

AWL week school September 2007



This school covers the same broad areas as the AWL week school in July, but each area in a different way, using different texts and different activities - sometimes activities which were in the July school schedule but which we could not do then for lack of time. It will be held in London. To register to attend, contact the AWL office.

SESSION 1: SKILLS

Monday 3 September, 11:30 to 16:30

A) Public speaking.

Preliminary reading [1].

Brainstorm on dos and don'ts.

Practise drafting and delivering a speech to move a motion in your union branch to commit the Union Executive to oppose Gordon Brown's plans for restructuring Labour Party conference.

De-brief.

B) Contact work.

Divide into pairs. In each pair, one "plays" a contact, and the other "plays" AWL. Then swap.

Types of contact to "play":

(i) Young person who is broadly speaking left-wing but doesn't know what the word "socialist" means - comes up to you on a street sale or stall and asks: "What is this for? Is it a charity thing, or what?"

(ii) Young person who considers themselves left-wing but doesn't know much about it, and is shy. They have been sitting quietly at the back of a meeting and buy a paper when you go round to them after the meeting.

(iii) Young person who has come across the SWP or SP, quite likes what they have heard from SWP/SP about socialism, doesn't know anything about their more detailed politics, and is curious to know what all these different groups on the left are.

Debrief.

SESSION 2: WHY THE WORKING CLASS?

Tuesday 4 September, 11:30 to 16:30

Read The critique of capitalism: the writings of Ellen Meiksins Wood in review [2]; Back to Marx [3], by Ellen Meiksins Wood; and a review of Beverly Silver's Forces of Labor [4].

Brainstorm the main arguments used by postmodernists and others for the proposition that working-class struggle can no longer be central to politics, and the positive counter-arguments.

Draft and deliver a speech to be given to a meeting of students, left-wing but unsure what "the working class" even means, and somewhat influenced by postmodernist ideas, on why left-wingers should look to the working class.

SESSION 3: MARXISM AND ECONOMISM

Wednesday 5 September, 11:30 to 16:30

Preliminary reading: Lenin, What Is To Be Done? [5]; Antonio Gramsci, Some Theoretical and Practical Aspects of 'Economism' [6]; excerpts from Marx and Engels on historical materialism [7].

Discussion:

1. In chapter 3 of What Is To Be Done?, Lenin poses the question: "Is it true that, in general, the economic struggle 'is the most widely applicable means' of drawing the masses into the political struggle? It is entirely untrue". Doesn't this comment of Lenin's contradict the fundamental idea of socialism having a material basis in the class struggle of an economically defined class?

2. Is Gramsci's dismissive comment on "the theoretical syndicalist movement" - that "the transformation of the subordinate group into a dominant one is... posed [only in] a belief in the possibility of leaping from class society directly into a society of perfect equality with a syndical economy" - justified historically? What element of truth is there in it?

3. Gramsci calls "economism" what other Marxists would call "crude economic determinism". The socialists in Russia around 1900 who were called "Economists" had a slightly different angle. What is the difference between the two senses of "economism", and what is the overlap?

4. In the later part of this passage Gramsci probably has in mind, in the first place, the response of the majority of the Italian Communist Party, led by Bordiga, to the rise of fascism in the early 1920s. What was the issue there?

5. Gramsci shows himself to have been partly brainwashed by the anti-Trotsky propaganda current in the Communist International in the mid-1920s. Thus his reference to "the struggle against the theory of the so-called Permanent Revolution". What is wrong with his argument here?

Draft and deliver a speech to be delivered in a socialist educational on "What is economism?"

SESSION 4: MARXISM AND ANARCHISM

Thursday 6 September, 14:30 to 20:30

Preliminary reading: Plekhanov, Anarchism and Socialism [8]. Lenin's criticism of that pamphlet [9]. Basic statement of the Anarchist Federation [10]

Brainstorm session:

- analysing the various versions of anarchism;
- looking at the "quasi-Marxified" versions of anarchism which have become more current since Plekhanov wrote.

Drafting and delivering a short speech on "Marxism and Anarchism" as an introduction from the Marxist side to a hypothetical debate with the Anarchist Federation.

SESSION 5: THE NATIONAL QUESTION AND IRELAND IN PARTICULAR

Friday 7 September, 11:00 to 16:00

Preliminary reading: Preliminary reading: Trotsky on the national question [11]; texts from the AWL pamphlet Ireland: the socialist answer [12]

Brainstorm session:

Formulate a short list of six key turning points between 1968 and 1985. Add to them the Provisional IRA ceasefire of 1994 and the Good Friday Agreement of 1998.

Discuss each turning point.

Drafting and deliver a short speech on "Ireland: the last forty years" for a socialist but not particularly well-informed audience.

Source URL:

<http://www.workersliberty.org/node/9044>

Links:

- [1] <http://www.workersliberty.org/node/8711>
- [2] <http://www.workersliberty.org/node/4579>
- [3] <http://www.monthlyreview.org/697wood.htm>
- [4] <http://www.workersliberty.org/node/4720>
- [5] <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1901/witbd/index.htm>
- [6] http://www2.cddc.vt.edu/marxists/archive/gramsci/editions/spn/modern_prince/ch07.htm
- [7] <http://www.workersliberty.org/node/8809>
- [8] <http://www.marxists.org/archive/plekhanov/1895/anarch/index.htm>
- [9] <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/staterev/ch06.htm#s1>
- [10] <http://www.afed.org.uk/online/afed-iaf-ifa.pdf>
- [11] <http://www.workersliberty.org/node/6739>
- [12] <http://www.workersliberty.org/taxonomy/term/522>

[1] PUBLIC SPEAKING: SOME GUIDELINES

You can drop some of these rules when you become practised and confident at public speaking.

1. Keep it brief. Limit yourself strictly to about three points. The most common failing is trying to say too much.
2. Even if it is just a speech or question from the floor in a public meeting, write down what your three points are. If it is a prepared speech, write it out; memorise it as far as you can, but have your notes to refer to.
3. Decide in advance, and write down, what the final sentence of your speech will be.
4. If you tend to put lots of "you know" or "like" or "I mean" or "sort of" or "do you know what I mean?" into your speeches, as many people do when nervous, make a special point of writing the speech down before you make it, and

memorise it or at least practise reading it through aloud.

5. Stand up (unless it is a very tiny meeting).
6. Stand still. Preferably stand behind a table or a chair, and put your hands on it. Keep hand movements very limited.
7. Speak loudly and clearly and not too fast. The second most common failing is speaking too fast.
8. Look at the audience. Fix on different people at different points in the speech.
9. Announce what the speech is about in the first sentence. E.g. "I am speaking against motion 53 because I oppose the boycott of Israel".
10. Never start your speech by apologising - "I haven't had much time to prepare", or "I don't know much about this", or "X has already said pretty much all I wanted to say", etc.
11. Give signposts. Say what you are going to say, say it, and then tell the audience what you've just said. E.g. "I oppose the boycott of Israel for three reasons. One: it is a cheap substitute for serious action to help the Palestinians... Two: it will strengthen the Israeli right... Three: it will spill over into boycott and harassment of Jews... So, in conclusion: A boycott is a cheap substitute. It will strengthen the Israeli right. And in practice it will become an anti-Jewish movement. So oppose the boycott!"
12. Structure your argument in groups of three. E.g. "By endorsing Gordon Brown our union Executive has endorsed the war in Iraq. It has endorsed privatisation of the Health Service and schools. And it has endorsed cuts in real wages for public sector workers".
13. If you lose your thread, or your place in your notes, repeat what you have just said until you find your thread again.

[2] THE CRITIQUE OF CAPITALISM: THE WRITINGS OF ELLEN MEIKSINS WOOD IN REVIEW

The lesson that we may be obliged to draw from our current economic and political condition is that a humane, 'social', truly democratic and equitable capitalism is more unrealistically utopian than socialism" concludes Ellen Wood in *Democracy against capitalism* (p 293).

And if capitalism cannot be reformed to achieve this kind of society, then we need a critique of capitalism, which, Wood begins her book by explaining, is the principal project of Marxism.

So, why, given the dire state of the world, is the Marxist critique of capitalism not more influential, widely supported, authoritative?

Wood's book, written in the wake of two critically important events, takes up this question. The dramatic and unexpected collapse of the command economies of Eastern Europe and the triumph of the "New World Order" after the Gulf War brought to an end the Cold War, which had been a constant feature of international and national politics for the past half century.

For many on the left the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union removed a set of certainties which had included a belief that alternative, socialist societies actually existed and that their existence maintained, an albeit fragile, peace. Pessimism grew with the belief that the prospects of radical social, political and economic change had come to an end and that capitalism was triumphant. Some abandoned politics, others accommodated to what they saw as "new times". A number used their positions in the universities to teach pessimism to new generations of students under the guise of radical theories such as post-marxism, the politics of identity, postmodernism and poststructuralism.

Others drew different political conclusions from the death of Stalinism. Rather than bringing an end to cold war certainties it opened up the opportunity of reconceiving what socialism might be, of renewing the link between socialism and democracy which had been eliminated in the repressive regimes of Eastern Europe.

Early in 1992 Ellen Meiksins Wood was asked for her assessment of the collapse of the Soviet Union. She replied that it would take some time to repair the damage to socialism caused by Stalinism but concluded that we should be relieved that the albatross had been removed from our collective neck.

"In fact, maybe the principal lesson we ought to be learning from the collapse of Communism is that, while capitalism has proved itself capable of functioning without democracy, socialism cannot. Socialism is, by definition, a democratic organisation of society at every level from the workplace to the state."

"If we conceive of socialism as, in its very foundation, an organisation of material life based on freely associated direct producers, then that understanding of the socialist project conditions everything else." (*Workers Liberty* 16, March 1992). This conception of the centrality of democracy to socialism underpins her book.

Democracy against capitalism is a continuation of her earlier work *The retreat from class*, for which she is best known among socialists. There she challenged the idea, which had been evolving since the 1970s, that the working class was no longer the crucial element in the struggle against capitalism. She examined the writings of "post-Marxists" such as

Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffe, Paul Hirst, Barry Hindess and Gareth Stedman Jones as well as writers such as Sam Bowles and Herb Gintis.

Wood takes the reader on a wide-ranging tour of modern Marxist philosophy and its current radical critics. She asks us to consider what causes human society to be the way it is, or more specifically to consider what are its fundamental determinants. Class relations, she argues, have taken very different forms over time and place, and underlie the vast differences in social relations in general. A recurring theme of the book is that capitalism is a historically specific system of social organisation, unlike all previous systems. She argues that the market as a driving force is specific to capitalism.

One of the features differentiating capitalism and previous systems of production and accumulation is the separation of economy and politics. Under feudalism, for instance, the lord owned the land, appropriated the surplus and held political power — any struggle tended to challenge the authority of the feudal lord. In contrast, the connection between economics and politics is deliberately obscured as capitalism has developed two separate realms of power which previously were one and the same. As a result capitalist proprietors appear as separate from the state and politics, or as Karl Polanyi in his writings on the “great transformation” described it as the “disembedding of the ‘economy’ from society”.

So the economy appears as an autonomously functioning entity operating under a set of “laws” determined by the market which is most efficient if left unhindered and unconstrained by politics or the state.

Wood lays the groundwork for a discussion of the history of democracy, and her case for applying the political concepts of democracy to the economic sphere of production. She is also placing capitalism in a historical context, which helps the reader to conceive that capitalism is not a permanent state of affairs.

She is particularly critical of the base-superstructure metaphor and the mechanical way in which it has been employed by twentieth century Marxism. She prefers E P Thompson’s metaphor for relations of production as a field of force. Here relations of production are the fundamental feature of capitalism — not technology, forces of production or even capitalist ownership.

Capitalism is the relations of production by which capital appropriates the surplus of production — and these relations of production are not confined to the sphere of work, they are incorporated in law, in the state, in other aspects of society. To narrowly define an economic base for capitalism is to be unable to understand it fully.

Capitalist class relations force people to sell their labour power, exchanging it as a commodity or to be condemned to social exclusion or poverty. It is this social relation which is fundamental to capitalism and which despite changes in the economy, production systems, international trade, politics or culture remains at the core of capitalism today.

She sees class relations as a “structured process”, as against various stratification theories, which are in effect accepted by some Marxists. This geological layered approach understands people occupy fixed positions, and enjoy gradations of privilege. This obscures the fundamental relations of domination. The “structured process” for Thompson and Wood, means having a way of understanding changes in class relations, including how the working class can develop from being a class in itself to being a class for itself. It recognises that socialism is the act of working class self-emancipation, not of some superior intellectuals decreeing or implementing socialism from above.

The book’s second section begins with a historical overview of the concept of democracy and citizenship from ancient through to modern times. In discussing current popular ideas of “civil society”, (which she calls the “cult of civil society”) and the politics of identity, she suggests that both concepts operate primarily in the political sphere. They accept, perhaps unwittingly, capitalist social relations, and the separation of economics and politics as givens.

Wood examines the first ideas and realities of democracy in Ancient Greece. Despite its limitations it provided equal civic status and participation to all its citizens and generated opposition from elitist philosophers who did not like the rule of the demos (people). She traces the misappropriation of the ideas of Greek democracy by the founding fathers of American democracy, and the way in which they limited democracy to allow and conceal the emergence of a capitalist ruling class, immune from accountability to the people. Thus emerged modern capitalist democracy based on an understanding of a public political sphere which respected and protected private property in the means of production.

And yet modern capitalist democracy has been able to concede an extension of citizenship on a broader scale than any previous social order. Capitalism has found, after it was forced by struggle to concede, that civic participation of the propertyless, of women, blacks and indigenous peoples, homosexuals, 18 year olds, has not threatened its continued existence. Indeed many proponents of extending democratic rights argue that recognising a greater diversity of citizenship rights will strengthen capitalism’s efficiency while making it harder and more representative.

So we live with the grotesque juxtaposition of formal, legal and political equality — liberal democracy — against the most extensive inequality and poverty. It is commonplace in the industrialised economies to find massive differences in income and property (where managerial salaries are more than 100 times the average pay of employees) that would be considered intolerable were they applied to political rights such as voting, or to civil rights such as equal access to the law.

Some current expressions of political radicalism see civil society or identity politics as the means to emancipation under capitalism without challenging social relations. Civil society is conceived of as the place of freedom from the state, a space for a wide range of emancipatory aspirations. Its advocates see the state, not class relations, as the chief obstacle to democracy.

Wood sees no inherent structural impediment in capitalism to changes in response to identity politics, although she sees capitalism as resistant to them. She contends that capitalism is capable of tolerating difference and could survive without the oppression of women, racial minorities or homosexuals. What it cannot tolerate, or survive, is working class liberation.

Her central criticism of the politics of identity and civil society, is that they place issues of difference and democracy at the centre of their conception of social change, thereby “surrender(ing) to capitalism and its ideological mystifications.” (p 263) If it is class relations that constitute capitalism then class relations are what must be overthrown to rid ourselves of capitalism.

“We should not confuse respect for the plurality of human experience and social struggles with a complete dissolution of historical causality, where there is nothing but diversity, difference and contingency, no unifying structure, no logic of process, no capitalism, and therefore no universal project of human emancipation.” (p 263)

Her observation that political life in capitalism is subordinate to the power of capital is not new. What Wood is adding is an exploration of democracy including its original form in ancient Greece. She is making a case that a program for emancipation needs to both challenge capitalist social relations and replace them with a genuine democracy as the driving mechanism of the economy.

The very idea of a unifying democracy or a program of human emancipation is dismissed by various postmodern and post-Marxist writers, most of whom can be found in publicly funded universities. Wood links their ideological development with the economic downturn following the post war boom. The vast expansion of post-secondary education in the 1970s also meant new job opportunities for graduates as university teachers. They rose on the wave of ideological struggle and cultural revolution which rested on the long post-war economic boom. What many failed to understand was that boom would soon turn to a series of crashes beginning in 1973/4. Wood argues that many of this generation felt the boom’s end as the end of normality and so the cyclical decline since the 1970s has had a special, cataclysmic meaning for them.

Disillusioned by their expectations of revolutionary change they have turned their backs on what they see as old-fashioned economic issues or class struggle (Wood labels them “world weary pessimists”) instead being attracted by cultural practice and ideology. “Productive activity has finally been displaced by ‘discourse’ as the constitutive practice of social life, the material reconstruction of society has been replaced by the intellectual deconstruction of texts, and the terrain of left politics has been purposefully enclosed within the walls of the academy, while historical causality has been completely dissolved in postmodern fragmentation, ‘difference’ and contingency.” (Chronology 1995, p 45)

Today’s “post” academics have progressed from 1960s students to junior staff and are now senior academics. The paradox is that their intellectual activity, which celebrates “popular culture” has become increasingly exclusionary. Academic discourse has become more inaccessible, available to only a small minority of the initiated.

Included among these are a number of feminist writers who benefited from the mass movements of the 1960s and 1970s. “If the women’s movement has remained as the sixties’ most consistently activist legacy, it is especially ironic that it has also produced some of the most inaccessible and exclusionary discourses in today’s academy.” (Chronology 1995, p 39)

She is inclined to dismiss “the conditions of postmodernity” as not so much a historical condition corresponding to a period of capitalism — indeed she refutes the periodising of modernity and postmodernity as being historically flawed — but as a psychological condition corresponding to a period in the biography of the Western left intelligentsia”. (Modernity, 1997)

Such writers believe that the “new social movements” have replaced the working class as the touchstone of radicalism. In their retreat from class as a tool of analysis they have gone in for “pretension and obscurity”. In her view radical Western intellectuals “have gone a long way beyond the healthy and fruitful attention to the ideological and cultural dimensions of human experience” as a result of their disappointments in failed Stalinist projects and the absence of a revolutionary working class. (Democracy, p. 10)

What unites many of these writers is their disillusion with what they saw as revolutionary socialism in either China, Cambodia, Vietnam or Yugoslavia. They saw the leaders of these regimes as leaders of some variety of world socialist revolution. But as they belatedly recognised that these were brutal totalitarian regimes they abandoned their youthful sense of outrage at capitalism and replaced it with their very own detente, now placing hope in environmental, gender, race or identity politics or even in some cases accepting outright the market as the best or only possible way after all of organising society.

The bridge for the new reformists between their former seemingly radical politics and their present politics was the Eurocommunism of the French, Italian, Greek and Spanish Communist Parties. Wood identifies Louis Althusser and the

Greek/French writer Nicos Poulantzas as the “forerunners” of the present retreat. Their arguments for the (relative) autonomy of ideology created the ideological environment for a more virulent anti-marxism. “The intellectual history of the (stunningly rapid) transition from the structuralist Marxism of the sixties and seventies, through the brief moment of ‘post-Marxism’, to the current fashions of ‘postmodernism’ has in large part been the story of a disappointed determinism... Western Marxism has been deeply influenced by the default of revolutionary consciousness within the working class and by the resulting dissociation of intellectual practice from any political movement. This seems to have encouraged people not only to seek political programmes less reliant on the working class but also to look for theories of social transformation freed from the constraints and disappointments of history...” (Democracy p 9-10)

Post-Marxist ideas infected other more notable journals of the left such as New Left Review. In “A chronology of the new left and its successors” Wood traces the origins of the journal’s establishment before drawing a balance sheet on her involvement as an editor in the 1980s. The article is in effect her resignation statement from the NLR and it highlights some of the problems of current leftist politics in the industrialised countries.

The increasing concentration on abstract political theory and cultural criticism crowded out and eventually replaced an analysis of issues relevant to working class struggle. For instance, Wood recounts that between 1984-1988 the period which included the printers’ dispute against Murdoch at Wapping and the landmark British Miners Strike, NLR printed 184 articles. Of those only “one minor piece on the miners’ strike, an anecdotal, experiential account of the strike as it affected one community” was printed. “There has been nothing more on this event or about any other industrial dispute in Britain or elsewhere, whether empirical, experiential, or analytical. Only one or two articles have appeared concerning anything remotely resembling the issues of immediate concern to workers: one on the labour process debate, and another on Swedish wage-earner funds.”

Since Democracy Wood has further developed a number of the ideas and themes she raised in her book. She has focussed on what are becoming a new set of orthodoxies — globalisation, the market and technological development, modernity and postmodernity, — contrasting them with the realities of capitalism at the end of the twentieth century and the enduring features of capitalism — class, exploitation, accumulation and expansion. In this period when the left is fragmented and disillusioned political clarity is essential in revitalising an organised opposition to capitalism based in the working class. Wood’s now substantial body of work is a major contribution to that project. The task she has set herself is to rethink historical materialism not just because it is important in its own right but because capitalism has achieved a global political and economic dominance that is even more extensive than that of the early part of this century. She is talking about the “universalisation of capitalism itself”, its social relations, its laws of motions, its contradictions — the logic of commodification, accumulation, and profit-maximisation penetrating every aspect of our lives”. (Modernity 1997) This is something all together different to what is meant by the vague term “globalisation”.

The power of its ruling classes and the market are increasingly unregulated, and is accompanied by a rapid rise in inequality both within the advanced economies and between nations. For instance in the USA, the wealthiest nation on earth, over thirty five million people, 40% of them children, today live in what has been defined as “absolute poverty” (Peterson, W. Silent Depression, 1994)

It is not that resistance to capitalism does not exist, it clearly does. There are many examples of working class opposition to capitalism such as in Korea and France, of popular and local oppositions on environmental grounds, or in campaigns against the winding back of the welfare state and in support of indigenous rights.

Many of these movements are not socialist, even not yet fundamentally anti-capitalist. It is not surprising that there are those who will latch on to expressions of resistance and even elevate those campaigns to a status beyond that which they deserve. But that will in the end not assist in the task of building a socialist alternative. One of the vital missing ingredients which could help to unite these movements is a broad program for universal human emancipation which recognises the working class — in all its diversity — as fundamental to that goal.

Ellen Wood is issuing a challenge to think through the changes that have occurred within the left and within capitalism as a precursor to building that alternative.

Renewing and revitalising historical materialism, keeping alive hope and critique in these difficult times is an essential educative role in preparing new generations of workers, students and socialists opposed to the cruelties and despair of capitalism. The critique of capitalism — the principal project of Marxism — can erode the hegemony of the ideology of the market, and enable us to conceive of alternatives.

[3] BACK TO MARX, BY ELLEN WOOD

Let me start with a provocative claim, which is contrary to all the conventional wisdom. The claim I want to make is that this historical moment, the one we’re living in now, is the best not the worst, the most not the least appropriate moment to bring back Marx. I’ll even claim that this is the moment when Marx should and can come fully into his own *for the first time*—not excluding the historical moment when he actually lived.

I'm making this claim for one simple reason: we're living in a moment when, for the first time, capitalism has become a truly universal system. It's universal not only in the sense that it's global, not only in the sense that just about every economic actor in the world today is operating according to the logic of capitalism, and even those on the outermost periphery of the capitalist economy are, in one way or another, subject to that logic. Capitalism is universal also in the sense that its logic—the logic of accumulation, commodification, profit-maximization, competition—has penetrated just about every aspect of human life and nature itself, in ways that weren't even true of so-called advanced capitalist countries as recently as two or three decades ago. So Marx is more relevant than ever, because he, more effectively than any other human being then or now, devoted his life to explaining the systemic logic of capitalism.

In the *Communist Manifesto*, there is a striking and prophetic image of capitalism spreading throughout the world, battering down all Chinese walls, as Marx and Engels put it. But when Marx wrote *Capital*, he—rightly—emphasized the *specificity* of capitalism, as a very particular and, for the moment, local phenomenon. He didn't mean, of course, that capitalism didn't already have global effects, through the international market, colonialism, and so on. But the system itself was very far from being universal. It would inevitably spread, but for the moment it was very localized—not just confined to Europe or North America but, at least in its mature industrial form, to one place in particular, England. He even felt compelled to explain to the Germans that some day they too would follow in the footsteps of England: *de te fabula narratur*, he warned them. You may think this is a story only about England, but whether you know it or not, this story is also about you.

So Marx's *Capital* derives its distinctive character from this simple fact: that it is about one capitalist system, as if it were a self-enclosed system, and about the internal logic of that system. Now I'll come back to this in a minute, and to why, paradoxically, the localized quality of Marx's analysis makes it more, not less, relevant to our current condition, even though, or precisely *because*, capitalism is so universal. But first, I want to say some things about the development of Marxism after Marx, and also about the new forms of left *anti-Marxism* that have followed.

My main point is this: nearly every major development of Marxism in the 20th century has been less about capitalism than about what is *not* capitalist. (I'll explain what I mean in a second.) This is especially true of the first half of the 20th century, but I would argue that the tendency I'm talking about here has affected Marxism ever since. What I mean is that the major Marxist theories, like Marx, proceeded on the premise that capitalism was far from universal; but where Marx started with the most mature example and abstracted from it the systemic logic of capitalism, his major successors started, so to speak, from the other end. They were mainly interested—for very concrete historical and political reasons—with conditions that, on the whole, *weren't* capitalist. And there was an even more basic difference: whatever Marx may have thought about the global expansion of capitalism, or the possible limits on its expansion, that wasn't his primary concern. He was mainly interested in the internal logic of the system and its specific capacity to totalize itself, to permeate every aspect of life wherever it did implant itself. Later Marxists, besides being concerned with less mature capitalisms, generally started from the premise that capitalism would dissolve before it matured, or certainly before it became universal and total; and their main concern was how to navigate within a largely non-capitalist world.

Just think about the major milestones in 20th century Marxist theory. For instance, the major theories of revolution were constructed in situations where capitalism scarcely existed or remained undeveloped and where there was no well developed proletariat, where the revolution had to depend on alliances between a minority of workers and, in particular, a mass of pre-capitalist peasants. Even more striking are the classic Marxist theories of imperialism. In fact, it's striking that the theory of imperialism in the early 20th century almost replaces or *becomes* the theory of capitalism. In other words, the object of Marxist economic theory becomes what you might call the *external* relations of capitalism, its interactions with *non-capitalism* and the interactions among capitalist states in relation to the non-capitalist world.

For all the profound disagreements among the classical Marxist theorists of imperialism, they shared one fundamental premise: that imperialism had to do with the location of capitalism in a world that wasn't—and never would be—fully, or even predominantly, capitalist. Take, for instance, the basic Leninist idea that imperialism represented "the highest stage of capitalism." Underlying that definition was the assumption that capitalism had reached a stage where the main axis of international conflict and military confrontation would run between imperialist states. But that competition was, by definition, competition over division and redivision of the world, that is, a largely non-capitalist world. The more capitalism spread (at uneven rates), the more acute would be the rivalry among the main imperialist powers. At the same time, they would face increasing resistance. The whole point—and the reason imperialism was the highest stage of capitalism—was that it was the *final* stage, which meant that capitalism would end before the non-capitalist victims of imperialism were finally and completely swallowed up by capitalism.

The point is made most explicitly by Rosa Luxemburg. The essence of her classic work in political economy, *The Accumulation of Capital*, is to offer an alternative to Marx's own approach. It is meant to be precisely an alternative to Marx's analysis of capitalism as a self-enclosed system. Her argument is that the capitalist system needs an outlet in non-capitalist formations—which is why capitalism inevitably means militarism and imperialism. Capitalist militarism, having gone through various stages beginning with the straightforward conquest of territory, has now reached its "final" stage, as "a weapon in the competitive struggle between capitalist countries for areas of non-capitalist civilization." But one of the fundamental contradictions of capitalism, she suggests, is that "Although it strives to become universal, and, indeed, on account of this tendency, it must break down—because it is immanently incapable of becoming a universal

form of production." It is the first mode of economy that tends to engulf the whole world, but it is also the first that *can't* exist by itself because it "needs other economic systems as a medium and soil."¹ So in these theories of imperialism, capitalism by definition assumes a non-capitalist environment. In fact, capitalism depends for its survival not only on the existence of these non-capitalist formations but on essentially pre-capitalist instruments of "extra-economic" force, military and geo-political coercion, and on traditional forms of colonial war and territorial expansion.

And so it goes on, in other aspects of Marxist theory too. Trotsky's notion of combined and uneven development, with its corollary notion of permanent revolution, probably implies that the universalization of the capitalist system will be short-circuited by capitalism's own demise. Gramsci was writing very consciously in the context of a less developed capitalism, with a pervasive pre-capitalist peasant culture. And this surely had a lot to do with the importance he attached to ideology and culture, and to intellectuals, because something was needed to push class struggle beyond its material limits, something was needed to make socialist revolution possible even in the absence of mature material conditions of a well developed capitalism and an advanced proletariat. In a different way, the same is true of Mao. And so on.

What I'm saying, then, is that non- or pre-capitalism permeates all these theories of capitalism. Now all of these Marxist theories are profoundly illuminating in various ways. But in one way, they seem to have been proved wrong. Capitalism *has* become universal. It has totalized itself both intensively and extensively. It's global in reach, and it penetrates to the heart and soul of social life and nature. This doesn't, by the way, necessarily mean the disappearance of the nation-state. It may just mean new roles for nation-states, as the logic of competition imposes itself not only on capitalist firms but on entire national economies, which, with the help of the state, conduct their competition less in the old "extra-economic" and military ways than in purely "economic" forms. Even imperialism now has a new form. People like to call it "globalization," but that's really just a code-word, and a misleading one at that, for a system in which the logic of capitalism has become more or less universal and where imperialism achieves its ends not so much by the old forms of military expansion but by unleashing and manipulating the destructive impulses of the capitalist market. Anyway, though this universalization of capitalism has certainly exposed some fundamental contradictions in the system, we have to admit that there's no sign of its demise in the near future.

So what theoretical response has there been to this new reality? Well, to begin with, you could say that there's been a real paradox here: the more universal capitalism has become, the more people have moved away from classical Marxism and its main theoretical concerns. This is certainly true of post-Marxist theories and their successors, but I suppose you could argue that it's true even of more recent forms of Marxism—say, the Frankfurt School, or the tradition of Western Marxism in general. For instance, the famous shift from the traditional Marxist concern with political economy to culture and philosophy in some of these cases seems to be related to the conviction that the totalizing effects of capitalism have penetrated every aspect of life and culture—and also that the working class has been thoroughly absorbed into that capitalist culture. (I happen to think, by the way, that there may be another explanation for this shift, which has to do not with the universalization of capitalism but, on the contrary, with the ways in which pre-capitalist forms still pervade the consciousness of thinkers like the Frankfurt School—but I don't have time to go into that here, and anyway, I'm far from being able to make a coherent argument about it.)²

The point I want to make is this: there are, I think, two possible ways of responding to the universalization of capitalism. One is to say that if, contrary to all expectations, capitalism has after all become universal instead of dissolving before it had a chance to totalize itself, this is truly the end. This can only be the system's final triumph. I'll come back to the other possible response, but this one, the defeatist one, the one that represents the other side of the coin of capitalist triumphalism, is the one that has generally taken hold of the left today.

This is where post-Marxist theories come in—and I think that to understand them, it's useful to consider them against the background of the Marxist theories I've been talking about here. If you look at the history of so-called post-Marxism, you'll find that it started from the premise that capitalism has indeed become universal. In fact, for post-Marxists the universality of capitalism is precisely the reason for *abandoning* Marxism. You might think this is a bit odd, but the reasoning goes something like this: the universal capitalism of the postwar world is dominated by liberal democracy and a democratic consumerism, and both of these have opened up whole new arenas of democratic opposition and struggle, which are much more diverse than the old class struggles. The implicit—though sometimes more explicit—conclusion is that these struggles can't really be *against* capitalism, since it's now so total that there really is no alternative—and it's probably the best of all possible worlds anyway. So in this universal system of capitalism, there can be, can *only* be, lots of fragmented particular struggles within the interstices of capitalism.

Post-post-Marxist—or maybe postmodernist—theories have gone one step further. Now, it's not even just a question of a universal capitalism. Now, capitalism is *so* universal that it's basically invisible, as air is to us human beings, or as water is to fish. We can play around in this invisible medium, and maybe we can even carve out little enclaves, little sanctuaries, of privacy, seclusion, and freedom. But we can't escape—or even *see*—the universal medium itself.

So is this the right conclusion to draw from the universality of capitalism? I don't suppose I'll surprise anyone if I say that I'm convinced it's precisely the wrong conclusion. I happen to think that the disposition to reach that conclusion has something to do with the historical roots of the generation—admittedly my own generation—which has produced these varieties of post-Marxism and postmodernism. I think it has a lot to do with the fact that these people are still rooted in

the golden age of the long postwar boom. I've been very impressed for some time with the degree to which the theorists of the so-called 60s generation, and even their students whose recent experience has been very different, have been shaped by the assumptions of the postwar boom. In other words, they haven't yet learned to dissociate the universality of capitalism from capitalist growth, prosperity, and success, or apparent success, and they take for granted its total hegemony.

But if these theories seem to have bought into capitalist triumphalism, it may also be partly because of the intellectual background of 20th century Marxism. Against that background and its assumptions about the limits of capitalism, maybe it's hard to imagine any other measure of success than its capacity to spread throughout the world. It's as if the limits of capitalism can be measured only by the limits of its geographic expansion. And if it proves itself capable of breaching those geographic limits—as it now apparently has—it must surely be judged an unchallengeable success.

But suppose we go back to Marx and to his internal analysis of capitalism as a self-enclosed system—which I think the very totality of capitalism actually entitles us to do. We really can begin to look at the world not as a relationship between what's inside and what's outside capitalism but as the working out of capitalism's own internal laws of motion. And that might make it easier to see the universalization of capitalism not just as a measure of success but as a source of weakness. Capitalism's impulse to universalize itself isn't just a show of strength. It's a disease, a cancerous growth. It destroys the social fabric just as it destroys nature. It's a contradictory process, just as Marx always said it was. The old theories of imperialism may not have been strictly right to suggest that capitalism can't become universal, but it's certainly true that it can't be universally successful and prosperous. It can only universalize its contradictions, its polarizations between rich and poor, exploiters and exploited. Its successes are also its failures.

Now, capitalism has no more escape routes, no more safety valves or corrective mechanisms outside its own internal logic. Even when it's not at war, even when it's not involved in the old forms of inter-imperialist rivalry, it's subject to the constant tensions and contradictions of capitalist competition. Now, having more or less reached its geographic limits and ended the spatial expansion that supported its earlier successes, it can only feed on itself; and the more successful it is on its own terms—in other words, the more it maximizes profit and so-called growth—the more it devours its own human and natural substance. So maybe it's time for the left to see the universalization of capitalism not just as a defeat for us but also as an opportunity—and that, of course, above all means a new opportunity for that unfashionable thing called class struggle.

NOTES

1. Rosa Luxemburg, *The Accumulation of Capital* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), p. 467.
2. For those few readers who may be interested in this point, let me just give a very sketchy idea of what I have in mind. I think, for example, that the Frankfurt School was in a sense more preoccupied with bourgeois society than with capitalism (which to me are not the same thing, as I suggested, for instance, in "Modernity, Postmodernity, or Capitalism?," *Monthly Review* 48 no. 3, July-August 1996). So the famous shift from political economy to culture and philosophy may have had to do not just with an intellectual shift of focus from the material to the ideological, but with a focus on a different material reality. It had at least a little to do with a view of society in which the main axis of division was not capital vs labour but non-capitalist bourgeoisie (especially, in the German model, a bourgeois of intellectuals and bureaucrats) vs the "masses." And the problem is further complicated by the fact that these critics of bourgeois society and culture themselves belonged to that very particular kind of bourgeoisie, were steeped in its culture, and (dare I say it?) sometimes shared its contempt for the masses. But leaving that complication aside, the point is that this form of theory may not only be seeing *capitalism* from a different angle but may have one eye fixed on a different, *pre-capitalist* social world.

[4] REVIEW OF BEVERLY SILVER'S FORCES OF LABOR

Beverly J Silver, *Forces of Labor: Workers' Movements and Globalization since 1870*, Cambridge University Press.

Beverly Silver's *Forces of Labor* squarely addresses a question central to real socialist politics today, yet not tackled systematically in any other extended study to date: what are the long-term trends of working-class combativity, what are the reasons for the worldwide dip in struggle since the 1980s, and where should we look for revival?

Official strike statistics exist continuously over a long period for only one country in the world (the UK), and anyway their counting is often seriously incomplete and inconsistent between countries. To get substantial long-term statistics, therefore, Silver and her co-researchers turned to the major newspapers of the hegemonic powers.

They tabulated every mention of labour unrest in the London *Times* and the *New York Times* between 1870 and 1996, discounting London *Times* reports on British disputes and *New York Times* reports on US disputes. By counting "mentions" rather than disputes, they gave greater weighting to bigger or longer struggles. They tested their findings against official strike statistics where they exist, and found that the newspaper count gave a workable measure.

The broad long-term trend is for a slow increase in labour unrest. However, three anomalies stand out.

The first, unsurprisingly, is that labour unrest dipped sharply during the two world wars, and then rose to all-time highs after them.

The second, oddly, is that Silver's figures show no peak at all around the late 1960s and the early 1970s. That period appears as one of fairly high but slowly declining militancy.

This is a puzzle. Silver's comment seems inadequate. "If we disaggregate the date by country, there are indeed waves [i.e. peaks] where and when we would expect them, e.g. France in 1968, Italy in 1969-70. The fact that it does not show up in the aggregate time series is probably due to several factors. First, the explosions were not simultaneous in all European countries, thus, they tend to average each other out in the aggregate time series.

"Second, the wave, while intense, was relatively short-lived. Thirdly, much of the social unrest of the period... was not classifiable as labour unrest".

The third anomaly is a sharp downturn in struggle, in metropolitan countries from the early 1980s, in ex-colonial countries from the end of the 1980s.

In 2005, we know that downturn has continued and worsened since 1996, the end of Silver's database. Developments which around 1996 plausibly seemed to point to a general revival - the French strikes of 1995, the South Korean strikes of 1996, the shifts in the US trade union movement around that time, Seattle in 1998 - have not done so.

Working-class struggle has far from vanished, but the current dip in the graph is without precedent except for a smaller dip in the 1890s - or, perhaps, outside Silver's time frame, the long slump in British working-class activity between the defeat of the Chartists in 1848 and the rise of New Unionism in 1888-9.

Silver starts her book by refuting the idea that geographical restructuring can abolish working-class struggle. A chapter on the car industry shows that industry bosses have been "relocating" from the start - Detroit was chosen as a site because it was an "open shop" city - but their "relocations" have consistently been followed by a "relocation" of working-class struggle.

"The epicentre of auto worker militancy [shifts] from North America in the 1930s and 1940s to northwestern (and then southern) Europe in the 1960s and 1970s and to a group of rapidly industrialising [ex-colonial] countries in the 1980s and 1990s".

Silver plausibly predicts new surges of worker militancy in China in the coming years. But if that were the whole story, then the global trend of workers' struggles would be unambiguously upwards, with at most short setbacks, as industries and thus strong working-class concentrations spread across the world.

Silver introduces three main ideas to explain why the actual pattern is more complicated.

First, she argues that in the later stages of the "product cycle" - the evolution of an industry from cutting-edge, high-tech sector concentrated in a few richer countries to global routine staple - workers' position tends to be weaker because the bosses have less windfall pioneers' profit from which to make concessions, and competition is sharper.

Second, she invokes several other "fixes" with which bosses can respond to worker militancy other than the "spatial fix" (moving to another country or region). The critical one, for her, is the "financial fix", i.e. capital moving out of production altogether and into financial manipulations.

Third, she distinguishes between two distinct types of worker struggle: "Marx-type", driven by workers feeling strong, and "Polyani-type", driven by workers feeling weak and threatened by market pressures. In the course of the book, she tacitly drifts towards seeing the "Polyani type" as primary, so that "world labour unrest in the 20th century has been embedded in a pendulum swing between crises of profitability [in which established capitalist concessions to workers prove too expensive] and crises of social legitimacy [in which capitalist measures to recover profits provoke "Polyani-type" struggles]".

To my mind, none of these three arguments holds together. Whatever the reason for US carmakers, for example, giving concessions to US car workers in the 1930s, it was not that they were making big windfall profits. The car industry was already decades old, highly competitive, and facing a slump. Contrariwise, the relative gains won by Korean car workers in the 1980s were not smaller than those won by US carworkers in the 1930s.

The "financial fix"? Capitalists cannot live just by lending money to each other, any more than they can live just by taking each other out to lunch. And who says that finance workers can't strike?

The "pendulum" theory would imply either that today we should have a big rise of "Polyani-type" struggles (in response to sharp market pressures), or that the bosses should be easing off (because, in many countries, profits are well up on what they were in the 1970s and early 1980s). Neither has happened.

Silver's approach is skewed by her theoretical framework. She is avowedly "Third-Worldist", emphasising "Third World" versus "First World" as a struggle as or more important for progress than workers versus capital.

Taking a cue from Italian operaista theory, she tends to present all capital's moves ("fixes") as defensive reflex

responses to worker militancy. Simultaneously and incongruously, following a different cue from French regulationist theory, she presents workers' struggles as iron-cased by successive capitalist "regimes", shaped by the functional needs of capital. For her 1945-70s was a period of a global "labour-friendly" regime ("social compact" or "developmentalist") in which workers' struggles may have been large but had little subversive dynamic.

With one eye, so to speak, she sees the working class as the only active force (but being such more or less irrespective of politics) and capital only having defensive reflex responses. With the other eye, she sees worker struggles as reflex responses whose import is decided not by their own dynamic but by the capitalist-designed "regime" in which they are embedded.

Consequently, and also because of Silver's own Stalinistic sympathies, the effects of Stalinism in shaping workers' organisations, limiting the import of workers' struggles, and dragging much worker organisation down with it when it collapsed, are missing from the story.

So are politics generally, apart from a chapter largely given over to the effect of world wars on workers' struggle. But how is the long ebb of the British working-class movement from 1848 until 1888-9 to be explained, if not by reference to politics and to the tremendous force of inertia that certain "shaping" or "generational" victories and defeats can have?

Silver also gives insufficient weight to technical and organisational restructuring of capital. I don't think the word "privatisation" even appears in the book. She nowhere discusses the effects of the large reduction in the size (measured by number of workers) of manufacturing workplaces in recent decades.

While she mentions the increased intensity of global capitalist competition since the 1970s, I don't think she gives it enough weight as a factor operating in combination with the drastic technical-organisational restructurings of capital in the same period.

But this is a study with a vastly greater weight of empirical research behind it, a much longer historical view, and much more searching in argument, than the other books of recent years covering something like the same issue: Ellen Wood's collection *Rising from the Ashes?* (Monthly Review Press, 1998) and Leo Panitch's and Colin Leys's *Working Classes, Global Realities* (Merlin, 2001).

Both Wood and Panitch-Leys contain many valuable articles. Their general political and theoretical standpoint is much more congenial to ours than Silver's. But Silver's is the book that presents the greatest challenge, and the most material for thought.

[5] LENIN: WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

Chapter 1

D. Engels On the Importance of the Theoretical Struggle

...

Let us quote what Engels said in 1874 concerning the significance of theory in the Social-Democratic movement. Engels recognizes, not two forms of the great struggle of Social Democracy (political and economic), as is the fashion among us, but three, placing the theoretical struggle on a par with the first two. His recommendations to the German working-class movement, which had become strong, practically and politically, are so instructive from the standpoint of present-day problems and controversies, that we hope the reader will not be vexed with us for quoting a long passage from his prefatory note to *Der deutsche Bauernkrieg*, which has long become a great bibliographical rarity:

"The German workers have two important advantages over those of the rest of Europe. First, they belong to the most theoretical people of Europe; and they have retained that sense of theory which the so-called 'educated' classes of Germany have almost completely lost. Without German philosophy, which preceded it, particularly that of Hegel, German scientific socialism – the only scientific socialism that has ever existed – would never have come into being. Without a sense of theory among the workers, this scientific socialism would never have entered their flesh and blood as much as is the case. What an immeasurable advantage this is may be seen, on the one hand, from the indifference towards all theory, which is one of the main reasons why the English working-class movement crawls along so slowly in spite of the splendid organisation of the individual unions; on the other hand, from the mischief and confusion wrought by Proudhonism, in its original form, among the French and Belgians, and, in the form further caricatured by Bakunin, among the Spaniards and Italians.

"The second advantage is that, chronologically speaking, the Germans were about the last to come into the workers' movement. Just as German theoretical socialism will never forget that it rests on the shoulders of Saint-Simon, Fourier, and Owen – three men who, in spite of all their fantastic notions and all their utopianism, have their place among the most eminent thinkers of all times, and whose genius anticipated innumerable things, the correctness of which is now being scientifically proved by us – so the practical workers' movement in Germany ought never to forget that it has developed on the shoulders of the English and French movements, that it was able simply to utilise their dearly bought experience, and could now avoid their mistakes, which in their time were mostly unavoidable. Without the precedent of the English trade unions and French workers' political struggles, without the gigantic impulse given especially by the

Paris Commune, where would we be now?

“It must be said to the credit of the German workers that they have exploited the advantages of their situation with rare understanding. For the first time since a workers’ movement has existed, the struggle is being conducted pursuant to its three sides – the theoretical, the political, and the practical-economic (resistance to the capitalists) – in harmony and in its interconnections, and in a systematic way. It is precisely in this, as it were, concentric attack, that the strength and invincibility of the German movement lies.

“Due to this advantageous situation, on the one hand, and to the insular peculiarities of the English and the forcible suppression of the French movement, on the other, the German workers have for the moment been placed in the vanguard of the proletarian struggle. How long events will allow them to occupy this post of honour cannot be foretold. But let us hope that as long as they occupy it, they will fill it fittingly. This demands redoubled efforts in every field of struggle and agitation. In particular, it will be the duty of the leaders to gain an ever clearer insight into all theoretical questions, to free themselves more and more from the influence of traditional phrases inherited from the old world outlook, and constantly to keep in mind that socialism, since it has become a science, demands that it be pursued as a science, i.e., that it be studied. The task will be to spread with increased zeal among the masses of the workers the ever more clarified understanding thus acquired, to knit together ever more firmly the organisation both of the party and of the trade unions....

“If the German workers progress in this way, they will not be marching exactly at the head of the movement – it is not at all in the interest of this movement that the workers of any particular country should march at its head – but they will occupy an honourable place in the battle line; and they will stand armed for battle when either unexpectedly grave trials or momentous events demand of them increased courage, increased determination and energy.”

Engels’s words proved prophetic. Within a few years the German workers were subjected to unexpectedly grave trials in the form of the Exceptional Law Against the Socialists. And they met those trials armed for battle and succeeded in emerging from them victorious.

The Russian proletariat will have to undergo trials immeasurably graver; it will have to fight a monster compared with which an antisocialist law in a constitutional country seems but a dwarf. History has now confronted us with an immediate task which is the most revolutionary of all the immediate tasks confronting the proletariat of any country. The fulfilment of this task, the destruction of the most powerful bulwark, not only of European, but (it may now be said) of Asiatic reaction, would make the Russian proletariat the vanguard of the international revolutionary proletariat. And we have the right to count upon acquiring this honourable title, already earned by our predecessors, the revolutionaries of the seventies, if we succeed in inspiring our movement, which is a thousand times broader and deeper, with the same devoted determination and vigour.

Chapter 2

The Spontaneity of the Masses and the Consciousness of the Social-Democrats

We have said that our movement, much more extensive and deep than the movement of the seventies, must be inspired with the same devoted determination and energy that inspired the movement at that time. Indeed, no one, we think, has until now doubted that the strength of the present-day movement lies in the awakening of the masses (principally, the industrial proletariat) and that its weakness lies in the lack of consciousness and initiative among the revolutionary leaders.

However... Rabocheye Dyelo formulated its indictment as a “belittling of the significance of the objective or the spontaneous element of development”...

A. The Beginning of the Spontaneous Upsurge

In the previous chapter we pointed out how universally absorbed the educated youth of Russia was in the theories of Marxism in the middle of the nineties. In the same period the strikes that followed the famous St. Petersburg industrial war of 1896 assumed a similar general character. Their spread over the whole of Russia clearly showed the depth of the newly awakening popular movement, and if we are to speak of the “spontaneous element” then, of course, it is this strike movement which, first and foremost, must be regarded as spontaneous. But there is spontaneity and spontaneity. Strikes occurred in Russia in the seventies and sixties (and even in the first half of the nineteenth century), and they were accompanied by the “spontaneous” destruction of machinery, etc. Compared with these “revolts”, the strikes of the nineties might even be described as “conscious”, to such an extent do they mark the progress which the working-class movement made in that period. This shows that the “spontaneous element”, in essence, represents nothing more nor less than consciousness in an embryonic form. Even the primitive revolts expressed the awakening of consciousness to a certain extent. The workers were losing their age-long faith in the permanence of the system which oppressed them and began... I shall not say to understand, but to sense the necessity for collective resistance, definitely abandoning their slavish submission to the authorities. But this was, nevertheless, more in the nature of outbursts of desperation and vengeance than of struggle. The strikes of the nineties revealed far greater flashes of consciousness; definite demands were advanced, the strike was carefully timed, known cases and instances in other places were discussed, etc. The revolts were simply the resistance of the oppressed, whereas the systematic strikes represented the class struggle in embryo, but only in embryo. Taken by themselves, these strikes were simply trade union struggles, not yet Social Democratic struggles. They marked the awakening antagonisms between workers and employers; but the workers, were not, and could not be, conscious of the irreconcilable antagonism of their interests to the whole of the modern political and social system, i.e., theirs was not yet Social-Democratic consciousness. In this sense, the strikes of the nineties,

despite the enormous progress they represented as compared with the "revolts", remained a purely spontaneous movement.

We have said that there could not have been Social-Democratic consciousness among the workers. It would have to be brought to them from without. The history of all countries shows that the working class, exclusively by its own effort, is able to develop only trade union consciousness, i.e., the conviction that it is necessary to combine in unions, fight the employers, and strive to compel the government to pass necessary labour legislation, etc. The theory of socialism, however, grew out of the philosophic, historical, and economic theories elaborated by educated representatives of the propertied classes, by intellectuals. By their social status the founders of modern scientific socialism, Marx and Engels, themselves belonged to the bourgeois intelligentsia. In the very same way, in Russia, the theoretical doctrine of Social-Democracy arose altogether independently of the spontaneous growth of the working-class movement; it arose as a natural and inevitable outcome of the development of thought among the revolutionary socialist intelligentsia. In the period under discussion, the middle nineties, this doctrine not only represented the completely formulated programme of the Emancipation of Labour group, but had already won over to its side the majority of the revolutionary youth in Russia.

Hence, we had both the spontaneous awakening of the working masses, their awakening to conscious life and conscious struggle, and a revolutionary youth, armed with Social-Democratic theory and straining towards the workers. In this connection it is particularly important to state the oft-forgotten (and comparatively little-known) fact that, although the early Social-Democrats of that period zealously carried on economic agitation (being guided in this activity by the truly useful indications contained in the pamphlet *On Agitation*, then still in manuscript), they did not regard this as their sole task. On the contrary, from the very beginning they set for Russian Social-Democracy the most far-reaching historical tasks, in general, and the task of overthrowing the autocracy, in particular.

Thus, towards the end of 1895, the St. Petersburg group of Social-Democrats, which founded the League of Struggle for the Emancipation of the Working Class, prepared the first issue of a newspaper called *Rabocheye Dyelo*. This issue was ready to go to press when it was seized by the gendarmes, on the night of December 8, 1895, in a raid on the house of one of the members of the group, Anatoly Alexeyevich Vaneyey, so that the first edition of *Rabocheye Dyelo* was not destined to see the light of day. The leading article in this issue (which perhaps thirty years hence some *Russkaya Starina* will unearth in the archives of the Department of Police) outlined the historical tasks of the working class in Russia and placed the achievement of political liberty at their head. The issue also contained an article entitled "What Are Our Ministers Thinking About?" which dealt with the crushing of the elementary education committees by the police. In addition, there was some correspondence from St. Petersburg, and from other parts of Russia (e.g., a letter on the massacre of the workers in Yaroslavl Gubernia).

This, "first effort", if we are not mistaken, of the Russian Social-Democrats of the nineties was not a purely local, or less still, "Economic", newspaper, but one that aimed to unite the strike movement with the revolutionary movement against the autocracy, and to win over to the side of Social-Democracy all who were oppressed by the policy of reactionary obscurantism. No one in the slightest degree acquainted with the state of the movement at that period could doubt that such a paper would have met with warm response among the workers of the capital and the revolutionary intelligentsia and would have had a wide circulation. The failure of the enterprise merely showed that the Social-Democrats of that period were unable to meet the immediate requirements of the time owing to their lack of revolutionary experience and practical training...

But what was only part misfortune became full misfortune when this consciousness began to grow dim (it was very much alive among the members of the groups mentioned), when there appeared people – and even Social-Democratic organs – that were prepared to regard shortcomings as virtues, that even tried to invent a theoretical basis for their slavish cringing before spontaneity. It is time to draw conclusions from this trend, the content of which is incorrectly and too narrowly characterised as Economism.

B. Bowing to Spontaneity. *Rabochaya Mysl*

Rabochaya Mysl... After stating that the arm of the "blue-coats" could never halt the progress of the working-class movement, the leading article goes on to say: ". . . The virility of the working-class movement is due to the fact that the workers themselves are at last taking their fate into their own hands, and out of the hands of the leaders"; this fundamental thesis is then developed in greater detail. Actually, the leaders (i.e., the Social-Democrats, the organisers of the League of Struggle) were, one might say, torn out of the hands of the workers by the police; yet it is made to appear that the workers were fighting against the leaders and liberated themselves from their yoke! Instead of sounding the call to go forward towards the consolidation of the revolutionary organisation and the expansion of political activity, the call was issued for a retreat to the purely trade union struggle. It was announced that "the economic basis of the movement is eclipsed by the effort never to forget the political ideal", and that the watchword for the working-class movement was "Struggle for economic conditions" (!) or, better still, "The workers for the workers". It was declared that strike funds "are more valuable to the movement than a hundred other Organisations"... Catchwords like "We must concentrate, not on the 'cream' of the workers, but on the 'average', mass worker"; "Politics always obediently follows economics", etc., etc., became the fashion...

... The adherents of the "labour movement pure and simple", worshippers of the closest "organic" contacts (*Rabocheye Dyelo*'s term) with the proletarian struggle, opponents of any non-worker intelligentsia (even a socialist intelligentsia), are compelled, in order to defend their positions, to resort to the arguments of the bourgeois "pure trade-unionists". This shows that from the very outset *Rabochaya Mysl* began – unconsciously – to implement the programme of the Credo. This shows (something *Rabocheye Dyelo* cannot grasp) that all worship of the spontaneity of the working

class movement, all belittling of the role of “the conscious element”, of the role of Social-Democracy, means, quite independently of whether he who belittles that role desires it or not, a strengthening of the influence of bourgeois ideology upon the workers. All those who talk about “overrating the importance of ideology”, about exaggerating the role of the conscious element, etc., imagine that the labour movement pure and simple can elaborate, and will elaborate, an independent ideology for itself, if only the workers “wrest their fate from the hands of the leaders”. But this is a profound mistake. To supplement what has been said above, we shall quote the following profoundly true and important words of Karl. Kautsky on the new draft programme of the Austrian Social-Democratic Party:

“Many of our revisionist critics believe that Marx asserted that economic development and the class struggle create, not only the conditions for socialist production, but also, and directly, the consciousness [K. K.’s italics] of its necessity. And these critics assert that England, the country most highly developed capitalistically, is more remote than any other from this consciousness. Judging by the draft, one might assume that this allegedly orthodox Marxist view, which is thus refuted, was shared by the committee that drafted the Austrian programme. In the draft programme it is stated: ‘The more capitalist development increases the numbers of the proletariat, the more the proletariat is compelled and becomes fit to fight against capitalism. The proletariat becomes conscious of the possibility and of the necessity for socialism. In this connection socialist consciousness appears to be a necessary and direct result of the proletarian class struggle. But this is absolutely untrue. Of course, socialism, as a doctrine, has its roots in modern economic relationships just as the class struggle of the proletariat has, and, like the latter, emerges from the struggle against the capitalist-created poverty and misery of the masses. But socialism and the class struggle arise side by side and not one out of the other; each arises under different conditions. Modern socialist consciousness can arise only on the basis of profound scientific knowledge. Indeed, modern economic science is as much a condition for socialist production as, say, modern technology, and the proletariat can create neither the one nor the other, no matter how much it may desire to do so; both arise out of the modern social process. The vehicle of science is not the proletariat, but the bourgeois intelligentsia [K. K.’s italics]: it was in the minds of individual members of this stratum that modern socialism originated, and it was they who communicated it to the more intellectually developed proletarians who, in their turn, introduce it into the proletarian class struggle where conditions allow that to be done. Thus, socialist consciousness is something introduced into the proletarian class struggle from without [von Aussen Hineingetragen] and not something that arose within it spontaneously [urwüchsig]. Accordingly, the old Hainfeld programme quite rightly stated that the task of Social-Democracy is to imbue the proletariat (literally: saturate the proletariat) with the consciousness of its position and the consciousness of its task. There would be no need for this if consciousness arose of itself from the class struggle. The new draft copied this proposition from the old programme, and attached it to the proposition mentioned above. But this completely broke the line of thought...”

Since there can be no talk of an independent ideology formulated by the working masses themselves in the process of their movement...

[[FOOTNOTE: This does not mean, of course, that the workers have no part in creating such an ideology. They take part, however, not as workers, but as socialist theoreticians, as Proudhons and Weitlings; in other words, they take part only when they are able, and to the extent that they are able, more or less, to acquire the knowledge of their age and develop that knowledge. But in order that working men may succeed in this more often, every effort must be made to raise the level of the consciousness of the workers in general; it is necessary that the workers do not confine themselves to the artificially restricted limits of “literature for workers” but that they learn to an increasing degree to master general literature. It would be even truer to say “are not confined”, instead of “do not confine themselves”, because the workers themselves wish to read and do read all that is written for the intelligentsia, and only a few (bad) intellectuals believe that it is enough “for workers” to be told a few things about factory conditions and to have repeated to them over and over again what has long been known.]]

... the only choice is – either bourgeois or socialist ideology. There is no middle course (for mankind has not created a “third” ideology, and, moreover, in a society torn by class antagonisms there can never be a non-class or an above-class ideology). Hence, to belittle the socialist ideology in any way, to turn aside from it in the slightest degree means to strengthen bourgeois ideology. There is much talk of spontaneity. But the spontaneous development of the working-class movement leads to its subordination to bourgeois ideology, to its development along the lines of the Credo programme; for the spontaneous working-class movement is trade-unionism, is *Nur-Gewerkschaftlerei*, and trade unionism means the ideological enslavement of the workers by the bourgeoisie.

Hence, our task, the task of Social-Democracy, is to combat spontaneity, to divert the working-class movement from this spontaneous, trade-unionist striving to come under the wing of the bourgeoisie, and to bring it under the wing of revolutionary Social Democracy. The sentence employed by the authors of the Economist letter published in *Iskra*, No. 12, that the efforts of the most inspired ideologists fail to divert the working-class movement from the path that is determined by the interaction of the material elements and the material environment is therefore tantamount to renouncing socialism...

Let us recall the example of Germany. What was the historic service Lassalle rendered to the German working-class movement? It was that he diverted that movement from the path of progressionist trade-unionism and co-operativism towards which it had been spontaneously moving (with the benign assistance of Schulze-Delitzsch and his like). To fulfil such a task it was necessary to do something quite different from talking of underrating the spontaneous element, of tactics-as-process, of the interaction between elements and environment, etc. A fierce struggle against spontaneity was necessary, and only after such a struggle, extending over many years, was it possible, for instance, to convert the working population of Berlin from a bulwark of the progressionist party into one of the finest strongholds of Social-

Democracy. This struggle is by no means over even today (as might seem to those who learn the history of the German movement from Prokopovich, and its philosophy from Struve). Even now the German working class is, so to speak, split up among a number of ideologies. A section of the workers is organised in Catholic and monarchist trade unions; another section is organised in the Hirsch-Duncker unions, founded by the bourgeois worshippers of English trade-unionism; the third is organised in Social-Democratic trade unions. The last-named group is immeasurably more numerous than the rest, but the Social-Democratic ideology was able to achieve this superiority, and will be able to maintain it, only in an unswerving struggle against all other ideologies.

But why, the reader will ask, does the spontaneous movement, the movement along the line of least resistance, lead to the domination of bourgeois ideology? For the simple reason that bourgeois ideology is far older in origin than socialist ideology, that it is more fully developed, and that it has at its disposal immeasurably more means of dissemination.

[[FOOTNOTE: It is often said that the working class spontaneously gravitates towards socialism. This is perfectly true in the sense that socialist theory reveals the causes of the misery of the working class more profoundly and more correctly than any other theory, and for that reason the workers are able to assimilate it so easily, provided, however, this theory does not itself yield to spontaneity, provided it subordinates spontaneity to itself. Usually this is taken for granted, but it is precisely this which Rabocheye Dyelo forgets or distorts. The working class spontaneously gravitates towards socialism; nevertheless, most widespread (and continuously and diversely revived) bourgeois ideology spontaneously imposes itself upon the working class to a still greater degree.]]

And the younger the socialist movement in any given country, the more vigorously it must struggle against all attempts to entrench non-socialist ideology, and the more resolutely the workers must be warned against the bad counsellors who shout against “overrating the conscious element”, etc....

Rabochaya Mysl believes, however, that “politics always obediently follows economics”.... If by politics is meant Social-Democratic politics, then the theses of Rabochaya Mysl and Rabocheye Dyelo are utterly incorrect. The economic struggle of the workers is very often connected (although not inseparably) with bourgeois politics, clerical politics, etc., as we have seen. Rabocheye Dyelo’s theses are correct, if by politics is meant trade union politics, viz., the common striving of all workers to secure from the government measures for alleviating the distress to which their condition gives rise, but which do not abolish that condition, i.e., which do not remove the subjection of labour to capital. That striving indeed is common to the English trade-unionists, who are hostile to socialism, to the Catholic workers, to the “Zubatov” workers, etc. There is politics and politics.

Thus, we see that Rabochaya Mysl does not so much deny the political struggle, as it bows to its spontaneity, to its unconsciousness. While fully recognising the political struggle (better: the political desires and demands of the workers), which arises spontaneously from the working-class movement itself, it absolutely refuses independently to work out a specifically Social-Democratic politics corresponding to the general tasks of socialism and to present-day conditions in Russia.....

Chapter 3

A. Political Agitation And Its Restriction By the Economists

Everyone knows that the economic...

[[FOOTNOTE: to avoid misunderstanding, we must point out that here, and throughout this pamphlet, by economic struggle, we imply (in keeping with the accepted usage among us) the “practical economic struggle”, which Engels, in the passage quoted above, described as “resistance to the capitalists”, and which in free countries is known as the organised-labour syndical, or trade union struggle]]

struggle of the Russian workers underwent widespread development and consolidation simultaneously with the production of “literature” exposing economic (factory and occupational) conditions. The “leaflets” were devoted mainly to the exposure of the factory system, and very soon a veritable passion for exposures was roused among the workers. As soon as the workers realised that the Social-Democratic study circles desired to, and could, supply them with a new kind of leaflet that told the whole truth about their miserable existence, about their unbearably hard toil, and their lack of rights, they began to send in, actually flood us with, correspondence from the factories and workshops. This “exposure literature” created a tremendous sensation, not only in the particular factory exposed in the given leaflet, but in all the factories to which news of the, revealed facts spread. And since the poverty and want among the workers in the various enterprises and in the various trades are much the same, the “truth about the life of the workers” stirred everyone. Even among the most backward workers, a veritable passion arose to “get into print” – a noble passion for this rudimentary form of war against the whole of the present social system which is based upon robbery and oppression.

And in the overwhelming majority of cases these “leaflets” were in truth a declaration of war, because the exposures served greatly to agitate the workers; they evoked among them common demands for the removal of the most glaring outrages and roused in them a readiness to support the demands with strikes. Finally, the employers themselves were compelled to recognise the significance of these leaflets as a declaration of war, so much so that in a large number of cases they did not even wait for the outbreak of hostilities. As is always the case, the mere publication of these exposures made them effective, and they acquired the significance of a strong moral influence. On more than one occasion, the mere appearance of a leaflet proved sufficient to secure the satisfaction of all or part of the demands put forward. In a word, economic (factory) exposures were and remain an important lever in the economic struggle. And they will continue to retain this significance as long as there is capitalism, which makes it necessary for the workers to defend themselves. Even in the most advanced countries of Europe it can still be seen that the exposure of abuses in

some backward trade, or in some forgotten branch of domestic industry, serves as a starting-point for the awakening of class-consciousness, for the beginning of a trade union struggle, and for the spread of socialism.

The overwhelming majority of Russian Social-Democrats have of late been almost entirely absorbed by this work of organising the exposure of factory conditions. Suffice it to recall Rabochaya Mysl to see the extent to which they have been absorbed by it – so much so, indeed, that they have lost sight of the fact that this, taken by itself, is in essence still not Social-Democratic work, but merely trade union work. As a matter of fact, the exposures merely dealt with the relations between the workers in a given trade and their employers, and all they achieved was that the sellers of labour power learned to sell their “commodity” on better terms and to fight the purchasers over a purely commercial deal. These exposures could have served (if properly utilised by an organisation of revolutionaries) as a beginning and a component part of Social-Democratic activity; but they could also have led (and, given a worshipful attitude towards spontaneity, were bound to lead) to a “purely trade union” struggle and to a non-Social-Democratic working-class movement. Social-Democracy leads the struggle of the working class, not only for better terms for the sale of labour-power, but for the abolition of the social system that compels the propertyless to sell themselves to the rich. Social-Democracy represents the working class, not in its relation to a given group of employers alone, but in its relation to all classes of modern society and to the state as an organised political force. Hence, it follows that not only must Social-Democrats not confine themselves exclusively to the economic struggle, but that they must not allow the organisation of economic exposures to become the predominant part of their activities....

The question arises, what should political education consist in? Can it be confined to the propaganda of working-class hostility to the autocracy? Of course not. It is not enough to explain to the workers that they are politically oppressed (any more than it is to explain to them that their interests are antagonistic to the interests of the employers). Agitation must be conducted with regard to every concrete example of this oppression (as we have begun to carry on agitation round concrete examples of economic oppression). Inasmuch as this oppression affects the most diverse classes of society, inasmuch as it manifests itself in the most varied spheres of life and activity – vocational, civic, personal, family, religious, scientific, etc., etc. – is it not evident that we shall not be fulfilling our task of developing the political consciousness of the workers if we do not undertake the organisation of the political exposure of the autocracy in all its aspects? In order to carry on agitation round concrete instances of oppression, these instances must be exposed (as it is necessary to expose factory abuses in order to carry on economic agitation).

... Listen to the following: “The political struggle of the working class is merely [it is certainly not “merely”] the most developed, wide, and effective form of economic struggle” (programme of Rabocheye Dyelo, published in issue No. 1, p. 3). “The Social-Democrats are now confronted with the task of lending the economic struggle itself, as far as possible, a political character” (Martynov, Rabocheye Dyelo, No. 10, p. 42). “The economic struggle is the most widely applicable means of drawing the masses into active political struggle” (resolution adopted by the Conference of the Union Abroad and “amendments” thereto, Two Conferences, pp. 11 and 17). As the reader will observe, all these theses permeate Rabocheye Dyelo from its very first number to the latest “Instructions to the Editors”, and all of them evidently express a single view regarding political agitation and struggle. Let us examine this view from the standpoint of the opinion prevailing among all Economists, that political agitation must follow economic agitation.

Is it true that, in general, the economic struggle “is the most widely applicable means” of drawing the masses into the political struggle? It is entirely untrue. Any and every manifestation of police tyranny and autocratic outrage, not only in connection with the economic struggle, is not one whit less “widely applicable” as a means of “drawing in” the masses. The rural superintendents and the flogging of peasants, the corruption of the officials and the police treatment of the “common people” in the cities, the fight against the famine-stricken and the suppression of the popular striving towards enlightenment and knowledge, the extortion of taxes and the persecution of the religious sects, the humiliating treatment of soldiers and the barrack methods in the treatment of the students and liberal intellectuals – do all these and a thousand other similar manifestations of tyranny, though not directly connected with the “economic” struggle, represent, in general, less “widely applicable” means and occasions for political agitation and for drawing the masses into the political struggle?

The very opposite is true. Of the sum total of cases in which the workers suffer (either on their own account or on account of those closely connected with them) from tyranny, violence, and the lack of rights, undoubtedly only a small minority represent cases of police tyranny in the trade union struggle as such. Why then should we, beforehand, restrict the scope of political agitation by declaring only one of the means to be “the most widely applicable”, when Social-Democrats must have, in addition, other, generally speaking, no less “widely applicable” means? ...

... The economic struggle is the collective struggle of the workers against their employers for better terms in the sale of their labour-power, for better living and working conditions. This struggle is necessarily a trade union struggle, because working conditions differ greatly in different trades, and, consequently, the struggle to improve them can only be conducted on the basis of trade organisations (in the Western countries, through trade unions; in Russia, through temporary trade associations and through leaflets, etc.). Lending “the economic struggle itself a political character” means, therefore, striving to secure satisfaction of these trade demands, the improvement of working conditions in each separate trade by means of “legislative and administrative measures” (as Martynov puts it on the ensuing page of his article, p. 43). This is precisely what all workers’ trade unions do and always have done. Read the works of the soundly scientific (and “soundly” opportunist) Mr. and Mrs. Webb and you will see that the British trade unions long ago recognised, and have long been carrying out, the task of “lending the economic struggle itself a political character”; they have long been fighting for the right to strike, for the removal of all legal hindrances to the co-operative and trade union movements, for laws to protect women and children, for the improvement of labour conditions by means of

health and factory legislation, etc.

Thus, the pompous phrase about “lending the economic struggle itself a political character”, which sounds so “terrifically” profound and revolutionary, serves as a screen to conceal what is in fact the traditional striving to degrade Social-Democratic politics to the level of trade union politics...

Revolutionary Social-Democracy has always included the struggle for reforms as part of its activities. But it utilises “economic” agitation for the purpose of presenting to the government, not only demands for all sorts of measures, but also (and primarily) the demand that it cease to be an autocratic government. Moreover, it considers it its duty to present this demand to the government on the basis, not of the economic struggle alone, but of all manifestations in general of public and political life. In a word, it subordinates the struggle for reforms, as the part to the whole, to the revolutionary struggle for freedom and for socialism. Martynov, however, resuscitates the theory of stages in a new form and strives to prescribe, as it were, an exclusively economic path of development for the political struggle. By advancing at this moment, when the revolutionary movement is on the upgrade, an alleged special “task” of struggling for reforms, he is dragging the Party backwards and is playing into the hands of both “Economist” and liberal opportunism.

To proceed. Shamefacedly hiding the struggle for reforms behind the pompous thesis of “lending the economic struggle itself a political character”, Martynov advanced, as if it were a special point, exclusively economic (indeed, exclusively factory) reforms. As to the reason for his doing that, we do not know it. Carelessness, perhaps? Yet if he had in mind something else besides “factory” reforms, then the whole of his thesis, which we have cited, loses all sense. Perhaps he did it because he considers it possible and probable that the government will make “concessions” only in the economic sphere? If so, then it is a strange delusion. Concessions are also possible and are made in the sphere of legislation concerning flogging, passports, land redemption payments, religious sects, the censorship, etc., etc. “Economic” concessions (or pseudo-concessions) are, of course, the cheapest and most advantageous from the government’s point of view, because by these means it hopes to win the confidence of the working masses. For this very reason, we Social-Democrats must not under any circumstances or in any way whatever create grounds for the belief (or the misunderstanding) that we attach greater value to economic reforms, or that we regard them as being particularly important, etc. “Such demands,” writes Martynov, speaking of the concrete demands for legislative and administrative measures referred to above, “would not be merely a hollow sound, because, promising certain palpable results, they might be actively supported by the working masses....” We are not Economists, oh no! We only cringe as slavishly before the “palpableness” of concrete results as do the Bernsteins, the Prokopoviches, the Struves, the R.M.s, and tutti quanti! We only wish to make it understood (together with Nartsis Tuporylov) that all which “does not promise palpable results” is merely a “hollow sound”! We are only trying to argue as if the working masses were incapable (and had not already proved their capabilities, notwithstanding those who ascribe their own philistinism to them) of actively supporting every protest against the autocracy, even if it promises absolutely no palpable results whatever! ...

B. How Martynov Rendered Plekhanov More Profound

...
“Much water,” Lomonosov-Martynov says, “has flowed under the bridge since Plekhanov wrote his book (Tasks of the Socialists in the Fight Against the Famine in Russia). The Social-Democrats who for a decade led the economic struggle of the working class ... have failed as yet to lay down a broad theoretical basis for Party tactics. This question has now come to a head, and if we should wish to lay down such a theoretical basis, we should certainly have to deepen considerably the principles of tactics developed at one time by Plekhanov.... Our present definition of the distinction between propaganda and agitation would have to be different from Plekhanov’s (Martynov has just quoted Plekhanov’s words: “A propagandist presents many ideas to one or a few persons; an agitator presents only one or a few ideas, but he presents them to a mass of people.”) By propaganda we would understand the revolutionary explanation of the present social system, entire or in its partial manifestations, whether that be done in a form intelligible to individuals or to broad masses. By agitation, in the strict sense of the word (sic!), we would understand the call upon the masses to undertake definite, concrete actions and the promotion of the direct revolutionary intervention of the proletariat in social life.”

We congratulate Russian-and international-Social-Democracy on having found, thanks to Martynov, a new terminology, more strict and more profound. Hitherto we thought (with Plekhanov, and with all the leaders of the international working class movement) that the propagandist, dealing with, say, the question of unemployment, must explain the capitalistic nature of crises, the cause of their inevitability in modern society, the necessity for the transformation of this society into a socialist society, etc. In a word, he must present “many ideas”, so many, indeed, that they will be understood as an integral whole only by a (comparatively) few persons.

The agitator, however, speaking on the same subject, will take as an illustration a fact that is most glaring and most widely known to his audience, say, the death of an unemployed worker’s family from starvation, the growing impoverishment, etc., and, utilising this fact, known to all, will direct his efforts to presenting a single idea to the “masses”, e.g., the senselessness of the contradiction between the increase of wealth and the increase of poverty; he will strive to rouse discontent and indignation among the masses against this crying injustice, leaving a more complete explanation of this contradiction to the propagandist.

Consequently, the propagandist operates chiefly by means of the printed word; the agitator by means of the spoken word. The propagandist requires qualities different from those of the agitator. Kautsky and Lafargue, for example, we term propagandists; Bebel and Guesde we term agitators.

To single out a third sphere, or third function, of practical activity, and to include in this function “the call upon the masses to undertake definite concrete actions”, is sheer nonsense, because the “call”, as a single act, either naturally and

inevitably supplements the theoretical treatise, propagandist pamphlet, and agitational speech, or represents a purely executive function.

Let us take, for example, the struggle the German Social-Democrats are now waging against the corn duties. The theoreticians write research works on tariff policy, with the “call”, say, to struggle for commercial treaties and for Free Trade. The propagandist does the same thing in the periodical press, and the agitator in public speeches. At the present time, the “concrete action” of the masses takes the form of signing petitions to the Reichstag against raising the corn duties. The call for this action comes indirectly from the theoreticians, the propagandists, and the agitators, and, directly, from the workers who take the petition lists to the factories and to private homes for the gathering of signatures. According to the “Martynov terminology”, Kautsky and Bebel are both propagandists, while those who solicit the signatures are agitators. Isn’t it clear?

The German example recalled to my mind the German word which, literally translated, means “Ballhorning”. Johann Ballhorn, a Leipzig publisher of the sixteenth century, published a child’s reader in which, as was the custom, he introduced a drawing of a cock, but a cock without spurs and with a couple of eggs lying near it. On the cover he printed the legend, “Revised edition by Johann Ballhorn”. Ever since then, the Germans describe any “revision” that is really a worsening as “ballhorning”. And one cannot help recalling Ballhorn upon seeing how the Martynovs try to render Plekhanov “more profound”....

C. Political Exposures And “Training In Revolutionary Activity”

In advancing against Iskra his theory of “raising the activity of the working masses”, Martynov actually betrayed an urge to belittle that activity, for he declared the very economic struggle before which all economists grovel to be the preferable, particularly important, and “most widely applicable” means of rousing this activity and its broadest field. This error is characteristic, precisely in that it is by no means peculiar to Martynov. In reality, it is possible to “raise the activity of the working masses” only when this activity is not restricted to “political agitation on an economic basis”. A basic condition for the necessary expansion of political agitation is the organisation of comprehensive political exposure. In no way except by means of such exposures can the masses be trained in political consciousness and revolutionary activity. Hence, activity of this kind is one of the most important functions of international Social-Democracy as a whole, for even political freedom does not in any way eliminate exposures; it merely shifts somewhat their sphere of direction.

Thus, the German party is especially strengthening its positions and spreading its influence, thanks particularly to the untiring energy with which it is conducting its campaign of political exposure. Working-class consciousness cannot be genuine political consciousness unless the workers are trained to respond to all cases of tyranny, oppression, violence, and abuse, no matter what class is affected – unless they are trained, moreover, to respond from a Social-Democratic point of view and no other. The consciousness of the working masses cannot be genuine class-consciousness, unless the workers learn, from concrete, and above all from topical, political facts and events to observe every other social class in all the manifestations of its intellectual, ethical, and political life; unless they learn to apply in practice the materialist analysis and the materialist estimate of all aspects of the life and activity of all classes, strata, and groups of the population. Those who concentrate the attention, observation, and consciousness of the working class exclusively, or even mainly, upon itself alone are not Social-Democrats; for the self-knowledge of the working class is indissolubly bound up, not solely with a fully clear theoretical understanding – or rather, not so much with the theoretical, as with the practical, understanding – of the relationships between all the various classes of modern society, acquired through the experience of political life.

For this reason the conception of the economic struggle as the most widely applicable means of drawing the masses into the political movement, which our Economists preach, is so extremely harmful and reactionary in its practical significance. In order to become a Social-Democrat, the worker must have a clear picture in his mind of the economic nature and the social and political features of the landlord and the priest, the high state official and the peasant, the student and the vagabond; he must know their strong and weak points; he must grasp the meaning of all the catchwords and sophisms by which each class and each stratum camouflages its selfish strivings and its real “inner workings”; he must understand what interests are reflected by certain institutions and certain laws and how they are reflected. But this “clear picture” cannot be obtained from any book. It can be obtained only from living examples and from exposures that follow close upon what is going on about us at a given moment; upon what is being discussed, in whispers perhaps, by each one in his own way; upon what finds expression in such and such events, in such and such statistics, in such and such court sentences, etc., etc. These comprehensive political exposures are an essential and fundamental condition for training the masses in revolutionary activity.

Why do the Russian workers still manifest little revolutionary activity in response to the brutal treatment of the people by the police, the persecution of religious sects, the flogging of peasants, the outrageous censorship, the torture of soldiers, the persecution of the most innocent cultural undertakings, etc.? Is it because the “economic struggle” does not “stimulate” them to this, because such activity does not “promise palpable results”, because it produces little that is “positive”? To adopt such an opinion, we repeat, is merely to direct the charge where it does not belong, to blame the working masses for one’s own philistinism (or Bernsteinism).

We must blame ourselves, our lagging behind the mass movement, for still being unable to organise sufficiently wide, striking, and rapid exposures of all the shameful outrages. When we do that (and we must and can do it), the most backward worker will understand, or will feel, that the students and religious sects, the peasants and the authors are being abused and outraged by those same dark forces that are oppressing and crushing him at every step of his life.

Feeling that, he himself will be filled with an irresistible desire to react, and he will know how to hoot the censors one day, on another day to demonstrate outside the house of a governor who has brutally suppressed a peasant uprising, on still another day to teach a lesson to the gendarmes in surplices who are doing the work of the Holy Inquisition, etc.

As yet we have done very little, almost nothing, to bring before the working masses prompt exposures on all possible issues. Many of us as yet do not recognise this as our bounden duty but trail spontaneously in the wake of the “drab everyday struggle”, in the narrow confines of factory life. Under such circumstances to say that “Iskra displays a tendency to minimise the significance of the forward march of the drab everyday struggle in comparison with the propaganda of brilliant and complete ideas” (Martynov, op. cit., p. 61), means to drag the Party back, to defend and glorify our unpreparedness and backwardness.

As for calling the masses to action, that will come of itself as soon as energetic political agitation, live and striking exposures come into play. To catch some criminal red-handed and immediately to brand him publicly in all places is of itself far more effective than any number of “calls”; the effect very often is such as will make it impossible to tell exactly who it was that “called” upon the masses and who suggested this or that plan of demonstration, etc. Calls for action, not in the general, but in the concrete, sense of the term can be made only at the place of action; only those who themselves go into action, and do so immediately, can sound such calls. Our business as Social-Democratic publicists is to deepen, expand, and intensify political exposures and political agitation.

A word in passing about “calls to action”. The only newspaper which prior to the spring events called upon the workers to intervene actively in a matter that certainly did not promise any palpable results whatever for the workers, i.e., the drafting of the students into the army, was Iskra. Immediately after the publication of the order of January 11, on “drafting the 183 students into the army”, Iskra published an article on the matter (in its February issue, No. 2), and, before any demonstration was begun, forthwith called upon “the workers to go to the aid of the students”, called upon the “people” openly to take up the government’s arrogant challenge. We ask: how is the remarkable fact to be explained that although Martynov talks so much about “calls to action”, and even suggests “calls to action” as a special form of activity, he said not a word about this call? After this, was it not sheer philistinism on Martynov’s part to allege that Iskra was one-sided because it did not issue sufficient “calls” to struggle for demands “promising palpable results”?

Our Economists, including Rabocheye Dyelo, were successful because they adapted themselves to the backward workers. But the Social-Democratic worker, the revolutionary worker (and the number of such workers is growing) will indignantly reject all this talk about struggle for demands “promising palpable results”, etc., because he will understand that this is only a variation of the old song about adding a kopek to the ruble. Such a worker will say to his counsellors from Rabochaya Mysl and Rabocheye Dyelo: you are busying yourselves in vain, gentlemen, and shirking your proper duties, by meddling with such excessive zeal in a job that we can very well manage ourselves. There is nothing clever in your assertion that the Social-Democrats’ task is to lend the economic struggle itself a political character; that is only the beginning, it is not the main task of the Social-Democrats. For all over the world, including Russia, the police themselves often take the initiative in lending the economic struggle a political character, and the workers themselves learn to understand whom the government supports.

[[FOOTNOTE: The demand “to lend the economic struggle itself a political character” most strikingly expresses subservience to spontaneity in the sphere of political activity. Very often the economic struggle spontaneously assumes a political character, that is to say, without the intervention of the “revolutionary bacilli – the intelligentsia”, without the intervention of the class-conscious Social-Democrats. The economic struggle of the English workers, for instance, also assumed a political character without any intervention on the part of the socialists. The task of the Social-Democrats, however, is not exhausted by political agitation on an economic basis; their task is to convert trade-unionist politics into Social-Democratic political struggle, to utilise the sparks of political consciousness which the economic struggle generates among the workers, for the purpose of raising the workers to the level of Social-Democratic political consciousness. The Martynovs, however, instead of raising and stimulating the spontaneously awakening political consciousness of the workers, bow to spontaneity and repeat over and over ad nauseam, that the economic struggle “Impels” the workers to realise their own lack of political rights. It is unfortunate, gentlemen, that the spontaneously awakening trade-unionist political consciousness does not “impel” you to an understanding of your Social-Democratic tasks.]]

The “economic struggle of the workers against the employers and the government”, about which you make as much fuss as if you had discovered a new America, is being waged in all parts of Russia, even the most remote, by the workers themselves who have heard about strikes, but who have heard almost nothing about socialism. The “activity” you want to stimulate among us workers, by advancing concrete demands that promise palpable results, we are already displaying and in our everyday, limited trade union work we put forward these concrete demands, very often without any assistance whatever from the intellectuals. But such activity is not enough for us; we are not children to be fed on the thin gruel of “economic” politics alone; we want to know everything that others know, we want to learn the details of all aspects of political life and to take part actively in every single political event. In order that we may do this, the intellectuals must talk to us less of what we already know and tell us more about what we do not yet know and what we can never learn from our factory and “economic” experience, namely, political knowledge. You intellectuals can acquire this knowledge, and it is your duty to bring it to us in a hundred- and a thousand-fold greater measure than you have done up to now; and you must bring it to us, not only in the form of discussions, pamphlets, and articles (which very often – pardon our frankness – are rather dull), but precisely in the form of vivid exposures of what our government and our governing classes are doing at this very moment in all spheres of life. Devote more zeal to carrying out this duty and talk less about “raising the activity of the working masses”. We are far more active than you think, and we are quite able

to support, by open street fighting, even demands that do not promise any “palpable results” whatever. It is not for you to “raise” our activity, because activity is precisely the thing you yourselves lack. Bow less in subservience to spontaneity, and think more about raising your own activity, gentlemen!

[6] GRAMSCI: SOME THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL ASPECTS OF 'ECONOMISM'

Economism — theoretical movement for Free Trade — theoretical syndicalism. It should be considered to what degree theoretical syndicalism derives originally from the philosophy of praxis, and to what degree from the economic doctrines of Free Trade — i.e. in the last analysis from liberalism. Hence it should be considered whether economism, in its most developed form, is not a direct descendant of liberalism, having very little connection with the philosophy of praxis even in its origins — and what connection it had only extrinsic and purely verbal.

From this point of view one should study the polemic between Einaudi and Croce over the new (1917) preface to Croce's "Historical Materialism". The need, spoken of by Einaudi, to take into account the literature of economic history inspired by English classical economics, may be satisfied in the following sense. The literature in question, through a superficial contamination with the philosophy of praxis, gave rise to economism; hence when Einaudi criticises (very imprecisely, to tell the truth) certain economist degenerations, he forgets the old adage that those who live in glass houses should not throw stones. The nexus between free-trade ideology and theoretical syndicalism is particularly evident in Italy, where the admiration of syndicalists like Lanzillo & Co. for Pareto is well known. The significance of the two tendencies, however, is very different. The former belongs to a dominant and directive social group; the latter to a group which is still subaltern, which has not yet gained consciousness of its strength, its possibilities, of how it is to develop, and which therefore does not know how to escape from the primitivist phase.

The ideas of the Free Trade movement are based on a theoretical error whose practical origin is not hard to identify; they are based on a distinction between political society and civil society, which is made into and presented as an organic one, whereas in fact it is merely methodological. Thus it is asserted that economic activity belongs to civil society, and that the State must not intervene to regulate it. But since in actual reality civil society and State are one and the same, it must be made clear that *laissez-faire* too is a form of State "regulation", introduced and maintained by legislative and coercive means. It is a deliberate policy, conscious of its own ends, and not the spontaneous, automatic expression of economic facts. Consequently, *laissez-faire* liberalism is a political programme, designed to change — in so far as it is victorious — a State's leading personnel, and to change the economic programme of the State itself — in other words the distribution of the national income.

The case of theoretical syndicalism is different. Here we are dealing with a subaltern group, which is prevented by this theory from ever becoming dominant, or from developing beyond the economic-corporate stage and rising to the phase of ethical-political hegemony in civil society, and of domination in the State. In the case of *laissez-faire* liberalism, one is dealing with a fraction of the ruling class which wishes to modify not the structure of the State, but merely government policy; which wishes to reform the laws controlling commerce, but only indirectly those controlling industry (since it is undeniable that protection, especially in countries with a poor and restricted market, limits freedom of industrial enterprise and favours unhealthy the creation of monopolies). What is at stake is a rotation in governmental office of the ruling-class parties, not the foundation and organisation of a new political society, and even less of a new type of civil society. In the case of the theoretical syndicalist movement the problem is more complex. It is undeniable that in it, the independence and autonomy of the subaltern group which it claims to represent are in fact sacrificed to the intellectual hegemony of the ruling class, since precisely theoretical syndicalism is merely an aspect of *laissez-faire* liberalism — justified with a few mutilated (and therefore banalised) theses from the philosophy of praxis. Why and how does this "sacrifice" come about? The transformation of the subordinate group into a dominant one is excluded, either because the problem is not even considered (Fabianism, De Man, an important part of the Labour Party), or because it is posed in an appropriate and ineffective form (social-democratic tendencies in general), or because a belief in the possibility of leaping from class society directly into a society of perfect equality with a syndical economy.

The attitude of economism towards expressions of political and intellectual will, action or initiative is to say the least strange — as if these did not emanate organically from economic necessity, and indeed were not the only effective expression of the economy. Thus it is incongruous that the concrete posing of the problem of hegemony should be interpreted as a fact subordinating the group seeking hegemony. Undoubtedly the fact of hegemony presupposes that account be taken of the interests and the tendencies of the groups over which hegemony is to be exercised, and that a certain compromise equilibrium should be formed — in other words, that the leading group should make sacrifices of an economic-corporate kind. But there is also no doubt that such sacrifices and such a compromise cannot touch the essential; for though hegemony is ethical-political, it must also be economic, must necessarily be based on the decisive function exercised by the leading group in the decisive nucleus of economic activity.

Economism appears in many other guises besides *laissez-faire* liberalism and theoretical syndicalism. All forms of electoral abstentionism belong to it (a typical example is the abstentionism of the Italian Clericals after 1870, which became ever more attenuated after 1900 until 1919 and the formation of the Popular Party; the organic distinction which the Clericals made between the real Italy and the legal Italy was a reproduction of the distinction between economic

world and politico-legal world); and there are many such forms, in the sense that there can be semi-abstentionism, 25 per cent abstentionism, etc. Linked with abstentionism is the formula "the worse it gets, the better that will be", and also the formula of the so-called parliamentary "intransigence" of certain groups of deputies. Economism is not always opposed to political action and to the political party, but the latter is seen merely as an educational organism similar in kind to a trade union. One point of reference for the study of economism, and for understanding the relations between structure and superstructure, is the passage in *The Poverty of Philosophy* where it says that an important phase in the development of a social class is that in which the individual components of a trade union no longer struggle solely for their own economic interests, but for the defence and the development of the organisation itself. In this connection Engels' statement too should be recalled, that the economy is only the mainspring of history "in the last analysis" (to be found in his two letters on the philosophy of praxis also published in Italian); this statement is to be directly related to the passage in the preface to the *Critique of Political Economy* which says that it is on the level of ideologies that men become conscious of conflicts in the world of the economy.

At various points in these notes it is stated that the philosophy of praxis is far more widely diffused than is generally conceded. The assertion is correct in what is meant is that historical economism, as Professor Loria now calls his more or less incoherent theories, is widely diffused, and that consequently the cultural environment has completely changed from the time in which the philosophy of praxis began its struggles. One might say, in Crocean terminology, that the greatest heresy which has grown in the womb of the "religion of freedom" has itself too like orthodox religion degenerated, and has become disseminated as "superstition" — in other words, has combined with *laissez-faire* liberalism and produced economism. However, it remains to be seen whether — in contrast to orthodox religion, which has by now quite shrivelled up — this heretical superstition has not in fact always maintained a ferment which will cause it to be reborn as a higher form of religion; in other words, if the dross of superstition is not in fact easily got rid of.

A few characteristics of historical economism

1. in the search for historical connections it makes no distinction between what is "relatively permanent" and what is a passing fluctuation, and by an economic fact it means the self-interest of an individual or small group, in an immediate and "dirty-Jewish" sense. In other words, it does not take economic class formations into account, with all their inherent relations, but is content to assume motives of mean and usurious self-interest, especially when it takes forms which the law defines as criminal;
2. the doctrine according to which economic development is reduced to the course of technical change in the instruments of work. Professor Loria has produced a splendid demonstration of this doctrine in application, in his article on the social influence of the aeroplane published in *Rassegna Contemporanea* in 1912;
3. the doctrine according to which economic and historical development are made to depend directly on the changes in some important element of production — the discovery of a new raw material or fuel, etc. — which necessitate the application of new methods in the construction and design of machines. In recent times there has been an entire literature on the subject of petroleum: Antonio Lavosia's article in *Nuova Antologia* of 16 May 1929 can be read as a typical example. The discovery of new fuels and new forms of energy, just as of new raw materials to be transformed, is certainly of great importance, since it can alter the position of individual states; but it does not determine historical movement, etc.

It often happens that people combat historical economism in the belief that they are attacking historical materialism. This is the case, for instance, with an article in the Paris *Avenir* of 10 October 1930 (reproduced in *Rassegna Settimanale della Stampa Estera* [Weekly Review of the Foreign Press] of 21 October 1930, pp. 2303-4), which can be quoted as typical: "We have been hearing for some time, especially since the war, that it is self-interest which governs nations and drives the world forward. It was the Marxists who invented this thesis, to which they give the somewhat doctrinaire title of 'Historical Materialism'. In pure Marxism, men taken as a mass obey economic necessity and not their own emotions. Politics is emotion; patriotism is emotion; these two imperious goddesses merely act as a façade in history. In reality, the history of peoples throughout the centuries is to be explained by a changing, constantly renewed interplay of material causes. Everything is economics. Many 'bourgeois' philosophers and economists have taken up this refrain. They pretend to be able to explain high international politics to us by the current price of grain, oil or rubber. They use all their ingenuity to prove that diplomacy is entirely governed by questions of custom tariffs and cost prices. These explanations enjoy a high esteem. They have a modicum of scientific appearance, and proceed from a sort of superior scepticism which would like to pass for the last word in elegance. Emotions in foreign policy? Feelings in home affairs? Enough of that! This stuff is all right for the common people. The great minds, the initiates, know that everything is governed by debits and credits. Now this is an absolute pseudo-truth. It is utterly false that peoples only allow themselves to be moved by considerations of self-interest, and it is entirely true that they are above all motivated by desire for, and ardent belief in, prestige. Anyone who does not understand this, does not understand anything." The article (entitled *The Desire for Prestige*) goes on to cite the examples of German and Italian politics, which it claims are governed by considerations of prestige, and not dictated by material interests. In short, it includes most of the more banal polemical gibes that are directed against the philosophy of praxis; but the real target of the polemic is crude economism of Loria's kind. However, the author is not very strong in argument in other respects either. He does not

understand that "feelings" may be simply a synonym for economic interests, and that it is difficult to maintain that political activity is a permanent state of raw emotion and of spasm. Indeed he himself presents French politics as systematic and coherent "rationality", i.e. purged of all emotional elements, etc.

In its most widespread form as economistic superstition, the philosophy of praxis loses a great part of its capacity for cultural expansion among the top layer of intellectuals, however much it may gain among the popular masses and the second-rate intellectuals, who do not intend to overtax their brains but still wish to appear to know everything, etc. As Engels wrote, many people find it very convenient to think that they can have the whole of history and all political and philosophical wisdom in their pockets at little cost and no trouble, concentrated into a few short formulae. They forget that the thesis which asserts that men become conscious of fundamental conflicts on the level of ideology is not psychological or moralistic in character, but structural and epistemological; and they form the habit of considering politics, and hence history, as a continuous *marché de dupes*, a competition in conjuring and sleight of hand. "Critical" activity is reduced to the exposure of swindles, to creating scandals, and to prying them into the pockets of public figures.

It is thus forgotten that since "economism" too is, or is presumed to be, an objective principle of interpretation (objective-scientific), the search for direct self-interest should apply to all aspects of history, to those who represent the "thesis" as well as those who represent the "antithesis". Furthermore, another proposition of the philosophy of praxis is also forgotten: that "popular beliefs" and similar ideas are themselves material forces. The search for "dirty-Jewish" interests has sometimes led to monstrous and comical errors of interpretation, which have consequently reacted negatively on the prestige of the original body of ideas. It is therefore necessary to combat economism not only in the theory of historiography, but also and especially in the theory and practice of politics. In this field, the struggle can and must be carried on by developing the concept of hegemony — as has been done in practice in the development of the theory of the political party,⁴⁶ and in the actual history of certain political parties (the struggle against the theory of the so-called Permanent Revolution — to which was counterposed the concept of revolutionary-democratic dictatorship; the extent of the support given to constituentist ideologies, etc.). A study could be made of how certain political movements were judged during the course of their development. One could take as a model the Boulangist movement (from 1886 to 1890 approximately) of the Dreyfus trial or even the coup d'état of 2nd December (one would analyse the classic work on the subject and consider how much relative importance is given on the one hand to immediate economic factors, and on the other to the concrete study of "ideologies"). Confronted with these events, economism asks the question: "who profits directly from the initiative under consideration?", and replies with a line of reasoning which is as simplistic as it is fallacious: the ones who profit directly are a certain fraction of the ruling class. Furthermore, so that no mistake shall be made, the choice falls on that fraction which manifestly has a progressive function, controlling the totality of economic forces. One can be certain of not going wrong, since necessarily, if the movement under consideration comes to power, sooner or later the progressive fraction of the ruling group will end up by controlling the new government, and by making it its instrument for turning the State apparatus to its own benefit.

This sort of infallibility, therefore, comes very cheap. It not only has no theoretical significance — it has only minimal political implications or practical efficacy. In general, it produces nothing but moralistic sermons, and interminable questions of personality. When a movement of a Boulangist type occurs, the analysis realistically should be developed along the following lines: 1. social content of the mass following of the movement; 2. what function did this mass have in the balance of forces — which is in process of transformation, as the new movement demonstrates by its very coming into existence? 3. what is the political and social significance of those of the demands presented by the movement's leaders which find general assent? To what effective needs do they correspond? 4. examination of the conformity of the means to the proposed end; 5. only in the last analysis, and formulated in political not moralistic terms, is the *hypothesis* considered that such a movement will necessarily be perverted, and serve quite different ends from those which the mass of its followers expect. But economism puts forward this hypothesis in advance, when no concrete fact (that is to say, none which appears as such to the evidence of common sense — rather than as a result of some esoteric "scientific" analysis) yet exists to support it. It thus appears as a moralistic accusation of duplicity and bad faith, or (in the case of the movement's followers), of naiveté and stupidity. Thus the political struggle is reduced to a series of personal affairs between on the one hand those with the genie in the lamp who know everything and on the other those who are fooled by their own leaders but are so incurably thick that they refuse to believe it. Moreover, until such movements have gained power, it is always possible to think that they are going to fail — and some indeed have failed (Boulangism itself, which failed as such and then was definitively crushed with the rise of the Dreyfusard movement; the movement of Georges Valois; that of General Gajda).⁵¹ Research must therefore be directed towards identifying their strengths and weaknesses. The "economist" hypothesis asserts the existence of an immediate element of strength — i.e. the availability of a certain direct or indirect financial backing (a large newspaper supporting the movement is also a form of indirect financial backing) — and it is satisfied with that. But it is not enough. In this case too, an analysis of the balance of forces — at all levels — can only culminate in the sphere of hegemony and ethico-political relations.

One point which should be added as an example of the so-called intransigence theories is the rigid aversion on principle to what are termed compromises — and the derivative of this, which can be termed "fear of dangers". It is clear that this aversion on principle to compromise is closely linked to economism. For the conception upon which the aversion is

based can only be the iron conviction that there exist objective laws of historical development similar in kind to natural laws, together with a belief in a predetermined teleology like that of a religion: since favourable conditions are inevitably going to appear, and since these, in a rather mysterious way, will bring about paligenetic events, it is evident that any deliberate initiative tending to predispose and plan these conditions is not only useless but even harmful. Side by side with these fatalistic beliefs however, there exists the tendency "thereafter" to rely blindly and indiscriminately on the regulatory properties of armed conflict. Yet this too is not without its logic and its consistency, since it goes with a belief that the intervention of will is useful for destruction but not for reconstruction (already under way in the very moment of destruction). Destruction is conceived of mechanically, not as destruction/reconstruction. In such modes of thinking, no account is taken of the "time" factor, nor in the last analysis even of "economics". For there is no understanding of the fact that mass ideological factors always lag behind mass economic phenomena, and that therefore, at certain moments, the automatic thrust due to the economic factor is slowed down, obstructed or even momentarily broken by traditional ideological elements — hence that there must be a conscious, planned struggle to ensure that the exigencies of the economic position of the masses, which may conflict with the traditional leadership's policies, are understood. An appropriate political initiative is always necessary to liberate the economic thrust from the dead weight of traditional policies — i.e. to change the political direction of certain forces which have to be absorbed if a new, homogeneous politico-economic historical bloc, without internal contradictions, is to be successfully formed. And, since two "similar" forces can only be welded into a new organism either through a series of compromises or by force of arms, either by binding them to each other as allies or by forcibly subordinating one to the other, the question is whether one has the necessary force, and whether it is "productive" to use it. If the union of two forces is necessary in order to defeat a third, a recourse to arms and coercion (even supposing that these are available) can be nothing more than a methodological hypothesis; the only concrete possibility is compromise. Force can be employed against enemies, but not against a part of one's own side which one wishes rapidly to assimilate, and whose "good will" and enthusiasm one needs.

[7] EXCERPTS FROM MARX AND ENGELS ON HISTORICAL MATERIALISM

Engels to J. Bloch In Königsberg
London, September 21, 1890

... According to the materialist conception of history, the ultimately determining element in history is the production and reproduction of real life. Other than this neither Marx nor I have ever asserted. Hence if somebody twists this into saying that the economic element is the only determining one, he transforms that proposition into a meaningless, abstract, senseless phrase. The economic situation is the basis, but the various elements of the superstructure — political forms of the class struggle and its results, to wit: constitutions established by the victorious class after a successful battle, etc., juridical forms, and even the reflexes of all these actual struggles in the brains of the participants, political, juristic, philosophical theories, religious views and their further development into systems of dogmas — also exercise their influence upon the course of the historical struggles and in many cases preponderate in determining their form. There is an interaction of all these elements in which, amid all the endless host of accidents (that is, of things and events whose inner interconnection is so remote or so impossible of proof that we can regard it as non-existent, as negligible), the economic movement finally asserts itself as necessary. Otherwise the application of the theory to any period of history would be easier than the solution of a simple equation of the first degree.

We make our history ourselves, but, in the first place, under very definite assumptions and conditions. Among these the economic ones are ultimately decisive. But the political ones, etc., and indeed even the traditions which haunt human minds also play a part, although not the decisive one. The Prussian state also arose and developed from historical, ultimately economic, causes. But it could scarcely be maintained without pedantry that among the many small states of North Germany, Brandenburg was specifically determined by economic necessity to become the great power embodying the economic, linguistic and, after the Reformation, also the religious difference between North and South, and not by other elements as well (above all by its entanglement with Poland, owing to the possession of Prussia, and hence with international political relations — which were indeed also decisive in the formation of the Austrian dynastic power). Without making oneself ridiculous it would be a difficult thing to explain in terms of economics the existence of every small state in Germany, past and present, or the origin of the High German consonant permutations, which widened the geographic partition wall formed by the mountains from the Sudetic range to the Taunus to form a regular fissure across all Germany.

In the second place, however, history is made in such a way that the final result always arises from conflicts between many individual wills, of which each in turn has been made what it is by a host of particular conditions of life. Thus there are innumerable intersecting force, an infinite series of parallelograms of forces which give rise to one resultant — the historical event. This may again itself be viewed as the product of a power which works as a whole unconsciously and without volition. For what each individual wills is obstructed by everyone else, and what emerges is something that no one willed. Thus history has proceeded hitherto in the manner of a natural process and is essentially subject to the same laws of motion. But from the fact that the wills of individuals — each of whom desires what he is impelled to by his physical constitution and external, in the last resort economic, circumstances (either his own personal circumstances or those of society in general) — do not attain what they want, but are merged into an aggregate mean, a common resultant, it must not be concluded that they are equal to zero. On the contrary, each contributes to the resultant and is to

this extent included in it.

I would furthermore ask you to study this theory from its original sources and not at second-hand; it is really much easier. Marx hardly wrote anything in which it did not play a part. But especially *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* is a most excellent example of its application. There are also many allusion to it in *Capital*. Then may I also direct you to my writings: Herr Eugen Dühring's *Revolution in Science and Ludwig Feuerbach and the End of Classical German Philosophy*, in which I have given the most detailed account of historical material which, as far as I know, exists.

Marx and I are ourselves partly to blame for the fact that the younger people sometimes lay more stress on the economic side than is due to it. We had to emphasise the main principle vis-à-vis our adversaries, who denied it, and we had not always the time, the place or the opportunity to give their due to the other elements involved in the interaction. But when it came to presenting a section of history, that is, to making a practical application, it was a different matter and there no error was permissible. Unfortunately, however, it happens only too often that people think they have fully understood a new theory and can apply it without more ado from the moment they have assimilated its main principles, and even those not always correctly. And I cannot exempt many of the more recent "Marxists" from this reproach, for the most amazing rubbish has been produced in this quarter, too....

Engels to Conrad Schmidt

In Berlin

London, October 27, 1890

... The thing is easiest to grasp from the point of view of the division of labour. Society gives rise to certain common functions which it cannot dispense with. The persons selected for these functions form a new branch of the division of labour within society. This gives them particular interests, distinct too from the interests of those who gave them their office; they make themselves independent of the latter and--the state is in being. And now the development is the same as it was with commodity trade and later with money trade; the new independent power, while having in the main to follow the movement of production, also, owing to its inward independence (the relative independence originally transferred to it and gradually further developed) reacts in its turn upon the conditions and course of production. It is the interaction of two unequal forces: on one hand the economic movement, on the other the new political power, which strives for as much independence as possible, and which, having once been established, is also endowed with a movement of its own. On the whole, the economic movement gets its way, but it has also to suffer reactions from the political movement which it established and endowed with relative independence itself, from the movement of the state power on the one hand and of the opposition simultaneously engendered on the other. Just as the movement of the industrial market is, in the main and with the reservations already indicated, reflected in the money market and, of course, in inverted form, so the struggle between the classes already existing and already in conflict with one another is reflected in the struggle between government and opposition, but also in inverted form, no longer directly but indirectly, not as a class struggle but as a fight for political principles, and so distorted that it has taken us thousands of years to get behind it again.

The reaction of the state power upon economic development can be one of three kinds: it can run in the same direction, and then development is more rapid; it can oppose the line of development, in which case nowadays state power in every great nation will go to pieces in the long run; or it can cut off the economic development from certain paths, and impose on it certain others. This case ultimately reduces itself to one of the two previous ones. But it is obvious that in cases two and three the political power can do great damage to the economic development and result in the squandering of great masses of energy and material.

Then there is also the case of the conquest and brutal destruction of economic resources, by which, in certain circumstances, a whole local or national economic development could formerly be ruined. Nowadays such a case usually has the opposite effect, at least among great nations: in the long run the defeated power often gains more economically, politically and morally than the victor.

It is similar with law. As soon as the new division of labour which creates professional lawyers becomes necessary, another new and independent sphere is opened up which, for all its general dependence on production and trade, still has its own capacity for reacting upon these spheres as well. In a modern state, law must not only correspond to the general economic position and be its expression, but must also be an expression which is consistent in itself, and which does not, owing to inner contradictions, look glaringly inconsistent. And in order to achieve this, the faithful reflection of economic conditions is more and more infringed upon. All the more so the more rarely it happens that a code of law is the blunt, unmitigated, unadulterated expression of the domination of a class--this in itself would already offend the "conception of justice." Even in the Code Napoleon the pure logical conception of justice held by the revolutionary bourgeoisie of 1792-96 is already adulterated in many ways, and in so far as it is embodied there has daily to undergo all sorts of attenuation owing to the rising power of the proletariat. Which does not prevent the Code Napoleon from being the statute book which serves as a basis for every new code of law in every part of the world. Thus to a great extent the course of the "development of law" only consists: first in the attempt to do away with the contradictions arising from the direct translation of economic relations into legal principles, and to establish a harmonious system of law, and then in the repeated breaches made in this system by the influence and pressure of further economic development, which involves it in further contradictions (I am only speaking here of civil law for the moment).

The reflection of economic relations as legal principles is necessarily also a topsy turvy one: it happens without the person who is acting being conscious of it; the jurist imagines he is operating with a priori principles, whereas they are

really only economic reflexes; so everything is upside down. And it seems to me obvious that this inversion, which, so long as it remains unrecognised, forms what we call ideological conception, reacts in its turn upon the economic basis and may, within certain limits, modify it. The basis of the law of inheritance--assuming that the stages reached in the development of the family are equal--is an economic one. But it would be difficult to prove, for instance, that the absolute liberty of the testator in England and the severe restrictions imposed upon him in France are only due in every detail to economic causes. Both react back, however, on the economic sphere to a very considerable extent, because they influence the division of property.

As to the realms of ideology which soar still higher in the air, religion, philosophy, etc., these have a prehistoric stock, found already in existence and taken over in the historic period, of what we should to-day call bunk. These various false conceptions of nature, of man's own being, of spirits, magic forces, etc., have for the most part only a negative economic basis; but the low economic development of the prehistoric period is supplemented and also partially conditioned and even caused by the false conceptions of nature. And even though economic necessity was the main driving force of the progressive knowledge of nature and becomes ever more so, it would surely be pedantic to try and find economic causes for all this primitive nonsense. The history of science is the history of the gradual clearing away of this nonsense or of its replacement by fresh but already less absurd nonsense. The people who deal with this belong in their turn to special spheres in the division of labour and appear to themselves to be working in an independent field. And in so far as they form an independent group within the social division of labour, in so far do their productions, including their errors, react back as an influence upon the whole development of society, even on its economic development. But all the same they themselves remain under the dominating influence of economic development. In philosophy, for instance, this can be most readily proved in the bourgeois period. Hobbes was the first modern materialist (in the eighteenth century sense) but he was an absolutist in a period when absolute monarchy was at its height throughout the whole of Europe and when the fight of absolute monarchy versus the people was beginning in England. Locke, both in religion and politics, was the child of the class compromise of 1688. The English deists and their more consistent successors, the French materialists, were the true philosophers of the bourgeoisie, the French even of the bourgeois revolution. The German petty bourgeois runs through German philosophy from Kant to Hegel, sometimes positively and sometimes negatively. But the philosophy of every epoch, since it is a definite sphere in the division of labour, has as its presupposition certain definite intellectual material handed down to it by its predecessors, from which it takes its start. And that is why economically backward countries can still play first fiddle in philosophy: France in the eighteenth century compared with England, on whose philosophy the French based themselves, and later Germany in comparison with both. But the philosophy both of France and Germany and the general blossoming of literature at that time were also the result of a rising economic development. I consider the ultimate supremacy of economic development established in these spheres too, but it comes to pass within conditions imposed by the particular sphere itself: in philosophy, for instance, through the operation of economic influences (which again generally only act under political, etc., disguises) upon the existing philosophic material handed down by predecessors. Here economy creates nothing absolutely new (*a novo*), but it determines the way in which the existing material of thought is altered and further developed, and that too for the most part indirectly, for it is the political, legal and moral reflexes which exercise the greatest direct influence upon philosophy.

About religion I have said the most necessary things in the last section on Feuerbach.

If therefore Barth supposes that we deny any and every reaction of the political, etc., reflexes of the economic movement upon the movement itself, he is simply tilting at windmills. He has only got to look at Marx's Eighteenth Brumaire, which deals almost exclusively with the particular part played by political struggles and events; of course, within their general dependence upon economic conditions. Or *Capital*, the section on the working day, for instance, where legislation, which is surely a political act, has such a trenchant effect. Or the section on the history of the bourgeoisie. (Chapter XXIV.) Or why do we fight for the political dictatorship of the proletariat if political power is economically impotent? Force (that is state power) is also an economic power.

But I have no time to criticise the book now. I must first get Vol. III out and besides I think too that Bernstein, for instance, could deal with it quite effectively.

What these gentlemen all lack is dialectic. They never see anything but here cause and there effect. That this is a hollow abstraction, that such metaphysical polar opposites only exist in the real world during crises, while the whole vast process proceeds in the form of interaction (though of very unequal forces, the economic movement being by far the strongest, most elemental and most decisive) and that here everything is relative and nothing is absolute--this they never begin to see. Hegel has never existed for them.

Karl Marx: A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy: Preface

I examine the system of bourgeois economy in the following order: capital, landed property, wage-labour; the State, foreign trade, world market.

The economic conditions of existence of the three great classes into which modern bourgeois society is divided are analysed under the first three headings; the interconnection of the other three headings is self-evident. The first part of the first book, dealing with *Capital*, comprises the following chapters: 1. The commodity, 2. Money or simple circulation; 3. Capital in general. The present part consists of the first two chapters. The entire material lies before me in the form of monographs, which were written not for publication but for self-clarification at widely separated periods; their remoulding into an integrated whole according to the plan I have indicated will depend upon circumstances.

A general introduction, which I had drafted, is omitted, since on further consideration it seems to me confusing to anticipate results which still have to be substantiated, and the reader who really wishes to follow me will have to decide to advance from the particular to the general. A few brief remarks regarding the course of my study of political appropriate here.

Although I studied jurisprudence, I pursued it as a subject subordinated to philosophy and history. In the year 1842-43, as editor of the *Rheinische Zeitung*, I first found myself in the embarrassing position of having to discuss what is known as material interests. The deliberations of the Rhenish Landtag on forest thefts and the division of landed property; the officials polemic started by Herr von Schaper, then Oberpräsident of the Rhine Province, against the *Rheinische Zeitung* about the condition of the Moselle peasantry, and finally the debates on free trade and protective tariffs caused me in the first instance to turn my attention to economic questions. On the other hand, at that time when good intentions "to push forward" often took the place of factual knowledge, an echo of French socialism and communism, slightly tinged by philosophy, was noticeable in the *Rheinische Zeitung*. I objected to this dilettantism, but at the same time frankly admitted in a controversy with the *Allgemeine Augsburger Zeitung* that my previous studies did not allow me to express any opinion on the content of the French theories. When the publishers of the *Rheinische Zeitung* conceived the illusion that by a more compliant policy on the part of the paper it might be possible to secure the abrogation of the death sentence passed upon it, I eagerly grasped the opportunity to withdraw from the public stage to my study.

The first work which I undertook to dispel the doubts assailing me was a critical re-examination of the Hegelian philosophy of law; the introduction to this work being published in the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher* issued in Paris in 1844. My inquiry led me to the conclusion that neither legal relations nor political forms could be comprehended whether by themselves or on the basis of a so-called general development of the human mind, but that on the contrary they originate in the material conditions of life, the totality of which Hegel, following the example of English and French thinkers of the eighteenth century, embraces within the term "civil society"; that the anatomy of this civil society, however, has to be sought in political economy. The study of this, which I began in Paris, I continued in Brussels, where I moved owing to an expulsion order issued by M. Guizot. The general conclusion at which I arrived and which, once reached, became the guiding principle of my studies can be summarised as follows.

In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation, on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness. At a certain stage of development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production or – this merely expresses the same thing in legal terms – with the property relations within the framework of which they have operated hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an era of social revolution. The changes in the economic foundation lead sooner or later to the transformation of the whole immense superstructure.

In studying such transformations it is always necessary to distinguish between the material transformation of the economic conditions of production, which can be determined with the precision of natural science, and the legal, political, religious, artistic or philosophic – in short, ideological forms in which men become conscious of this conflict and fight it out. Just as one does not judge an individual by what he thinks about himself, so one cannot judge such a period of transformation by its consciousness, but, on the contrary, this consciousness must be explained from the contradictions of material life, from the conflict existing between the social forces of production and the relations of production. No social order is ever destroyed before all the productive forces for which it is sufficient have been developed, and new superior relations of production never replace older ones before the material conditions for their existence have matured within the framework of the old society.

Mankind thus inevitably sets itself only such tasks as it is able to solve, since closer examination will always show that the problem itself arises only when the material conditions for its solution are already present or at least in the course of formation. In broad outline, the Asiatic, ancient,[A] feudal and modern bourgeois modes of production may be designated as epochs marking progress in the economic development of society. The bourgeois mode of production is the last antagonistic form of the social process of production – antagonistic not in the sense of individual antagonism but of an antagonism that emanates from the individuals' social conditions of existence – but the productive forces developing within bourgeois society create also the material conditions for a solution of this antagonism. The prehistory of human society accordingly closes with this social formation.

Frederick Engels, with whom I maintained a constant exchange of ideas by correspondence since the publication of his brilliant essay on the critique of economic categories (printed in the *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher*, arrived by another road (compare his *Lage der arbeitenden Klasse in England*) at the same result as I, and when in the spring of 1845 he too came to live in Brussels, we decided to set forth together our conception as opposed to the ideological one of German philosophy, in fact to settle accounts with our former philosophical conscience. The intention was carried out in the form of a critique of post-Hegelian philosophy. The manuscript [*The German Ideology*], two large octavo volumes, had long ago reached the publishers in Westphalia when we were informed that owing to changed circumstances it could not be printed. We abandoned the manuscript to the gnawing criticism of the mice all the more willingly since we had achieved our main purpose – self-clarification. Of the scattered works in which at that time we presented one or another aspect of our views to the public, I shall mention only the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*,

jointly written by Engels and myself, and a Discours sur le libre echange, which I myself published. The salient points of our conception were first outlined in an academic, although polemical, form in my Misere de la philosophie..., this book which was aimed at Proudhon appeared in 1847. The publication of an essay on Wage-Labour [Wage-Labor and Capital] written in German in which I combined the lectures I had held on this subject at the German Workers' Association in Brussels, was interrupted by the February Revolution and my forcible removal from Belgium in consequence.

The publication of the Neue Rheinische Zeitung in 1848 and 1849 and subsequent events cut short my economic studies, which I could only resume in London in 1850. The enormous amount of material relating to the history of political economy assembled in the British Museum, the fact that London is a convenient vantage point for the observation of bourgeois society, and finally the new stage of development which this society seemed to have entered with the discovery of gold in California and Australia, induced me to start again from the very beginning and to work carefully through the new material. These studies led partly of their own accord to apparently quite remote subjects on which I had to spend a certain amount of time. But it was in particular the imperative necessity of earning my living which reduced the time at my disposal. My collaboration, continued now for 8 years, with the New York Tribune, the leading Anglo-American newspaper, necessitated an excessive fragmentation of my studies, for I wrote only exceptionally newspaper correspondence in the strict sense. Since a considerable part of my contributions consisted of articles dealing with important economic events in Britain and on the continent, I was compelled to become conversant with practical detail which, strictly speaking, lie outside the sphere of political economy.

This sketch of the course of my studies in the domain of political economy is intended merely to show that my views – no matter how they may be judged and how little they conform to the interested prejudices of the ruling classes – are the outcome of conscientious research carried on over many years. At the entrance to science, as at the entrance to hell, the demand must be made:

Qui si convien lasciare ogni sospetto
Ogni viltà convien che qui sia morta.

[From Dante, Divina Commedia:

Here must all distrust be left;

All cowardice must here be dead.]

Karl Marx

London, January 1859

[8] PLEKHANOV: ANARCHISM AND SOCIALISM

CHAPTER I

The Point of View of the Utopian Socialists

The French Materialists of the 18th century while waging relentless war against all the “infames” whose yoke weighed upon the French of this period, by no means scorned the search after what they called “perfect legislation,” i.e., the best of all possible legislations, such legislation as should secure to “human beings” the greatest sum of happiness, and could be alike applicable to all existing societies, for the simple reason that it was “perfect” and therefore the most “natural.” Excursions into this domain of “perfect legislation” occupy no small place in the works of a d’Holbach and a Helvetius. On the other hand, the Socialists of the first half of our century threw themselves with immense zeal, with unequalled perseverance, into the search after the best of possible social organizations, after a perfect social organization. This is a striking and notable characteristic which they have in common with the French Materialists of the last century, and it is this characteristic which especially demands our attention in the present work.

In order to solve the problem of a perfect social organization, or what comes to the same thing, of the best of all possible legislation, we must eventually have some criterion by the help of which we may compare the various “legislations” one with the other. And the criterion must have a special attribute. In fact, there is no question of a “legislation” relatively the best, i.e., the best legislation under given conditions. No, indeed! We have to find a perfect legislation, a legislation whose perfection should have nothing relative about it, should be entirely independent of time and place, should be, in a word, absolute. We are therefore driven to make abstraction from history, since everything in history is relative, everything depends upon circumstance, time, and place. But abstraction made of the history of humanity, what is there left to guide us in our “legislative” investigations. Humanity is left us, man in general, human nature – of which history is but the manifestation. Here then we have our criterion definitely settled, a perfect legislation. The best of all possible legislation is that which best harmonizes with human nature. It may be, of course, that even when we have such a criterion we may, for want of “light” or of logic, fail to solve this problem of the best legislation. “Errare humanum est,” but it seems incontrovertible that this problem can be solved, that we can, by taking our stand upon an exact knowledge of human nature, find a perfect legislation, a perfect organization.

Such was, in the domain of social science, the point of view of the French Materialists. Man is a sentient and reasonable being, they said; he avoids painful sensations and seeks pleasurable ones. He has sufficient intelligence to recognize what is useful to him as well as what is harmful to him. Once you admit these axioms, and you can in your investigations into the best legislation, arrive, with the help of reflection and good intentions, at conclusions as well founded, as exact, as incontrovertible as those derived from a mathematical demonstration. Thus Condorcet undertook to construct deductively all precepts of healthy morality by starting from the truth that man is a sentient and reasonable being.

It is hardly necessary to say that in this Condorcet was mistaken. If the “philosophers” in this branch of their investigations arrived at conclusions of incontestable though very relative value, they unconsciously owed this to the fact that they constantly abandoned their abstract standpoint of human nature in general, and took up that of a more or less idealized nature of a man of the Third Estate. This man “felt” and “reasoned,” after a fashion very clearly defined by his social environment. It was his “nature” to believe firmly in bourgeois property, representative government, freedom of trade (“laissez faire, laissez passer!” the “nature” of this man was always crying out), and so on. In reality, the French philosophers always kept in view the economic and political requirements of the Third Estate; this was their real criterion. But they applied it unconsciously, and only after much wandering in the field of abstraction, did they arrive at it. Their conscious method always reduced itself to abstract considerations of “human nature,” and of the social and political institutions that best harmonize with this nature.

Their method was also that of the Socialists. A man of the 18th century, Morelly, “to anticipate a mass of empty objections that would be endless,” lays down as an incontrovertible principle “that in morals nature is one, constant, invariable ... that its laws never change;” and that “everything that may be advanced as to the variety in the morals of savage and civilized peoples, by no means proves that nature varies;” that at the outside it only shows “that from certain accidental causes which are foreign to it, some nations have fallen away from the laws of nature; others have remained submissive to them, in some respects from mere habit; finally, others are subjected to them by certain reasoned-out laws that are not always in contradiction with nature;” in a word, “man may abandon the True, but the True can never be annihilated! Fourier relies upon the analysis of the human passions; Robert Owen starts from certain considerations on the formation of human character; Saint Simon, despite his deep comprehension of the historical evolution of humanity, constantly returns to “human nature” in order to explain the laws of this evolution; the Saint-Simonians declared their philosophy was “based upon a new conception of human nature.” The Socialists of the various schools may quarrel as to the cause of their different conceptions of human nature; all, without a single exception, are convinced that social science has not and cannot have, any other basis than an adequate concept of this nature. In this they in no wise differ from the Materialists of the 18th century. Human nature is the one criterion they invariably apply in their criticism of existing society, and in their search after a social organization as it should be, after a “perfect” legislation.

Morelly, Fourier, Saint Simon, Owen – we look upon all of them today as Utopian Socialists. Since we know the general point of view that is common to them all, we can determine exactly what the Utopian point of view is. This will be the more useful, seeing that the opponents of Socialism use the word “Utopian” without attaching to it any, even approximately, definite meaning.

The Utopian is one who, starting from an abstract principle, seeks for a perfect social organization. The abstract principle which served as starting point of the Utopians was that of human nature. Of course there have been Utopians who applied the principle indirectly through the intermediary of concepts derived from it. Thus, e.g., in seeking for “perfect legislation,” for an ideal organization of society, one may start from the concept of the Rights of Man. But it is evident that in its ultimate analysis this concept derives from that of human nature.

It is equally evident that one may be a Utopian without being a Socialist. The bourgeois tendencies of the French Materialists of the last century are most noticeable in their investigations of a perfect legislation. But this in no wise destroys the Utopian character of these enquiries. We have seen that the method of the Utopian Socialist does not in the least differ from that of d’Holbach or Helvetius, those champions of the revolutionary French bourgeoisie.

Nay, more. One may have the profoundest contempt for all “music Of the future,” one may be convinced that the social world in which one has the good fortune to live is the best possible of all social worlds, and yet in spite of this one may look at the structure and life of the body social from the same point of view as that from which the Utopians regarded it.

This seems a paradox, and yet nothing could be more true. Take but one example.

In 1753 there appeared Morelly’s work, *Les Isles Flottantes on la Basiliade du celebre Pelpai*, traduit de l’Indien. Now, note the arguments with which a review, *La Bibliotheque Impartiale*, combatted the communistic ideas of the author:— “One knows well enough that a distance separates the finest speculations of this kind and the possibility of their realization. For in theory one takes imaginary men who lend themselves obediently to every arrangement, and who second with equal zeal the views of the legislator; but as soon as one attempts to put these things into practice one has to deal with men as they are, that is to say, unsubmitive, lazy, or else in the thralldom of some violent passion. The scheme of equality especially is one that seems most repugnant to the nature of man; they are born to command or to serve, a middle term is a burden to them.”

Men are born to command or to serve. We cannot wonder, therefore, if in society we see masters and servants, since human nature wills it so. It was all very well for *La Bibliotheque Impartiale* to repudiate these communist speculations. The point of view from which it itself looked upon social phenomena, the point of view of human nature, it had in common with the Utopian Morelly.

And it cannot be urged that this review was probably not sincere in its arguments, and that it appealed to human nature with the single object of saying something in favor of the exploiters, in favor of those who “command.” But sincere or hypocritical in its criticism of Morelly, the *Bibliotheque Impartiale* adopted the standpoint common to all the writers of this period. They all of them appeal to human nature conceived of in one form or another, with the sole exception of the retrograde, who, living shadows of passed times, continued to appeal to the will of God.

As we know, this concept of human nature has been inherited by the 19th century from its predecessor. The Utopian Socialists had no other. But here again it is easy to prove that it is not peculiar to the Utopians.

Even at the period of the Restoration, the eminent French historian, Guizot, in his historical studies, arrived at the

remarkable conclusion that the political constitution of any given country depended upon the “condition of property” in that country. This was an immense advance upon the ideas of the last century which had almost exclusively considered the action of the “legislator.” But what in its turn did these “conditions of property” depend on? Guizot is unable to answer this question, and after long, vain efforts to find a solution of the enigma in historical circumstances, he returns, falls back “*nolens volens*,” upon the theory of human nature. Augustin Thierry, another eminent historian of the Restoration, found himself in almost the same case, or rather he would have done so if only he had tried to investigate this question of the “condition of property” and its historical vicissitudes. In his concept of social life, Thierry was never able to go beyond his master Saint Simon, who, as we have seen above, held firmly to the point of view of human nature.

The example of the brilliant Saint Simon, a man of encyclopaedic learning, demonstrates more clearly perhaps than any other, how narrow and insufficient was this point of view, in what confusion worse confounded of contradictions it landed those who applied it. Says Saint Simon, with the profoundest conviction: “The future is made up of the last terms of a series, the first of which consist of the past. When one has thoroughly mastered the first terms of any series it is easy to put down their successors; thus from the past carefully observed one can easily deduce the future.” This is so true that one asks oneself at the first blush why a man who had so clear a conception of the connection between the various phases of historical evolution, should be classed among the Utopians. And yet, look more closely at the historical ideas of Saint Simon, and you will find that we are not wrong in calling him a Utopian. The future is deducible from the past, the historical evolution of humanity is a process governed by law. But what is the impetus, the motive power that sets in motion the human species, that makes it pass from one phase of evolution to another? Of what does this impetus consist? Where are we to seek it? It is here that Saint Simon comes back to the point of view of all the Utopians, to the point of view of human nature. Thus, according to him, the essential fundamental cause of the French Revolution was a change in the temporal and spiritual forces, and, in order to direct it wisely and conclude it rightly, it “was necessary to put into direct political activity the forces which had become preponderant.” In other words, the manufacturers and the savants ought to have been called upon to formulate a political system corresponding to the new social conditions. This was not done, and the Revolution which had begun so well was almost immediately directed into a false path. The lawyers and metaphysicians became the masters of the situation. How to explain this historical fact? “It is in the nature of man,” replies Saint Simon, “to be unable to pass without some intermediate phase from any one doctrine to another. This law applies most stringently to the various political systems, through which the natural advance of civilization compels the human species to pass. Thus the same necessity which in industry has created the element of a new temporal power, destined to replace military power, and which in the positive sciences, has created the element of a new spiritual power called upon to take the place of theological power, must have developed and set in activity (before the change in the conditions of society had begun to be very perceptible) a temporal or spiritual power of an intermediary, bastard, and transitory nature, whose only mission was to bring about the transition from one social system to another.”

So we see that the “historical series” of Saint Simon really explained nothing at all; they themselves need explanation, and for this we have again to fall back upon this inevitable human nature. The French Revolution was directed along a certain line, because human nature was so and so.

One of two things. Either human nature is, as Morelly thought, invariable, and then it explains nothing in history, which shows us constant variations in the relations of man to society; or it does vary according to the circumstances in which men live, and then, far from being the cause, it is itself the effect of historical evolution. The French Materialists knew well enough that man is the product of his social surroundings. “Man is all education,” said Helvetius. This would lead one to suppose that Helvetius must have abandoned the human nature point of view in order to study the laws of the evolution of the environment that fashion human nature, giving to socialized man such or such an “education.” And indeed Helvetius did make some efforts in this direction. But not he, nor his contemporaries, nor the Socialists of the first half of our century, nor any representatives of science of the same period, succeeded in discovering a new point of view that should permit the study of the evolution of the social environment; the cause of the historical “education” of man, the cause of the changes which occur in his “nature.” They were thus forced back upon the human nature point of view as the only one that seemed to supply them with a fairly solid basis for their scientific investigations. But since human nature in its turn varied, it became indispensable to make abstraction from its variations, and to seek in nature only stable properties, fundamental properties preserved in spite of all changes of its secondary properties. And in the end all that these speculations resulted in was a meagre abstraction, like that of the philosophers, e.g., “man is a sentient and reasonable being,” which seemed all the more precious a discovery in that it left plenty of room for every gratuitous hypothesis, and every fantastical conclusion.

A Guizot had no need to seek for the best of social organizations for a perfect legislation. He was perfectly satisfied with the existing ones. And assuredly the most powerful argument he could have advanced to defend them from the attacks of the malcontents would still have been human nature, which he would have said renders every serious change in the social and political constitution of France impossible. The malcontents condemned this same constitution, making use of the same abstraction. And since this abstraction, being completely empty, left, as we have said, full room for every gratuitous hypothesis and the logical consequences resulting therefrom, the “scientific” mission of these reformers assumed the appearance of a geometrical problem; given a certain nature, find what structure of society best corresponds with it. So Morelly complains bitterly because “our old teachers” failed to attempt the solution of “this excellent problem” – “to find the condition in which it should be almost impossible for men to be depraved, or wicked, or at any rate, *’minima de malis’*.” We have already seen that for Morelly human nature was “one, constant, invariable.”

We now know what was the “scientific” method of the Utopians. Before we leave them let us remind the reader that in human nature, an extremely thin and therefore not very satisfying abstraction, the Utopians really appealed, not to human nature in general, but to the idealized nature of the men of their own day, belonging to the class whose social tendencies they represented. The social reality, therefore, inevitably appears in the words of the Utopians, but the Utopians were unconscious of this. They saw this reality only across an abstraction which, thin as it was, was by no means translucent.

CHAPTER II

The Point of View of Scientific Socialism

The great idealist philosophers of Germany, Schelling and Hegel, understood the insufficiency of the human nature point of view. Hegel, in his Philosophy of History, makes fun of the Utopian bourgeoisie in search of the best of constitutions. German Idealism conceived history as a process subject to law, and sought the motive-power of the historical movement outside the nature of man. This was a great step towards the truth. But the Idealists saw this motive-power in the absolute idea, in the “Weltgeist;” and as their absolute idea was only an abstraction of “our process of thinking,” in their philosophical speculation upon history, they reintroduced the old love of the Materialist philosophers – human nature – but dressed in robes worthy of the respectable and austere society of German thinkers. Drive nature out of the door, she flies in at the window! Despite the great services rendered to social science by the German Idealists, the great problem of that science, its essential problem, was no more solved in the time of the German Idealists than in the time of the French Materialists. What is this hidden force that causes the historic movement of humanity? No one knew anything about it. In this field there was nothing to go upon save a few isolated observations, more or less accurate, more or less ingenious – sometimes indeed, very accurate and ingenious – but always disjointed and always incomplete.

That social science at last emerged from this No Thoroughfare, it owes to Karl Marx.

According to Marx, “legal relations, like forms of State, can neither be understood in themselves nor from the so-called general development of the human mind, but are rather rooted in those material conditions of life, whose totality Hegel, following the English and the French of the 18th century, summed up under the name of ‘bourgeois society.’” This is almost the same as Guizot meant when he said that political constitutions had their roots in “the condition of property.” But while for Guizot “the condition of property” remained a mystery which he vainly sought to elucidate with the help of reflections upon human nature, for Marx this “condition” had nothing mysterious; it is determined by the condition of the productive forces at the disposal of a given society. “The anatomy of bourgeois society is to be sought in political economy.” But Marx himself shall formulate his own conception of history.

“In the social production of their lives, men enter upon certain definite, necessary relations, relations independent of their will, relations of production that correspond with definite degrees of development of their material productive forces. The totality of these relations of production constitute the economic structure of society, the true basis from which arises a juridical and political superstructure to which definite social forms of consciousness correspond. The mode of production of material life determines the social, political, and intellectual processes of life. It is not the consciousness of mankind that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness. In a certain stage of their development, the material forces of production of society come into contradiction with the existing relations of production, or, which is only a juridical expression for the same thing, with the relations of property within which they had hitherto moved. From forms for the development of these forces of production, they are transformed into their fetters. We then enter upon an epoch of social revolution.

This completely materialist conception of history is one of the greatest discoveries of our century, so rich in scientific discoveries. Thanks to it alone sociology has at last, and for ever, escaped from the vicious circle in which it had, until then, turned; thanks to it alone this science now possesses a foundation as solid as natural science. The revolution made by Marx in social science may be compared with that made by Kopernicus in astronomy. In fact, before Kopernicus, it was believed that the earth remained stationary, while the sun turned round it. The Polish genius demonstrated that what occurred was the exact contrary. And so, up to the time of Marx, the point of view taken by social science, was that of “human nature;” and it was from this point of view that men attempted to explain the historical movement of humanity. To this the point of view of the German genius is diametrically opposed. While man, in order to maintain his existence, acts upon nature outside himself, he alters his own nature. The action of man upon the nature outside himself, presupposes certain instruments, certain means of production; according to the character of their means of production men enter into certain relations within the process of production (since this process is a social one), and according to their relations in this social process of production, their habits, their sentiments, their desires, their methods of thought and of action, in a word, their nature, vary. Thus it is not human nature which explains the historical movement; it is the historical movement which fashions diversely human nature.

But if this is so, what is the value of all the more or less laborious, more or less ingenious enquiries into “perfect legislation” and the best of possible social organizations! None; literally none! They can but bear witness to the lack of scientific education in those who pursue them. Their day is gone for ever. With this old point of view of human nature must disappear the Utopias of every shade and color. The great revolutionary party of our day, the International Social-Democracy, is based not upon some “new conception” of human nature, nor upon any abstract principle, but upon a scientifically demonstrable economic necessity. And herein lies the real strength of this party, making it as invincible as the economic necessity itself.

“The means of production and exchange on whose foundation the bourgeoisie built itself up, were generated in

feudal society. At a certain stage in the development of these means of production and exchange, the conditions under which feudal society produced and exchanged, the feudal organization of agriculture and manufacturing industry, in one 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. Into their place stepped free competition, accompanied by a social and political constitution adapted to it, and by the economical and political sway of the bourgeois class. A similar movement is going on before our own eyes. Modern bourgeois society, with its relations of production, of exchange, and of property, a society that has conjured up such gigantic means of production and of exchange, is like the sorcerer, who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called up by his spells. For many a decade past the history of industry and commerce is but the history of the revolt of modern productive forces against the property relations that are the conditions for the existence of the bourgeoisie and its rule. It is enough to mention the commercial crises that by their periodical return put on its trial, each time more threateningly, the existence of the entire bourgeois society....The weapons with which the bourgeoisie felled feudalism to the ground are now turned against the bourgeoisie itself.” [Communist Manifesto]

The bourgeoisie destroyed the feudal conditions of property; the proletariat will put an end to the bourgeois conditions of property. Between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie a struggle, an implacable war, a war to the knife, is as inevitable as was, in its way, the struggle between the bourgeoisie and the privileged estates. But every class war is a political war. In order to do away with feudal society the bourgeoisie had to seize upon political power. In order to do away with capitalist society the proletariat must do the same. Its political task is therefore traced out for it beforehand by the force of events themselves, and not by any abstract consideration.

It is a remarkable fact that it is only since Karl Marx that Socialism has taken its stand upon the class war. The Utopian Socialists had no notion – even an inexact one – of it. And in this they lagged behind their contemporary theorists of the bourgeoisie, who understood very well the historical significance at any rate of the struggle of the third estate against the nobles.

If every “new conception” of human nature seemed to supply very definite indications as to the organization of “the society of the future,” Scientific Socialism is very chary of such speculations. The structure of society depends upon the conditions of its productive forces. What these conditions will be when the proletariat is in power we do not know. We now know but one thing – that the productive forces already at the disposal of civilized humanity imperatively demand the socialization and systematized organization of the means of production. This is enough to prevent our being led astray in our struggle against “the reactionary mass.” “The Communists, therefore, are practically the most advanced and resolute section of the working class parties of every country ... theoretically they have over the great mass of the proletariat the advantage of clearly understanding the line of march, the conditions, and the ultimate general results of the proletarian movement.” [C.M.] These words, written in 1848, are today incorrect only in one sense: they speak of “working class parties” independent of the Communist party; there is today no working class party which does not more or less closely follow the flag of Scientific Socialism, or, as it was called in the Manifesto, “Communism.”

Once again, then, the point of view of the Utopian Socialists, as indeed of all social science of their time, was human nature, or some abstract principle deriving from this idea. The point of view of the social science, of the Socialism of our time is that of economic reality, and of the immanent laws of its evolution. It is easy, therefore, to form an idea of the impression made upon modern Socialists by the arguments of the bourgeois theorists who sing ceaselessly the same old song of the incompatibility of human nature and communism. It is as though one would wage war upon the Darwinians with arms drawn from the scientific arsenal of Cuvier’s time. And a most noteworthy fact is that the “evolutionists” like Herbert Spencer, themselves are not above piping to the same tune.

And now let us see what relation there may be between modern Socialism and what is called Anarchism.

CHAPTER III

The Historical Development of the Anarchist Doctrine

The Point of View of Anarchism.

“I have often been reproached with being the father of Anarchism. This is doing me too great an honor. The father of Anarchism is the immortal Proudhon, who expounded it for the first time in 1848.”

Thus spoke Peter Kropotkin in his defense before the Correctional Tribunal of Lyons at his trial in January, 1883. As is frequently the case with my amiable compatriot, Kropotkin has here made a statement that is incorrect. For “the first time” Proudhon spoke of Anarchism was in his celebrated book, *Qu’est-ce que le Propriété, ou Recherches sur le principe du droit et du Gouvernement*, the first edition of which had already appeared in 1840. It is true that he “expounds” very little of it here; he only devotes a few pages to it. And before he set about expounding the Anarchist theory “in 1848,” the job had already been done by a German, Max Stirner (the pseudonym of Caspar Schmidt) in 1845, in his book *Der Einzige und sein Eigenthum*. Max Stirner has therefore a well defined claim to be the father of Anarchism. “Immortal” or not, it is by him that the theory was “expounded” for the first time.

Max Stirner.

The Anarchist theory of Max Stirner has been called a caricature of the “philosophy of religion” of Ludwig Feuerbach. It is thus, e.g. that Ueberweg in his *Grundzüge der Geschichte der Philosophie*, (3rd part, *Philosophie der Neuen Zeit*) speaks of it. Some have even supposed that the only object Stirner had in writing his book was to poke fun at this philosophy. This supposition is absolutely gratuitous. Stirner in expounding his theory was not joking. He is in deadly earnest about it, though he now and again betrays a tendency, natural enough in the restless times when he wrote, to outdo Feuerbach and the radical character of his conclusions.

For Feuerbach, what men call Divinity, is only the product of their phantasy, of a psychological aberration. It is not Divinity that has created man, but man who creates Divinity in his own image. In God man only adores his own being. God is only a fiction, but a very harmful fiction. The Christian God is supposed to be all love, all pity for poor suffering humanity. But in spite of this, or rather because of it, every Christian really worthy the name, hates, and must hate, the Atheists, who appear to him the living negation of all love and all pity. Thus the god of love becomes the god of hate, the god of persecution; the product of the phantasy of man becomes a real cause of his suffering. So we must make an end of this phantasmagoria. Since in Divinity man adores only his own being, we must once for all rend and scatter to the winds the mystic veil beneath which this being has been enveloped. The love of humanity must not extend beyond humanity. "Der Mensch ist dem Menschen das höchste Wesen" (Man is the highest being for man).

Thus Feuerbach. Max Stirner is quite at one with him, but wishes to deduce what he believes to be the final, the most radical consequences of his theory. He reasons in this fashion. God is only the product of phantasy, is only a spook. Agreed. But what is this humanity the love of which you prescribe to me? Is not this also a spook, an abstract thing, a creature of the imagination? Where is this humanity of yours? Where does it exist but in the minds of men, in the minds of individuals? The only reality, therefore, is the individual, with his wants, his tendencies, his will. But since this is so, how can the individual, the reality, sacrifice himself for the happiness of man, an abstract being? It is all very well for you to revolt against the old God; you still retain the religious point of view, and the emancipation you are trying to help us to is absolutely theological, i.e., "God-inspired." "The highest Being is certainly that of man, but because it is his Being and is not he himself, it is quite indifferent if we see this Being outside of him as God, or find it in him and call it the 'Being of Mankind' or 'Man.' I am neither God nor Man, neither the highest Being, nor my own Being, and therefore it is essentially a matter of indifference if I imagine this Being in myself or outside myself. And, indeed, we do always imagine the highest being in the two future states, in the internal and external at once; for the 'Spirit of God' is, according to the Christian conception, also 'our spirit' and 'dwells within us.' It dwells in heaven and dwells in us; but we poor things are but its 'dwelling-place,' and if Feuerbach destroys its heavenly dwelling-place and forces it to come down to us bag and baggage, we, its earthly abode, will find ourselves very over-crowded."

To escape the inconveniences of such over-crowding, to avoid being dominated by any spook, to at last place our foot upon actual ground, there is but one way: to take as our starting-point the only real being, our own Ego. "Away then with everything that is not wholly and solely my own affair! You think my own concerns must at least be 'good ones'? A fig for good and evil! I am I, and I am neither good nor evil. Neither has any meaning for me. The godly is the affair of God, the human that of humanity. My concern is neither the Godly nor the Human, is not the True, the Good, the Right, the Free, etc., but simply my own self, and it is not general, it is individual, as I myself am individual. For me there is nothing above myself."

Religion, conscience, morality, right, law, family, state, are but so many fetters forced upon me in the name of an abstraction, but so many despotic lords whom "I," the individual conscious of my own "concerns," combat by every means in my power. Your "morality," not merely the morality of the bourgeois philistines, but the most elevated, the most humanitarian morality is only religion which has changed its supreme beings. Your "right," that you believe born with man, is but a ghost, and if you respect it, you are no farther advanced than the heroes of Homer who were afraid when they beheld a god fighting in the ranks of their enemies. Right is might. "Whoever has might, he has right; if you have not the former you have not the latter. Is this wisdom so difficult of attainment?" You would persuade me to sacrifice my interests to those of the State. I, on the contrary, declare war to the knife to all States, even the most democratic. "Every State is a despotism, whether it is the despotism of one or many, or whether, as one might suppose would be the case in a Republic, all are masters, i.e., one tyrannizes over the rest. For this is the case whenever a given law, the expressed will perhaps of some assemblage of the people, is immediately to become a law to the individual, which he must obey, and which it is his duty to obey. Even if one were to suppose a case in which every individual among the people had expressed the same will, and thus a perfect "will of all" had easily been arrived at, the thing would still be the same. Should I not today and in the future be bound by my will of yesterday? In this event my will would be paralyzed. Fatal stagnation! My creation, i.e. a certain expression of will would have become my master. But I, in my will should be constrained, I, the creator should be constrained in my development, my working out. Because I was a fool yesterday, I must remain one all my life. So that in my life in relation to the State I am at best – I might as well say at worst – a slave to my own self. Because yesterday I had a will, I am today without one; yesterday free, today bound."

Here a partisan of the "People's State" might observe to Stirner, that his "I" goes a little too far in his desire to reduce democratic liberty to absurdity; further, that a bad law may be abrogated as soon as a majority of citizens desire it, and that one is not forced to submit to it "all one's life." But this is only an insignificant detail, to which, moreover, Stirner would reply that the very necessity for appealing to a majority proves that "I" am no longer the master of my own conduct. The conclusions of our author are irrefutable, for the simple reason that to say, I recognize nothing above myself, is to say, I feel oppressed by every institution that imposes any duty upon me. It is simply tautology.

It is evident that no "Ego" can exist quite alone. Stirner knows this perfectly, and this is why he advocates "Leagues of Egoists," that is to say, free associations into which every "Ego" enters, and in which he remains when and so long as it suits his interests.

Here let us pause. We are now face to face with an "egoist" system "par excellence". It is, perhaps, the only one that the history of human thought has to chronicle. The French Materialists of the last century have been accused of preaching egoism. The accusation was quite wrong. The French Materialists always preached "Virtue," and preached it with such unlimited zeal that Grimm could, not without reason, make fun of their "capucinades" on the subject. The

question of egoism presented to them a double problem. (1) Man is all sensation (this was the basis of all their speculations upon man); by his very nature he is forced to shun suffering and to seek pleasure; how comes it then that we find men capable of enduring the greatest sufferings for the sake of some idea, that is to say, in its final analysis, in order to provide agreeable sensations for their fellow-men. (2) Since man is all sensation he will harm his fellowman if he is placed in a social environment where the interests of an individual conflict with those of others. What form of legislation therefore can harmonize public good and that of individuals? Here, in this double problem, lies the whole significance of what is called the materialist ethics of the 18th century. Max Stirner pursues an end entirely opposed to this. He laughs at "Virtue," and, far from desiring its triumph, he sees reasonable men only in egoists, for whom there is nothing above their own "Ego." Once again, he is the theorist "par excellence" of egoism.

The good bourgeois whose ears are as chaste and virtuous as their hearts are hard; they who, "drinking wine, publicly preach water," were scandalized to the last degree by the "immorality" of Stirner. "It is the complete ruin of the moral world," they cried. But as usual the virtue of the philistines showed itself very weak in argument. "The real merit of Stirner is that he has spoken the last word of the young atheist school" (i.e., the left wing of the Hegelian school), wrote the Frenchman, St. Rene Taillandier. The philistines of other lands shared this view of the "merits" of the daring publicist. From the point of view of modern Socialism this "merit" appears in a very different light.

To begin with, the incontestable merit of Stirner consists in his having openly and energetically combated the sickly sentimentalism of the bourgeois reformers and of many of the Utopian Socialists, according to which the emancipation of the proletariat would be brought about by the virtuous activity of "devoted" persons of all classes, and especially of those of the possessing-class. Stirner knew perfectly what to expect from the "devotion" of the exploiters. The "rich" are harsh, hard-hearted, but the "poor" (the terminology is that of our author) are wrong to complain of it, since it is not the rich who create the poverty of the poor, but the poor who create the wealth of the rich. They ought to blame themselves then if their condition is a hard one. In order to change it they have only to revolt against the rich; as soon as they seriously wish it, they will be the strongest and the reign of wealth will be at an end. Salvation lies in struggle, and not in fruitless appeals to the generosity of the oppressors. Stirner, therefore, preaches the class war. It is true that he represents it in the abstract form of the struggle of a certain number of egoist "Egos" against another smaller number of "Egos" not less egoist. But here we come to another merit of Stirner's.

According to Taillandier, he has spoken the last word of the young atheist school of German philosophers. As a matter of fact he has only spoken the last word of idealist speculation. But that word he has incontestably the merit of having spoken.

In his criticism of religion Feuerbach is but half a Materialist. In worshipping God, man only worships his own Being idealized. This is true. But religions spring up and die out, like everything else upon earth. Does this not prove that the human Being is not immutable, but changes in the process of the historical evolution of societies? Clearly, yes. But, then, what is the cause of the historical transformation of the "human Being"? Feuerbach does not know. For him the human Being is only an abstract notion, as human Nature was for the French Materialists. This is the fundamental fault of his criticism of religion. Stirner said that it had no very robust constitution. He wished to strengthen it by making it breathe the fresh air of reality. He turns his back upon all phantoms, upon all things of the imagination. In reality, he said to himself, these are only individuals. Let us take the individual for our starting-point. But what individual does he take for his starting-point? Tom, Dick, or Harry? Neither. He takes the individual in general – he takes a new abstraction, the thinnest of them all – he takes the "Ego."

Stirner naively imagined that he was finally solving an old philosophical question, which had already divided the Nominalists and the Realists of the Middle Ages. "No Idea has an existence," he says, "for none is capable of becoming corporeal. The scholastic controversy of Realism and Nominalism had the same content." Alas! The first Nominalist he came across could have demonstrated to our author by the completest evidence, that his "Ego" is as much an "Idea" as any other, and that it is as little real as a mathematical unit.

Tom, Dick and Harry have relations with one another that do not depend upon the will of their "Ego," but are imposed upon them by the structure of the society in which they live. To criticize social institutions in the name of the "Ego," is therefore to abandon the only profitable point of view in the case, i.e., that of society, of the laws of its existence and evolution, and to lose oneself in the mists of abstraction. But it is just in these mists that the "Nominalist" Stirner delights. I am I – that is his starting-point; not I is not I – that is his result. I + I + I + etc. – is his social Utopia. It is subjective Idealism, pure and simple applied to social and political criticism. It is the suicide of idealist speculation.

But in the same year (1845) in which *Der Einzige* of Stirner appeared, there appeared also, at Frankfort-on-Maine the work of Marx and Engels, *Die heilige Familie, oder Kritik der Kritischen Kritik, gegen Bruno Bauer und Consorten*. In it Idealist speculation was attacked and beaten by Materialist dialectic the theoretical basis of modern Socialism. *Der Einzige* came too late.

We have just said that I + I + I + etc. represents the social Utopia of Stirner. His League of Egoists is, in fact, nothing but a mass of abstract quantities. What are, what can be the basis of their union? Their interests, answers Stirner. But what will, what can be the true basis of any given combination of their interests? Stirner says nothing about it, and he can say nothing definite, since from the abstract heights on which he stands, one cannot see clearly economic reality, the mother and nurse of all the "Egos," egoistic or altruistic. Nor is it surprising that he is not able to explain clearly even this idea of the class struggle, of which he nevertheless had a happy inkling. The "poor" must combat the "rich." And after, when they have conquered these? Then every one of the former "poor," like every one of the former "rich" will combat everyone of the former poor, and against every one of the former rich. There will be the war of all against all. (These are Stirner's own words). And the rules of the "Leagues of Egoists" will be so many partial truces in

this colossal and universal warfare. There is plenty of fight in this idea, but of the “realism” Max Stirner dreamed of, nothing.

But enough of the “Leagues of Egoists.” A Utopian may shut his eyes to economic reality, but it forces itself upon him in spite of himself; it pursues him everywhere with the brutality of a natural force not controlled by force. The elevated regions of the abstract “I” do not save Stirner from the attacks of economic reality. He does not speak to us only of the “Individual”; his theme is “the Individual and his property.” Now, what sort of a figure does the property of the “Individual” cut?

It goes without saying, that Stirner is little inclined to respect property as an “acquired right.” “Only that property will be legally and lawfully another’s which it suits you should be his property. When it ceases to suit you, it has lost its legality for you, and any absolute right in it you will laugh at.” It is always the same tune: “For me there is nothing above myself.” But his scant respect for the property of others does not prevent the “Ego” of Stirner from having the tendencies of a property-owner. The strongest argument against Communism, is, in his opinion, the consideration that Communism by abolishing individual property transforms all members of society into mere beggars. Stirner is indignant at such an iniquity.

“Communists think that the Commune should be the property owner. On the contrary, I am a property-owner, and can only agree with others as to my property. If the Commune does not do as I wish I rebel against it, and defend my property, I am the owner of property, but property is not sacred. Should I only be the holder of property (an allusion to Proudhon)? No, hitherto one was only a holder of property, assured of possession of a piece of land, because one left others also in possession of a piece of land; but now everything belongs to me, I am the owner of everything I need, and can get hold of. If the Socialist says, society gives me what I need, the Egoist says, I take what I want. If the Communists behave like beggars, the Egoist behaves like an owner of property.” The property of the egoist seems pretty shaky. An “Egoist” retains his property only as long as the other “Egoists” do not care to take it from him, thus transforming him into a “beggar.” But the devil is not so black as he is painted. Stirner pictures the mutual relations of the “Egoist” proprietors rather as relations of exchange than of pillage. And force, to which he constantly appeals, is rather the economic force of a producer of commodities freed from the trammels which the State and “Society” in general impose, or seem to impose, upon him.

It is the soul of a producer of commodities that speaks through the mouth of Stirner. If he falls foul of the State, it is because the State does not seem to respect the “property” of the producers of commodities sufficiently. He wants his property, his whole property. The State makes him pay taxes; it ventures to expropriate him for the public good. He wants a “jus utendi et abutendi;” the State says “agreed” – but adds that there are abuses and abuses. Then Stirner cries “stop thief!” “I am the enemy of the State,” says he, “which is always fluctuating between the alternative: He or I.... With the State there is no property, i.e., no individual property, only State property. Only through the State have I what I have, as it is only through the State that I am what I am. My private property is only what the State leaves me of its own, while it deprives other citizens of it: that is State property.” So down with the State and long live full and complete individual property!

Stirner translates into German J.B. Say’s *Traite D’Economie Politique Pratique* (Leipsic, 1845-46). And although he also translated Adam Smith, he was never able to get beyond the narrow circle of the ordinary bourgeois economic ideas. His “League of Egoists” is only the Utopia of a petty bourgeois in revolt. In this sense one may say he has spoken the last word of bourgeois individualism.

Stirner has also a third merit – that of the courage of his opinions, of having carried through to the very end his individualist theories. He is the most intrepid, the most consequent of the Anarchists. By his side Proudhon, whom Kropotkine, like all the present day Anarchists, takes for the father of Anarchism, is but a straight-laced Philistine.

CHAPTER IV

Proudhon.

If Stirner combats Feuerbach, the “immortal” Proudhon imitates Kant. “What Kant did some sixty years ago for religion what he did earlier for certainty of certainties; what others before him had attempted to do for happiness or supreme good, the Voice of the People proposes to do for the Government,” pompously declares “the father of Anarchism.” Let us examine his methods and their results.

According to Proudhon, before Kant, the believer and the philosopher moved “by an irresistible impulse,” asked themselves, “What is God!” They then asked themselves “Which, of all religions, is the best!” “In fact, if there does exist a Being superior to Humanity, there must also exist a system of the relations between this Being and Humanity. What then is this system! The search for the best religion is the second step that the human mind takes in reason and in faith. Kant gave up these insolvable questions. He no longer asked himself what is God, and which is the best religion; he set about explaining the origin and development of the Idea of God; he undertook to work out the biography of this idea.” And the results he attained were as great as they were unexpected. “What we seek, what we see, in God, as Malebranche said ... is our own Ideal, the pure essence of Humanity ... The human soul does not become conscious of its Ego through premeditated contemplation, as the psychologists put it; the soul perceives something outside itself, as if it were a different Being face to face with itself, and it is this inverted image which it calls God. Thus morality, justice, order, law, are no longer things revealed from above, imposed upon our free will by a so-called Creator, unknown and ununderstandable; they are things that are proper and essential to us as our faculties and our organs, as our flesh and our blood. In two words religion and society are synonymous terms, man is as sacred to himself as if he were God.”

Belief in authority is as primitive, as universal as belief in God. Wherever men are grouped together in societies

there is authority, the beginning of a government. From time immemorial men have asked themselves, What is authority? Which is the best form of government? And replies to these questions have been sought for in vain. There are as many governments as there are religions, as many political theories as systems of philosophy. Is there any way of putting an end to this interminable and barren controversy? Any means of escape from this impasse!" Assuredly! We have only to follow the example of Kant. We have only to ask ourselves whence comes this idea of authority, of government? We have only to get all the information we can upon the legitimacy of the political idea. Once safe on this ground and the question solves itself with extraordinary ease.

"Like religion, government is a manifestation of social spontaneity, a preparation of humanity for a higher condition."

"What humanity seeks in religion and calls God, is itself." "What the citizen seeks in Government and calls king, emperor, or president, is again himself, is liberty." "Outside humanity there is no God; the theological concept has no meaning: – outside liberty no government, the political concept has no value."

So much for the "biography" of the political idea. Once grasped it must enlighten us upon the question as to which is the best form of government.

"The best form of government, like the most perfect of religions, taken in a literal sense, is a contradictory idea. The problem is not to discover how we shall be best governed, but how we shall be most free. Liberty commensurate and identical with Order, – this is the only reality of government and politics. How shall this absolute liberty, synonymous with order, be brought about? We shall be taught this by the analysis of the various formulas of authority. For all the rest we no more admit the governing of man by man than the exploitation of man by man."

We have now climbed to the topmost heights of Proudhon's political philosophy. It is from this that the fresh and vivifying stream of his Anarchist thought flows. Before we follow the somewhat tortuous course of this stream let us glance back at the way we have climbed.

We fancied we were following Kant. We were mistaken. In his Critique of Pure Reason Kant has demonstrated the impossibility of proving the existence of God, because everything outside experience must escape us absolutely. In his Critique of Practical Reason Kant admitted the existence of God in the name of morality. But he has never declared that God was a topsy-turvy image of our own soul. What Proudhon attributes to Kant, indubitably belongs to Feuerbach. Thus it is in the footsteps of the latter that we have been treading, while roughly tracing out the "biography" of the political Idea. So that Proudhon brings us back to the very starting point of our most unsentimental journey with Stirner. No matter. Let us once more return to the reasoning of Feuerbach.

It is only itself that humanity seeks in religion. self, it is liberty that the citizen seeks in Government ... Then the very essence of the citizen is liberty? Let us assume this is true, but let us also note that our French "Kant" has done nothing, absolutely nothing, to prove the "legitimacy" of such an "Idea." Nor is this all. What is this liberty which we are assuming to be the essence of the citizen? Is it political liberty which ought in the nature of things to be the main object of his attention? Not a bit of it ! To assume this would be to make of the "citizen" an "authoritarian" democrat.

It is the absolute liberty of the individual, which is at the same time commensurate and identical with Order, that our citizen seeks in Government. In other words, it is the Anarchism of Proudhon which is the essence of the "citizen." It is impossible to make a more pleasing discovery, but the "biography" of this discovery gives us pause. We have been trying to demolish every argument in favor of the Idea of Authority, as Kant demolished every proof of the existence of God. To attain this end we have – imitating Feuerbach to some extent, according to whom man adored his own Being in God – assumed that it is liberty which the citizen seeks in Government. And as to liberty we have in a trice transformed this into "absolute" liberty, into Anarchist liberty. fins, zwei, drei; Geschwindigkeit ist keine Hexerei!

Since the "citizen" only seeks "absolute" liberty in Government the State is nothing but a fiction ("this fiction of a superior person, called the 'State'"), and all those formulas of government for which people and citizens have been cutting one another's throats for the last sixty centuries, are but the phantasmagoria of our brain, which it would be the first duty of free reason to relegate to the museums and libraries. Which is another charming discovery made "en passant." So that the political history of humanity has, "for sixty centuries," had no other motive power than a phantasmagoria of our brain !

To say that man adores in God his own essence is to indicate the origin of religion, but it is not to work out its "biography." To write the biography of religion is to write its history, explaining the evolution of this essence of man which found expression in it. Feuerbach did not do this – could not do it. Proudhon, trying to imitate Feuerbach, was very far from recognizing the insufficiency of his point of view. All Proudhon has done is to take Feuerbach for Kant, and to ape his Kant-Feuerbach in a most pitiful manner. Having heard that Divinity was but a fiction, he concluded that the State is also a figment: since God does not exist, how can the State exist? Proudhon wished to combat the State and began by declaring it nonexistent. And the readers of the *Voix du Peuple* applauded, and the opponents of M. Proudhon were alarmed at the profundity of his philosophy! Truly a tragi-comedy!

It is hardly necessary for modern readers to add that in taking the State for a fiction we make it altogether impossible to understand its "essence" or to explain its historical evolution. And this was what happened to Proudhon.

"In every society I distinguish two kinds of constitution," says he; "the one which I call social, the other which is its political constitution; the first innate in humanity, liberal, necessary, its development consisting above all in weakening, and gradually eliminating the second, which is essentially factitious, restrictive, and transitory. The social constitution is nothing but the equilibration of interests based upon free contract and the organization of the economic forces, which, generally speaking, are labor, division of labor, collective force, competition, commerce, money, machinery, credit, property, equality in transactions, reciprocity of guarantees, etc. The principle of the political constitution is authority.

Its forms are: distinction of classes, separation of powers, administrative centralization, the judicial hierarchy, the representation of sovereignty by elections, etc. The political constitution was conceived and gradually completed in the interest of order, for want of a social constitution, the rules and principles of which could only be discovered as a result of long experience, and are even today the object of Socialist controversy. These two constitutions, as it is easy to see, are by nature absolutely different and even incompatible: but as it is the fate of the political constitution to constantly call forth and produce the social constitution something of the latter enters into the former, which, soon becoming inadequate, appears contradictory and odious, is forced from concession to concession to its final abrogation." The social constitution is innate in humanity, necessary. Yet it could only be discovered as the result of long experience, and for want of it humanity had to invent the political constitution. Is not this an entirely Utopian conception of human nature, and of the social organization peculiar to it? Are we not coming back to the standpoint of Morelly who said that humanity in the course of its history has always been "outside nature"? No – there is no need to come back to this standpoint, for with Proudhon we have never, for a single instant, got away from it. While looking down upon the Utopians searching after "the best form of government," Proudhon does not by any means censure the Utopian point of view. He only scoffs at the small perspicacity of men who did not divine that the best political organization is the absence of all political organization, is the social organization, proper to human nature, necessary, immanent in humanity.

The nature of this social constitution is absolutely different from, and even incompatible with, that of the political constitution. Nevertheless it is the fate of the political constitution to constantly call forth and produce the social constitution. This is tremendously confusing! Yet one might get out of the difficulty by assuming that what Proudhon meant to say was that the political constitution acts upon the evolution of the social constitution. But then we are inevitably met by the question, Is not the political constitution in its turn rooted – as even Guizot admitted – in the social constitution of a country? According to our author no; the more emphatically no, that the social organization, the true and only one, is only a thing of the future, for want of which poor humanity has "invented" the political constitution. Moreover, the "Political Constitution" of Proudhon covers an immense domain, embracing even "class distinctions," and therefore "non-organized" property, property as it ought not to be, property as it is today. And since the whole of this political constitution has been invented as a mere stop-gap until the advent of the anarchist organization of society, it is evident that all human history must have been one huge blunder. The State is no longer exactly a fiction as Proudhon maintained in 1848; "the governmental formulas for which people and citizens have been cutting one another's throats for sixty centuries are no longer a "mere phantasmagoria of our brain," as the same Proudhon believed at this same period; but these formulas, like the State itself, like every political constitution, are but the product of human ignorance, the mother of all fictions and phantasmagorias. At bottom it is always the same. The main point is that Anarchist ("social") organization could only be discovered as the result of "many experiences." The reader will see how much this is to be regretted.

The political constitution has an unquestionable influence upon the social organization; at any rate it calls it forth, for such is its "fate" as revealed by Proudhon, master of Kantian philosophy and social organization. The most logical conclusion to be drawn therefrom is that the partisans of social organization must make use of the political constitution in order to attain their end. But logical as this deduction is, it is not to the taste of our author. For him it is but a phantasmagoria of our brain. To make use of the political constitution is to offer a burnt offering to the terrible god of authority, to take part in the struggle of parties. Proudhon will have none of this. "No more parties," he says; "no more authority, absolute liberty of the man and the citizen – in three words, such is our political and social profession of faith."

Every class-struggle is a political struggle. Whosoever repudiates the political struggle, by this very act gives up all part and lot in the class-struggle. And so it was with Proudhon. From the beginning of the Revolution of 1848 he preached the reconciliation of classes. Here, e.g., is a passage from the Circular which he addressed to his electors in Doubs, which is dated 3rd April of this same year: "The social question is there; you cannot escape from it. To solve it we must have men who combine extreme Radicalism of mind with extreme Conservatism of mind. Workers, hold out your hands to your employers; and you, employers, do not deliberately repulse the advances of those who were your wage-earners."

The man whom Proudhon believed to combine this extreme Radicalism of mind with extreme Conservatism of mind, was himself – P.J. Proudhon. There was, on the one hand, at the bottom of this belief a "fiction," common to all Utopians who imagine they can rise above classes and their struggles, and naively think that the whole of the future history of humanity will be confined to the peaceful propagation of their new gospel. On the other hand, this tendency to combine Radicalism and Conservatism shows conclusively the very "essence" of the "Father of Anarchy."

Proudhon was the most typical representative of petty bourgeois socialism. Now the "fate" of the petty bourgeois – in so far as he does no: adopt the proletarian standpoint – is to constantly oscillate between Radicalism and Conservatism. To make more understandable what we have said, we must bear in mind what the plan of social organization propounded by Proudhon was.

Our author shall tell us himself. It goes without saying that we shall not escape a more or less authentic interpretation of Kant. "Thus the line we propose to follow in dealing with the political question and in preparing the materials for a constitution will be the same as that we have followed hitherto in dealing with the social question." The *Voix du Peuple* while completing the work of its predecessors, the two earlier journals, will follow faithfully in their footsteps. What did we say in these two publications, one after the other of which fell beneath the blows of the reaction and the state of siege? We did not ask, as our precursors and colleagues had done, Which is the best system of

community? The best organization of property? Or again: Which is the better, property or the community? The theory of St. Simon or that of Fourier? The system of Louis Blanc or that of Cabet? Following the example of Kant we stated the question thus: "How is it that man possesses? How is property acquired? How lost? What is the law of its evolution and transformation? Whither does it tend? What does it want? What, in fine, does it represent?.....Then how is it that man labors? How is the comparison of products instituted? By what means is circulation carried out in society? Under what conditions? According to what laws?" And the conclusion arrived at by this monograph of property was this: Property indicates function or attribution; community; reciprocity of action; usury ever decreasing, the identity of labor and capital (sic!). In order to set free and to realize all these terms, until now hidden beneath the old symbols of property, what must be done? The workers must guarantee one another labor and a market; and to this end must accept as money their reciprocal pledges. Good! Today we say that political liberty, like industrial liberty, will result for us from our mutual guarantees. It is by guaranteeing one another liberty that we shall get rid of this government, whose destiny is to symbolize the republican motto: "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity," while leaving it to our intelligence to bring about the realization of this. Now, what is the formula of this political and liberal guarantee? At present universal suffrage; later on free contract ... Economic and social reform through the mutual guarantee of credit; political reform through the inter-action of individual liberties; such is the programme of the *Voix du Peuple*." We may add to this that it is not very difficult to write the "biography" of this programme.

In a society of producers of commodities, the exchange of commodities is carried out according to the labor socially necessary for their production. Labor is the source and the measure of their exchange-value. Nothing could seem more "just" than this to any man imbued with the ideas engendered by a society of producers of commodities. Unfortunately this justice is no more "eternal" than anything else here below. The development of the production of commodities necessarily brings in its train the transformation of the greater part of society into proletarians, possessing nothing but their labor-power, and of the other part into capitalists, who, buying this power, the only commodity of the proletarians, turn it into a source of wealth for themselves. In working for the capitalists the proletarian produces the income of his exploiter, at the same time as his own poverty, his own social subjection. Is not this sufficiently unjust? The partisan of the rights of the producer of commodities deplores the lot of the proletarians; he thunders against capital. But at the same time he thunders against the revolutionary tendencies of the proletarians who speak of expropriating the exploiter and of a communistic organization of production. Communism is unjust, it is the most odious tyranny. What wants organizing is not production but exchange, he assures us. But how organize exchange? That is easy enough, and what is daily going on before our eyes may serve to show us the way. Labor is the source and the measure of the value of commodities. But is the price of commodities always determined by their value? Do not prices continually vary according to the rarity or abundance of these commodities? The value of a commodity and its price are two different things; and this is the misfortune, the great misfortune of all of us poor, honest folk, who only want justice, and only ask for our own. To solve the social question, therefore we must put a stop to the arbitrariness of prices, and to the anomaly of value (Proudhon's own expressions). And in order to do this we must "constitute" value; i.e., see that every producer shall always, in exchange for his commodity, receive exactly what it costs, private property not only cease to be theft, it will become the most adequate expression of justice. To constitute value is to constitute small private property, and small private property once constituted, everything will be justice and happiness in a world now so full of misery and injustice. And it is no good for proletarians to object, they have no means of production: by guaranteeing themselves credit gratis, all who want to work will, as by the touch of a magic wand, have everything necessary for; production.

Small property and small parcelled-out production, its economic basis, was always the dream of Proudhon. The huge modern mechanical workshop always inspired him with profound aversion. He says that labor, like love, flies from society. No doubt there are some industries – Proudhon instances railways – in which association is essential. In these, the isolated producer must make way for "companies of workers." But the exception only proves the rule. Small private property must be the basis of "social organization."

Small private property is tending to disappear. The desire not merely to preserve it, but to transform it into the basis of a new social organization is extreme conservatism. The desire at the same time to put an end to "the exploitation of man by man," to the wage-system, is assuredly to combine with the most conservative the most radical aspirations.

We have no desire here to criticize this petty bourgeois Utopia. This criticism has already been undertaken by a master hand in the works of Marx: *La Misere de la Philosophie*, and *Zur Kritik der Politischen Oekonomie*. We will only observe the following: –

The only bond that unites the producers of commodities upon the domain of economics is exchange. From the juridical point of view, exchange appears as the relation between two wills. The relation of these two wills is expressed in the "contract." The production of commodities duly "constituted" is therefore the reign of "absolute" individual liberty. By finding myself bound through a contract that obliges me to do such and such a thing, I do not renounce my liberty. I simply use it to enter into relations with my neighbors. But at the same time this contract is the regulator of my liberty. In fulfilling a duty that I have freely laid upon myself when signing the contract, I render justice to the rights of others. It is thus that "absolute" liberty becomes "commensurate with order." Apply this conception of the contract to the "political constitution" and you have "Anarchy."

"The idea of the contract excludes that of government. What characterizes the contract, reciprocal convention, is that by virtue of this convention the liberty and well-being of man are increased, while by the institution of authority both are necessarily decreased.

... Contract is thus essentially synallagmatic; it lays upon the contracting parties no other obligation than that which results from their personal promise of reciprocal pledges; it is subject to no external authority; it alone lays down a law

common to both parties, and it can be carried out only through their own initiative. If the contract is already this in its most general acceptation and in its daily practice, what will the social contract be – that contract which is meant to bind together all the members of a nation by the same interest? The social contract is the supreme act by which every citizen pledges to society his love, his intellect, his labor, his service, his products, his possessions, in exchange for the affection, the ideas, the labor, products, service, and possessions of his fellows; the measure of right for each one being always determined by the extent of his own contribution, and the amount recoverable being in accordance with what has been givenThe social contract must be freely discussed, individually consented to, signed “*manu propria*,” by all who participate in it. If its discussion were prevented, curtailed or burked; if consent to it were filched; if the signature were given to a blank document in pure confidence, without a reading of the articles and their preliminary explanation; or even if, like the military oath, it were all predetermined and enforced, then the social contract would be nothing but a conspiracy against the liberty and well-being of the most ignorant, the most weak, and most numerous individuals, a systematic spoliation, against which every means of resistance or even of reprisal might become a right and a duty.

... The social contract is of the essence of the reciprocal contract; not only does it leave the signer the whole of his possessions; it adds to his property; it does not encroach upon his labor; it only affects exchange.Such, according to the definitions of right and universal practice, must be the social contract.”

Once it is admitted as an incontestable fundamental principle that the contract is “the only moral bond that can be accepted by free and equal human beings” nothing is easier than a “radical” criticism of the “political constitution.” Suppose we have to do with justice and the penal law, for example? Well, Proudhon would ask you by virtue of what contract society arrogates to itself the right to punish criminals. “Where there is no compact there can be, so far as any external tribunal is concerned, neither crime nor misdemeanor. The law is the expression of the sovereignty of the people; that is, or I am altogether mistaken, the social contract and the personal pledge of the man and the citizen. So long as I did not want this law, so long as I have not consented to it, voted for it, it is not binding upon me, it does not exist. To make it a precedent before I have recognized it, and to use it against me in spite of my protests is to make it retroactive, and to violate this very law itself. Every day you have to reverse a decision because of some formal error. But there is not a single one of your laws that is not tainted with nullity, and the most monstrous nullity of all, the very hypothesis of the law. Soufflard, Lacenaire, all the scoundrels whom you send to the scaffold, turn in their graves and accuse you of judicial forgery. What answer can you make them?”

If we are dealing with the administration and the police Proudhon sings the same song of contract and free consent. “Cannot we administer our goods, keep our accounts, arrange our differences, look after our common interests at least as well as we can look after our salvation and take care of our souls?” What more have we to do with State legislation, with State justice, with State police, and with State administration than with State religion?”

As to the Ministry of Finance, “it is evident that its *raison d’être* is entirely included in that of the other ministries. Get rid of all the political harness and you will have no use for an administration whose sole object is the procuring and distribution of supplies.”

This is logical and “radical;” and the more radical, that this formula of Proudhon’s – constituted value, free contract – is a universal one, easily, and even necessarily applicable to all peoples. “Political economy is, indeed, like all other sciences; it is of necessity the same all over the world; it does not depend upon the arrangements of men or nations, it is subject to no one’s caprice. There is no more a Russian, English, Austrian, Tartar, or Hindoo political economy than there is a Hungarian, German, or American physics or geometry. Truth is everywhere equal to itself: Science is the unity of the human race. If science, therefore, and no longer religion or authority is taken in all countries as the rule of society, the sovereign arbiter of all interests, government becomes null and void, the legislators of the whole universe are in harmony.”

But enough of this! The “biography” of what Proudhon called his programme is now sufficiently clear to us. Economically it is but the Utopia of a petty bourgeois, who is firmly convinced that the production of commodities is the most “just” of all possible modes of production, and who desires to eliminate its bad sides (hence his “Radicalism”) by retaining to all eternity its good sides (hence his “Conservatism”). Politically the programme is only the application to public relations of a concept (the “contract”) drawn from the domain of the private right of a society of producers of commodities. “Constituted value” in economics, the “contract” in politics – these are the whole scientific “truth” of Proudhon. It is all very well for him to combat the Utopians; he is a Utopian himself to his finger tips. What distinguishes him from men like Saint Simon, Fourier, and Robert Owen is his extreme pettiness and narrowness of mind, his hatred of every really revolutionary movement and idea.

Proudhon criticized the “political constitution” from the point of view of private right. He wished to perpetuate private property, and to destroy that pernicious “fiction” the State, forever.

Guizot had already said that the political constitution of a country has its root in the conditions of property existing there. For Proudhon the political constitution owes its origin only to human ignorance, has only been “imagined” in default of the “social organization” at last “invented” by him, Proudhon, in the year of our Lord so and so. He judges the political history of mankind like a Utopian. But the Utopian negation of all reality by no means preserves us from its influence. Denied upon one page of a Utopian work it takes its revenge on another, where it often appears in all its nakedness. Thus Proudhon “denies” the State. “The State – no, no – I will none of it, even as servant; I reject all government, even direct government,” he cries “*ad nauseam*.” But, oh! irony of reality! Do you know how he “invents” the constitution of value? It is very funny.

The constitution of value is the selling at a fair price, at the cost price. If a merchant refuses to supply his merchandise at cost price it is because he is not certain of selling a sufficient quantity to secure a due return, and further

he has no guarantee that he will get “quid pro quo” for his purchases. So he must have guarantees. And there may be “various kinds” of these guarantees. Here is one.

“Let us suppose that the Provisional Government or the Constituent Assembly ... had seriously wished to help along business, encourage commerce, industry, agriculture, stop the depreciation of property, assure work to the workers – it could have been done by guaranteeing, e.g., to the first 10,000 contractors, factory owners, manufacturers, merchants, etc., in the whole Republic, an interest of 5 per cent. on the capital, say, on the average, 100,000 francs, that each of them had embarked in his competitive business. For it is evident that the State” ... Enough! It is evident that the State has forced itself upon Proudhon, at least “as servant.” And it has done this with such irresistible force that our author ends by surrendering, and solemnly proclaiming:

“Yes, I say it aloud: the workers’ associations of Paris and the departments hold in their hands the salvation of the people, the future of the revolution. They can do everything, if they set about it cleverly. Renewed energy on their part must carry the light into the dumbest minds, and at the election of 1852 [he wrote this in the summer of 1851] must place on the order of the day, and at the head of it, the constitution of value.”

Thus “No more parties! No politics!” when it is a question of the class struggle – and “Hurrah for politics! Hurrah for electoral agitation! Hurrah for State interference!” when it is a question of realizing the vapid and meagre Utopia of Proudhon!

“Destruam et aedificabo,” says Proudhon, with the pompous vanity peculiar to him. But on the other hand – to use the phrase of Figaro – it is the truest truth of all he has ever uttered in his life. He destroys and he builds. Only the mystery of his “destruction” reveals itself completely in his formula, “The Contract solves all problems.” The mystery of his “aedificatio” is in the strength of the social and political bourgeois reality with which he reconciled himself, the more readily in that he never managed to pluck from it any of its “secrets.”

Proudhon will not hear of the State at any price. And yet – apart from the political propositions such as the constitution of value, with which he turns to the odious “fiction” – even theoretically he “builds up” the State as fast as he “destroys” it. What he takes from the “State” he bestows upon the “communes” and “departments.” In the place of one great State we see built up a number of small states; in the place of one great “fiction” a mass of little ones. To sum up, “anarchy” resolves itself into federalism, which among other advantages has that of making the success of revolutionary movements much more difficult than it is under a centralized State. So endeth Proudhon’s General Idea of the Revolution.

It is a curious fact that Saint Simon is the “father” of Proudhon’s anarchy. Saint Simon has said that the end of social organization is production, and that, therefore, political science must be reduced to economics, the “art of governing men” must give way to the art of the “administration of things.” He has compared mankind to the individual, who, obeying his parents in childhood, in his ripe age ends by obeying no one but himself. Proudhon seized upon this idea and this comparison, and with the help of the constitution of value, “built up” anarchy. But Saint Simon, a man of fertile genius, would have been the very first to be alarmed at what this Socialistic petty bourgeois made of his theory. Modern scientific Socialism has worked out the theory of Saint Simon very differently, and while explaining the historical origin of the State, shows in this very origin, the conditions of the future disappearance of the State.

“The State was the official representative of society as a whole, the gathering of it together into a visible embodiment. But it was this only in so far as it was the State of that class which itself represented, for the time being, society as a whole; in ancient times the State of slave-owning citizens; in the middle ages, the feudal lords; in our own time, the bourgeoisie. When at last it becomes the real representative of the whole of society, it renders itself unnecessary. As soon as there is no longer any social class to be held in subjection; as soon as class rule and the individual struggle for existence based on our present anarchy in production, with the collisions and excesses arising from these are removed, nothing more remains to be repressed, and a special repressive force, a State, is no longer necessary. The first act by virtue of which the State really constitutes itself the representative of the whole of society, the taking possession of the means of production in the name of society, this is, at the same time, its last independent act as a State. State interference in social relations becomes, in one domain after another, superfluous, and then dies out of itself; the government of persons is replaced by the administration of things, and by the conduct of processes of production. The State is not ‘abolished.’ It dies out.”

CHAPTER V

Bakounine

We have seen that in their criticism of the “political constitution,” the “fathers” of anarchy always based themselves on the Utopian point of view. Each one of them based his theories upon an abstract principle. Stirner upon that of the “Ego,” Proudhon upon that of the “Contract.” The reader has also seen that these two “fathers” were individualists of the first water.

The influence of Proudhonian individualism was, for a time, very strong in the Romance countries (France, Belgium, Italy, Spain) and in the Slav countries, especially Russia. The internal history of the International Working Men’s Association is the history of this struggle between Proudhonism and the modern Socialism of Marx. Not only men like Tolain, Chemalé or Murat, but men very superior to them, such as De Paepe, e.g., were nothing but more or less opinionated, more or less consistent “Mutualists.” But the more the working class movement developed, the more evident it became that “Mutualism” could not be its theoretical expression. At the International Congresses the Mutualists were forced by the logic of facts to vote for the Communist resolutions. This was the case, e.g., at Brussels in the discussion on landed property. Little by little the left wing of the Proudhonian army left the domain of

Individualism to intrench itself upon that of “Collectivism.”

The word “Collectivism” was used at this period in a sense altogether opposed to that which it now has in the mouths of the French Marxists, like Jules Guesde and his friends. The most prominent champion of “Collectivism” was at this time Michel Bakounine.

In speaking of this we shall pass over in silence his propaganda in favor of the Hegelian philosophy, as far as he understood it, the part he played in the revolutionary movement of 1848, his Panslavist writings in the beginning of the sixties, and his pamphlet, Roumanow, Pougatchew or Pestel (London 1862), in which he proposed to go over to Alexander II., if the latter would become the “Tzar of the Moujiks.” Here we are exclusively concerned with his theory of Anarchist Collectivism.

A member of the “League of Peace and Liberty,” Bakounine, at the Congress of this Association at Berne in 1869, called upon the League – an entirely bourgeois body – to declare in favor of “the economical and social equalization of classes and of individuals.” Other delegates, among whom was Chaudey, reproached him with advocating Communism. He indignantly protested against the accusation.

“Because I demand the economic and social equalization of classes and individuals, because, with the Workers’ Congress of Brussels, I have declared myself in favor of collective property, I have been reproached with being a Communist. What difference, I have been asked, is there between Communism and Collectivism. I am really astounded that M. Chaudey does not understand this difference, he who is the testamentary executor of Proudhon! I detest Communism, because it is the negation of liberty, and I cannot conceive anything human without liberty. I am not a Communist, because Communism concentrates and causes all the forces of society to be absorbed by the State, because it necessarily ends in the centralization of property in the hands of the State, while I desire the abolition of the State – the radical extirpation of this principle of the authority and the tutelage of the State, which, under the pretext of moralizing and civilizing men, has until now enslaved, oppressed, exploited, and depraved them. I desire the organization of society and of collective or social property from below upwards, by means of free association and not from above downwards by means of some authority of some sort. Desiring the abolition of the State, I desire the abolition of property individually hereditary, which is nothing but an institution of the State. This is the sense, gentlemen, in which I am a Collectivist, and not at all a Communist.”

In another speech at the same Congress Bakounine reiterates what he had already said of “Statist” Communism. “It is not we, gentlemen,” he said, “who systematically deny all authority and all tutelary powers, and who in the name of Liberty demand the very abolition of the ‘authoritarian’ principle of the State; it is not we who will recognize any sort of political and social organization whatever, that is not founded upon the most complete liberty of every one. ... But I am in favor of collective property, because I am convinced that so long as property, individually hereditary, exists, the equality of the first start, the realization of equality, economical and social, will be impossible.” This is not particularly lucid as a statement of principles. But it is sufficiently significant from the “biographical” point of view.

We do not insist upon the ineptitude of the expression “the economic and social equalization of classes;” the General Council of the International dealt with that long ago. We would only remark that the above quotations show that Bakounine –

1. Combats the State and “Communism” in the name of “the most complete liberty of everybody;”
2. Combats property, “individually hereditary,” in the name of economic equality;
3. Regards this property as “an institution of the State,” as a “consequence of the very principles of the State”;
4. Has no objection to individual property, if it is not hereditary; has no objection to the right of inheritance, if it is not individual. In other words:

1. Bakounine is quite at one with Proudhon so far as concerns the negation of the State and Communism;
2. To this negation he adds another, that of property, individually hereditary;
3. His programme is nothing but a total arrived at by the adding up of the two abstract principles – that of “liberty,” and that of “equality;” he applies these two principles, one after the other, and independently one of the other, in his criticism of the existing order of things, never asking himself whether the results of these two negations are reconcilable with one another.

4. He understands, just as little as Proudhon, the origin of private property and the causal connection between its evolution and the development of political forms.

5. He has no clear conception of the meaning of the words “individually hereditary.”

If Proudhon was a Utopian, Bakounine was doubly so, for his programme was nothing but a Utopia of “Liberty,” reinforced by a Utopia of “Equality.” If Proudhon, at least to a very large extent, remained faithful to his principle of the contract, Bakounine, divided between liberty and equality, is obliged from the very outset of his argument constantly to throw over the former for the benefit of the latter, and the latter for the benefit of the former. If Proudhon is a Proudhonian “sans reproche,” Bakounine is a Proudhonian adulterated with “detestable” Communism, nay even by “Marxism.”

In fact, Bakounine has no longer that immutable faith in the genius of the “master” Proudhon, which Tolain seems to have preserved intact. According to Bakounine “Proudhon, in spite of all his efforts to get a foothold upon the firm ground of reality, remained an idealist and metaphysician. His starting point is the abstract side of law; it is from this that he starts in order to arrive at economic facts, while Marx, on the contrary, has enunciated and proved the truth, demonstrated by the whole of the ancient and modern history of human societies, of peoples and of states, that economic facts preceded and precede the facts of political and civil law. The discovery and demonstration of this truth is one of the greatest merits of M. Marx.” In another of his writings he says, with entire conviction, “All the religions, and

all the systems of morals that govern a given society are always the ideal expression of its real, material condition, that is, especially of its economic organization, but also of its political organization, the latter, indeed, being never anything but the juridical and violent consecration of the former.” And he again mentions Marx as the man to whom belongs the merit of having discovered and demonstrated this truth. One asks one’s self with astonishment how this same Bakounine could declare that private property was only a consequence of the principle of authority. The solution of the riddle lies in the fact that he did not understand the materialist conception of history; he was only “adulterated” by it.

And here is a striking proof of this. In the Russian work, already quoted, *Statism and Anarchy*, he says that in the situation of the Russian people there are two elements which constitute the conditions necessary for the social (he means Socialist) revolution. “The Russian people can boast of excessive poverty, and unparalleled slavery. Their sufferings are innumerable, and they bear these, not with patience, but with a profound and passionate despair, that twice already in our history has manifested itself in terrible outbursts: in the revolt of Stephan Razine, and in that of Pougatschew.” And that is what Bakounine understood by the material conditions of a Socialist revolution! Is it necessary to point out that this “Marxism” is a little too “sui generis”?

While combatting Mazzini from the standpoint of the materialist conception of history, Bakounine himself is so far from understanding the true import of this conception, that in the same work in which he refutes the Mazzinian theology, he speaks, like the thorough-faced Proudhonian that he is, of “absolute” human morality, and he bolsters up the idea of this morality – the morality of “solidarity,” – with such arguments as these:

“Every actual being, so long as he exists, exists only by virtue of a principle which is inherent in himself, and which determines his particular nature; a principle that is not imposed upon him by a divine law-giver of any sort” (this is the “materialism” of our author!), “but is the protracted and constant result of combinations of natural causes and effects; that is not, according to the ludicrous idea of the idealists, shut up in him like a soul within its body, but is, in fact, only the inevitable and constant form of his real existence. The human, like all other species, has inherent principles quite special to itself, and all these principles are summed up in, or are reducible to, a single principle, which we call solidarity. This principle may be formulated thus: No human individual can recognize his own humanity, nor, therefore, realize it in his life except by recognizing it in others, and by helping to realize it for others. No man can emancipate himself, except by emancipating with him all the men around him. My liberty is the liberty of everyone, for I am not truly free, free not only in thought but in deed, except when my liberty and my rights find their confirmation, their sanction, in the liberty and the rights of all men, my equals.”

As a moral precept, solidarity, as interpreted by Bakounine, is a very excellent thing. But to set up this morality, which by the way is not at all “absolute,” as a principle “inherent” in humanity and determining human nature, is playing with words, and completely ignoring what materialism is. Humanity only exists “by virtue” of the principle of solidarity. This is coming a little too strong. How about the “class war, and the cursed State, and property, “individually hereditary” – are these only manifestations of “solidarity,” inherent in humanity, determining its special nature, etc., etc.? If this is so, everything is all right, and Bakounine was wasting his time in dreaming of a “social” revolution. If this is not so, this proves that humanity may have existed “by virtue” of other principles than that of solidarity, and that this latter principle is by no means “inherent” in it. Indeed, Bakounine only enunciated his “absolute” principle in order to arrive at the conclusion that “no people could be completely free, free with solidarity, in the human sense of the word, if the whole of humanity is not free also.”

This is an allusion to the tactics of the modern proletariat, and it is true in the sense that – as the rules of the International Workingmen’s Association put it – the emancipation of the workers is not a merely local or national problem, but, on the contrary, a problem concerning every civilized nation, its solution being necessarily dependent upon their theoretical and practical co-operation. It is easy enough to prove this truth by reference to the actual economic situation of civilized humanity. But nothing is less conclusive, here as elsewhere, than a “demonstration” founded upon a Utopian conception of “human nature.” The “solidarity” of Bakounine only proves that he remained an incorrigible Utopian, although he became acquainted with the historical theory of Marx.

CHAPTER VI

Bakounine – (Concluded)

We have said that the principal features of Bakounine’s programme originated in the simple addition of two abstract principles: that of liberty and that of equality. We now see that the total thus obtained might easily be increased by the addition of a third principle, that of solidarity. Indeed, the programme of the famous “Alliance” adds several others. For example, “The Alliance declares itself Atheist; it desires the abolition of religions, the Substitution of science for faith, of human for divine justice.” In the proclamation with which the Bakounists placarded the walls of Lyons, during the attempted rising at the end of September, 1870, we read (Article 41) that “the State, fallen into decay, will no longer be able to intervene in the payment of private debts.” This is incontestably logical, but it would be difficult to deduce the non-payment of private debts from principles inherent in human nature.

Since Bakounine in tacking his various “absolute” principles together does not ask himself, and does not need to ask himself – thanks to the “absolute” character of his method – whether one of these principles might not somewhat limit the “absolute” power of others, and might not in its turn be limited by them, he finds it an “absolute” impossibility to harmonize the various items of his programme whenever words no longer suffice, and it becomes necessary to replace them by more precise ideas. He “desires” the abolition of religion. But, “the State having fallen into decay,” who is to abolish it! He “desires” the abolition of property, individually hereditary. But what is to be done if, “the State having fallen into decay,” it should continue to exist? Bakounine himself feels the thing is not very clear, but he consoles

himself very easily.

In a pamphlet written during the Franco-German war, *Lettres a un francais sur la crise actuelle*, while demonstrating that France can only be saved by a great revolutionary movement, he comes to the conclusion that the peasants must be incited to lay hands upon the land belonging to the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie. But so far, the French peasants have been in favor of property, "individually hereditary," so this unpleasant institution would be bolstered up by the new Social Revolution?

"Not at all," answers Bakounine, "once the State is abolished they" (i.e., the peasants) "will no longer have the juridical and political consecration, the guarantee of property by the State. Property will no longer be a right, it will be reduced to the condition of a simple fact." (The italics are Bakounine's own.)

This is very reassuring. "The State having fallen into decay," any fellow that happens to come along, stronger than I, will incontinently possess himself of my field, without having any need to appeal to the principle of "solidarity;" the principle of "liberty" will sufficiently answer his purpose. A very pleasant "equalization of individuals"!

"It is certain," Bakounine admits, "that at first things won't work in an absolutely peaceful manner; there will be struggles; public order, that arch saint of the bourgeois, will be disturbed, and the just deeds which will result from such a state of things may constitute what one is agreed to call a civil war. But do you prefer to hand over France to the Prussians?.....Moreover, do not fear that the peasants will devour one another; even if they tried to do so in the beginning, they would soon be convinced of the material impossibility of persisting in this course, and then we may be sure they would try to arrive at some understanding, to come to terms, to organize among themselves. The necessity of eating, of providing for their families, and the necessity therefore of safeguarding their houses, their families, and their own lives against unforeseen attacks, all this would soon force them individually to enter into mutual arrangements. And do not believe, either, that in these arrangements, arrived at outside all official tutelage" (italicized by Bakounine), "by the mere force of events, the strongest, the richest, will exercise a predominant influence. The wealth of the wealthy, no longer guaranteed by juridical institutions, will cease to be a power ... As to the most cunning, the strongest, they will be rendered innocuous by the collective strength of the mass of the small, and very small peasants, as well as by the agricultural proletarians, a mass of men today reduced to silent suffering, but whom the revolutionary movement will arm with an irresistible power. Please note that I do not contend that the agricultural districts which will thus reorganize themselves, from below upwards, will immediately create an ideal organization, agreeing at all points with the one of which we dream. What I am convinced of is that this will be a living organization, and as such, one a thousand times superior to what exists now. Moreover, this new organization being always open to the propaganda of the towns, as it can no longer be held down, so to say petrified by the juridical sanction of the State, it will progress freely, developing and perfecting itself indefinitely, but always living and free, never decreed nor legalized, until it attains as reasonable a condition as we can hope for in our days."

The "idealist" Proudhon was convinced that the political constitution had been invented for want of a social organization "immanent in humanity." He took the pains to "discover" this latter, and having discovered it, he could not see what further "raison d'être" there was for the political constitution. The "materialist" Bakounine has no "social organization" of his own make. "The most profound and rational science," he says, "cannot divine the future forms of social life." This science must be content to distinguish the "living" social forms from those that owe their origin to the "petrifying" action of the State, and to condemn these latter. Is not this the old Proudhonian antithesis of the social organization "immanent in humanity," and of the political constitution "invented" exclusively in the interests of "order"? Is not the only difference that the "materialist" transforms the Utopian programme of the "idealist," into something even more Utopian, more nebulous, more absurd?

"To believe that the marvellous scheme of the universe is due to chance, is to imagine that by throwing about a sufficient number of printers' characters at hazard, we might write the Iliad." So reasoned the Deists of the 18th century in refuting the Atheists. The latter replied that in this case everything was a question of time, and that by throwing about the letters an infinite number of times, we must certainly, at some period, make them arrange themselves in the required sequence. Discussions of this kind were to the taste of the 18th century, and we should be wrong to make too much fun of them now-a-days. But it would seem that Bakounine took the Atheist argument of the good old times quite seriously, and used it in order to make himself a "programme." Destroy what exists; if only you do this often enough you are bound at last to produce a social organization, approaching at any rate the organization you "dream" of. All will go well when once the revolution has come to stay. Is not this sufficiently "materialist"? If you think it is not, you are a metaphysician, "dreaming" of the impossible!

The Proudhonian antithesis of the "social organization" and the "political constitution" reappears "living" and in its entirety in what Bakounine is for ever reiterating as to the "social revolution" on the one hand, and the "political revolution" on the other. According to Proudhon the social organization has unfortunately, up to our own days, never existed, and for want of it humanity was driven to "invent" a political constitution. According to Bakounine the social revolution has never yet been made, because humanity, for want of a good "social" programme had to content itself with political revolutions. Now that this programme has been found, there is no need to bother about the "political" revolution; we have quite enough to do with the "social revolution."

Every class struggle being necessarily a political struggle, it is evident that every political revolution, worthy of the name, is a social revolution; it is evident also that for the proletariat the political struggle is as much a necessity as it has always been for every class struggling to emancipate itself. Bakounine anathematizes all political action by the proletariat; he extols the "social" struggle exclusively. Now what is this social struggle?

Here our Proudhonian once again shows himself adulterated by Marxism. He relies as far as possible upon the Rules

of the International Workingmen's Association.

In the preamble of these Rules it is laid down that the subjection of the worker to capital lies at the bottom of all servitude, political, moral and material, and that therefore the economic emancipation of the workers is the great end to which all political movements must be subordinated as a means. Bakounine argues from this that "every political movement which has not for its immediate and direct object the final and complete economic emancipation of the workers, and which has not inscribed upon its banner quite definitely and clearly, the principle of economic equality, that is, the integral restitution of capital to labor, or else the social liquidation – every such political movement is a bourgeois one, and as such must be excluded from the International." But this same Bakounine has heard it said that the historical movement of humanity is a process in conformity with certain laws, and that a revolution cannot be improvised at a moment's notice. He is therefore forced to ask himself, what is the policy which the International is to adopt during that "more or less prolonged period of time which separates us from the terrible social revolution which everyone foresees today" To this he replies, with the most profound conviction, and as if quoting the Rules of the International:

"Without mercy the policy of the democratic bourgeois, or bourgeois-Socialists, must be excluded, which, when these declare that political freedom is a necessary condition of economic emancipation, can only mean this: political reforms, or political revolutions must precede economic reforms or economic revolutions; the workers must therefore join hands with the more or less Radical bourgeois, in order to carry out the former together with them, then, being free, to turn the latter into a reality against them. We protest loudly against this unfortunate theory, which, so far as the workers are concerned, can only result in their again letting themselves be used as tools against themselves, and handing them over once more to bourgeois exploitation."

The International "commands" us to disregard all national or local politics; it must give the working-class movement in all countries an "essentially economic" character, by setting up as final aim "the shortening of the hours of labor, and the increase of wages," and as a means "the association of the working masses, and the starting of "funds for fighting." It is needless to add that the shortening of the hours of labor must, of course, be obtained without any intervention from the accursed State.

Bakounine cannot understand that the working class in its political action can completely separate itself from all the exploiting part ties. According to him, there is no other "role" in the political movement for the workers than that of satellite of the Radical bourgeoisie. He glorifies the "essentially economic" tactics of the old English Trade Unions, and has not the faintest idea that it was these very tactics that made the English workers the tail of the Liberal Party.

Bakounine objects to the working class lending a hand in any movement whose object is the obtaining or the extension of political rights. In condemning such movements as "bourgeois," he fancies himself a tremendous revolutionist. As a matter of fact he thus proves himself essentially Conservative, and if the working class were ever to follow this line of inaction the Governments could only rejoice.

The true revolutionists of our days have a very different idea of Socialist tactics. They "everywhere support every revolutionary movement against the existing social and political order of things; which does not prevent them (but quite the contrary) from forming the proletariat into a party separate from all the exploiter parties, opposed to the whole "reactionary mass."

Proudhon, who we know had not an overwhelming sympathy for "politics," nevertheless advised the French workers to vote for the candidates who pledged themselves to "constitute value." Bakounine would not have politics at any price. The worker cannot make use of political liberty: "in order to do so he needs two little things – leisure and material means." So it is all only a bourgeois lie. Those who speak of working-class candidates are but mocking the proletariat. "Working-class candidates, transferred to bourgeois conditions of life, and into an atmosphere of completely bourgeois political ideas, ceasing to be actually workers in order to become statesmen, will become bourgeois, and possibly will become even more bourgeois than the bourgeois themselves. For it is not the men who make positions, but, on the contrary, positions which make the men."

This last argument is about all Bakounine was able to assimilate of the materialist conception of history. It is unquestionably true that man is the product of his social environment. But to apply this incontestable truth with advantage it is necessary to get rid of the old, metaphysical method of thought which considers things one after the other, and independently one of the other. Now Bakounine, like his master, Proudhon, in spite of his flirtation with the Hegelian philosophy, all his life remained a metaphysician. He does not understand that the environment which makes man may change, thus changing man its own product. The environment he has in his mind's eye when speaking of the political action of the proletariat, is the bourgeois parliamentary environment, that environment which must necessarily fatally corrupt labor representatives. But the environment of the electors, the environment of a working-class party, conscious of its aim and well organized, would this have no influence upon the elected of the proletariat? No! Economically enslaved, the working class must always remain in political servitude; in this domain it will always be the weakest; to free itself it must begin by an economic revolution. Bakounine does not see that by this process of reasoning he inevitably arrives at the conclusion that a victory of the proletariat is absolutely impossible, unless the owners of the means of production voluntarily relinquish their possessions to them. In effect the subjection of the worker to capital is the source not only of political but of moral servitude. And how can the workers, morally enslaved, rise against the bourgeoisie? For the working class movement to become possible, according to Bakounine, it must therefore first make an economic revolution. But the economic revolution is only possible as the work of the workers themselves. So we find ourselves in a vicious circle, out of which modern Socialism call easily break, but in which Bakounine and the Bakounists are for ever turning with no other hope of deliverance than a logical "salto mortale."

The corrupting influence of the Parliamentary environment on working-class representatives is what the Anarchists have up to the present considered the strongest argument in their criticism of the political activity of Social-Democracy. We have seen what its theoretical value amounts to. And even a slight knowledge of the history of the German Socialist party will sufficiently show how in practical life the Anarchist apprehensions are answered.

In repudiating all "politics" Bakounine was forced to adopt the tactics of the old English Trade Unions. But even he felt that these tactics were not very revolutionary. He tried to get out of the difficulty by the help of his "Alliance," a kind of international secret society, organized on a basis of frenetic centralization and grotesque fancifulness. Subjected to the dictatorial rule of the sovereign pontiff of Anarchy, the "international" and the "national" brethren were bound to accelerate and direct the "essentially economic" revolutionary movement. At the same time Bakounine approved of "riots," of isolated risings of workers and peasants which, although they must inevitably be crushed out, would, he declared, always have a good influence upon the development of the revolutionary spirit among the oppressed. It goes without saying that with such a "programme" he was able to do much harm to the working class movement, but he was not able to draw nearer, even by a single step, to that "immediate" economic revolution of which he "dreamed." We shall presently see the result of the Bakounist theory of "riots." For the present let us sum up what we have said of Bakounine. And here, he shall help us himself.

"Upon the Pangermanic banner" [i.e., also upon the banner of German Social-Democracy, and consequently upon the Socialist banner of the whole civilized world] "is inscribed: The conservation and strengthening of the State at all costs; on the Socialist-revolutionary banner" (read Bakounist banner) "is inscribed in characters of blood, in letters of fire: the abolition of all States, the destruction of bourgeois civilization; free organization from the bottom to the top, by the help of free associations; the organization of the working populace (sic!) freed from all trammels, the organization of the whole of emancipated humanity, the creation of a new human world."

It is with these words that Bakounine concludes his principal work *Statism and Anarchy* (Russian). We leave our readers to appreciate the rhetorical beauties of this passage. For our own part we shall be content with saying that it contains absolutely no human meaning whatsoever.

The absurd, pure and simple – that is what is inscribed upon the Bakounist "banner." There is no need of letters of fire and of blood to make this evident to any one who is not hypnotized by a phraseology more or less sonorous, but always void of sense.

The Anarchism of Stirner and of Proudhon was completely individualist. Bakounine did not want individualism, or to speak more correctly, one particular phase of individualism. He was the inventor of "Collectivist-Anarchism." And the invention cost him little. He completed the "liberty" Utopia, by the "equality" Utopia. As these two Utopias would not agree, as they cried out at being yoked together, he threw both into the furnace of the "permanent revolution" where they were both at last forced to hold their tongues, for the simple reason that they both evaporated, the one as completely as the other.

Bakounine is the "decadent" of Utopism.

CHAPTER VII

The Smaller Fry

Among our present-day Anarchists some, like John Mackay, the author of *Die Anarchisten*, *Kulturgemalde aus dem Ende des xix. Jahrhunderts*, declare for individualism, while others – by far the more numerous – call themselves Communists. These are the descendants of Bakounine in the Anarchist movement. They have produced a fairly considerable literature in various languages, and it is they who are making so much noise with the help of the "propaganda by deed." The prophet of this school is the Russian refugee, P.A. Kropotkine.

I shall not here stop to consider the doctrines of the Individualist-Anarchists of today, whom even their brethren, the Communist-Anarchists, look upon as "bourgeois." We will go straight on to the Anarchist-"Communist."

What is the standpoint of this new species of Communism? "As to the method followed by the Anarchist thinker, it entirely differs from that of the Utopists," Kropotkine assures us. "The Anarchist thinker does not resort to metaphysical conceptions (like 'natural rights,' the 'duties of the State' and so on) to establish what are, in his opinion, the best conditions for realizing the greatest happiness of humanity. He follows, on the contrary, the course traced by the modern philosophy of evolution. He studies human society as it is now, and was in the past; and, without either endowing men altogether, or separate individuals, with superior qualities which they do not possess, he merely considers society as an aggregation of organisms trying to find out the best ways of combining the wants of the individual with those of co-operation for the welfare of the species. He studies society and tries to discover its tendencies, past and present, its growing needs, intellectual and economical, and in this he merely points out in which direction evolution goes."

So the Anarchist-Communists have nothing in common with the Utopians. They do not, in the elaborating of their "ideal," turn to metaphysical conceptions like "natural rights," "duties of the State," etc. Is this really so?

So far as the "duties of the State" are concerned, Kropotkine is quite right; it would be too absurd if the Anarchists invited the State to disappear in the name of its own "duties." But as to "natural rights" he is altogether mistaken. A few quotations will suffice to prove this.

Already in the *Bulletin de la Federation Jurasienne* (No.3, 1877), we find the following very significant declaration: "The sovereignty of the people can only exist through the most complete autonomy of individuals and of groups." This "most completely autonomy," is it not also a "metaphysical conception"?

The *Bulletin de la Fédération Jurasienne* was an organ of Collectivist Anarchism. At bottom there is no difference between "Collectivist" and "Communist" Anarchism. And yet, since it might be that we are making the Communists

responsible for the Collectivists, let us glance at the “Communist” publications, not only according to the spirit but the letter. In the autumn of 1892 a few “companions” appeared before the Assize Court of Versailles in consequence of a theft of dynamite at Soisy-sous-Etiolles, Among others there was one G. Etiévant, who drew up a declaration of Anarchist-Communist principles. The tribunal would not allow him to read it, whereupon the official organ of the Anarchists, *La Révolte*, undertook to publish this declaration, having taken great pains to secure an absolutely correct copy of the original. The Declaration of G. Etiévant made a sensation in the Anarchist world, and even “cultured” men like Octave Mirbeau quote it with respect along with the works of the “theorists,” Bakounine, Kropotkine, the “unequalled Proudhon,” and the “aristocratic Spencer” (!). Now this is the line of Etiévant’s reasoning:

No idea is innate in us; each idea is born of infinitely diverse and multiple sensations, which we receive by means of our organs. Every act of the individual is the result of one or several ideas. The man is not therefore responsible. In order that responsibility should exist, will would have to determine the sensations, just as these determine the idea, and the idea, the act. But as it is, on the contrary, the sensations which determine the will, all judgment becomes impossible, every reward, every punishment unjust, however great the good or the evil done may be. “Thus one cannot judge men and acts unless one has a sufficient criterion. Now no such criterion exists. At any rate it is not in the laws that it could be found, for true justice is immutable and laws are changeable. It is with laws as with all the rest (!). For if laws are beneficent what is the good of deputies and senators to change them? And if they are bad what is the good of magistrates to apply them?”

Having thus “demonstrated” “liberty,” Etiévant passes on to “equality.”

From the zoophytes to men, all beings are provided with more or less perfect organs destined to serve them. All these beings have therefore the right to make use of their organs according to the evident will of mother Nature. “So for our legs we have the right to all the space they can traverse; for our lungs to all the air we can breathe; for our stomach to all the food we can digest; for our brain to all we can think, or assimilate of the thoughts of others; for our faculty of elocution to all we can say; for our ears to all we can hear; and we have a right to all this because we have a right to life, and because all this constitutes life. These are the true rights of man ! No need to decree them, they exist as the sun exists. They are written in no constitution, in no law, but they are inscribed in ineffaceable letters in the great book of Nature and are imprescriptible. From the cheese-mite to the elephant, from the blade of grass to the oak, from the atom to the star, everything proclaims it.”

If these are not “metaphysical conceptions,” and of the very worst type, a miserable caricature of the metaphysical materialism of the eighteenth century, if this is the “philosophy of evolution,” then we must confess that it has nothing in common with the scientific movement of our day.

Let us hear another authority, and quote the now famous book of Jean Grave, *La société mourante et l’Anarchie*, which was recently condemned by French judges, who thought it dangerous, while it is only supremely ridiculous.

“Anarchy means the negation of authority. Now, Government claims to base the legitimacy of its existence upon the necessity of defending social institutions: the family, religion, property, etc. It has created a vast machinery in order to assure its exercise and its sanction. The chief are: the law, the magistracy, the army, the legislature, executive powers, etc. So that the Anarchist idea, forced to reply to everything, was obliged to attack all social prejudices, to become thoroughly penetrated by all human knowledge, in order to demonstrate that its conceptions were in harmony with the physiological and psychological nature of man, and in harmony with the observance of natural laws, while our actual organization has been established in contravention of all logic and all good sense..... Thus, in combating authority, it has been necessary for the Anarchists to attack all the institutions which the Government defends, the necessity for which it tries to demonstrate in order to legitimate its own existence.”

You see what was “the development” of the “Anarchist Idea.” This Idea “denied” authority. In order to defend itself, authority appealed to the family, religion, property. Then the “Idea” found itself forced to attack institutions, which it had not, apparently, noticed before, and at the same time the “Idea,” in order to make the most of its “conceptions,” penetrated to the very depths of all human knowledge (it is an ill wind that does not blow some good!) All this is only the result of chance, of the unexpected turn given by “authority” to the discussion that had arisen between itself and the “Idea.”

It seems to us that however rich in human knowledge it may be now, the “Anarchist Idea” is not at all communistic; it keeps its knowledge to itself, and leaves the poor “companions” in complete ignorance. It is all very well for Kropotkine to sing the praises of the “Anarchist thinker”; he will never be able to prove that his friend Grave has been able to rise even a little above the feeblest metaphysics.

Kropotkine should read over again the Anarchist pamphlets of Elisée Reclus – a great “theorist” this – and then, quite seriously tell us if he finds anything else in them but appeals to “justice,” “liberty,” and other “metaphysical conceptions.”

Finally, Kropotkine himself is not so emancipated from metaphysics as he fancies he is. Far from it! Here, e.g., is what he said at the general meeting of the Federation of the Jura, on the 12th October, 1879, at Chaux-de-Fonds:—

“There was a time when they denied Anarchists even the right to existence. The General Council of the International treated us as factious, the press as dreamers; almost all treated us as fools; this time is past. The Anarchist party has proved its vitality; it has surmounted the obstacles of every kind that impeded its development; today it is accepted.” [By whom!] “To attain to this, it has been necessary, above all else, for the party to hold its own in the domain of theory, to establish its ideal of the society of the future, to prove that this ideal is the best; to do more than this – to prove that this ideal is not the product of the dreams of the study, but flows directly from the popular aspirations, that it is in accord with the historical progress of culture and ideas. This work has been done,” etc. ...

The hunt after the best ideal of the society of the future, is not this the Utopian method “par excellence”? It is true that Kropotkin tries to prove “that this ideal is not the product of dreams of the study, but flows directly from the popular aspirations, that it is in accord with the historical progress of culture and ideas.” But what Utopian has not tried to prove this equally with himself? Everything depends upon the value of the proofs, and here our amiable compatriot is infinitely weaker than the great Utopians whom he treats as metaphysicians, while he himself has not the least notion of the actual methods of modern social science. But before examining the value of these “proofs,” let us make the acquaintance of the “ideal” itself. What is Kropotkin’s conception of Anarchist society?

Pre-occupied with the reorganizing of the governmental machine, the revolutionist-politicians, the “Jacobins” (Kropotkin detests the Jacobins even more than our amiable Empress, Catherine II, detested them) allowed the people to die of hunger. The Anarchists will act differently. They will destroy the State, and will urge on the people to the expropriation of the rich. Once this expropriation accomplished, an “inventory” of the common wealth will be made, and the “distribution” of it organized. Everything will be done by the people themselves. “Just give the people elbow room, and in a week the business of the food supply will proceed with admirable regularity. Only one who has never seen the hard-working people at their labor, only one who has buried himself in documents, could doubt this. Speak of the organizing capacity of the Great Misunderstood, the People, to those who have seen them at Paris on the days of the barricades” (which is certainly not the case of Kropotkin) “or in London at the time of the last great strike, when they had to feed half a million starving people, and they will tell you how superior the people is to all the hide-bound officials.”

The basis upon which the enjoyment in common of the food supply is to be organized will be very fair, and not at all “Jacobin.” There is but one, and only one, which is consistent with sentiments of justice, and is really practical. The taking in heaps from what one possesses abundance of! Rationing out what must be measured, divided! Out of 350 millions who inhabit Europe, 200 millions still follow this perfectly natural practice – which proves, among other things, that the Anarchist ideal “flows from the popular aspirations.”

It is the same with regard to housing and clothing. The people will organize everything according to the same rule. There will be an upheaval; that is certain. Only this upheaval must not become mere loss, it must be reduced to a minimum. And it is again – we cannot repeat it too often – by turning to those immediately interested and not to bureaucrats that the least amount of inconvenience will be inflicted upon everybody.”

Thus from the beginning of the revolution we shall have an “organization”; the whims of sovereign “individuals” will be kept within reasonable bounds by the wants of society, by the logic of the situation. And, nevertheless, we shall be in the midst of full-blown Anarchy; individual liberty will be safe and sound. This seems incredible, but it is true; there is anarchy, and there is organization, there are obligatory rules for everyone, and yet everyone does what he likes. You do not follow? ’Tis simple enough. This organization-it is not the “authoritarian” revolutionists who will have created it; – these rules, obligatory upon all, and yet anarchical, it is the People, the Great Misunderstood, who will have proclaimed them, and the People are very knowing as anyone who has seen, – what Kropotkin never had the opportunity of seeing – days of barricade riots, knows.”

But if the Great Misunderstood had the stupidity to create the “bureaux” so detested of Kropotkin? If, as it did in March, 1871, it gave itself a revolutionary Government? Then we shall say the people is mistaken, and shall try to bring it back to a better state of mind, and if need be we will throw a few bombs at the “hidebound officials.” We will call upon the People to organize, and will destroy all the organs it may provide itself with.

This then is the way in which we realize the excellent Anarchist ideal – in imagination. In the name of the liberty of individuals all action of the individuals is done away with, and in the name of the People we get rid of the whole class of revolutionists; the individuals are drowned in the mass. If you can only get used to this logical process, you meet with no more difficulties, and you can boast that you are neither “authoritarian” nor “Utopian.” What could be easier, what more pleasant?

But in order to consume, it is necessary to produce. Kropotkin knows this so well that he reads the “authoritarian” Marx a lesson on the subject.

“The evil of the present organization is not in that the ‘surplus value’ of production passes over to the capitalist – as Rodbertus and Marx had contended – thus narrowing down the Socialist conception, and the general ideas on the capitalist regime. Surplus value itself is only a consequence of more profound causes. The evil is that there can be any kind of ‘surplus value,’ instead of a surplus not consumed by each generation; for, in order that there may be ‘surplus value,’ men, women, and children must be obliged by hunger to sell their labor powers, for a trifling portion of what these powers produce, and, especially of what they are capable of producing.” [Poor Marx, who knew nothing of all these profound truths, although so confusedly expounded by the learned Prince!] ... “It does not, indeed, suffice to distribute in equal shares the profits realized in one industry, if, at the same time, one has to exploit thousands of other workers. The point is to produce with the smallest possible expenditure of human labor-power the greatest possible amount of products necessary for the well being of all.”

Ignorant Marxists that we are! We have never heard that a Socialist society pre-supposes a systematic organization of production. Since it is Kropotkin who reveals this to us, it is only reasonable that we should turn to him to know what this organization will be like. On this subject also he has some very interesting things to say.

“Imagine a Society comprising several million inhabitants engaged in agriculture, and a great variety of industries – Paris, for example, with the Department of Seine-et-Oise. Imagine that in this Society all children learn to work with their hand as well as with their brain. Admit, in fine, that all adults, with the exception of the women occupied with the education of children, undertake to work five hours a day from the age of twenty or twenty-two to forty-five or fifty,

and that they spend this time in any occupations they choose, in no matter what branch of human labor considered necessary. Such a Society could, in return, guarantee well-being to all its members, i.e., far greater comfort than that enjoyed by the bourgeoisie today. And every worker in this Society would moreover have at his disposal at least five hours a day, which he could devote to science, to art, and to those individual needs that do not come within the category of necessities, while later on, when the productive forces of man have augmented, everything may be introduced into this category that is still today looked upon as a luxury or unattainable.”

In Anarchist Society there will be no authority, but there will be the “Contract” (oh! immortal Monsieur Proudhon, here you are again; we see all still goes well with you!) by virtue of which the infinitely free individuals “agree” to work in such or such a “free commune.” The contract is justice, liberty, equality; it is Proudhon, Kropotkine, and all the Saints. But, at the same time, do not trifle with the contract! It is a thing not so destitute of means to defend itself as would seem. Indeed, suppose the signatory of a contract freely made does not wish to fulfil his duty? He is driven forth from the free commune, and he runs the risk of dying of hunger – which is not a particularly gay outlook.

I suppose a group of a certain number of volunteers combining in some enterprise, to secure the success of which all rival each other in zeal, with the exception of one associate, who frequently absents himself from his post. Should they, on his account, dissolve the group, appoint a president who would inflict fines, or else, like the Academy, distribute attendance-counters? It is evident that we shall do neither the one nor the other, but that one day the comrade who threatens to jeopardize the enterprise will be told: “My friend, we should have been glad to work with you, but as you are often absent from your post, or do your work negligently, we must part. Go and look for other comrades who will put up with your off-hand ways.” This is pretty strong at bottom; but note how appearances are saved, how very “Anarchist” is his language. Really, we should not be at all surprised if in the “Anarchist-Communist” society people were guillotined by persuasion, or, at any rate, by virtue of a freely-made contract.

But farther, this very Anarchist method of dealing with lazy “free individuals” is perfectly “natural,” and “is practiced everywhere today in all industries, in competition with every possible system of fines, stoppages from wages, espionage, etc.; the workman may go to his shop at the regular hour, but if he does his work badly, if he interferes with his comrades by his laziness or other faults, if they fall out, it is all over. He is obliged to leave the workshop.” Thus is the Anarchist “Ideal” in complete harmony with the “tendencies” of capitalist society.

For the rest, such strong measures as these will be extremely rare. Delivered from the yoke of the State and capitalist exploitation, individuals will of their own free motion set themselves to supply the wants of the great All of society. Everything will be done by means of “free arrangement”.

“Well, Citizens, let others preach industrial barracks, and the convent of ‘Authoritarian’ Communism, we declare that the tendency of societies is in the opposite direction. We see millions and millions of groups constituting themselves freely in order to satisfy all the varied wants of human beings, groups formed, some by districts, by streets, by houses; others holding out hands across the walls (!) of cities, of frontiers, of oceans. All made up of human beings freely seeking one another, and having done their work as producers, associating themselves, to consume, or to produce articles of luxury, or to turn science into a new direction. This is the tendency of the nineteenth century, and we are following it; we ask only to develop it freely, without let or hindrance on the part of governments. Liberty for the individual! ‘Take some pebbles,’ said Fourier, ‘put them into a box and shake them; they will arrange themselves into a mosaic such as you could never succeed in producing if you told off some one to arrange them harmoniously.’”

A wit has said that the profession of faith of the Anarchists reduces itself to two articles of a fantastic law: (1) There shall be nothing. (2) No one is charged with carrying out the above article. This is not correct. The Anarchists say:

(1) There shall be everything. (2) No one is held responsible for seeing that there is anything at all.

This is a very seductive “Ideal”, but its realization is unfortunately very improbable.

Let us now ask, what is this “free agreement” which, according to Kropotkine, exists even in capitalist society? He quotes two kinds of examples by way of evidence: (a) those connected with production and the circulation of commodities; (b) those belonging to all kinds of societies of amateurs – learned societies, philanthropic societies, etc.

“Take all the great enterprises: the Suez Canal, e.g., TransAtlantic navigation, the telegraph that unites the two Americas. Take, in fine, this organization of commerce, which provides that when you get up in the morning you are sure to find bread at the bakers’ ... meat at the butchers’, and everything you want in the shops. Is this the work of the State? Certainly, today we pay middlemen abominably dearly. Well, all the more reason to suppress them, but not to think it necessary to confide to the Government the care of providing our goods and our clothing.”

Remarkable fact! We began by snapping our fingers at Marx, who only thought of suppressing surplus value, and had no idea of the organization of production, and we end by demanding the suppression of the profits of the middleman, while, so far as production is concerned, we preach the most bourgeois “laissez-faire, laissez passer” Marx might, not without reason, have said, he laughs best who laughs last!

We all know what the “free agreement” of the bourgeois “entrepreneur” is, and we can only admire the “absolute” naivete of the man who sees in it the precursor of communism. It is exactly this Anarchic “arrangement” that must be got rid of in order that the producers may cease to be slaves of their own products.

As to the really free societies of “savants”, artists, philanthropists, etc., Kropotkine himself tells us what their example is worth. They are “made up of human beings freely seeking one another after having done their work as producers.” Although this is not correct – since in these societies there is often not a single producer – this still farther proves that we can only be free after we have settled our account with production. The famous “tendency of the nineteenth century”, therefore, tells us nothing on the main question – how the unlimited liberty of the individual can be made to harmonize with the economic requirements of a communistic society. And as this “tendency” constitutes the

whole of the scientific equipment of our “Anarchist thinker”, we are driven to the conclusion that his appeal to science was merely verbiage, that he is, in spite of his contempt for the Utopians, one of the least ingenious of these, a vulgar hunter in search of the “best Ideal”.

The “free agreement” works wonders, if not in Anarchist society, which unfortunately does not yet exist, at least in Anarchist arguments. “Our present society being abolished, individuals no longer needing to hoard in order to make sure of the morrow, this, indeed being made impossible, by the suppression of all money or symbol of value – all their wants being satisfied and provided for in the new society, the stimulus of individuals being now only that ideal of always striving toward the best, the relations of individuals or groups no longer being established with a view to those exchanges in which each contracting party only seeks to ‘do’ his partner” (the “free agreement” of the bourgeois, of which Kropotkine has just spoken to us) “these relations will now only have for object the rendering of mutual services, with which particular interests have nothing to do, the agreement will be rendered easy, the causes of discord having disappeared.”

Question: How will the new society satisfy the needs of its members! How will it make them certain of the morrow?

Answer: By means of free agreements.

Question: Will production be possible if it depends solely upon the free agreement of individuals?

Answer: Of course! And in order to convince yourself of it, you have only to assume that your morrow is certain, that all your needs are satisfied, and, in a word, that production, thanks to free agreement, is getting on swimmingly.

What wonderful logicians these “companions” are, and what a beautiful ideal is that which has no other foundation than an illogical assumption!

“It has been objected that in leaving individuals free to organize as they like, there would arise that competition between groups which today exists between individuals. This is a mistake, for in the society we desire money would be abolished, consequently there would no longer be any exchange of products, but exchange of services. Besides, in order that such a social revolution as we contemplate can have been accomplished we must assume that a certain evolution of ideas will have taken place in the mind of the masses, or, at the least, of a considerable minority among them. But if the workers have been sufficiently intelligent to destroy bourgeois exploitation, it will not be in order to re-establish it among themselves, especially when they are assured all their wants will be supplied.”

It is incredible, but it is incontestably true: the only basis for the “Ideal” of the Anarchist-Communists, is this “petitio principii”, this “assumption” of the very thing that has to be proved. Companion Grave, the “profound thinker”, is particularly rich in assumptions. As soon as any difficult problem presents itself, he “assumes” that it is already solved, and then everything is for the best in the best of ideals.

The “profound” Grave is less circumspect than the “learned” Kropotkine. And so it is only he who succeeds in reducing the “ideal” to “absolute” absurdity.

He asks himself what will be done if in “the society of the day after the revolution” there should be a papa who should refuse his child all education. The papa is an individual with unlimited rights. He follows the Anarchist rule, “Do as thou wouldst.” No one has any right, therefore, to bring him to his senses. On the other hand, the child also may do as he likes, and he wants to learn. How to get out of this conflict, how resolve the dilemma without offending the holy laws of Anarchy? By an “assumption”. “Relations” (between citizens) “being much wider and more imbued with fraternity than in our present society, based as it is upon the antagonism of interests, it follows that the child by means of what he will see passing before his eyes, by what he will daily hear, will escape from the influence of the parent, and will find every facility necessary for acquiring the knowledge his parents refuse to give him. Nay more, if he finds himself too unhappy under the authority they try to force upon him, he would abandon them in order to place himself under the protection of individuals with whom he was in greater sympathy. The parents could not send the gendarmes after him to bring back to their authority the slave whom the law today gives up to them.”

It is not the child who is running away from his parents, but the Utopian who is running away from an insurmountable logical difficulty. And yet this judgment of Solomon has seemed so profound to the companions that it has been literally quoted by Emile Darnaud in his book *La Société Future* (Foix, 1890, p. 26) – a book especially intended to popularize the lucubrations of Grave.

“Anarchy, the No-government system of Socialism, has a double origin. It is an outgrowth of the two great movements of thought in the economical and the political fields which characterize our century, and especially its second part. In common with all Socialists, the Anarchists hold that the private ownership of land, capital, and machinery has had its time; that it is condemned to disappear; and that all requisites of production must, and will, become the common property of society, and be managed in common by the producers of wealth. And, in common with the most advanced representative of political Radicalism, they maintain that the ideal of the political organization of society is a condition of things where the functions of government are reduced to a minimum, and the individual recovers his full liberty of initiative and action for satisfying, by means of free groups and federations – freely constituted – all the infinitely varied needs of the human being. As regards Socialism, most of the Anarchists arrive at its ultimate conclusion, that is, at a complete negation of the wage-system, and at Communism. And with reference to political organization, by giving a farther development to the above-mentioned part of the Radical programme, they arrive at the conclusion that the ultimate aim of society is the reduction of the functions of governments to “nil” – that is, to a society without government, to Anarchy. The Anarchists maintain, moreover, that such being the ideal of social and political organization they must not remit it to future centuries, but that only those changes in our social organization which are in accordance with the above double ideal, and constitute an approach to it, will have a chance of life and be beneficial for the commonwealth.”

Kropotkin here reveals to us, with admirable clearness the origin and nature of his "Ideal". This Ideal, like that of Bakounine, is truly "double"; it is really born of the connection between bourgeois Radicalism, or rather that of the Manchester school, and Communism; just as Jesus was born in connection between the Holy Ghost and the Virgin Mary. The two natures of the Anarchist ideal are as difficult to reconcile as the two natures of the Son of God. But one of these natures evidently gets the better of the other. The Anarchists "want" to begin by immediately realizing what Kropotkin calls "the ultimate aim of society", that is to say, by destroying the "State" Their starting point is always the unlimited liberty of the individual. Manchesterism before everything. Communism only comes in afterwards. But in order to reassure us as to the probable fate of this second nature of their Ideal, the Anarchists are constantly singing the praises of the wisdom, the goodness, the forethought of the man of the "future". He will be so perfect that he will no doubt be able to organize Communist production. He will be so perfect that one asks oneself, while admiring him, why he cannot be trusted with a little "authority".

CHAPTER VII

The So-called Anarchist Tactics

Their Morality.

The Anarchists are Utopians. Their point of view has nothing in common with that of modern scientific Socialism. But there are Utopias and Utopians. The great Utopians of the first half of our century were men of genius; they helped forward social science, which in their time was still entirely Utopian. The Utopians of today, the Anarchists, are the abstractors of quintessence, who can only fully draw forth some poor conclusions from certain nummified principles. They have nothing to do with social science, which, in its onward march, has distanced them by at least half a century. Their "profound thinkers", their "lofty theorists", do not even succeed in making the two ends of their reasoning meet. They are the "decadent" Utopians, stricken with incurable intellectual anaemia. The great Utopians did much for the development of the working class movement. The Utopians of our days do nothing but retard its progress. And it is especially their so-called tactics that are harmful to the proletariat.

We already know that Bakounine interpreted the Rules of the International in the sense that the working class must give up all political action, and concentrate its efforts upon the domain of the "immediately economic" struggle for higher wages, a reduction of the hours of labor, and so forth. Bakounine himself felt that such tactics were not very revolutionary. He tried to complete them through the action of his "Alliance"; he preached riots. But the more the class consciousness of the proletariat develops, the more it inclines towards political action, and gives up the "riots", so common during its infancy. It is more difficult to induce the working men of Western Europe, who have attained to a certain degree of political development, to riot, than, for example, the credulous and ignorant Russian peasants. As the proletariat has shown no taste for the tactics of "riot", the companions have been forced to replace it by "individual action". It was especially after the attempted insurrection at Benevento in Italy in 1877 that the Bakounists began to glorify the "propaganda of deed". But if we glance back at the period that separates us from the attempt of Benevento, we shall see that this propaganda too assumed a special form: very few "riots", and these quite insignificant, a great many personal attempts against public edifices, against individuals, and even against property – "individually hereditary", of course. It could not be otherwise.

"We have already seen numerous revolts by people who wished to obtain urgent reforms," says Louise Michel, in an interview with a correspondent of the *Matin*, on the occasion of the Vaillant attempt. "What was the result? The people were shot down. Well, we think the people have been sufficiently bled; it is better large-hearted people should sacrifice themselves, and, at their own risk, commit acts of violence whose object is to terrorize the Government and the bourgeois."

This is exactly what we have said – only in slightly different words. Louise Michel has forgotten to say that revolts, causing the bloodshed of the people, figured at the head of the Anarchists' programme, until the Anarchists became convinced, not that these partial risings in no way serve the cause of the workers, but that the workers, for the most part, will not have anything to do with these risings.

Error has its logic as well as truth. Once you reject the political action of the working-class, you are fatally driven – provided you, do not wish to serve the bourgeois politicians – to accept the tactics of the Vaillants and the Henrys. The so-called "Independent" (Unabhängige) members of the German Socialist Party have proved this in their own persons. They began by attacking "Parliamentarism", and to the "reformist" tactics of the "old" members they opposed – on paper, of course – the "revolutionary struggle", the purely "economic" struggle. But this struggle, developing naturally, must inevitably bring about the entry of the proletariat into the arena of political struggles. Not wishing to come back to the very starting-point of their negation, the "Independents", for a time, preached what they called "political demonstrations", a new kind of old Bakounist riots. As riots, by whatever name they are called, always come too late for the fiery "revolutionists there was only left to the Independents to "march forward", to become converts to Anarchy, and to propagate – in words – the propaganda of deed. The language of the "young" Landauers and Co. is already as "revolutionary" as that of the "oldest" Anarchists.

"Reason and knowledge only thou despise
The highest strength in man that lies!
Let but the lying spirit bind thee,
With magic works and shows that blind thee,
And I shall have thee fast and sure."

As to the "magic work and shows", they are innumerable in the arguments of the Anarchists against the political

activity of the proletariat. Here hate becomes veritable witchcraft. Thus Kropotkine turns their own arm – the materialist, conception of history-against the Social-Democrats. “To each new economical phase of life corresponds a new political phase,” he assures us. “Absolute monarchy – that is Court-rule – corresponded to the system of serfdom. Representative government corresponds to capital-rule. Both, however, are class-rule. But in a society where the distinction between capitalist and laborer has disappeared, there is no need of such a government; it would be an anachronism, a nuisance.” If Social-Democrats were to tell him they know this at least as well as he does, Kropotkine would reply that possibly they do, but that then they will not draw a logical conclusion from these premises. He, Kropotkine, is your real logician. Since the political constitution of every country is determined by its economic condition, he argues, the political action of Socialists is absolute nonsense. “To seek to attain Socialism or even (!) an agrarian revolution by means of a political revolution, is the merest Utopia, because the whole of history shows us that political changes flow from the great economic revolutions, and not “vice versa”. Could the best geometrician in the world ever produce anything more exact than this demonstration? Basing his argument upon this impregnable foundation, Kropotkine advises the Russian revolutionists to give up their political struggle against Tzarism. They must follow an “immediately economic” end. “The emancipation of the Russian peasants from the yoke of serfdom that has until now weighed upon them, is therefore the first task of the Russian revolutionist. In working along these lines he directly and immediately works for the good of the people ... and he moreover prepares for the weakening of the centralized power of the State and for its limitation.

Thus the emancipation of the peasants will have prepared the way for the weakening of Russian Tzarism. But how to emancipate the peasants before overthrowing Tzarism? Absolute mystery! Such an emancipation would be a veritable “witchcraft”. Old Liscow was right when he said, “It is easier and more natural to write with the fingers than with the head.”

However this may be, the whole political action of the working-class must be summed up in these few words: “No politics! Long live the purely economic struggle!” This is Bakounism, but perfected Bakounism. Bakounine himself urged the workers to fight for a reduction of the hours of labor, and higher wages. The Anarchist-Communists of our day seek to “make the workers understand that they have nothing to gain from such child’s play as this, and that society can only be transformed by destroying the institutions which govern it.” The raising of wages is also useless. “North America and South America, are they not there to prove to us that whenever the worker has succeeded in getting higher wages, the prices of articles of consumption have increased proportionately, and that where he has succeeded in getting 20 francs a day for his wages, he needs 25 to be able to live according to the standard of the better class workman, so that he is always below the average?” The reduction of the hours of labor is at any rate superaverage fluous since capital will always make it up by a “systematic intensification of labor by means of improved machinery. Marx himself has demonstrated this as clearly as possible.”

We know, thanks to Kropotkine, that the Anarchist Ideal has double origin. And all the Anarchist “demonstrations” also have a double origin. On the one hand they are drawn from the vulgar handbooks of political economy, written by the most vulgar of bourgeois economists, e.g., Grave’s dissertation upon wages, which Bastiat would have applauded enthusiastically. On the other hand, the “companions”, remembering the somewhat “Communist” origin of their ideal, turn to Marx and quote, without understanding, him. Even Bakounine has been “sophisticated” by Marxism. The latterday Anarchists, with Kropotkine at their head, have been even more sophisticated.

The ignorance of Grave, “the profound thinker”, is very remarkable in general, but it exceeds the bounds of all probability in matters of political economy. Here it is, only equalled by that of the learned geologist Kropotkine, who makes the most monstrous statements whenever he touches upon an economic question. We regret that space will not allow us to amuse the reader with some samples of Anarchist economics. They must content themselves with what Kropotkine has taught them about Marx’s “surplus-value”.

All this would be very ridiculous, if it were not too sad, as the Russian poet Lermontoff says. And it is sad indeed. Whenever the proletariat makes an attempt to somewhat ameliorate its economic position, “large-hearted people”, vowing they love the proletariat most tenderly, rush in from all points of the compass, and depending on their halting syllogisms, put spokes into the wheel of the movement, do their utmost to prove that the movement is useless. We have had an example of this with regard to the eight-hour day, which the Anarchists combatted, whenever they could, with a zeal worthy of a better cause. When the proletariat takes no notice of this, and pursues its “immediately economic” aims undisturbed – as it has the fortunate habit of doing – the same “large-hearted people” reappear upon the scene armed with bombs, and provide the government with the desired and sought-for pretext for attacking the proletariat. We have seen this at Paris on May 1, 1890; we have seen it often during strikes. Fine fellows these “large hearted men”! And to think that among the workers themselves there are men simple enough to consider as their friends, these personages who are, in reality, the most dangerous enemies of their cause !

An Anarchist will have nothing to do with “parliamentarism”, since it only lulls the proletariat to sleep. He will none of “reforms”, since reforms are but so many compromises with the possessing classes. He wants the revolution, a “full, complete, immediate, and immediately economic” revolution. To attain this end he arms himself with a saucepan full of explosive materials, and throws it amongst the public theater or cafe. He declares this is the “revolution”. For our own part it seems to us nothing but “immediate” madness.

It goes without saying that the bourgeois governments, whilst inveighing against the authors of these attempts, cannot but congratulate themselves upon these tactics. “Society is in danger!” “Caveant consules!” And the police “consuls” become active, and public opinion applauds all the reactionary measures resorted to by ministers in order to “save society” “The terrorist saviors of society in uniform, to gain the respect of the Philistine masses, must appear with

the halo of true sons of 'holy order', the daughter of Heaven rich in blessings, and to this halo the school-boy attempts of these Terrorists help them. Such a silly fool, lost in his fantastical imaginings, does not even see that he is only a puppet, whose strings are pulled by a cleverer one in the Terrorist wings; he does not see that the fear and terror he causes only serve to so deaden all the senses of the Philistine crowd, that it shouts approval of every massacre that clears the road for reaction."

Napoleon III already indulged from time to time in an "outrage" in order once again to save society menaced by the enemies of order. The foul admissions of Andrieux, the acts and deeds of the German and Austrian "agents provocateurs", the recent revelations as to the attempt against the Madrid Parliament, etc., prove abundantly that the present Governments profit enormously by the tactics of the "companions", and that the work of the Terrorists in uniform would be much more difficult if the Anarchists were not so eager to help in it.

Thus it is that spies of the vilest kind, like Joseph Peukert, for long years figured as shining lights of Anarchism, translating into German the works of foreign Anarchists; thus it is that the French bourgeois and, priests directly subvention the "companions", and that the law-and-order ministry does everything in its power to throw a veil over these shady machinations. And so, too, in the name of the "immediate revolution", the Anarchists become the precious pillars of bourgeois society, inasmuch as they furnish the "raison d'être" for the most immediately reactionary policy.

Thus the reactionary and Conservative press has always shown a hardly disguised sympathy for the Anarchists, and has regretted that the Socialists, conscious of their end and aim, will have nothing to do with them. "They drive them away like poor dogs," pitifully exclaims the Paris Figaro, apropos of the expulsion of the Anarchists from the Zurich Congress.

An Anarchist is a man who – when he is not a police agent – is fated always and everywhere to attain the opposite of that which he attempts to achieve.

"To send working men to a Parliament," said Bordat, before the Lyons tribunal in 1893, "is to act like a mother who would take her daughter to a brothel." Thus it is also in the name of morality that the Anarchists repudiate political action. But what is the outcome of their fear of parliamentary corruption? The glorification of theft ("Put money in thy purse," wrote Most in his *Freiheit*, already in 1880), the exploits of the Duvals and Ravachols, who in the name of the "cause" commit the most vulgar and disgusting crimes. The Russian writer, Herzen, relates somewhere how on arriving at some small Italian town, he met only priests and bandits, and was greatly perplexed, being unable to decide which were the priests and which the bandits. And this is the position of every impartial person today; for how are you going to divine where the "companion" ends and the bandit begins? The Anarchists themselves are not always sure, as was proved by the controversy caused in their ranks by the Ravachol affair. Thus the better among them, those whose honesty is absolutely unquestionable, constantly fluctuate in their views of the "propaganda of deed."

"Condemn the propaganda of deed?" says Elysee Reclus. "But what is this propaganda except the preaching of well-doing and love of humanity by example? Those who call the "propaganda of deed" acts of violence prove that they have not understood the meaning of this expression. The Anarchist who understands his part, instead of massacring somebody or other, will exclusively strive to bring this person round to his opinions, and to make of him an adept who, in his turn, will make "propaganda of deed" by showing himself good and just to all those whom he may meet."

We will not ask what is left of the Anarchist who has divorced himself from the tactics of "deeds".

We only ask the reader to consider the following lines: "The editor of the *Sempre Avanti* wrote to Elysée Reclus asking him for his true opinion of Ravachol. 'I admire his courage, his goodness of heart, his greatness of soul, the generosity with which he pardons his enemies, or rather his betrayers. I hardly know of any men who have surpassed him in nobleness of conduct. I reserve the question as to how far it is always desirable to push to extremities one's own right, and whether other considerations moved by a spirit of human solidarity ought not to prevail. Still I am none the less one of those who recognize in Ravachol a hero of a magnanimity but little common.'"

This does not at all fit in with the declaration quoted above, and it proves irrefutably that citizen Reclus fluctuates, that he does not know exactly where his "companion" ends and the bandit begins. The problem is the more difficult to solve that there are a good many individuals who are at the same time "bandits" and Anarchists. Ravochol was no exception. At the house of the Anarchists, Ortiz and Chiericotti, recently arrested at Paris, an enormous mass of stolen goods were found. Nor is it only in France that you have the combination of these two apparently different trades. It will suffice to remind the reader of the Austrians Kammerer and Stellmacher.

Kropotkine would have us believe that Anarchist morality, a morality free from all obligations or sanction, opposed to all utilitarian calculations, is the same as the natural morality of the people, "the morality from the habit of well doing." The morality of the Anarchists is that of persons who look upon all human action from the abstract point of view of the unlimited rights of the individual, and who, in the name of these rights, pass a verdict of "Not guilty" on the most atrocious deeds, the most revoltingly arbitrary acts. "What matter the victims," exclaimed the Anarchist poet Laurent Tailhade, on the very evening of Vaillant's outrage, at the banquet of the "Plume" Society, "provided the gesture is beautiful?"

Tailhade is a decadent, who, because he is "blasé" has the courage of his Anarchist opinions. In fact the Anarchists combat democracy because democracy, according to them, is nothing but the tyranny of "the morality from the habit of well doing." The morality of the impose its wishes upon the minority. But if this is so, in the name of what moral principle do the Anarchists revolt against the bourgeoisie? Because the bourgeoisie are not a minority? Or because they do not do what they "will" to do?

"Do as thou would'st," proclaim the Anarchists. The bourgeoisie "want" to exploit the proletariat, and do it remarkably well. They thus follow the Anarchist precept, and the "companions" are very wrong to complain of their

conduct. They become altogether ridiculous when they combat the bourgeoisie in the name of their victims. “What matters the death of vague human beings” – continues the Anarchist logician Tailhade – “if thereby the individual affirms himself!” Here we have the true morality of the Anarchists; it is also that of the crowned heads. “Sic volo, sic jubeo!”

Thus, in the name of the revolution, the Anarchists serve the cause of reaction; in the name of morality they approve the most immoral acts; in the name of individual liberty they trample under foot all the rights of their fellows.

And this is why the whole Anarchist doctrine founders upon its own logic. If any maniac may, because he “wants” to, kill as many men as he likes, society, composed of an immense number of individuals, may certainly bring him to his senses, not because it is its caprice, but because it is its duty, because such is the “*conditio sine qua non*” of its existence.

CHAPTER VII

Conclusion

The Bourgeoisie, Anarchism, and Socialism.

The “father of Anarchy”, the “immortal” Proudhon, bitterly mocked at those people for whom the revolution consisted of acts of violence, the exchange of blows, the shedding of blood. The descendants of the “father”, the modern Anarchists, understand by revolution only this brutally childish method. Everything that is not violence is a betrayal of the cause, a foul compromise with “authority”. The sacred bourgeoisie does not know what to do against them. In the domain of theory they are absolutely impotent with regard to the Anarchists, who are their own “*enfants terribles*”. The bourgeoisie was the first to propagate the theory of “*laissez faire*”, of dishevelled individualism. Their most eminent philosopher of today, Herbert Spencer, is nothing but a conservative Anarchist. The “companions” are active and zealous persons, who carry the bourgeois reasoning to its logical conclusion.

The magistrates of the French bourgeois Republic have condemned Grave to prison, and his book, *Société Mourante et l’Anarchie*, to destruction. The bourgeois men of letters declare this puerile book a profound work, and its author a man of rare intellect.

And not only has the bourgeoisie no theoretical weapons with which to combat the Anarchists; they see their young folk enamoured of the Anarchist doctrine. In this society, satiated and rotten to the marrow of its bones, where all faiths are long since dead, where all sincere opinions appear ridiculous, in this “*monde ou l’on s’ennui*”, where after having exhausted all forms of enjoyment they no longer know in what new fancy, in what fresh excess to seek novel sensations, there are people who lend a willing ear to the song of the Anarchist siren. Amongst the Paris “companions” there are already not a few men quite “*comme il faut*”, men about town who, as the French writer, Raoul Allier, says, wear nothing less than patent leather shoes, and put a green carnation in their button-holes before they go to meetings. Decadent writers and artists are converted to Anarchism and propagate its theories in reviews like the *Mercure de France*, *La Plume*, etc. And this is comprehensible enough. One might wonder indeed if Anarchism, an essentially bourgeois doctrine, had not found adepts among the French bourgeoisie, the most “*blasée*” of all bourgeoisies.

By taking possession of the Anarchist doctrine, the decadent, “*fin-de-siecle*” writers restore to it its true character of bourgeois individualism. If Kropotkine and Reclus speak in the name of the worker, oppressed by the capitalist, *La Plume* and the *Mercure de France* speak in the name of the individual who is seeking to shake off all the trammels of society in order that he may at last do freely what he “wants” to. Thus Anarchism comes back to its starting-point. Stirner said: “Nothing for me goes beyond myself.” Laurent Tailhade says: “What matters the death of vague human beings, if thereby the individual affirms himself.”

The bourgeoisie no longer knows where to turn. “I who have fought so much for Positivism,” moans Emile Zola, “well, yes! after thirty years of this struggle, I feel my convictions are shaken. Religious faith would have prevented such theories from being propagated; but has it not almost disappeared today? Who will give us a new ideal?”

Alas, gentlemen, there is no ideal for walking corpses such as you! You will try everything. You will become Buddhists, Druids, Sars Chaldeans, Occultists, Magi, Theosophists, or Anarchists, whichever you prefer – and yet you will remain what you are now – beings without faith or principle, bags, emptied by history. The ideal of the bourgeois has lived.

For ourselves, Social-Democrats, we have nothing to fear from the Anarchist propaganda. The child of the bourgeoisie, Anarchism, will never have any serious influence upon the proletariat. If among the Anarchists there are workmen who sincerely desire the good of their class, and who sacrifice themselves to what they believe to be the good cause, it is only thanks to a misunderstanding that they find themselves in this camp. They only know the struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat under the form which the Anarchists are trying to give it. When more enlightened they will come to us.

Here is an example to prove this. During the trial of the Anarchists at Lyons in 1883, the working man Desgranges related how he had become an Anarchist, he who had formerly taken part in the political movement, and had even been elected a municipal councillor at Villefranche in November, 1879. “In 1881, in the month of September, when the dyers’ strike broke out at Villefranche, I was elected secretary of the strike committee, and it was during this memorable event ... that I became convinced of the necessity of suppressing authority, for authority spells despotism. During this strike, when the employers refused to discuss the matter with the workers, what did the prefectural and communal administrations do to settle the dispute? Fifty gendarmes, with sword in hand, were told off to settle the question. That is what is called the pacific means employed by Governments. It was then, at the end of this strike, that some working men, myself among the number, understood the necessity of seriously studying economic questions, and, in order to do

so, we agreed to meet in the evening to study together. It is hardly necessary to add that this group became Anarchist.

That is how the trick is done. A working man, active and intelligent, supports the programme of one or the other bourgeois party. The bourgeois talk about the well-being of the people, the workers, but betray them on the first opportunity. The working man who has believed in the sincerity of these persons is indignant, wants to separate from them, and decides to study seriously "economic questions". An Anarchist comes along, and reminding him of the treachery of the bourgeois, and the sabres of the gendarmes, assures him that the political struggle is nothing but bourgeois nonsense, and that in order to emancipate the workers political action must be given up, making the destruction of the State the final aim. The working man who was only beginning to study the situation thinks the "companion" is right, and so he becomes a convinced and devoted Anarchist! What would happen, if pursuing his studies of the social question further, he had understood that the "companion" was a pretentious Ignoramus, that he talked twaddle, that his "Ideal" is a delusion and a snare, that outside bourgeois politics there is, opposed to these, the political action of the proletariat, which will put an end to the very existence of capitalist society? He would have become a Social-Democrat.

Thus the more widely our ideas become known among the working classes, and they are thus becoming more and more widely known, the less will proletarians be inclined to follow the Anarchists. Anarchism, with the exception of its "learned" housebreakers, will more and more transform itself into a kind of bourgeois sport, for the purpose of providing sensations for "individuals" who have indulged too freely in the pleasures of the world, the flesh and the devil.

And when the proletariat are masters of the situation, they will only need to look at the "companions", and even the "finest" of them will be silenced; they will only have to breathe to disperse all the Anarchist dust to the winds of heaven.

[9] LENIN'S CRITICISM OF PLEKHANOV

Plekhanov wrote a special pamphlet on the relation of anarchism to socialism, entitled *Anarchism and Socialism*, which was published in German in 1894.

In treating this subject, Plekhanov contrived completely to evade the most urgent, burning, and most politically essential issue in the struggle against anarchism, namely, the relation of the revolution to the state, and the question of the state in general! His pamphlet falls into two distinct parts: one of them is historical and literary, and contains valuable material on the history of the ideas of Stirner, Proudhon, and others; the other is philistine, and contains a clumsy dissertation on the theme that an anarchist cannot be distinguished from a bandit.

It is a most amusing combination of subjects and most characteristic of Plekhanov's whole activity on the eve of the revolution and during the revolutionary period in Russia. In fact, in the years 1905 to 1917, Plekhanov revealed himself as a semi-doctrinaire and semi-philistine who, in politics, trailed in the wake of the bourgeoisie.

We have now seen how, in their controversy with the anarchists, Marx and Engels with the utmost thoroughness explained their views on the relation of revolution to the state. In 1891, in his foreword to Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, Engels wrote that "we"--that is, Engels and Marx--"were at that time, hardly two years after the Hague Congress of the [First] International, engaged in the most violent struggle against Bakunin and his anarchists."

The anarchists had tried to claim the Paris Commune as their "own", so to say, as a collaboration of their doctrine; and they completely misunderstood its lessons and Marx's analysis of these lessons. Anarchism has given nothing even approximating true answers to the concrete political questions: Must the old state machine be smashed? And what should be put in its place?

But to speak of "anarchism and socialism" while completely evading the question of the state, and disregarding the whole development of Marxism before and after the Commune, meant inevitably slipping into opportunism. For what opportunism needs most of all is that the two questions just mentioned should not be raised at all. That in itself is a victory for opportunism.

[10] BASIC STATEMENT OF THE ANARCHIST FEDERATION

Please read the whole thing. Excerpts reproduced here for reference.

The central plank of our principles, like all anarchist organisations, is the recognition of the need to bring an end to capitalism (in all its varieties) as well as the State, which can never be used as a vehicle to transform society. In addition, we believe that these objectives can only come about through a social revolution, where the working class organises itself to both ideologically and physically overthrow the system. Our definition of the working class is broad, reflecting the fact that capitalism has undergone significant changes. A social revolution can only come about as a result of the will of the vast majority of the population, including office and shop workers, public sector employees, the unwaged, women working in the home, children and retired people, as well as the traditional industrial workers. Anarchism is about individuals changing as part of a general social struggle. It is not about individuals changing their lifestyle and hoping capitalism will go away. Neither do we fetishise violence, recognising that the use of violence can produce new hierarchies. The revolution will primarily come about through non-military means, as we develop our power through a variety of social, economic, political and cultural forms of resistance. It is to this end that we work. Nevertheless, we realise that it is unavoidable and therefore do not hold pacifism to be a point of principle.

The nature of Trade Unionism in Britain has posed many problems for us when trying to decide on a workplace strategy. The unions are not only reformist but are often totally implicated in the exploitation of the working class. Our experience led us to adopt what some may call an 'anti-union' position. We argue that people should not take up positions in the union and that in many cases there is no point in even being a member of the union if its role is particularly counter-revolutionary. There is no point in trying to 'democratise' the unions or try and make them more combative. It is in their nature to negotiate with capitalism, not to seriously undermine it. They cannot be reformed. This position has caused some difficulties because as most workplace activity takes place within the context of the official union, what do we actually do? We have argued that we should be trying to organise informal groups of militant workers, whether they be union members or not. The aim is not to establish an alternative union structure, which would only end up becoming another reformist union, but to be a source of revolutionary propaganda and a catalyst for action.

... We are organised on federalist lines, which means we are a federation of individuals and groups with no central political or administrative apparatus. This does not mean that we have no decision-making structure, something that only leads to informal leadership cliques rather than formal ones. We have one national conference and three national delegate meetings a year, which take decisions on our general orientation, strategy and action. However, these decisions are reached through extended discussion in the Internal Bulletin and on an internet discussion list. It is very rare that we have anything that is not generally agreed after discussion. If we do vote on anything, the vote is first open to any member to register a negative vote. If the decision is still made, then groups and/or individuals are still free to not implement the decision as long as they do not seek to undermine the organisation...

AF members are involved in a diverse range of struggles. We support initiatives such as the anti-G8 preparations because they are part of the general struggle to build a culture of resistance. However, we do not prioritise organising for such big events as we also have our day-to-day work to spread anarchist ideas and action in the working class movement. As we are not a large organisation, we cannot do everything. Some of our members will be involved in these initiatives, but we do not believe that it is worth abandoning our normal activity in order to make the enormous financial and time commitment that such events require. We strongly believe that our main focus must be to develop an anarchist presence within the working class both in the workplace and the locality. The future for anarchism and for the planet lies in anarchism being taken up by a wide variety of working class people in their everyday struggles.

[11] TROTSKY ON THE NATIONAL QUESTION

In two countries of pre-war Europe the national question was of exceptional political significance: in Tsarist Russia and in Hapsburg Austria-Hungary. In each of these the workers' party, created its own school. In the sphere of theory, the Austrian Social-Democracy, in the persons of Otto Bauer and Karl Renner, considered nationality independent of territory, economy and class, transforming it into a species of abstraction limited by so-called "national character."

In the field of national policy, as for that matter in all other fields, it did not venture beyond a corrective status quo. Fearing the very thought of dismembering the monarchy, the Austrian Social-Democracy strove to adapt its national programme to the borders of the patchwork state.

The programme of so-called "national cultural autonomy" required that the citizens of one and the same nationality, irrespective of their dispersal over the territory of Austria-Hungary and irrespective of the administrative divisions of the state should be united, on the basis of purely personal attributes, into one community for the solution of their "cultural" tasks (the theatre, the church, the school, and the like). That programme was artificial and utopian, in so far as it attempted to separate culture from territory and economy in a society torn apart by social contradictions; it was at the same time reactionary, in so far as it led to a forced disunion into various nationalities of the workers of one and the same state, undermining their class strength.

Lenin's position was the direct opposite. Regarding nationality as unseverably connected with territory, economy and class structure, he refused at the same time to regard the historical state, the borders of which cut across the living body of the nations, as a sacrosanct and inviolate category.

He demanded recognition of the right to secession and independent existence for each national portion of the state.

In so far as the various nationalities, voluntarily or through force of necessity, coexist within the borders of one state, their cultural interests must find the highest possible satisfaction within the framework of the broadest regional (and consequently, territorial) autonomy, including statutory guarantees of the rights of each minority. At the same time, Lenin deemed it the incontrovertible duty of all the workers of a given state, irrespective of nationality, to unite in one and the same class organisations.

The national problem was particularly acute in Poland, aggravated by the historical fate of that country. The so-called PPS (Polish Socialist Party), headed by Josef Pilsudski, came out ardently for Polish independence; the "socialism" of the PPS was no more than a vague appendage of its militant nationalism. On the other hand, the Polish Social-Democracy, whose leader was Rosa Luxemburg, counterposed to the slogan of Polish independence the demand for the

autonomy of the Polish region as a constituent part of democratic Russia. Luxemburg proceeded from the consideration that in the epoch of imperialism the separation of Poland from Russia was economically infeasible and in the epoch of socialism — unnecessary.

She looked upon “the right of self-determination” as an empty abstraction. The polemic on that question lasted for years. Lenin insisted that imperialism did not reign similarly or equably in all countries, regions and spheres of life; that the heritage of the past represented an accumulation and interpenetration of various historical epochs; that although monopolistic capitalism towers above everything, it does not supersede everything; that, notwithstanding the domination of imperialism, the numerous national problems retained their full force and that, contingent upon the internal and world conjunctures, Poland might become independent even in the epoch of imperialism.

It was Lenin’s view that the right of self-determination was merely an application of the principles of bourgeois democracy in the sphere of national relations. A real, full-bodied, all-sided democracy under capitalism was unrealisable; in that sense the national independence of small and weak peoples was likewise “unrealisable”. However, even under imperialism, the working class did not refuse to fight for democratic rights, including among them the right of each nation to its independent existence.

Moreover, in certain portions of our planet it was imperialism itself that invested the slogan of national self-determination with extraordinary significance. Although Western and Central Europe have somehow managed to solve their national problems in the course of the nineteenth century, in Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa and South America the epoch of national democratic movements had not really begun to unfold until the twentieth century. To deny the right of nations to self-determination is tantamount in effect to offering aid and comfort to the imperialists against their colonies and generally against all oppressed nationalities.

The problem of nationalities was considerably aggravated in Russia during the period of reaction. “The wave of militant nationalism,” wrote Stalin, “called attention from above to numerous acts of repressions by those in power, who wreaked their vengeance upon the border states for their love of freedom, calling forth in response a wave of nationalism from below, which at times passed into crude chauvinism.”

This was the time of the ritual murder trial of the Kiev Jew Bayliss. Retrospectively, in the light of civilisation’s latest achievements, especially in Germany and in the USSR, that trial today seems almost a humanitarian experiment. But in 1913 it shocked the whole world. The poison of nationalism began to affect many sections of the working class as well. Alarmed, Gorky wrote to Lenin about the need for counteracting this chauvinistic rabidness. “As for nationalism, I quite agree with you,” replied Lenin, “that we must cope with it more earnestly than ever. We have a splendid Georgian staying with us here who is writing a long article for *Prosveshcheniye* (Enlightenment), after garnering all the Austrian and other material. We will bear down on it.”

The reference was to Stalin. Gorky, long connected with the party, knew all its leading cadres well. But Stalin evidently was utterly unknown to him since Lenin had to resort to such an impersonal, although flattering, expression as “a splendid Georgian”. This is, by the way, the only occasion when Lenin characterised a prominent Russian revolutionist by the token of his nationality. He had in mind, of course, not a Georgian, but a Caucasian: the element of primitiveness undoubtedly attracted Lenin; small wonder that he treated Kamo with such tenderness.

During his two months’ sojourn abroad Stalin wrote a brief but very trenchant piece of research entitled “Marxism and the National Problem”. Since it was intended for a lawful magazine, the article resorted to discreet vocabulary. Its revolutionary tendencies were nonetheless distinctly apparent.

The author set out by counterposing the historico-materialistic definition of nation to the abstracto-psychological, in the spirit of the Austrian school. “The nation,” he wrote, “is a historically-formed enduring community of language, territory, economic life and psychological composition, asserting itself in the community of culture.” This combined definition, compounding the psychological attributes of a nation with the geographic and economic conditions of its development, is not only correct theoretically but practically fruitful, for then the solution to the problem of each nation’s fate must perforce be sought along the lines of changing the material conditions of its existence, beginning with territory.

Bolshevism was never addicted to the fetishistic worship of a state’s borders. Politically the point was to reconstruct the Tsarist empire, that prison of nations, territorially, politically, and administratively in line with needs and wishes of the nations themselves.

The party of the proletariat does not enjoin the various nationalities either to remain within the bounds of a given state or separate from it: that is their own affair. But it does obligate itself to help each of them to realise its actual national will. As for the possibility of separating from a state, that is a matter of concrete historical circumstances and the relation of forces. “No one can say,” wrote Stalin, “that the Balkan War is the end of internal and external circumstances that one or another nationality in Russia will deem it necessary to postulate and to solve the problem of its own independence. And, of course, it is no business of the Marxists to place barriers in such cases. But for that very reason Russian Marxists cannot get along without the right of nations to self-determination.”

The interests of the nations which voluntarily remain within the bounds of democratic Russia would be fenced off by

means of “the autonomies of such self-determined units as Poland, Lithuania, the Ukraine, the Caucasus, and the like. Regional autonomy is conducive to a better utilisation of the natural wealth of the region; it does not divide citizens along national lines and makes it possible for them to group themselves in class parties.” The territorial self-administration of regions in all spheres of social life is counterposed to the extra-territorial — that is, platonic—self-administration of nationalities in matters of “culture” only.

However, most directly and acutely significant, from the point of view of the proletariat’s struggle, was the problem of the relations between workers of various nationalities inside the same state. Bolshevism stood for a compact and indivisible unification of workers of all nationalities in the party and in the trade unions on the basis of democratic centralism.

“The type of organisation does not exert its influence on practical work alone. It places an indelible stamp on the worker’s whole spiritual life. The worker lives the life of his organisation, within which he develops spiritually and is educated...The international type of organisation is a school of comradely feelings, of the greatest agitation in favour of internationalism.”

One of the aims of the Austrian programme- of “cultural autonomy” was “the preservation and development of the national idiosyncrasies of peoples.” Why and for what purpose? asked Bolshevism in amazement. Segregating the various nationalistic portions of mankind was never our concern. True, Bolshevism insisted that each nation should have the right to secede—the right, but not the duty—as the ultimate, most effective guarantee against oppression. But the thought of artificially preserving national idiosyncrasies was profoundly alien to Bolshevism.

The removal of any, even disguised, even the most refined and practically “imponderable” national oppression or indignity, must be used for the revolutionary unification rather than the segregation of the workers of various nationalities. Wherever national privileges and injuries exist, nations must have the possibility to separate from each other, that thus they may facilitate the free unification of the workers, in the name of a close rapprochement of nations, with the distinct perspective of the eventual complete fusion of all. Such was the basic tendency of Bolshevism, which revealed the full measure of its force in the October Revolution.

[12] IRELAND: 1968-85

Please also read the other bits cited from the pamphlet "Ireland: the socialist answer"

Introduction

From the mid-1960s a sizeable minority of the people of the USA turned against the war their government was waging in Vietnam. They marched, demonstrated and lobbied to force their government to stop the war.

This active opposition of a section of their own people was a major factor in making the Indochina war unwinnable for the mighty US government.

Since about 1972 opinion polls have more or less consistently shown that half or more than half the people of Britain do not want Britain to continue to rule Northern Ireland, do not want the British troops there, and therefore do want Britain to continue to spend British money and lives fighting the IRA. Influential newspapers like Daily Mirror have favoured Troops Out for fifteen years or more.

Yet this vast swathe of British public opinion has had almost no influence on British government policy. Why? Many of those who want British troops out have narrow - minded British nationalist attitudes: 'let the mad Irish kill each other'. The effect of this on British policy is to license any brutality of policy, attitude and utterance the government chooses to indulge in. And that is the only influence that the segment of British public opinion which favours troops out has had on British government policy.

Troops out sentiment is overwhelmingly passive and cynical. No powerful movement exists to mobilise and agitate on the question. For nearly two decades the organised 'troops out' movement has consisted of tiny groups of left-wingers, mostly sympathisers of the Irish Republican movement. Many of these 'troops out' activists are moved to activity by seeing the Republican movement and the struggle of the Catholics in Northern Ireland as playing a role in some preconceived scenario of 'world revolution' or 'permanent revolution' - a vision which cannot possibly mobilise broader forces.

'Time To Go' has achieved a bigger involvement of activists than any similar initiative for some time partly because it talks of more than troops out, and through the voice of Clare Short MP it links troops out inextricably with a political settlement.

Now conscription in the USA made the Indochina war a big part of the lives of a generation, while there is no conscription in Britain. The casualty levels in Northern Ireland are far lower than the rates of death through violent crime in many American cities, and qualitatively below the levels suffered by the US soldiers in Vietnam. That is one

reason why the public opinion for troops out has little bite in British politics. But it explains only part of the arresting contrast with the USA.

Much more central is the fact that the troops out majority in opinion polls is made up of people with vastly different attitudes, from Britain - first reactionaries to those who believe that the IRA is leading the Irish socialist revolution and vehemently support it for that reason. The troops out current is not so much a current as an arithmetic sum of people who agree only negatively - against British troops remaining - but disagree entirely on positive answers.

For Vietnam the negative opposition to US troops remaining clearly implied a positive solution, whether you accepted it reluctantly or welcomed it enthusiastically - let the Vietnamese nationalists take over. Northern Ireland is far more complex.

The history of the relations between the two islands of Britain and Ireland is that of England as predator for centuries, and Ireland as prey. It is a history of British ruling - class oppression and exploitation, and of repeated Irish risings for freedom. But it is also a history shaped and marked by the interpenetration of the peoples of the two islands over the centuries.

Today Ireland is divided between two peoples of different and conflicting identities and allegiances. In the north - east of the island the majority is, and for centuries has been, the people who used to be called (by James Connolly, too) Ulster Scots.

Yes, the existing partition of Ireland is a brutal outrage against the majority of the people of Ireland, a botched, clumsy piece of British imperialist policy. It supposedly set out to give the Protestants of the north - east self - government against the rest of the Irish, but in so doing created a second, artificial, Irish minority, the Six Counties Catholics, who are a bigger proportion of the Six Counties population than the Protestants would be as a proportion of the 32 Counties of all Ireland.

This way of dealing with the conflict between the Irish majority and minority was only possible because of the alliance of the Protestants with the dominant section of the British ruling class in the early part of this century.

The bedrock fact, however, remains: a sizeable minority of the people on the island, the compact majority in the north - east, do not want to be part of a united Ireland under a Catholic majority - and have been willing to fight against being forced into it.

The hundred years since the first Home Rule Bill which Gladstone introduced into the House of Commons at the beginning of 1886 have demonstrated conclusively that the Irish majority's desire for Irish independence and its desire for Irish unity are incompatible. On top of that basic problem, the British ruling class has erected structures such as partition which have made relations between the Catholics and Protestants even more antagonistic and poisonous.

So Britain is both a bully in Ireland, and the ally of a sizeable chunk of the Irish people. British troops out without a political settlement would mean not a united Ireland, nor any solution that would freely be chosen by a majority of either community, but bloody civil war and repartition.

It is such complexities which render the troops out mood in Britain impotent. The mood for troops out can only be a contributory force for a settlement, for peace and democracy, if it is linked to a search for positive solutions and to a discussion of particular proposals.

Yet the lack of positive policy among those advocating troops out is as glaring, as obvious, and as crippling on the left as in the broader population. The simple slogan 'Troops out', with 'now' usually added for emphasis, and perhaps the reassuring footnote that 'Socialism is the only answer', has been the staple of much of the hard left over the last 15 to 20 years.

The left has refused to discuss the real complexities and problems of the British - Irish relationship. That is why the left has made so little headway, has mobilised so scantily, counts for so little, and has failed for 15 years to do anything with a mass vague mood for troops out.

The articles in this pamphlet are selected and adapted from Socialist Organiser and Workers' Liberty to do two things: to provide facts and analysis about the real situation in Ireland; and to discuss the options and perspectives in that situation. Before the labour movement and the left can help solve the tragic conflict in Ireland, it must sort itself out.

Since 1968: what has happened and why

1. Before 1968

Moves for reform from above and below For four years or so before 1968 Northern Ireland had been shaken up and destabilised. In October 1968 it blew up.

The British Labour government had been openly putting pressure on the Protestant sectarian regime in Stormont to stop being sectarian, to stop discrimination against Catholics, and to stop repressing them. The British government plainly no longer considered the partition of Ireland to be in Britain's interest.

The prospects ahead were that Britain and Ireland would both soon join the EEC. Relations between Britain and the 26 Counties were better than for many years. In 1965 the Anglo - Irish Free Trade Agreement was signed. The British government had the bones of Sir Roger Casement dug up out of their grave at Pentonville jail, where Casement was buried after they hanged him in 1916, and returned to Ireland with much ceremony, as if symbolically to lay the ghosts of past conflicts. Six County Prime Minister O'Neill visited Dublin and Taoiseach Sean Lemass visited Belfast.

The Southern Irish economy was in its best shape for a quarter century. On the surface it seemed to be a time of amicable co-operation, readjustment and rational reconstruction. The contradiction that changed these prospects so dramatically lay in Northern Ireland itself, which proved beyond the power of Britain - or of Britain and the Southern Irish bourgeoisie together - to control.

For 50 years Northern Ireland had been ruled as a "Protestant state for Protestant people" (long - time Northern Ireland Prime Minister Lord Brookeborough). The Catholics were a big and threatening hostile minority of about one in three who had been kept in the Six County state against their will in 1921. Chronic antagonism was therefore built into the Six Counties state. The Protestants repressed the Catholics, organising a special sectarian part - time wing of the police, the B-Specials, to do so.

The built a solid Protestant bloc, involving all classes from slum Protestants to horse Protestants, against the Catholic minority. Partly for political reasons, but also because there was great scarcity and poverty, they systematically discriminated against Catholics.

More Catholics were unemployed than Protestants; run - down areas where unemployment never dropped below the Great Depression level, even during the years of the boom in the '40s, '50s and '60s, tended to be Catholic areas. Politics was largely communal - sectarian politics - Catholic against Protestant. Catholics were cheated of local democracy: the system long discarded in Britain of giving business people one vote for every business premises continued in Northern Ireland where it hit the poorer Catholic community. Areas with big Catholic majorities - Derry City for example - were blatantly gerrymandered to give the Protestant/ Unionist minority control of the local council. Because votes went with houses, Catholic housing was among the worst in Western Europe.

There was systematic anti - Catholic discrimination in employment. The Harland and Wolff shipyard, and the big engineering works, employed practically no Catholics. The Sirocco Engineering Works in East Belfast, standing in the Catholic enclave of the Short Strand where there was 70% unemployment, had four Catholics out of 600 workers in the mid - '70s. As a direct consequence of this, the composition of the trade unions was tilted heavily against the Catholics.

The unions remained united on day - to - day trade unionism, on a basis of tacit acceptance of these discriminatory practices and agreement not to raise political questions concerning the Six Counties' constitution. Trade union unity was unity of the privileged with the: oppressed on the terms laid down by the privileged - the status quo in industry and on the Six Counties' constitutional: position.

At the top, where prominent people often were leftists or had a left-wing past - like, for example, Betty Sinclair, the Stalinist secretary of the Belfast Trades Council - trade unions and trades councils could sometimes be got to pass 'progressive' or liberal resolutions, but these were not representative of the Orange majority of the Northern Ireland labour movement. Unity in the Northern Ireland trade unions was a fragile thing. The threat of a split on the constitutional questions was always present, staved off by political paralysis and tacit agreement to avoid splitting issues.

The situation was the same with the political labour movement. In the '60s the Northern Ireland Labour Party had a socialist left-wing in Derry and Belfast. But it was a Unionist, that is a fundamentally Protestant, party. Time and again, throughout its history, it had been disrupted by conflicting positions on 'the constitutional question'. Always for the status quo, it attempted to broaden its support, sometimes by playing down its Unionist character, sometimes by trickery. In the '40s for example, the NILP agitated in the Falls Road under the Irish tricolour; in the Shankhill under the Union Jack, and in the city centre under the Red Flag! Inevitably this party fell apart, repeatedly.

The Protestant workers were a privileged layer. Their privileges were marginal - but nevertheless big privileges. Leon Trotsky once remarked that the greatest possible privilege is to have a crust of bread when everybody else is starving. To have, as part of the Protestant ruling bloc, a considerably better chance of a job amongst mass unemployment, was no small privilege.

Sectarianism was no surface part of Northern Ireland, but basic to it. It was a society flawed right through along the lines of the Catholic and Protestant communities. In the late '60s and early '70s it split vertically along the lines of the communal divide, not horizontally along the lines of class.

This was the problem for Britain's reforming drive in the mid '60s. The upper - class Orange and Unionist leaders were willing to make timid moves towards reform; the Protestant working-class ranks became very alarmed that reform would be at their expense. At first this was a slow process. Around 1966, Ian Paisley, the most vocal representative of that alarm, still seemed an archaic crank. But the first killings occurred in 1966, when a Protestant secret army, the UVF killed a Catholic barman suspected by them of having IRA connections.

But at first, in the mid - '60s, the Protestant backlash was limited. and seemed like it could be easily contained. The Catholic agitation that now got under way, to add pressure from below to the British government's pressure for reform from above, turned the Protestant backlash into a powerful mass movement.

The Catholics began to agitate for 'civil rights' - one man (sic) one job, one man one house, one man one vote. The Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association was formed in 1967. It was a broad coalition led by Republicans who had renounced the gun - at least for the moment - green nationalist politicians, Stalinists, and socialists of various sorts. Inevitably their demands were taken by the Protestants to be demands to divide up the existing jobs and homes.

It is possible that these 'civil rights' demands could have been rendered more palatable to the Protestant workers if expressed in some way as this: create jobs by building more houses, etc. However it is not at all certain.

The implications of the Catholic movement went way beyond what they demanded. The fundamental civil right the Catholics lacked was the right of self - determination - the fact that they were an artificial minority within an artificial state, carved out against the will of the big majority of the people of Ireland. From that flowed the possibility of discrimination and repression in the Orange sectarian state. It was not just ultra - sensitive Unionist politicians like the Stormont Home Secretary William Craig who saw that the logic of any such mainly - Catholic movement would lead it straight to the question of Northern Ireland's constitutional status. The leaders of the 'Official' Republicans, who were heavily involved in the civil rights agitation, did see it as the first stage in a mass mobilisation that would, when the time was ripe, raise 'the national question'. Protestants tended to see any movement of Catholics as a threat to 'the constitution'.

2. 1968 - 9: The Northern Ireland state breaks down

This was the background to the events of October 1968. Home Secretary William Craig banned the civil rights demonstration in Derry, and the police enforced the ban by baton charges when it was defied. World TV audiences saw the Republican Labour MP for West Belfast, Gerry Fitt, with blood streaming from a head wound caused by a police baton. Most importantly, people in Britain saw it.

From that moment on, the Protestant majority Unionist government at Stormont was on the defensive. Northern Ireland was world headline news. The pressure for reform intensified. William Craig was sacked from the Stormont government. The Protestant working class became increasingly alarmed at the prospect of being 'sold out'. The Protestant backlash grew bigger and began to reflect itself inside the ruling Unionist Party.

One of the main Northern Ireland responses to the bloody events in Derry was the creation of a powerful movement of students to agitate for civil rights - People's Democracy (which should not be confused with the present organisation of that name, though the two do have some links). PD was based on Queen's University, Belfast, had initially had many Protestant members. Outraged by police brutality at home, they were influenced by the world - wide student radicalisation of that time, which elsewhere focused on organising protests and solidarity with the Vietnamese against the US Army in Vietnam. Most of the leaders of PD were Marxist socialists.

PD agitated and marched - often very provocatively - for civil rights. The Orange backlash grew. The Unionist Party went into ferment and crisis. Prime Minister Terence O'Neill was a feeble politician nurtured in a political system in which gentry like himself could take the loyalty and deference of the lower orders for granted. He could not cope.

Central to what happened in the next three years was the incapacity of the Unionist upper - class elite to carry the Protestant masses with them on reform. Every Catholic, or pro - Catholic, action stirred up and agitated the Protestant ranks, feeding the backlash. The elite could control neither the one nor the other, and the system was ground to bits between the two. O'Neill resigned in early 1969, to be replaced by another ex - Army man, his cousin Chichester - Clark.

In January 1969 police rioted in Derry's Bogside, the Catholic slum area built outside the walls of the one - time Protestant city of Londonderry. The Catholics erected barricades to keep them out.

Serious rioting occurred in July. Then in August the upper - class Orange Order, the Apprentice Boys of Derry, staged a provocative march on the walls overlooking the Catholic slums. Bitter clashes occurred, which became full-scale warfare between the police, the sectarian B - Special constables and assorted Paisleyites on the one side, and the Catholics of the Bogside on the other.

Barricades were set up, and the Bogsiders held off the forces of the state using stones and petrol - bombs. Protestant bigots attacked Catholic areas in West Belfast, and the same thing happened there. The Southern Ireland Prime Minister said that the South could not "stand idly by". The Northern Ireland state seemed about to dissolve into sectarian civil war. On August 13th the British Army was moved onto the streets to stop the state falling apart. It quickly took control in Belfast and Derry.

The Catholics welcomed the Army as saviours - but they didn't take their barricades down. The Catholics of Derry and Belfast had seceded from the Northern Ireland state, for the moment. The barricades would stay up, patrolled on the outside by the British Army armed with machine guns and rifles, and on the inside by Catholics armed with hurleys, until the Catholics agreed to take them down in October.

This was the first crucial turning point. The Northern Ireland state had shown itself to be unreformable. It had been designed to serve the Protestant majority and they had a built-in majority against any change they didn't want. The Labour government had to decide what to do. As well as sending in the army, it sent in a bevy of civil servants to oversee the chief Northern Ireland civil servants, thus seriously curtailing the independence of the Northern Ireland government. That's all the British Labour government did.

Instead of recognising that the system had to be radically dismantled and restructured, it left it essentially in being, tinkering with it. But a process had begun that would end with the abolition of Stormont in March 1972, thus depriving the Protestant majority, whose right to self-determination the Six County state allegedly gives expression to, of the right to exercise that majority in any local political structures.

The events of August - October 1969 set Northern Ireland on a new trajectory, though that was not clear at the time. The youth in the Catholic areas had been roused up and radicalised, and were deflated and disappointed when the barricades came down in October 1969. The crisis in the Unionist Party continued, under pressure on one side from the British government to reform and on the other from the Protestant population against 'selling them out' to the Catholics or 'Dublin'. Chichester - Clark resigned in 1970, to be replaced by the tougher, less genteel and altogether less effete Brian Faulkner.

3. 1969-70: The failure of the socialists, the rise of the Provos

Paradoxically, this period saw the high point of socialism in Northern Ireland. Most of the prominent Catholic activists or representatives were socialists - the exceptions were middle-class civil rights people like John Hume, and even they allied with 'socialists' like Gerry Fitt MP and called the party they set up in 1970 the Social Democratic and Labour Party. (Mainly Catholic, it then included some Protestants, like Ivan Cooper MP.) PD ceased to be an amorphous student movement in late '69 and started agitating for socialism and on social questions. The PD - associated MP for Mid - Ulster, Bernadette Devlin, elected in 1969, was a revolutionary socialist who worked closely in Britain with groups like IS (SWP) and, briefly, the SLL (WRP). (Today she is hardly distinguishable from a Republican).

All the leading activists in Derry were socialists, with the leading role falling to the Derry Labour Party, led by Eamonn McCann. In Derry almost all the Republicans were socialists, and some were influenced by Trotskyism. Most of these socialists did appeal on a class basis to the Protestant workers, before and after August 1969. Even in its wild and provocative student days, PD appealed to Protestant workers to see that socially they had a common interest with Catholic workers. They all carefully tried to avoid appearing as Catholics or traditional Republicans.

For example, a PD leader, Cyril Toman, who was then a sort of Trotskyist, tried to get a hearing from Protestant workers by flying a Union Jack over his platform! Today Cyril Toman is in Sinn Fein and in 1983 was one of its Parliamentary candidates.

All the socialists made Militant-style denunciations of the idea that there could be a non-socialist united Ireland. Only in a socialist Ireland could the Protestant's legitimate fears that Home Rule would be Rome Rule be allayed. 'Neither Thames nor Tiber', the most Republican of them said, meaning no Irish unification apart from socialism.

They roundly abused the 'Green Tory' Republic and marched across the border waving illegal condoms in the faces of the 26 County police.

By contrast the Republicans were eclipsed. Shamed and split by their inability to defend the Catholic areas in August 1969, they seemed to count for little - and anyway the main body of Republicans were socialists too.

The high point for socialism was the election of June 1970. The Northern Ireland Labour Party refused to endorse Eamonn McCann as a candidate, and he stood with the backing of the Derry and Coleraine Labour Parties. He advocated troops out and socialism, which he defined as nationalisation of the commanding heights of the economy. McCann got 8,000 votes.

There were lots of socialists, many of them Trotskyists of one sort or another. The problem was that they were largely confined to the Catholic community. Individual Protestants were socialists, of course. Though the big student Protestant support for civil rights fell away very quickly, some stayed - for example, Ronnie Bunting, son of a prominent associate of Ian Paisley, who joined PD and was reputed to be 'Chief of Staff' of the Irish National Liberation Army when he was murdered in 1981. But these were individuals. The Protestant working class remained impervious to appeals.

Sections of it were 'radicalising' and separating off from the traditional Unionist leaders. But they were going to Paisleyism. Their radicalism was diffuse, sectional, fuelled in part by fear of the Catholics in the Six Counties and in a possible united Ireland.

Any class feeling was strictly confined within their communal framework. If they recognised similar people in similar conditions to their own across the communal divide, they did not go on to conclude that there was a common interest. Communalism shaped and limited everything. Northern Ireland's society split vertically along communal lines in 1969 and after; and when the Protestant community split horizontally, it had no significance for class politics - it was an affair internal to the Protestant community. That is the basic tragedy of Northern Ireland politics in the last 15 years: that workers' disillusionment with the Orange bosses served only to build the Paisleyite Democratic Unionist Party.

The Catholics and their representatives - in the first place the socialists - could and did propose working-class unity. But they could not impose it on the Protestants, nor even get a dialogue with the Protestants. It is normally thus when an oppressed layer moves, frightening the upper layers.

For example, who can doubt that the US blacks would, given a chance, have chosen unity with the white workers in the '50s and '60s? Unity wasn't on offer on any terms other than the continued subordination of the blacks. The '60s black revolt, with riots and burning cities, followed, 'alienating' white workers. That was tragic as were the parallel events and relationships in Northern Ireland. But those are poor Marxists who would (or did) therefore conclude that our Job was to tell the oppressed patiently to bear their burden.

Many activists agreed that 'socialism was the only road', but there can be no socialism without the working class - in this case, crucially, the Protestant working class - so that road was not open.

The consequence for the radicalised Catholic youth was isolation from the main body of the working class and working-class movement - and impotence. The ground was prepared for the Provisionals' campaign by the impotence, and by the attempts of the socialists to avoid the national question.

As we saw, all the socialists, including the socialist Republicans, steered clear of the national question or renounced it (some of the Republicans hypocritically, tactically). That left the national question and 'anti - imperialism' entirely in the hands of the Provisional - initially, right - wing - Republicans.

Cyril Toman - the Marxist of '69, waving his Union Jack at Protestant workers so that they would let him talk to them about socialism, who became the Sinn Fein candidate of '83 - symbolises and sums up this tragic experience.

The Republican movement had come out of World War II, in which it had allied with Germany, pulverised and seemingly defunct. It made a principle of physical force and of boycotting the various parliaments (Dublin, Belfast, London) and apart from that was 'non - political'. In fact it reflected the rightwing cold - war atmosphere of Catholic Ireland in the '40s and '50s. It revived slowly in the post - war period, and in 1956 launched a military campaign of small guerrilla actions on the Border. This soon petered out and eventually, in 1962, a formal 'cease-fire' was declared.

Trying to learn from their experience, some of the leading activists turned 'left' and began to talk of using social agitation to gain support for 'the national struggle'. They drew on half - forgotten experiences of left-wing Republicanism in the '30s, when left - moving traditional Republicans met the right - moving Stalinised Communist Party of Ireland

and together they created a sort of populist Republicanism. The immediate task was to win national independence ('the Republic'; for the Stalinists, 'the bourgeois-democratic revolution'); then socialism would come at the next stage.

In the '60s, too, the leftward - moving Republicans met Stalinists and were influenced by them, in the first place by Dr Roy Johnstone, who went onto the Army Council.

One product of the Republicans' turn to social questions was that they became involved in the civil rights movement. They began to disarm the IRA, expelling dissidents, benefiting from the dropping-away of many traditional activists.

The events of August 1969 changed the direction of the IRA too. They were largely irrelevant during the fighting, the 'Chief of Staff' Goulding being reduced to making idle public threats. Militants were told that the problem was that the IRA had lent its guns to the Free Wales Army!

In December 1969 and January 1970 the Republican movement split. The break - aways were traditionalists. Many like David O'Connell, were veterans of what little action there had been in the '50s. Others, like Joe Cahill - sentenced to death but reprieved because of his age, while 19-year old Tom Williams was hanged, in 1942 - went back even further. They denounced the 'communism' of the mainstream Republicans, though they too called themselves socialists - democratic socialists. The Provisionals' prospects did not seem very bright: for example, J. Bowyer Bell, the author of a learned academic study of the IRA published in 1970, dismissed them as a moribund relic of the past who could not keep up with the development of the mainstream.

In fact the Provos grew with astonishing speed. They recruited rapidly from the disillusioned Catholic youth.

Fianna Fail money helped launch the Provos, but to explain the development of their movement as a result of ruling class divide-and-rule is self-evidently inadequate, and no more than a conspiracy theory of history. As well to explain the Russian Revolution as a German plot because the German general staff allowed Lenin to cross Germany in a sealed train. Fianna Fail wanted to split and stop the left-wing Republican movement. They did not want what the Provos very rapidly became.

Eamonn McCann has described the Provo's appeal like this. Whereas everyone talked about socialism and 'imperialism', but had nothing to suggest doing about it in the circumstances, the Provos could point to the British soldier standing at the local street corner and say: 'There, that's imperialism. Shoot it.'

The determined avoidance of the national question by the left and the official Republicans - who consigned it to the distant future, together with a socialism that had to wait on the Protestant workers - ensured that the national question,

which lay at the heart of the subordinate and oppressed position of the Catholics, was raised, when it inevitably forced its way to the front, in the Provos' initially right-wing version. The Provos could, of course, also draw on the Catholic-Republican culture - songs, history, ingrained loyalties - with which the Catholic community was saturated. In late '69 a staunch old-style Republican like ex-internee Sean Keenan seemed a respected anachronism: within a year or 18 months, people like that were the centre of a powerful movement which had taken in many of the radicalised youth eager to 'shoot imperialism'. One consequence of this was that the Provisional Republican movement would itself become radicalised, especially in Belfast and Derry - though its radicalism was within the limits of one community.

4. 1970 - 72: Growth of IRA and UDA. Direct rule

By early 1970 relations between the British Army and the Catholics had deteriorated badly. The sort of reforms the civil rights movement had called for had quickly been rushed through after August 1969. The B-Specials were disbanded, the RUC disarmed. But things had gone too far. These measures - especially the disbandment of the B-Specials - alarmed the Protestants but failed to satisfy the Catholics.

The army was a crude and brutal tool for police work. Balancing between the communities, it inevitably began to reflect the real balance of the Six County state - which favours the Protestants. The election of a Tory government in June 1970 replaced a Labour government which had learned to have some sensitivity towards the feelings of the Catholics with Tories whose parliamentary allies were the Unionists of Northern Ireland.

A major turning-point in Army/ Catholic relations came in July 1970. Protestants attacked a Catholic church in the Lower Falls and the Official IRA shot three of them dead. The Army, perhaps to placate Protestant anger and 'keep the balance' then declared a curfew on the Lower Falls and a systematic search of the area for arms. Bloody clashes followed with the Official IRA.

In early 1971 the Provisional IRA killed three British soldiers and things began to move towards a military-style confrontation. But it was still limited. The decisive turn came on August 9 1971, with the introduction of internment. Few IRA men were rounded up, but various political opponents of the Faulkner Stormont government were, like PD leader Michael Farrell. If they had wanted to give the allegiance of the Catholic community to the two IRAs, then Faulkner and Tory Prime Minister Edward Heath could not have made a better job of it. Now it became a full-scale Catholic insurrection, with the Provisional IRA gaining more support. Bombings and killings escalated enormously. So did the Protestant backlash.

The Protestant UDA was founded in late '71 and became a mass movement of perhaps 50,000 by mid - '72.

This phase ended in March 1972, when the Tory government decided to destroy the 52-year old sectarian structures of Northern Ireland and start again. Stormont was abolished. The IRA had gained a tremendous victory. Everything seemed to be in the melting pot - and it was. Quarter of a million Protestant workers struck in protest.

The Provos' military campaign deepened and widened the gap between Protestants and Catholics. It did not create it. In terms of the basic cause and effect, the Provos and their campaign were a product of the Catholic/Protestant division which had rendered impotent the Catholic radicals in 1969 and afterwards.

Everything was in the melting pot - but only within the given Northern Ireland framework. The Tories acted more vigorously and radically than Labour had, but they were even less inclined than Labour to face the fact that Northern Ireland was a failed entity, in a state of latent or incipient civil war - increasingly ungovernable.

In 1972 Protestant barricades went up throughout Belfast. Catholic barricades had gone up again in Belfast and Derry after 'Bloody Sunday' - January 30, when the British Army shot and killed 14 unarmed Catholics taking part in a banned Republican demonstration in Derry.

The Provos declared a cease-fire in mid - '72, and the mighty British government decided to negotiate with them. Republican and Loyalist prisoners were given special political prisoner status. Provisional IRA leaders - among them Gerry Adams, now MP for West Belfast - were flown to London for discussions. Nothing came of it at all. The British were willing to change the way Northern Ireland was run, but not to change Northern Ireland. The armed mass movement of the Protestants paralysed any impulses they may have had to make basic changes. They stuck to their commitment to maintain the Six County state. And that meant balancing between the communities.

This balancing led to a breakdown of the truce with the IRA. Many hundred of Catholics had been made homeless by sectarian intimidation, but when an attempt was made to re-house them in houses vacated by Protestants the Army intervened with a heavy hand to stop it and the Provisional IRA went back to the gun. An Official IRA cease-fire in the same period remained in being, and still does.

Northern Ireland had never been closer to open communal civil war than in mid - '72. Civil war didn't come. In stead there occurred a hurricane of sectarian assassinations, mostly of Catholics by Protestants, which continued through to 1974 and beyond. The British government placated the Protestants by forcibly taking down the Catholic barricades in July 1972. Tension eased. The war between the British Army and the Provisional IRA resumed fiercely. IRA bombs continued to blast the centres of Northern Ireland's cities

5. 1973-4: Britain's moves for reform shattered by the Protestants

Britain now moved energetically to re-erect a self-governing system in Northern Ireland, calling on the aid of the Southern Irish government. A series of talks, with Unionist and Catholic politicians and with the Southern Irish government, culminated in the 'Sunningdale Agreement' on a new system in Northern Ireland. The new system would have institutionalised power-sharing in the Six Counties and a loose and rather powerless 'Council of Ireland' would take account of Northern Ireland Catholics' desire for Irish unity. Britain promised a referendum to determine whether the Northern Ireland majority wanted Irish unity. (The referendum was held in March 1973: of course, the majority did not want unity.)

The old Unionist Party, for 50 years Northern Ireland's monolithic ruling party, had broken up in 1972. Now the Unionists fragmented further. The Paisleyites - now very much more than a fringe group - and William Craig's 'Vanguard' were marching and drilling and making blood-curdling threats while some of their followers were slaughtering individual Catholics at random. The Unionists divided into those willing to work the new system Britain wanted and those who were either against it or thought it could not be carried with the Protestant masses. On the Catholic side, the pro-power-sharing SDLP had the electoral support of the mass of Catholics: Sinn Fein was not allowed to stand in the elections for the new Assembly.

On 1 January 1974 the new power-sharing executive came into being. It was a coalition of a Unionist minority, led by Brian Faulkner, the SDLP; and some tiny parties like the non-sectarian liberal Unionists, Alliance, and the no less Unionist Northern Ireland Labour Party. The Paisleyites and other die-hard bigots were ghettoised, accounting for about one-third of the Assembly. They shouted, rioted and disrupted the work of the Assembly. To no avail. Though the Faulknerites were under tremendous pressure and had broken election pledges against power-sharing, the SDLP-Faulknerite alliance held and began to get a grip on Northern Ireland.

A dramatic shift had occurred, for the stable mainstay of this regime was the SDLP. Britain had shifted its weight heavily onto the middle-class Catholic party. The die-hard Orangemen appeared isolated and impotent. There was reason to think that massive government patronage and a vigorous reform policy - for which Britain had the resources and the will to pay - would gradually rally a sizeable Protestant support around the Faulknerites. The power-sharing executive seemed to have years of life ahead of it. The IRA was still active but it seemed to be in decline.

But now the British class struggle intervened. In February 1974 the British Tory government called an election on the issue, 'Who rules, the unions or the government?', hoping thereby to gain the political and moral authority they needed to defeat the British miners. Heath lost the election. In Northern Ireland what was lost was the entire government strategy.

The Westminster election took the die-hard Orange politicians out of the Stormont ghetto in which they had been confined, it forced Brian Faulkner's party to face the Orange electorate they had tricked in the Northern Ireland election six months before. The result was a catastrophe for power-sharing. Of 12 Northern Ireland Westminster seats, no less than 11 were won by opponents of power-sharing (the other was Gerry Fitt's). The moral authority of the power-sharing executive was undermined. It staggered on until May 1974, when a majority vote in favour of activating the Council of Ireland provision triggered a powerful general strike.

The Unionists had already used their industrial muscle on a number of occasions. In early 1971 thousands of Harland and Wolff shipyard workers had marched to demand that internment for suspected Republicans be introduced. In March 1972 a quarter of a million struck when Stormont was abolished. (To get an equivalent British figure you would have to multiply by either 60 or 40 - depending on whether you take the strikers as a proportion of the Protestant population or of the whole Six County population - to get 15 or 10 million!)

Now, in May 1974, there was a full-scale general strike. Intimidation by the UDA was used to get it going - but it soon became clear that it had real support. It was a revolutionary general strike - for utterly reactionary objectives. The strikers were against the power-sharing executive and the Council of Ireland and for a restoration of 'majority rule' in the Six Counties - that is, Protestant rule. The official Northern Ireland trade unions attempted to fight the reactionary strike, and, protected by the Army, organised a march back to work. Only a handful of people turned up, taking their lives in their hands to walk behind TUC secretary Len Murray and local trade union leaders. It was a fiasco. Nobody who knew the Northern Ireland labour movement would have expected anything else when the official unions came into conflict with their Protestant rank and file. The British Army was powerless and, maybe, the officers did not want to act against the strike. After two weeks the Faulknerites resigned and the power-sharing executive collapsed.

6. 1974-80: 'Sweating it out'

It was the decisive turning point for the period which opened with the abolition of the old Protestant home rule Parliament in March 1972. The British government had proved unable to face down the Protestants and had allowed its entire strategy of political reconstruction to be shattered. What now?

The Labour government refused to admit that this strategy was in ruins. It announced that there would be new elections for a Northern Ireland assembly. This time its function would be - to work out a political system for the province acceptable to both Catholics and Protestants on the basis of some sort of power-sharing.

Elections were duly held, and the Faulknerites, the moderate compromising Unionists willing to work the system Britain wanted, were massacred. There followed a full year of discussion, bargaining, demonstrating, posturing and manoeuvring in the Convention. Spectacular shifts took place, for example when William Craig - the man scapegoated by O'Neill for the batoning of peaceful demonstrators in October 1969, the founder of 'Vanguard' and associate of the Protestant paramilitaries - came out for a variant of power-sharing. He was immediately disowned by his supporters. No deal was possible. The canny politicians who might be willing to try didn't dare - and had they dared then they like Craig would have been repudiated.

The Protestants had won victory in May 1974 - and they wanted victory in the Convention. There was widespread fear in the Catholic community that the Protestant majority would organise some sort of political coup, declaring a new government and set a train of events in motion which would trigger sectarian civil war. For most of 1975 the Provisional IRA observed a cease-fire. Finally, early in 1976, the Convention sent a report to London which demanded majority rule, not power-sharing, and the British government dissolved the Convention.

The British government was stuck with direct rule. The only political structure that could be set up in Northern Ireland would correspond with the nature of Northern Ireland - with its in-built artificial Protestant majority. This put Britain in the absurd position of justifying the Northern Ireland entity and Partition in terms of defending the democratic rights of the Protestant majority while it was forced to deny the Protestant majority the exercise of its majority rights in that Northern Ireland unit!

But logic didn't come into it. The British government sought the line of least resistance and after the Orange general strike that meant leaning heavily against the Catholics. The IRA was badly affected by the truces of 1975 - but it was still a force to be reckoned with, and now it began to reorganise.

Britain's policy now was signalled early in 1976 when the Labour minister responsible for Northern Ireland, Roy Mason, announced that from now on, convicted Republican and Loyalist activists would no longer have special status or prison regime that they had had since 1972. This was the 'criminalisation' policy. Inevitably it bore down far more heavily on the Catholics than the Protestants.

At the same time the war against the IRA became an intensive war against the people of the Catholic ghettos of Derry and Belfast. Thousands of Catholic homes were repeatedly searched and wrecked by the British army. Mason's policy was to sit tight, beat down the Catholics, and make neither attempt nor pretence at any new political initiative Northern Ireland would be forced to 'sweat out' its sickness. For quite a while it seemed to be working. The IRA was in serious decline; the flesh fell off Protestant organisations like the UDA and they shrivelled into not much more than racketeering gangs. Bombings and killings became somewhat less frequent.

When in 1977 an attempt was made by Ian Paisley to get a new Orange general strike over 'security' it flopped. The majority of Protestant workers no longer felt under immediate and intense threat. They didn't respond and since not enough of them could be coerced, the second Orange 'general' strike was a fiasco. It had more to do with jockeying for position among Loyalist politician' than with anything else.

But the convulsions were not over - the processes were just hidden from view. The Provisional IRA reorganised itself on a tighter cell structure and geared itself towards what its strategists talked of as a 20 - year war. Developments were germinating in the prison camps and jails that would allow the IRA to gain an unprecedented position of political dominance in the Catholic community.

For the Republicans did not accept Mason's criminalisation policy. Those convicted after the new rules came into force in early 1976 refused to comply with prison regulations. They refused to wear prison uniform, wearing blankets instead. Mason's criminalisation policy opened one of the most terrible battles ever fought for their own dignity and political principles by political prisoners confronting a brutal and soulless prison system designed to degrade and demoralise them. Republican prisoners spent years 'on the blanket'. Some served out entire sentences and were released without ever wearing prison clothes. Slowly support built up outside' but it was never enough to have any effect.

7. 1980-85: The hunger strikes of 1980-81 and the Provos' turn to politics

The turning point came with the hunger strikes of 1980 and 1981. The hunger strike of 1980 was called off before anyone died, the Republicans thinking that they had been promised changes. They hadn't. A new hunger strike started in Spring 1981, led by Bobby Sands, officer commanding the Provisional IRA prisoners at Long Kesh. While on hunger strike Sands was elected MP for Fermanagh-S. Tyrone and it was Bobby Sands MP whom Mrs Thatcher allowed to starve to death in Long Kesh.

World-wide attention was now on Long Kesh. Support for the hunger strikers grew rapidly in the Northern Ireland Catholic community. It was a sign of the times that the SDLP did not dare stand against Sands and, by splitting the Catholic vote, deprive the Provisional IRA of a great propaganda boost. Sands was the first to die and nine others followed him. Like the execution of the 15 captured leaders of the 1916 rising, the slow and terrible deaths of the ten young Republicans in 1981 had a profound effect on Catholic Ireland.

As coffin after coffin came out of the gates of Long Kesh, the Provisionals gained massive support. They easily won the

by-election caused by Bobby Sands' death, in mid-1981. On the other side of the Northern Ireland divide, Protestants reacted with great hostility to the giant Catholic funeral marches and to the very successful propaganda campaign mounted by the Republicans and their supporters. Communal tensions became drum-tight.

The hunger strike ended in defeat. Would the support that the sacrifice of the hunger strikers had won for the Provisional IRA survive the end of the hunger strikes? They had had such support before. They had never been able to consolidate it or put it to any use. By now, however, they had learned some important lessons. Things had changed in the Republican movement.

The right-wing Provisional IRA had been steadily radicalised throughout the 1970s. The working-class Republicans in Belfast and Derry were always more radical than the typical petty-bourgeois Sinn Fein supporters in the South. Steadily their influence grew. They talked of socialism with some conviction - though, unfortunately, without much clear definition, and, worse, as if it could be an affair of the Catholic community alone. One 'lesson' the left-wing Republicans in the Northern cities learned in the '70s was to give up on the Protestant workers. Side by side with their radicalisation went a more and more clear sectarianism - though in implication rather than intention - towards the Protestants.

Arguably much that they did was always sectarian. But the old guard paid at least lip service to the ideas and goals of traditional Irish Republicanism, which proudly insisted that the whole people of Ireland were the Irish nation, whatever their origins or creed. The 1972 Provisional IRA policy for a federal Ireland with a nine county Ulster - adopted when it looked like they would soon win - was preposterous in some of its details but it contained the core idea of conciliating the Protestants. The most clear-cut expression of the sectarianism entwined with the radicalisation of the Northern Provisionals was their hostility to 'federalism', which they removed from Sinn Fein's constitution in 1981. The Protestants must either be conciliated, or you try to conquer them: and without federalism and the possibility of autonomy, all that the Provos now offered the Protestants was incorporation as a minority in a heavily Catholic Ireland.

The dilemma of the Provisionals parallels that of the Republican socialists in 1968-70: they are a one - community movement, cut off from the majority of the Northern Ireland working class. They know it is the opposition of the Protestants - and specifically of the Protestant working class - that mainly stands in their way. Whereas the socialists of 1968-70 abjured, ignored or renounced the national question, the Provo radicals start from it and now they have an ill-defined socialism which abjures the majority of the Northern Ireland working class. The Provos of today, like the socialists of 1968-70, are therefore impotent to change Northern Ireland, or Ireland.

But the Provisionals are a powerful force in the Catholic community. They learned from the hunger strike the value of politics, and have systematically turned to electioneering. Since 1982 they have consolidated a seemingly stable Catholic vote of not too far short of 40%. They define their new strategy as a combination of the ballot box and the gun - 'the Armalite in one hand, a ballot paper in the other'. They aim to make politics, and social agitation, serve the armed struggle. The SDLP was helped mightily by British favour in the early and mid - '70s, it has wasted and cracked in the political wilderness since 1976, shedding its odd socialists and Protestants, to become little more than a green nationalist party.

What is happening politically in the Catholic community now parallels the political polarisation and differentiation that occurred within Unionism at the beginning of the '70s. The Provos' enforced or voluntary abstention from political action slowed down that process in the Catholic community and allowed the SDLP a virtual monopoly of Catholic politics for a time. No more - the weakening of the SDLP, put out to starve in the no - politics wilderness after 1976, and the Provisionals' own turn to politics, has put an end to that. It is unlikely, however, that the Provisionals will politically annihilate the SDLP, and there is probably still much opposition inside the Provisionals to 'politics'.

8. Conclusion

Overall, the results of the years of turmoil are not encouraging from a working-class point of view. A chasm deep and wide divides the Protestant and Catholic workers. Bitterness which will in the best circumstances take a generation or two to heal has built up.

Despite severe crises in the South since the '60s industry there has grown relatively fast, so that the social contrast between North and South - which at the time of Partition was a stark division between a relatively advanced industrial North and an impoverished mostly agricultural South - is greatly diminished. All this, however, has not generated a common feeling of working-class identity across the communal divide. It would be a miracle if it did.

Northern Ireland continues in a state of latent civil war. The British Army keeps the communities apart, but within a strategic British framework of maintaining the artificial sectarian state which keeps the Catholic - Protestant antagonism at near boiling point. Fundamentally the British Army is not a peace - keeper, but the military scaffolding erected to shore up the Six County state when it began to collapse into sectarian chaos in 1969 - in other ~ words, to shore up the framework for the chronic communal antagonism. It keeps the communities apart by beating down the rebellious Catholics.

Britain's policy of holding the ring in Northern Ireland, tinkering occasionally with the political structures and beating down the Catholics as the staple activity, is stoking the fires of latent civil war. It maintains just below boiling point, the

conditions that could well develop into a Lebanese-style civil war in Northern Ireland, with mass communal slaughter and bloody repartition at the end of it. The only way out of this situation is to recast the entire framework. The sectarian Northern Ireland state must be replaced by a broader framework within which the Catholic and Protestant communities can learn to live together. The Labour Party should commit itself to abolish the Six County sectarian state and to work for a federal united Ireland that will offer the fullest rights, guarantees and autonomy for the Protestant population that are compatible with the rights of the majority of the Irish people.