Georgetown that Maria's father was a child-beater, that he had sexually abused Maria throughout her childhood, etc. Katzaris also learned from ex-members of the Temple that his daughter had signed a predated suicide note.

JJ was also deeply involved throughout this period in legal disputations concerning the return to the USA of a boy called John Victor Stoen. JJ claimed to be the father of the boy, a statement Mr and Mrs Stoen (former cult devotees) rigidly denied. The haggling went on for months. Exasperated, Jones eventually sent an extraordinary message to the Guyanese authorities in Georgetown. 'Unless the government of Guyana takes all necessary steps to put an end to the judicial action undertaken concerning the custody of John Victor Stoen, the whole population of Jonestown will commit mass suicide at 17.30 today'.. The Guyanese authorities capitulated, feeling it unwise to test whether Jones was bluffing. In March 1978 Jim Jones also sent a letter to every senator and congressman, complaining of the harassment of the commune by various government agencies. It ended ominously: 'I inform you that it is preferable to die than to be persecuted from one continent to another'.

'SOCIALIST' PARANOIA

JJ's speeches over the loudspeakers were daily becoming longer – and more strident. He would denounce the 'traitors' who were abandoning the Temple. Threats were now openly being made: 'there is only one punishment for treason: death'. 'Enemies of the Temple' were being rooted out everywhere. Equivocations would not be tolerated. 'Whoever is not with us is against us'. Paranoia and delusions intertwined. He (JJ) 'was the reincarnation of Lenin and of Jesus Christ'. He had 'friends and contacts' throughout the world, including 'the leaders of the USSR and Idi Amin'. Several times he broached the theme of 'a collective suicide to bring socialism into the world'. Meanwhile, armed guards (30 by day and 15 by night) would constantly surround the camp.

Jones was nothing if not logical. Once a week there was a dress rehearsal for the mass suicide. These were on the so-called 'white nights'. 'The situation is hopeless', he would proclaim. 'Our only choice is a collective suicide for the glory of socialism'. The congregation would then line up and each be given a glass full of a red fluid. 'In forty minutes', Jones would intone, 'you will all be dead'. 'Now empty your glasses'.. Everybody did. Describing the night she first witnessed this ritual, Deborah Layton – a 19 year old member of Jones' Inner Circle (and one of the eventual survivors) – said: 'we all went through with it without a protest. We were exhausted. We couldn't react to anything'.

People who have been through the harrowing experience of life in some of the 'left' sects at times of 'crisis' will know exactly what she meant. Emotionally and physically exhausted people can vote that black is white without batting an eyelid. Nor is such irrationality necessarily confined to small groups. The manipulated 'confessions in the long term interests of the Revolution' of some of the old Bolsheviks during the Moscow Trials contained several similar ingredients.

Deborah Layton managed to get herself transferred from Jonestown to Georgetown, where she defected. She turned up in San Francisco. Her stories, initially disbelieved, were eventually listened to by Leo Ryan, congressman for San Mateo.

THE CLIMAX

We are now approaching the climax. Ryan wrote to Jones saying that some of his (Ryan's) constituents had 'expressed anxiety' about relatives in the colony and that he intended to visit the place. Back came a testy letter from the Temple's attorney Mark Lane, implying that Ryan was engaging in a witch-hunt. If this continued, Lane said, the Peoples Temple might have to move to either of two countries that do not have 'friendly relations' with the USA (he meant Russia and Cuba). This would prove 'most embarrassing' for the USA. Ryan decided to go to Guyana all the same, with eight newsmen. After much humming and hawing Lane eventually joined the group.

The rest of the story is fairly well known: the arrival of Ryan's party at the commune, the 'show' put on for them, the messages slipped surreptitiously into the hands of the visitors, Jones' fury when 14 of his congregation asked to return to the USA, the unsuccessful knife attack on Ryan by cult member Don

Sly, the journey back to Kaituma with an impostor planted among the 'defectors', the hastily conceived and partly botched up attack on Ryan's party at the airstrip (Ryan and four others were killed, but one of the two aircraft got away), and Jones' final decision on the 'mass suicide' when news reached him that the attack had failed and that a major crisis now really confronted him.

The deaths themselves were well described by Odell Rhodes, a survivor, in the *Los Angeles Times* of November 25. 'Generally there was no panic or emotional outburst. People stood in line to swallow the poison ... a lot of people walked around like they were in a trance'. The camp's doctor and nurses brought out several large plastic vessels containing fruit-punch laced with cyanide. 'They would draw up an amount into syringes. Babies and children went first. A nurse or someone would put (the syringe) into a person's mouth and the people would simply swallow it down. Rhodes escaped by slipping through a ring of armed guards into the jungle. Asked why the cultists had meekly gone to their deaths, Rhodes said 'some of these people were with Jimmy Jones for 10 or 20 years. They wouldn't know what to do with themselves without him'.

So much for the story itself – which had to be told. Even if sundry leftists or third-worldist do-gooders scream! Even in the context of contemporary 'socialist' political scholarship where, in the words of Revel (*The Totalitarian Temptation*, Penguin, 1978) 'to suppress evidence seems to be the normal way of showing which side one is on'.

Part Two

WHAT DO SECTS PROVIDE?

Throughout history religious or political faiths have exercised great influence. They have moved armies and motivated people to build both cathedrals and concentration camps. Their success had had very little to do with whether they were true or not. The fact that thousands (or millions) believed in them made of them real historical and social forces.

Religious or political faiths (and the Jonestown events show that the boundaries may be hard to define) have several things in common. They can provide, for the emotionally or materially deprived, the lonely, the rejected (or – less often – the culturally alienated or intellectually confused) the security of human contact, the satisfaction of an activity that seems socially useful, and the self-generating warmth of knowing all the answers, i.e. of a closed system of beliefs. These beliefs diminish, in those who hold them, the awareness of 'failure' or of rejection – or the feeling of being useless. They are potent analgesics. And they offer positive objectives, either through instant political solutions in this world, or through solutions in the hereafter (pie in the sky). In a society which either callously disregards (or just bureaucratically forgets) the very existence of thousands of its citizens, claims to make existence meaningful evoke an echo. Sects (i.e. groups based on cults) may come to fill an enormous vacuum in people's lives.

Most people are much happier in a situation where they are needed, wanted and accepted for what they are, not condemned and looked down upon for not being what they are not. We all like to act in a manner that is rational and that fulfils both one's own needs and those of others. The tragedy is that political and religious sects may convert these positive human attributes into their opposites: manipulation and authoritarian dogmatism on the part of the leaders, submission and the abdication of critical faculties on the part of the led.

SECTS IN HISTORY

Historically, cults and sects have usually flourished at times of social crisis, when old value systems were collapsing and new ones had not yet asserted themselves. They usually start as small groups which break off from the conventional consensus and espouse very different views of the real, the possible and the moral. They have attracted very diverse followings and achieved very variable results. Christianity started as a religion of slaves. In *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, Norman Cohn shows how, many centuries later, 'the people for whom (the Medieval Millennium) had most appeal were neither peasants, firmly integrated into the life of the village, nor artisans integrated into their guilds. The belief in the Millennium drew its strength from a population living on the margin of society'. The New England Puritans conformed at one time to the norms of a harsh age by imprisoning and torturing their own dissidents. They later became respectable. So did the Mormon followers of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young.

Marxism arose as a theory that would liberate a proletariat that had 'nothing to lose but its chains', and has ended up imposing chains on the proletariat. The followers of the Peoples Temple (mainly poor blacks and alienated young whites) have made history by inaugurating the 'mass revolutionary suicide'. Cults can clearly mature into mainstream institutions. Or disintegrate into jungle horror stories.

A detailed analysis of cults would require an analysis of their rhetoric and ideology, and of the culture matrices in which they are embedded. The present appeal of cults is related to the major upheaval of our times. This is not primarily economic. Referring to the Jonestown events an American sociologist has written: 'The US consensus of values has broken down. There is, in some respects, an undermined authority in philosophy and theology. There is the demise of metaphysics. . . there is no "rock in a weary land" that gives people something

certain to hold onto. So people reach out and grab at anything: an idea or an organisation. When traditional answers seem inadequate people are ripe for cults that promise prescriptions for a better life. Most cults offer three benefits: ultimate meaning, a strong sense of community and rewards either in this world or the next. When those prescriptions are linked to the authoritarian style of a charismatic leader you have an extremely powerful antidote to the cultural malaise of what sociologists call anomie (rootlessness, aimlessness).' (*Los Angeles Times*, December 1, 1978.)

Specific ingredients to disaffection from established society had welled up in the 1960's and early 1970's. There had been the expansion of an unpopular war in South East Asia, massive upheavals over civil rights and a profound crisis of values in response to the unusual combination of unprecedented affluence on the one hand, and potential thermonuclear holocaust on the other. Revolutionary socialists – the whole axis of their propaganda vitiated by their erroneous analyses of capitalism and their distorted vision of socialism – had proved quite unable to make any lasting impact.

Specific ingredients to disaffection from established society had welled up in the 1960's and early 1970's… Revolutionary socialists – the whole axis of their propaganda vitiated by their erroneous analyses of capitalism and their distorted vision of socialism – had proved quite unable to make any lasting impact.

BLACK SEPARATISM

Predominantly black organisations such as the Peoples Temple have, moreover, deep roots in the very fabric of American society and of American history. Before the Civil War there had already been 3 separate attempts by US blacks to flee racial persecution. The first was initiated by a black seaman, Paul Cuffee, in 1815; the second by a black physician, Martin Delaney, in 1850; and the third by a black minister, the Rev. Henry Highland Garnet, in 1855. All were designed to lead blacks to a world of peace and freedom by inciting them to make a mass exodus either to Africa or to the West Indies. The appeals proved most attractive to the most exploited and dispossessed. This separatism was often cloaked in religious cloth. But it was the bitter racism and socio-economic oppression experienced by the black masses in the post-Reconstruction South, rather than religious exhortation, that led so many blacks to support the cause of emigration.

This was also true of the largest mass black separation movement of this century, Marcus Garvey's 'Back to Africa' movement of the 1920's. Calling his movement 'Black Zionism', Garvey skilfully used symbols (flags, uniforms and other regalia) and highly emotional rhetoric to fire his followers. In the end thousands of enthusiasts lost money, suffered broken promises and became victims of outright fraud. Father Divine had been inspired by Garvey. And Jim Jones was inspired by Father Divine.

As Earl Ofari points out in an article in the *International Herald Tribune* (Dec. 9, 1978) 'the willingness of a sizeable segment of blacks to embrace movements that have run the gamut from "Back to Africa" to Peoples Temple stands as a reflection of their utter desperation. The lesson, surely, is not that cults hold a particular fascination for blacks but that the most deprived members of US society – those who see the least hope of making it within the system are the easiest prey for charlatans preaching that Paradise lies just over some falsely technicolored rainbow'. This is clearly true: oppressed whites have also sought refuge in 'solutions' of this kind. And it is a powerful rebuke to those trendy radicals (usually guilt-laden middle class individuals) who seem to think that oppression is good for you, that it somehow guarantees revolutionary purity.

THE CALIFORNIAN BACKGROUND

The state of California was also part of the cultural matrix of the Peoples Temple. It has established a questionable claim to fame as the cult centre of the world. Richard Mathison (author of '*Faiths, Cults and Sects of America*') points out that 'as the tide of seers, prophets, mystics and gurus came to this natural haven for the disenfranchised and the uprooted, they grew to be accepted as no less a part of the landscape than eucalyptus or foot-long hotdogs'.

Over the years California has spawned nearly every variant of cultic fraud. Between the wars it produced the '*Mighty I am*' movement. Guy Ballard (an unemployed paper hanger) claimed he had been visited on Mt. Shasta by a vision of the legendary Count of St. Germain, an 18th century mystic. The Count gave Ballard a sip of 'pure electronic essence' and a wafer of 'concentrated energy' (the religious symbolism, in modern garb, is here very clear) and told him to get rich. It worked. By the time the dust settled in the 1940's Ballard claimed 350,000 followers and the Internal Revenue claimed he'd bilked his disciples of some $4 million.

Joe Bell, a post-depression dandy, founded *Mankind United* by preaching that a race of little men with metal

heads who lived in the centre of the earth would tell cultists what to do through his revelations. Bell ended up claiming a quarter of a million gullible followers who mortgaged homes and sold other belongings before he was grounded in a maze of legal problems.

In more recent times there have been the (not specifically Californian) examples of Ron Hubbard's Church of Scientology, of the Unification Church of the Rev. Sun Myung Moon, of Chuck Dederich's Synanon, of the Divine Light Mission, of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness ... to mention only some of the 'religious' cults. Recent estimates claim that more than 2 million Americans – mostly between the ages of 18 and 25 – are affiliated to cults. And this doesn't include those affiliated to various 'political' cults. ('Psyching Out the Cults Collective Mania', *Los Angeles Times*, Nov. 26, 1978.)

LETTER IN *LOS ANGELES TIMES* Dec. 5, 1978.

In his column McCarthy says: 'Don't try to explain it'. There is an explanation and there is a way to armor our children against fanatic leaders.

We must rear our children to value autonomy, to question authority, all authority. We must see to it that children trust themselves, not any cult, not any panacea.

We must foster independence as a goal, we must not lead children to believe anyone has all the answers. Father doesn't know best – whether the child's own or Jim Jones.

Florence Maxwell Brogdon,
Culver City

FULFILMENT AND RATIONALITY

The key thing to grasp about cults is that they offer a 'fulfilment' of unmet needs. Biologically speaking such needs (to be loved and protected, understood and valued) are something much older and deeper than the need to think, argue or act autonomously. They play a far deeper role than 'rationality' in the moulding of behaviour. People who haven't grasped this will never understand the tenacity with which the beliefs of certain cults are clung to, the way otherwise intelligent people get caught up in them, their imperviousness to rational disproof, or the organisational loyalties of various sect members. The surrender of individual judgment is one of the hallmarks of a 'well integrated' sect member.

Jim Jones was called 'Father' or 'Dad' by his devotees. The poor blacks of the Jonestown commune hadn't just 'given up their self' to their charismatic father. Such were the physical, emotional and social deprivations they had grown up in that they had very little 'self' to surrender. And that 'self', such as it was, seemed to them of little relevance in changing their circumstances or the world they lived in. Some young middle class whites in the commune were prepared to surrender their 'self' in exchange for an emotional feedback they had lacked in earlier life. Others had already surrendered their 'self' to their parents. In joining the Temple they had merely found a new repository for it.

'The less justified a man is in claiming excellence for his own self, the more ready he is to claim it for his Nation, his Race or his Holy Cause

Eric Hoffer in 'The True Believer'.

(P.S. Same, no doubt, applies to women.)

But the twisted and manipulatory demagogues who lead various fascist and leninist cults are also – at least to begin with – pathetic individuals. They too are often the products of distorted backgrounds. They seek to blot out the intolerable parts of their life, first through the manipulation and later through the control of the lives of others. The needs of follower and leader feed insatiably upon one another. The relationship is symbiotic: each needs the other. Both seek instant, effortless, ready made solutions, rather than the achievement of understanding, which is a pre-condition for real action for change. Human beings often feel vaguely guilty about not knowing THE TRUTH. When a gifted, persuasive leader comes along who says he has it – and who presents it in a simple and easy manner (even if it is a delusional system) people will listen. They will accept some things about which they have reservations, because they perceive that the Leader has 'good' answers about other things.

Arthur Janov, author of '*The New Consciousness'* and of *'Primal Man'*, points out that 'the surrender of the self, of judgment, of feeling, has taken place long before the outward appearances of a cult become bizarre'. In an otherwise excellent article on Cults and the Surrender of Judgment' (*International Herald Tribune*, Dec. 2, 1978) he fails however to stress the specificity of the Jonestown events. This wasn't a rational decision like the mass suicide at Masada.[1] It was not culturally motivated like Saipan.[2] It didn't even resemble the fate

[1] In 73A.D., after a prolonged siege, 960 Jewish men and women besieged by the Romans for over a year decided, after full discussion, that mass suicide was preferable to surrender. This decision was taken despite the fact that it constituted a transgression of the Jewish religious code. Another Jewish leader (Yoseph ben Matatyahw, later known as Flavius Josephus) had been trapped on another hill, some years earlier. He took the opposite decision ... and lived to record the Masada events.

[2] During the US invasion of the South Seas Island of Saipan during World War II, Japanese officers used their Samurai swords to behead dozens, if not hundreds of their compliant

of the Old Believers.[1] What happened during those last grizzly hours in the Guyana commune was something historically new, a typical product of our time: the era of propaganda and of the loudspeaker, of brainwashing and of totalitarian ideologies.

ON TEMPLES: RELIGIOUS OR REVOLUTIONARY

Sects like the Peoples Temple – or certain revolutionary groups – offer more immediate solutions than the more abstract religions, or than the more rational and self-managed forms of political radicalism. They don't only offer a new super-family, a new group of people to hold onto, to support one. The main attraction is that the cult leader is real, visible, tangible. He may promote you – or shout at you, abuse you, even spit at you. His sanctity or political omniscience (and I say 'his' deliberately, for most popes or general secretaries have almost universally been male) provide a spurious antidote to the malaise of rootlessness. 'Join me' the Leader says (for most sects are actively proselytising agencies) 'for I am the one who knows'. 'Come to my Church (or become a member of my revolutionary organisation). For I am the one and only interpreter of the word of God (or of the course of history). Find with us a purpose for your useless life. Become one of the Chosen People (or a Cadre of the Revolution)'.

We are not saying that all revolutionary groups (or not even that all those we disagree with most strongly) are like the Peoples Temple. But who – in all honesty – can fail to see occasional disturbing similarities? Who does not know of marxist sects which resemble the Temple – in terms of the psychological atmosphere pervading them?[2] Surviving members of the Japanese Red Army Fraction or ex-members of the Socialist Labour League (now WRP) who got out in time need not answer these questions.

In such organisations- the Leader may become more and more authoritarian and paranoid. If he has achieved institutional power he may kill, torture or excommunicate (Stalin, Torquemada) increasing numbers of his co-thinkers. Or he may order them 'shot like partridges'. If he is a 'leftist' authoritarian devoid – as yet – of the state power he is seeking, he will merely expel large numbers of his deviant followers. Deviance – above all – cannot be tolerated. Such men would rather live in a world peopled with heretics and renegades, and keep the total allegiance of those who remain. One even wonders whether (unlike most of their supporters) they still believe in what they preach – or whether the maintenance of their power has not become their prime concern. Jim Jones' rantings about defectors and 'traitors' is not unique. It is encountered in a whole stratum of the political left. Many radical 'leaderships' boast of how they have coped with previous deviations. But however 'unreal' the world they live in, the core of followers will remain loyal. The Leader is still the shield. Even in Jonestown anything seemed better than the other reality: the painful alternative of deprivation, material, emotional or intellectual.

Why didn't more people leave Jonestown? It was because they would again be left without hope. This was at least as potent a motive for staying as were the stories spread by Jones and his inner clique that there would be no point in seeking help in Georgetown, for the Peoples Temple had its agents there too. . . who would 'get them'. Even when Ryan and his team visited the commune, only 14 out of over 900 members said they wanted to leave. To many, the figure seems trivial. To Jones it spelt catastrophe.

Many sects live in political isolation. This is a further mechanism for ensuring the control of the leaders. The members are not only 'rescued' from their past, they are 'protected' from their own present. Such sects refrain from anything that would bring their members into too close a proximity with the outside world. Recruitment is encouraged, but closely monitored. Members are urged to give up their hobbies and their previous friends. Such external relationship are constantly scrutinised, questioned, frowned upon, deemed suspect. United action with other groups – of a kind that may involve discussion or argument – is avoided, or only allowed to 'trustworthy' leaders. The simplest course is to move, lock, stock and barrel, to the jungles of Guyana. In such an environment, after surrendering their passports and all their worldly possessions, the members would be totally dependent on the leaders for their news, their day-to-day needs, for the very content of their thoughts.

Open, non-authoritarian organisations encourage individuality and differences of opinion. But criticism impairs the pain-killing effect of cults – and the cohesion of sects. When a cult is threatened both Leader and followers may go berserk. The best analogy to this is the withdrawal reaction from a drug on which someone has become hooked. Criticism impairs the efficacy of such drugs. So does any suggestion that the Leader doesn't know, or that perhaps there is no hard and fast answer to certain questions.

---

troops. Other soldiers obeyed orders to jump off cliffs into the sea. This event was an integral part of a culture where dishonour was deemed worse than death.

[1] During the second half of the 17th century the Old Believers broke from the Russian Orthodox Church and were later threatened by the official Church with reconversion by decree. 'Thousands burned themselves alive. They assembled in log huts, churches and other buildings, mostly in the northern regions of European Russia. 'They would ignite the buildings and perish. They felt it was far better to die in flames than to burn eternally in Hell by accepting what they perceived as an heretical church.' (see Frazer's '*The Golden Bough*')

[2] All they lacked was the dedication to mass suicide.

Journey Through Utopia:

Edward Bellamy – *Looking Backward*

Marie Louise Berneri

If *Looking Backward* is, in spite of its paradoxical title, a romance about the future, it is a future with which we are already familiar. The nationalisation of industry, the conscription of labour, the importance of the managerial class, are all features which belong to the present rather than to the future, and we might be tempted to call Edward Bellamy a prophet, rather than an utopian, if he had not been sadly mistaken in thinking that these changes would bring us happiness.[1]

Marie Louise Berneri
1918-1949

The public of the 'nineties, which had not tasted the reality of state control, received Bellamy's Utopia with enthusiasm. Reviewing *Looking Backward* in *La Revolte*, at the end of 1889, two years after the book had first appeared in America Peter Kropotkin mentioned that 139,000 copies of the American edition, and 40,000 of the English edition, had already been sold and that it had achieved many "conversions." Darwin's great co-worker, A. R. Wallace, declared that he had only been in favour of the nationalisation of the land, but Bellamy's book had convinced him that the United States were ready for socialism.

Bellamy's clear and practical approach to economic problems was probably one of the chief causes for his success, while the sentimental romance, woven into his description of the society of the future, could not fail to appeal to the taste of the time. Bellamy was also very careful to disguise his authoritarianism in such a way as not to antagonise the individualist susceptibilities of the American bourgeoisie. Cabet wrote his Utopia thinking of the unemployed and starving masses who, he presumed, would be more interested in food and shelter than in the luxury of being allowed to decide what to eat or what to wear. Bellamy obviously wrote with an eye to the middle classes, and in seeking to attract people who did not lack the essential amenities of life, he had to emphasise other attractions than food and shelter, such as the possibility of retiring at forty-five, and having no servant problems. It is also obvious that the cultured classes would not accept dictation in matters of taste or restriction in what they considered to be their intellectual freedom, and Bellamy ingeniously combined state control in matters of production and distribution with private

[1] *Looking Backward: 2000-1887* is a utopian science fiction novel by Edward Bellamy (1850-1898), a journalist and writer from Chicopee, which was first published in 1888. It quickly became a best seller and was translated into several languages. It influenced many intellectuals and socialist as well as producing a mass movement in the United States, where over 162 "Bellamy Clubs" sprang up to discuss and propagate the book's ideas (as well as inspiring several utopian communities). As it advocated the nationalisation of private property and the desire to avoid using the word "socialism", this movement came to be known as "Nationalism" (not to be confused with the political concept of nationalism) for which Bellamy – in the 1891 – established a newspaper (*The New Nation*) and began to promote united action between the various "Nationalist Clubs" and the emerging Populist Party. He published a sequel, *Equality*, in 1897 which dealt with the ideal society of the post-revolutionary future in greater detail (including feminism and vegetarianism). By then, the Bellamyite movement had disappeared (*The New Nation* ending in February 1894). (*Black Flag*)

initiative in literature and art, and allowed a greater degree of independence to the liberal professions than to the industrial workers.

Mr West, the hero of the story, lived in Boston at the end of the nineteenth century, when poverty and unemployment produced widespread industrial unrest. This wealthy young man, whose main preoccupation in life seems to have been that the building of a house for his future wife was held up by continuous strikes, suffered from insomnia and had an underground chamber specially constructed so that he could sleep without being disturbed by the noises of the town. But he had also on occasion to use the services of a doctor who sent him to sleep by hypnotism. On the night of the 30th May, 1887, his house was burnt to the ground, and, no one knowing of his underground chamber except his doctor who had left the town and his valet who had probably died in the fire, he was left to lie in his hypnotic state until the year 2,000, when he was discovered in the course of some excavation work.

Dr Leete, who is to become his host, awakens him from his long sleep and, with the help of his young and beautiful daughter, manages to reconcile the young man to his unusual experience and, furthermore, to make him into an ardent admirer of the new system. To finish with the romantic side of the book, we might mention that Edith Leete happens to be the great grand-daughter of the other Edith whom Mr. West had been prevented from marrying, firstly through the building strikes, and afterwards through his own presumed death, that the two naturally fall passionately in love, and this time no housing problem prevents their marriage. Mr West gets a chair of history at Shawmut College, Boston, and it is in his capacity of historian that he relates the story of his own experiences both in the nineteenth and twenty-first century.

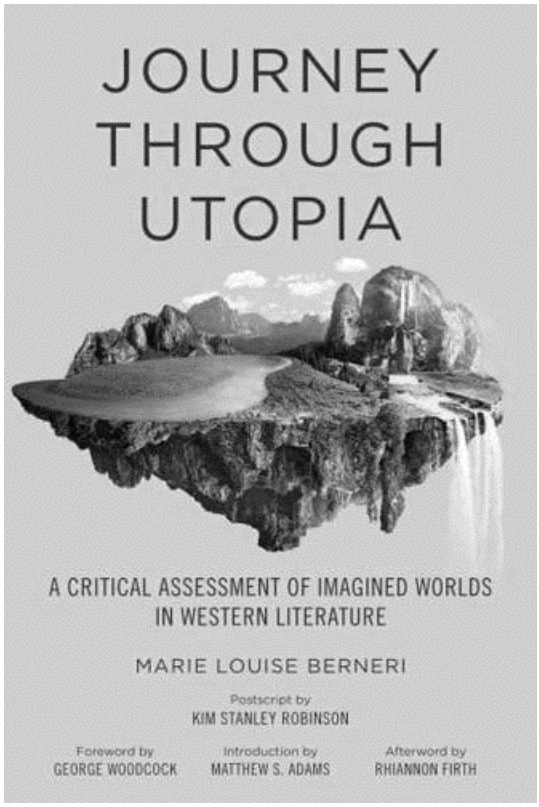
The first thing which surprises Julian West, whose head is still full of the reports of strikes, lockouts and boycotts is that, in the new society, there is no labour problem and that there are no longer, in fact, employers and employees. Dr Leete explains to him that, at the beginning of the twentieth century, a peaceful social revolution took place:

> The movement toward the conduct of business by larger and larger aggregations of capital, the tendency toward monopolies, which had been so desperately and vainly resisted, was recognised at last, in its true significance, as a process which only needed to complete its logical evolution to open a golden future to humanity. Early in the last century the evolution was completed by the final consolidation of the entire capital of the nation. The industry and commerce of the country, ceasing to be conducted by a set of irresponsible corporations and syndicates of private persons at their caprice and for their profit, were intrusted to a single syndicate representing the people, to be conducted in the common interest for the common profit. The nation, that is to say, organised as the one great business corporation in which all other corporations were absorbed; it became the one capitalist in the place of all other capitalists, the sole employer, the final monopoly in which all previous and lesser monopolies were swallowed up, a monopoly in the profits and economies of which all citizens shared. In a word, the people of the United States concluded to assume the conduct of their own business, just as one hundred odd years before they had assumed the conduct of their own government, organising now for industrial purposes on precisely the same grounds on which they had been organised for political ends..
>
> When the nation became the sole employer, all the citizens, by virtue of their citizenship, became employees, to be distributed according to the needs of industry… The people were already accustomed to the idea that the obligation of every citizen, not physically disabled, to contribute his military services to the defence of the nation, was equal and absolute. That it was equally the duty of every citizen to contribute his quota of industrial or intellectual services to the maintenance of the nation was equally evident, though it was not until the nation became the employer of labour that citizens were able to render this sort of service with any pretence either of universality or equity.

Every citizen, from the age of 21, when his education ends, until the age of 45, is conscripted for some kind of national work. He is free to choose the occupation which corresponds to his tastes and capacities, unless there are too many volunteers for the needs of a particular branch of

industry, in which case only the fittest are accepted. Great care is taken to render all occupations equally attractive:

> It is the business of the administration to seek constantly to equalise the attractions of the trades so far as the conditions of labour in them are concerned, so that all trades shall be equally attractive to persons having natural tastes for them. This is done by making the hours of labour in different trades to differ according to their arduousness. The lighter trades, prosecuted under most agreeable circumstances, have in this way the longest hours, while an arduous trade, such as mining, has very short hours. There is no theory, nor *a priori* rule, by which the respective attractiveness of industries is determined. The administration, in taking burdens off one class of workers and adding them to other classes, simply follows the fluctuations of opinions among the workers themselves as indicated by the rate of volunteering. The principle is that no man's work ought to be, on the whole, harder for him than any other man's for him, the workers themselves to be the judges.



The problem of "who will do the dirty work" is solved by directing the new recruits for a period of three years, wherever they are needed: "It is not till after this period, during which he is assignable to any work at the discretion of his superiors, that the young man is allowed to elect a special avocation. These three years of stringent discipline none are exempt from." At the age of 45 both men and women are discharged from further service and become free to occupy themselves as they wish, or to be completely idle if they prefer, for the remainder of their lives.

The next great innovation is that the new system has established the right of each individual to an equal share of the wealth of the nation, independently of the amount of work he produces. In other words, the wage system has been abolished, and, here again, Bellamy draws a parallel between military and industrial service. Just as in a capitalist society all the members of a nation "share equally in the protection of the army and the prosperity it ensures, the nation of the year 2000, all alike, whether men or women, strong or weak, able-bodied or defective, share in the wealth produced by the industrial army, and the share of all is equal. This share, varying only with the general prosperity of the national business, is the sole income and means of maintenance of all, whether during active industrial service or after discharge from it. Owing to the method of organising industry upon the mutual obligation of citizen to nation, and nation to citizen, duty has wholly taken the place of contract, as the basis of industry and the cement of society."

The nation being the sole producer of all commodities, the need for exchange between individuals has disappeared. "A system of direct distribution from the national storehouses took the place of trade, and for this money was unnecessary." Distribution is managed on the simplest possible plan. "A credit corresponding to his share of the annual product of the nation is given to every citizen on the public books at the beginning of each year, and a credit card issued him with which he procures at the public storehouses, found in every community, whatever he desires whenever he desires it. This arrangement totally obviates the necessity for business transactions of any sort between individuals and consumers." This card is issued for a certain number of dollars; the old word has been kept but is merely used as an "Algebraical symbol for comparing the values of products with one another." The credit provided by the card is so ample that it permits the satisfaction of all needs and even many luxuries, but if a citizen happens to have some extraordinary expense he can obtain an advance on the next year's credit, "though this

practice is not encouraged, and a heavy discount is charged to check it."

Every citizen is at liberty to spend his allowance as he wishes: "Although the income is the same, personal taste determines how the individual shall spend it. Some like fine horses; others prefer pretty clothes; and still others want an elaborate table. The rents which the nation receives for these houses vary, according to size, elegance, and location, so that everybody can find something to suit." No one tries to impress other people by ostentatious houses or clothes, "for everybody's income is known, and it is known that what is spent in one way must be saved in another." On the other hand, the nation being rich, the people do not need to deprive themselves of any good thing, and parsimony is no longer regarded as a virtue.

All shopping is done in the national stores, which are run on an extremely efficient (if somewhat impersonal) system. There are no salesmen or saleswomen, but merely clerks who take the orders and punch the value of the goods purchased on the credit card. They are not expected to know, or to praise, the qualities of the goods, for all the information which the customer may require is neatly printed on a card attached to the samples on show. Shops are run on the principle of our industrial fairs rather than present-day shops; only specimens of merchandise are shown and the orders received are transmitted to the central warehouse of the city, where they are prepared and dispatched, by means of pneumatic tubes, to the city districts and thence distributed to the houses. The sample shop of the smallest village is the exact replica of the city shop, and gives the choice of all the varieties of goods at the disposal of the nation. The "village sample shops are connected by transmitters with the central county warehouse, which may be twenty miles away," but the transmission is so swift that the time lost on the way is trifling.

Meals can be taken at home or at a public restaurant, having all the grandiosity of our Lyons' Corner Houses, but where each family in the ward can, for a small annual rent, have a room set aside for its permanent and exclusive use. People are not obliged to spend their allowance in the United States alone but can use it in Europe, Australia, Mexico and parts of South America which are industrial republics like the United States: "An American credit card is just as good in Europe as American gold used to be, and on precisely the same condition, namely, that it be exchanged into the currency of the country you are travelling in. An American in Berlin takes his credit card to the local office of the international council, and receives in exchange for the whole or part of it a German credit card, the amount being charged against the United States, in favour of Germany on the international account."

The credit card can also be used to hire labour from the state. Although servants have disappeared it is possible to obtain cleaners or decorators from the "labour exchange" if one's house needs a spring cleaning. More important, perhaps, people can own their own newspapers by each subscribing a certain sum which will cover the cost of production, and the editor whom they have chosen is discharged from industrial service during his incumbency, for "the subscribers pay the nation an indemnity equal to the cost of his support for taking him away from the general service." The credit card also provides for the hiring of churches and clergymen.

> "The religious practices of the people have naturally changed considerably in a century," says Dr Leete: "but supposing them to have remained unchanged, our social system would accommodate them perfectly. The nation supplies any person or number of persons with buildings on guarantee of the rent, and they remain tenants while they pay it. As for the clergymen, if a number of persons wish the services of an individual for any particular end of their own, apart from the general service of the nation, they can always secure it, with that individual's own consent of course, just as we secure the service of our editors, by contributing from their credit-cards an indemnity to the nation for the loss of his services in general industry. This indemnity, paid the nation for the individual answers to the salary in your day paid to the individual himself; and the various applications of this principle leave private initiative full play in all details to which national control is not applicable."

Authors and artists are in a special category for they can use their credit card to bring out a book, or produce a work of art, and are then entitled to the royalties provided by the sale of their work.

It will be seen from this and from what we have said already, Bellamy's state socialism allows a greater degree of personal freedom than most other

utopias based on the same principles. But it is the freedom which might be granted to soldiers once they have been conscripted; no provision is made for "conscientious objectors." If a man refuses to accept the authority of the state and the inevitability of industrial service, he loses all his rights as a human being: "To speak of service being compulsory would be a weak way to state its absolute inevitableness. Our entire social order is so wholly based upon and deduced from it that if it were conceivable that a man could escape it, he would be left with no possible way to provide for his existence. He would have excluded himself from the world, cut himself off from his kind, in a word, committed suicide."

We see from this that every citizen of the new society is obliged to respect a contract, made by previous generations, between themselves and the state. No means are provided for the revision of such a contract, for the working population is deprived of all political rights. The President of the United States, who is also the commander-in-chief of the industrial army, and is "responsible for the enforcement of the laws as to all classes," is not elected by the industrial army, because that is considered prejudicial to discipline, but by the retired members. This means that up to the age of forty-five neither men nor women have the right to vote, and are ruled by the older generation.

While every citizen shares equally in the wealth of the nation, the ruling class is composed of men who distinguish themselves for their ability in industrial work. This industrial aristocracy forms what James Burnham has called the "managerial class." According to Bellamy, honours and distinctions, offices of rank and authority in the industrial army and in the nation, must be allotted to men and women according to their comparative diligence and brilliancy of achievement, to the end that the fittest may lead and rule. The reward for achievements in the industrial field not only provides a managerial class, but also serves as an incentive to produce the maximum effort. While in the old days this was chiefly provided by the desire to acquire wealth, in the new society men strive to achieve a position of authority. As in the military army, emulation is induced by the possibility of rising from the ranks to posts of command: "The line of promotion for the meritorious lies through three grades to the officer's grade, and thence up through the lieutenancies to the captaincy, or foremanship, and superintendency or colonel's rank. Next, with an intervening grade in some of the larger trades, comes the general of the guild, under whose immediate control all the operations of the trade are conducted. This officer is at the head of the national bureau representing his trade, and is responsible for its work to the administration. The general of his guild holds a splendid position, and one which amply satisfies the ambition of most men, but above his rank, which may be compared, to follow the military analogies familiar to you, to that of a general of division or major-general, is that of the chiefs of the ten great departments or groups of allied trades. The chiefs of these ten grand divisions of the industrial army may be compared to your commanders of army corps, or lieutenant-generals, each having from a dozen to a score of generals of separate guilds reporting to him. Above these ten great officers, who form his council, is the general-in-chief, who is the president of the United States."

For those who do not aspire to posts of authority merely for the sake of the power it gives them, more tangible privileges are provided:

> Apart from the grand incentive to endeavour, afforded by the fact that the high places in the nation are open only to the highest class men, various incitements of a minor, but perhaps equally effective, sort are provided in the form of special privileges and immunities in the way of discipline, which the superior class men enjoy. These, while not in the aggregate important, have the effect of keeping constantly before every man's mind the desirability of attaining the grade next above his own.

On the other hand those who infringe the discipline of the industrial army are severely punished: "For actual neglect of work, positively bad work, or other overt remissness on the part of men incapable of generous motives, the discipline of the industrial army is far too strict to allow much of that. A man able to do duty, and persistently refusing, is cut off from all human society."

The ranking system necessitates a vast bureaucratic machine and the maintenance of piecework which might have disappeared with the abolition of the wage system:

> To facilitate the testing of efficiency, all industrial work, whenever by any means, and even at some inconvenience, it is possible, is conducted by piecework, and if this is absolutely out of the question, the

> best possible substitute for determining ability is adopted. The men are regraded yearly, so that merit never need wait long to rise, nor can any rest on past achievements, unless they would drop into a lower rank. The results of each annual regrading, giving the standing of every man in the army, are gazetted in the public prints.

Outside the industrial army incentive is provided by decorations: "The highest of all honours in the nation, higher than the presidency, which calls merely for good sense and devotion to duty, is the red ribbon awarded by the vote of the people to the great authors, artists, engineers, physicians, and inventors of the generation. Not over one hundred wear it at any one time, though every bright young fellow in the country loses innumerable nights' sleep dreaming of it."

All the production and distribution of the nation is carried out by a central administration and, according to Bellamy, nothing can ever go wrong because of the simplicity and wisdom of the laws, and because all the work of direction is in the hands of "experts." Local State governments have been suppressed because "they would have interfered with the control and discipline of the industrial army, which of course, required to be central and uniform."

All the production and distribution of the nation is carried out by a central administration and, according to Bellamy, nothing can ever go wrong because of the simplicity and wisdom of the laws, and because all the work of direction is in the hands of "experts."

The tasks of government have been greatly simplified with the disappearance of the army and the navy, of the departments of state and treasury, of taxes and tax-collectors. Bellamy's society is not so ideal, however, that it does not necessitate police and judges, though their number and duties have, we are assured, been reduced to a minimum, and jails have disappeared because all cases of "atavism" are treated in the hospitals. We might mention in passing that the jury system has been abolished and that judges are nominated by the President from among citizens over forty-five years of age.

Bellamy's unlimited faith in the wisdom of experts and of the "administration" is only equalled by his confidence in technical progress. He seems to have conceived man's happiness in terms of an ever-increasing quantity of consumers' goods, of bigger and better restaurants, of a speedier delivery of goods from the stores, of skyscrapers and streets covered with waterproof material in bad weather. Bellamy's "inventions," such as his music by telephone, are amusing to us as interesting anticipations, and if the following passage makes us aware of our good fortune, through the enthusiasm of a man of the nineteenth century for an invention which already we take for granted, we also feel that happiness cannot be found after all, in technical progress alone:

> "Come, then, into the music room," she said, and I followed her into an apartment finished, without hangings, in wood, with a floor of polished wood. I was prepared for new devices in musical instruments, but I saw nothing in the room which by any stretch of imagination could be conceived as such. It was evident that my puzzled appearance was affording intense amusement to Edith.
>
> "Please look at today's music," she said, handing me a card, "and tell me what you would prefer. It is now five o'clock, you will remember."

The card bore the date "September 12, 2000," and contained the largest programme of music I had ever seen. It was as various as it was long, including a most extraordinary range of vocal and instrumental solos, duets, quartets, and various orchestral combinations. I remained bewildered by the prodigious list until Edith's pink fingertip indicated a particular section of it, where several selections were bracketed, with the words "5 p.m." against them; then I observed that this prodigious programme was an all day one, divided into twenty-four sections answering to the hours. There were but a few pieces of music in the "5 p.m." section, and I indicated an organ piece as my preference.

She made me sit down comfortably, and crossing the room, so far as I could see, merely touched one or two screws, and at

once the room was filled with the music of a grand organ anthem; filled, not flooded, for, by some means, the volume of melody had been perfectly graduated to the size of the apartment. I listened, scarcely breathing, to the close. Such music so perfectly rendered, I had never expected to hear.

"Grand!" I cried, as the last great wave of sound broke and ebbed away into silence. "Bach must be at the keys of that organ; but where is the organ?"

"Wait a moment, please," said Edith; "I want to have you listen to this waltz before you ask any questions. I think it is perfectly charming," and as she spoke the sound of violins filled the room with the witchery of summer night. When this had also ceased, she said: "There is nothing in the least mysterious about the music as you seem to imagine. It is not made by the fairies or genii, but by good, honest, and exceedingly clever human hands, We have simply carried the idea of labour-saving by co-operation into our musical service as into everything else. There are a number of music rooms in the city, perfectly adapted acoustically to the different sorts of music. These halls are connected by telephone with all the houses of the city whose people care to pay the small fee, and there are none, you may be sure, who do not. The corps of musicians attached to each hall is so large that, although no individual performer, or group of performers, has more than a brief part, each day's programme lasts through the twenty-four hours. There are on that card for today, as you will see if you observe closely, distinct programmes of four of these concerts, each of a different order of music from the others, being now simultaneously performed, and any one of the four pieces now going on that you prefer, you can hear merely by pressing the button which will connect your house wire with the hall where it is being rendered. The programmes are so co-ordinated that the pieces at any one time simultaneously proceeding in the different halls usually offer a choice, not only between instrumental and vocal, and between different sorts of instruments; but also between different motives from grave to gay, so that all tastes and moods can be suited."

"It appears to me, Miss Leete," I said, "that if we could have devised an arrangement for providing everybody with music in their homes, perfect in quality, unlimited in quantity, suited to every mood, and beginning and ceasing at will, we should have considered the limit of human felicity already attained, and ceased to strive for further improvements."

If we feel sceptical of the happiness which technical inventions might bring us, it also is difficult to feel very enthusiastic about the solution of the labour problem offered by Bellamy.

If we feel sceptical of the happiness which technical inventions might bring us, it also is difficult to feel very enthusiastic about the solution of the labour problem offered by Bellamy. Apart from the fact that recent experience has shown that industrial conscription does not always run as smoothly as he seems to have hoped, his rigid regimentation of men's lives takes little note of the differences in the psychological make-up of individuals. It is difficult to see why everyone should be obliged to study up to the age of 21, when many would prefer to engage in some kind of trade, and why everyone should retire at 45, when many only begin to gather the fruits of the experience acquired during their youth. Nor do we feel very comforted by the idea that after three years of "dirty work" we would be able to choose an occupation suited to our taste since, in view of the development of mass production, most of the jobs available would probably involve working in factories on some kind of belt system.

The joy with which the citizens of Bellamy's society greet their retirement is a sufficient indication that industrial conscription is resented as a burden. "We all agree," says Dr Leete, "in looking forward to the date of our discharge as the time when we shall first enter upon the full

enjoyment of our birth right, the period when we shall first really attain our majority and become enfranchised from discipline and control, with the fee of our lives vested in ourselves." Bellamy was convinced that twenty-one years of compulsory education and twenty-four years of conscripted labour was a very moderate demand on the part of the state, and that no one could possibly object to it. That life begins at forty-five is, however, an opinion with which it is permissible to disagree.

One might also feel little sympathy for the constant use Bellamy makes of compulsion. If the citizens of the new society are truly satisfied with their conditions, what need is there to compel them to do what, we are constantly assured, is light and even pleasant work? Is there not also a danger that work which can be pleasant when freely undertaken, becomes irksome when done under compulsion? Bellamy, however, was so convinced that he had found a solution to all the world's problems that he devoted the rest of his life to perfecting his system, and published several books to explain it in greater detail. That he had found a solution cannot be denied, but as we shall see in the next Utopia [William Morris's *News from Nowhere*], there could be a more attractive one.

"Looking Backward"

William Morris

Commonweal, 22 June 1889

We often hear it said that the signs of the spread of Socialism among English-speaking people are both abundant and striking. This is true; six or seven years ago the word Socialism was known in this country, but few even among the 'educated' classes knew more about its meaning than Mr Bradlaugh, Mr Gladstone, or Admiral Maxse know now — *i.e.*, nothing. Whereas at present it is fashionable for even West-end dinner-parties to affect an interest in and knowledge of it, which indicates a wide and deep public interest. This interest is more obvious in literature perhaps than in anything else, quite outside the propagandist tracts issued by definitely Socialist societies. A certain tincture of Socialism, for instance (generally very watery), is almost a necessary ingredient nowadays in a novel which aims at being at once serious and life-like, while more serious treatment of the subject at the hands of non-Socialists is common enough. In short the golden haze of self-satisfaction and content with the best of all possible societies is rolling away before the sun-heat bred of misery and aspiration, and all people above the lowest level of intelligence (which I take to be low gambling and statesmanship) are looking towards the new development, some timorously, some anxiously, some hopefully.

It seems clear to me that the reception which Mr Bellamy's 'Looking Backward' has received that there are a great many people who are hopeful in regard to Socialism. I am sure that ten years ago it would have been very little noticed, if at all; whereas now several editions have been sold in America, and it is attracting general attention in England, and to anyone not deeply interested in the social question it could not be at all an attractive book. It is true that it is cast into the form of a romance, but the author states very frankly in his preface that he has only given it this form as a sugar-coating to the pill, and the device of making a man wake up in a new world has now grown so common, and has been done with so much more care and art than Mr Bellamy has used, that by itself this would have done little for it: it is the serious essay and not the slight envelops of romance which people have found interesting to them.

Since, therefore, both Socialists and non-Socialists have been so much impressed with the book, it seems to me necessary that the *Commonweal* should notice it. For it is a 'Utopia'. It purports to be written in the year 2000, and to describe the state of society at that period after a gradual and peaceable revolution has realized the Socialism which to us is but in the beginning of its militant period. It requires notice all the more because there is a certain danger in such books as this: a twofold danger; for there will be some temperaments to whom the answer given to the question 'How shall we live then?' will be pleasing and satisfactory, others to whom it will be displeasing and unsatisfactory. The danger to the first is that they will accept it with all its necessary errors and fallacies (which such a book must abound in) as conclusive statements of facts and rules of action, which will warp their efforts into futile directions. The danger to the second, if they are but enquirers or very young Socialists, is that they also accepting its speculations as facts, will be inclined to say, 'If *that is* Socialism, we won't help its advent, as it holds out no hope to us'.

The only safe way of reading a utopia is to consider it as the expression of the temperament of its author. So looked at, Mr Bellamy's utopia must be still called very interesting, as it is constructed with due economical knowledge, and with much adroitness; and of course his temperament is that of many thousands of people. This temperament may be called the unmixed modern one, unhistoric and unartistic; it makes its owner (if a Socialist) perfectly satisfied with modern civilization, if only the injustice, misery, and waste of class society

could be got rid of; which half-change seems possible to him. The only ideal of life which such a man can see is that of the industrious *professional* middle-class men of to-clay purified from their crime of complicity with the monopolist class, and become independent instead of being, as they now are, parasitical. It is not to be denied that if such an ideal could be realised, it would be a great improvement on the present society. But can it be realized? It means in fact the alteration of the machinery of life in such a way that all men shall be allowed to share in the fulness of that life, for the production and upholding of which the machinery was instituted. There are clear signs to show us that that very group whose life is thus put forward as an ideal for the future are condemning it in the present, and that they also demand a revolution. The pessimistic revolt of the latter end of this century led by John Ruskin against the philistinism of the triumphant bourgeois, halting and stumbling as it necessarily was, shows that the change in the life of civilization had begun, before any one seriously believed in the possibility of altering its machinery.

It follows naturally from the author's satisfaction with the best part of modern life that he conceives of the change to Socialism as taking place without any breakdown of that life, or indeed disturbance of it, by means of the final development of the great private monopolies which are such a noteworthy feature of the present day. He supposes that these must necessarily be absorbed into one great monopoly which will include the whole people and be worked for its benefit by the whole people. It may be noted in passing that by this use of the word monopoly he shows unconsciously that he has his mind fixed firmly on the mere *machinery* of life: for clearly the only part of their system which the people would or could take over from the monopolists would be the machinery of organization, which monopoly is forced to use, but which is not an essential part of it. The essential of monopoly is, 'I warm myself by the fire which you have made, and you (very much the plural) stay outside in the cold'.

To go on. This hope of the development of the trusts and rings to which the competition for privilege has driven commerce, especially in America, is the distinctive part of Mr Bellamy's book; and it seems to me to be a somewhat dangerous hope to rest upon, too uncertain to be made a sheet-anchor of. It may be indeed the logical outcome of the most modern side of commercialism — *ie*., the outcome that *ought* to be; but then there is its historical outcome to be dealt with — ie., what *will* be; which I cannot help thinking may be after all, as far as this commercial development is concerned, the recurrence of break-ups and re-formations of this kind of monopoly, under the influence of competition for privilege, or war for the division of plunder, till the flood comes and destroys them all. A far better hope to trust to is that men having once got it into their leads that true life implies free and equal life, and that is now possible of attainment, they will consciously strive for its attainment at any cost. The economical semi-fatalism of some Socialists is a deadening and discouraging view, and may easily become more so, if events at present unforeseen bring back the full tide of 'commercial prosperity'; which is by no means unlikely to happen.

The great change having thus peaceably and fatalistically taken place, the author has to put forward his scheme of the organization of life; which is organized with a vengeance. His scheme may be described as State Communism, worked by the very extreme of national centralization. The underlying vice in it is that the author cannot conceive, as aforesaid, of anything else than the *machinery* of society, and that, doubtless naturally, he reads in to the future of society, which he tells us is unwastefully conducted, that terror of starvation which is the necessary accompaniment of a society in which two-thirds or more of its labour-power is wasted: the result is that though he tells us that every man is free to chose his occupation and that work is no burden to anyone, the *impression* which he produces is that of a huge standing army, tightly drilled, compelled by some mysterious fate to unceasing anxiety for the production of wares to satisfy every caprice, however wasteful and absurd, that may cast up amongst them.

As an illustration it may he mentioned that everybody is to begin the serious work of production at the age of twenty-one, work three years as a labourer, and then choose his skilled occupation and work till he is forty-five, when he is to knock off his work and amuse himself (improve his mind, if he has one left him). Heavens! think of a man of forty-five changing all his habits suddenly and by compulsion! It is a small matter after this that the said persons past work should form a kind of aristocracy (how curiously old ideas cling) for the performance of certain judicial and political functions.

Mr Bellamy's ideas of life are curiously limited; he has no idea beyond existence in a great city; his dwelling of man in the future is Boston (USA) beautified. In one passage, indeed, he mentions villages, but with unconscious simplicity shows that they do not come into his scheme of economical equality, but are mere servants of the great centres of civilization. This seems strange to some of us, who cannot help thinking that our experience ought to have taught us that such aggregations of population afford the worst possible form of dwelling-place, whatever the second-worst might be.

In short, a machine-life is the best which Mr Bellamy can imagine for us on all sides; it is not to be wondered at then that his only idea of making labour tolerable is to decrease the amount of it by means of fresh and ever fresh developments of machinery. This view I know he will share with many Socialists with whom I might otherwise agree more than I can with him; but I think a word or two is due to this important side of the subject.

Now surely this ideal of the great reduction of the hours of labour by the mere means of machinery is a futility. The human race has always put forth about as much energy as it could in given conditions of climate and the like, though that energy has had to struggle against the natural laziness of mankind: and the development of man's resources, which has given him greater power over nature, has driven him also into fresh desires and fresh demands on nature, and thus made his expenditure of energy much what it was before. I believe that this will be always so, and the multiplication of machinery will just — multiply machinery; I believe that the ideal of the future does not point to the lessening of men's energy by the reduction of *labour* to a minimum, but rather to the reduction of *pain in labour* to a minimum, so small that it will cease to be a pain; a gain to humanity which can only be dreamed of till men are even more completely equal than Mr Bellamy's utopia would allow them to be, but which will most assuredly come about when men are really equal in condition; although it is probable that much of our so-called 'refinement', our luxury — in short, our civilization — will have to be sacrificed to it. In this part of his scheme, therefore, Mr Bellamy worries himself unnecessarily in seeking (with obvious failure) some incentive to labour to replace the fear of starvation, which is at present our only one, whereas it cannot be too often repeated that the true incentive to useful and happy labour is and must be pleasure in the work itself.

I believe that the ideal of the future does not point to the lessening of men's energy by the reduction of *labour* to a minimum, but rather to the reduction of *pain in labour* to a minimum… a gain to humanity which can only be dreamed of till men are even more completely equal than Mr Bellamy's utopia would allow them to be

I think it necessary to state these objections to Mr Bellamy's utopia, not because there is any need to quarrel with a man's vision of the future of society, which, as above said, must always be more or less personal to himself; but because this book, having produced a great impression on people who are really enquiring into Socialism, will be sure to be quoted as an authority for what Socialists believe, and that, therefore, it is necessary to point out that there are some Socialists who do not think that the problem of the organization of life and necessary labour can be dealt with by a huge national centralization, working by a kind of magic for which no one feels himself responsible; that on the contrary it will be necessary for the unit of administration to be small enough for every citizen to feel himself responsible for its details, and be interested in them; that individual men cannot shuffle off the business of life on to the shoulders of an abstraction called the State, but must deal with it in conscious association with each other. That variety of life is as much an aim of true communism as equality of condition, and that nothing but an union of these two will bring about real freedom. That modern nationalities are mere artificial devices for the commercial war that we seek to put an end to, and will disappear with it. And, finally, that art, using that word in its widest and due signification, is not a mere adjunct of life which free and happy men can do without, but the necessary expression and indispensable instrument of human happiness.

On the other hand, it must be said that Mr Bellamy has faced the difficulty of economical reconstruction with courage, though he does not see any other sides to the problem, such, e.g., as the future of the family; that at any rate he sees the necessity for the equality of the reward of labour, which is such a stumbling block for incomplete Socialists; and his criticism of the present monopolist system is forcible and fervid. Also up and down his pages there will be found satisfactory answers to many ordinary objections. The book is one to be read and considered seriously, but it should not be taken as the Socialist bible of reconstruction; a danger which perhaps it will not altogether escape, as incomplete systems impossible to be carried out but plausible on the surface are always attractive to people ripe for change, but not knowing clearly what their aim is.[1]

[1] Bellamy reviewed Morris' *News from Nowhere* and noted that "Morris appears to belong to the school of anarchistic rather than to the state socialists. That is to say, he believes that the present system of private capitalism once destroyed, voluntary co-operation, with little or no governmental administration, will be necessary to bring about the ideal social system." He reiterates his belief in the need for "a strictly economic administration for the directing of the productive and distributive machinery." (Edward Bellamy, "News from Nowhere: William Morris' idea of the good time coming", *The New Nation*, 14 February 1891). (*Black Flag*)

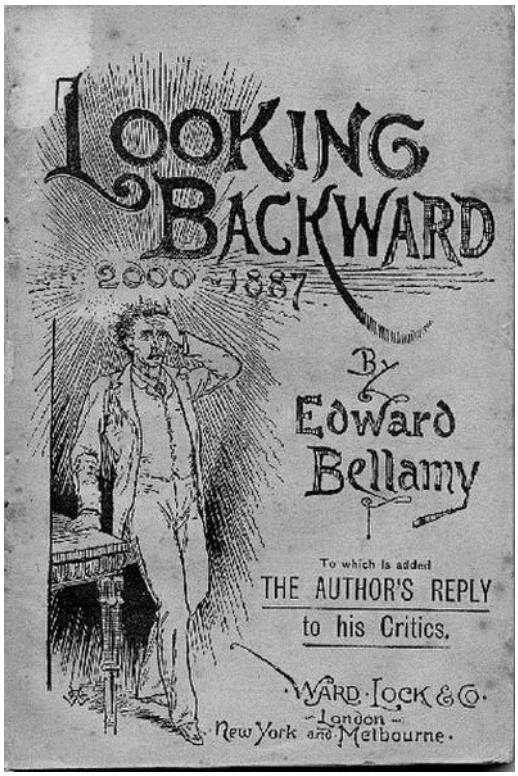
The Twentieth Century

Peter Kropotkin

"Le Vingtième Siècle", *La Révolte*, 30 November, 14, 21 and 28 December 1889

I

We have not yet spoken of a book which is at the moment widely read in the United State, in England, in Australia. This is the socialist novel *Looking Backward* (*Un regard en arrière*) by [Edward] Bellemy, which appeared about a year ago in America. In the United States, it is found everywhere, and a friend, returning from a trip to America, told us the other day that four books are the American's favourite books: Bellamy's and three others ("Robert Elsmere" "John Ward, Preacher" and "The Story of an African Farm", all three written by women and all three attacking Christianity).



Published in England at the very modest price of 90 centimes, *Looking Backward* has sold 18,000 copies in a few months. It must now be at its 25th thousand, and it is for sale in every railway station, and is on the table of the worker and the bourgeois. To show what an impression this book has made, it will suffice to say that Darwin's great forerunner, A.R. Wallace, who up to the present time has been only a nationaliser of the soil, declared in the press that this book had shown him the possibility of Socialism – at least for America, and that England would only require a period of education in this direction to realise Bellamy's ideal.

***

This book, we said, is socialist, and it has the form of a novel. However, it only has the narrative of a novel, which plays a completely secondary role. What makes it readable is that it contains, like Cabèt's *Voyage en Icarie*, a description of a society with a socialist future.[1] It is a work on society after the Social Revolution, put in the form of a novel.

The hero of the novel, Mr. West, lives in Boston at the end of the 19th century, at a time when everyone in the working class, hounded by crisis, is in turmoil. Great strikes erupt everywhere. Mr. West suffers from insomnia and he has a vault built in his house, so that he can sleep there comfortably without being disturbed by the noise of the city. The vault is not always enough, however, and he sometimes has recourse to a hypnotist who puts him to sleep through his activities. He falls asleep on the eve of a huge strike. The strike becomes a (peaceful) Revolution, and Mr. West is forgotten in his vault. One hundred years later, in the year 2000, they find him his vault when excavations are being made to enlarge a house built upon the ruins of the old house. They wake him up, and Mr. West tells us about this new world; he looks back at society today. If we add that Mr. West, when he fell asleep for his long slumber, was about to get married, and that a hundred years later he finds in the family of the doctor who unearths him a charming young lade, Edith, who replaces his former finance, and that he falls in love with her, of course – we will have finished with the novel side of the book.

There remains the socialist side, the constructive side of the future society. And the success of *Looking Backward* is entirely explained by this *constructive* side of the book. The mass of workers and intelligent men of our time have heard enough *criticism*, [enough] demolishing [of] current society. – "Tell us what you plan to do, give us a glimpse, some idea, of what the future society might be like."

Bellamy did that; he did it with talent, and that is what makes his book so successful. It must also be said that he preserved a lot of authoritarian prejudices and that this contributed to giving his ideal an aftertaste.

***

Bellamy's ideal is not ours. But it still helps to clarify our ideas; he unwittingly confirms them on several points. In any case, his book shows us what is readily accepted by a very large number of individuals and it gives us a glimpse of what will be accepted if we make a good effort to demolish the authoritarian prejudices

[1] Kropotkin discussed Cabet and his utopia in *Modern Science and Anarchy* (1913), noting its "authoritarian communism" which "demanded the complete annihilation of the human personality" (see, *Modern Science and Anarchy* [Edinburgh: AK Press, 2018], 148-9, 204, 219-20). (*Black Flag*)

that still clutter many heads. As such, it deserves careful analysis.

Bellamy is not an anarchist. But he has the good sense not to believe in the possibility of a collectivist society which would possess everything in common but which would reward everyone according to their works. The solution he proposes is very similar to the one that has already been working successfully for nearly a quarter of a century in the peasant community of Amana (minus religion, of course).[1]

The nation of the United States, having made the Social Revolution, has recognised that *every individual, whether strong or weak, eager or sluggish at work, strong like a Hercules [or] an anaemic or crippled – has the right to well-being*, by the very fact of his existence; that everything belongs to everyone, and that everything that is produced must belong to everyone.

Also the nation issues to each individual a card, a voucher of so many francs for his expenses for the coming year (francs serving only as an abstract unit) *and the sum is equal for each individual of the country*. With this card, every individual can take whatever he pleases from the stores of the nation: it is a credit that is open to him. The card is, however, valid for such a considerable sum that he can give himself a rich existence, even for his whims, with this credit.

There are houses (apartments) for all tastes, and when you have taken a house of so-many francs of rent per year, they write on your card the sum of your rent. Take a house that devours two-thirds of your card, or another house that will only take one-tenth – that is your business.

In the national shops (there is one per neighbourhood, one in each village) you find all possible goods; and each sample has its price. You choose what you like and a clerk crosses off your card the price of your purchase; the order is sent to the central store, where the metres of fabric are cut and everything you have bought is packed – and your purchases are sent to you in a pneumatic tube capsule.[2] No need for legions of clerks to pressure you to buy or get rid of junk. One clerk, to cross off so many francs on your card, suffices.

Dine at home, if you wish: [or in] the neighbourhood's kitchen – a palace where you can dine, either at a table in the mansion or in a private room whose annual rent you pay at a very modest price. Once your dinner has been finished, the price of your consumption will be crossed off your card.

Public opinion suffices to induce you to spend the whole sum allocated on your card; and if the sum is not enough for you, you could take out a loan from the following year's credit – something which is, incidentally, frowned upon in society.

If you want to visit France, which has introduced the same system, the credit on your American card is exchanged for an equivalent French credit and every time you consume in France, your consumption is marked.

France transfers this credit to America and every three years an account will be taken of what one country may owe to the other after all their exchanges of goods and travellers.

That, in a few words, is consumption. The main idea is that each individual has his or her right to comfort by the very fact of existing upon the earth.

Once this principle is recognised, we understand that there are a thousand ways to arrange things: by means of cards as proposed by Bellamy, by taking from the pile, by communal consumption, or by any other means. It is only enough that the principle of the right of comfort for all be recognised, so that the rest organises itself.

And we are convinced that this principle *will* be accepted. Our whole civilisation leads us there. As for how to put it into practice, there will certainly be a thousand different ways to do it and Humanity will soon find the best way to do it, while safeguarding the freedom of the individual.

The main thing is to accept this principle. Once accepted, wages disappear, Wage-labour ceases to exist, and money, or any other form of currency (cheque, labour notes, assignats) becomes absolutely useless. So Bellamy's Twentieth Century does not need money. Its *franc* is only an abstract unit of measurement which can

[1] The Amana Colonies in Iowa were seven villages built by German Radical Pietists in 1856, who were persecuted in their homeland by the government and the Lutheran Church. All lands and buildings were held in common with communal kitchens, each with its own garden. For eighty years, the Amana Colony maintained an almost completely self-sufficient local economy, importing very little from the wider economy but sometimes hiring outside workers. The Amanians were able to maintain their independence and (patriarchal) lifestyle by adhering to the specialised crafting and farming occupations that they had brought with them from Germany. However, the system did not survive the Great Depression and the community formed two organisations: the non-profit Amana Church Society to oversee its spiritual needs and a for-profit Amana Society which was incorporated as a joint-stock company. The transition was completed in 1932 and came to be known in the community as the Great Change. (*Black Flag*)

[2] Pneumatic tubes propel cylindrical containers through networks of tubes by compressed air or by partial vacuum. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, pneumatic tube networks were used in a variety of places (including offices, department stores and postal services) to transport small, often urgent packages, over relatively short distances, within a building or, at most, within a city. The Berlin Post Service, for example, had by 1890 a network of kilometres of pneumatic tubes sending letters and small parcels long distances almost instantly. (*Black Flag*)

be replaced by any other unit, if one wants to make even the name of [existing] currency disappear.

Let us move on to production.

II

We have seen how consumption is organised in the society dreamt up by Bellamy. Now let us move onto production.

He starts with this idea, so right, that there is no need for any kind of wage labour.[1]

"You see," said the doctor of the twentieth century to his friend, Mr. West, the ghost of the nineteenth century, "you see that it is not merely that we have no money to pay wages in, but we have nothing at all answering to your idea of wages."

"While he was speaking," relates Mr. West, "I had pulled myself together sufficiently to voice some of criticisms... I exclaimed: Are the clever workmen content with a plan that ranks them with the indifferent?"

"We leave no possible ground for any complaint of injustice by requiring precisely the same measure of service from all."

"How can you do that, I should like to know, when no two men's powers are the same?"

"Nothing could be simpler," replied the doctor. "We require of each that he shall make the same effort; that is, we demand of him the best service it is in his power to give."

As we can see, after starting from an absolutely correct idea, Bellamy falls back into the errors of the socialists of the start of this century by preaching a system of rewards, of stimulants to vanity, to obtain from each the greatest possible amount of products

"And supposing all do the best they can, the amount of the product resulting is twice greater from one man than from another..."

"Very true," replied the doctor. "But the amount of the resulting product has nothing whatever to do with the question, which is one of desert. Desert is a moral question, and the amount of the product a material quantity. It would be an extraordinary sort of logic which should try to determine a moral question by a material standard... All men who do their best, do the same."

And thereupon Dr. Leete developed the philosophy of the twentieth century, according to which the man endowed with great abilities, if he does not do more than others endowed with less abilities deserves censure. By doing more than the others, he is only doing his duty. However, to encourage every member of society to do the best they can, the 20th century would have developed a whole system of rewards and advancements to boost the efforts of the languid. And Bellamy shows us a whole array of ranks, of promotions – what do I know! – in the industrial army. It is like being in Bismarck's army.

***

As we can see, after starting from an absolutely correct idea, Bellamy falls back into the errors of the socialists of the start of this century by preaching a system of rewards, of stimulants to vanity, to obtain from each the greatest possible amount of products. The contemporary school, with its gold, silver and bronze medals: which only makes "careerists" – [military] rank, in a word[2] – that is where Bellamy winds up; and this mistake is explained, according to us, by the simple reason that the author, having studied the economic life of societies so well, did not even dare to delve into the anarchist idea, and did not take the trouble to analyse human nature and the mechanism of its functioning.

The fact is, that in everything that concerns the routine of daily work, a municipality or a nation organised as Bellamy proposes would have no need for rank to stimulate work – not to mention the execrable effect which the rank system would have if it were ever to be applied. With all the help that man can obtain from machinery, it would already be enough for everyone to work according to an average, which would soon be established, to provide for all the needs of society.

As for the great inequalities of ability that exist today and that so concern certain socialists, let us not forget that they are simply an artificial product – the sad product of an absurd education, of a senseless [social] organisation.

Talk to a school teacher: he will certainly tell you that there are children who have the capacity for mathematics, while others do not. Well, such a statement is absolutely false. There are bad teachers, there are even a lot of them, but there are no children

[1] With quotes or summaries, we have tried to reproduce Bellamy's actual words rather than re-translate Kropotkin's translation. However, this sometimes involved some slight changes to the original text. (*Black Flag*)

[2] Kropotkin uses the word "stripe" (*le galon*) here rather than rank but as stripes are used to indicate rank in the military we thought it less confusing to use rank. (*Black Flag*)

devoid of mathematical abilities, just as – apart from the sick – there are no children devoid of memory if they are taught to learn.

What is true is that there is a wide variety of abilities, and if one brain is suited to studying mathematics in a certain way, another demands that the same subject be presented to it in a completely different form. Present the problem to the student in another form and he will overcome the difficulty. And such-and-such a child, reputed to be absolutely incapable of mathematics, becomes an excellent mathematician if he has had the good fortune to come across a teacher who knows how to understand that the subject *must* be treated in a way different from the standard way – in a way appropriate to each individual brain. There are no incapable children and, consequently, [in] all the physical sciences, there are only bad teachers – this is the conclusion of the best pedagogists, this is also our experience.

All this division of human beings into good and bad, capable and incapable, lazy and diligent, is simply a misunderstanding, fed by religious prejudices, cultivated by teachers who would do better to sweep the streets than to teach, propagated by the conceited.

There is only the infinite variety of abilities – a variety of which [current] education, condemned to follow the traditional textbooks, still takes no account.

As for the so-called lazy, we know that there is no child who is not capable of wonders in the branch of work which pleases him, even when he would be considered extremely lazy at school. He may have a distaste (very justifiable) for the Latin that is stuffed into his head, for a geography which is not geography [rightly understood], for mathematics which is nothing but black lines and letters on white paper; and can hate the school which is a place of stupefaction. And if he does not meet someone in his life who teaches him an activity that fascinates him, he will get used to doing everything with disgust, he will remain what is called a shirker – that is to say, a man who has not found his calling.

Add to that the anaemia that gnaws at three-quarters of our children; the fact that nine-tenths of Humanity only learn a trade under conditions which must inspire them with disgust for the trade; finally add to that the disgust that each of us feels when he does a task that he knows is badly done. And above all, remember the conditions in which all work is done – and then ask yourself if, apart from a few sick people, you have really known in your life any people lazy by nature?

What strikes us in Humanity is precisely the opposite: it is the drive to work, it is working hard, despite everything; it is the need to work, to exercise one's strength and abilities, despite all that should inspire repugnance for work.

And when you take all this into consideration: when you think of the variety of skills and the pleasure you feel from doing anything, as soon as you feel that you are doing it well, when we remember, moreover, the attraction of all work when it is done in common, with familiar comrades, and as long as the work does not become over-work; when you think, finally, of the attraction that work acquires when it is *varied* and when the various capacities of this so complex being, man, can be exercised in turn; when you think of all this, and you put the nasty stimulant of rank alongside these powerful stimulants, you can only be surprised that intelligent men might still endow with it with a power that it does not have, instead of opening their eyes to real life, as it unfolds before us every day, with its formidable stimulants for work, for invention, for creation.

As we will see in a future article, it is always the prejudice of authority, the faith in authority that pushes our author to this error and all those that flow from it.

III

There is no wage-labour in the 20th century dreamt up by Bellamy. The huge syndicates, the great shareholder companies, the formidable associations of workers and employers which characterised the end of the 19th century – especially in America – would have brought the nation to this idea, that it must take into its own hands the organisation of production, just as a hundred years before it had taken up the organisation of its political government. "The movement toward the conduct of business by larger and larger aggregations of capital, – says Bellamy – the tendency toward monopolies, which had been so desperately and vainly resisted, was recognized at last, in its true significance, as a process which only needed to complete its logical evolution to open a golden future to humanity."

The nation (it is still Bellamy who speaks) then seized all the means of production. Industry and commerce were handed over to a single syndicate – the nation. It was finally understood that industry and commerce are much more a public affair than anything else, and the nation thus became the one and only business director, the sole employer.

In the past, the State forced citizens to do compulsory military service, mistakenly believing that the main function of the State was war. Now all citizens from the age of 21 to 45 do compulsory industrial service. They are considered obliged to work a certain number of hours a day in the workshops or the fields of the nation. Until the age of 21 they study. At 21 they enter industry; after three years they choose the profession they prefer, and they work in this trade. At 45, they are absolutely free to enjoy life as they see fit. They no longer have compulsory work to do, except in exceptional cases (such as a public calamity), when the nation would call upon all available arms.

Twenty-four years of useful labour by all citizens is perfectly sufficient – and this is perfectly true – to give everyone well-being and luxury.

***

Let us add, to finish with the system proposed by Bellamy before making our observations, that the choice of occupation is absolutely free. However, to avoid the lack of volunteers in one branch of work which is less pleasant than the others, the administration has recourse to this system: as soon as too many volunteers come to enrol in one profession and desert another, the administration asks for longer hours of work in the easy trade and reduces the hours in the more difficult trade. "If any particular occupation is in itself so arduous or so oppressive that, in order to induce volunteers, the day's work in it had to be reduced to ten minutes, it would be done. If, even then, no man was willing to do it, it would remain undone," says Dr. Leete (or we would try to make it less unpleasant). "If, indeed, the unavoidable difficulties and dangers of such a necessary pursuit were so great that no inducement of compensating advantages would overcome men's repugnance to it, the administration would only need to take it out of the common order of occupations by declaring it 'extra hazardous,' and those who pursued it especially worthy of the national gratitude, to be overrun with volunteers" – which is again very true.

This is why, if certain Communes are organised on this principle, there will be other Communes or other groups which will be organised on other principles; and there will be a certain coming and going between these Communes

As for the work of simple day labourers, all the young people do them during the first three years of industrial service (from 21 to 24 years), before they have chosen the trade of their liking.

Here, in a few words, is the system presented by Bellamy with great clarity and talent.

***

As can be seen, Bellamy's mistake is to err on the side of authoritarianism –an absolutely unnecessary authoritarianism in his self-same system.

Indeed, one can conceive that a commune, or any other aggregation of individuals, making this declaration: "We are ready to welcome anyone who wants to be part of our commune. We guarantee him, not only housing, bread and clothing but a whole mass of other pleasures: communal museums, music at home by the telephone, luxurious restaurants, entertainment venues, paved and covered streets, home delivery of everything he wants to get from our communal stores, education for children and full freedom to enjoy life after a certain age – on condition that he will undertake to give in exchange four or five or three hours of work a day, from the age of 21 to 45 – of manual work useful for the Commune, and varied according to its tastes."

A system like that can be accepted and, all in all, we think that it will be done in many communities. It is already being done.

For 25 francs a year, which basically represents something like 50 hours of ordinary manual work, you can become a member of the Zoological Society of London and, by that very fact, find yourself in daily possession of a collection of living animals, the likes of which cannot be found anywhere in the world, of libraries, of anatomical museums and of all the facilities for working as a zoologist.

One can understand and even accept such a system, and all the more so if in addition the individual who does not want to belong to the Commune has all the [necessary] facilities either to group together with other individuals who [want to] live differently or by oneself to try to do without the whole world if necessary by cultivating a piece of land or by doing something else without entering into communal life.

But for an industrial volunteer system to exist for 24 years, it is of absolute necessity that this system *is not compulsory*. If it became obligatory, it would at once become unbearable; thousands or millions of individuals would not want it; and, having become obligatory, having become a machine manipulated by the State, with no other means of getting rid of it than by striking ("and the strike against the State is the Revolution", Bellamy rightly remarks), it would immediately become, by that very fact, a corrupt system – a system as untenable as the compulsory military system of our day.

We can conceive, and we can admit a Commune posing, as a condition for enjoying its marvels of comfort and luxury, that whoever wants to enjoy it, *and as long as he wants to enjoy it*, undertakes to work so many hours per day; but the possibility and ability for each individual to terminate the contract at any moment – that is the only guarantee that the system will not turn into oppression. But, for such an organisation to last and not to become oppression, it is precisely this possibility of living differently [that is essential].[1]

[1] We mentioned at the beginning the Amana community. But what enabled it to survive was precisely the right, the possibility and the ability given to each of its members to terminate the contract and leave the community, taking even

This is why, if certain Communes are organised on this principle, there will be other Communes or other groups which will be organised on other principles; and there will be a certain coming and going between these Communes, just as Bellamy admits it for different kinds of work more or less sought after, and this possibility of change will be the best guarantee for stability.

If such a system prevails in the future, it will be communal, or by groups, and not national. That nation – or rather the natural region, the industrial province – will result from the free federation of these groups, and they will have nothing fixed, nor restricted, within their geographical boundaries. Thus, in the commercial alliance of the Hanseatic towns, London was the ally of Hamburg in the heart of Germany, of Visby in Sweden, and of Novgorod in Russia; as allies for a special purpose: the exchange of goods and the mutual protection of merchants.

We insist above all on this point, since there is a whole school of socialists who always dream of the national social revolution and who have a horror of federation; whereas history is moving precisely in the direction of the subdivision of national territories and the federative link between the various independent units, [so] any attempt to "Jacobinise" the Revolution, to centralise production and exchange, would be the ruin of the Revolution. Our century had paid its tribute to the Jacobin heritage, and Humanity, deep down, no longer wants it.

***

As for this central administration which, according to Bellamy, should regulate the influx of volunteers by rewards of reduction of working hours, note that, even while upholding the idea of reducing hours for disagreeable work, the administration would be absolutely useless.

We have already mentioned the example of the railways once, and we return to it again since it applies very well to the case of Bellamy. When, even today, goods start to take one route in preference to the others, and neither the equipment nor the conditions of operation for this line can suffice for the needs of the transportation – what do the railway companies do? Do they have recourse to a central administration to make goods take other routes by reducing work on other lines? They agree directly with each other. Scoundrels as they are, the companies manage to get along without having to resort to a chief of the railways. Well, groups of producers can get along in the same way – infinitely better than companies of exploiters – without having recourse to a central administration. And this administration, if we wanted to give ourselves the luxury of it, would be sure to become as bad as any government.

In a future issue, we will analyse some more details of the [social] organisation proposed by the author of *Looking Backward*.

***

We said that Bellamy's book sold 25,000 [copies] in England. Exact figures have just been published. It sold 139,000 copies in America and 40,000 in England, of which a few thousand were sent to the colonies. Besides the 90 centime edition, there is a bookshop edition that costs more, and a 3 franc edition is being prepared.

IV

If Bellamy bravely broke with political economy – including Marxist political economy – he remained faithful to all the prejudices of the authoritarian school. Each citizen, as we have seen, has a right in his system to social wealth; renumeration according to services rendered is recognised as absurd; the guarantee of equal well-being for all is the basis of the society.

But then comes the authoritarian prejudice. The workers form an *army*, like the German army, with chiefs, deputy chiefs, etc. What is especially striking, is that, in Bellamy's idea itself, all these chiefs are absolutely unnecessary.

Bellamy fully understands that they can become a source of evil in society. So he seeks to show that by applying the system of elections in a certain way, society would have the best men for chiefs – to which anarchists, who have studied the question of authority in depth, will answer that all these guarantees are fictitious. And on the other hand he points out that the powers of the chiefs are so minimal and so clear that they could not seriously abuse them – to which we will answer that then these chiefs become unnecessary, and this is what emerges from Bellamy's own book.

***

So, let us take one of the powers of the chiefs – one of the principal ones: that of determining the prices of things.

It will be recalled that every citizen receives a credit of so many thousand francs a year from the national stores; and that he can dispose of his credit as he sees fit: take a rich lodging and live on potatoes, or take from the shops works of art and be content with an attic and dry bread. Each thing supplied by the nation (housing, fabrics, works of art, food, etc.) having its prices, you live as you please as long as you have not exhausted your credit.

---

the proceeds of his labour. The Community gave to each his share of the social wealth, in proportion to the number of years he had given to the Community. This ease of leaving without considering oneself robbed by the Community made the number of departures tiny – almost nil.

These prices are established by the administration, based on the length of the labour needed to produce each commodity, every cloth, every pound of bread or meat. Thus, if it takes 100,000 hours of farmers' labour to produce 200,000 pounds of bread, while the same number of hours of weavers' yields only 50,000 yards of cotton, the yard of cotton will cost four times as much as the pound of bread. And if, in such-and-such unpleasant trade, it was necessary to reduce the day by half in order to attract volunteers, in that trade the hour will count as two hours for the ordinary professions.

Well, so be it. Suppose we accept this system. And with all that, the administration has nothing to do with pricing. Because it only *states the fact*; since it is only *repeating* what comes to it from the farmers or the weavers who tell it: "*we* have put in 100,000 hours of work to make 200,000 pounds of bread, or to weave 50,000 metres of cloth" – what good is its useless existence?

With Bellamy, as with so many social democrats, it is always this same error that we encounter: imagining that statistics can come from a central office, whereas they can only come from the *individual*. Today, in fact, statistics are produced by bureaus, and that is also why all their figures are so many lies. But even today, when we want to have correct figures, we go to the *individual*. We already do it for censuses and we will do it for everything; because correct statistics can only come from the individual. And as for the summation, if it is done by house, by street, by district, by town, by region – in the final instance, all that remains is to make a summation of about fifty figures at most – something which is done by the supervisor of the printshop much better than by the secretaries of statistical committees. In the end, the supervisor always checks the summations of the employees.

This is the common mistake of authoritarians. Either they give authority real powers, and then they themselves perceive the danger, or they reduce its duties to zero, so few that it becomes unnecessary. Only the name and the uniform remain. Either harmful or pointless – for any kind of authority there is no getting away from this.

***

As for the credit card system, it is a system like any other to which the following can be said: everything that the Commune, the communist group or the communist nation has produced in quantities more than sufficient for consumption (gas, water and everything that will be produced in the same way) will be taken at discretion. But, as there are absolutely no limits to the artistic needs of man and those of enjoyment in general, and the community cannot deliver telescopes, grand pianos, works of art, etc., at discretion, there must be a certain limit to the consumption by the individual for these objects – as long as we have not yet found the means of producing what is rare in quantities large enough for this sought-after object to become accessible to all in unlimited quantities.

Bellamy proposes credit cards. We proposed rationing for rare items and taking from the pile for everything else. But we are convinced that the day when we have really permeated this idea that everyone has the right to comfort, we will find a thousand other means for matching needs with the possibilities of production. And we will try these differing means in different groups.

This is the common mistake of authoritarians. Either they give authority real powers, and then they themselves perceive the danger, or they reduce its duties to zero, so few that it becomes unnecessary.

The essential thing is to conceive the possibility of it in order to march with a firm step towards this goal. Because as long as society has not recognised the right of comfort for all, there will be nothing done: the Social Revolution will [still] have to be made.

***

There will be one more point which we need to make before we conclude our remarks.

For works of art and literature, as well as for the press, Bellamy proposes the following system:

Suppose, he says, that I and my friends want to establish a new newspaper. We look for subscribers. And when we have enough to cover the cost of the newspaper, we go to the administration, which deducts the amounts subscribed from the credit cards of our subscribers and credits them to the editor or administrator elected by the subscribers. The newspaper is printed in the national workshops, and what each issue will cost will be deducted from the account of the administrator of the newspaper. "The editor", adds Bellamy, "is discharged from other service during his incumbency and the subscribers pay the nation an indemnity equal to the cost of his support for taking him away from the general service."

This is an idea which one cannot protest too much. If it were admitted by the Social Revolution, it would become the source of whole inequalities and, therefore, of whole inequities. And here, again, as with authority, it is an absolutely unnecessary mechanism.

The main aim of the Social Revolution, after taking possession of social capital, should be the *absolute*

abolition of all distinction between manual work and brain work. As long as everyone, without any exception, does not work with his hands as well as with his head – there will always be iniquity, intrigue, domination, duality of consciousness, in short, all the evils of which we complain today, As long as public opinion does not consider the man who does not work with his arms as well as with his head as a failed being, as a pitiful monstrosity – something like a lunatic, or a cripple – the Revolution will still have to be done.

Society needs writers, poets, artists, scholars; it certainly needs more than there is today. But, a poet, a writer, a scholar and an artist will only be better poets, better artists and better scholars if they work with their hands *like all the others*.

Since, in a society where all work for all, it would only take three or four hours of manual labour to give wealth to all – anyone who feels the vocation of poet, artist or scholar will find ample time, in the rest of the day, to do his poetry, his works of art or his research.

As for propagating one's thoughts, printing what one has written or drawn – well, take one of those huge workshops where such-and-such an English newspaper creates its paper, its typesetting, its plates, its printing; people them with volunteers who come in their spare time to propagate the idea that suits them, and you will have the newspaper.

And this reminds us that if we have already talked about it when dealing with "scientific needs" (in *Révolte* last year), we have not yet sufficiently developed this idea and that it is time to resume our series [of articles], interrupted by articles on current events. The very fact that a man as intelligent as Bellamy revives in his Twentieth Century the division into writers and workers, into aristocrats and plebs, does it not already prove that this idea, so just and so natural, has not caught on yet, that it must be spread? Because, as long as the aristocracy of brain work exists, the Revolution will still have to be made. This inequality is the source of all the others.

***

Looking Backward will certainly be translated and read in French, as it is read in American and England. A person well-placed to know the exact numbers has just written in the English newspapers that Bellamy's book has sold 240,000 copies in America. These figures are the best answer to comrades who reproach us for talking too much about the future society. The fact is, that before making the Revolution, we want to know what we could put in place of the current mess. And, whatever the faults of this little book, it will still have rendered the immense service of suggesting some ideas and giving material for discussion to those who really want the Social Revolution.

Bellamy's "Equality"

Peter Kropotkin

The Independent, 2 December 1897

In "Looking Backward" Bellamy produced his utopia of the future Socialist Society. In his new book, "Equality," he gives an economical treatise to justify the utopia. Nothing, however, of the dullness, or the metaphysics of most economical treatises: the romance of "Looking Backward" is skilfully carried through the new book, and it is interwoven with economical discussions, taking all possible forms. Dialogs between the "ghost" of the nineteenth century, Mr. West, and the twentieth century doctor, Mr. Leete, and his charming daughter, Edith; historical lessons; inquisitive interviews; school papers read in a twentieth century school; homely chat in connection with the bonds and securities discovered in a safe which belonged to the ex-millionaire, Mr. West – all these forms are resorted to in turn. And all tend to one aim: to demonstrate how uneconomical, how wasteful, how inconsistent our present organisation of production is.

Bellamy has perfectly well studied the Socialist literature of the last thirty years, as well as, I presume, the literature of the "thirties" and the "forties," which, by the way, is so desperately seldom consulted by our own generation of Socialists. He has admirably assimilated the argumentation of Socialist writers; but his manner of thinking and his way of putting each separate argument, bear the stamp of his own individuality. He does not commit himself to any definite school of Socialism or Anarchism; and if his utopia is not entirely of his own (this would have been materially impossible) he has certainly copied it from none of his predecessors. The same is true of his new treatise; for "Equality" *is* a treatise on political economy, and a very good one. He also makes in it his own choice, which I, for my own account, cannot but fully indorse.

Many ways lead to the Socialist conclusion. Thompson, in 1824, and later on Marx, came to it through an analysis of the origin of surplus-value. Lassalle was brought to it by a study of the so-called iron-law of wages. Many writers in the forties came to Socialist views from a moral condemnation of interest on capital; and so on.

That original thinker, Proudhon, came to the same conclusion in several ways, the most original of which and the richest in consequences being the following: Under a capitalist organisation, the selling price of each

commodity contains, not only the cost of production (which may be reduced, in last analysis, to wages paid to workers), but also the *profits* of the various employers of labour who took part in the production. If there were no such profits, there would be no production under the present system of organisation. It results therefrom that with their wages, the sum total of workers cannot buy the sum total of what they have produced. With their wages alone they cannot pay the wages *plus* the profits. Part of the produce must, consequently, either be sent to some other country, or be destroyed; because otherwise the unsold part would accumulate every year, and very soon it would glut the market. This is, in fact, what we see continually nowadays, when, notwithstanding an under-production in all directions (look only at the unsatisfied needs of the great mass of the population), we continually hear complaints of over-production, *i.e.*, of a glutted market.

This way of representing our economic system has always seemed to me as the most striking, the most correct, and the most prolific in important consequences. It is conceived in a purely scientific spirit; it has nothing metaphysic in it; it bears the characters of the generalisations which we are accustomed to in exact sciences. And yet I observe that people, as a rule, do not easily understand it; and consequently I only indicate it in my writings, but prefer, in lectures and pamphlets, to base the Socialist conclusion on other grounds, namely, on the share which past generations have taken and the present one is taking in the production of all the present wealth, and the material impossibility of correctly measuring every individual's part in the present interwoven and complicated production.

Bellamy takes the Proudhonian way of putting into evidence the essential contradiction in the present production for profits; and in his handling the idea becomes quite plain, and rich in consequences. The many vices of a system which aims at the 'highest profits for the individual employer – instead of the fullest satisfaction of the many needs of a human agglomeration – become self-evident; and "Equality" becomes in this way a most powerful act of accusation delivered by an economist, from the economist's point of view, against the system under which we live. There is no room for sentiment, for compassion; the present system is wrong because it is uneconomic, because it is a negation of political *economy*. "It is a question of arithmetic," as Proudhon wrote; and this is why Bellamy, in one chapter only of his new book – in his glorification of the striker, who certainly displays as much as or even more courage in his uprisings than the soldier in battle – leaves himself to be carried by feeling. The unavoidable misery of the worker; the poor results of a large interior trade for the mass of the workers; the fallacies of free trade and protection being instrumental in the enrichment of the nation taken as a whole; the unavoidable wars, and so on, are forcibly shown to be the fatal results of an economic system based upon a wrong basis.

Bellamy's utopia, as is known, is essentially communistic. Every citizen in his twentieth century society is supposed to receive a check of $4000 on the nation – whatsoever his or her health, capacities or energy may be. With this check they can obtain from the national stores whatsoever they like up to that value, the allowance being so calculated as to be largely sufficient for satisfying all the wants of the individual. The citizen may spend his yearly allowance exactly in accordance with his personal tastes; he may live on bread and water in a shanty and order costly physical instruments, or live in a rich house and spend all his allowance on costly food, if he chooses to do so. Society will supply him with whatever he sets his eyes upon, provided he does not spend more than his yearly allowance.

In exchange for that check on the nation, every individual is bound to serve, from the age of twenty-one till the age of forty, in the ranks of the productive army, in any capacity of his own choice. The National Government will only take care that no career should be overcrowded by the volunteers. If some trade or profession attracts more volunteers than is required, while too few workers intend to follow some other professions, the Government reduces the hours of labour in the latter profession, and thus renders it more attractive. The Government also settles the prices of all goods; and for stimulating the zeal of the producers it has quite a system of promotions and recompenses.

Two separate ideas thus lie at the bottom of Bellamy's system, As regards the use which is made in society of the produced goods (*i.e.*, consumption), he takes the advanced position of a communist; but in the organisation of production he pays a heavy tribute to the present organisation and the idea of a nineteenth century army, with its system of grades and promotions, is carried over into the twentieth century. In one case Bellamy goes to the root of the evil; in the other he shuts his eyes upon the evils of the system which he advocates.

In his admirable analysis of the fundamental and inherent defects of the present organisation of production for profits, Bellamy has fully realised that these evils do not lie in the fact that the surplus value goes to the employers but that they are in the very existence of such a thing as surplus value; in the fact that the majority of mankind cannot live at all unless they sell their labour force to somebody, and unless they agree beforehand to be paid for it *less* than it is worth. Bellamy does not indorse either the error of the Collectivists who advocate the common possession of all instruments of labour, and place by the side of it *individual* remuneration (*i.e.*, wages, after all) in accordance with labour-time and the productivity of labour. All that is wanted in his ideal society is that

every one should work to the full amount of his capacities, and then his right to well-being will be recognised. Society will guarantee him that well-being; and society, under such conditions, has no fear that any one of its members should sell his forces for less than they are worth to a Rothschild, who would come from across the border, and should thus become an underpaid wage-worker.

In this view upon the economical problem I can but give full support to Bellamy. All the work that I have done in this direction, and all the thoughts that I have given to this subject, have brought me to consider *guaranteed well-being* as *essential* for every reform of consequence which could be made in our present economical system. That Bellamy shapes his views in the form of a so many dollars' check upon the nation, in preference to other means of attaining the same object, is of little importance. His leading idea is: "Begin by guaranteeing a certain standard of life and well-being; and then organise production so as to render that well-being possible." Consider the *needs* first, and shape production so as to satisfy them. Consumption, not production, is the first chapter of his Social Economy.

A society which would be capable of gradually coming to recognise the principle of guaranteed well-being for every individual, would undoubtedly work out better forms for organising production than the form of an army. It would accept the Anarchist principle of *free* agreement and free grouping. It certainly would need no hierarchy of commanders, nor would it tolerate them.

In Bellamy's scheme water, light, music, news, communications, transportation, etc., are supplied to the citizen "gratuitously on public account"; and he can buy the remainder (dwelling-house, food, clothing and luxuries), with his $4,000 check – this distinction being made in order "to provide free play to the greatest possible variety of tastes" (p. 31). In a sort of utopia which I brought out some years ago, I have endeavoured to show that the same could be realised in another way. Society could provide every citizen with housing, food, clothing, besides water, light, transportation and so on, in exchange for an agreement to work *half a day* for the production of these necessaries for life; while the other half of the day could be given by every one to any of the hobbies which would better satisfy his individual tastes, or to the production (in free clubs, similar to the present clubs, artistic and scientific societies, and so on) of all that may be required for the satisfaction of one's personal, artistic or scientific needs. This solution would have its advantages; but this is a matter of secondary importance once the above-mentioned leading principle is recognised.

As to the semi-military organisation of production, and the managing industrial powers of the National Government, it is simply repugnant to every freeman, and I will offer only one remark which probably must have occurred to Bellamy himself. A society which would be capable of gradually coming to recognise the principle of guaranteed well-being for every individual, would undoubtedly work out better forms for organising production than the form of an army. It would accept the Anarchist principle of *free* agreement and free grouping. It certainly would need no hierarchy of commanders, nor would it tolerate them. Even now, an immense and ever-increasing amount of work is performed without such an organisation; and every one who knows industry knows what an immense share is already given to the good will of the worker. Let the sailors and the engineers be discontented on board ship and everything will go wrong on that ship, even tho the most terrible naval discipline should be enforced. Let the workers have a grudge against the employers, and no amount of foremen, of supervision and discharges of workers will help; the produce will be spoiled in quality, and its sum total will be reduced. Even now the intelligent employer knows that he depends infinitely more on the good will of his workers than he is presumed to depend in the text-books of Political Economy, and that this dependency is growing in proportion as the success of the work depends more and more upon the skill, the pluck and the energy of the worker. In a society which would have to depend upon these qualities even more than it depends on them now, the army-organisation of the workers would become unavailable, and the promotions would be looked upon with, at least, as much contempt as they are now in the schools in which boys and girls have taste for learning.

There is one more remark which I should like to make concerning Bellamy's ideas. One fully understands that he should have represented the Twentieth Century Society as a national organisation, and not as a local growth which would cover but a small territory.

But it appears very improbable that the great social change which is ripening among us, and whose preliminary steps Bellamy has described in the chapter given to the "Transition Period," will come to be accomplished in any nation as a whole. All probabilities are, on the contrary, in favour of such a change being accomplished in many separate spots, or on smaller territories, before it becomes generalised by means of federation. In other words, the social revolution will hardly have the character of the great French Revolution of 1789-93; it will rather resemble the revolution of the twelfth century, when in the course of a hundred years,

thousands of free medieval cities made their appearance, by imitation, on the territory of Europe, from England and Scotland to Russia, and from Spain and Italy to Scandinavian lands.

In conclusion I can but heartily recommend to every one the reading of that plain, comprehensible, interesting and inspiring little work, "Equality."

New York City.

Edward Bellamy

Peter Kropotkin

Freedom, July 1898

It is with great sorrow that many will learn of the death of Edward Bellamy, the author of *Looking Backward* and *Equality.* He has died quite young, worn out by overwork. When I was in New York last autumn I was told that he was used up by-three years' hard work on his last book, *Equality,* and that he had gone West in the hope of regaining his health.

We have spoken at length of his first work in the *Révolte,* and we have there analysed Bellamy's Utopia. In America alone nearly 500,000 copies of the book have been sold, and it has made a deep impression. Hundreds of thousands of people who had once thought that the Socialist ideal could not be realised have been shown by Bellamy that it is not impossible, and that the obstacles are neither technical difficulties nor the individualistic tendencies of men, but simply inertia, stupidity, indolence and the slavishness of thought. A number of Americans have been inspired by some of Bellamy's ideas and are seriously thinking of establishing a Commune one day in one of the Eastern States on more or less Communistic principles, without adhering literally to his idea.

A finely prosperous colony already exists on these principles, and their journal is one of the best for general propaganda of Communist and Socialist ideas. There is nothing of the pretentious sect about it. Bellamy himself had none of this pretention, and his adherents do not possess the arrogance of the so-called "scientific."

The principal feature of Bellamy's Utopia was that each inhabitant of the Socialist nation should be credited with a certain sum (about £800). He may spend it as he pleases, by taking in the public shops whatever he chooses – lodging, food, clothing, objects of luxury, according to his taste. If he does not spend all the £800, whatever is left is each year deducted from his credit. There is no way of treasuring up his money.

On the other hand, everyone, from the age of twenty to forty or fifty years, works in any capacity he may choose a certain number of hours agreed upon. Committees estimate the value of the products and their selling price. It is a system of partial Communism. Unfortunately, Bellamy paid a tribute (absolutely useless in his own system) to authority in dreaming, like the Socialists of 1848, of an authoritarian organisation of production.

His last production, *Equality*, is much superior to his Utopia. It is in the form of a novel and conversation, a decidedly admirable criticism of the capitalist system. Bellamy in this book, which I recommend everyone to read, does not criticise capitalism from the moral, but from the economic point of view. He shows that this is the most absurdly uneconomic system of production. Bellamy does not go into metaphysics as does Marx; neither does he appeal to sentiment. In order to show the evils of capitalism, he takes the point of view of Proudhon, the only one which, in my opinion, was really scientific. That is, he demonstrates that a million of workers who have produced, let us say, all that is necessary for our consumption, from raw materials to manufactured articles, and who have only their salary, cannot buy those same products; for in their selling price they comprise, besides the salary paid, the profit of the master and the capitalist in general. Consequently, each nation produces more than it can purchase with the total sum of its salaries.

From this he deduces all the vices of the capitalistic system, and analyses them so admirably that I know of no other Socialist work on this subject that equals Bellamy's *Equality*.

At the same time the book is interesting, and while I travelled last autumn through Canada and the States, I saw it in every car. The vendors of papers and books in the trains never had enough, so great was the demand for the book. It is certainly not so interesting as *Looking Backward*, but it were well to have a French edition of it at a low price.

What a pity that Bellamy has not lived longer! He would have produced other excellent books. I am positive that were Bellamy to have met an Anarchist, who could have explained to him our ideal, he would have accepted it. The authoritarianism which he introduced into his Utopia was useless there and contradictory to the very system. It was simply a survival, a concession, a tribute to the past. Those who have known Bellamy speak of him with great sympathy. Of a very retiring and timid disposition, he did not seek to impose his personality, much less to become the head of a school. He was the first to be astonished by the success of his first book.

– P. K. in *Temps Nouveaux* ["Edouard Bellamy", 4 June 1898]

Libertarian Utopias
in the lead up to the French Revolution

Robert Graham

The following discussion of utopia is taken from my forthcoming book. **The Anarchist Current: A History of Anarchist Ideas**. *Here, I focus on 18th century utopian literature in the lead up to the French Revolution.*

Anarchism is often dismissed as a utopian doctrine, with "utopian" being used to signify something unrealistic and unattainable. But utopia does not have to have such a negative connotation. Utopia can be something to strive toward, or an imaginary ideal that can be used to criticise existing society, or as a community to live in. While some utopias have been conceived in fairly authoritarian terms, there have been anarchistic utopias for centuries, going back to at least ancient Greece and China.

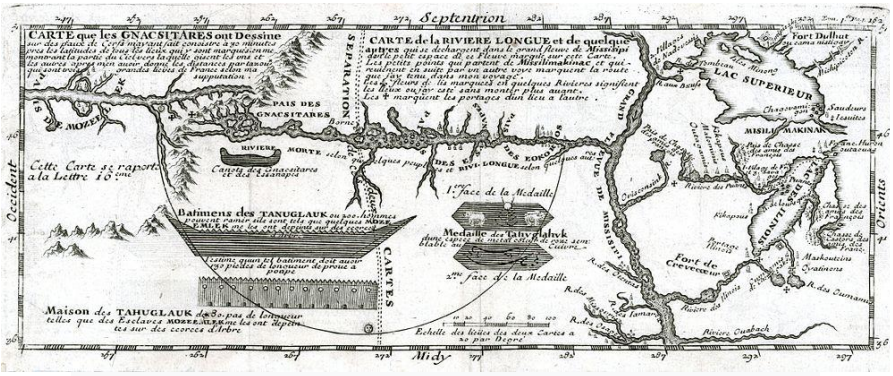
Utopia can be conceived of as a practice as well as an ideal. During the English Revolution and Civil Wars, Gerrard Winstanley and the Diggers sought to realise their ideal of libertarian communism by creating their own communities. The Ranters can be viewed as arguing that a kind of utopia can be achieved in the here and now by living freely to the greatest extent possible, avoiding the entanglements and restrictions imposed by existing social and political institutions and practices as best one can, much like the early Christian heretics who believed in the "marriage feast of a thousand years," acting as if this utopia had already been achieved, so there was no need to wait any further for the "new Jerusalem" to descend from heaven.

Utopia can be something to strive toward, or an imaginary ideal that can be used to criticise existing society, or as a community to live in. While some utopias have been conceived in fairly authoritarian terms, there have been anarchistic utopias for centuries

The more conventional notion of Utopia is as a vision of an imaginary ideal society. There have been many anarchistic versions of utopia. The ancient Cynic, Crates, envisaged a polis, Pera, where there was no private property or coercive institutions, and everyone lived in harmony with each other. The early Stoic, Zeno, appears to have sketched out an ideal society without hierarchical political and social institutions in his *Republic*. The Daoist, Tao Quian, conceived a utopian community without hierarchy and domination in the late 4th century CE in China. The "Pure Land" of medieval Japanese Buddhists was a kind of heavenly utopia to be mirrored in Buddhist communities on earth.

Utopian depictions of distant and imaginary lands go back at least to the ancient Greeks. The Greek writer, Herodotus (c.484-c.425 BCE), in his *Histories* (primarily in Book IV), described lands where women were held in common, others where women had the same status as men, and places where land was more equitably distributed. Tao Quian's story of the remote utopian community is told by a fisher who accidentally discovers it during one of his voyages. Utopian "travelogues" often provide a way of raising subversive ideas under the guise of describing the customs and mores of people in strange lands.

Some 18th century depictions of utopian societies were based on European reports of actual travels to distant lands. Among the most influential were French accounts of the "New World," particularly northeastern North America, where a French colony was established in 1608 in what is now Quebec, and later, the "tropical paradise" of Tahiti, which was visited by French explorers only much later, in 1768. French accounts of the indigenous peoples of northeastern North America ("New France" or "Canada") and Tahiti played an important role in the philosophical debates among French intellectuals during the 18th century French "Enlightenment," in the years leading up to the 1789 French Revolution, and through those debates influenced the development of libertarian ideas in Europe.



Map depicting Baron de Lahontan's west-east Long River

Baron de Lahontan's *Nouveaux Voyages de M. le Baron de Lahontan dans l'Amérique Septentrionale*, first published in 1703, including an English version entitled *New Voyages to North-America*, generated considerable debate and controversy. Lahontan's book was based on his first-hand observations when stationed as a French army officer in "New France," from 1683 to 1693, of the Wendat Iroquois, called the "Huron" by the French, Lahontan (1666-1716) disputed the accounts by Catholic missionaries of Iroquois societies and people, and included a series of dialogues, allegedly between himself and the indigenous leader, "Adario" (based on the Wendat diplomat and "war chief," Kandiaronk), in which they debate religious and political issues. From Lahontan's own observations and his debates with Adario there emerges a picture of the Iroquois as living in something coming very close to an anarchist society.

In the *Dialogues*, the character of Adario (Kandiaronk) challenges Christian religious beliefs and contrasts Iroquois societies to European societies, arguing that the Iroquois are much more free and enjoy much better lives than European people subjugated by their monarchs, merchants and nobles. Adario argues that European systems of private property force impoverished people into a life of crime, that it is "impossible" for Europeans to live within the bounds of the law, "so long as the distinction of *Meum* and *Tuum* [mine and thine] is kept up among" them. French men are whipped for trapping "Partridges and Hares" to feed their families, and condemned to forced labour on the galleys for evading the heavy tax on salt (the "gabelle," which did not apply to the aristocracy and priests). The Wendat would never have tolerated such treatment.

"Mony [sic]," Adario says, "is the Father of Luxury, Lasciviousness, Intrigues, Tricks, Lying, Treachery, Falseness, and in a word, of all the mischief in the World." It reduces everyone to the status of a commodity, and causes great evil: "The Father sells his Children, Husbands expose their Wives to Sale, Wives betray their husbands, Brethren kill one another, [and] Friends are false." Abolish private property and hierarchical distinctions would disappear, with "a levelling equality" eventually being achieved, as already enjoyed by the Wendat, who practice a "Communion of Goods." In Wendat society, no one is left in need of food, clothing or shelter.

But despite his insights regarding the economic basis of European hierarchies and the civil strife that a system of private property engenders, Adario does not present an entirely idyllic picture of life among the Iroquois. He says that the Wendat use "Slaves [to] take all the Drudgery off our hands." For some authors, the question of who would perform the drudge work in a utopian society was a problem. The reliance on slaves or servants is also found in Rabelais' Abbey of Thélème. In other utopias, menial work is a shared responsibility, or rendered unnecessary by technological innovation.

The slaves allegedly found among the Wendat are enemies captured by male warriors in battle. One reason why women enjoy greater sexual freedom among the Iroquois is to permit young unmarried women to have sex with the bachelor warriors "once or twice a Month," so that the women will not be "tempted to a mean submission to the Embraces of Slaves." Nevertheless, Adario makes the point that European prohibitions of sex beyond the confines of marriage are ineffective in restraining people's natural sexual urges, even among priests and nuns who are supposed to remain celibate, with the result that laws against adultery simply turn a great many people into criminals, much like the laws regarding private property also do.

One of the themes developed by Adario in the Dialogues then is that the Iroquois live lives much closer to and in accordance with Nature, in contrast to the Europeans, with their artificial constraints and restrictions that are so contrary to Nature that it is impossible for European people to live within them. Adario tells Lahontan that the true path of

salvation for the Europeans is not through Christianity but to live like the "*Huron*."

Lahontan, through the character of Adario, portrays the Wendat as natural born anarchists, with no laws, no judges, and no penal system. Everyone ensures that no one goes without. Adario argues that the reason why Europeans have coercive legal systems is primarily to maintain inequalities of wealth and power, making the vast majority of French people slaves to their political and economic masters. The Wendat, in contrast, are "born free" and "are all equally Masters." This includes women, who are free to choose their own husbands, without needing the consent of their parents, as in France.

Lahontan, through the character of Adario, portrays the Wendat as natural born anarchists, with no laws, no judges, and no penal system. Everyone ensures that no one goes without.

During marriage, Wendat women may choose to have sex with men other than their husbands, whom they may even divorce. Unmarried and widowed Wendat women are also free to choose their sexual partners. Wendat women faced with an unwanted pregnancy are at liberty to decide whether to end it by taking "Potions to make themselves Miscarry." All of this would have been unthinkable in France, where divorce and abortion were strictly prohibited, and women were punished for infidelity. Because Wendat women have sexual freedom, and the Wendat materially provide for each other, there is no prostitution, in contrast to France where husbands sometimes force their wives, and parents force their daughters, into prostitution out of economic necessity.

Adario describes life among the Wendat as one "without Laws, without Prisons, and without Torture," where people "live quietly under the Laws of Instinct and innocent Conduct, which wise Nature has imprinted upon [their] Minds from [their] Cradles." The reason why the Wendat are able to live in harmony with each other, with "no Disputes or Suits" taking "place amongst" them, is that they "are all of one Mind," with their "Wills, Opinions and Sentiments" having "an exact Conformity."

Whether Adario would have presented such a picture of Wendat society remains open to debate, as the Wendat had a complex system of rules or laws, and sometimes practiced torture (albeit not of each other, but only of captured enemy warriors). In any event, that the life of "Sweetness and Tranquility" among the Wendat purportedly described by Adario ultimately depended on ideological conformity would have raised questions among readers of the dialogues regarding the possibility of Europeans living without a coercive legal system, given their many religious and ideological differences.

While Adario hopes "that one day [the French] might come to live without Laws as [the Wendat] do," because of French superstitions, religious beliefs and their system of private property, which give "rise to disputes, murders, enmity, and irreconcileable [sic] hatred," legal "prohibitions" of harmful conduct will remain "very much wanted among the *French*." But the possibility is clearly left open that French people will some day be able to become free like the Wendat, if they would only abolish private property, inequality and hierarchy, and rise above their irrational beliefs. An anarchist society therefore remains achievable, but only by means of a thoroughgoing process of social transformation. By drawing out the multiple and intersecting bases of European inequality and oppression, the dialogues emphasise just how far reaching that social transformation would have to be.

While the accuracy of Lahontan's descriptions of Wendat society has been a matter of dispute ever since his *New Voyages to North-America* was first published, what matters more is how Lahontan's writings may have influenced his readers in Europe. *New Voyages to North-America* was widely read and discussed and remained popular into the 1740s. In 1705, a new edition of *New Voyages to North-America* was published, extensively revised "by an unfrocked Benedictine monk, Nicolas Gueudeville" (David M. Hayne, "Louis-Armand de Lom d'Arce, Baron Lahontan" (2013), in *The Canadian Encyclopedia*).

Gueudeville (1652-1721) added his own commentary to the book (without alerting readers

that he was doing so), making it even more subversive than Lahontan's original text. Gueudeville had quit his Benedictine monastery in 1688, making his way to Holland in 1689, where he joined French Huguenot refugees and then the Protestant Walloon Church. In 1699, "he began publishing anonymously a monthly, political periodical, *L'Esprit des cours de L'Europe*, in which, for the next ten years, he waged an incessant war against the Pope and Catholicism, against Louis XIV and France" (Aubrey Rosenberg, *Nicolas Gueudeville and His Work (1652-172?)* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1982), page 7). In addition to being a despot with a crown, Louis XIV had revoked the *Edict of Nantes* in 1685, subjecting French Huguenots to fresh persecution, forcing hundreds of thousands of them to take refuge in Protestant jurisdictions, such as Holland, England and even colonial North America.

Gueudeville denounced the injustice and cruelty of the European conquest and dispossession of the indigenous peoples of North America, accomplished by a combination of evangelical zeal and brutal violence. He celebrated the freedom enjoyed by non-European women, referring to the women of Madagascar, who remained masters of their own bodies, and were free to divorce their husbands.

In Gueudeville's revised edition of Lahontan's *New Voyages to North-America*, he replaced some of the more "innocuous" passages with "attacks on Christianity, on private property, on monarchy," and called on "the people to unite and throw off the yoke of oppression" (Rosenberg, page 125). In doing so, Gueudeville made much more explicit the revolutionary implications of Lahontan's work. In his version of the Dialogues, Gueudeville has Adario predict a social revolution in France, when the dispossessed shall "make the nation return their rights, destroying particular property, making an equal and just compensation of goods," enabling "every member of society" to "participate, each according to his ability, in the common happiness" (quoted by Russ Leo in "Nicolas Gueudeville's Enlightenment *Utopia*," *Moreana* 55.1 (2018): 24-60, page 48).

Gueudeville emphasises that among the Wendat "Reason" is the "only and sovereign judge." He has Adario express views very similar to Gerrard Winstanley's, that by "banishing […] 'mine' and 'yours'," namely private property, the Wendat are able to live in accordance with Reason, rather than following the dictates of self-interest, living "without ambition or dispute and, consequently" enjoying "a solid and inalterable felicity" (quoted by Russ Leo, "Nicolas Gueudeville's Enlightenment *Utopia*," page 40).

The subversive implications of Lahontan and Gueudeville's accounts of the lives and views of the Wendat and Iroquois are summarised in this early 20th century tirade by the conservative French historian Gilbert Chinard (1881-1972), in his denunciations of the myth of the "good" or "noble savage":

> "Rebelling against every constraint, against every law, against every superiority, the Baron de Lahontan or [his editor] Gueudeville, it matters little which, and his American savage are, speaking properly, anarchists. The *Dialogues with a Savage* is neither a political treatise nor a scholarly dissertation; it is the clarion call of a revolutionary journalist; that which Lahontan proclaims is not only Jean-Jacques Rousseau, it is Père Duchesne and the modern socialist revolutionaries" (Chinard, quoted by Ter Elllingson, in *The Myth of the Noble Savage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), at page 384).

Several decades after the publication of Gueudeville's version of Lahontan's *New Voyages to North-America*, at the height of the 18th century French Enlightenment, another French explorer, Louis Antoine de Bougainville, published in 1771 an account of his circumnavigation of the globe, *Voyage autour du monde* ("A Voyage Around the World"), which included the first French depiction of Tahiti, in which he presented an idealised picture of Tahitian society as a kind of tropical paradise.

Bougainville's botanist, Philibert Commerson, called Tahiti a living "Utopia." He described Tahiti as a place "inhabited by men without vices, without prejudices, without needs and without dissension." The Tahitians "recognise no other God than Love." Sexually liberated women lived "entirely nude" (Commerson, quoted in Anne Salmond, "Aphrodite's Island: Sexual Mythologies in Early Contact Tahiti," in *Changing Contexts, Shifting Meanings: Transformations of Cultural Traditions in Oceania*, ed. E. Hermann (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2011, pp. 93 - 106), at page 99).

It was largely through the writings of Bougainville and Commerson that Tahiti assumed the role in the European imagination as a male sexual fantasy made real.

The French *philosophe,* Denis Diderot (1713-1784), used Bougainville's depiction of Tahitian society as the basis for his own book, *Supplement to Bougainville's "Voyage"*, written in 1772, but not published until after the French Revolution. Diderot was one of the leading figures of the French Enlightenment. With Jean le Rond d'Alembert, he created, edited and contributed to the famous *Encyclopédie*, an ambitious attempt to catalogue European knowledge. He was a champion of a rational, scientific approach to human affairs, and the enemy of superstitious religious beliefs.

There were subversive and libertarian aspects to Diderot's ideas, but these were mainly kept private during his lifetime. In 1749, he had been imprisoned for several months for publishing an essay, "Letter on the Blind," that challenged Christian beliefs in divine providence, which no doubt led him to be more circumspect in his subsequent public writings. At home he continued to express himself more freely.

As part of a family parlour game he wrote that "nature has made neither servant nor master – I want neither to give nor to receive laws […] weave the entrails of the priest for want of rope, to hang the kings" (Berneri, *Journey Through Utopia,* page 202). Diderot may well have taken the image of the priest's entrails being used to hang the kings from Jean Meslier (1664-1729), a French priest who wrote in his political *Testament* in the 1720s: "Let all the great ones of the earth and all the nobles hang and strangle themselves with the priests' guts, the great men and nobles who trample on the poor people and torment them and make them miserable." During the French Revolution this phrase was transformed into the slogan "Humanity will not be happy until the last aristocrat is hanged by the guts of the last priest."

While Diderot's *Supplement* portrays Tahiti as a kind of utopian paradise, it is noteworthy because it contains both a utopian picture of Tahitian society and a dystopian vision of the future Tahiti after European contact. These views are expressed through the character of the "Old Man," a Tahitian elder, who extolls the libertarian lifestyle of the Tahitians, which is about to be destroyed by their European visitors.

While Diderot's *Supplement* portrays Tahiti as a kind of utopian paradise, it is noteworthy because it contains both a utopian picture of Tahitian society and a dystopian vision of the future Tahiti after European contact.

The Old Man portrays pre-contact Tahitian society as one without private property, where people's needs are met with the least amount of labour necessary, there is no crime and women are free to choose their sexual partners. Living a natural lifestyle, the only disease Tahitians know is "old age." Their "most profound feeling is a love of liberty," leading them to regard European systems of laws as "nothing but shackles disguised in a hundred different ways."

The Old Man describes how all of this is threatened by European contact. The Europeans bring with them not only disease but their sexual repression, inhibitions and hypocrisy, criminal prohibitions and retributive punishments, social and religious conflict, inequality, social stratification, hierarchy and domination, including, worst of all, human slavery. Diderot, much like Adario in Lahontan's *New Voyages to North-America,* draws a link between sexual repression and political authoritarianism. Coercively enforced monogamous marriage turns women into the captives and property of their husbands, and unfaithful women who do not remain within the confines of legal marriage into criminals. Patriarchy, "the tyranny of men," has "converted the possession of women into a right of property."

Diderot's Tahitians function as a foil to the Europeans and their repressive political and social institutions and practices, enabling Diderot to provide a wide-ranging critique of European societies. But because the Tahitians are clearly human, they also provide a positive image of alternative ways of organising and living within human societies that may be possible to achieve, albeit if only through a profound social revolution that would abolish private property, the power of

the Church, puritanical social mores, and coercive authority. Despite its dystopian elements, Diderot's portrait of Tahitian society retains glimmers of hope for people living in repressive European societies. Unfortunately for the Tahitians, as Diderot clearly foresaw, their tropical paradise would soon be subjected to the realities of European power and influence, including diseases for which they had no natural immunity.

In the *Supplement to Bougainville's "Voyage,"* Diderot counterposes the sexual freedom of the Tahitians to the unnatural Christian institution of lifelong patriarchal marriage, which inevitably leads to infidelity, jealously, deception, quarrels and violence. But the fundamental problem for Diderot is the principle of authority, the idea that some people, such as magistrates and priests, by virtue of the authority vested in them, may determine what is right and wrong, and condemn and punish those who disobey them, nor matter how contradictory, unnatural, irrational or unjust their commands and edicts may be. This not only leads to moral relativism, with religious and political authorities imposing conflicting conceptions of good and evil, it actually creates more unrest and strife rather than their suppression, for "whenever something is forbidden, it is inevitable that people should be tempted to do that thing, and do it." In contrast, the Tahitians "have no laws and hold no opinions that would stigmatise as evil something that is not by its nature evil," with the result that their society has virtually no crime.

The sexual freedom in Tahiti includes, on Diderot's account (there is no mention of this in Bougainville's *Voyage Around the World*), incest among consenting adults. Diderot seems to have regarded incest taboos as irrational (as did the ancient Cynics and early Stoics). However, Diderot's challenge to incest taboos had a different basis from that of the Cynics and early Stoics.

The problem for the latter was that because they advocated that people should be free to have sex whenever and with whomever they pleased, it would be difficult to determine who the biological father of any children may be, with the result that people enjoying free sexual encounters may inadvertently have sex with someone to whom they are biologically related. Rather than taking this as an argument against free sexual relations, the Cynics and early Stoics argued that there was nothing wrong with biologically related people having sex with each other. In Diderot's imagined Tahiti, this was not a problem because, while free to have sex with any man of their choosing, Tahitian women allegedly would have sex with only one man during any given month, so that it would be clear who the biological father of their children was.

Diderot argued that incest between consenting adults was acceptable for another reason. While there appears to be no private property in land or material things in Diderot's imagined Tahiti, the economy is based on the (re)production and distribution of children, who are regarded as the main economic resource in an economy where the primary productive power is human labour. Permitting incest between consenting adults helps maximise the (re)production of children. In fact, the only major sexual taboo among Diderot's Tahitians is pre-pubescent, menstruating, infertile and post-menopausal females having sex, because this is a waste of the man's seed.

At one point, Diderot claims that post-menopausal women who have sex with fertile men are exiled or sold into slavery, but earlier has the Tahitian character, Orou, say that the only punishment for such behaviour is "public disapproval," which is more consistent with Diderot's idealised depiction of Tahitian society. Diderot's later reference to much harsher punishments is more revealing of the limitations of his own outlook regarding sexual relations, with sexual freedom being justified primarily on the basis that this will lead to the (re)production of more children, rather than on the basis that people should be free to have consensual sex with each other whenever they choose, as the Cynics and early Stoics had advocated. This is one aspect of Diderot's "enlightened" scientific-rationalist approach that illustrates how it does not always lead to libertarian conclusions.

Diderot believed that the best way to tyrannise people was to civilise them. Impose upon them "a system of morality that is contrary to nature," and "terrify" them with religious "phantoms," so that "the natural man will always have the artificial, moral man's foot upon his neck," and then you will be better able to exploit and dominate them. He regarded the "natural anarchy" of a society without laws as likely being "less vicious than our 'polite society'." But he doubted that once "civilised," it would be possible for people to "go back to the state of nature." Instead, we "should speak out against foolish laws until they get reformed, and

meanwhile we should obey them as they are." Despite his anti-authoritarianism, Diderot was not an anarchist. He thought that if everyone took "it upon himself, on his private authority, to break a bad law," that would authorise "everyone else to break the good ones."

Diderot's *Supplement to Bougainville's "Voyage"* was published in 1796, at the end of the French Revolution, too late to have any influence on the political debates leading up to the Revolution. But there was another writer who published some satirical and utopian pieces prior to and during the Revolution who expressed anarchistic ideas, Sylvain Maréchal (1750-1803). Maréchal made his political views much more public than had Diderot, and therefore may have played a greater role than Diderot in promoting an anti-authoritarian and libertarian perspective in the years leading up to the 1789 French Revolution. Like Diderot, he was imprisoned at one point for publishing his subversive ideas, but unlike Diderot he continued to publicise them after his release from prison.

Maréchal was one of those rare satirists who, before the end of the French Revolution, was not so cynical or pessimistic as to have lost hope of transformative social change. As the reaction began to triumph over the Revolution, and his hopes had begun to wain, Maréchal wrote a kind of anarchist declaration, "The Manifesto of the Equals", denouncing the new tyranny that had replaced the French monarchy.

Maréchal studied law, working briefly as a lawyer, a difficult occupation for someone like him who had a stutter. He went on to obtain a position that suited him much better, "assistant librarian at the prestigious Mazarin Library in Paris" (Sheila Delany, introduction to *Anti-Saints – The New Golden Legend of Sylvain Maréchal* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2012), page 5). He was an atheist, and began publishing parodies of religious books, resulting in his brief imprisonment prior to the French Revolution.

As with Adario in Lahontan's *New Voyages to North-America*, and Diderot in his *Supplement to Bougainville's "Voyage"*, Maréchal contrasted nature to the artificiality of human institutions and practices. But Maréchal, much more than Diderot, and more like Adario, took nature as a model for a free society, envisaging a pastoral kind of anarchist utopia where people would live in neither cities nor villages, but on relatively self-sufficient farms distributed throughout the countryside, enjoying "[c]lear skies, pure streams," and "health, joy, contentment and peace."

Maréchal looked back to a mythical "golden age" when "there were neither masters, nor servants, nor sovereigns, nor subjects; each served themselves." He thought that as soon as people began living together in larger groups, rivalry and conflict emerged, with some coming to dominate and exploit the others, creating hierarchical distinctions and institutions to ensure the continuation of their superior status and privileged positions.

Much like the philosophical Daoists, Maréchal saw hierarchical societies arising as people became estranged from nature, seeing themselves as separate from and in conflict with nature and with each other, creating artificial distinctions among themselves and competing for resources made scarce through unjust institutions, like private property, maintained by the coercive power of the state. But Maréchal took his inspiration from Rousseau, who was also a critic of the artifice and inequality found among so-called civilised nations.

What distinguished Maréchal from Rousseau was that Maréchal thought it was possible to return to a pastoral existence where there would be no rank or status and everyone would live as equals. During the French Revolution, he tried to persuade people to undertake this project. For him, neither the creation of a constitutional monarchy nor a democratic republic would result in a free and equal society as long as some remain "masters, the others servants, some rich, the others poor, some city-dwellers, the others villagers, some priests, the others soldiers, some representatives, the others represented." Thus, Maréchal's pastoral anarchist utopia was not just a vehicle for criticising existing society, like Diderot's imaginary Tahiti, but was intended to provide a picture of the kind of society that revolutionaries should be striving toward.

A recurrent theme in Maréchal's satirical works is that monarchs cannot survive on their own. They need servants and subjects to provide for their every need and desire. In the year preceding the French Revolution, Maréchal wrote about a king who orders his troops to attack the civilian population when they begin to resist the ever "more exorbitant" taxes that he is imposing on them, much like Louis XVI was doing in France. The people flee into the mountains, where they live "with no other master than nature, with no other kings than our patriarchs," renouncing "forever life in the cities" that they have built, "whose every

stone is washed with [their] tears and dyed with [their] blood." The king, having no one to provide for him, dies "wracked by the agonies of need."

The political lesson of this story is clear: if the people refuse to be dominated and exploited, they will become free, and their monarchs will perish. While the idea of withdrawing cooperation to bring down a tyrant goes back at least to Etienne de la Boétie, Maréchal focuses more on the economic basis of a monarch's power. The withdrawal of the material means necessary to maintain that power becomes, for Maréchal, the primary way for the people to free themselves from tyranny.

The political lesson of this story is clear: if the people refuse to be dominated and exploited, they will become free, and their monarchs will perish.

In a vignette entitled "The Desert Island," included in another collection of Maréchal's writings issued a few months before the Revolution, Maréchal returns to the theme of monarchs causing their own extinction. A "visionary" imagines the "peoples of the earth" banishing all of their kings "to a small, uninhabited, but habitable island," to fend for themselves. Rather than learning how to live and work together to ensure their survival, the exiled kings exterminate one another. Unlike the exiled monarchs, the people will survive and prosper once rid of these parasites.

During the Revolution, after the execution of King Louis XVI, Maréchal turned the story of the exiled monarchs into a popular one act play, *The Last Judgment of Kings*, in which the Pope, and all the kings, queens and emperors of Europe, are exiled to an island where they proceed to fight over the little food left to them by the revolutionaries. Before they can kill each other, they die in a volcanic eruption, vowing too late that if they were to survive, they would embrace the revolutionary ideals of liberty and equality.

From a modern anarchist perspective, the fundamental flaw in Maréchal's utopian vision is its patriarchalism. While there will be no kings, no churches, nor even any cities, on the family farms that people will live on in Maréchal's pastoral arcadia, the father of each family shall stand at its head, albeit as "the king of his children alone."

As with many male French intellectuals of the 18th century, including one of Maréchal's heroes, Rousseau, Maréchal regarded women as creatures ruled by passion rather than by reason, and therefore unfit for positions of authority, whether within the family or without. The contradictions inherent in Maréchal's patriarchal utopianism are brought out in his epistolatory novella, *The Woman Priest*, published in 1801, after Maréchal's revolutionary hopes and aspirations had been dashed (Maréchal, *The Woman Priest: A Translation of Sylvain Maréchal's Novella,* La femme abbé, translated by Sheila Delany (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2016).) The French Revolution, a revolution that had held out so much promise at its beginnings – liberty, equality and fraternity – had ended with the triumph of reaction, causing deep disappointment and even despair for those revolutionaries, like Maréchal, who had survived the tumult and upheaval, unlike many of their comrades.

The premise of the novella is itself transgressive and revolutionary: a women dresses like a man so that she can become a Catholic priest, something that the Catholic Church has continued to forbid to the present day. The main character, Agatha, passes herself off as a man to be close to a priest for whom she has developed an obsession, Saint-Almont, eventually becoming his private secretary. But to achieve her goal, not only must she dress and act like a man, she must also learn how to reason like a man. Disguised as a man, she gains admission "into an elite Parisian seminary" led by Saint-Almont, where she does so well in her ecclesiastical studies that she is "invited to proceed to full priesthood" (Delany, introduction to *The Woman Priest*, pages IX and XXI). In her pursuit of Saint-Almont, which is irrational because she will never be able to have a romantic relationship with a priest, Agatha demonstrates that she has the intellectual capacity of a man but remains ruled by her emotions.

Maréchal appears to have believed that this was a problem for all women. Whether people in general are ruled by their emotions or can act in accordance with reason is a matter of long-standing debate. During the English Revolution, Gerrard Winstanley had argued that people for whom reason is merely

an instrument for devising ways to satisfy their passions remain unfree. For Winstanley, this was not a female problem, but a problem for all people, but most pronounced among men in positions of wealth and authority who misuse their reason to achieve and maintain their privileged status, deceiving themselves and others into thinking that this is right and reasonable.

During the 18th century European "Enlightenment," debates regarding the nature of human reason continued. The Scottish Enlightenment philosopher, David Hume (1711-1776), had famously argued in his *Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-1740) that "Reason is, and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them" (David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature,* Book III, Part III, Sect. III, "Of the Influencing Motives of the Will").

While this instrumental view of reason as an intellectual faculty for indicating the best means for satisfying one's passions and goals should not be confused with the view that people are completely irrational, the political implications of this viewpoint are generally conservative. If people ultimately are driven by their appetites and passions, rather than being governed by reason, then those passions must be constrained in order to prevent incessant conflict between individuals (or so the argument goes). Prior to the failure of the French Revolution, Maréchal appears to have believed in the power of reason (at least among men), such that people would be able to live together in liberty and equality without coercive legal institutions and superstitious religious beliefs. Any instability and conflict that might arise from women's passionate natures would be constrained by the reasonable father of each family.

Maréchal makes his sexist views clear in *The Woman Priest* when he portrays Agatha as incapable of surmounting her irrational impulses despite having received the same education and training as a man. When the priest, Saint-Almont, presses Agatha regarding her refusal to enter the priesthood, she confesses to him that she is really a woman in love with him. Saint-Almont tells her that she will have to "feign a grave illness" so that no one will know the real reason why she must leave the seminary. She goes to throw herself into a river, but gets lost and ends up in old underground quarry where she meets Timon, a "modern misanthrope" disillusioned with life who detests "the human species."

Maréchal uses the character of Timon to express his own disappointment with the French Revolution. Timon, as with Maréchal, "had constructed for himself a brilliant theory" for the reform of society, but his "century was not sufficiently mature, and his country too corrupt for the success of his bold and austere plans." It is clear that by the time that Maréchal wrote *The Woman Priest*, he had given up hope that his pastoral utopia would ever be achieved (at least in France).

Timon denounces "religious prejudice" and all "those clever social conventions that enslave human beings." Like Maréchal, he yearns for the day when people will "retrace their steps" and "return to their primitive social organisation," learning "how to live without the ridiculous and sinister scaffolding of either political or sacred legislation." He sees Agatha's downfall as having been caused by these "absurd codes, imagined by ambitious people," that forbade her and Saint-Almont from following their natural impulses. With his critique of civilisation as contrary to nature, Maréchal came close to an anarchist primitivist perspective.

But no modern-day anarchist primitivist would share Maréchal's vision of a patriarchal agricultural utopia, preferring a hunter-gatherer type of existence. They would also reject Maréchal's views on the natural inferiority of women.

After the failure of the French Revolution, Maréchal, through the character of Timon, no longer regarded a "[r]etreat to the countryside" as feasible. Although rural people "are a little less wicked," this is because they are also "a little more ignorant." The Catholic Church retained its pernicious influence in the French countryside, where many peasants had supported the counter-revolutionary royalist forces.

Timon tells Agatha that what they both need instead is "a still-virgin corner of earth where vice and prejudice have not penetrated, such as exists" among the people living "beyond the sea, in the forests of North America." Timon imagines himself and Agatha "strolling […] amid beautiful forests, where noble savages ["les bons sauvages"] will build [them] a dwelling without luxury but healthy and tranquil," where they can live "without feeling any need for a [legal] code and a religion."

Agatha remains in love with Saint-Almont, and prefers to die of a broken heart in France. Her womanly passions prevent her from acting rationally to preserve her own life. In contrast, both Timon and Saint-Almont take action to ameliorate their respective situations. Saint-Almont leaves his seminary in Paris and goes to what is now Quebec in "northern America" to act as a Catholic missionary. Timon travels separately to Quebec to live happily among the Iroquois. When the Iroquois try to kill Saint-Almont, "believing him a spy sent by the English," Timon recognises him and saves his life, taking him back to a French settlement where Saint-Almont renounces "the priesthood" and becomes a tutor to the son of Agatha's friend, Zoe, who had also moved to Quebec.

Regardless of the literary merits of this remarkable string of coincidences, the ending to the story of Agatha, "the woman priest," shows a distinct shift in Maréchal's utopian perspective. The pastoral utopia that he thought could be achieved in France by the people leaving the cities to live as equals in the countryside, without authoritarian legal and religious institutions, is replaced by an imaginary life among "the good savages" in Quebec that was clearly not a feasible alternative for the vast majority of people living in France. In fact, as Sheila Delany points out in her introduction to *The Woman Priest*, it was no longer even a feasible alternative for isolated French individuals like Timon, for the British had taken over Quebec in 1763 (page XVII). Maréchal's final utopian tale of Timon's escape to North America is not a prescription for practical action, but a nostalgic imagining of what might have been, another alternative future foreclosed by the reality of European power politics in the 18th and early 19th centuries.

In some ways, Maréchal epitomised reactionary caricatures of the radical intellectual: an atheist, rationalist and materialist who believed that people were naturally good, looked back to a mythical golden age when people lived freely without hierarchical distinctions, in harmony with themselves and with nature, and looked forward to a revolutionary transformation of society that would return people to their natural condition of freedom and equality.

Ironically, in Europe the myth of a past "golden age" had religious roots in the Biblical story of the Garden of Eden, but was given a secular basis by reference to indigenous societies that were considered by European writers as not only being closer to nature, but closer to humanity's original primitive condition. The French Enlightenment concept of the "good savage" ("le bon sauvage") is of people who have not yet become alienated from nature. It at least did not carry the more reactionary connotations of the English concept of the "noble savage," with its implication that there are such things as natural born aristocrats. But both concepts portray indigenous peoples as more primitive than Europeans, closer to the natural condition, or "state of nature," which preceded the rise of civilisation. The English philosopher, John Locke, even went so far as to say that, "in the beginning all the world was America, and more so than that is now; for no such thing as money was any where known" (*Second Treatise of Government*, Sect. 49).

The first self-proclaimed anarchists did not look back to a mythical Golden Age, but sought to push forward the most radical aspirations of the French Revolution that the original French revolutionaries had failed to achieve: liberty, equality and fraternity.

Maréchal distinguished himself from other Enlightenment era writers by expressly advocating a pastoral kind of anarchism, drawing inspiration from idyllic depictions of a distant past and life among the indigenous peoples of North America. But as much as he can be seen as a precursor of 19th century anarchism, his views are not representative of 19th century anarchist thought. The first self-proclaimed anarchists did not look back to a mythical Golden Age, but sought to push forward the most radical aspirations of the French Revolution that the original French revolutionaries had failed to achieve: liberty, equality and fraternity.

Justice and Morality

Peter Kropotkin

Foreword

The lecture *Justice and Morality* was first given [in the Autumn of 1893] to the Ancoats Brotherhood of Manchester, in front of an audience composed mostly of workers and participants in the labour movement. That Fraternity held important lectures on Sundays in the winter. By keeping to an objective exposition, the most serious problems could be discussed by your audience.

I cannot determine the exact date on which I delivered this lecture. I only know that it was not long after the famous Darwinian Professor Huxley[1], the main propagandist for Darwinian ideas, gave a lecture at Oxford University in which he astonished all his friends because indicated to them, in contrast to Darwin, that morality cannot have a natural origin in man, that the nature of man only teaches evil.

Huxley's lecture, published in the February issue of the journal the *Nineteenth Century* and which soon appeared as a pamphlet, provoked general astonishment, and the impression created had not been erased when I was preparing my talk on the natural origin of morality.

Two or three years later I repeated this lecture at the London Ethical Society, enlarging it somewhat in the part where I referred to justice.

Since I had written the concepts that I presented at that time in English, as part of the text of the first lecture, plus the additions that I inserted when I repeated it for the London Ethical Society, I have translated my work into Russian and offer it for publication.

Over the last thirty years I have increasingly devoted myself, albeit with interruptions, to the study of moral doctrines, and I have been able to give further development to some of the concepts presented here, but I have decided to keep the wording of the lecture such as I gave it to the Ancoats audience, and I have only added what I wrote for the lecture at the Ethical Society.

P.K.

Dmitrov, January 1919

Friends and comrades!

By choosing as the subject of our talk justice and morality, it has not been my purpose, of course, to give you a sermon. My intention is very different. I would like to explore with you how we begin today to explain the development of the ethical concepts of humanity, their true origins, their gradual development and indicate what may be useful for their evolution.

Such an investigation is a particular necessity at present. You yourselves feel that we live in a time that demands something new in the structure of social relations. The rapid evolution, both industrial and mental, that people have experienced in recent years makes the solution of important problems urgent.

There is a need to establish life on a more just basis. And when such a need arises in society, it can be seen, as a rule, that a revision of the fundamental concepts of morality is inevitable.

And it cannot happen in any other way, for the existing social order – its institutions, its customs and its habits – supports the moral concepts of the society. Any fundamental change in the relations of the different social strata is linked to a fundamental modification of the prevailing ethical concepts.

Consider the lives of people who are in different degrees of culture. Take for example the life of contemporary nomadic peoples: the Mongols, Tungus, and those who we call "savages." Amongst them it is a disgrace to kill a sheep and eat its meat without inviting all the inhabitants of the settlement to participate in the meal. I know this from my own experience, gathered in travels through the remote regions of Siberia, by the Sayansk mountain range. Or look at the most

[1] Thomas Henry Huxley (1825–1895) was an English biologist and anthropologist, known as "Darwin's Bulldog" for his advocacy of Charles Darwin's ideas and the theory of evolution. He played a key role in ensuring wider acceptance of Darwin's theory of evolution and was very much the public face of evolutionary theory at the time. (*Black Flag*)

miserable savages in South Africa, the Hottentots.[1] Even quite recently it was a crime amongst them when someone began their meal without shouting three times: "Is there anyone here who wants to share my food with me?" Even amongst the lower savages of Patagonia, Darwin found the following trait: the smallest amount of food he gave them was immediately distributed amongst all those present. Moreover: in North and Central Africa it is customary, as a law, that if a nomad denies lodging to a traveller and as a result he succumbs to cold or hunger, the descendant of the deceased has the right to pursue as a murderer the one who had denied shelter, and demand from him some kind of atonement, as is common in cases of murder.

These and other concepts of morality have been formed in primitive peoples. Those customs have disappeared amongst us since we began to experience constituted "States." In our cities and villages, police officers have the duty to welcome the vagrant without refuge and take him to the police station, the prison or the workhouse in case the destitute is in danger of freezing in the street. Each of us has the right, of course, to take in a traveller; the law does not forbid it, but nobody considers themselves obligated to do so. And if on a dark winter night a homeless person dies in the streets of Ancota of hunger and cold, it will not occur to his relatives to accuse you of murder. Furthermore, it is possible that the abandoned traveller had no family, which is impossible in the organisation of the tribe since all the offspring are one family.

I do not want to make any comparison here between the tribe and the State. I merely wish to point out that the moral concepts of man are modified according to the social order in which he lives. At a given time, the social order of a people is intrinsically associated with the dominant morality.

I merely wish to point out that the moral concepts of man are modified according to the social order in which he lives. At a given time, the social order of a people is intrinsically associated with the dominant morality.

Consequently, it is always inevitable that a fierce discussion arises about the problem of the origins of morality when the necessity to modify the relations between members of a society develops. And, in fact, it would be extremely rash to speak of the transformation of a social order without simultaneously thinking about the transformation of opinions on the prevailing morality.

Strictly speaking, issues of an ethical nature are the foundation of all our discussions on political and economic matters. Take, for example, a learned economist who considers communism. "In the communist society," he says, "no one will work because no one will feel the threat of hunger." "Why?" replies the communist. "Will men not understand that if they stopped working there would be a widespread famine? Everything depends on the [type of] communism you want to introduce." And indeed think of how much communism has been established in the life of the cities of Europe and the United States in the form of paved streets, lighting, municipal schools, electric trams, etc.

You see, then, how a purely economic issue leads to a consideration of the ethical condition of man. The issue is, therefore, the following: Is man capable of living in a communist society? From the domain of economics, the issue is transferred to the domain of morality.

Or look at two political thinkers who entertain any innovation of social life, for example the doctrine of the anarchists or the transition of a state from an autocracy to a democratic constitution.

"I warn you," says the defender of absolute power, "that everyone will start stealing as soon as the strong arm that holds the reins is gone." "Therefore," replies the other," would you become a thief without the fear of jail?" With this the issue of the political form of society also becomes an issue about the effect of established institutions with respect to the moral aspect of man.

[1] Hottentot was a term used to describe the Khoikhoi, the non-Bantu indigenous nomadic pastoralists of South Africa. It was also used to refer to the non-Bantu indigenous population as a whole, now collectively known as the Khoisan. It is now considered offensive, the preferred name for the non-Bantu indigenous people of the Western Cape area being Khoi, Khoikhoi, or Khoisan. (*Black Flag*)

In recent years quite a few works have appeared on this issue of such great importance. But I just want to dwell on one of them, on the lecture recently delivered by the famous Professor Huxley at the University of Oxford on the subject of *Evolution and Ethics*.[1] Much can be learned from it, for Huxley has seriously investigated the issue of the origin of ethics. Huxley's lecture was received by the press as a sort of manifesto of the Darwinians and as a scientific summary of the foundations of morality and its origin – an issue which has occupied almost all thinkers from ancient Greece to the present day.

The lecture had a special resonance, not because in it the famous scholar expressed his opinion as the most important exponent of the Darwinian theory of evolution, nor because it was advanced in a perfect literary manner, which can be designated as one of the most beautiful pieces of English prose; the particular importance of this lecture was that, regrettably, it expressed the most widespread thoughts amongst the educated classes of the epoch in such a way that it can be considered as the profession of faith of the majority of these classes.

Huxley's fundamental thought, which he constantly refers to in his paper, is as follows: There are two kinds of phenomena in the world, two processes occur: the cosmic process of nature and the ethical process, that is to say, morality, which occurs only in man and only in a certain state of his development.

The "cosmic process," that is to say, the whole life of Nature, of the dead and the living, including plants, animals and man. This process – claims Huxley – is nothing more than a "bloody fight with tooth and claw." It is the desperate struggle for existence, which rejects all ethical considerations. "Suffering is the badge of all the tribe of sentient things" – "an essential constituent of the cosmic process."[2] The methods of the tiger and the ape in the struggle for existence are the pure characteristic signs of that process. Even for humanity they have been established "as the most appropriate means of struggle, the self-assertion, the unscrupulous seizing upon all that can be grasped, the tenacious holding of all that can be kept, which constitute the essence of the struggle for existence."[3]

The lesson we receive from nature is then "the lesson of inherent evil."[4] Nature cannot be described as amoral, that is to say, it cannot be maintained that it does not take any moral position nor answer the moral question. It is clearly immoral. "Cosmic nature is no school of virtue" (page 27 of the first edition of the lecture as a pamphlet). Therefore, it is absolutely impossible to find signs of "what we call good is preferable to what we call evil" (page 31). "The practice of that which is ethically best – what we call goodness or virtue – involves a course of conduct which, in all respects, is opposed to that which leads to success in the cosmic struggle for existence." (page 33) This is, according to Huxley, the only lesson that man can deduce from the life of nature.

But then, as soon as human beings have joined together in organised communities, there appears within them, in an unknown manner, an "ethical process" that, without any doubt, is opposed to everything that nature has taught them. The object of this process is not the preservation of all those who have adapted better to the given conditions, but the preservation of those "who are ethically the best" (page 33) This new process of unknown origin, but which in any event does not arise from nature, begins to act through laws and customs (page 35). It is protected by our civilisation and through it our morality develops.

But, what is the origin of this process? There would be no answer to this question, even if you wanted to maintain with Hobbes[5] that the moral concepts of man have been provided by the lawmakers,

---

[1] Huxley presented "Evolution and Ethics" at the the University of Oxford's Romanes Lecture on 18th May 1893. It was subsequently reprinted as a pamphlet before appearing in the book *Evolution and Ethics and Other Essays* (London: MacMillan and Co., 1895). (*Black Flag*)

[2] *Evolution and Ethics* (London: Macmillan and Co, 1893), 8. (*Black Flag*)

[3] Kropotkin slightly paraphrases Huxley: "Man, the animal, in fact, has worked his way to the headship of the sentient world, and has become the superb animal which he is, in virtue of his success in the struggle for existence. The conditions having been of a certain order, man's organization has adjusted itself to them better than that of his competitors in the cosmic strife. In the case of mankind, the self-assertion, the unscrupulous seizing upon all that can be grasped, the tenacious holding of all that can be kept, which constitute the essence of the struggle for existence" (Huxley, 5-6) (*Black Flag*)

[4] Kropotkin is summarising Huxley's argument rather than providing an actual quote: "the cosmos is […] necessarily inherent evil […] the universal experience of mankind testified then, as now, that, whether we look within us or without us, evil stares us in the face on all sides" (Huxley, 23) (*Black Flag*)

[5] Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679) was an English philosopher, considered to be one of the founders of modern political philosophy. He is best known for his 1651 book *Leviathan*, which argued for a strong central authority to end the "war of

since Huxley specifically affirms that the lawmakers could not draw observations from nature: an ethical process exists neither in pre-human animal life nor amongst savages. What follows – if Huxley is right – is that the ethical process in man cannot be in any way of natural origin. The only possible explanation of its appearance, then, is a supernatural origin. If moral practices – benevolence, friendship, mutual support, self-control over expressing passions and self-denial – could not be developed under any circumstances in the pre-human period or in the primitive forms of human herds, their origin can be none other than supernatural, by divine inspiration.

What follows – if Huxley is right – is that the ethical process in man cannot be in any way of natural origin. The only possible explanation of its appearance, then, is a supernatural origin.

This conclusion of a Darwinist, the naturalist Huxley surprised everyone who knew him as an agnostic, that is to say, an unbeliever. But the ultimate conclusion was inevitable. When Huxley affirmed that man could not under any circumstances create moral teachings from life in nature, there was no other solution than to recognise the supernatural origin of morality. That is why George Mivart[1], a respected Catholic known as a naturalist, published an article in the *Nineteenth Century* [which should have been] entitled "The Conversion of Huxley" shortly after the publication of Huxley's lecture, in which he congratulated the author for his return to the doctrines of the Church.[2]

Mivart reasons with perfect logic. There are two possibilities: Huxley is right in arguing that there is no ethical process in nature or, on the contrary, Darwin is, who in his second seminal work, *The Descent of Man*, affirms with Bacon[3] and Auguste Comte[4] that in herds of animals, as a result of that herd life, the instinct of community develops so strongly and becomes so powerful and decisive that it triumphs even over the instinct for self-preservation.[5] And since Darwin demonstrated along with Shaftesbury[6] that this instinct is so strong in primitive man and that tradition developed it more and more, it is clear that, if this conception is right, the origin of morality in man cannot be other than the evolution of the instinct of sociability, a characteristic of all livings and which is observed in all of living nature.

That instinct has been constantly heightened in men thanks to the development of reason, experience and corresponding customs. The aptitude for language, the achievement of writing greatly helped man to gather life experiences and constantly develop the habit of mutual aid and solidarity, that is to say, the habit of reciprocal reliance between all members of society. In this way it is comprehensible how duty is born before human consciousness; the sense of duty to which Kant dedicated such magnificent lines, but which

---

all against all" (*bellum omnium contra omnes*) he thought existed in "the state of nature." (*Black Flag*)

[1] St. George Jackson Mivart (1827–1900) was an English biologist. He was an ardent believer in natural selection who later became one of its fiercest critics. His attempt to reconcile Darwin's theory of evolution with the beliefs of the Catholic Church ended with him being condemned by both parties. (*Black Flag*)

[2] St. George Mivart, "Evolution in Professor Huxley," *Nineteenth Century*, Vol. XXXIV (August 1893), 198-211. Mivart suggested that Huxley was "not... an entirely conscious convert to a view opposed to that he had before advocated." (206) (*Black Flag*)

[3] Francis Bacon (1561-1626) was an English philosopher and statesman, whose works are credited with developing the scientific method and remained influential through the scientific revolution. (*Black Flag*)

[4] Isidore Marie Auguste François Xavier Comte (1798-1857) was a French philosopher and writer who founded positivism, a philosophical theory stating that certain ("positive") knowledge is based on natural phenomena and their properties and relations. Thus, information derived from sensory experience, interpreted through reason and logic, forms the exclusive source of all certain knowledge. (*Black Flag*)

[5] For customs, so deeply rooted in the blood and flesh, are described as instincts which are inherited in men and animals. Thus chicks, as soon as they emerge from the egg, begin to dig at the earth with their feet, exactly like the adult hen, although they have only been incubated by the warmth of the hen.

[6] Anthony Ashley Cooper, 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury (1671-1713) was an English politician, philosopher and writer. Driven by a desire to refute Hobbes, he concluded that the distinction between right and wrong is part of the constitution of human nature. (*Black Flag*)

he could not provide any moral explanation during many years of enquiry.[1]

Thus declared Darwin, a man so well versed in natural laws, the sentiment of duty. But certainly, when the life of animals is judged by what is observed in the Zoo; when you avert your eyes from the actual life of nature and want to portray it according to your darkest conceptions, then there is only one way out: an investigation of moral sentiments supposing them to be rooted in some mysterious power.

Huxley is placed into the same situation. But – how strange is this too – a few weeks after giving his lecture, when he produced it as a pamphlet, he supplemented it with a series of notes in which he completely contradicted one of the principle ideas of his lecture: that of "processes."

How did Huxley arrive at such a reversal, which completely contradicts the essential ideas of what he had preached shortly before? We do not know. It can only be assumed that he did so under the influence of his friend, Professor Romanes of Oxford[2], who, as is well known, was preparing at that time material for his work on morality in animals, and under whose guidance Huxley delivered his lecture at the University. It may be that another of his friends also exercised that influence upon him. But I do not want to investigate the reasons for such an event change. Perhaps Professor Huxley's biographers will.

We only care about the following: for anyone who deals seriously with the problem of the origins of morality in nature, it must be clear that animals that live in groups feel compelled by nature to adopt certain instincts, that is, hereditary habits of a moral character.

for anyone who deals seriously with the problem of the origins of morality in nature, it must be clear that animals that live in groups feel compelled by nature to adopt certain instincts, that is, hereditary habits of a moral character.

Without such habits life would not be possible in communities.

Without such habits life would not be possible in communities. That is why find in the communities of birds and of higher warm-blooded animals – and especially ants, wasps, bees, which are at the head of the class of insects – the initial elements of morality. We find in them the habit of living in societies, which is for them a necessity and a custom: do not do to others that which you do not want to be done to you. We often see self-sacrifice there in the interests of society.

If a young parrot takes a twig from the nest of another, the others in the flock throw themselves on it. If in the spring a swallow occupies, after its return from Africa, a nest in our countries that did not belong to it the previous years, it is ejected from that nest by the other swallows that congregate in that spot. When a flock of pelicans enters the vicinity of another flock, it is expelled, etc. Identical facts, which were already studied in the past century by the founders of zoology and later confirmed by many modern observers, are countless. They are only unknown to those zoologists who have never worked in free nature.[3]

Therefore, it can be accurately stated that customs of morality and reciprocal aid were already developed in animal life and that primitive man was fully aware of those traits in the life of animals, as is clear from the traditions and religions of primitive men.[4]

The same is evident from the study of existing primitive peoples, although the customs of these

[1] Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) was an influential German philosopher and an early anthropologist. He is known for his theory that there is a single moral obligation, which he called the "Categorical Imperative" and introduced in his 1785 work *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, and is derived from the concept of duty. (*Black Flag*)

[2] George John Romanes (1848-1894) was a Canadian-Scots evolutionary biologist and physiologist who laid the foundation of what he called comparative psychology, postulating a similarity of cognitive processes and mechanisms between humans and other animals. He founded the Romanes Lecture series, which was named after him, in 1892. (*Black Flag*)

[3] See my book *Mutual Aid*, in which sources are cited.

[4] I have devoted some pages of my article "The Morality of Nature" in the journal *Nineteenth Century*, March 1905, to the issue of the adoption of the ethical rules of the animal kingdom by primitive man.

communities are developing more and more. We discover in them a series of customs and traditions that tame the arbitrariness of individuals and define the foundations of equal rights.

Indeed, equal rights form the basis of the economy of the tribe. When someone, for example, has spilled the blood of a member of another family in a quarrel, they must lose their blood in equal measure. When someone has injured one of their family or an unknown family, one of the relatives of the injured person has the right or, better, duty to inflict a wound of equal size on the aggressor. The biblical law – an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a life for a life, and nothing more – forms the rule solemnly maintained by all peoples living in family communities. An eye for a tooth or a mortal wound for a superficial one would contradict the customary concept of equal rights and justice. It also illustrates the following: this concept is so deeply rooted in the consciousness of primitive peoples that when a hunter spills the blood of an animal close to the human species according to his perception, such as a bear, relatives spill a few drops of the hunter's blood, albeit only a few, in the name of justice for the bear family. Many customs have also remained in civilised peoples as survivals of previous epochs, together with highly developed moral rules, up to the present day.[1] In the same tribal communities, other concepts gradually begin to develop. A man who has slandered someone is obliged to seek reconciliation and his relatives have a duty to intervene as peaceful mediators.

When the manifestations of primitive peoples concerning justice are carefully examined, it is found that they contain solely and ultimately nothing more than the duty not to treat another member of the tribe differently than they wish to be treated by them, that is to say, the same thing that constitutes the foundation of all morals and the entire science of morality: ethics.

But what is more: we also find lofty concepts amongst the most rudimentary representatives of the human race. Consider, for example, the moral rules of the Aleutians, who form a branch of the most primitive peoples, the Eskimos. They are well known to us, thanks to the works of an extraordinary man, the missionary Veniaminov,[2] and we can present them as models for the ethical concepts of ice-age man, all the more so since we find identical rules in other savage peoples. And, yet, those rules have something that exceeds the framework of primitive justice.

Amongst the Aleutians there are two kinds of rules: mandatory obligations and simple advice. The first, including the rules that I mentioned at the beginning of this lecture, are based on the principle of equal treatment for all, that is, on the principle of equal rights. To this belong the exigencies: not to kill nor to wound a member of the tribe under any pretext; to give any kind of aid to the members of the tribe and share with them the last morsel, protect them against attacks, respect the gods of the tribe, etc. So naturally these norms constitute the rules of the tribal economy that cannot be ignored.

However alongside these strict laws, there are, amongst the Aleutians and the Eskimos, certain

[1] Certainly, customs already begin to form in the early stages of the tribe phase that undermine equal rights. The soothsayer, the sage, the warrior chief acquire such importance in the tribe that little by little (mainly by secret societies) classes form, the prophets, the priests, the warriors assuming a particularly privileged position in the tribal community. Later, when family associations begin to form within the tribes, at a time when women are appropriated first by attacking and enslaving foreign tribes and then by simple robbery, an inequality developed that from then on put certain families in a better position than the others. But tribal communities strived and still strive, where they exist, to mitigate these inequalities; and we see, for example, amongst the Normans that the war leader (king) who murdered a warrior had, like any mere warrior, to apologise to the dead man's family and pay the usual atonement (more details are in my book *Mutual Aid*).

[2] Subsequently, the Metropolitan of Moscow, a Saint. [Father Veniaminov (1797-1879) was a Christian missionary of the Russian Orthodox Church who arrived in Unalaska in 1824. He was named Bishop Innokentii in 1840 before becoming in 1867 the Metropolitan of Moscow and all Russia (a Metropolitan being the spiritual head of the Russian Orthodox Church). He is now known in the Orthodox Church as Saint Innocent of Alaska – *Black Flag*]

moral demands that are not required but only recommended. It is not expressed by the formula "you must do this or that"; nor is the Greek expression "this must be done" appropriate; the Aleutoan says in this case: "It is a disgrace not to do this or that."

It is, for example, a disgrace not to be strong and falter in an expedition whilst others suffer from hunger.

It is a disgrace not to go to sea when the wind rages; in other words, it is a disgrace to be a coward and not want to face the storm.

It is a disgrace after a hunt to not offer the best hunk of your companions; in other words, be greedy.

It is a disgrace to fawn over your wife in the presence of a strange, and it is a great disgrace, in the exchange of goods, to put a price on one's own possessions. The honest seller accepts the price that the buyer offers him; this was at least the general rule not only amongst the Aleutians of Alaska, amongst the Chukchi in northwest Siberia, but also amongst the majority of the islanders of the Atlantic Ocean.

What the Aleutians mean by the following words is clear: "it is a disgrace not to be as strong, nor as skilled, nor as generous as the others." They mean "that it is a disgrace to be weak, that is, not to be equal to others, physically and morally." With these words they condemn those that do not correspond to the desired equal value between all men of the tribe. "Do not show any weakness that inspires compassion."

The same desires are expressed in the songs that the women of the Eskimos sing during the long northern nights and in which men who have not reached the right heights in the aforementioned circumstances or who got angry without sufficient reason or who behaved foolishly are ridiculed.[1]

So we see that together with the simple principles of justice, which are nothing else but the evidence of equality and equal rights, the Aleutians still have certain "ideal" desires. They express the wish that all members of the tribe aspire to be equal to the strongest, the wisest, the sturdiest, the most generous. These behavioural tendencies, which have been raised to a rule, already mean something more than simply equal rights. They are the expression of an effort towards ethical perfection. And this trait is undoubtedly found in all primitive peoples. They know that amongst animals that live in society the strongest males rush to the defence of the females and children, often sacrificing their life; in their legends and songs, primitive peoples glorify those of their circle who lost their lives in the struggle against nature or with enemies, defending their own. They created veritable song cycles about those who did something extraordinary in daring, love, skill, or insight for the good of others, without asking what they would receive in return.

According to these indications, it is clear that the "ethical" process of which Huxley speaks, already beginning in the animal kingdom, had passed to man, and in this it has been developed more and more by tradition, by poetry and by art. Its highest degree was achieved in the "heroes" of humanity and in some of its teachers. The willingness to give their lives for brothers was glorified in the poetry of all peoples and then transferred to the religions of antiquity with the addition of forgiveness for enemies, instead of vengeance as a duty as before; it became the foundation of Buddhism and of Christianity before it became a state religion and renounced the underlying concepts that differentiate it from other religions.

This is how moral concepts have developed within nature in general and later in humanity.

I would like to give a brief summary of its subsequent development in the writings of thinkers from antiquity to the present day. But I cannot do this today, because it would be too much for one lecture. I just want to emphasise that the naturalist explanation of morality in man was not possible until the XIX century, although Spinoza[2] came close to it and Bacon also spoke on this issue with some success. We have verified data to convince us that moral concepts are intimately linked to the existence of living creatures, that the struggle for existence would not have been achievable without them, that the evolution of such concepts was unstoppable, the same as the entire progressive movement from the simplest organisms to men,

[1] On this, see the report of the Danish expedition which arrived at the western shore of Greenland in 1886 and the work of Dr. Ranke on the Eskimos.

[2] Benedict de Spinoza (1632-1677) was a Jewish-Dutch philosopher and one of the early thinkers of the Enlightenment. His *Ethica, ordine geometrico demonstrata* (*Ethics, Demonstrated in Geometrical Order*) was published posthumously in 1677. (*Black Flag*)

and that this evolution would not have been possible if the majority of animals were not endowed with the gregarious qualities for common life and even under certain circumstances for the sacrifice of themselves.

We now have a lot of material to prove this claim. Darwin provided in his book *The Descent of Man*, in the chapter on the development of morality, the description of a fight between two caravan dogs with a troop of baboons taken from Brehm's *Thierleben*.[1] As the caravan approached, the monkeys climbed a steep mountain. When the oldest monkeys saw the dogs, they descended through the rocks in spite of the great danger and threw themselves with such fury upon the latter that they were frightened and made to retreat towards their masters. It was not easy to set the dogs back onto the monkeys. Then they surprised a little female monkey, barely half-a-year old, who had lagged behind and sat on a rock. An old monkey came back alone, walked slowly to the dogs, chased them away, carried the girl monkey on his shoulders and returned with her to the troop.[2]

When they acted in such a manner at that moment, the old monkeys did not ask themselves in the name of which principle, nor which command they were responding to. They hastened to save their people out of sympathy, because of the sense of community that had developed in them over the course of millennia; and finally, by the strength of the feeling they had of their power and their audacity.

Another case has been described by a naturalist who merits equal credit, Stansbury.[3] He once found an old blind pelican that was fed by other pelicans who brought it fish; Darwin confirmed this fact.[4] There are now so many findings of the self-sacrifice of animals for others of their species, in ants, in alpine goats, in horses of the steppes, in birds, etc., they have been described so often by our best naturalists, that we have a firm ground for our views on the development and evolution of moral concepts and sentiments in the study of nature.

we can easily distinguish three fundamental elements, three integral parts of morality: initially, the "gregarious instinct," in which customs and habits later develop; then, the concept of "justice"; on both develops the feeling not quite accurately called "abnegation or self-sacrifice, altruism, magnanimity,"

In this we can easily distinguish three fundamental elements, three integral parts of morality: initially, the "gregarious instinct," in which customs and habits later develop; then, the concept of "justice"; on both develops the feeling not quite accurately called "abnegation or self-sacrifice, altruism, magnanimity," a sentiment endorsed by reason and that should be called, properly speaking, the moral sentiment.

Morality is made up of these three elements, which are formed in all human communities in a natural way. If ants help each other to save their young from a nest destroyed by a man, if birds fly together to defend themselves against birds of prey; if migrant birds, several days before departing, meet every afternoon at a certain place to carry out practice flights; if thousands of goats or rams come together to protect themselves; in a word, if animals manifest in their community customs and practices that help them to facilitate the struggle for existence, against the wilderness, or to fight against unfavourable conditions, this demonstrates the necessary appearance of an instinct without which they would undoubtedly have perished. Community was and still is the basic form of the

[1] Alfred Edmund Brehm (1829-1884) was a German zoologist and writer. His essays and expedition reports from the animal world were well received, resulting in the large multivolume work on the animal world known as *Brehms Tierleben* (*Brehm's Life of Animals*). (*Black Flag*)

[2] Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), Volume 1, Part 1, Chapter III, "The Moral Sense," 75-6. (*Black Flag*)

[3] Howard Stansbury (1806-1863) was an officer in the U.S. Army Corps of Topographical Engineers who led a two-year expedition (1849–1851) to survey the Great Salt Lake and its surroundings. The expedition report (1852) provided the first serious scientific exploration of the flora and fauna of the area. (*Black Flag*)

[4] Darwin, 77. (*Black Flag*)

struggle for existence, and it is precisely that law of nature that most Darwinians have overlooked, even though Darwin himself, who had not appreciated this fact enough in his first work *The Origin of the Species*, began to speak of it in his second essential book, *The Descent of Man*. Yet it is precisely in that instinct we find the initial origins of morality, the root from which all higher sentiments and ideals derive over time.

Thanks to his life in a community, the sentiment of solidarity develops more and more in man. Primitive savages could observe in nature that animals that lived in strong communities succeeded in the struggle for existence, and they understood how much life in society facilitated the struggle against hostile nature. They left their observations to their descendants in the form of traditions, proverbs, legends, songs, religions and even the deification of certain animals that lived in society. In this way the social instinct was transmitted from generation to generation and was affirmed by customs.

men have tenaciously fought the emerging inequality of rights everywhere, and history could also be considered as a narrative that shows how some antisocial people strive to form a state of affairs that allows them to control the others

But the social instinct, by itself, would not be enough to develop the rules of the tribal community that I spoke about at the start. In reality, a more conscious and higher concept, the concept of justice, gradually developed in primitive men, and that concept was fundamental to the evolution of morality.

When we say: "You must not do to others what you do not want them to do to you," we demand justice, whose essence is the recognition of the equal value of all members of human society, consequently the right to self-respect that the members of the society must reciprocally recognise. At the same time it means the rejection of the pretension of certain individuals to control overs.

Without that equalitarian concept, morality could not be born. In the French and English languages, the words "justice" and "equality" arise from the same origin: *équité* and *égalité*, *equity* and *equality*. But where and when did that concept emerge?

In embryo it is already found in gregarious animals. In some the predominance of males is also observed, but not in all. In many animals, juvenile play is very widespread – as we now know in detail, thanks to Karl Groos's book [*Die*] *Spiele der Tieren*[1] – and in these games the strictest equality of position of all the participants is taken into account, as we observe in the play of young goats and other animals. You can also see that in new-born animals, which do not allow one to avail itself of more than another of the maternal nutrition. As we have already said, we can observe the feeling of justice in migrating birds when they return to their old nests. Countless similar examples could be provided.

The more the feeling of justice is present in men, even in the wildest peoples, the less they suffer from local rulers. I have already mention some examples; I just want to add that since scholars have begun to study the tribe, and we should not confuse it with primitive monarchies – like those that we find now in Africa – whole volumes could be filled with examples of equality of rights amongst primitive people.

I will be answered that in most primitive peoples there already are military leaders, soothsayers, etc. who enjoy special rights. Certainly, the aspiration to conquer special rights already expresses itself in the most rudimentary human communities and academic history is concerned – from fear of the rulers – to dwell on these facts, so that we could consider academic history as a narrative on human inequality. But at the same time, men have tenaciously fought the emerging inequality of rights everywhere, and history could also be considered as a narrative that shows how some antisocial people strive to form a state of affairs that allows them to control the others, and how these others resisted them and defended equal rights. All the institutions of the tribe were shaped to achieve equal rights. But unfortunately

[1] Karl Groos (1861-1946) was a German philosopher and psychologist who proposed an evolutionary instrumentalist theory of play. His 1896 book *Die Spiele der Tiere* (translated by E. L. Baldwin as *The Play of Animals* in 1898) suggested that play is a preparation for later life. (*Black Flag*)

historians know very little about that because very little attention had been paid to these primitive forms until two new sciences appeared in the second half of the nineteenth century, that of man and that of the primitive forms of human life – anthropology and ethnology.

But now, after a great number of facts have been gathered, we see that the basic concept of justice is already in primitive man and that it becomes the norm within the original form of community: the tribe.

There is more. We can continue to reason, and I encourage you to do so, on the level of science and raise the following question: "Does not justice have its foundation in human nature? And if so is it perhaps the basic physiological trait of our thinking?"

To speak in the language of metaphysics, we can ask: does not the concept of justice form the basic "category," that is, the fundamental capacity of our thought? Or to speak in the language of the natural sciences: is not the inclination of our thought to the investigation of "equality of right" a consequence of our thinking apparatus? In this case, is it perhaps the consequence of the structure of our brain? I think I must say yes.

The fact that our thought always operates in one way, that in mathematics is known as an equation and that the physical laws we discover are expressed in that form, gives a certain justification to the explanation I propose. It is also known that before anyone makes a decision a kind of conversation involving the pros and the cons takes place in our mind, and some physiologists see in that phenomenon, if not a consequence of double symmetry of the brain's structure, at least its complex stability.[1] In any case, it is a minor issue whether my hypothesis about the physiological concept of justice is true or not. The important thing is that justice is the core concept of morality, since there can be no morality without equal rights, that is, without justice. And if the opinions of the scholars who dealt with the issue of ethics until now were contradictory, the reason is that most of these scholars did not want to recognise that justice is the origin of morality. This recognition was also tantamount to the recognition of equal political and social rights for men and, consequently, should lead to the rejection of class differences. But that is precisely what most of those who have dealt with issues of morality did not want to accept.

Beginning with Plato,[2] who maintained slavery in his plan of an ideal form of society, continuing with Paul the Apostle[3] and ending with the writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, all – if they have not directly defended – have at any rate not rejected inequality; not even the French Revolution, which inscribed on its banners equality and fraternity alongside liberty. Godwin in England[4] and Proudhon in France,[5] who recognised justice as the starting point of every moral form of society, thus far occupy an exceptional position.

But justice does not represent the entirety of morality. Since it only means an equality in the exchange of reciprocal treatment, from this standpoint it is not much distinguished from a trade. There is no doubt that it has a decisive importance in shaping morality. That is why it would mean the most profound transformation of human existence if the concept of equal rights formed the basis of social life. It was not in vain that all popular movements, starting with that in Judea at the time of Julius Caesar and Christianity, and which continued later in the Reformation and eventually in the Great French Revolution, aspired to equality and the levelling of rights.

---

[1] I add here that, as I learned later, the well-known positivist thinker [Émile] Littré came to the same hypothesis, according to the outline in an article about morality published in the journal [*La Revue de*] *Philosophie positive*.

[2] Plato (c.428-c.348 BCE) was an Athenian philosopher during the Classical period in Ancient Greece, noted for his work the *Republic*, which outlined an authoritarian utopia ruled by a philosopher-aristocracy. (*Black Flag*)

[3] Paul the Apostle (c.5-c.65), commonly known as Saint Paul, was an apostle (although not one of the Twelve Apostles) who taught the gospel of Christ to the first-century world. (*Black Flag*)

[4] William Godwin (1756-1836) was an English journalist, political philosopher and novelist. He is often considered as a precursor of modern anarchism, due to his 1793 book *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* which attacked both the State and private property. While influential after publication of this work, he did not directly influence the anarchist movement as it was mostly forgotten before being rediscovered by the anarchist movement in the 1890s. (*Black Flag*)

[5] Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809-1865) was a French libertarian socialist who was the first person to declare himself an anarchist in *What is Property?* (1840). His mutualist ideas – a federalist market socialism – was very influential during his lifetime and laid the foundations for all later forms of anarchism, including Kropotkin's revolutionary communist-anarchism (*Black Flag*)

However, the proclamation of the equality of all members of society before the law had no effect until the end of the eighteenth century, with the French Revolution. But even today we are very far from the realisation of equality in social life. Civilised peoples so far have been divided into classes that lie one on top of each other like geological strata. Recall the slavery that dominated Russia until 1861 and in North American until 1864. Recall the servitude that lasted in England until 1797 for miners, and the children of the poor who were called in England workhouse apprentices, torn from parents by special officers, who until the end of the eighteenth century travelled all over the country, and taken to Lancashire to make them toil in the cotton factories. Think, finally, about the infamous treatment that the so-called civilised peoples inflict upon the people they call "inferior races."

The first step that humanity should take in its moral evolution would be, then, the recognition of justice, that is, the equality of all human creatures.

The first step that humanity should take in its moral evolution would be, then, the recognition of justice, that is, the equality of all human creatures.

Without justice, morality is what it has been up to now, that is, a hypocrisy, and that hypocrisy protects the ambiguity which has permeated current individualistic morality.

Without justice, morality is what it has been up to now, that is, a hypocrisy, and that hypocrisy protects the ambiguity which has permeated current individualistic morality.

But sociability and justice do not form the entire content of morality either. It is also composed of a third part, which for lack of a better name can be described as a disposition for sacrifice, as magnanimity.

The positivists call that altruism,[1] that is, the ability to act for the benefit of others and in opposition to selfishness. With this adjective they avoid the Christian concept of love of neighbour, and they avoid it because the phase "love thy neighbour" does not exactly reflect the feeling that moves men when they sacrifice their immediate advantages for the benefit of others. And actually, the man who acts so does not in most cases consider it a sacrifice and does not feel any kind of love for the "neighbour." Most of the time he does not know him at all. But neither the word "altruism" nor "self-sacrifice" exactly reflect the character of this attitude, for such actions must be qualified, along with "good," if they are of course, and whether they are carried out without any coercion and without expecting a reward in life or after death; not for considerations of personal or social utility, but because of an invincible internal need these acts receive the characteristic of good, and only then do they belong to the domain of morality and in such cases they deserve the classification of "ethical."

From the earliest times, society strove to arouse the inclination towards such kinds of actions. Education, popular songs, legends, poetry, art, religion, had that tendency. In human society there has always been the effort to make such actions an obligation, a "duty of honour," and to encourage them in all forms. But, unfortunately, men became demoralised because of the promise of a reward for moral acts. And until the present time, the ideal had not started to emerge that a society that is established on justice and the equal rights of all does not need to compensate the self-negation of individuals with any kind of reward. The word "abnegation" begins, little by little, to take on a new meaning, for in most cases the man who puts his energy at the service of all does not ask what is to be given in return. He acts like this and not in any other way because he cannot act differently than the monkey which went to defend the young monkey against the dogs and who had never heard the religious nor the Kantian imperative, nor acted for any utilitarian consideration.[2]

[1] Positivists are advocates of positivism. The word "altruism" was coined by the founder of positivism, Auguste Comte, as an antonym of egoism in 1830. (*Black Flag*)

[2] Utilitarianism is an ethical theory that promotes actions are calculated to maximise happiness and well-being. Its basic idea is to maximise utility (pleasure) and so the best action is that which produces the greatest happiness of the greatest

The "feeling of duty" is surely a moral energy. But it only decides when the two modalities of temperament clash within us and make us hesitant in behaviour. The men of whom we say that they are endowed with the capacity of self-sacrifice do not wait, in most cases, for the prompting of that feeling.

A French thinker, likeable to a fault and early dead, Marc Guyau, was the first, I believe, to state the true characteristic of what I call the third element of morality.[1] He understood that its essence is nothing more than the force of human consciousness: an excess of force, which drives him to express it in deeds.

We have, Guyau wrote, more ideas than we need for ourselves and that is why we are driven to communicate them to others. We cannot act otherwise.

We have more tears and more joys than we need, and we gladly give the surplus.

And some of us possess more willpower and energy than is necessary for the life of an individual. Sometimes, when that superabundant will is directed by a petty spirit, it produces a conqueror, but when it is directed and developed by a great spirit and a great socially orientated feeling, the founder of a new religion or a new humane movement arises that causes the renewal of society.

But in all these cases we are first driven by an awareness of our own strength and the need to use it.

If this feeling is also approved by reason, it does not demand any other sanction for subsequent conduct, no superior intervention and no exterior commitment. It becomes by itself an obligation, because at a certain moment man cannot act otherwise. The awareness of his strength and ability to do something approved by reason in favour of someone or everyone in general already contains the impulse for action. That is what I call "duty."

It is true – continues Guyau – that a struggle is often waged within us before we decide to take action. Man is not something unified, fused into a single piece. Rather, each one of us is made up of different individualities, of different traits; if our inclinations and temperaments are in mutual opposition and contradict each other at every step, then life is unbearable. Anything, even death, is more pleasant than the constant upheaval, the incessant clashes that can lead us to madness. That is why man decides for one or the other.

It so happens that our conscience and our reason rebel against a taken decision, like something unfair, despicable, petty, and then some sophism, that is, a self-deception, is invented to justify it. In strong and honest men, a sophism has no effect; although, unconsciously, they overcome the deep, internal causes in cases of doubt. Then there is harmony between reason and what we call conscience and an accord is developed that gives the possibility of living life in its total essence, the intensive, joyful life before which sorrows fade… The one who has lived that life, the one who has known such a life, will not change it for a miserable existence full of doubt.

If someone is "sacrificed" by it, he does not feel in any way like a victim. A flower must blossom, Guyau writes, although death inevitably follows the flowering. Likewise the man who feels in himself an excess of compassion for human suffering, who has the need for spiritual fruitfulness, for creative work, freely offers his strength, without taking into account the consequences for him.

Usually, such action is called abnegation, selflessness, altruism. But all these descriptions are false, for the man who so acts, in most cases, would not change the physical and even moral hardships that he had to suffer because of that way of acting for a peaceful abstention, no less for a defective willpower.

One example, one among many:

"When I was on the south coast of England, in a small village where there is an establishment of the Society for the rescue of [victims of] shipwrecks, I spoke with the sailors of the Coast Guard. One of them told me how they saved the crew of a Spanish ship loaded with oranges the year before. During a terrible snowstorm the vessel was carried away

---

numbers, the worst that causes the most misery. It was founded by Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) and developed by John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), who popularised the term. (*Black Flag*)

[1] Jean-Marie Guyau (1854–1888) was French philosopher and poet, whose works primarily analyse and respond to modern philosophy, especially moral philosophy and moral theory. His main work was *Esquisse d'une morale sans obligation ni sanction* (*Sketch of a Morality without obligation or punishment*), written in 1884. (*Black Flag*)

from a calm place that was near the village. Gigantic waves leaped over it; the crew, which consisted of five men and a boy, tied themselves to the masts and called for help. However, the rescue boat could not leave, because the waves were forcing it back to the beach.

"'We were all on the beach,' said the man who told me the story, 'and we could not do anything until about three when it started to grow dark; it was in February, and we heard the desperate cries of the boy tied to the mast. Then we could hold ourselves back anymore. Those who had previously said it was crazy to prepare to go out because we would never get there were the first to start shouting: "Still, we have to try!" We launched a rescue boat again, fighting for a long time against the storm before reaching the sea. The waves overturned the boat twice. Two of us drowned. Poor Daga got tangled up in the roles and drowned before our eyes in the waves… It was horrifying to see. Finally, a strong wave came and cast us all onto the beach. I was found the next day in the snow, two miles from here. Two Spaniards were saved by a big rescue boat from Dungeness…'"

Even now when the most brutal individualism is propagated… mutual aid is the essential component part in the life of humanity. And it is up to us… to extend more and the more the radius of reciprocal aid, not in the form of charity but by the natural cultivation of the social instincts latent in all of us.

And, oh!, the miners of the Rhondda! Two days were spent tunnelling to break through to a destroyed underground passage to reach their buried comrades. And they did it, fearing every moment that they would be killed by an explosion or a new collapse. "Explosions continued, but we heard the comrades knocking; they gave us a sign that they were still alive… and we continued."

That is the content of all truly altruistic acts, big and small. A man who has been instilled with the ability to identify with his milieu, a man who is aware of the strength of his heart, of his will, freely puts his ability at the service of others, without expecting any reward either in this world or another. Above all, he has the ability to understand the feelings of others, to experience them. That is enough. Sharing pain and joy with others. It helps them endure the difficult circumstances of their life. Sense your strength and generously use your capacity to cherish others, to encourage them, to awaken their faith in a better future and to urge them to fight for that tomorrow. Whatever may be his fate, he does not take it as a sorrow, but as the fulfilment of his life, as a richness of life that he would not want to change for that of a vegetable devoid of all duty; he prefers the possible dangers to a life without struggle or meaning.

Even now when the most brutal individualism is propagated through the spoken and written word, mutual aid is the essential component part in the life of humanity. And it is up to us, not from external circumstances, to extend more and the more the radius of reciprocal aid, not in the form of charity but by the natural cultivation of the social instincts latent in all of us.

I will now consider how to present what we call duty, from the perspective [here] elaborated.

Almost everyone who writes about morality tries to relate it to some source: inspiration from above, an innate feeling or a personal or general benefit, rationally understood.

In fact, it is proven that morality is a complex system of sentiments and concepts that have developed slowly in man and are still in the process of development. At least three constituent elements must be distinguished in morality: 1) the instinct, that is, the habit inherited from sociability; 2) the conceptual representation of justice, and 3) the feeling supported by reason which can be called self-sacrifice, selflessness, detachment, or the highest satisfaction of the powerful demands of [our] nature. The very word magnanimity falsely captures the meaning of that feeling, for magnanimity supposes a high appreciation of the act itself, whereas the moral man precisely refuses that assessment. That is precisely what the real moral force consists of.

Men are inclined to attribute their propensity for ethics to supernatural revelations; that temptation is resisted by very few thinkers; the rest, the utilitarians, endeavoured to explain morality by the rendering of what is beneficial, developed within man. Thus arose two contradictory schools. But

those amongst us who know human life and freed themselves from the prejudices of the Church know how important mutual aid was and still is for humanity, how important is a rational judgement concerning justice and how selfless are the actions of a man with a firm heart and a firm will.

Even in this era when the most brutal individualism is propagated, that is the rule which says "think above all about yourself," humanity could not exist a dozen years without mutual aid and without spontaneous activities at the service of the community. Unfortunately, these thoughts on the essence of morality and evolution have not found the slightest echo amongst the representatives of modern science. Huxley, being one of the best Darwinists when he explains new ideas about "the struggle for existence" and its significance for evolution, abandons his great teacher on the issue of the evolution of man's ethical concepts. Darwin explained them as a social instinct belonging equally to men and animals. Instead of giving morality a natural explanation, this remarkable naturalist prefers to associate lessons from nature with ecclesiastical dogmas.

Herbert Spencer, who devoted his life to the elaboration of a rational philosophy based on the theory of evolution and who had worked many years in the issues of morality, has also not completely followed the Darwinian explanation of the moral instinct.[1] After the belated recognition of mutual aid in animals – in June of 1888, in the journal *Nineteenth Century*[2] – and after the confession that in many of them there are rudiments of moral feeling, Spencer remained, nevertheless, a disciple of Hobbes, who denies the existence of moral feelings in primitive peoples, "while there is no social pact concluded" nor while they have not been subjected to the rules of wise legislators, inspired in a mysterious manner. And if Spencer modified his perspective somewhat in the last years of his life, primitive man was always for him, as for Huxley, a quarrelsome creature, that if it could be tamed it was thanks to laws, and that at last a concept of moral relations with his fellows has been formed, in part, by selfish calculations.

But science should have left Faust's study a long ago, in which light only penetrates through murky windows.[3]

It is time for scholars to know nature not just through dusty libraries but in the freedom of the mountains and the valleys, in the light of the sun, as the founders of scientific zoology in the deserts of America did at the beginning of the nineteenth century, just like the founders of genuine anthropology who lived with primitive peoples, not in order to teach them Christian doctrine but to know their traditions and customs.

Then they will be convinced that morality is not foreign to nature. They will see how across the whole animal world the mother endangers her life to save the child, how the gregarious animals fight collectively against enemies, how they gather in large communities to seek, together, new foods; they will see how primitive savages receive the doctrines of morality from animals; they will see, then, from whence comes that which our spiritual teachers are so proud and boast of being the representatives of God upon earth. And instead of repeating that nature is immoral, they will understand that whatever our concepts of good and evil are, they are nothing more than the expression of what nature initially gave us and thereafter the slow process of evolution.

The supreme ideal to which the best of us have risen is nothing more than what we already observe in animals and primitive races, as well as in the civilised peoples of our day, when life is given for others and for the happiness of future generations. No one so far has risen above this ideal, and no one can surpass it.

Instead of giving morality a natural explanation, this remarkable naturalist prefers to associate lessons from nature with ecclesiastical dogmas

[1] Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) was a prominent English classical liberal political theorist of the Victorian era. He wrote extensively on evolution, coining the phrase "survival of the fittest" which was later taken up by Darwin, although Spencer subscribed to a more Lamarckian perspective. Opposed to almost all forms of state intervention beyond defending private property. (*Black Flag*)

[2] Kropotkin is referring to a later article by Herbert Spencer: "On Justice," *Nineteenth Century* (March, 1890) 27: 435–448. (*Black Flag*)

[3] A reference to the German legend Faust, who is bored and depressed with his life as a scholar and sells his soul to the Devil for further knowledge and magic powers with which to indulge all the pleasure and knowledge of the world. It has been retold many times, including a play, *Faust: A Tragedy*, by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe (1749-1832) first published in 1808 in which Faust is first seen in his study, disappointed with science using natural means and who then attempts and fails to gain knowledge of nature and the universe by magical ones. (*Black Flag*)

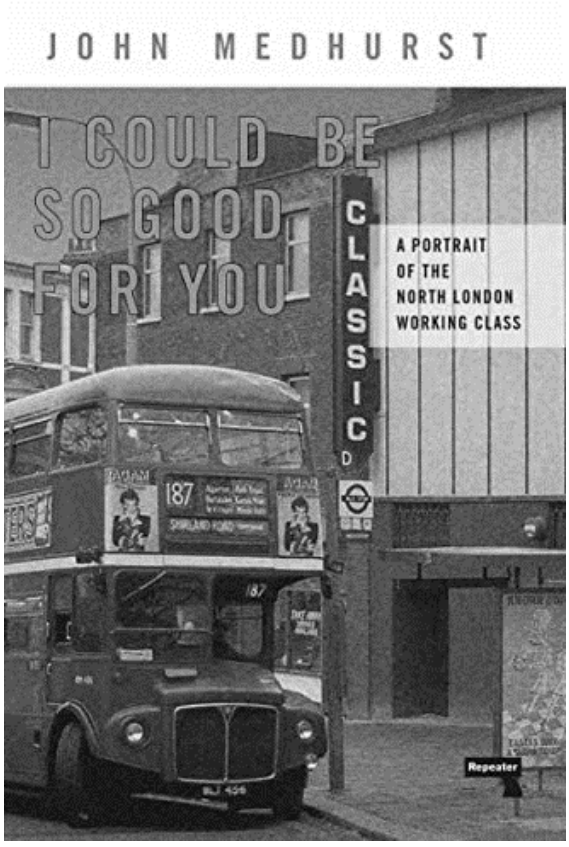
Reviews

I could be so good for you

Aubrey Dawney

John Medhurst, *I could be so good for you: a portrait of the North London working class*
(London: Repeater Books, 2023)

Back in 2000 I was working in the acquisitions department of a public library service in North London and used to catalogue the books we'd bought to fulfil reservations. Someone had requested "True: the autobiography of Martin Kemp", of Spandau Ballet fame. On the inside flap of the dust cover he wrote of being from Islington "which was, and still is, a working class area". Not the Islington of the tabloid imagination but the real one, where a few years earlier Shadow Home Secretary Tony Blair had been embarrassed by the local Adams crime family killing a rival round the corner from where he lived. Where people vote for Jeremy Corbyn not because they are middle class lefties – or a "privileged minority who can afford luxury beliefs" - but because they are working class and his politics benefits them or would do given half a chance.



Medhurst draws heavily on working class memoirs and autobiography to bring social history to life. Martin Kemp is not quoted, but his older brother Gary is. Along with other musicians such as Adam Ant, Steve Jones, Viv Albertine and the various members of Madness. The author's own experiences and those of his family and friends are also woven in. I am the same age as Medhurst and like him studied History and Politics at Queen Mary College, University of London, in Mile End. I don't remember him and I don't recognise him from his photo, which may reflect my lack of any real interest in being a student once I'd escaped from Thanet, beyond not letting my mother down. Or it may be that I was in a different year and didn't take the same courses when we overlapped. I have lived in the area covered by this book for 40 years, but I was born and grew up in Kent and my background was not working class. My family roots are in London East of the River Lea and my family moved to Thanet before I was born because my dad left his job in a perfume factory in Stratford-atte-Bow to be a research chemist at Pfizer in Sandwich. I loved the area he describes and know it quite well.

The blurb emphasises the cultural and subcultural aspects of working class life – "At the cutting edge of British music, fashion and politics" – which are bold claims the author doesn't really demonstrate. I was excited by these claims, I enjoyed the culture and subculture and was involved in the politics but this is not the book I wanted it to be, nor the book it is marketed as. The author himself merely claims to be "trying to identify a London working class experience and, in as much as possible, a specifically *North London* working class experience". He is largely successful in that he demonstrates that working class communities lived in his North London and still do, and that they have a rich cultural life. His best passages on social housing and living conditions gives you an idea of what the book could have been, and perhaps what it should have concentrated on. He is also best on the cultural aspects when they are reflective of social conditions, and draws on memoirs and interviews rather than music criticism and subcultural studies. He aims to establish the case for an "urban bohemia… Not a bastion of middle class privilege

but a fusion of the detritus of an older working class culture – its canals, warehouses, cafes, markets, garrets – with new immigrants and déclassé middle class elements [Hello!] seeking freedom from bourgeois conventions offered by such environments". That is what I've always loved about London and wanted to read about in more detail. I mourn its passing into a world of privatised spaces, gentrification and corporate domination. He is less successful at that because his material isn't a synthesis of research in particular areas or themes but seems to be more an accumulation of anything which he has found or experienced either relevant or related to his idea of the working class life of North London. As he admits, "It is inevitably partial and incomplete…The final product is highly subjective although not, I hope, untrue or misleading". Partial and incomplete it may be, but its scope is ultimately too ambitious and it is neither comprehensive nor sufficiently detailed as a result.

It's highly readable in manageable chunks, but with chapters covering whole decades and running to around 70 pages each the structure really needs breaks so you can read each chapter topic-by-topic. Or perhaps sections on each of the claims, each tracing their history over a number of chapters. The lack of organisation of the material makes testing his proposition, or even drawing any conclusions from the material he's gathered bloody difficult and exhausting. It also made it difficult to read purely for entertainment as there are no natural breaks where you can let what you've just read sink in before it rattles on. It could also have done with better proof-reading as there are all sorts of minor errors throughout, such as novelist "Arthur Le Bern", upon whose novel *Goodbye Piccadilly, farewell Leicester Square* Alfred Hitchcock's film *Frenzy* (set in and around the old Covent Garden Market) is based, being [correctly] spelt "La Bern" a few lines down. These are minor quibbles but having to check the footnotes and look up the source to find out that "Janet Daley" is correctly named as Patricia Daley originally, then becomes "Janet" (Janet Daley is a right-wing American journalist, and not to be confused with Mills & Boon author Janet Dailey) on the next page, and the reference is also attributed to "Janet Daley", is annoying and confusing. The Whittington Estate in Dartmouth Park is also misspelt "Whittingdon", because obviously the proof-reader had never heard of Dick Whittington, who allegedly turned back on the A1 just east of the estate at a spot marked by the Whittington Stone (and pub of that name), or the nearby Whittington Hospital which I know rather better than I would have liked. Later there is a reference to "Right to Buy and Right to Let" which surely should have read "Right to Buy and buy-to-let". Oh, and under George Graham's management Arsenal first won the Football League in 1989, only one of the most famous seasons in English football history; it was the League Cup they won at the end of that manager's first season in 1987.

A more serious problem is that it reads like two different books, or rather the chapters covering the 1980s and 1990s are a bit different from what preceded and succeeds them, which I found jarring. The first three chapters/decades are fact-heavy with anecdotes used to illustrate social history, then in the 1980s and 1990s it becomes a series of episodes, anecdotes and quotes which seem to be what the author remembered from those decades, or what he thought was important and there was a book about it he could use. Once we get to 2000-2008, we are back with housing and the readability improves. I enjoyed it by the end but I initially gave up on it in the 1990s. There is little depth, with a single source almost always being used (the exceptions being where the author apparently doesn't agree with his main source), and how the author decided what to include and what to leave out can be puzzling, except where it falls foul of the his geographical range which then often seems arbitrary when the events excluded had an impact on the people who lived, worked, enjoyed the culture, participated in the subcultures and were active in the politics which took place there. The National Front's Wood Green march in 1977 is covered but not the Battle of Lewisham; which might be fair enough, but the murder of Stephen Lawrence even further to the southeast than Lewisham and the specific police conduct of the investigation is included alongside instances of police racism and killings in north London – either you leave stuff out from outside the area or you don't and you include it on grounds of relevance. Similarly, he deals with Grime through Skepta who is from Tottenham while admitting that the genre/subculture originates in East London but not describing the relationship between the two. I would have preferred to know more about the origins of Grime and then how North London had its own take on it.

The result is perhaps best described as "sprawling", the chapter on the 1990s begins with the Trafalgar

Square Poll Tax riot, partly blames it for the militarisation of the police (which actually has its origins in the 1972 Miners' Strike culminating in the police riot at Orgreave in 1984), briefly describes the campaign – of which more later – touches on policing; switches to further deindustrialisation, unemployment and changing employment patterns; describes the Dispatch Industry Workers' Union – again, more on this later – and lousy working conditions in sweatshops and the construction industry, discrimination and employment tribunals; the North London Line railway, now part of London Overground; housing; his parents buying their council house, selling up and moving to Shepperton; immigration and the BNP, Finsbury Park mosque, the murder of Richard Everitt in Somerstown; crime; police corruption in Hackney; more crime; football; boxing; music; the Young British Artists; the gay scene and the Copeland bombings; Reclaim the Streets, or rather J18; theatre schools; depictions of working class life in *Eastenders* and *The football factory*; and some kind of conclusion about the persistence of white working class life in north London. It begins to feel like striking up a conversation in a pub with someone who starts off interesting but just doesn't know when to stop.

The story is written from the perspective of council tenants, although squatters make an appearance from the 1970s. Some of the local politicians were pro-active, but positive developments were driven by local pressure from community groups

The bulk of the first three chapters, covering the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, and the last two covering 200-2008 and then bringing it up to date and coming to some conclusions, is about the places people live, both the districts and the housing, and how they make the living which placed them there and kept them there. It is the changes to housing and employment patterns which drive the story. Those changes also involve the movement of working class people out of London (or to its outer edges) either for better housing or following the industries they worked in. They, and especially their children, often came to regret the decision and missed the world they had left behind. In some cases the feeling of regret, or resentment of their parents' decision to leave has combined with resentment at how the world they knew has changed. Since those leaving were mostly white, this helped drive the demographic changes which had already made the working class in London culturally diverse. It also means that in some cases the more racially and ethnically diverse populations of the areas they once knew are the targets of resentment on the part of those who left or those who remain and dislike the changes [that's my experience, the author does not make this point]. Multiculturalism is one of the points of the book, that while the older white working class (including Irish, Jewish and Cypriot minorities) retains its own identit[ies] that identity has not remained fixed but has evolved through contact with diverse cultures and sometimes varies from generation to generation within the same family, just as people from those other cultures have become both Londoners and British and changed the meaning of those terms in the process. This is a riposte both to racists and hand-wringing liberals concerned about minorities as victims rather than actors in their own right. Working for Hackney Council I experienced this multiculturalism – the people I worked with got to be accepted as British without pretending to be something they were not.

What is now called "Social Housing" features heavily because this is what enabled working class people to live in the centre of London, and to work in the trades and industries located there. 43% of the population of Greater London still live in socially-rented housing today. The subject is covered in detail, addressing the varying approaches of different councils – the London County Council and its various Metropolitan Boroughs, and from 1965 the Greater London Council (until abolition in 1986) and the 32 London Boroughs – both to building homes for working class people and to "municipalisation" of privately-owned homes to boost the public housing stock or to enable working class people to continue living there. The story is written from the perspective of council tenants, although squatters make an appearance from the 1970s. Some of the local politicians were pro-active, but positive developments were driven by local pressure from community groups as much as by a desire to fulfil

statutory obligations, some of the groups' proposals were adopted after legal battles against the destruction of homes and developments detrimental to working class residents. Forcefully asserting their needs and putting forward proposals about how those needs could be met was how they made local government democratic. In those days the Tories may have been in the pockets of private landlords and developers but not all the Labour politicians were. For example, Margaret Hodge (Margaret Watson from 1968 to 1978), Chair of Islington's Housing Committee from 1975 to 1982 when she became Leader of the Council, is credited with a big increase in new council housing, but the reference to extensive municipalisation (in response to proposals from Islington Housing Action Group, according to Wikipedia, which credits it to Hodge/Watson) cites the acquisition and refurbishment of 3,000 homes by 1975, preceding her tenure.

"Many council tenants did not welcome squatters, either because they disliked their lifestyle or because they saw them as queue-jumpers, grabbing vacant council properties for which their friends and family were patiently waiting. This wasn't always fair. Many vacant properties were not council-owned and were deliberately kept empty by their owners to accrue value and to be easy to rent later. Many squatters were not drop-outs but working class men and women, some with kids, with nowhere else to go. But it was a widespread perception…" Medhurst also describes council tenants and squatters working together to clean up the Hillview Estate in Camden in 1979. Hodge/Watson was a scourge of squatters, of whom there were an estimated 30,000 in London in 1975 because the public housing supply was inadequate. Given that squatting, in precisely the area and period covered by the book, was a big factor in the anarcho-punk underground, a major target for violence from Nazi skinheads, a political issue in the 1980s which was very important in Hackney with Council meetings being repeatedly occupied by squatters resisting the mass evictions on the Stamford Hill Estate, for example, and crucial to both the counter culture and the revolutionary anarchist movement in the 1970s in the area covered (the link between the latter two being the Angry Brigade) it cries out for a better treatment than "on the one hand, on the other hand". Surely this is relevant to the claims about the area being "at the cutting edge of music… and politics" not to mention the author's "urban bohemia"? Then, in the chapter on the 1990s, the resisted Stamford Hill Estate eviction in 1988 and Hackney Housing Action Group crops up in a passage about housing changes, followed by eviction of squatters or the absorption of "Hackney's vibrant squatter culture" into housing co-ops which seems inconsistent with his previous comments; something he doesn't address. Your reviewer was not active in the squatting movement, so would welcome further comment from those who were.

Efforts to address the supply of affordable housing were hampered by the Housing Finance Act 1972, which changed the requirement for public housing to charge "fair rents" to "reasonable rents", i.e. in line with private rents. This was backed up by the threat of withdrawal of government subsidies from councils and the surcharging and disbarment of councillors from office in a foretaste of what the Thatcher government would do with Rate-capping. Since the London Borough of Camden was one of the most progressive council housing providers, and its Labour councillors were often lawyers who would be disqualified from practising law and would lose their livelihoods if surcharged, this was decisive (and Camden caved in over Rate-capping first of the left-wing Labour councils for those reasons). Rate-capping brought an end to the brief period of enhanced local democracy responsive to local people's needs known as "Municipal Socialism" (or "the Looney Left") and along with the decline of the trades union movement as a political force after the miners' defeat in 1985 that blow is probably the origin of New Labour in my view. However, Municipal Socialism is only covered at GLC level, even though that is at odds with his more local rather than London-wide focus elsewhere. Its legacy in local councils outlived the abolition of the GLC and helps explain the persistence of the Labour left into the 1990s even as Kinnock assaulted them under the pretext of expelling the Militant and those in the Party with ambitions adapted to the Tory government's agenda with "caring cuts". A possible clue as to why the focus is on the GLC rather than Camden or Islington, say, is that the author mentions still living in Poplar (in Tower Hamlets) in 1985.

The Housing Act 1980 introduced "right-to-buy", along with a ban on councils using the proceeds to build more council housing. By 1997 the council housing stock in the UK had been reduced by about a quarter (the need to use UK statistics underlines the problematic nature of the geographical frame).

The Land Compensation Act 1973 introduced a duty to house residents made homeless by new developments, meaning they took priority in council housing, and the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act 1977 gave "needs-based allocation" of housing priority meaning that the poorest people with the most problems replaced the more mobile in council estates. Add in unemployment and lack of funding for services and sink estates resulted. This shift in eligibility for new council tenancies helped force existing tenants to move out for bigger flats or convinced them that to do so would be necessary for a better life.

Medhurst returns to council housing in the last chapter with the return of council housebuilding by some Labour councils in the 2010s, based on some horrible compromises with developers. It's here that I think he is most revealing about his politics. "One of the most controversial, the Haringey Development Vehicle (HDV), a scheme which repackaged certain estates in Haringey as a 'joint venture' between the council and private investors with the council retaining a 50% controlling veto, was scuppered by a vociferous campaign by local housing and Momentum activists. The HDV may have given away too much to the private sector but it was a genuine attempt to use the one remaining resource of local government, its land, to bring investment to some of North London's most neglected estates. Its critics, *possibly not as representative of the tenants as they believed* [my italics], had no real alternative except the arrival of a socialist government which, sadly, never did." A perfectly valid criticism of the Corbynistas but they really are an easy target. The difficult thing is coming up with an alternative to partial and temporary mitigation of government attacks, measures which make the property developers more powerful and ensures they will come back for more. This comment reminded me of the kind of Stalinist loop I was often trapped in as a trades union activist during the 1980s where it was argued that we should make no attempt to mobilise the membership against council attacks because "the members aren't with us". How we create a real alternative is the question to which I dedicated the 1980s and 1990s. I burned out twice, and I swear the stress and the coping strategies I resorted to are what gave me cancer.

He even manages to comment that "far more working class Londoners" attended football matches, or went to the pub or went shopping, than attended the 1990 National Anti-Poll Tax demonstration; undeniably true, but tell me again how that demonstrates that "the North London working class" was "at the cutting edge of… politics"?

Since this is an anarchist publication and your reviewer was first an anarcho-punk, later an anti-fascist and an anarcho-syndicalist militant in North London during this period, this brings us to the politics. Here the publisher's claims fall flat on their face. Housing policy and struggles apart, the politics seems mostly to be selected from Medhurst's experience working in Unemployment Benefit Offices and his experiences in the trades union movement. Other public services, and the political-industrial struggles involved in defending them, don't get the coverage they deserve. This is possibly because the author's day job is as a Policy Officer for the Civil and Public Service union, and it's basically been his life. That would also explain the fact that he doesn't reference any personal interest in music or subculture and doesn't seem to understand them except as they reflect social conditions; and he doesn't seem to be a football fan but reels off some potted portraits of Tottenham Hotspur (which his brother supports), Arsenal, Chelsea and Queens Park Rangers (Fulham's exclusion is a mystery). He even manages to comment that "far more working class Londoners" attended football matches, or went to the pub or went shopping, than attended the 1990 National Anti-Poll Tax demonstration; undeniably true, but tell me again how that demonstrates that "the North London working class" was "at the cutting edge of… politics"? I think the truth is that he sees politics, and indeed culture, from the perspective of how it impacted on ordinary working class people and not from that of those on the cutting edge, regardless of how working class or "urban bohemian" the latter were. London Punk appears during 1976-1978, and its long afterlife in which far more working class kids participated in various largely underground

scenes and subcultures is overlooked completely in favour of more mainstream successors such as Two-Tone and the Blitz Kids/New Romantics.

Anarchists do get a look in, "Class War and other anarchists led the way" in fighting back against the police [in Trafalgar Square] – which is at least positive, even if I agree that we shouldn't blow the significance of the riot out of proportion – although I am dubious about this. Most of the people I saw fighting were casuals, many wearing "Mersey Militant" stickers, but Militant's leadership distanced themselves from the fighting and offered to grass people up to the police leaving Class War to take the credit. Class War spokesperson Andy Murphy got disciplined by his employer, London Borough of Hackney, for doing interviews allegedly including at least one on a work phone. This anarchist got a resolution in his support through the Executive Committee of the Hackney NALGO Branch, of which we were both members, in solidarity with anarchists and referencing the Chicago May Day in 1886, as well as challenging the lazy depiction of anarchists as concerned solely with violence in a reply in *Labour Briefing*. I also had Militant's Steve Nally distort my argument that "if there's going to be a riot, it might as well happen when there are 250,000 people there" twisted to "if you've got 250,000 people you might as well have a riot". Not only that, but given that Haringey Anti-Poll Tax Union is cited as the leading campaign in London (not a claim those of us involved would have made, we just worked bloody hard and had a brilliant fundraiser so we could produce non-Militant-endorsed propaganda in sufficient quantities to support the independent campaign nationally) it would have been nice if the leading role in HAPTU of anarchists in London Greenpeace and North London Direct Action Movement (DAM) could have been mentioned, one of the latter even got elected to the National Committee of the All-Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation. That kind of detail might have leant a bit more support to the claims of North London primacy, although it would have contradicted his politics. It was the work we did ensuring the local campaign wasn't subordinate to the Labour Party – we insisted that Labour councillors should support us, rather than demanding that they "lead" us as the Labour left proposed, knowing that they would do neither – which allowed the wide participation which was our greatest strength.

Elsewhere, we have a reference to "anarchist cliques" among some squatters and DIWU "tried to operate in a loose anarcho-syndicalist fashion devoid of hierarchy and bureaucracy" (if he had any experience of the anarcho-syndicalist organisation of the period he wouldn't describe it as "loose", believe me) but the anarcho-syndicalist militant from East London DAM who started it isn't credited and there is mention of "quite a few couriers who described themselves as socialists or anarchists who did not join the Union. For example, I had one discussion with an Australian anarchist courier who said he liked everything about the DIWU except the word 'Union'. Another anarchist said he couldn't help the DIWU because Monday evenings were 'cheap night at the Rio Cinema'…You can give me your normal working class courier with mortgage and kids over one of those airheads any day." The point that these people call themselves "anarchists" but are actually airheads, and that the "normal working class" bloke – he's was working as a nurse in Southend when I saw him at a funeral three years ago - who started the union was an anarchist doesn't fit the narrative.

The omission of the anarchist trials of the 1970s (such as the "Stoke Newington 8" and "Persons Unknown") is presumably down to the misunderstanding that the defendants were not working class (or at least "urban bohemians") – a definition which can be slippery when people are trying to make a political point – even though Stuart Christie was an apprentice electrician. Presumably, McLibel which involved two members of London Greenpeace from Tottenham – a former postman and a gardener – doesn't fit in either. Equally strangely, "the Carnival Against Capital, also known as J18," is described as "an attempt to replicate the Poll Tax revolt" (the latter involved years of grassroots organising, not just a few riots in 1990) but is not placed in the context of its obvious forerunner the Stop the City actions which arose from the anarcho-punk scene in the early 1980s, itself closely linked to "urban bohemian" squatting. Dave Morris, the London Greenpeace activist who was one of the defendants in the McLibel trial, was involved in both Stop the City and the Haringey anti-Poll Tax campaign. There is a continuity of resistance which does not come across when material is cherry-picked from libcom and other published sources by someone who doesn't seem to know how events and people relate to each other, and appears oblivious to the ecology of radical politics and how cultures of resistance form, are maintained and operate.

The struggle against the National Front is covered, even after the 1979 General Election, partly through the memoirs of Anna Sullivan. After being in the Socialist Workers' Party and the Anti-Nazi League, Anna was among those who left the SWP or was expelled around 1981 for continuing to see the NF as a threat because it was attacking the SWP paper sale in Chapel Market in Islington up until 1983 even though the SWP leadership had declared the battle won after Thatcher stole the NF's thunder in the 1979 General Election. Anna was a key figure in forming the pointedly named Islington Anti-Racist Anti-Fascist Action (ARAFA) which distinguished itself from Anti-Fascist Action (AFA) formed in 1985. AFA isn't mentioned in the book even though it also came out of the long struggle against the NF in Islington, and the battle to combat attacks on music events by the NF and the British Movement from the late 70s through to the abolition of the GLC. The activities of this movement, centred around the group which became Red Action, carried on throughout North London and beyond for the 1980s and 1990s and put a major brake on the ability of the fascists to organise and to attack their enemies on the streets. Red Action had a large first and second generation Irish membership and an ability to work with others who shared their objectives and accepted their methods but not necessarily their politics. They also spanned North London and its diaspora in new towns such as Hatfield and Welwyn Garden City and were solidly working class; one of the things they advocated was "a socialist organisation inspired and led by working class people". That would seem to tick all the boxes for inclusion in the book, there's even a pretty comprehensive published history of it to quote from.

Anarchists were also involved, Martin Lux's "Anti-fascist" is not cited, even though his brother Danny's "Camden parasites" is cited a few times. Among anarchists who sought to combat the fascists at the infamous 1979 Crass gig at Conway Hall was one of the "Persons Unknown" trial defendants, Vince Stevenson (the gig was a benefit for the defendants). Later, as a member of East London DAM, Vince was involved with AFA. Members of ELDAM and Red Action had also been involved together in Holborn, Finsbury and St Pancras Miners' Support Group. Medhurst thinks the 1984-85 Miners' Strike didn't happen in London as the coalfields are elsewhere, which ignores both the fact that the Kent Coalfield is not far away and that there was an enormous amount of solidarity work done in London. He does mention money being collected by "St Pancras Labour Party" for the miners, but that's all. A whole generation of working class activists, especially anarchists, was energised and alerted to the possibility of a wider working class resistance than simple industrial disputes, even if not already politicised, by the strike and its solidarity networks. Diarmaid Kelliher has written a book about the relationship between London and the Miners' Strike, "Making cultures of solidarity" but the literature of the strike is vast.

A whole generation of working class activists, especially anarchists, was energised and alerted to the possibility of a wider working class resistance than simple industrial disputes, even if not already politicised, by the strike and its solidarity networks

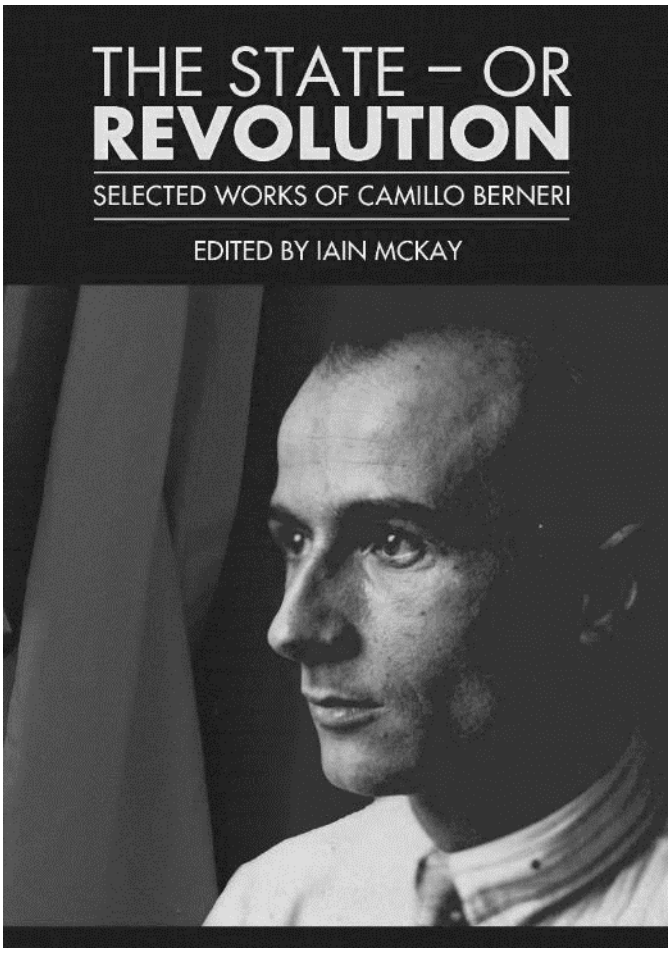
And lastly, Hackney Community Defence Association, a civil rights organisation against police harassment and violence including deaths in custody joined with activists from the recently disbanded Hackney Trade Union Support Unit to form the Colin Roach Centre, named after the most famous of those who died in custody in Stoke Newington Police Station, with the consent of his family. Although Medhurst describes migrant workers' struggles he doesn't reference the work of either Hackney TUSU or the CRC in supporting those struggles. That was the cutting edge of politics in North London, even if like most resistance during that era it was local, temporary and limited in its impact. Overall this is a worthwhile read but don't expect too much of its politics.

Overall this is a worthwhile read but don't expect too much of its politics

The State – Or Revolution

Zoe L, an Anarchist and Trade Union activist

The State – or Revolution: Selected Writings of Camillo Berneri (London: Freedom Press, 2023)



Like many (probably most) English-speaking Anarchists, I had never heard of Camillo Berneri before discovering this book. As editor Iain McKay explains in his introduction - that is because Berneri's writing has not been readily available in English translation until now. We should be grateful to Iain for taking the time to compile this selection of important and thought-provoking texts.

Iain McKay's introduction sets out the history and context of Berneri's life and works, and helps the reader get quickly into the texts. Berneri is important - a soldier, a trade union activist, an anti-fascist and anti-war activist. Berneri ag itated amongst the soldiers and officers while serving in the army during the First World War and later fought against fascism in Italy and Spain. He was also a writer and philosopher, with the intellectual capacity of a university professor. Berneri was both a hands-on, direct action activist, a workplace agitator, capable fighter and an intellectual. He was a free-thinker and a radical who was also pragmatic and adaptable.

Berneri's pragmatism and flexibility comes across strongly in the book. He was not afraid to challenge orthodox Anarchist theories when he found that they did not work in practice. For example, in the chapter titled "Abstentionism and Anarchism" he addresses the question of whether or not anarchists should always abstain from voting in elections, even when there are compelling strategic or tactical reasons to cast your vote. He asks the question "whether abstention is always appropriate".

Berneri challenged the idea that anarchists should dogmatically refuse to vote under any circumstances, without first considering the situation both strategically and tactically – for example, by considering whether or not voting could help to advance the working-class struggle. He called this "abstentionist cretinism".

He provides a great anecdote about refusing to vote in the 1921 Italian general election. Not only did the result of the election lead to the rise of fascism in Italy and Mussolini's takeover, but by refusing to vote, and dogmatically arguing that voting was pointless, he soured relationships with his socialist postman and all of his left-wing neighbours, who subsequently refused to talk to him. The lesson learned is that sometimes it makes strategic or tactical sense to take part in elections, (you can do so whilst at the same time recognising the limitations of voting, and still continuing to argue against a reliance on party politics to ultimately change things).

Berneri concluded:

> "Abstentionist cretinism is that political superstition which considers the act of voting as an injury to human dignity or that assesses a political-social situation by the number of non-voters in an election."

Berneri also challenged the orthodox Anarchist view about Trade Unions (i.e., that they are simply corrupt bureaucracies that collaborate with the bosses), in the chapter titled, "The Hour of

Anarcho-Syndicalism". He writes, based on his experiences, that:

> "With anarcho-syndicalism, anarchism leaves snobbery, onanist intellectualism, egotistic individualism, exasperated and desperate nihilism. Where the anarchist movement has roots in the trade union movement, it has an extensive and serious participation in the class struggle."

Berneri's point is proved by the fact that the Anarchist Trade Unions in Spain were quickly able to mobilise large sections of the working class into militias to fight against Franco's fascists.

Berneri also provides useful explanations of the key differences between Marxist-Leninist theory and Anarchist theory in the chapter titled "Abolition and Extinction of the State", (a key difference being the Marxist concept of "the dictatorship of the proletariat"). Berneri explains that whereas Anarchists desire the destruction of classes by means of a social revolution which suppresses both class rule and state structures simultaneously; Marxists do not propose armed revolution by the whole Proletariat, but rather the conquest of the State by the Party (which presumes to represent the proletariat).

Berneri also provides interesting insights into the Spanish Revolution (from first-hand experience); as well as theoretical analysis of the Russian Revolution; and interesting commentary on working class culture. He warns against romanticising the Proletariat, which he characterises as:

> "ignorant of itself [lacking class consciousness]; which takes care of its interests in an unintelligent way; which fights only with reluctance for idealistic motives or long-term ends; which is weighed down by an infinite number of prejudices, crude ignorance and infantile illusions."

There are some fascinating snippets about Franco, Mussolini and Hitler amongst his writings, and some interesting observations about the nature of 'work', in particular the need for the "discipline of rest", as well as the discipline of hard work (being disciplined in taking rest breaks ultimately makes you more productive).

This is not a book that needs to be read cover-to-cover, but a useful reference book, divided into sections on Marxism; the State; the Russian Revolution; the Spanish Revolution; and miscellaneous writings and essays. It is best read by honing in on chapters or subjects of particular interest to you, many of which are quite short and digestible.

As Iain McKay writes in the conclusion to his introduction:

> "the book is not an end in itself... this collection exists only to help libertarians today in our struggles to increase liberty and equality, to fight successfully against exploitation and oppression, and build the forces that can create libertarian communism. Anarchists today will benefit from reading Berneri's informed and realistic analysis."

The value of this book is Berneri's ideas and experiences, and what they can teach us about the struggles we face today.

It is not at all true to say that Berneri was merely a scientist and theoretician. He was much more: he was a fighter. And more still: he was a man. A man on whose word one could depend, whose actions could face the light of day – a man filled with ardour for the ideal of Justice, and Freedom and Human Dignity. All this was merged for him in the one word: ANARCHISM.

Augustin Souchy, "The Tragic End of an Anarchist Fighter", *Spain and the World*, 11 June 1937

Parish Notices

Green & Black Cross offer in-person and online training sessions in both Knowing Your Rights and becoming a Legal Observer. Information at greenandblackcross.org or contact their Protest Support Line: 07946 541 511

The Anarchist Federation are organising support for the Kill the Bill Prisoners, sent to prison after the Kill the Bill demonstration in Bristol in March 2021. They are serving sentences of 3-14 years: organisemagazine.org.uk/af-bc

The latest issue of the Anarchist Communist Group's *Jackdaw* (#15) is available as a free pdf. Download here: anarchistcommunism.org/2023/09/16/new-jackdaw-out-now-free-download-here

Solidarity Federation-IWA has a number of members in South and West Wales and is looking to organise and support the establishment of Locals. If you live in Wales and would like to join SolFed, then get in touch: solfed.wales@gmail.com

Sparrows' Nest Library continues to digitise their archive. The latest additions to the Digital Library include issues of *Tierra y Libertad* produced in Mexico by exiled Spanish refugees after the Civil War, and the single issue of *Hyde Park* published by Guy Aldred in 1938: thesparrowsnest.org.uk

Karl Marx

Le Révolté, 31 March 1883[1]


Cinquième Année. — N° 3 31 MARS 1883

LE RÉVOLTÉ

POUR LA SUISSE

Organe socialiste

Paraissant tous les 15 jours

POUR L'EXTERIEUR

Administration : rue des Grottes, 24, GENÈVE

The author of *Capital*, and one of the founders of the International Working Men's Association, died in London on the 14th.

His death is a great loss for the science of sociology and for the "social-democratic" party in Germany. A student of the Berlin philosophical school, Marx possessed mastery of the dialectical method, which he showed in all his attacks on the economists of the bourgeois school. In spite of the differences of opinion about his fundamental work, *Capital*, in which many people do not see original ideas – for example, the law of wages and value being found with Ricardo and other English economists – it must be admitted that no one has surpassed Marx in erudition, critique and scientific argumentation, either in his polemics with the bourgeois economist schools or in his assertion of socialist ideas.

Karl Marx is not only known as a writer, but his name is still linked to the socialist movement of the last forty years. His participation in the socialist movement in Germany is known, both as a publicist and as a man of agitation and organisation. In 1847 he published, together with Engels, the famous *Communist Manifesto*, which ended with the appeal: *Proletarians of the whole world, unite!* When, in 1864, this call was heard, and the idea was realised by the founding of the International Working Men's Association, Marx deployed all his activity to give as much extension as possible to this organisation. We can even say that for many years the General Council of the Association acted under the influence and inspiration of Karl Marx.

A man of 48[2], a partisan of the State and of centralist authoritarian organisation, he fought by *all means*, overt and covert, against the federalist and anarchist ideas that arose within the International in the interval of 1870-73. Resting on an artificial majority, Marx and his friends had the federalist minority expelled from the International at the Hague Congress (1872).

Although Marx was exclusively engaged with scientific work during the last ten years, his influence remains great in Germany. It is also found in the French labour movement, among the partisans of the Fourth Estate.[3]

[1] https://mgouldhawke.wordpress.com/2023/09/17/karl-marx-le-revolte-1883/
[2] That is, a participant in the revolutions which erupted across Europe in 1848. (*Black Flag*)
[3] That is, the working class. (*Black Flag*)

Letter from Kropotkin

"Report of the Commune Celebration", *Freedom*, April 1899

DEAR COMRADES,

It is with the sincerest regret that I find myself unable to be with you this evening. Illness has made it absolutely impossible, and all I can do is to send you a few words that I would so much rather have spoken, and wish you every success in the meeting which celebrates the proclamation of the Commune.

In 1870 the breakdown of Napoleon's empire was complete. Scandalous thefts were discovered in the administration. The rottenness of the administration in all its branches was apparent to everyone. There remained no choice for the Imperialist party but to divert the attention of the country towards a war, or to be overthrown by the people.

The conditions are now exactly the same; after twenty-eight years of a bourgeois republic the breakdown of the bourgeois parliamentary rule is also complete. There is not one branch of public administration in which the incapacity of the bourgeois republicans to solve the problems of the day would not have been proved. Education is again falling back into the clutches of the clergy. The Jesuits are again supreme, and it is their schools which supply now most military commanders to the general staff. Every day new thefts are discovered in the administration of the supplies for the army. Who knows if the Toulon explosion was not the means of destroying the material evidence of those thefts in the administration of the navy which Lockroy had discovered the other day during his visit of inspection at Toulon.

The prison administration, the charity organisations, the railways and canals administration, and so on, have all shown the same high level of bourgeois morality.

Scandals follow scandals. The Panama scandal, the Algerian railway scandal, the Eastern railway scandal, the Ambassador's scandal, and finally that colossal network of forgeries, thefts, assassinations, called suicides, in which every man of eminence, beginning with the President of the Republic down to the last turncoat in journalism are involved, keep the French nation in such a state that no cry would be more popular at the present moment than the war-cry of "down with all rulers!"

They know it, and they have tried to bring forward a dictator who, like Napoleon I, might divert public attention from inner affairs to victories abroad. But they had no luck with their " saviours." Their music hall General Boulanger, their Bonaparte and Dukes of Orleans have proved such miserable shams that all hope in them had to be given up.

War, or the overthrow of the bourgeois rule, and the proclamation of free Communes – THERE WAS NO OTHER CHOICE.

The Commune, which would break down the "centralised State," would begin a new era of more or less communist organisation for producing and consuming, and at last proclaim the liberty of the group and of the individual after three centuries of failures under the rule of the centralised State.

Is it France alone that is in such a condition? Are there no signs of something similar in this country as well? Ten years ago a great labour movement had reached its climax in England, so much so that enthusiasts like William Morris wrote, "The revolution is not going to begin, it has begun." The middle classes were appalled at the sudden growth of the Socialist idea amidst the workers of England; and, while some reactionists advocated that, an insurrection should be provoked that it might be drowned in blood and the workers terrorized, others more cunning found an escape for the time in jingoism.

For ten years they have worked in that direction with great ability, and a full knowledge of the lowest instincts of man, and we must recognise that their work has been crowned with a certain amount of success. And here, as in France, we must ask ourselves whether these cunning schemes will not, one of these days, involve the English nation in some terrible war in Europe or elsewhere.

The answer to this momentous question must be given by the workers of this country. But it must be well understood that the wars provoked by the ruling classes will solve none of the problems that are of vital interest to the workers; and even if we have twenty wars, social and economic problems will always return, and the world will still have to face the social revolution.