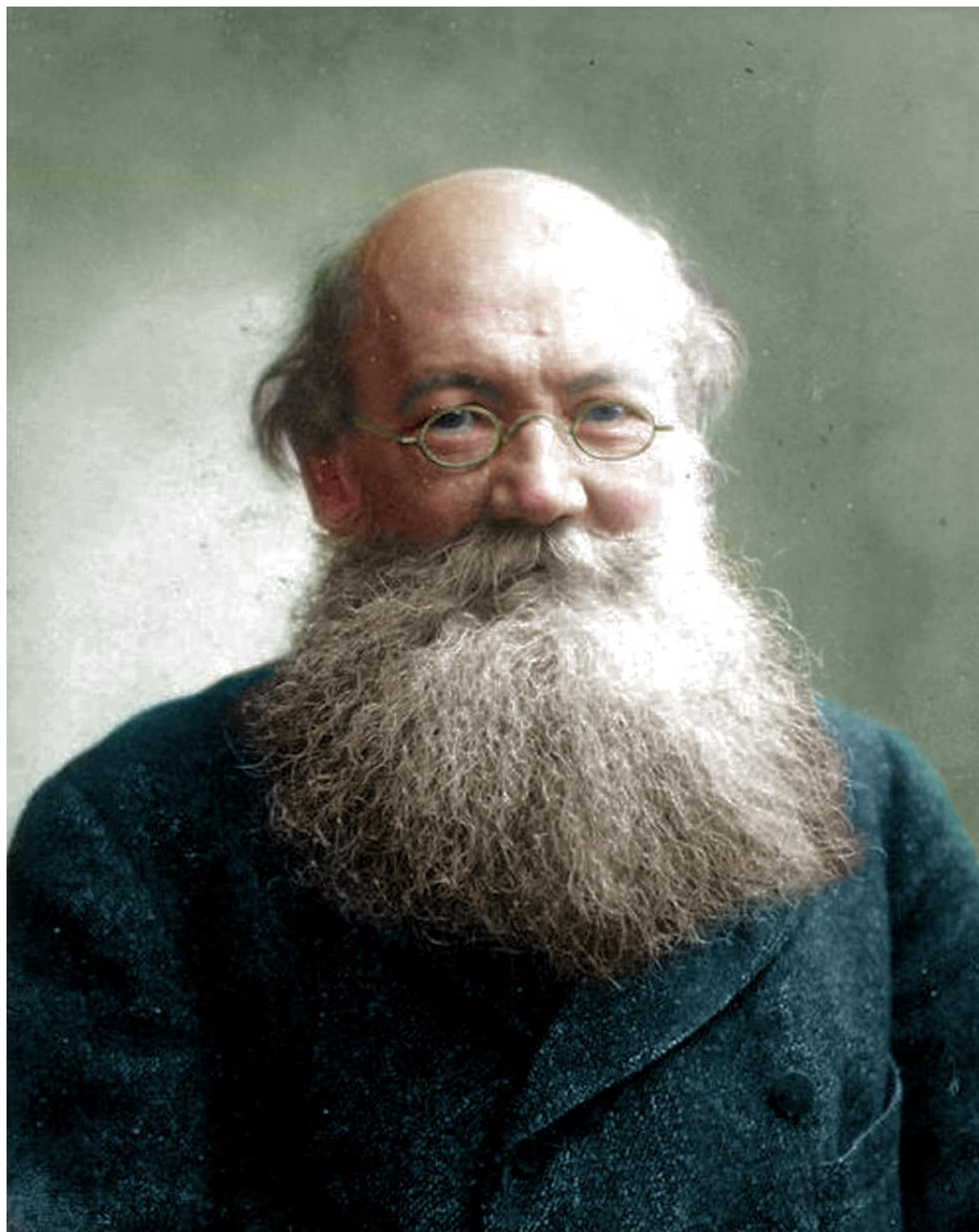


Black Flag

Anarchist Review



Peter Kropotkin: 1842-1921

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Editorial

The first issue of the relaunched *Black Flag* in 2021 marked the 100th anniversary of the death of Kropotkin with an article on his life by Robert Graham and the publishing of eight newly translated or rare articles by him. Now, to mark the 180th anniversary of the birth of one of anarchism’s greatest theorists, we dedicate a special issue to him and his ideas. With recent new editions of *Modern Science and Anarchy* and *Words of a Rebel*, our publishing newly translated or rare articles and pamphlets on a range of topics – anarchism, class war, Marxism, war, revolution, eugenics, amongst others – will help modern revolutionaries better understand his ideas and their importance.

Kropotkin’s legacy was undoubted harmed by his wrong position during the First World War but far more by his being championed by reformist anarchists after the Second World War. Rather than being remembered as the revolutionary class struggle anarchist he was, we were subjected to a sanitised account of a reformist, quasi-pacifist “anarcho-Santa” by the likes of George Woodcock and others associated with *Freedom*.

We start, however, with evaluations of Kropotkin’s ideas by Rudolf Rocker, Camillo Berneri, Marie Goldsmith, Errico Malatesta and Gaston Level. It should be noted that Berneri’s critique – better known as *Peter Kropotkin: His Federalist Ideas* – is translated in full (previously ones amounted to around three-quarters of the Italian original). Likewise, while Malatesta’s account of Kropotkin is well-known, Leval’s reply is less so and is of note. We hope this shows our special issue is not motivated by hagiography but rather by an awareness of the need to learn from his ideas rather than mechanically repeat or apply them today – as Kropotkin himself would have hoped, we are sure.

Then we move onto Kropotkin’s own writings, which we have grouped together by themes – On Anarchism, Class War, Marxism, Revolution, Other Libertarians, Eugenics, War – before ending with an interview and letters as well as prefaces to his most famous anarchist work, *The Conquest of Bread*. These are a combination of rare English-language texts and new translations, works which will hopefully help increase our understanding of Kropotkin’s ideas and show why he is still important and relevant today, 180 years after his birth.

Then there is a contribution to completing Kropotkin’s bibliography and why this is important to understanding his ideas and contribution to anarchism. We end with Wayne Price’s critique of those who have sought to defend Kropotkin’s infamous rallying to the Allied side during the imperialist slaughter of the First World War.

We should note that we will be publishing more translations of Kropotkin’s writings in future issues of *Black Flag*, for example when we discuss anarchism and the general strike in the next issue.

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

blackflagmag@yahoo.co.uk

On Kropotkin

Peter Kropotkin joined the anarchist movement in 1872 and remained a significant member of it until his death in 1921 (bar the period when he supported the allies during World War I, which saw his influence disappear). Unsurprisingly, other anarchists wished to evaluate the impact of his ideas on the movement and anarchist theory. Here we present a few of these evaluations

First, we present Rudolf Rocker's summation of his ideas, written for the album published to mark Kropotkin's funeral by Russian anarcho-syndicalists. This presents an excellent overview of his ideas and their lasting importance.

Second, we include a complete translation of Camilo Berneri's famous essay on Kropotkin, better known as *Peter Kropotkin: His Federalist Ideas*. Translated into English in May 1942 by Freedom Press, it is an unsurpassed account and critical discussion of a key aspect of Kropotkin's ideas and, unsurprisingly, has been much reprinted (the last being a slightly more complete version in *The Raven: Anarchist Quarterly* No. 31 (Autumn 1995). We have included the missing quarter of the text of that translation as well as using Berneri's original title.

Third, there is an article by Marie Goldsmith (1871-1933), pseudonyms M. Korn or M. Isidine, who was a Russian anarchist and biologist who spent most of her life in France. She was a close friend and colleague to Kropotkin and translated many of his publications between French and Russian during their lifetime. Their correspondences even reveal that there were plans for Goldsmith to help him assemble second volumes of both *Mutual Aid* and *Ethics*. This makes her well-placed to summarise his libertarian communist ideas. While well known in the movement during her lifetime, she has been sadly overlooked since her untimely passing. Goldsmith's life and work are now the subject of a research project meant to bring her scientific and anarchist writing into the twenty-first century (for more details: <https://mariegoldsmith.uk/>).

We are grateful for the comrades of this project for supplying this translation and we hope they will provide more in a future issue.

Fourth, there is Errico Malatesta's justly famous recollections of his old friend and college, written in 1931 to mark Kropotkin's death. Living in exile with the Russian in London for many years, Malatesta was well-placed to evaluate him and his influence on the anarchist movement and while some of his comments may be open to debate, it is undoubtedly the case that his analysis does highlight certain limitations in Kropotkin's anarchism.

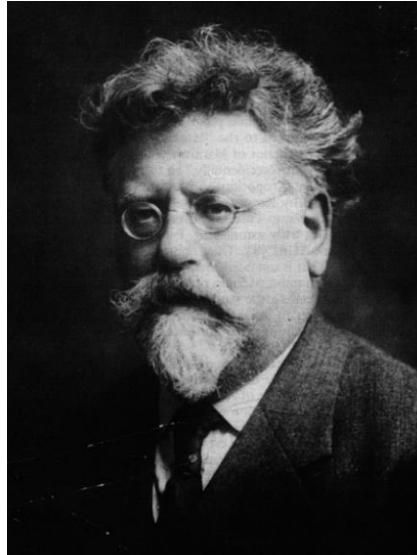
We end with Gaston Level's critique of Malatesta's recollections of Kropotkin. This somewhat angry – and at times unjust – polemic is a necessary supplement to Malatesta's critique as it shows why so many comrades hold Kropotkin in very high esteem as both an anarchist thinker and as a scientist.

Introduction

Rudolf Rocker

Funeral of P.A. Kropotkin in Moscow, February 13, 1921 : album (Berlin: All-Russian Confederation of Anarcho-Syndicalists, 1922)

Among the contemporary thinkers who have fertilized the theories of the socialist movement during the last 40 years, Peter Kropotkin was one of the few who helped us in the acquirement of a deeper insight into the entire socialist world of ideas, and who opened new perspectives to our understanding. His grand philosophy of Mutual Aid which is the keynote to his whole teaching, and which captivates our reason by its irresistible appeal, is really the very essence of the entire socialist “Weltanschauung”. And that which gives to this conception of social life its lasting significance, is the fact that it is not the speculative product of a scientist, out of touch with the practical side of life, but the result of concrete scientific research and exhaustive historical studies; and as such it must be rated. Kropotkin’s enlightened view of the development of the manifestations of social life was a splendid refutation of the one-sided and narrow interpretation of Darwin’s thesis regarding the “Struggle for Existence”, which for some tens of years was propounded by the greatest authorities of modern natural sciences – representing this struggle as not only taking place between the various species, but also as an uninterrupted conflict within each single one, in the course of which the “stronger” survive, and the “weaker” perish. This interpretation by the exponents of the so-called Social Darwinism, at whose head figured the English savant T.H. Huxley, gave the possibility for the sombre doctrines of Malthus about the Table of Life not being served for all, to acquire new glory which was supposed to rest on scientific foundation. And here came Kropotkin, and showed us, by means of an inexhaustible collection of data, that this conception of Nature was only a grotesque caricature of the real manifestations of life; and that besides this brutal form of the struggle for existence, upon which so



Rudolf Rocker (1873-1958)

many followers of Darwin laid such special stress, there was also another form – that of social unity and co-operation among the weaker species which finds its practical expression in mutual aid. But this second form of the struggle for existence proves to be much more effective for the life of the individual as well as that of the community, compared with the brutal war of the strong against the weak. This is proved by the significant retrogression and extinction of those species living isolated and attempting to exist merely by means of their

physical or psychological superiority.

Most distinctly is this seen in the history of human development. In each special phase of this development we meet with many thousands of social institutions and customs which owe their origin to the feeling for mutual solidarity, all finding their common root in the general interest of the community. In the clan organisations of the primitive peoples and in the *Village Communities* of the barbarians, in the art and craft guilds of the free cities of the Middle Ages, as well as in the innumerable organizations of our own time, the spirit of mutual aid works and creates, and shows itself everywhere as the most powerful factor of every social and cultural development. Not man was the creator of society, but society and the instinct for sociability were his heritage, transmitted to him by those species whose womb gave rise to his birth, and which existed prior to his becoming man. And this spirit of sociability which has become intuitive in the broad masses, spurs on the initiative and the creative activities of the people.

Thus does Kropotkin explain the origin and development of moral sentiments in Man. Neither the famous “Categorical Imperative” propounded by Kant, nor the sonorous phraseology of the great amoralist Nietzsche, which does not deceive one as

to its inner hollowness in respect of the brilliant “Beyond good and evil” theory, were able to give him any definite elucidation here. On the basis of concrete scientific investigation, Kropotkin recognised the ethical sentiments of Man as the natural outcome of his social life, and as the expression of mutual sympathy which ultimately found its expression in the customs and habits of the people. This heritage, transmitted from primeval times in the form of social instincts and customs, is the most valuable possession of Man, forming as it does the real basis of every progressive development. In this sense, Socialism is not a lofty utopia for Kropotkin, but the most perfected expression of that species of mutual aid which is the certain, definite tendency of human development.



Kropotkin's funeral procession in Moscow

Kropotkin's Socialism is revealed to us, as the result of the creative capacity in the life of the people, developing from base to summit; like a plant beginning at the root and ultimately progressing to bud and fruit. It is impossible to dictate this capacity at will, nor is it possible to call it into life artificially, by government-made laws and decrees. Every such attempt carries with it the germ of its own destruction, as it must unfailingly lead to State Capitalism – the worst form of all exploitation.

The uninterrupted conflict between Authority and Freedom, between state-slavery and free unions, between government and administration, between organized force and mutual understanding, which are conspicuous throughout human history, is only a manifestation of two different tendencies in society which are always antagonistic to each other. The first of these, which embodies the brutal form of the struggle for existence, is naturally antisocial; it always aims at the subjugation and exploitation of the broad masses, in favour of a privileged minority. It infallibly appears in the guise of public power and has always been a hindrance to every kind of social progress. The

second tendency is the outcome of the people's social instincts and develops their desire for activity and their creative initiative. In thousands of public institutions and unions is its favourable influence upon culture to be seen.

Kropotkin's socialism is a kind of synthesis in which the longing for personal freedom and social equality unite. Socialism will be free or it will not be at all. Together with the exploitation of Man by Man, the domination of Man over Man must disappear; together with the monopoly of property, must also vanish the monopoly of power. Not the conquest of the State but its elimination is the great political aim of Socialism. In place of the centralized machinery of power must come the free federation of autonomous communities; in place of legal force,

free agreement and mutual understanding. Kropotkin sees the tendencies towards this development in the many forms of free cooperation in every stratum of social life, which solely owe their existence to generally felt requirements and the free initiative of Man.

Kropotkin recognizes the same signs of development in the domain of public economy, and his ideas laid down in his “Fields, Factories and Workshops”, must be regarded as pioneer works in this direction. Most social thinkers, during the first half of last century, were hypnotised by the immense progress of industry and technique in all spheres of industrial production. It is therefore not surprising that they directed their chief attention to industry, and neglected the agricultural side of the problem. The originators of Political Economy were likewise dazzled by the result of this latest form of human production and saw therein the iron foundations of economical development, with unbounded possibilities and perspectives. And so great was the influence of their teachings, that a large number of socialist thinkers accepted their ideas, and imagined the modern subdivision of

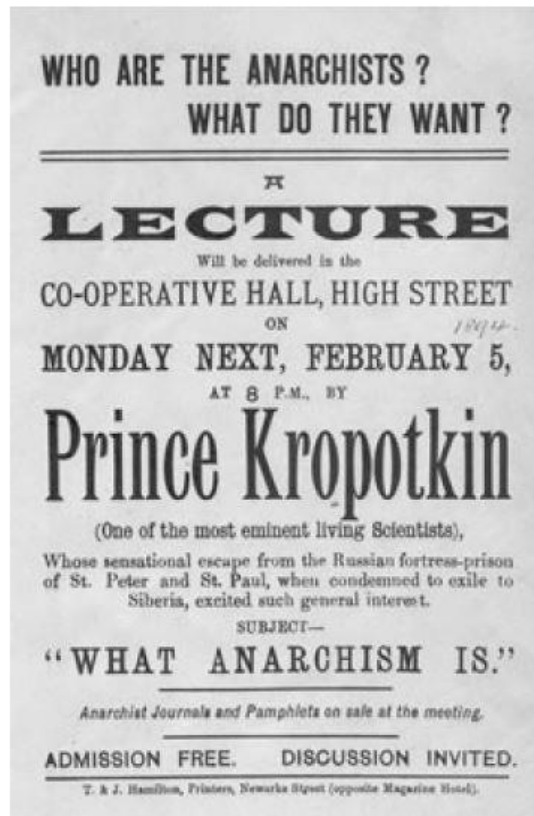
labour, and the centralization of industry to be the indispensable condition for the realization of Socialism.

Kropotkin emphatically refuted the theory of so-called subdivision of labour, and showed that it in no way increases the possibilities for productive output, but on the contrary, is a direct hindrance. By forgetting that production is in no case the purpose of our life, but only a means whereby to make life more agreeable, it was natural to arrive at the conclusion that Man existed for the sake of production, and not production for the sake of Man. In this sense, the subdivision of labour was a very important factor for the capitalist system of exploitation, but by no means for Socialism, which must necessarily express a view in direct opposition to the former. Kropotkin therefore advocates the working unity, the many-sided, and where possible, the varying employment of the people, as the only basis for Socialism. On the strength of an enormous quantity of concrete facts, he shows centralization of industry to have been only a passing stage in our economic life; and that the very perfecting of technique, and the progressive adaptation of productive work to scientific foundations, lead to a continually increasing decentralization of industry. The desire for individual independence which has to-day taken hold of all countries, accelerates this process in an unthought-of way; thereby giving the economic development of our times a certain trend, which becomes more distinct as it is freed from manifestations of a secondary nature. But the unity of work demands also a rational balancing of industry and agriculture, and this Kropotkin sketches on broad lines, aided by a great quantity of material, in an attempt to solve practically this most difficult of all problems. For this purpose a new kind of education would be necessary, wherein the artificial boundaries set between brain and manual work are entirely eliminated and the aim will be the universality of individual knowledge

and capacity. We are in need of an education which does not again specialize, but which is able to unite our knowledge, enabling us to bridge the gulfs between its various domains by means of large synthesis. Only in this way can Man be liberated from the yoke of uniformity and mental stagnation, and be made conscious of his personality by the development and strengthening of that which constitutes his individuality. Not centralisation, but decentralisation; not subdivision of labour, but unity of labour will become the watchword of the future. This is the direction of the path to Socialism.

Kropotkin points out to us the germs of this new development. He shows that at the present stage of our technical and scientific progress, how easy it would be to guarantee the relative well-being of each member of society. And this knowledge leads him to negate all estimates of the individual share of the general labour results, as these can never be just; and also to condemn the wage-system in every form. Anarchy and Communism are the two cornerstones of his Socialism. The means for their achievement – the Social Revolution. And as he expects all social upheavals only from the depths of the people, he lays such great import on the economic unions and the contemporary labour movement, for therein does he see the true bearer of social regeneration.

What the general Socialist Movement has lost in Kropotkin is not to be estimated. This loss is the greater, as there is not one among the present generation capable of filling his place adequately. Just in our time when an old civilization is hastening to its end, and we already perceive the first faint signs of a new social order; just at this period, when on the two fronts of the Socialist World the watchwords “State Capitalism” and “Free Socialism” are resounding upon our ears, with more clarity than ever before; just to-day, the name of Kropotkin comes to us as a symbol of the time to be, when we shall be liberated from the curse of thralldom and exploitation, and advance to the new horizon of a freer life.



1894

A Russian Federalist: Peter Kropotkin

Camillo Berneri

Un federalista Russo: Pietro Kropotkine (Rome, 1925)

One of the most interesting aspects of Kropotkin's political thought is federalism, something which constantly recurs in his writings and forms one of the foundations of his anarchist ideology. Although Kropotkin's federalism is not a systematic theory and cannot be clearly differentiated from the federalism of Proudhon and Bakunin, it has various characteristics which make its study of interest.

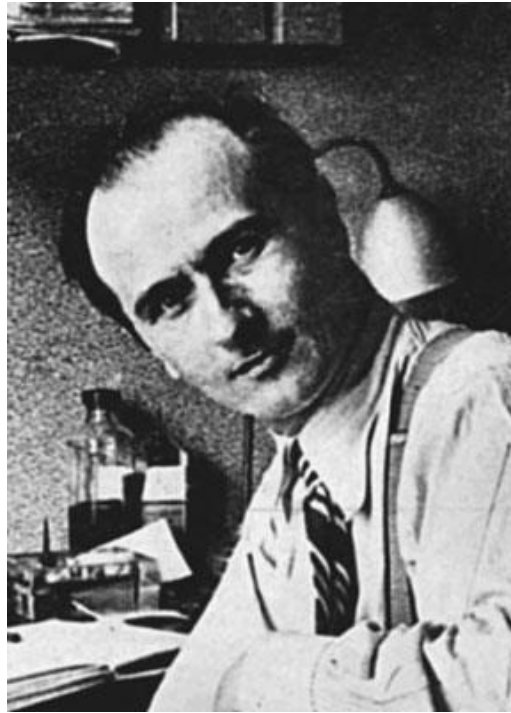
This study requires a biographical excursus to illuminate for us the genesis of Kropotkin's federalist thought in relation to the surroundings in which this thought was formed and affirmed. An Italian philosopher writing about Kropotkin rightly remarks: "We will never understand the inner spirit of the anarchist movement if we do not consider it historically as a radical and violent reaction against the profound transformation undergone during the nineteenth century by the institution of the State." (A. Tilgher, "A Philosopher of Anarchism", in *Il Tempo*, Rome, 2 July 1921)

Kropotkin, anarchist-prince, is, in fact, the best example of this assertion.

I. Experiences

Kropotkin's clear and detailed autobiography (*Memoirs of a Revolutionist*) makes it possible for us to follow step by step the different stages in the formation of his federalist thought.

At the age of nineteen, when he was an officer in the Cossacks, he went to Transbaikalia where he took a passionate interest in the great reforms started by the government in 1862 and entrusted to



Camillo Berneri (1897-1937)

the Higher Administration of Siberia. As secretary to government committees, in contact with the best of the officials, he began to study the various projects of municipal administration but he soon saw that all the reform efforts were hampered by the District Chiefs, protected by the Governors General who, in their turn, were subject to the orders and influences of the central government. Administrative life revealed to him absurd systems and methods every day, so that given the impossibility of achieving any reforms in 1863 he took part in an expedition along the Amur.

During a storm forty barges were sunk with the loss of 2,000 tons of flour. This catastrophe gave him the opportunity of getting to know the central bureaucracy even better. The authorities refused to believe in the disaster and these same officials for Siberian Affairs in Petrograd revealed a complete ignorance of all that concerned their particular... specialty. A high functionary said to him: "But my dear fellow, how would it be possible for 40 barges to be destroyed on the Neva without anyone rushing to save them!" When Kropotkin replied that the Amur is four times as big as the Neva, the astonished functionary asked: "Is it really as big as that?" – and passed on, annoyed, to talk of some frivolity.¹

Kropotkin left for Manchuria more than ever distrustful of the central administration. He certainly thought of the Petrograd bureaucrats when at the Chinese frontier an official of the Celestial Empire refused his passport because it consisted of a modest sheet of stamped paper whilst showing the greatest respect for an old copy

¹ *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1989), 183-4. (*Black Flag*)

of the bulky *Moscow Gazette* which was shown to him as a passport.¹

Having become an attaché to the “Governor General for Cossack affairs”, Kropotkin made a thorough investigation into the economic conditions of the Ussuri Cossacks. On his return to Petrograd he was congratulated, promoted and honoured. But his proposals were not put into practice because of the officials who stole money and continued to flog the peasants, instead of providing them with cattle and alleviating, by prompt and suitable assistance, the ravages of famine. “And thus it went on,” says Kropotkin, “in all directions, beginning with the winter palace at St. Petersburg and ending with the Ussuri and Kamchatka. The higher administration of Siberia was influenced by excellent intentions, and I can only repeat that, everything considered, it was far better, far more enlightened, and far more interested in the welfare of the people than the administration of any other province in Russia. But it was an administration – a branch of the tree which had its roots at St. Petersburg – and that was enough to paralyse all its excellent intentions, enough to make it interfere with and kill all the beginnings of local life and progress. Whatever was started for the good of the country by local men was looked at with distrust, and was immediately paralysed by hosts of difficulties which came, not so much from the bad intentions of the administrators, but simply from the fact that these officials belonged to a pyramidal, centralised administration. The very fact of their belonging to a government which radiated from a distant capital caused them to look upon everything from the point of view of functionaries of the government, who think first of all about what their superiors will say, and how this or that will appear in the administrative machinery. The interests of the country are a secondary matter.”²

Alongside knowledge of the inefficiency of centralised administration bodies, the observations on the *free agreement between those with common interests* which he made throughout his long journeys in Siberia and Manchuria also contributed to the formation of his anarchist personality. He saw clearly the role played by the anonymous masses in great historic events and in the development of civilisation in general. This appreciation, as we shall see later, then informed

all of his sociological criticism and was the foundation of his method of historical research.

When he came to the West, to Switzerland, his libertarian and federalist tendencies were greatly influenced by contact with the Jura Federation, whose militants were imbued with Bakunin’s libertarian federalism. As early as 1872 that organisation had assumed a distinctly autonomist and anti-authoritarian direction (Kropotkin saw in that experience “the first spark of anarchism”³). It should be noted that the highly centralised, it can be said tyrannical, domination of the International’s General Council had contributed greatly to the development of these tendencies.

Returning to Russia and contacting groups of left-wing intellectuals, Kropotkin notes again the uselessness of the efforts made by those who tried to regenerate the country through the *zemstvos*, or district and provincial councils. The idea that Russia needed to be a federative regime, agitated for by the Decembrists since the beginning of the XIX century (around 1825), was taken up by members of Pétrachewsky’s socialist group (1848), by Cernycewsky between 1855 and 1861 and finally by Bakunin and the populists of the 1870-80 period. The example of the United States of America and certain local institutions and traditions also led officials to devise administrative organisations based on the principle of autonomy. For example: Speransky’s administrative project for Siberia included councils comprising of representatives from all departments whose task would have been to manage all local affairs.

Such work was suspected as being separatist, of tending to create a State within the State, and was persecuted to such an extent that any attempt to improve the spheres of administration, health and education was a miserable failure, bringing with it the ruin of entire groups elected to the *zemstvos*.

Despite the disappointments suffered during his previous administrative activities, before he left Russia Kropotkin set to work once more, and having inherited his father’s property at Tambov, he went to live there and devoted all his energies to the local *zemstvo*. But he realised once again the impossibility of setting up schools, co-operatives, or model-farms without creating new victims of the central government.

¹ *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*, 192-3. (*Black Flag*)

² *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*, 199. (*Black Flag*)

³ *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*, 262. (*Black Flag*)

II. Critique

From the articles that Kropotkin published between 1879 and 1882 in *Le Révolté* of Geneva, it is clear that the administrative life of the Western States

only provided him with new material for anti-State criticism and confirmed him still further in his federalist and libertarian ideas. Wherever there is centralisation he found a powerful bureaucracy, “an army of officials, spiders with greedy little fingers, who know the world only through the dirty windows of their offices, or by their paperwork of grimoire-like absurdity – a black band with only one religion, that of money – one concern, that of clinging to any party, black, purple, or white, so that it guarantees a maximum of income for a minimum of work.”¹

(*Words of a Rebel*) And centralisation, which leads to extensive bureaucratism, appeared to Kropotkin as one of the characteristics of the representative system. He saw in parliamentarism the triumph of incompetence, and so he speaks with picturesque irony of the administrative and legislative activities of the representative who is not called upon to judge and arrange matters on which he has a particular competency and relates to his own constituency, but is asked to give an opinion, to vote on the varied and infinite series of questions that arise in that mammoth machine that is the centralised State:

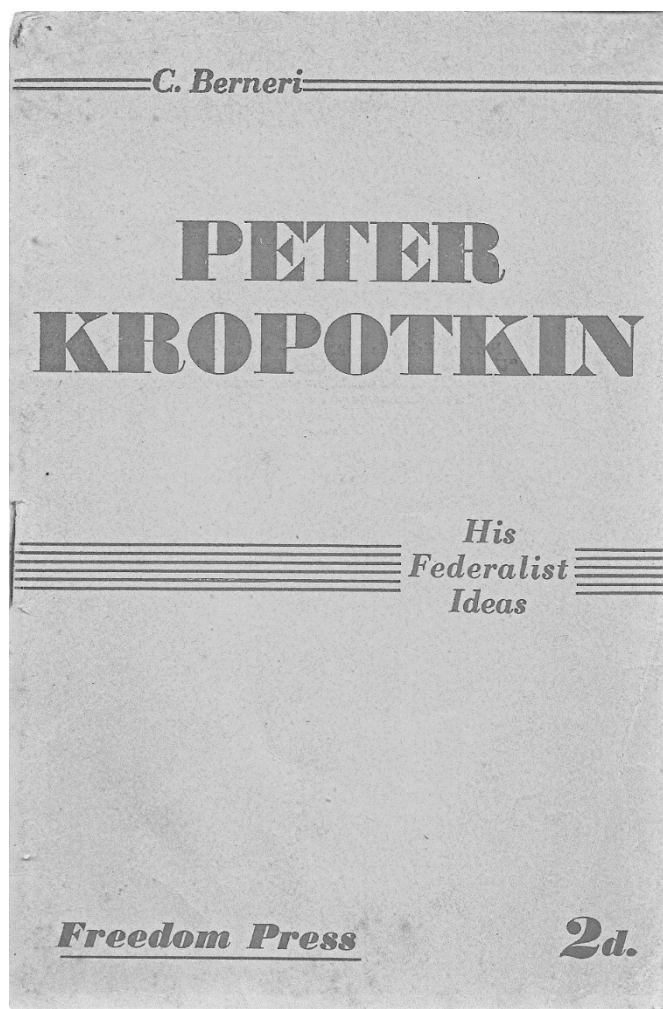
He will have to vote on the tax on dogs and the reform of university education, without ever having set foot in a university nor knowing what a field dog is. He will have to decide upon the advantages of the Gras rifle and to choose the location for the

State’s stud farm. He will vote on phylloxera, guano, tobacco, primary education and the sanitation of towns; on Cochinchina and Guiana, on chimney flues and on the Paris Observatory. He, who has

only seen soldiers on parade, shall allot army corps, and without ever having seen an Arab, he will write and rewrite the Muslim land law in Algeria. He will vote on military headwear according to the tastes of his spouse. He will protect sugar and sacrifice wheat. He shall kill the vineyard believing he is protecting it; and he will vote for reforestation against pastureland and to protect pasture against the forest. He will protect the banks. He will kill such-and-such canal for a railway without being entirely sure in which part of France either of them is. He will add new articles to the Penal Code without ever having read it. An omniscient and omnipotent Proteus, today a soldier, tomorrow a pig

farmer, a banker, an academic, a sewer-cleaner, a doctor, an astronomer, a pharmacist, a tanner or merchant, according to the agenda of the Chamber, he will never hesitate. Accustomed in his role as a lawyer, journalist, or public orator to talk on what he knows nothing about, he will vote on all of these issues, with the sole difference that in his newspaper he amused the janitor at his stove, and at the court he awoke drowsy judges and jurors with his voice, while in the Chamber his opinion will become law for thirty or forty million people.² (*Words of a Rebel*)

But the western world, together with the administrative absurdities of the centralised representative regimes, revealed to him that immense strength, more extensive and complex,



¹ “The Breakdown of the State”, *Words of a Rebel* (Oakland: PM Press, 2022), 9. (*Black Flag*)

² “Representative Government”, *Words of a Rebel*, 118. (*Black Flag*)

observed in the Russian *Mir*: that of the free associations which “are spreading and are already starting to cover every branch of human activity,” and which made him declare that “the future lies in the free grouping of interested parties, and not in governmental centralisation”.¹ (*Words of a Rebel; The Conquest of Bread; Mutual Aid*: chapters VII-VIII and the conclusion). Since about 1840 the *Mir* had served as a starting point for Russian social thought inspired by collectivist views, while liberal thought gravitated towards the *zemstvo*. Formed between the XVI and XVIII centuries, as a reaction to taxation and noble power, the *Mir* had as essential features the collective responsibility for gathering taxes and the regular distribution of land. At the time of the 1861 reform, the *Mir* also acquired a judicial character. At the beginning of the XX century, the rural commune (*Mir*) still comprised eight-tenths of the peasants’ land, but the Stolipin reform (decree of 22 November 1907 and law of 27 June 1910) and the conditions of capitalist development in Russia started its disintegration. In 1881, at the request of Vera Zasulich, Marx had looked into the issue of the possibility of a direct passage from the *Mir* to a “higher communist form of land ownership” and had come to the conclusion that “this commune is the fulcrum of social regeneration in Russia; but in order that it may function as such, it would first be necessary to eliminate the deleterious influences which are assailing it from all sides, and then ensure for it the normal conditions for spontaneous development.”²

Especially the years spent in England, a country where the independence of the people and the enormous development of free initiative could not fail to deeply strike the foreigner coming from Slav or Latin countries, caused Kropotkin to appreciate, sometimes excessively, the value of associations.

To his direct knowledge of the Western world, Kropotkin added a new direction to his studies. A geographer in Russia, he became an ardent historian in Britain. He wanted to understand the State and knew that to do so “there is only one way of really understanding the State: it is to study its historic development”.³ He discovered with enthusiasm that the general tendency of science is that “of studying nature not through its great results and large sums, but rather through individual phenomena and separate elements.”⁴ History also ceased to be the history of dynasties, becoming the history of peoples. So much the better for the historical method, but also so much the better for the federalist conception, for it will become obvious that great renewals have not taken place in courts and parliaments, but in the cities and in the countryside. Devoting himself to historical studies, Kropotkin saw in the excessive centralisation of the Roman Empire the cause of its collapse, and in the era of the [Medieval] Communes the renaissance of the western world. “It is precisely in the liberation of the Communes and in the uprisings of peoples and Communes against States that we find the most beautiful pages in history. Of course, in transporting us into the past, it would not be to a Louis XI, to a Louis XV, or to a Catherine II that we would look: rather it would be to the communes or republics of Amalfi and Florence, to those of Toulouse and Laon, to Liege and Courtray, Augsburg and Nuremburg, to Pskov and Novgorod.”⁵

In drawing examples from mediaeval society, Kropotkin fell into various errors of interpretation, especially in the lecture on *The State: Its Historic Role*,⁶ due more than anything else to the fact that the texts that he consulted (such as the writings of Sismondi) were not so advanced as the historical studies of today. For example: E. Zoccoli’s criticism of Kropotkin (*L’Anarchia*, Torino, Bocca, 1906, pp. 494-495) regarding his interpretation of

¹ “Representative Government”, *Words of a Rebel*, 127. (*Black Flag*)

² “Marx to Vera Zasulich, 8 March 1881”, *Collected Works* 26: 72. The expression “higher communist forms of land ownership” is a paraphrase summarising the nature of the discussion rather than a direct quote although the preface to the Second Russian Edition of the *Communist Manifesto* uses a similar expression: “Now the question is: can the Russian *obshchina*, a form of primeval common ownership of land, even if greatly undermined, pass directly to the higher form of communist common ownership?” (*Marx-Engels, Collected Works* 24: 426) (*Black Flag*)

³ “The State: Its Historic Role”, Part III, *Modern Science and Anarchy* (Edinburgh: AK Press, 2018), 234. (*Black Flag*)

⁴ A paraphrase of Kropotkin’s “Anarchy: Its Philosophy, Its Ideal”, included in *Modern Science and Anarchy*, 456. (*Black Flag*)

⁵ “The Commune”, *Words of a Rebel*, 65. (*Black Flag*)

⁶ Kropotkin’s well-known pamphlet *The State: Its Historic Role* was originally planned as a public lecture to be given in Paris during March 1896 but the French authorities refused him entry into France. It was subsequently serialised in the newspaper *Les Temps Nouveaux* and issued as a pamphlet before being later revised and included as Part III of the expanded French edition of *Modern Science and Anarchy* in 1913. (*Black Flag*)

the medieval Commune is largely correct. However, we should not believe, as is asserted by certain superficial people, that Kropotkin considered the era of the Communes as a kind of golden age. “It may be said that I forget the conflicts, the internal struggles, with which the history of these communes is filled, the turmoil of the streets, the bitter battles against the lords, the insurrections of the ‘young arts’ against the ‘old arts,’ the bloodshed and reprisals of these struggles.... Well, no, I forget nothing. But like Leo and Botta – the two historians of medieval Italy – like Sismondi, like Ferrari, Gino Capponi and so many others, I see that these struggles were the very guarantee of a free life in the free city.”¹ (*The State: Its Historic Role*) And it was these internal struggles that allowed, according to Kropotkin, the intervention of the king and the tendency of the medieval Commune to enclose itself within its walls (*The State: Its Historic Role*²).

Another historical field explored by Kropotkin was that of the French Revolution. He was opposed to the dream of bourgeoisie of 1789 “to abolish all the local powers which at that time constituted so many autonomous units in the State. They meant to concentrate all governmental power in the hands of a central executive authority, strictly controlled by Parliament, but also strictly obeyed in the State, and combining every department – taxes, law courts, police, army, schools, civic control, general direction of commerce and industry – everything.”³ (*The Great French Revolution*) He reproached the Girondins for having tried to dissolve the communes and pauses to show that their federalism was an opposition slogan and that in their actions they showed themselves as centralising as the Montagnards.⁴

For Kropotkin, the Communes were the soul of the French Revolution and he gave extensive illustrations of the communalist movement, seeking to show that one of the main causes of the decline of the cities was the abolition of the plenary assemblies of citizens which possessed control of justice and administration (*The Great French Revolution*, Chapters XV-XXI and XXIV-XXV).

The era of the Communes and the French Revolution were, as for Salvemini, the two historical fields in which Kropotkin found confirmation of his federalist ideas and the elements of the development of his libertarian conception of life and politics. But there always remained alive in him the memory of his observations on the Russian *Mir* and of the free agreement of primitive peoples, and it was precisely these recollections that led him to an integral federalism, which sometimes is guilty of that populist oversimplification that predominates in the *Conquest of Bread*.

III. Communalism

When explaining socialist theories, Kropotkin adopted a negative attitude towards the Saint-Simonians and the so-called Utopians, especially [Étienne] Cabet, because they based their systems on an hierarchy of administrators, instead showing enthusiasm for the communalist theory of Fourier (*Modern Science and Anarchy*⁵). He rejects State collectivism because although it significantly modified the capitalist regime “it does not abolish the wage system,” since “the State, that is to say the representative government, national or local, takes the place of the boss,”⁶ so that its representatives and bureaucrats absorb, and render necessary, the surplus value of production. This consideration also applies to the socialist State: “How much work does each of us give to the State? No economist has ever sought to estimate the number of working days that the worker in the fields and factories gives each year to this Babylonian idol. We would search the textbooks of political economy in vain to find an approximate estimate of what the man who produces wealth gives of his labour to the State. A simple estimation based on the budget of the State, the nation, the provinces, and the municipalities (which also contribute to the expenditure of the State) would say nothing; because it would be necessary to estimate not what is in the coffers of the treasury but what the payment of each Franc paid to the Treasury represents of the real expenditures made by the taxpayer. All we can say is that the amount of work the producer gives each year to the State is

¹ “The State: Its Historic Role”, Part III, *Modern Science and Anarchy*, 251. (*Black Flag*)

² See Section VI, “The State: Its Historic Role”, Part III, *Modern Science and Anarchy*, 252-7. (*Black Flag*)

³ *The Great French Revolution, 1789-1793* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1989), 7. (*Black Flag*)

⁴ *The Great French Revolution, 1789-1793*, 365-7. (*Black Flag*)

⁵ Chapters XI and XII, “Modern Science and Anarchy”, Part I, *Modern Science and Anarchy*. (*Black Flag*)

⁶ “Food”, *The Conquest of Bread and other writings*, 58; translation corrected. (*Black Flag*)

immense. It must reach, and for certain categories [of worker] exceed, the three days of work a week that the serf once gave to his lord.”¹ (*Conquest of Bread; Modern Science and Anarchy*) Even the socialist State would try to extent its powers because “every party in power is obliged to create new employment for its supporters”² which, in addition to burdening the economic life of the country with administrative expenses, would also constitute an oligarchy of incompetents. Instead, what is needed is “the collective spirit of the masses working on concrete things.”³

The collective spirit, a generic term which in the *Conquest of Bread* became “the people”, “the commune”, “society” etc., which administers justice, organises everything, solves the most complex problems. It is a kind of divinity which, as Saverio Merlino wrote with just irony, plays the part of the chorus in Greek tragedies, and which the most acute representatives of anarchism are far from worshipping. If Kropotkin’s federalism errs with vagueness and excessive faith in the political capacities of the people, it is remarkable for its breadth of view. No federalism can be consistent if it is not integral. And this can only be socialist and revolutionary.

The integral nature of Kropotkin’s federalist ideas is proved by many passages in his writings. Here are a few of the most explicit statements: “*Federalism* and *autonomy* are not enough. These are just words always covering the authority of the centralised State”⁴; “Today the State has managed to become involved in all the activities of our lives. From the cradle to the grave, it smothers us in its arms. Sometimes as a central State, sometimes as a

provincial or district State, sometimes as a municipal State, it pursues our every step, it appears at every turn, it taxes us, restrains us, harasses us”⁵; The *free commune* is “the *political* form that the *social* revolution must take”⁶; He exalts the Paris Commune precisely because its communal independence was a means, and the social revolution the aim. The Commune of the nineteenth century “will not only be *communalist*, it will be *communist*; revolutionary in politics, it will also be revolutionary in matters of production and exchange”⁷; Either the Commune will be absolutely “free to endow itself with all the institutions it wants and to make all the reforms and revolutions it may find necessary”, or else it will remain “a mere branch of the State, fettered in all its movements, forever on the brink of coming into conflict with the State and sure to succumb in the struggle that would ensue”⁸; For Kropotkin, then, the free communes were the necessary environment for the revolution to reach its maximum development.

His federalism aspires to this: “Complete independence of the Commune, the Federation of

free Communes, and the social revolution within the Commune, that is to say trade unions for production replacing the statist organisation”.⁹

Kropotkin said to the peasants: “In the past, the earth belonged to the Communes, composed of those who cultivated the land themselves, with their own hands”, but through fraud, harassment, violence, the communal lands have become private property”. Therefore, the peasants, organised in Communes, must take back these lands, to put

If Kropotkin’s federalism errs with vagueness and excessive faith in the political capacities of the people, it is remarkable for its breadth of view. No federalism can be consistent if it is not integral. And this can only be socialist and revolutionary.

¹ “Taxation: A Means of Creating the Powers of the State”, Chapter III, “The Modern State”, Part IV, *Modern Science and Anarchy*, 294. (*Black Flag*)

² “The Breakdown of the State”, *Words of a Rebel*, 10. (*Black Flag*)

³ “The Means of Action”, Chapter XV, “Modern Science and Anarchy”, Part I, *Modern Science and Anarchy*, 192. (*Black Flag*)

⁴ “Anarchy”, Chapter XII, “Modern Science and Anarchy”, Part I, *Modern Science and Anarchy*, 159. (*Black Flag*)

⁵ “The Breakdown of the State”, *Words of a Rebel*, 9. (*Black Flag*)

⁶ “Anarchy”, Chapter XII, “Modern Science and Anarchy”, Part I, *Modern Science and Anarchy*, 161. (*Black Flag*)

⁷ “The Commune”, *Words of a Rebel*, 67. (*Black Flag*)

⁸ “The Commune”, *Words of a Rebel*, 66. (*Black Flag*)

⁹ “Anarchy”, Chapter XII, Part I, *Modern Science and Anarchy*, 161. (*Black Flag*)

them at the disposal of those who want to farm them themselves”. And again: “Do you need a road? – Well, let the people of neighbouring communes reach an agreement amongst themselves, and they will do it better than the ministry of public works. – A railway? The interested communes in a whole region will do it better than entrepreneurs, who amass millions by making bad routes. – Do you need schools? You will create them yourselves as well as, and better, than the gentlemen of Paris. – The State has nothing to do with all this; schools, roads, canals will all be better made by yourselves and with less cost.”¹ These passages from *Words of a Rebel* make it clear that in the *Conquest of Bread*, where he says that the Commune will distribute goods, ration wood, regulate pasture land, divide the land, etc., he does not mean the Commune as a “branch of the State,” but the free association of the interested parties, which may be, from one time to another, a co-operative, a productive grouping, or simply a temporary union of several people united by a common need.

Kropotkin, although he recognises their seriousness, is not concerned much with the dangers inherent in particularism. Here is a characteristic passage on the subject: “These days, the parochial mentality can arouse many jealousies between two neighbouring communes, prevent their direct alliance and even ignite fratricidal conflicts. But if such resentment can effectively prevent the direct federation of these two communes, that federation will be established through the intermediary of the large centres. Today, two small neighbouring municipalities often have nothing that connects them directly: what few relations they have would instead serve to generate conflicts than forge bonds of solidarity. But both already have a common centre with which they are in frequent contact, without which they cannot survive; and whatever their local rivalries, they will be obliged to unite through the intermediary of the large town where they obtain their supplies, where they take their products; each of them will become part of the same federation, in order to maintain their relations with this focus of attraction and group themselves around it.”²

Here again we have a simplification of the federalist problem. To judge Kropotkin fairly one

must take account not only what he wrote but also what could not write. A certain hastiness, certain omissions, certain over-simplifications of complex problems are due not only to his mindset, but also to the material impossibility of developing his point of view. Kropotkin almost always wrote for newspapers intended to be read by working people.

Deeply democratic, he always voluntarily renounced the mantle of the theoretician in order to roll up his shirt sleeves, like Malatesta who was also an original theoretician and an educated man. Even his pamphlets do not represent the whole expression of his ideas, the complete exposition of his research, and he himself explains why in his *Memoirs*: “Quite a new style had to be worked out for such pamphlets. I must say that I was often wicked enough to envy those writers who could use any number of pages for developing their ideas, and were allowed to make the well-known excuse of Talleyrand: ‘I have not had the time to be brief.’ When I had to condense the results of several months’ work – upon, let me say, the origins of law – into a penny pamphlet, I had to give extra time in order to be short.”³

Kropotkin faced these material difficulties only until about 1884. After that, for almost thirty years, he was able to write powerful books. But in this second period he was more a theoretician than an agitator, and his thoughts were more occupied with historical research and scientific studies. That means *Words of a Rebel* remains his best anarchist work for freshness of expression and ideological coherence.

Kropotkin saw that the federalist issue is a technical issue, and in fact he states in his book *Modern Science and Anarchy* that humanity will be forced to find new forms of organisation for the social functions that the State performs through the bureaucracy and that “nothing will be done as long as this is not done”,⁴ but could not systematically develop his federalist conception because of his now turbulent, now scientific life. And such a development was opposed, as far as the elaboration of projects was concerned, to its own anarchist conception in which the vital spirit of the people constitutes the soul of [social] evolution in its partial realisations in history, varying endlessly in different places and times.

¹ “The Agrarian Question”, *Words of a Rebel*, 99. (*Black Flag*)

² “The Commune”, *Words of a Rebel*, 69-70. (*Black Flag*)

³ *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*, 394. (*Black Flag*)

⁴ “Anarchy”, Chapter XIII, “Modern Science and Anarchy”, Part I, *Modern Science and Anarchy*, 169. (*Black Flag*)

IV. Coherence within incoherence

Kropotkin was inspired by his federalist thought even in his attitude to the issue of anarchist activity during the European war [of 1914 to 1918].

In his *Memoirs*, Kropotkin writes: “The conflict between the Marxists and the Bakunists was not a personal affair. It was the necessary conflict between the principles of federalism and those of centralisation, the free Commune and the State’s paternal rule, the free action of the masses of the people and the betterment of existing capitalist conditions through legislation – a conflict between the Latin spirit and the German *Geist*”.¹ Once the European war broke out, Kropotkin saw in France the protector of the Latin spirit, that is of the Revolution, and in Germany the triumph of State-worship, that is of reaction. His attitude was that of the democratic interventionist. And he did, at first, made common cause with the jingoists of the Entente and fell, as did [James] Guillaume (author of the unfortunate pamphlet *Karl Marx Pangermaniste*), into exaggeration.

Some have wanted to see in Kropotkin’s attitude in 1914 an analogy with that of Bakunin in 1871. Bakunin was in favour of the revolutionary defence of France after the Paris revolution [in September 1870] had overthrown the monarchy; and he was also opposed to the republican government of Paris, against which he urged insurrection in order to oppose the German army only with popular revolution.²

With his interventionism, Kropotkin broke from anarchism, and he went so far as to sign the so-called *Manifesto of the Sixteen* in 1916, which marked the culmination of incoherence in the pro-war anarchists.³

¹ *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*, 361. (*Black Flag*)

² A reference to Bakunin’s “Letter to a Frenchman on the Present Crisis”, *Bakunin on Anarchism* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1980), edited by Sam Dolgoff. (*Black Flag*)

³ Errico Malatesta expressed this well by his article in *Freedom* (April 1916) entitled “Pro-Government Anarchists”.

But in the one-sidedness of his position, the affirmation of his federalist faith is remarkable. He opposed Germany because he saw in it a danger to the autonomy of peoples and to decentralisation. In his letter to the Swedish professor G. Steffan (*Freedom*, October 1914) he argued: “For Eastern

Europe, and especially for Russia, Germany was the chief support and protection of reaction. Prussian militarism, the mock institution of popular representation offered by the German Reichstag and the feudal Landtags of the separate portions of the German empire, and the ill-treatment of the subdued nationalities in Alsace, and especially in Prussian Poland, where the Poles were treated lately as badly as in Russia (without protest from the advanced political parties), these fruits of German imperialism were the lessons that modern Germany, the Germany of Bismarck, taught her neighbours and, above all,

Russian absolutism. Would absolutism have maintained itself so long in Russia, and would that absolutism ever have dared to ill-treat Poland and Finland as it has ill-treated them, if it could not produce the example of ‘cultured Germany,’ and if it were not sure of Germany’s protection?”

And anticipating the criticism – Are you forgetting the Russian autocracy? – he wrote:

Is there anybody who has not thought himself that the present war, in which all parties in Russia have risen unanimously against the common enemy, will render a return to the autocracy of old materially impossible? And then, those who have seriously followed the revolutionary movement of Russia in 1905 surely know what were the ideas which dominated in the first and second, approximately freely elected, Dumas. They surely know that

This, along with his other critiques of Kropotkin’s position, can be found in the excellent anthology *Life and Ideas: The Anarchist Writings of Errico Malatesta* (Oakland: PM Press, 2015). (*Black Flag*)

complete home rule for all the component parts of the empire was a fundamental point of all the liberal and radical parties. More than that: Finland then actually *accomplished* her revolution in the form of a democratic autonomy, and the Duma approved it.

And finally, those who knew Russia and her last movement certainly feel that autocracy will never more be re-established in the forms it had before 1905, and that a Russian constitution could never take the imperialists forms and spirit which parliamentary rule has taken in Germany. As to us, who know Russia from the inside, we are sure that the Russians never will be capable of becoming the aggressive, warlike nation Germany is. Not only the whole history of the Russians shows it, but with the federation Russia is bound to become in the very near future, such a warlike spirit would be absolutely incompatible.

For Kropotkin, Russia was the country of the *Mir*, the country which had provided him with a wide number of observations on the results and possibilities of popular initiative.

The European War drove him away from his political family: the anarchist movement. The October Revolution in Russia brought him back to it.

V. Bolshevism and Sovietism

Many years ago, fighting the illusion that secret revolutionary societies had the power, having destroyed Tsarist tyranny, to replace the demolished bureaucratic machine with a new administration made up of honest and intransigent revolutionaries, Kropotkin wrote: "Others – the cautious ones who work to make their names while the revolutionaries dig their tunnels or perish in Siberia; others – the intriguers, talkers, lawyers, writers who from time to time drop a very quickly dried tear on the tomb of the heroes and pose as friends of the people – it is they who will come forward to take the vacant place of the government

and will shout 'Back!' at the 'unknowns' who have prepared the revolution."¹ Kropotkin's prophecy has been amply confirmed, and he was in the opposition [to the Bolshevik regime], an opposition which would have had a considerable impact if his staunch interventionism had not deprived him of all political prestige.

In an interview with Augustin Souchy, published in *Erkenntnis Befreiung* of Vienna, Kropotkin said: "We should have communal Councils. Communal Councils should work on their own initiative. They should, for example, see to it that, in the event of a poor harvest, the population did not lack the basic necessities. Centralised government is, in this case, an extremely cumbersome machine. whereas, federating the Councils would create a vital centre." Kropotkin expressed his hostility towards the coercive economy of the Bolshevik government in an interview with the *Daily News* correspondent, W. Meakin. See also the interesting interview with A. Berkman in *Le Libertaire* of 22 February 1922. In his meeting with Armando Borghi, Kropotkin placed great stress on the role of trade unions as the cells of the autonomous and anti-authoritarian social revolution.² In one of his last letters (23 December 1920) to the Dutch anarchist De Rejger, which was published in the *Vrije Socialist*, Kropotkin wrote: "The Social Revolution in Russia has unfortunately assumed a centralised and authoritarian character."

On 7 January 1918, Kropotkin held a conference in Moscow (at the headquarters of the Federalist League, a group created on his initiative to study a possible federation of Russia) in which, after tracing the history of the autonomist and centralist currents in Russian thought and the steady and disastrous centralisation of the Tsarist autocracy, reaffirmed his federalist principles.

The impossibility of directing from one single centre 180 million people who inhabit extremely different territories and which far exceed that of the whole of Europe, becomes increasingly evident. This truth is becoming more and more clearly understood: that the creative power of these millions of men can only manifest itself

¹ "Revolutionary Government", *Words of a Rebel*, 155-6. (*Black Flag*)

² It should be noted that Kropotkin used the same words in the lessons he wished the Russian Anarchist movement to draw from the experience of the 1905 Revolution: "anarchists look to the workers' unions as cells of the future social order

and as a powerful means for the preparation of the social revolution, which is not confined to a change of political regime but also transforms the current forms of economic life" ("The Russian Revolution and Anarchism", *Direct Struggle Against Capital* [Edinburgh: AK Press, 2014], 467). (*Black Flag*)

when they feel they possess the fullest liberty to work out their own peculiarities and organise their life in accordance with their aspirations, the physical characteristics of their territories and their historic past. (*Plus loin*, Paris, 15 May 1925, and *Pensiero e volontà*, 1 February 1926)

Kropotkin's thoughts on the Russian Revolution are expressed in a message to the western workers, given to Miss Bonfield on 10 June 1920 when she and other delegates of the [British] Labour Party went to visit him in his retreat at Dimitrov. This message is a notable document in the history of the Russian Revolution.

Given that, although the attempt to establish a new society through the dictatorship of a party is doomed to fail, one cannot fail to recognise that the revolution had introduced new conceptions into Russian life on the social function and on the rights of labour as well as on the duties of the individual citizen, Kropotkin set out his ideas, making a calm but intransigent criticism of Bolshevism as a party dictatorship and as a centralised government.

The first general question was that of the different nationalities that make up Russia. On this question Kropotkin writes:

A renewal of relations between the European and American nations and Russia certainly must not mean the admission of a supremacy of the Russian nation over those nationalities of which the empire of the Russian Tsars was composed. Imperial Russia is dead, and will not return to life. The future of the various provinces of which the empire was composed lies in the direction of a great Federation. The natural territories of the different parts of that Federation are quite distinct for those of us who are acquainted with the history of Russia, its ethnography, and its economic life, and all attempts to bring the constituent

parts of the Russian Empire – Finland, the Baltic Provinces, Lithuania, the Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia, Siberia, and so on – under one central rule are surely doomed to failure. The future of what was the Russian Empire is in the direction of a Federation of independent units. It would, therefore, be in the interest of all that the Western nations should declare beforehand that they are recognising the right of self-government for every portion of what was once the Russian Empire.¹

But Kropotkin's federalism goes further than this programme for ethnographic autonomy. He says that he sees in the near future "a time when every portion of that Federation will itself be a federation of free rural communes and free cities, and I believe still that portions of Western Europe will soon take the lead in that direction."²

And then the revolutionary tactics of the federalist autonomist is outlined and the critique of the centralised State-worship of the Bolsheviks expounded:

The Russian Revolution – being a continuation of the two great Revolutions in England and in France – is trying now to make a step in advance of where France stopped, when it came to realise in life what was described then as *real equality* (*égalité de fait*), that is, economical equality.

Unfortunately, the attempt to make that step has been undertaken in Russia under the strongly-centralised *Dictatorship of one party* – the Social Democratic Maximalists, and the attempt was made on the lines taken in the utterly Centralist and Jacobinist conspiracy of Babeuf. About this attempt I am bound frankly to tell you that, in my opinion, the attempt to build up a Communist Republic on the lines of strongly-centralised State Communism

¹ "Message to the Workers of the Western World", *Direct Struggle Against Capital*, 488-9. (*Black Flag*)

² "Message to the Workers of the Western World", *Direct Struggle Against Capital*, 489. (*Black Flag*)

under the iron rule of the Dictatorship of a party is ending in a failure. We learn in Russia *how Communism cannot be introduced*, even though the populations, sick of the old regime, opposed no active resistance to the experiment made by the new rulers.

The idea of Soviets, that is, of Labour and Peasant Councils, first promoted during the attempted revolution of 1905 and immediately realised by the revolution of February 1917, as soon as the Tsar's regime broke down – the idea of such councils controlling the political and economical life of the country is a grand idea. The more so as it leads necessarily to the idea of these Councils being composed of all those who take a *real part* in the production of national wealth by their own personal effort.

But so long as a country is governed by the dictatorship of a party, the Labour and Peasant Councils evidently lose all their significance. They are reduced to the passive role played in times past by “States-General” and Parliaments, when they were convoked by the King and had to oppose an all-powerful King's Council.

A Labour Council ceases to be a free and valuable adviser when there is no free Press in the country, and we have been in this position for nearly two years, the excuse for such conditions being the state of war. More than that, the Peasant and Labour Councils lose all their significance when no free electoral agitation precedes the elections, and the elections are made under the pressure of party dictatorship. Of course, the usual excuse is that a dictatorial rule was unavoidable as a means of combating the old regime. But such a rule evidently becomes a formidable drawback as soon as the Revolution proceeds towards the building up of a new society on a new economic basis: it becomes a death sentence on the new construction.

The ways to be followed for overthrowing an already weakened Government and taking its place are well known from

history, old and modern. But when it comes to build up quite new forms of life – especially new forms of production and exchange – without having any examples to imitate; when everything has to be worked out by men on the spot, then an all-powerful centralised Government which undertakes to supply every inhabitant with every lamp-glass and every match to light the lamp proves absolutely incapable of doing that through its functionaries, no matter how countless they may be – it becomes a nuisance. It develops such a formidable bureaucracy that the French bureaucratic system, which requires the intervention of forty functionaries to sell a tree felled by a storm on a public road, becomes a trifle in comparison. This is what we now learn in Russia. And this is what you, the working men of the West, can and must avoid by all means, since you care for the success of a social reconstruction, and send here your delegates to see how a Social Revolution works in real life.

The immense constructive work that is required from a Social Revolution cannot be accomplished by a central Government, even if it had to guide it in its work something more substantial than a few Socialist and Anarchist booklets. It requires the knowledge, the brains, and the willing collaboration of a mass of local and specialised forces, which alone can cope with the diversity of economical problems in their local aspects. To sweep away that collaboration and to trust to the genius of party dictators is to destroy all the independent nuclei, such as Trade Unions (called in Russia “Professional Unions”) and the local distributive Co-operative organisations – turning them into bureaucratic organs of the party, as is being done now. But this is the way *not* to accomplish the Revolution; the way to render its realisation impossible. And this is why I consider it my duty earnestly to warn you from taking such a line of action.¹

These are the thoughts of Kropotkin on the Russian Revolution, confirming all his propaganda. And

¹ “Message to the Workers of the Western World”, *Direct Struggle Against Capital*, 489-90. (*Black Flag*)

these are the ideas which inspired and still inspires the opposition of the Russian Anarchists.

VI. Sovietist Anarcho-Syndicalism

On the eve of leaving for Russia, Kropotkin wrote from Brighton on 21 May 1917 a warm letter of revolutionary enthusiasm and shinning with anarchist hope:

Something great has happened in Russia and something which will be the beginning of still greater events everywhere... what struck me very much is the profound good sense of the masses of workers and peasants in comprehending the import of the movement and its promise... I see here, in France, in Russia, opening up immense possibilities for constructive work in the direction of communalist communism... What they reproached us with as a fantastic Utopia is being realised on a grand scale in Russia, at least as far as the spirit of free organisation, outwith the State and the municipality, is concerned.

In his letter, Kropotkin mentioned the reason for his return to Russia: participating in the development of the revolution. In Moscow, in the winter of 1917-1918, he attempted to elaborate the elements of a federalist-sovietist republic. After having his small apartment requisitioned, he had to retire to the small village of Dimitrov, where, in isolation, he resumed work on *Ethics* which he had begun in London. A. Schapiro writes of this period:

He refrained from openly criticising and attacking the State Communists who had become the masters of Russia. It was the military period of the Revolution when its fiercest enemies were attaching it from every side. Kropotkin, who was against any foreign intervention, feared that an untimely criticism, that a misinterpreted opposition, would benefit the common enemy at that moment.



He was a great rebuilder and whether it was a question of workshops or agriculture, trade unions or schools, he always had his practical proposal, his plan for reconstruction. You wanted to immediately treasure those suggestions that were so useful in that moment of creative revolution. Seeing that the reconstructive spirit was missing from the Russian anarchists caused him pain and one day when this and the divisions amongst us come into our discussion (this theme often recurred in our conversations) he exclaimed: "Let us see, my friend, whether we could not draw up a plan for the organisation of an anarchist party? We certainly cannot stand by with folded arms." It was so good to see this forever young old man – who could have been the grandfather of his interlocutor – unable to remain inactive and call upon young people

to unite and organise themselves. We decided that for our next meeting Kropotkin would prepare a project for the organisation of the anarchist party. He spoke of a party not to mimic those of politicians; but because the word group had become

too small and narrow faced with the revolution, magnificent even though obstructed by politicians and political parties. At our next meeting we had a long discussion about the project, which he of course had not forgotten to prepare. [Federal] Organisation was the basis of this project."

The anarchist party dreamt of by Kropotkin would have been, even if it was not called by this name, an anarcho-syndicalist party. Schapiro recounts:

And when the discussion was on the trade union issue, he always reiterated that, in reality, the revolutionary syndicalism which had developed in Europe was already found in its entirety in the ideas propagated by

Bakunin in the First International, in that International Workers' Association which he loved to give as an exemplar of a workers' organisation. He was increasingly interested in the development of revolutionary syndicalism and the attempts of the Russian anarcho-syndicalists to participate in the trade union movement and the industrial reconstruction of the country.

When towards the end of 1920 – almost on the eve of the illness that killed him – young people called on him to ask for guidance within the anarchist movement, Kropotkin sent me the question of these comrades with a note which ended with these words: If they are serious young people, the best way forward for them is anarcho-syndicalism.

We were glad to have Kropotkin with us. And when I went to see him a few days before his death – the last conversation I had with him – he wanted first of all to know how the proceedings of the Conference of Anarcho-Syndicalists (which lasted from Christmas [day] 1920 to 7 February 1921, that is to say to the eve of his death) were going and he expressed to me the expectation of good work for the future.

Also in his meeting with Armando Borghi, Kropotkin was most insistent on the role of trade unions as cells of the autonomist and “anti-authoritarian” revolution. And likewise when meeting with Augustin Souchy and other exponents of anarcho-syndicalism. b

But, to avoid suspicions of a biased interpretations of his words, I think it appropriate to quote a passage from a letter of 2 May 1920: “I believe profoundly in the future. I believe that the trade union movement, that is to say the professional unions – which recently brought together the representatives of twenty million workers at its congress – will become a great power over the next

fifty years, ready to begin the creation of an anti-State communist society. And if I were in France, where the centre of this professional movement is currently located, and if I felt physically stronger, I would throw myself body and soul into this movement of the First International (not the Second, nor the Third, which represent the usurpation of the idea of the workers' International for the benefit of the Social Democratic Party alone, which is not even half composed of workers).”

To End

Kropotkin, old, sick, destitute, died during a period of inactivity after having attempted to encourage a federalist movement but without being able to achieve anything due to his lack of liberty and because his staunch interventionism had taken away so much of his political prestige. Kropotkin had also deluded himself about Bolshevik sovietism, so much so to say that he felt a connection with Bolshevism; but above the reservations, the incidental doubts, his syndicalist-communalist sovietism shone with logical consistency and constructive audacity, so that it is to be regretted that Kropotkin could not follow the subsequent degenerative phases of the October Revolution.

The federalist issue both in the field of nationalities and in that of political and economic organisation is the vital problem in Russia. When experience and opposition have led the Russian communists definitely away from their doctrinaire schemes and the union of left-wing parties takes the first steps on the road to the new revolution, the figure of Peter Kropotkin will appear in all its full height and his thought will inspire the new reconstruction. In Kropotkin's federalism there is excessive optimism, there are simplifications and contradictions, but there is a great and fertile truth: that freedom is a condition of life and development for the people; that only when a people governs itself and for itself is it safe from tyranny and certain of its progress.

The State is the protection of exploitation, of speculation, of private property – the product of plunder. The proletariat, who has only his arms for a fortune, has nothing to expect from the State; he will find there only an organisation designed to prevent his emancipation at all costs.

– “The Breakdown of the State”, *Words of a Rebel*

Kropotkin's Communism

M. Korn (aka Marie Goldsmith)

*International collection dedicated to the tenth anniversary of the death of P. A. Kropotkin (Chicago, 1931)*¹

It was the development of the theory of anarchist communism that Kropotkin believed to be his main contribution to the theory of anarchism. Indeed, what had the economic ideal of the anarchist movement been before Kropotkin published a series of his famous articles in the *Le Révolté* newspaper in 1879, articles which eventually made up his book *Words of a Rebel?*

At the time of the foundation of the International, socialist doctrines were developed along two lines: state communism and Proudhonism. Communists sought to concentrate economic power in the hands of the state and to structure social life in a military fashion: strict discipline, “detachments” and “labour armies,” compulsory collective consumption in a barracks-like environment, etc. The communism of Louis Blanc and [Étienne] Cabet was precisely that kind of “war communism”; it may have proclaimed the principle “to each according to his needs,” but the actual needs had to be determined from above, by means of a kind of a “reallocation” system.²

A social ideal like this could not, of course, satisfy free minds, and Proudhon put forward an arrangement of an entirely different, opposing type. He based the economic system of the future on the notion of *equality* and *reciprocity*: production and exchange were grounded on cooperative principles



Marie Goldsmith (1871-1933)

with members of society exchanging services and products of equal value. The privileges of capital are thus eliminated, but private property – labour property³ – would continue, and the notion of its communalisation does not enter into this arrangement.

As long ago as in the early years of the International, both ideals failed to satisfy the advanced socialists and, at the Congresses held in 1867 and 1868, the principle of *public* (in opposition to state) ownership of land and

instruments of labour was adopted. In the years that followed, at the height of Bakunin's activity, this idea was further developed to constitute, under the name of *collectivism*, the economic programme of the federalist part of the International. The original meaning of the word “collectivism” later suffered a number of mutations, but at that time it meant: *public* (“collective”) possession of the land and the implements of production along with the organisation of distribution within each anarchist federation community according to the preferences of the members of that community.

The members of the International defined “collectivism” as non-state federalist communism, thus distancing themselves from the centralised state communism professed by Babeuf, Louis

¹ This article has been translated by Alexandra Agranovich and edited by Christopher Coquard and Søren Hough with the goal of preserving Goldsmith's original meaning and stylistic emphases. Footnotes by the translator or editors are prefaced “Ed:” while all other footnotes are from Marie Goldsmith's original article. Her references to page numbers in Kropotkin's books and pamphlets correspond to the Russian editions. (*Black Flag*)

² Ed: Louis Jean Joseph Charles Blanc (1811-1882) was a French socialist politician and historian who was a staunch proponent of state-funded “social workshops”; Étienne Cabet (1788-1856) was a French philosopher and utopian socialist who also believed in government control of community resources.

³ Ed: Proudhon argued that while the means of production (land, factories, housing, etc.) should be socialised to end wage labour, the products of labour should be the property of the worker(s) who would possess and control the means used to create them. Thus, possession (of the means of life) would replace private property and the inequalities, oppression, and exploitation it created. Such a system would be a form of market socialism, with peasants, artisans, and worker-run co-operatives selling the product of their labour on the market rather than their labour to bosses and landlords..

Blanc, Cabet, and Marx and his followers.¹ That's what Bakunin meant when he said at a congress: "I am not a communist, I am a collectivist." When the "collectivists" of the International proclaimed the principle: "to each the whole result of his labour," they did not mean that labour would be evaluated and rewarded by someone; they meant only that it would not be exploited and all the products of labour would be used to the benefit of the workers. How these products would be distributed was an open question, left to the decision of each community.

But as the development of ideas advanced, collectivism in that form became unsatisfactory, and the thought of the members of the International began to search for a definite answer to the open question, an answer that would be compatible with the principle of absence of a coercive force, of state power in society. An idea was proposed that the only thing that could guide the distribution was everyone's *needs*, and that an exact evaluation of each worker's labour was an impossible thing. In 1876, the Italian Federation of the International spoke in favour of "anarchist communism" at its congress in Florence and, four years later, the Jura Federation, the most influential one, arrived at the same decision (at the 1880 congress in Chaux-de-Fonds). At this congress, the old "collectivism" that only proclaimed communalisation of the land and instruments of labour encountered the new idea of *anarchist communism* defended by Kropotkin, [Élisée] Reclus, and [Carlo] Cafiero, as the only idea compatible with a stateless system.²

The new idea triumphed, and since that time communism has entered the anarchist worldview as an inseparable part of it, at least in the eyes of the vast majority of anarchists. The credit for developing this idea on the basis of data drawn from both science and practical life must go to Kropotkin. It's owing to him that anarchism possesses this guiding economic principle.

Kropotkin's communism stems from two sources: on the one hand, from the study of economic phenomena and their historical development, and, on the other, from the social ideal of equality and freedom. His objective scientific research and his

passionate search for a social formation into which maximum justice can be embodied consistently led him to the same solution: *anarchist communism*.

Over the centuries, step by step, by the labour of countless generations, by conquering nature, by developing productive forces, by improving technology, humanity has accumulated enormous wealth in the fertile fields, in the bowels of the earth, in vibrant cities. Countless technical improvements have made it possible to facilitate and reduce human labour; the broadest human needs can be satisfied to greater and greater extent. And it is only because a small handful of people have seized everything that is needed to create this wealth – land, machines, means of communication, education, culture, etc. – these *possibilities* remain possibilities without ever being translated into reality.

Our whole industry, says Kropotkin, our entire production, has embarked on a false course: instead of serving the needs of society, it is guided solely by the interests of profit. Hence the industrial crises, competition, and struggle for the market with its inevitable companions – constant wars. The monopoly of a small minority extends not only to material goods, but also to the gains of culture and education; the economic slavery of the vast majority makes true freedom and true equality impossible, prevents people from developing social feelings and, as this whole way of life is based on lies, lowers their moral standards.

Adjusted to this abnormal situation, modern political economy – from Adam Smith to Karl Marx – follows, in its entirety, a false path: it begins with production (accumulation of capital, role of machines, division of labour, etc.) and only then moves on to *consumption*, i.e., to the satisfaction of human needs; whereas, if it were what it is meant to be, i.e., the physiology of human society, it would "*study the needs of humanity, and the means of satisfying them with the least possible waste of human energy.*"³ One must always bear in mind that "*the goal of every production is the satisfaction of needs.*"⁴

Forgetting this truth leads to a situation which cannot last:

¹ François-Noël Babeuf (1760-1797) was an influential revolutionary thinker and proto-communist theorist.

² Ed: Jacques Élisée Reclus (1830-1905) was a renowned French geographer, writer and anarchist; Carlo Cafiero (1846-

1892) was an Italian anarchist, champion of Bakunin, and one of the main proponents of anarcho-communism.

³ *Khleb i Volya (Bread and Freedom - The Conquest of Bread)*, Golos Truda (The Voice of Labor) Publishers, 172.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 173.

Under pain of death which has already befallen many states in antiquity, human societies are forced to return to first principles: the means of production being the collective work of humanity, they should be the collective property of the race. Individual appropriation is neither just nor serviceable. All things are for all people, since all people have need of them, since all people have worked in the measure of their strength to produce them, and since it is not possible to evaluate every individual's part in the production of the world's wealth... Yes, all is for all! If the man and the woman bear their fair share of work, they have a right to their fair share of all that is produced by all, and that share is enough to secure them well-being.¹

In this total sum of social wealth, Kropotkin sees no way to distinguish between the *instruments of production and the commodities*, a distinction that characterises socialist schools of the social-democratic type. How may the former be separated from the latter, especially in a civilised society?

We are not savages who can live in the woods, without other shelter than the branches... For the worker, a room, properly heated and lighted, is as much an instrument of production as the tool or the machine. It is the place where the nerves and sinews gather strength for the work of the morrow. The rest of the worker is the daily repairing of the machine. The same argument applies even more obviously to food. The so-called economists of whom we speak would hardly deny that the coal burnt in a machine is as necessary to production as raw cotton or iron ore. How then can food, without which the human machine is incapable of a slightest effort, be excluded from the list of

things indispensable for production?²

The same is true for clothing and for everything else.

The distinction between instruments of production and commodities, artificially established by economists, not only does not stand up to logical criticism, but also cannot be put into practice. "In our society everything is so closely interconnected that it is impossible to touch one branch of production without affecting all the others."³

At the moment of the transformation of the capitalist order into a socialist formation, expropriation must affect everything; half-measures will only cause an enormous upheaval in society by disrupting its routines and will lead to overall discontent. One cannot, for example, expropriate the landed estates and hand them over to the peasants, while leaving the factories in the possession of the capitalists; one cannot hand the factories over to the workers, while leaving the trade, the banks, the stock exchange in their present form. "It is impossible for society to organise itself following two opposite principles: on the one hand, to make common property of all that has been produced up to the present day, and on the other hand, to keep strictly private property of what will be produced by the individual with public instruments and supplies..."⁴ Kropotkin strongly condemns all *labour remuneration*, all buying and selling.

It is impossible to reward everyone for his or her labour without exploiting this labour and violating justice. All socialist systems establishing remuneration in proportion to labour (be it in cash, worker's checks, or in kind) thus make an essential concession to the spirit of capitalist society. At first glance, this seems to be a paradox. "In fact," writes Kropotkin in his critique of the wage labour system,⁵ "in a society like ours, in which the more that people work the less they are remunerated, this principle, at first sight, may appear to be a yearning for justice. But it is really only the perpetuation of past injustice."

"It was by virtue of this principle that wagedom began – 'to each according to his deeds' – to end in

¹ Ibid., 27.

² Ibid., 58.

³ Ibid., 57.

⁴ *Sovremennaya Nauka i Anarkhiya (Modern Science and Anarchism)*, Golos Truda (The Voice of Labor) Publishers, 88.

⁵ See the chapter "The Collectivist Wages System" in *The Conquest of Bread*.

the glaring inequalities and all the abominations of present society. From the very day work was appraised in currency, or in any other form of wage, from the very day it was agreed upon that workers would only receive the wage they could secure for themselves; the whole history of the State-aided Capitalist Society was as good as written...

“Services rendered to society, be they work in the factory, or in the fields, or intellectual services, *cannot be valued in money*. There can be no exact measure of value (of what has been wrongly-termed exchange value), nor of use value, with regard to production... We may roughly say that the worker who during their lifetime has deprived themselves of leisure ten hours a day has given far more to society than the one who has only been deprived of leisure five hours a day, or who has not been deprived at all. But we cannot take what the worker has done over two hours and say that the yield is worth twice as much as the yield of another individual, working only one hour, and remunerate the worker in proportion. It would be disregarding all that is complex in industry, in agriculture, in the whole life of present society; it would be ignoring to what extent all individual work is the result of past and present labour of society as a whole. It would mean believing ourselves to be living in the Stone Age, whereas we are living in an age of steel.”¹

Kropotkin, therefore, recognises no real basis under the labour theory of value, which plays, as we know, the most essential role in Marxist economics. Similarly, he does not recognise the distinction between simple labour and skilled labour which some socialist schools subscribe to. On the basis of Ricardo’s and Marx’s theory of value, they try to justify this distinction scientifically by arguing that training a technician costs society more than training a simple worker, that the “cost of production” of the former is greater. Kropotkin argues that the colossal inequality existing in this respect in modern society is not created by the “cost of production,” but by the existing *monopoly on knowledge*: knowledge constitutes a kind of capital, which can be exploited more easily because high pay for skilled labour is often simply a matter of profit calculated by the entrepreneur. Kropotkin believes that

maintaining these distinctions in a socialist society – even if they were to be considerably mitigated – is extremely harmful, because it would mean “the Revolution sanctioning and recognising as a principle a brutal fact we submit to nowadays, but that we nevertheless find unjust.”²

In general, the principle of *evaluation* and *remuneration* of labour must be abandoned once and for all. If the social revolution does not do this, says Kropotkin, it will put an obstacle to the further development of humanity and maintain the unsolved problem that we have inherited from the past. “‘The works of each!’ But human society would not exist for more than two consecutive generations if everyone did not give infinitely more than that for which he is paid... if workers had not given, at least sometimes, without demanding an equivalent, if workers did not give just to those from whom they expect no reward.”³

“If middle-class society is decaying, if we have got into a blind alley from which we cannot emerge without attacking past institutions with torch and hatchet, it is precisely because we have calculated too much; because we have let ourselves be influenced into *giving* only to *receive*, because we have aimed at turning society into a commercial company based on *debit* and *credit*.”⁴

And so, Kropotkin calls for the courage of thought, for the courage of building a new world on new foundations. And for this purpose, it is first of all necessary to “put people’s *needs* above their *works*,” it is necessary to “recognise, and loudly proclaim, that every one, whatever their status in the old society, whether strong or weak, capable or incapable, has, before everything, *the right to live*, and that society is bound to share amongst all the means of existence at its disposal.”⁵

“Let us have no limit to what the community possesses in abundance, but equal sharing and dividing of those commodities which are scarce or apt to run short.”⁶ But what shall we be guided by when establishing those necessary limitations? Who will have to endure them? It goes without saying that Kropotkin cannot accept the existence of different categories of citizens based on their value – economic or political – in society, nor can he accept any importance in this respect of their

¹ *Khleb i Volya (Bread and Freedom - The Conquest of Bread)*, Golos Truda (The Voice of Labour) Publishers, 164-5

² *Ibid.*, 162.

³ *Ibid.*, 162.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 167–168.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 135.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 70.

present occupation or past social position.

His measure is simpler and more humane; it is the only humane measure: privileges are accorded to those who find it most difficult to endure deprivation – the weak and the sick, the children and the old. This is so natural, so understandable to everybody that, on *this* basis, it is not difficult to come to a mutual agreement without any confrontation or coercion.

Therefore, at the heart of the new society, there is voluntary labour and the right of everyone to live. This immediately raises a number of questions. Would not such a communist society be a society of hungry, destitute people? Wouldn't labour productivity fall in the absence of the nudging spur of hunger? Kropotkin, on the contrary, shows by a number of examples how much the productivity of human labour has always risen when labour became at least comparatively free: after the abolition of feudal rights in France in 1792, after the abolition of slavery of the Negroes in America, and after the destruction of serfdom in Russia.

And – on a smaller scale – all of the examples of collective free labour (in Russian, Swiss, and German villages, in worker's cooperative associations, among American pioneers, among the Russian Doukhobors in Canada, in Mennonite communities, etc., etc.) – that they show such productivity, such a surge of energy in the workers, that no enterprise using wage labour can match.

“Wage labour is servile labour, which cannot and is

not supposed to yield all that it is capable of. It is time to put an end to this tale of wages as the best means of obtaining productive labour. If today's industry yields a hundred times more than it did in the epoch of our ancestors, we owe it to the rapid development of physics and chemistry at the end of the last century; this happened not owing to the capitalist system of wage labour, but in spite of it.”¹

It is freedom that is able to raise labour productivity, while all other measures, all pressure from above, whether in the form of disciplinary measures, whether in the form of piecework wages, all share the opposite effect. They are vestiges of slavery and serfdom, when Russian landlords used to say amongst themselves that the peasants were lazy and

would not work the land if not watched.

And do we not now see in Russia a brilliant confirmation of Kropotkin's words: labour productivity is falling, the country is sliding into poverty, while disciplinary measures are increasing and increasing, turning the country into barracks and the workers into mobilised soldiers?

Then there is another question: let us suppose that communism is able to ensure well-being and even wealth to society, but will it not also kill personal freedom? State communism will, answers Kropotkin, but anarchist communism will not.

“Communism, as an economic institution, can take all forms, from total personal freedom to the total enslavement of all.”² But any other economic form is worse in this respect, because it inevitably requires the existence of coercive power: where wage labour and private property are preserved,

The “right to well-being” means the possibility of living like human beings, and of bringing up children to be members of a society better than ours, whilst the “right to work” only means the right to be always a wage-slave, a drudge, ruled over and exploited by the middle class of the future. The right to well-being is the Social Revolution, the right to work means nothing but the Treadmill of Commercialism. It is high time for the worker to assert his right to the common inheritance and to enter into possession.

– “Well-being for all”,
The Conquest of Bread

¹ *Khleb i Volya (Bread and Freedom - The Conquest of Bread)*, Golos Truda (The Voice of Labour) Publishers, 146

² *Sovremennaya Nauka i Anarkhiya (Modern Science and Anarchy)*, 140

some people are made dependent on others and the privileges created must be forcefully guarded against possible encroachments from the disadvantaged part of society. Not only is communism not in conflict with personal freedom, but, on the contrary, “without communism man will never attain the full development of his personality, which is perhaps the most ardent desire of every thinking being.”¹

Communism, at least in relation to the necessities of life, constitutes the solution to which modern societies are heading, and in a civilised society, the only possible form of communism is the one proposed by anarchists, i.e., communism without any authorities. Any other kind of communism is impossible. We have outgrown it. Communism, in its essence, presupposes the equality of all members of the commune and therefore denies all power. On the other hand, no anarchical society of a certain size is conceivable that would not begin by providing everyone with at least a certain level of living comforts obtained jointly by all. Thus, the concepts of communism and anarchism necessarily complement each other.²

Objections are put forward against communism, among other things, on the grounds of the failure that commonly befalls various communist societies – religious communities or socialist colonies. Both suffer from shortcomings that have nothing to do with communism, and it is from these shortcomings that they perish. In the first place, Kropotkin remarks, they are usually too small and unconnected; their members, by force of things, live an artificial life in a too limited sphere of interests. These communities withdraw from the life of the rest of humanity, from its struggles, from its progress.

Besides, they always demand the total subordination of their members to the collective: everyone’s life is controlled, they never belong to

themselves, all of their time is absorbed by the community. This is why all at least remotely independent people, especially young people, usually run away from such communities. “Phalansteries are repugnant to millions of human beings.³ It is true that even the most reserved individual certainly feels the necessity of meeting their fellows for the purpose of common work which becomes more attractive the more the individual feels themselves a part of an immense whole. But it is not so for the hours of leisure, reserved for rest and intimacy... Sometimes a phalanstery is a necessity, but it would be hateful, were it the general rule... As to considerations of economy, which are sometimes laid stress on in favour of phalansteries, they are those of a petty tradesman. The most important economy, the only reasonable one, is to make life pleasant for all, because the person who is satisfied with their life produces infinitely more than the person who curses their surroundings.”⁴

These are some considerations that should now be well thought upon by those who see the goal of socialist construction in the “socialisation of living” and expect in such a way to cure the evils created by using similar methods imbued with military spirit.

In essence, Kropotkin notes, the objections to anarchist communism raised by other socialist schools are not fundamental: almost all recognise communism and anarchism as *an ideal*. After all, Marxists also outline the disappearance of the state following the disappearance of classes as a future endeavour. Anarchist communism is usually rejected on the grounds of its allegedly utopian nature. The majority of socialists do not see the possibility of a direct transition from capitalism to anarchist communism and aim their practical work not at it, but at that form of economic life which, in their opinion, will be realised during the inevitable transitional period. Kropotkin did not seek to prove that anarchist communism would necessarily be implemented immediately in its perfect form, but he did put the question of the transitional period differently.

“But we must remember that any discussion of the

¹ Ibid., 141.

² Ibid., 85.

³ Ed: A phalanstery is a building containing a phalange, or group of people living together in community, free of external regulation and holding property in common. It was first conceptualised by the utopian socialist Charles Fourier.

Kropotkin cautions that this organisational method becomes authoritarian in nature because the community’s needs eventually subsume the individual’s autonomy.

⁴ *Khleb i Volya (Bread and Freedom - The Conquest of Bread)*, Golos Truda (The Voice of Labour) Publishers, 118.

transitions that will have to be made on the way to the goal will be utterly useless unless it is based on the study of those directions, those rudimentary transitional forms that are already emerging.”¹ And here, Kropotkin points out that these directions lead exactly to communism. We cannot dwell here on the numerous examples and proofs of this; we refer the reader, therefore, to the text itself.

But, in this connection, it does not hurt to recall another expression. We all know how often Kropotkin’s extreme optimism is mentioned – with condescending praise by some (“idealist, wonderful man!”) and with censure by others. Indeed, they usually say, such a social system does not require a modern person, but a much more morally advanced one. And

they put aside any thought of this until the time when people develop in some unknown way. Yes, of course, Kropotkin believes in people, especially in their ability to develop and in those feelings of sociality and solidarity inherent in their nature; but isn’t this kind of optimism an indispensable characteristic of all people of progress, revolutionaries and reformers? After all, the argument that people are imperfect, that people are “immature,” that they are savage, ignorant, etc., has always been the domain of conservatives of all kinds, of defenders of the existing order against all attempts at liberation.

However, progressive people have always known that to raise people to be better, more advanced, more cultured, they should first be raised to better living conditions; that slavery can never teach you to be free; and that a war of all against all can never engender humane feelings.

The same is true here: only the anarchist system will produce accomplished anarchists like Kropotkin was, and like few others are today. Therefore, it is necessary to work for it, to advance in its direction without waiting for the quality of people to rise: people will grow as freedom and equality in social formations expand. And, at any rate, it is not the socialists, nor the people of the

future, who can ever be entitled to use the argument of the masses being imperfect and unprepared.

Kropotkin’s anarchist communism is endorsed by a vast majority of anarchists, but not by all. There are individualist anarchists, some of whom are proponents of private property, while others have little concern at all for future social

organisation, concentrating their attention on the inner freedom of an individual in any social order; there are also Proudhonist anarchists. But the fact that anarchist communism is accepted by all those involved in the social struggle of our time, chiefly in the workers’ movement, is not a coincidence nor a question of the temporary success of one idea or another.

Only communism provides the guiding thread in solving a series of issues of positive construction, because it constitutes the necessary condition for making a stateless society possible. All other anarchist systems are plagued by insoluble internal contradictions; anarchist communism alone meets both the requirements of theoretical consistency and those that can foster the creation of practical programmes.

revolutions are made by the people... an edifice founded on centuries of history cannot be destroyed with a few kilos of explosives... For the revolution not to be conjured away, it is necessary that the anarchist and communist idea should penetrate the masses. All those who have the *social* revolution at heart agree on that
– “Agreement”, *La Révolte*, 18 April 1891

...anarchist communism alone meets both the requirements of theoretical consistency and those that can foster the creation of practical programmes

¹ *Sovremennaya Nauka i Anarkhiya (Modern Science and Anarchy)*, 123.

Peter Kropotkin: Recollections and Criticisms of an Old Friend

Errico Malatesta

Studi Sociali, 15 April 1931¹

Peter Kropotkin is without doubt one of those who have contributed perhaps most – perhaps more even than Bakunin and Elisée Reclus – to the elaboration and propagation of anarchist ideas. And he has therefore well deserved the recognition and the admiration that all anarchists feel for him.

But in homage to the truth and in the greater interest of the cause, one must recognise that his activity has not all been wholly beneficial. It was not his fault; on the contrary, it was the very eminence of his qualities which gave rise to the ills I am proposing to discuss.

Naturally, Kropotkin being a mortal among mortals could not always avoid error and embrace the whole truth. One should have therefore profited by his invaluable contribution and continued the search which would lead to further advances. But his literary talents, the importance and volume of his output, his indefatigable activity, the prestige that came to him from his reputation as a great scientist, the fact that he had given up a highly privileged position to defend, at the cost of suffering and danger, the popular cause, and furthermore the fascination of his personality which held the attention of those who had the good fortune to meet him, all made him acquire a notoriety and an influence such that he appeared, and to a great extent he really was, the recognised master for most anarchists.

As a result of which, criticism was discouraged and the development of the anarchist idea was arrested. For many years, in spite of the iconoclastic and progressive spirit of anarchists, most of them so far



Errico Malatesta (1853-1932)

as theory and propaganda were concerned, did no more than study and quote Kropotkin. To express oneself other than the way he did was considered by many comrades almost as heresy.

It would therefore be opportune to subject Kropotkin's teachings to close and critical analysis in order to separate that which is ever real and alive from that which more recent thought and experience will have shown to be mistaken. A matter which would concern not only Kropotkin, for the errors that one can blame him for having committed were already being professed by anarchists before

Kropotkin acquired his eminent place in the movement: he confirmed them and made them last by adding the weight of his talent and his prestige; but all us old militants, or almost all of us, have our share of responsibility.

In writing now about Kropotkin I do not intend to examine his teachings. I only wish to record a few impressions and recollections, which may I believe, serve to make better known his moral and intellectual stature as well as understanding more clearly his qualities and his faults.

But first of all I will say a few words which come from the heart because I cannot think of Kropotkin without being moved by the recollection of his immense goodness. I remember what he did in Geneva in the winter of 1879 to help a group of Italian refugees in dire straits, among them myself; I remember the small attentions, I would call maternal, which he bestowed on me when one night in London having been the victim of an

¹ *Errico Malatesta: His Life and Ideas* (London: Freedom Press, 1993).

accident I went and knocked on his door; I recall the innumerable kind actions towards all sorts of people; I remember the cordial atmosphere with which he was surrounded. Because he was a really good person, of that goodness which is almost unconscious and needs to relieve all suffering and be surrounded by smiles and happiness. One would have in fact said that he was good without knowing it; in any case he didn't like one saying so, and he was offended when I wrote in an article on the occasion of his 70th birthday that his goodness was the first of his qualities. He would rather boast of his energy and courage – perhaps because these latter qualities had been developed in, and for, the struggle, whereas goodness was the spontaneous expression of his intimate nature.

I had the honour and good fortune of being for many years linked to Kropotkin by the warmest friendship.

We loved each other because we were inspired by the same passion, by the same hopes... and also by the same illusions.

Both of us were optimistic by temperament (I believe nevertheless that Kropotkin's optimism

surpassed mine by a long chalk and possibly sprung from a different source) and we saw things with rose tinted spectacles – alas! everything was too rosy – we then hoped, and it is more than fifty years ago, in a revolution to be made in the immediate future which was to have ushered in our ideal society. During these long years there were certainly periods of doubt and discouragement. I remember Kropotkin once telling me: “My dear Errico, I fear we are alone, you and I, in believing a revolution to be near at hand.” But they were passing moods; very soon confidence returned; we explained away the existing difficulties and the scepticism of the comrades and went on working and hoping.

Nevertheless it must not be imagined that on all questions we shared the same views. On the contrary, on many fundamentals we were far from being in agreement, and almost every time we met we would have noisy and heated discussions; but as Kropotkin always felt sure that right was on his side, and could not calmly suffer to be contradicted, and I, on the other hand, had great respect for his erudition and deep concern for his uncertain health, these discussions always ended by changing the subject to avoid undue excitement.

But this did not in any way harm the intimacy of our relationship, because we loved each other and because we collaborated for sentimental rather than intellectual reasons. Whatever may have been our differences of interpretation of the facts, or the arguments by which we justified our actions, in practice we wanted the same things and were motivated by the same intense feeling for freedom, justice and the well-being of all mankind. We could therefore get on together.

And in fact there was never serious disagreement between us until that day in 1914 when we were faced with a question of practical conduct of

capital importance to both of us: that of the attitude to be adopted by anarchists to the [First World] War. On that occasion Kropotkin's old preferences for all that which is Russian and French were reawakened and exacerbated in him, and he declared himself an enthusiastic supporter of the *Entente*. He seemed to forget that he was an Internationalist, a socialist, and an anarchist; he forgot what he himself had written only a short time before about the war that the Capitalists were preparing, and began expressing admiration for the worst Allied statesmen and Generals, and at the same time treated as cowards the anarchists who refused to join the *Union Sacrée*, regretting that his age and his poor health prevented him from taking

Kropotkin renounces anti-militarism because he thinks that the national questions must be solved before the social question. For us, national rivalries and hatreds are among the best means the masters have for perpetuating the slavery of the workers, and we must oppose them with all our strength. And so to the right of the small nationalities to preserve, if you like, their language and their customs, that is simply a question of liberty, and will have a real and final solution only when, the States being destroyed, every human group, nay, every individual, will have the right to associate with, and separate from, every other group.

– Errico Malatesta, *Freedom*, December 1914

up a rifle and marching against the Germans. It was impossible therefore to see eye to eye: for me he was a truly pathological case. All the same it was one of the saddest, most painful moments of my life (and, I dare to suggest, for him too) when, after a more than acrimonious discussion, we parted like adversaries, almost as enemies.

Great was my sorrow at the loss of the friend and for the harm done to the cause as a result of the confusion that would be created among the comrades by his defection. But in spite of everything the love and esteem which I felt for the man were unimpaired, just as the hope that once the moment of euphoria had passed and the foreseeable consequences of the war were viewed in their proper perspective, he would admit his mistake and return to the movement, the Kropotkin of old.

Kropotkin was at the same time a scientist and a social reformer. He was inspired by two passions: the desire for knowledge and the desire to act for the good of humanity, two noble passions which can be mutually useful and which one would like to see in all men, without being, for all this, one and the same thing. But Kropotkin was an eminently systematic personality and he wanted to explain everything with one principle, and reduce everything to unity and often, did so, in my opinion, at the expense of logic.

Thus he used science to support his social aspirations, because in his opinion, they were simply rigorous scientific deductions.

I have no special competence to judge Kropotkin as a scientist. I know that he had in his early youth rendered notable services to geography and geology, and I appreciate the great importance of his book on Mutual Aid, and I am convinced that with his vast culture and noble intelligence, could have made a greater contribution to the advancement of the sciences had his thoughts and activity not been absorbed in the social struggle.¹ Nevertheless it seems to me that he lacked that something which goes to make a true man of science; the capacity to forget one's aspirations and preconceptions and observe facts with cold

¹ His obituary in *The Geographical Journal* expressed regret that Kropotkin's "absorption" in his political views "seriously diminished the services which otherwise he might have rendered to Geography." He "was a keen observer, with a well-trained intellect, familiar with all the sciences bearing on his subject" and his "contributions to geographical science are

objectivity. He seemed to me to be what I would gladly call, a poet of science. By an original intuition, he might have succeeded in foreseeing new truths, but these truths would have needed to be verified by others with less, or no imagination, but who were better equipped with what is called the scientific spirit. Kropotkin was too passionate to be an accurate observer.

His normal procedure was to start with a hypothesis and then look for the facts that would confirm it – which may be a good method for discovering new things; but what happened, and quite unintentionally, was that he did not see the ones which invalidated his hypothesis.

He could not bring himself to admit a fact, and often not even to consider it, if he had not first managed to explain it, that is to fit it into his system.

As an example I will recount an episode in which I played a part.

When I was in the Argentinian Pampas (in the years 1885 to 1889), I happened to read something about the experiments in hypnosis by the School of Nancy, which was new to me. I was very interested in the subject but had no opportunity at the time to find out more. When I was back again in Europe, I saw Kropotkin in London, and asked him if he could give me some information on hypnosis. Kropotkin flatly denied that there was any truth in it; that it was either all a fake or a question of hallucinations. Some time later I saw him again, and the conversation turned once more onto the subject. To my great surprise I found that his opinion had completely changed; hypnotic phenomena had become a subject of interest deserving to be studied. What had happened then? Had he learned new facts or had he had convincing proofs of those he had previously denied? Not at all. He had, quite simply, read in a book, by I don't know which German physiologist, a theory on the relationship between the two hemispheres of the brain which could serve to explain, well or badly, the phenomena of hypnosis.

In view of this mental predisposition which allowed him to accommodate things to suit himself in questions of pure science, in which there are no

of the highest value." Kropotkin "had a singularly attractive personality, sympathetic nature, a warm but perhaps too tender heart, and a wide knowledge in literature, science, and art." (J.S.K., "Obituary: Prince Kropotkin", *The Geographical Journal*, April 1921, 316-319. (*Black Flag*))

reasons why passion should obfuscate the intellect, one could foresee what would happen over those questions which intimately concerned his deepest wishes and his most cherished hopes.

Kropotkin adhered to the materialist philosophy that prevailed among scientists in the second half of the 19th century, the philosophy of Moleschott, Buchner, Vogt, and others; and consequently his concept of the Universe was rigorously mechanistic.

According to his system, Will (a creative power whose source and nature we cannot comprehend, just as, likewise, we do not understand the nature and source of “matter” or of any of the other “first principles”) – I was saying, Will which contributes much or little in determining the conduct of individuals – and of society, does not exist and is a mere illusion. All that has been, that is and will be, from the path of the stars to the birth and decline of a civilisation, from the perfume of a rose to the smile on a mother’s lips, from an earthquake to the thoughts of a Newton, from a tyrant’s cruelty to a saint’s goodness, everything had to, must, and will occur as a result of an inevitable sequence of causes and effects of mechanical origin, which leaves no possibility of variety. The illusion of Will is itself a mechanical fact.

Naturally if Will has no power, if everything is necessary and cannot be otherwise, then ideas of freedom, justice and responsibility have no meaning, and have no bearing on reality.

Thus logically all we can do is to contemplate what is happening in the world, with indifference, pleasure or pain, depending on one’s personal feelings, without hope and without the possibility of changing anything.

So Kropotkin, who was very critical of the fatalism of the Marxists, was, himself the victim of mechanistic fatalism which is far more inhibiting.

But philosophy could not kill the powerful Will that was in Kropotkin. He was too strongly convinced of the truth of his system to abandon it or stand by passively while others cast doubt on it; he was too passionate, and too desirous of liberty and justice to be halted by the difficulty of a logical contradiction, and give up the struggle. He got round the dilemma by introducing anarchism into his system and making it into a scientific truth.

He would seek confirmation for his view by maintaining that all recent discoveries in all the sciences, from astronomy right through to biology and sociology coincided in demonstrating always more clearly that anarchy is the form of social organisation which is imposed by natural laws.

One could have pointed out that whatever are the conclusions that can be drawn from contemporary science, it was a fact that if new discoveries were to destroy present scientific beliefs, he would have remained an anarchist in spite of science, just as he was an anarchist in spite of logic. But Kropotkin would not have been able to admit the possibility of a conflict between science and his social aspirations and would have always thought up a means, no matter whether it was logical or not, to reconcile his mechanistic philosophy with his anarchism.

Thus, after having said that “anarchy is a concept of the Universe based on the mechanical interpretation of phenomena which embrace the whole of nature including the life of societies” (*I confess I have never succeeded in understanding what this might mean*) Kropotkin would forget his mechanistic concept as a matter of no importance, and throw himself into the struggle with the fire, enthusiasm, and confidence of one who believes in the efficacy of his Will and who hopes by his activity to obtain or contribute to the achievement of the things he wants.

In point of fact Kropotkin’s anarchism and communism were much more the consequence of his sensibility than of reason. In him the heart spoke first and then reason followed to justify and reinforce the impulses of the heart.

What constituted the true essence of his character was his love of mankind, the sympathy he had for the poor and the oppressed. He truly suffered for others, and found injustice intolerable even if it operated in his favour.

At the time when I frequented him in London, he earned his living by collaborating to scientific magazines and other publications, and lived in relatively comfortable circumstances; but he felt a kind of remorse at being better off than most manual workers and always seemed to want to excuse himself for the small comforts he could afford. He often said, when speaking of himself and of those in similar circumstances: “If we have been able to educate ourselves and develop our

faculties; if we have access to intellectual satisfactions and live in not too bad material circumstances, it is because we have benefited, through an accident of birth, by the exploitation to which the workers are subjected; and therefore the struggle for the emancipation of the workers is a duty, a debt which we must repay.”

It was for his love of justice, and as if by way of expiating the privileges that he had enjoyed, that he had given up his position, neglected the studies he so enjoyed, to devote himself to the education of the workers of St. Petersburg and the struggle against the despotism of the Tsars. Urged on by these same feelings he had subsequently joined the International and accepted anarchist ideas. Finally, among the different interpretations of anarchism he chose and made his own the communist-anarchist programme which, being based on solidarity and on love, goes beyond justice itself.

But as was obviously foreseeable, his philosophy was not without influence on the way he conceived the future and on the form the struggle for its achievement should take.

Since, according to his philosophy that which occurs must necessarily occur, so also the communist-anarchism he desired, must inevitably triumph as if by a law of Nature.

And this freed him from any doubt and removed all difficulties from his path. The bourgeois world was destined to crumble; it was already breaking up and revolutionary action only served to hasten the process.

His immense influence as a propagandist as well as stemming from his great talents, rested on the fact that he showed things to be so simple, so easy, so inevitable, that those who heard him speak or read

his articles were immediately fired with enthusiasm.

Moral problems vanished because he attributed to the “people,” the working masses, great abilities and all the virtues. With reason he praised the moral influence of work, but did not sufficiently clearly see the depressing and corrupting effects of misery and subjection. And he thought that it would be sufficient to abolish the capitalists’

privileges and the rulers’ power for all men immediately to start loving each other as brothers and to care for the interests of others as they would for their own.

In the same way he did not see the material difficulties, or he easily dismissed them. He had accepted the idea, widely held among the anarchists at the time, that the accumulated stocks of food and manufactured goods, were so abundant that for a long time to come it would not be necessary to worry about production; and he always declared that the immediate problem was one of consumption, that for the triumph of the revolution it was necessary to satisfy the needs of everyone immediately as well as abundantly, and that production would follow the rhythm of consumption. From this

idea came that of “taking from the storehouses” (“presa nel mucchio”), which he popularised and which is certainly the simplest way of conceiving communism and the most likely to please the masses, but which is also the most primitive, as well as truly utopian, way. And when he was made to observe that this accumulation of products could not possibly exist, because the bosses normally only allow for the production of what they can sell at a profit, and that possibly at the beginning of a revolution it would be necessary to organise a

At the risk of passing as a simpleton, I confess that I would never have believed it possible that Socialists – even Social Democrats – would applaud and voluntarily take part, either on the side of the Germans or on the Allies, in a war like the one that is at present devastating Europe. But what is there to say when the same is done by Anarchists—not numerous, it is true, but having amongst them comrades whom we love and respect most?

– Errico Malatesta, “Anarchists have forgotten their principles”, *Freedom*, November 1914.

system of rationing, and press for an intensification of production rather than call upon [the people] to help themselves from a storehouse which in the event would be non-existent, Kropotkin set about studying the problem at first hand and arrived at the conclusion that in fact such abundance did not exist and that some countries were continually threatened by shortages. But he recovered [his optimism] by thinking of the great potentialities of agriculture aided by science. He took as examples the results obtained by a few cultivators and gifted agronomists over limited areas and drew the most encouraging conclusions, without thinking of the difficulties that would be put in the way by the ignorance and aversion of peasants to what is change, and in any case to the time that would be needed to achieve general acceptance of the new forms of cultivation and of distribution.

As always, Kropotkin saw things as he would have wished them to be and as we all hope they will be one day; he considered as existing or immediately realizable that which must be won through long and bitter struggle.

At bottom Kropotkin conceived nature as a kind of Providence, thanks to which there had to be harmony in all things, including human societies.

And this has led many anarchists to repeat *that "Anarchy is Natural Order,"* a phrase with an exquisite Kropotkinian flavour.

If it is true that the law of Nature is Harmony, I suggest one would be entitled to ask why Nature has waited for anarchists to be born, and goes on waiting for them to triumph, in order to destroy the terrible and destructive conflicts from which mankind has always suffered.

Would one not be closer to the truth in saying that anarchy is the struggle, in human society, against the disharmonies of Nature?

I have stressed the two errors which, in my opinion, Kropotkin committed – his theory of fatalism and his excessive optimism, because I believe I have observed the harmful results they have produced on our movement.

May the errors of the past serve to teach us to do better in the future

There were comrades who took the fatalist theory – which they euphemistically referred to as determinism – seriously and as a result lost all revolutionary spirit. The revolution, they said, is not made; it will come when the time is ripe for it, and it is useless, unscientific and even ridiculous to try to provoke it. And armed with such sound reasons, they withdrew from the movement and went about their own business. But it would be wrong to believe that this was a convenient excuse to withdraw from the struggle. I

have known many comrades of great courage and worth, who have exposed themselves to great dangers and who have sacrificed their freedom and even their lives in the name of anarchy while being convinced of the uselessness of their actions. They have acted out of disgust for present society, in a spirit of revenge, out of desperation, or the love of the grand gesture, but without thinking thereby of serving the cause of revolution, and consequently without selecting the target and the opportune moment, or without bothering to coordinate their action with that of others.

On the other hand, those who without troubling themselves with philosophy have wanted to work towards, and for, the revolution, have imagined the problems as much simpler than they are in reality, did not foresee the difficulties, and prepare for them... and because of this we have found ourselves impotent even when there was perhaps a chance of effective action.

May the errors of the past serve to teach us to do better in the future.

I have said what I had to say.

I do not think my strictures on him can diminish Kropotkin, the person, who remains, in spite of everything one of the shining lights of our movement.

If they are just, they will serve to show that no man is free from error, not even when he is gifted with the great intelligence and the generous heart of a Kropotkin.

In any case anarchists will always find in his writings a treasury of fertile ideas and in his life an example and an incentive in the struggle for all that is good.

Kropotkin and Malatesta

Gaston Leval

Les Cahiers de Contre-courant (Paris: Sofrim, 1957)¹

Contre-courant [Counter-current] recently reproduced an article in which Malatesta attacked Kropotkin's intellectual oeuvre. This article wasn't the only one on the same subject published by the same author. I have read others which, in their time, had exercised in South America (where I then was) a real but passing influence in certain anarchist-communist milieux. I was myself, at first brush, impressed by his apparent logic, and at the death of Malatesta I affirmed in the Buenos Aires journal *Nervio* that the Malatestian principle was superior to that of Kropotkin.

But, as an autodidact in constant training, always searching, always studying, and taking up Kropotkin as well as Malatesta, it was not long before I convinced myself that the position of the latter led to an impasse, to a kind of medieval scholasticism in which study would be banned, and in which the dialectics of the most skilful literati would outweigh a thorough knowledge of the facts. That is, in rebuffing science we in reality rebuff all systematic and serious study of the different problems that occupy us – because such is what science is – and we condemn anarchist thought to be nothing more than prattle, more or less skilled, more or less eloquent, but without consistency and without the possibility of having a real scope in the social thought of the present and the future. That, in practical terms, was leading us to nothingness. Only the vain, in this century in which coordinated studies provide and continue to provide so many relevant factors which limit our pretensions to know everything and to wish to decide everything, can be satisfied with it.

Malatesta's critiques were formulated after the death of Kropotkin, which is and has been deeply



Gaston Leval (1895-1978)

regrettable. Taken on the whole, I daresay that only a few valid points stand. This is not apparent for those who have not read sufficiently either the attacker, or his target.

Malatesta is off-base when he presents Kropotkin as a simple "poet of science." It would first be necessary to know in what way he is qualified to say so. For all his keen intelligence does not change the fact that he was never anything but a student who frequented revolutionary circles more than the university, and that subsequently nothing in all of his writings permits us to attribute him a sufficient erudition to judge Kropotkin

this way.

Kropotkin was, at 30 years of age, named the president of the Russian Geographical Society, for the brilliant discoveries he had made concerning the general orography of Asia. He was, replacing Huxley, the great continuator of Darwin, and a collaborator-editor of the British Encyclopaedia. His value as a naturalist was apparent in books such as *Mutual Aid*, where for the first time he presented a whole social philosophy founded on the solidarity within animal species and in the prehistory and history of humanity. Elisée Reclus got Kropotkin to collaborate in the editing of the *Universal Geography*, on what concerned Russia and Asia. Whoever has read *Fields, Factories, and Workshops* has seen his vast knowledge in material economy, a knowledge which, along with that of the history of civilization, bursts from the page in the first chapters of *The Conquest of Bread*, which we find in the powerful pamphlet *The State: Its Historic Role*, and in *Modern Science and Anarchy*. *Ethics* shows an immense erudition, and even this

¹ <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/gaston-leval-kropotkin-and-malatesta>

or that chapter in *Words of a Rebel* prove a knowledge which exceeded that of an amateur. If, at the moment of Kropotkin's imprisonment in France, men such as Herbert Spencer signed the petition in protest on behalf of the English scientific world, this was not only because he was a political criminal.

A "poet of science" he may have been, but he was much more than this. There have been greater men of science, but Kropotkin was one of them. And we can regret not having had many others of the same calibre – the one I cannot forget being Elisée Reclus.

Thus launched, Malatesta made some fundamental reproaches of Kropotkin. First, that of having based anarchy on science alone, and on nothing but science. For this he reproduced many times a phrase pulled from *Modern Science and Anarchy*. This sentence, thus: "Anarchy is a conception of the universe, based on a mechanical interpretation of phenomena, which embraces all of nature, including the life of societies." What does that have to do with anarchy? asked Malatesta, several times. Whether or not the universe is or is not explicable according to the latest discoveries of physics does not at all preclude that the oppression and exploitation of man by man are an injustice, and that we must fight them.

In this, he was right, and this first reaction is so obvious that he has all of his readers with him. But his first fault was to present this sentence, extracted from a paragraph which appeared in a chapter of a book which contains many others, as the only base which Kropotkin gave to anarchy.

I am obliged to say that in proceeding this way Malatesta absolutely deforms Kropotkin's thought. Anyone who reads *Modern Science and Anarchy* will see, on page 46 of the French edition, that the reproduced sentence belongs to the chapter entitled

"The Place of Anarchy in Modern Science".¹ There Kropotkin responds to the question: "What place does anarchy occupy in the great intellectual movement of the nineteenth century?" Situating himself on this ground where philosophy cannot ignore new discoveries, he explains that science, that is to say the knowledge acquired on the nature

and constitution of matter, the mechanism of the universe and the evolution of living forms and social organisms, constitutes a whole which gives a sure basis to materialist philosophy; that this materialist philosophy, by eliminating the authoritarian conception that supposes a God as creator and director of the world, allows the development of a philosophy where progress is the work of a perfectly natural evolution, without the interposition of

an exterior source or intelligence. That consequently natural laws – or rather natural "facts" – are essentially non-authoritarian, and that this vast synthesis of the world permits the elaboration of a new social philosophy. Thus, says Kropotkin, the place of anarchy is "ahead of the intellectual movement of the nineteenth century."

That this exceeds the intellectual preoccupations of Malatesta is his own affair. Bakunin, before Kropotkin, had elaborated a similar philosophy. For him, socialism was the direct and logical consequence of the materialist conception of the universe. But we well know that he had other reasons to fight. Kropotkin also had his own. Reading him is enough to know this.

Because, as Malatesta seems to ignore, from the first chapter of *Modern Science and Anarchy*, everyone can read: "Like socialism in general, and

Do you want to have the freedom to say and write whatever seems right to you? Do you want to have the right to meet and organise? – It is not to a parliament that we must go to ask for permission; it is not a law that we must beg from the Senate. Let us be an organised force, capable of showing teeth every time anyone dares to restrict our right to speak or to meet... Freedoms are not given, they are taken.

– "Political Rights", *Words of a Rebel*

¹ Page 125 of the English-language edition, *Modern Science and Anarchy* (Edinburgh: AK Press, 2018). (*Black Flag*)

like every other social movement, anarchy is born among the people, and it will only maintain its vitality and its creative force as long as it remains popular.” On page 3 he insists at length on this claim. Then he shows the popular elements fighting against oppression, creating customs such as judicial norms, but preceded most often by “more or less isolated individuals who rebelled.”¹

“All reformers, politicians, religious leaders, economists,” he writes, “belonged to the first category. And, among them, one always finds individuals who, without waiting for all of their fellow citizens, or even for a minority of them, to be imbued with the same intentions, rose up against oppression – whether in more or less numerous groups, or all alone, as individuals if they were not followed. We encounter these revolutionaries in all epochs of history.”

The basis of anarchy is therefore not limited to the latest discoveries of physics, and it’s a complete distortion of Kropotkin’s thought to say so.

It’s another unfounded reproach of Malatesta’s that depicts Kropotkin as advocating the submission of man to universal determinism, in the sacred name of science. If some “scientists” have written similar things, Kropotkin is not responsible, anymore than Malatesta is responsible that in the name of his “voluntarism” some individuals chuck bombs to demonstrate their revolutionary will. Kropotkin – and here again Bakunin who had preceded him, with an unsurpassable depth – was too intelligent not to know that the human will, however determined it may be, is also, on its own scale, a factor on the cosmic and above all planetary determinism, and never, in any writing, did he recommend the submission of man to physical laws, or laws of biology. The citations I have given are sufficient proof.

We can prove it again by reading all of Kropotkin’s books. Whether it be in *The Great French Revolution*, in his *Memoirs [of a Revolutionist]*, in *Words of a Rebel*, in *Modern Science and Anarchy*, in various pamphlets, for instance “Anarchist Morality,” in which he exhorts the youth to struggle for justice, in the name of fullness of life; in the pamphlet “To The Young,” etc., Kropotkin always considered the factor of human will (which is the principle Malatestian discovery) as one of the necessary elements of history. To take one aspect of his thought – which in every way exceeds

philosophic mediocrity – and making it all of his thought, is not a fair treatment, and not ethically defensible.

I am familiar with nearly everything which has been published of Malatesta’s writings, in Italian and in Spanish, and I am familiar with Kropotkin, as with other theorists of anarchism. I can say that as concerns science, Malatesta is the only one who took this negative and contemptuous view of science. It’s a position which coincides with the dangerous antiscientific reaction of a certain spiritualist philosophy of which Benedetto Croce is the most notable theorist in Italy. That we would react against the excesses of the materialist conceptions of the nineteenth century, which ignore too much, in the slow discovery of truth, of that which psychology and the study of the physical world would reveal to us, is good and necessary. That we would repudiate science itself: no. That is why, in certain anarchist milieux where we study, the influence exercised by Malatesta and his voluntarist philosophy – it is already nonsense to oppose the will to science – has been ephemeral. This is why, in occupying myself with economy, sociology, and the reorganization of society (other than in the imagination), not contenting myself with the discursive method to understand the origin of the state and the evolution of human societies, I have taken an entirely different path than that given by Malatesta. Not having been born infused with science, nor with a genius sufficient in itself, I modestly believed I had to study.

In my intellectual formation, it is the method recommended by Kropotkin which has proved for me to be the most useful. But, let us repeat it, was this method solely Kropotkinian? Not at all. All the non-individualist anarchist social thinkers: Proudhon, Bakunin, Elisée Reclus, Ricardo Mella, Pietro Gori, Anselmo Lorenzo, Jean Grave, Tarrida del Marmol, etc., have seen in science, that is, it must be repeated again, in knowledge as broad, serious and profound as possible, one of the bases or one of the weapons of anarchism. In this sense, Malatesta is the only one of his opinion, and in attacking Kropotkin, he attacks all the others.

He has the right to take the position that pleases him, but if I already responded to his anti-Kropotkin articles, if I answer them tirelessly, it is because they demolish, for those who are not warned, Kropotkin as a sociologist and as a thinker. Reading these articles, we might believe that it is

¹ Page 85 of the English-language edition. (*Black Flag*)

useless to read Kropotkin, and useless to study. Sociology becomes the domain of those who know how to rattle off an article according to their momentary inspiration, and to defend (because they have an excellent literary don, in Malatesta) the most contradictory things under an apparent logic of reasoning. It is a dialectical question, a question of dialectical games.

This happens frequently with Malatesta. I had, around 1934, with his disciple Luigi Fabbri, who then published *Studi Sociali* in Montevideo, a correspondence in which this comrade and friend wrote me that it would be necessary to pass through authoritarian stages before the triumph of our ideas in a revolution. I responded to him that he had the duty to write what he thought, and proposed to him a debate in his journal in which I collaborated. He accepted. Fabbri defended ideas which were those of Malatesta, as he emphasized in his letter. They seemed to me so different from what I knew of the latter that I began to read methodically the articles, pamphlets, and collections of articles of Malatesta and I noticed that he advocated the same issues, always with the same dialectical ease, the same gift of reasoning which in turn makes the uninformed reader accept the most contradictory theses. With the same convincing logic he declared that if anarchists did not know how to orient the revolution by putting themselves at its head, it would be the authoritarians who would do it, “and

then, goodbye to anarchy!”; or that the anarchists being a minority, could not think of making an anarchist revolution without exercising a dictatorship, which would be the negation of anarchy; or that, as we could not cope with all the tasks that a revolution would impose, we should be content with other parties taking charge of them

(and we still wonder what would happen to anarchy); then, and this was his last position, that in a revolution we had to limit ourselves to “free experimentalism.” In what did that consist? To demand from the Bolshevik Communists, arms in hand if necessary, our right to practice our ideas, to experiment them freely in the anarchist islands formed in the midst of the dictatorial revolution. The slightest logic, and historical experience, proved to us that this would never be possible. It was enough to remember what had happened in Russia. Even if they did not resort to violent dissolution and massacre against us, as Trotsky had done in Russia, it would be enough to deprive us of raw materials to stifle such attempts dangerous for the dictatorship. Malatesta

Developed in the course of history to establish and maintain the monopoly of land ownership in favour of one class – which, for that reason, became the ruling class par excellence – what means can the State provide to abolish this monopoly that the working class could not find in its own strength and groups? Then perfected during the course of the nineteenth century to ensure the monopoly of industrial property, trade, and banking to new enriched classes, to which the State was supplying “arms” cheaply by stripping the land from the village communes and crushing the cultivators by tax – what advantages could the State provide for abolishing these same privileges? Could its governmental machine, developed for the creation and upholding of these privileges, now be used to abolish them? Would not the new function require new organs? And these new organs would they not have to be created by the workers themselves, in their unions, their federations, completely outside the State?

– Modern Science and Anarchy

did not seem to perceive this. And all these contradictory dispositions were defended almost simultaneously. It was the same with other problems of decisive importance, such as that of unions before a revolution. Six months apart, Malatesta advocated their disappearance because, being born out of the struggle against capitalism, they would have no reason to exist after capitalism, or else the activity of anarchists in the unions, the

use of which he advocated as the basis of the new society. Also, contradictions as to the most recommendable economic legal principle. Malatesta defended anarchist communism quite well, and also certain forms of collectivism. And when Fabbri wrote a book on the thought of his master – which thought had, in part, paralyzed his own – he could only conclude that in economy, Malatesta wanted “freedom.”

The absence of method, of coordinated thought has caused a brilliant intelligence, a sharp mind to be somehow wasted for lack of coherence, of continuity, of will in intellectual effort.

Moreover, Malatesta, more briefly, impugned Bakunin, reproaching him, as if this had been the essential and the only aspect of the thought of this formidable man as a thinker and organizer, of having defied nature. It is truly disconcerting.

Of course, one finds some errors in Kropotkin’s writings. I have already formulated my reservations on various points. Malatesta was right when he wrote – though others have said it as well – that Kropotkin elaborated certain ideas, then strove to justify them through science. But does this go against the use of science in sociology, of the scientific method, applied according to the aptitudes and the culture of each, of the systematic and serious study, coordinated, controlled and recontrolled which, even if it does not claim to be scientific, is so without knowing it? Not at all. When Kropotkin sees only mutual aid associations in the guilds of the Middle Ages, he can be criticized for not having sufficiently emphasized the struggles and inequalities between the guilds and the formation of a bourgeoisie of masters against the companions who were to compose the proletariat. When he opposes customary rights to the state, we can respond that if it is the case that human societies have been known, in certain periods, to live on the basis of these rights, that customs have been often worse than the law, and that all things considered, the latter is still preferable. When he attributes to the masses a too-spontaneous creative gift, we can respond that is wrong to do so because he also recommends what

the Kropotkinist “mass” has not wanted to see, the responsible and relentless activity of revolutionary minorities, and that of the anarchist minority for the present and the immediate future.

We can still make other reproaches, justified and founded otherwise than those of Malatesta. But I ask if, in the elaboration of all sciences, in the research and discovery of all the great truths which involve prolonged studies, has it not always been so? Must science be abandoned if it has made more than one mistake? To demolish everything because contradictions are revealed in the successive contributions of researchers? And to fall back on an empiricism dominated by ignorance or irresponsibility?

Whatever may be the errors for which we may reproach Kropotkin, at the very least the method he recommended offers, as is proper with all scientific method, the possibility of correction, rectification, and successive complement. Those who apply it will have a much greater chance to find the truth than those who will write a bit haphazardly, as has Malatesta. A social movement, a social philosophy, a current of thought cannot work usefully, according to the goals they pursue, unless they act in an organic way, in a continuity of coherent efforts where the critical spirit, which oversees all research, is a guide for a better construction.

Malatesta has not been an example of this, and he himself, the anti-Kropotkinian, was Kropotkinian in the best of his pamphlets, the small masterpiece, “Anarchy.” The theses he developed there are borrowed from *Mutual Aid*, which I name again, because this book, with all we learn therein, poses the foundation of a biological and social philosophy, theoretical and practical, of immense scope. If we are capable of developing the fundamental theses and intrinsic possibilities, even as we prune what may appear to us to be questionable, our ideas will exert an enormous positive influence on the future of humanity. They will not exert any with the “thought,” or the Malatestian method of thought-absent-method, in spite of the sometimes interesting insights which one finds there.

To ensure that everyone can live by working freely, without being forced to sell his labour and his liberty to others who accumulate wealth by the labour of their serfs – this is what the next revolution must do.

– “Expropriation”, *Words of a Rebel*

On Anarchism

Kropotkin's contribution to anarchism was immense. He is best known as a leading advocate of anarchist-communism, although it must be stressed that he did not invent the idea – he was imprisoned in Russia when it developed within the Italian section of the Federalist International – but he quickly became its leading champion. He had joined the “Bakuninist”-wing of the International in 1872 and re-joined it after his daring escape from prison in 1876. Like others, he called himself a collectivist and only embraced communism (in the sense of “from each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs) in 1878-9 along with others in the Jura Federation.

This evolution can be seen in our first article, a report of his speech at the 1878 congress of the Jura Federation. The topics addressed in this are expanded upon in a subsequent speech in 1879 and article “The Anarchist Idea from the Point of View of Its Practical Realisation” (both included in the new edition of *Words of a Rebel* [PM Press, 2022]). Then follows an article on “Selfishness or Solidarity”, written around the same time as his famous pamphlet, *Anarchist Morality*, which notes that the two concepts are not distinct but interwoven just as our lives are.

Next is the somewhat reflective article on anarchist organisation, “Agreement”, which discusses both the failures of the past and perspectives for the future of anarchist activity. This is part of an extensive debate in which Kropotkin urges anarchists to get involved in popular struggles, not least the labour movement and specifically the agitation over the 1st of May (other articles on this can be found in *Direct Struggle Against Capital: A Peter Kropotkin Anthology* [AK Press, 2014]). This position can also be seen in his 1895 note to an English-translation of *The Spirit of Revolt* and his comments on “Anarchy and its means of struggle, the International” written over ten years later. As will become clear in the next section – On Class War – Kropotkin was an early advocate of what became known as syndicalism, albeit with an awareness of the need for anarchists to organise as anarchists to influence the struggle towards revolution.

We also include two general introductions to anarchism. The first is a speech from 1893, the full speech was serialised in *La Révolte* and issued as a still untranslated pamphlet. The second is a pamphlet written twenty years later, *The Anarchist Principle* (a different translation of the latter can be found in *Direct Struggle Against Capital*). In addition, there is an article on the impact of State repression on the movement written in 1895 for the then newly launched *Les Temps Nouveaux*.

Anarchist Communism sums up all that is most beautiful and most durable in the progress of humanity; the sentiment of justice, the sentiment of liberty, and solidarity or community of interest. It guarantees the free evolution, both of the individual and of society. Therefore, it will triumph.

– *The Place of Anarchism in Socialistic Evolution*

Annual Congress of the Jura Federation of the IWA

Held in Fribourg on August 3, 4 and 5, 1878

“Congrès annuel de la Fédération jurassienne de l’AIT”, *L’Avant-garde*, 12 August 1878

LEVASCHOV summarises as follows the essential points that should be brought out in the anarchist programme that we propose to draw up: 1st *Collectivism* compared to the *authoritarian Communism* of the other schools, that is to say the collective ownership of the land, houses, raw materials, capital and instruments of labour, and distribution of the products of labour according to the method found suitable by communes and associations; 2nd the negation of the *State* and the free federation of autonomous communes and producer groups; 3rd and this is the point which especially contributed to producing the split between the anarchists and the statist – that a social revolution cannot be produced otherwise than by the spontaneous uprising of the people on a vast scale, and by the violent expropriation of the current holders of capital of all kinds by the communes and the producer groups themselves – an expropriation which can only take place when the country is going through of a few years of complete disorganisation in all the functions of the *State*; that during this period any legislative assembly having real power can only hinder the progress of the revolution; 4th as an inevitable consequence of the negation of the *State* and of this way of envisaging the revolution, the anarchists not only refuse to apply any tactic which would lead to the strengthening of the already shaken idea of the *State*; but moreover they seek to awaken in the people – by theoretical propaganda and above all by insurrectionary acts – grassroots spirit, sentiment and initiative, from the double point of view of the violent expropriation of property and the disorganisation of the *State*.

[...]

LEVASCHOV insists on the importance, for anarchists, of the claim to communal autonomy, from both a theoretical and practical point of view. The historical phase we are going through today is that of the disintegration of *States*. Formed by violence and by all sorts of inequities, which today have become contradictory or absurd from all points of view that once served to justify their constitution (identity of languages or races, natural borders, economic units, historical agglomerations, European equilibrium,.... etc.), undermined by their expenditure which inevitably always grow by surpassing the financial resources of the people, undermined by wars which are inevitable in bourgeois societies, having reached the impossibility of managing the infinitely varied affairs of human societies, falling into decline by the very decay of the idea of the *State* in minds, thus becoming more and

more an impossibility by the very force of things, *States* are inevitably heading towards their fall, to make way for free and freely federated communes. It is necessarily under the flag of the independence of the communes, urban and rural, that the next revolutions will take place, it is also within the independent communes that the socialist tendencies of the masses will necessarily manifest themselves: it is there on the basis of collectivism that the first outlines of the new society will be made. So working for the free commune means working for the historic phase through which we shall pass to a better future. This is the theoretical side of the question. As for the practical side, which interests us above all at the moment – it is in the commune and in the immense variety of issues of communal interest that we shall find the most favourable field for theoretical propaganda and for the insurrectional realisation of our collectivist and anarchist ideas. The affairs of the urban and rural commune are of great interest to a large part of the inhabitants; and it is above all by taking an active part in the daily affairs of the communes that we can demonstrate in a way visible and comprehensible to all, the evils of present-day society and the benefits that would result from the application of our economic and political principles. From the economic point of view, the commune presents an excellent terrain for the propaganda of collectivism, and can serve to prepare the ground for economic revolution. From the political point of view, the commune is the powerful weapon of war against the *State*. Finally – and *Levaschov* insists above all on this advantage, citing a few facts in support – the affairs that arise in communes, either in times of strikes, or on the subject of taxes, etc., make towns and villages the field where those insurrections best germinate that go before every great revolution and prepare the popular idea and sentiment. *Levaschov* therefore strongly urges the sections of the Jura to follow communal affairs closely, to take advantage of all the incidents they can provide which can be resolved in one of those insurrections which will certainly not take long to take place on communalist-socialist ground.

[..]

LEVASCHOV also emphasises the enormous difference that must be made between being concerned about the details of communal life in order to achieve legally some impotent improvements, or seizing upon these incidents to agitate minds for the benefit of revolutionary socialism. He goes into some considerations drawn from the latest Spanish local uprisings.

Selfishness or Solidarity

“Égoïsme ou Solidarité ?”, *La Révolte*, 28 September 1889

Instead of arguments we are used to throwing words. Thus we are accused, we who, drawing inspiration from modern positivism, want to counter the so-called scientific economics and philosophy which, by the work of Marx and his followers, have so far prevailed amongst socialists and have affected even anarchists, we are accused of sentimentalism and they believe that we are crushed by this stigma.

Sentimentalism, you mean the principle and practice of solidarity? Very well, so be it. Sentiment has always been and is still the most powerful lever of progress. It is that which elevates man above momentary individual interests, at the very least above his material interests. It is that which unites the oppressed in one thought, in one need for emancipation. It was that which taught man to rebel, not for his exclusive interest but for the humanity of which he is part, to rebel even without the hope of victory, but merely to leave behind a protest, an affirmation, an example.

Moreover – and in all circumstances of life – men fraternise by sentiment, even when cold reason divides them.

Anarchy is the organisation of solidarity – as the present state is the reign of selfishness. Selfishness and solidarity are, whatever one says, two contrary, antagonistic principles, especially in today's society.

You cannot be selfish without doing harm to someone or everyone.

The reason is that man is an essentially sociable being; that his life is composed of countless threads which extend visibly and invisibly into the lives of others; that, finally, he is not an entire being [by himself], but an integral part of humanity. There is no dividing line between one man and another, or between the individual and society: there is no moral *mine* and *thine*, as there is no economic *thine* and *mine*.

In addition to our own life, we live a little in the lives of others and of humanity. In truth, our whole lives are a kind of reflection of the latter: we do not eat, we do not walk, we do not open our eyes to the light, we do not

close them for sleep without having countless proofs of our intimate connection to a host of our fellows who work with us and for us, with whom we meet at every moment and who we can consider somehow as part of ourselves, as entering the sphere of our existence.

This explains another thing: why life is not everything; why it leaves behind it memories, affections, traces; why we all live, some more and some less, a little after us.

If the sun goes out, it is said, its light would illuminate us still for eight minutes. A similar phenomenon occurs in the moral world. Must we give an example? Our martyrs of Chicago and Russia, who are still alive and will live long in us and amongst us and everywhere where there are men who think like us.

Here is how we understand selfishness and solidarity, especially in the current social environment. One is the way by which men are divided; the other is the way by which they unite. Just think of the circumstances of a strike to realise the difference. Now there is another meaning of the word *selfishness*. There are those who understand by selfishness the desire of man to satisfy all his needs. In this sense, we are, we must be, all

selfish. The healthy man is more so than the infirm.

Nobody preaches maceration of the flesh, nor frugality, nor abstinence, nor Malthusianism.

The backward preachers of these theological virtues want to mutilate man and degrade him morally as well as physically, they want to diminish life. An intellectually and morally developed man feels his physical needs more than any other, but he also feels moral needs, and he sometimes sacrifices the former to the latter. Man does not live by bread alone, and those who preach selfishness preach to some extent moral abstinence, moral Malthusianism. Man must not only enjoy physically but also morally, and if a good diet is necessary to him, the feeling of solidarity, love of comrades, inner satisfaction are at least equally necessary to him.

We are told that every man is by nature selfish; that the altruist is himself a perfected egoist, solidarity being based upon a calculated interest. Let it be so, though the argument implies that man is guided from the beginning by reason rather than instinctively following the impulses of his sentiments.

Then again, even if this selfish calculation existed at the start, the characteristic of utility disappears at some point from the evolution of moral conduct.

We explain ourselves.

We may have been compelled to enter into a friendship for the pleasure of conversing with an intelligent man, for the assistance our comrade might give us in certain circumstances or for some other self-serving reason. But it happens that after a certain time, this motive loses its effectiveness, even disappears, and we love our comrade for himself. The effect is independent of the cause; the sentiment takes root in us; and we love because we love. It is the perfection of sentiment.

Likewise, we can begin to love a person of the other sex only for the pleasure that it offers us; but, especially amongst persons whose moral sense is developed, the transformation of sexual love into friendship, surviving old age and death, almost always happens.

It also happens that we are attached to an ideal.

Maybe in the beginning because we think that our action could bring happiness to ourselves and our loved ones; but we become more attached to it, until we love the idea for the idea, to the point of sacrificing to it our life and sometimes what is even harder than life, reputation, the love of parents, the happiness of the people whose fate is closely bound to ours.

These are facts, and we cannot deny them.

Those who reduce altruism to a calculation; abnegation, sacrifice to a gratification; friendship to an open tally between two people; finally, all that elevates man above his individuality to a miserable discovery of selfishness itself, deceiving himself on his true feelings, and they run the risk of the one who falsely cried wolf: they little by little insinuate into the heart of man true selfishness,

Social Movement

***Le Révolté*, 11 December 1880**

A lecture, organised by the Carpenters Union, took place on Wednesday, 1 December [1880], in the Treiber room. Nearly two hundred people attended the talk.

The speaker, comrade Kropotkin, gave an overview of the economic situation in Europe and the influence exerted upon industry and especially upon the worker by the rapid development of large-scale production. He then showed by figures, taken mainly from the report of the Congress of Marseilles, the terrible situation of the workers, and he contrasted these figures to the fabulous incomes and the scandalous spending of the holders of the capital. Large-scale industry, far from improving the lot of the masses, has only made it harder, and this situation will last as long as the worker does not render himself master of the workshops and factories.

The speaker ends with a call for the organisation of the workers' forces, for the struggle against capital and for the study of social questions. If the bourgeoisie continues, as it does today, to obstruct the workers' groups by persecuting the active members of the groups, then the workers will be forced to resort to the secret organisations. But in any case, the workers' forces must be organised in anticipation of the political and economic revolutions that will certainly break out in a few years in Europe.

for, it is said, since solidarity is only selfishness understood in a certain way, why bother to dedicate yourself?

Since we must be selfish, let us be so as reasonable men, let us be so for a cause!

Anarchy is the organisation of solidarity...

Agreement

“L’Entente”, *La Révolte: organe communiste-anarchiste*, 11 and 18 April 1891

I

The Italian Congress in Capologo once again discussed the question of organisation. One of us expressed his views on this. But as we are not all absolutely of the same opinion on matters of detail, we return to it again.

It is certain that French anarchists are looking for the best method of free organisation but that they have not found it yet. This is why the question is continually brought up for discussion.

We are not satisfied with what exists: today we feel too isolated. But we have not yet found anything better which is in conformity with our fundamental ideas of anarchy and individual initiative and which nevertheless makes it possible to better unify efforts, to better inspire us for the struggle.

As it is, the anarchist party has done much more than we think – as *Révolte* has already pointed out. But we are right to ask ourselves if we cannot do more and better.

One thing seems certain to us. It is that amongst French anarchists it is no longer possible to establish those organisations between a small number of friends, veiled from the great number, which wants to give an impulse and a direction to the party. If such were formed today, it would never have the importance that it would have had in the past and it would not last. The ten years during which the French anarchists lived without these centres developed the spirit of initiative up to a certain point, and a return to the past now seems impossible to us.

We can only rejoice at that. Such groupings, which have filled almost the entire history of this century, can undoubtedly give life to a party for a certain time. They can give it a power of action, an importance and a certain glory that it would not have acquired otherwise. But, after a few years, all these understandings became a hindrance, an obstacle to further development. They do not allow the individual to reach the full strength of his development. They accustom groups to rely on the initiative that must come from this centre whose existence one guesses. And if they can develop the power of action of the party in a certain direction, they sterilise its efforts in all other directions; they paralyse the growth of new ideas, they narrow the movement and end up giving it a false, antiquated character.

If examples were needed, there would be no shortage of them in the past. As for a current example, we have it in the Blanquist party which, still imbued with this idea that they will *make* the revolution, has recently done everything possible to throw France into the Boulangist

adventure. The Marxist party is another current example. Both keep the past alive in the present.

Does it follow, however, that the anarchists as they are [currently] organised have done all they could, given their forces? Did they avoid the government they sought to avoid? Did they not sterilise a good part of their efforts by absolutely renouncing, for a certain time, all agreement and by proclaiming – not the free initiative of each group but even isolation?

We don’t believe that.

First – and we were already pointing this out at the 1881 congress – the lack of closer relations between groups threatened to give newspapers a disproportionate importance. The newspaper became the centre to which everyone turned for the smallest thing. Everything from the koussou to kill the tapeworm within a comrade to dynamite was demanded of the newspaper – which suited the devilish business of the police. It was from the newspaper that every initiative was expected – whereas the anarchist newspaper must be the work of a small group, a work that one reads as long as one approves of its course of action and stops reading as soon as one finds that it no longer meets the needs of the moment.

Things have changed a lot since 1881. Groups know each other more or less. They see each other, meet sometimes, and sometimes also exchange their ideas.

But this exchange does not seem frequent enough, nor enduring enough.

When this issue [of *Révolte*] has appeared, we will have received in London around fifty comrades from the provinces of England to meet with friends from the capital. It was a group of the Socialist League which first invited friends from the provinces to take advantage of the three days of the Easter holidays to come to London; and since then this trip has become a habit. They come, whether there is an invitation or not.

But if they come to London, it is because they have already met in the same way in the provinces. There is always in one county or another local meetings without any formality, replacing the congresses of the past.

In France, the custom is just beginning to take shape. And in England, as in France, amongst comrades we still do not know each other well enough. So there is a gap to fill. To fill it, we should not wait for a French anarchist congress to decide that regional congresses

should be held. You are not an anarchist for nothing: you have to know how to take the initiative yourself. It is like *abstention*, which is not – as we have often repeated – *inaction*. Inaction is not anarchist at all; for if there is one point on which the anarchist must differ from all other *ists*, it is precisely in that he himself takes the initiative on what he think is best, without waiting for a congress to order him to do it.

If the custom of these meetings in small regions is established, it is certain that the wave will widen. We will meet in larger regions, and we will end up having national and international conferences.

That has to be done. For it is a dilemma. Either we will know each other only through some *centre*, and this centre will be the committee, the newspaper, or the orator – or we will know each other directly, by gathering at meetings. In any case, getting to know each other is necessary.

However beautiful, however great the idea that comes to such and such an individual, he will only carry it out when he feels supported. And it is not always sure that he will find support amongst his closest friends. Such and such a Marseilles tailor can find men who approve of his way of seeing things amongst the miners of the North, and so on. And if he never gets a chance to see anyone but his hometown friends – in most cases he will do nothing, or just write a letter to a newspaper.

Besides, who would doubt the strength that any idea, any inspiration receives in contact with numbers? The intensity of inspiration is increased a hundredfold just by the presence of ten men who share it. And if exceptionally energetic natures can march towards their goal against the whole world, it is known that this is not the forte of the average human character.

It is therefore necessary to see each other, to meet each other, to communicate our ideas. It is so banal that, really, it even seems childish to say it, to prove it.

But this does not happen, or at least it does not happen as much as it could.

The great obstacle that these anarchist meetings have always encountered is the question of – “will there be delegates or not?” It is impossible for everyone to go: it costs too much. Appointing representatives is not anarchist. We preferred to do nothing at all, while it would have been so simple to contribute so that a comrade could make the trip.

We understand the fear the delegate inspires. It is the fear of congresses that ape parliaments, the fear of decisions imposed by a *centre*. But once you not recognise a centre and do not accept any decision you do not yourself make – you could consider meetings as a simple opportunity to exchange ideas, without

resorting to doing that in a newspaper – always in a newspaper! In this case, the comrade whose trip has been paid by donations is no longer a legislator. He simply went to see the others and bring back a breath of fresh air from their contact.

All this, of course, is when you have something to discuss, a question to clarify, an item to reach agreement on. If it is only a question of theorising and giving everyone the opportunity to utter their little spiel – it is better to stay at home. But there have already been opportunities

to do better.

These occasions never fail to affirm in broad daylight the hatred [felt] against all these “patriotic”, “alliancist”, royalist, Germanophobist, Russophilist, and other scoundrels, and to raise the question of the revolution expropriating all social wealth?

II¹

It seems to us that amongst anarchists, we have not sufficiently distinguished between what can be done in isolation, by a few individuals, and what can only be accomplished by consulting with others, by associating with them, by agreeing to common action.

There are acts which can be carried out only when one is alone – when one acts without putting responsibility on anyone else and taking it on oneself. Such was the act of Vera Zasulich. Such was the act of Padlewski. Such were certain acts in France. If, in 1877, Vera

¹ Translated in part by N.W., “May Day and Anarchist Propaganda”, *Freedom: Anarchist Weekly*, 1 May 1971. (*Black Flag*)

Zasulich had consulted her friends, who at that time were extremely moderate, and had asked for their approval, she would have been completely discouraged before getting it. And her act would have lost that character of spontaneity and courage which won it the admiration of Europe.

But if the development of the revolutionary spirit gains immensely from the acts of heroic individuals, it is no less true (whatever historians say) that it is not by these heroic acts that revolutions are made. Zasuliches are rare exceptions, even in Russia, although that country is at the moment passing through the heroic period in its history which was passed through by France and Italy between 1830 and 1848. The revolution needs heroes; but for their blood to be of any use, they must be supported: that the thousands and hundreds of thousands of men who are in no way heroes also come to bring their strength, their day-to-day devotion, their energy and their knowledge to its service. Revolution, above all, is a popular movement.

And this is why the young Russian heroes have changed Russia so little, despite all their boundless devotion and their epic courage. They have forgotten that revolutions are made by the people, and that the blood of martyrs is useful only when we have succeeded in awakening the great mass of the people.

That was also the error of the anarchists in 1881. When the Russian revolutionaries had killed the Tsar – which, thanks to authoritarian prejudices, seemed to be the beginning of the revolution – the European anarchists imagined that henceforth a handful of ardent revolutionaries, armed with a few bombs, would suffice to make the social revolution. They made the mistake of forgetting the special conditions in which Russia found itself and imagined themselves all to be heroes like those who went to the scaffold in St. Petersburg. They believed that a few cartridges and a few men of courage would be enough to blow up the social edifice. But with very few exceptions they were by no means heroes; and an edifice founded on centuries of history cannot be destroyed with a few kilos of explosives.

Instead of realising in advance that the great majority have no desire to die as a lost sentinel¹, and that nevertheless *all* can contribute, in accordance with their strength, to fuelling the agitation (as we have tried to make clear in *The Spirit of Revolt*) – they spent several years discussing grandiose actions which were to change the face of the world, but which did not do so. Too often they neglected day-to-day agitation to dwell discussing amongst comrades plans for social reconstruction by means of an *Anarchist Detector*

¹ That is, a soldier assigned to a very dangerous mission or position. (*Black Flag*)

[*Indicateur anarchiste*²]. Remaining Jacobins, although calling themselves anarchists, they no more cared about the people than a Blanquist in a red sash cares about them.

We had to go through this period, and we needn't regret it at all, just as we don't regret in any way that other period when the Russian youth thought that with a few socialist pamphlets they would rouse the mass of the peasants. Rather these errors than the "practical good sense" of the far too practical people who today throng the corridors of the bourgeois parliaments, denying and betraying the working class from which they came. If this period was poor in action which appealed to the great majority, it nevertheless had its fortunate consequences: there were a few celebrated acts; despite everything, there were a few heroes. And this period made it possible for the anarchist ideal to be maintained at a certain level which will later appear in the revolution. The party reflected, developed habits of initiative and independence; it remained revolutionary, while elsewhere they threw themselves at the governmental cake.

So long as we were in this phase of the movement, we could confine ourselves to scattered little groups, scarcely aware of each other, and acting as skirmishers. When there were five or six anarchists in Paris – what indeed could be done, other than some act of individual courage, or else some noisy interruptions in electoral meetings to heckle some political charlatan with questions!

But the times have changed since then. There are no longer the five or six comrades of those days; and the environment we are acting in has completely changed.

Just through the general spread of revolutionary ideas, the great mass of the workers, holding aloof from *all* the socialist parties, has launched itself into movement. Throughout Europe and in the United States it already is in revolt against the present conditions of exploitation and work.

Fools may well say that the eight-hour movement is the work of [Jules] Guesde. But, with all the modesty for which they are known, none of the Marxists themselves would dare to affirm such an absurdity. It would be too stupid.

The movement dates back a long time. After the defeat of the International in Europe, it took refuge in America. That is where it is coming from today.

As early as 1877, the general strike was already declared during the strike of railways, in the light of

² *L'Indicateur anarchiste* was a bomb-making manual published in 1890. (*Black Flag*)

fires, looting, and the shootings of Pittsburgh. Pittsburgh is still at the head of the movement!

It was again on May 1st that the general strike for the eight-hour day broke out in Chicago, and that the anarchists, after having criticised the movement, joined in, arming themselves with guns and bombs – only one of which exploded on the evening of the 4th in the ranks of the police who charged the anarchist meeting.¹ Politicians who only know about the black horse of their brave general can ignore it; but anarchists should not forget that the 1st of May is when our heroes, Parsons, Spies, Lingg, Fischer and Engel, died. They should be ashamed to confuse the manoeuvres by which politicians seek to takeover a movement which overwhelms them with the movement itself, watered with workers' blood in Pittsburgh, with anarchist blood in Chicago. One might as well say that the Paris Commune was decreed by Félix Pyat!

Indeed, what efforts on the part of the Marxists to make it a "legal eight hours" – while the masses want it not *legally*, but *illegally*, and obtained from the bosses by threat and rebellion!

The masses want the general strike. And even those who don't come out in favour of it have only one argument: it is that they are not sufficiently federated, that they are not sure that *everyone* will stop work on May 1st. Give them this assurance, that they have the certainty that every one of you, to the extent that you are revolutionaries, will not let a single factory work after May 1st; that you will take it by storm – as the Slavs and Hungarians did this week in Pittsburgh – if it emits smoke after the declaration of the strike and you will see if the general strike doesn't break out on May 1st.

And if only half the fires go out that day – this means either the submission of the bourgeois, or else the beginning of the social war, fought on the real terrain – no offense to the Boulangists and especially to the Orléanists.

¹ It should be noted that all accounts of the meeting in the Haymarket indicates that it was peaceful and unarmed (in spite of a leaflet announcing the meeting which called workers to arms in response to the police shooting of pickets on May 3rd). No evidence has ever been produced – not at the

That is the situation. And we wonder if faced with such a situation it is possible to remain isolated, not to form groups, to reach agreement, to see each other, to discuss? Is it possible to abandon everything to discussions as slow, as incomplete, as those conducted through the press? We believe that the idea of groups *for a well-defined purpose* is perfectly correct. And isn't the attitude we should take to the workers movement a defined purpose?

Finally, to conclude, a word on propaganda by ideas and by deeds. The trouble with all revolutions has been – as we have often said – that the mass of the people had no clear idea of what they wanted, whereas the ruling classes knew perfectly. For the revolution not to be conjured away, it is necessary that the anarchist and communist idea should penetrate the masses. All those who have the *social* revolution at heart agree on that.

But how can these ideas penetrate the masses? That is the whole question. There are papers and meetings. But we know what they are worth. They address themselves always to the same individuals: the readers and the audiences. For four years we have been marking time with this minority. And if the light is shed on the minds of this small number – what can this small number do if it remains what it is – that is to say, a handful?

Blanqui understood this very well. There was in his time a group of militants. But to propagate the republican idea in France, they chose every occasion to proclaim it in the public square, in the court rooms, on the scaffold itself.

For many long years the workers of Europe slept; just a few men here and there came to socialist meetings or happened to buy a socialist paper.

trial in 1886 nor subsequently – that an anarchist threw the bomb at the meeting on May 4th (which Kropotkin wrongly suggests was on the 5th) and many have suggested that an agent provocateur was at work. (*Black Flag*)

But then at last they awoke again. They gather in meetings, they go to congresses, they take to the streets. The political intriguers, who see in socialism only a future Ministry of Labour in the armchairs of which they soon hope to sink, are there to stupefy the masses, to throw dust in their eyes with their so-called scientific nonsense. – Do anarchists have the right to stand aside? Shouldn't they make *their* voice heard, and distribute by the thousand their papers, pamphlets, manifestos everywhere where the working masses are?

The Italian and Spanish anarchists understand this. But in France we still have to waste precious time discussing, always discussing instead of acting!

And if May 1st is really what we believe it will be – that is to say, an imposing demonstration of the unity which

is being forged between workers, with partial rebellions here and there against the exploiters – then it will make thousands *think* who are not thinking today, who read neither our papers nor our pamphlets, and who visit neither our little circles nor our meetings. It will make them *reflect* and will help to spread the anarchist idea a hundred times more than all our spoken and written propaganda. It will force new elements to become anarchists.

Man, it has been said, is a thinking animal who hates to be forced to reflect. That is true.

There are, however, great deeds which, by stirring his imagination, lead him to think. Let us stir his imagination.

Kropotkine on Anarchism¹

Freedom, April 1893

March 5th, at Grafton Hall, Kropotkine delivered an address to a crowded and attentive audience, of which the following is a summary taken from shorthand notes:

I have been asked to give our general ideas on the subject of Anarchy, and I feel overpowered by the immensity of the subject. It has been long thought a mode of action belonging to the Socialist propaganda, but it is more than a mode of action, more than a Utopia, more than a theory. It is a tendency of thought, which begins to prevail more and more as the century ends, a kind of philosophy, a manner of thinking, a general conception, which re-acts on the whole Socialist program.

When Anarchy has been considered philosophically it induces every one of us to take an attitude vastly different from the attitude of Socialists generally. It is a mode of thought distinctive of modern science. Consider the changes in the thought of Europe at the time when the earth ceased to be considered as the centre of the universe, and the revolution that followed on the abandonment of that idea. In astronomy masses and forces were formally taken for granted; modes of thought prevailed, which considered integrals but neglected particles, science now goes into the infinitely small component parts. In biology, for instance, species were once considered exclusively, now not the individual merely, but the component parts of that individual were taken into account. Psychology, formerly the science of the indivisible soul or mind, is now the science of the elements of the soul, and this is treated as a result of infinitely small actions. The same change is acting in sociology, in political economy. Adam Smith in his famous book dwelt on the wealth of

nations, on their balance of trade, etc. Now the welfare of the individual is postulated as the basis of the science. In politics history used to talk of states and the policies of kings and political wars, now it treats of the life even of the villager. The centre of gravity of history has been transported to the sphere of the individual and the point of view is entirely changed. The Anarchist might claim the title of synthetic philosopher were it not for the fact that Herbert Spencer has employed the term and made it known in a rather different sense. The synthetic treatment of life, that is Anarchism, for it deals with life, with the small particles that make up the individual. Economics now begins to understand that it must conduce to the satisfaction of the needs of every separate individual. The economist formerly would take the theory of value and discourse on it not from the facts of life. The exchange value that the professor talks about as a benefit to both exchangers is not found in actual existence. We consider that political economy must be written directly from the lives of the workers; how the workers work and produce wealth and how they are repaid, or rather not repaid, and their needs never satisfied, that is what we have to enquire into. Economists must enquire into the number of hours necessary for building a decent house, and ask why the excessive labour of the peasant does not provide him with such. Why has not the labourer today all the scientific and artistic enjoyments which alone make life worth living? If we pursue our enquires into the slums of the East End, the houses of the middle-class, the mansions of the rich, the palaces of the rulers, why is it that everywhere we meet with dissatisfaction on account of the worry and pressures of life. We know how the poor live, that they cannot produce houses such

¹ This lecture is being published in full by *La Révolte*. [Presumably a reference to “Une Conférence sur l'Anarchie”, serialised in *La Révolte* between 18 March and 2 September 1893. This was subsequently published as the pamphlet *Les*

temps nouveaux : conférence faite à Londres (Publications de *La Révolte*, 1894), which has never been completely translated into English – *Black Flag*]

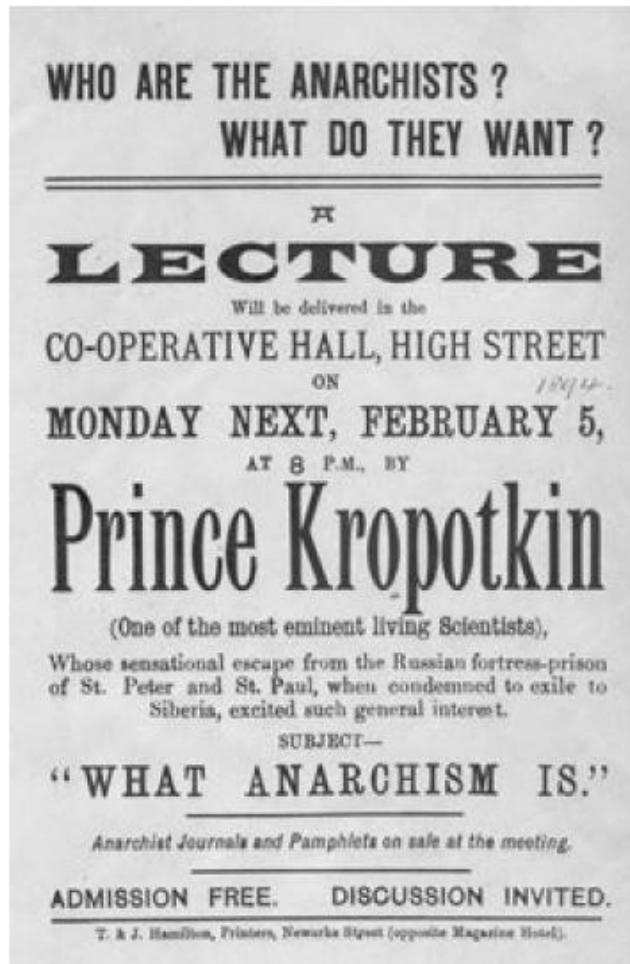
as they require. Surely were men's riches properly used immense numbers might be produced. A hundred years ago man's power of production was slow, but his means have now enormously increased. We might produce with the present means ever so much more than we do, but we don't, because the organisation of society is based on false principles. Miners, for instance, only work three days a week in order to keep up the price of coal. Strikes are produced even by employers themselves, and in this way human labour is wasted. Not to speak of the military armaments of the continent, have we not here armies and forces to protect the colonies? Don't we employ vast masses of labour in producing futilities? Think of from three to eight thousand men employed in making silk plush for the American market, an article which I am told is now out of fashion there. Why do we look for consumers in Asia or in Zululand, when we have children at home with so many needs to satisfy?

We are told that employers are necessary for the organisation of production, but if our books of political economy were written by people that worked in the shops, we should have learned that the waste of human labour even in the best factories is on an immense scale. I believe it might be reduced by 25 per cent without difficulty. Some two years ago, the dockers in Glasgow struck; they were defeated. Shoddy work was the consequence. And a few months later the employers declared that they were losing at the rate of 25 per cent through the inefficient work of the discontented strikers.

In the present conditions of things workers give only a low average. Here are instances of the evils of the competitive system of today: Bryant and May's match girls become bald at the age of fourteen because they carry on their heads trays, which it would be a saving to transport by machinery. In lace manufacture a man with his limbs huddled together binds two ends of cotton all the day long and does nothing else, to the destruction of his physique, merely because human labour is so cheap. Human labour is wasted because production has for [its] aim the sale of objects which will realise a certain profit. Production must be re-organised; the

responsibility cannot be left with the capitalist. Everyone ought to be interested in the production of goods. The community as a whole ought to look after its industry. The business of exchange assumed in books on political economy is not that which is going on in daily life. There is no measure of the effort of the individual in production. Every individual should live well. Renumeration cannot be based on the work of the individual producer. Four or five hours a day has been reckoned as enough to ensure the well-being that the middle-classes now enjoy. The remaining four or five would bestow similar well-being on the other classes along with artistic and scientific enjoyment – but these ideas the Anarchists share with the Socialists. Furthermore, the Anarchists consider that the interference of the State is a mistake. Take for instance 1848. What stood in the way of Communism, and induced the lovers of freedom to oppose it? They thought that Communism must be organised hierarchically. But during these last fifty years the workers have learned to trust themselves, and experience has disgusted them with democratic government. The Commune idea has made great way. In France and England the workers speak of the municipalisation of

everything. But this is only territorial separation. Read the Eight Hours Labour Day discussion, and you will find the idea gains ground that the organised trade is absolutely sovereign in matters of production. In mining matters the miners consider that they must be supreme. When the State proposes to introduce the Eight Hours they are distrustful. The workman now considers that the employer is nothing else but a fifth wheel to the coach. "No Bismarckism!" is his cry of today. Because, even if State-legislation in labour matters could be made successful, it would lead to the crushing of the individual. Home Rule therefore for city, for village, every separate branch of work is that he proclaims today. The abolition of the State must therefore come about. Free groupings between producers and consumers are bound to ensue. Enforced law, prisons, judges, police, etc., do not improve the public morality. The prisons are the great universities of crime. Judges



1894

and police exist to protect the privileges of the minority. Authority is the creation of wizards, priests, etc.

Dr Clifford has lately told us that Christ was an Anarchist and a Communist. The rising in Judaea was imbued with a Communist spirit. This too was the case with the peasants' revolt in the XVI Century. The Anabaptists, for instance, did not recognise any power but the rules of man's own conscience, and they held that property belonged to all. But we have been fed on Roman law, and trained in the theocratical notions of the East, and therefore the idea of not being governed seems strange to us. You must throw away more of the chains which have bound men down. Compulsion is not necessary to make men work. The lazy people at the present time receive no real training in anything. They know nothing of the real work of life; they cannot make shoes, they cannot build houses, they cannot drive engines. The universities might be accused of turning out lazy fellows: they are said to teach men to govern; *Voilà tout!* There is no attempt made in them to turn men's capacities to account. Where are the lazy boys, the lazy schoolgirls when reproached for not being at their books? Why, working in the garden, working at making mills, toy-engines, etc. Darwin was reputed a lazy fellow; so much so that they almost refused to take him on the *Beagle* as being worthless for scientific observation. Stevenson spent his time at the wheelwright's shop, and was called lazy for it. Does the fear of a fine keep order in a workshop? No, it is the trade organisation. In France and Belgium there exists a hierarchy of superintendents and foremen which is not necessary here. It is the spirit of his trade which keeps the worker going, not supervision. In the mills and big workshops of this country there is an infinitely small amount of superintendence. We need not be afraid of the results of the removal of authority.

Overwork in the mine, in the shop, in the dock is now universal, and under such conditions a man tries to throw away part of his labour. When the workshop becomes healthy and beautiful, which it is occasionally in England even at present, work will become welcome to us; the man who does not work will be treated as an idiot. In Switzerland, where military service is looked upon as a test of physical excellence, a boy would be quite depressed lest he should not be able to enter the service on account of his chest not measuring the necessary number of inches. This direction of mind, which is stupid when it treats military service as a standard of excellence, might be turned to common advantage when men are engaged in work for society.

Now as to the mode of action. When a young worker enters a Radical or Socialist association he is often shocked by what he sees of the intrigues for power that go on. In an Anarchist organisation he sees the reverse. Papers are printed without authority being exercised. The man, who can, speaks, the other writes, and so forth; for the Anarchist encourages above all individual

initiative. Try to do what you yourself consider right and out of that will come a better sort of community. Some ten years ago the idea among Anarchists was that they should not have anything to do with strikes or labour questions; now they think that they must try to take part in the workmen's organisations. This idea is spreading *per se*, through intercourse with Anarchists. Take the change of ideas during the last ten years about Home Rule as an example of the unconscious change in the direction of people's thoughts. We Anarchists have no central organisations to give orders; every one has to think and act for himself; experience corrects mistakes. Evolution is not opposed to revolution. In 1793 it was not cutting off the aristocrats' heads that was revolution; the basis of that revolution was the peasants rising themselves and taking possession of the land. As to the people who lost their lives through refusing to recognise the abolition of their privileges, they had only themselves to thank; they had tried to make the river flow backwards. A conspiracy against established fact was the cause of the Terror. The rapid abolition of worn-out institutions *en bloc*, that is the mark of revolution; and such is the law of development. Lloyd Morgan tells us in his writings that revolutions come to pass rather than evolutions. New ideas are kept back by an obstinate minority. If England has had no revolution since 1688 that was because the minority knew the psychological moment when to make concessions. Unlike the French aristocracy and middle classes, the English ruling classes have known when to give way. But if the ruling classes become so situated that they cannot give way, then a bloody revolution may be the result. The capacity of the rulers and the capacity of the workers are crucial points in the struggle. Evolution follows revolution. We develop feverishly, then enjoy a quieter spell – that is the life of society and the life of the species.

Anarchism is represented as *the* party of violence. But when I look back to the acts of violence that I have lived through during the last twenty years, I see the 35,000 Paris workers exterminated by the French property owners in May 1871; the attempt of the Social Democrat Hoedel and the Republican Nobiling against the German Emperor; the attempt of the Socialist Otero in Spain, and in Italy that of Passannante, who was a Mazzinian more than anything else; thirty-two gallows in Russia, and upon them not one Anarchist; the Irish Nationalists' violence; and the Anarchist acts of violence during the last few years; and I maintain that violence belongs to *all* parties, and that they all have recourse to it when they lose confidence in other means and are brought to despair.

Of all parties I now see only one party – the Anarchist – which respects human life, and loudly insist upon the abolition of capital punishment, prison torture and punishment of man by man altogether. All other parties teach every day their utter disrespect for human life. Killing the foe, torturing him to death in a prison, is

their principle. For the interest of bondholders they will massacre the miners in the mine, kill passengers in a train, or bombard Alexandria, slaughtering women and children in the streets. They only ripen the fruit of their own teachings. The sacredness of human life! Yes, by

all means; but society itself must first learn to recognise the sacredness of human life, and not teach the opposite. The sacredness of human life is the great principle of the Anarchists.

Note to *The Spirit of Revolt*

Anarchist (Sheffield), 20 January 1895¹

These papers were written in 1881, when, there being almost no traces of revival of the Socialist movement in France, the revolutionist who could not bear the present conditions, had nothing left to him but to rebel individually against the oppression he could not live under.

Since that time, the conditions have changed. A great movement has began all over Europe in the labouring masses – infinitely deeper than what we see of it on the surface in the so-called Labour Parties. The usual next step has been made, from individual rebellion to a mass movement of the workers towards their liberation – unconscious to a great extent, permeated yet to a great extent with superstitions about the State and the would-be Saviours, and very easily deviated from its final aims of emancipation of mankind from the clutches of Capital and Authority – but *a mass movement of the workers themselves*.

In such conditions, it becomes of first necessity to merge all individual efforts in that movement, and to do the utmost to direct it to what we consider to be the real way to freedom. Never compromising in any way; always telling the truth – only the truth, and all the truth – to combat everywhere the old superstitions, to inspire the movement with the grand ideas which we share and the vigour borrowed from these ideas, which alone may cope with the immense obstacles accumulated in the way of liberation of the masses.

Individuals awaken human thought in times of general slumbering. But a Social Revolution *can not* be the work of individuals. It will be the work *of the masses*. And its results will entirely depend upon the amount of true conceptions permeating the masses.

These are the ideas which I have never ceased to develop in all my writings.

P.K.

The Effects of Persecution

“L’effet des Persécutions”, *Les Temps Nouveaux*, 4 May 1895

For fifteen months everything was set into motion to smother anarchy. They silenced the press, suppressed men, shot at point blank range in Guiana,² transported to the isles of Spain, incarcerated by the thousands in Italy, without even the luxury of draconian laws or court comedies. Everywhere they have sought to starve women and children by sending the police to put pressure on bosses who still dared to give work to anarchists.

They stopped at nothing to crush men and smother the idea.

And, despite everything, never has the idea made as much progress as it has done during these fifteen months.

Never has it gained adherents so rapidly. Never has it penetrated so thoroughly into circles once resistant to all [forms of] socialism.

And never has it been so well demonstrated that this conception of society without exploitation nor authority was a necessary result of all the ideas that have occurred since last century; that it has deep roots in all that has been said for thirty years in the field of the infant science of the development of societies, in the science of moral sentiments, in the philosophy of history, and in philosophy in general.

And already we hear it being said: “Anarchy? But it is the summary of the thought of the coming century! Be wary of it, if you seek to return to the past. Welcome it, if you want a future of progress and freedom!”

¹ “Peter Kropotkin: Anarchism and Revolution”, *Freedom Anarchist Pamphlets* No. 5 (London: Freedom Press, 1970).

² A reference to the killing of an anarchist by a warden in September 1894 which provoked a prisoner revolt on the 21st of October the same year, which saw five anarchists along with twelve convicts killed by the authorities. (see Y.Z., “The Massacre of Anarchist Convicts in French Guiana,” *Liberty* [London], April 1895). (*Black Flag*)

While the label of anarchist alone earned, according to the law, banishment to Guyana and slow death from malarial fevers and the conduct of the prison guards – what mostly occupied the press?

We remember the investigation into anarchy carried out by a major Parisian newspaper. “To carry themselves so proudly and collectedly, they must be inspired by a great ideal,” they said. “You have to [get to] know it!” And we have read hundreds of articles in the daily and monthly press, begun perhaps with the desire to crush “the hundred-headed hydra” but which often ended by justifying [both] the ideas and the men.

Youth in schools, so long opposed to a socialism that, beginning gloriously, ended in an eight-hour law or expropriation of the railways by the State, hailed the new arrival. Young people glimpsed in it a board, powerful conception of the life of societies, embracing all human relations and bringing into all these relations the pride, the strength, the initiative of the free man – the very essence of all progress. And, in their best representatives, young people were impassioned about a concept that makes them understand how the liberation of the worker becomes the liberation of *man*; how communism and anarchy break all the chains in which a Christian, Roman-law and Jacobin society stifled the freedom of the human being.

The English press – especially the weekly paper that speaks to peasants and workers – has taken part in the discussion of anarchist principles, ideals, ways and means. For months and months, the five or six newspapers most read by the masses in the provinces had one or two columns of correspondence on anarchy. “Enough,” cried the editors; “from now on we will stop this correspondence!” But as of the next issue, it reopened again on some new issue: individualism and communism, the State and the individual... we could already make volumes of them, and still it continues!

At the same time, in Germany and Russia elaborate works appear in journals on the relations between society and the individual, the rights of the State, the fact of the individual placing himself outside current morality and the influence of this fact, the progress of public morality, and so on. Godwin and Max Stirner were unearthed; Nietzsche was studied and commented upon, and it was shown how the anarchist who dies on the scaffold is connected to the philosophical current which came from the works of the German philosopher.

And finally Tolstoy, speaking to the entire civilised world, showed in his responses to the criticisms raised

to his last book how not only the Christian but every intelligent man, whatever his philosophy, necessarily *must* completely break with the State that organises the exploitation of the worker – *must* refuse to take any part in the crimes, the economic exploitation and the military atrocities committed by every State, whatever its label.

To sum up in a few words – in all the manifold domains of thought there has been a drive towards anarchy; a profound labour of ideas has been accomplished which leads to anarchy and gives communism a new strength.

We note this work with happiness. But our thoughts above all go elsewhere.

We seek for the signs that show us that the same labour takes place in the classes that strain to produce everything, without enjoying any of the marvels of art, science, and luxury that they pile up on the earth.

We find these signs everywhere: at meetings, at workers’ congresses, in the very language of these meetings. But we never stop asking ourselves: “Does the echo of these discussions penetrate into the home, the hovel of the worker, the cottage of the peasant? Do the peasant and the worker glimpse the road that will lead them to their double liberation from Capital and the State? Or else, lured by scholars, priests, journalists, admirers of power and all the brats maintained by the State – do they still retain unshakeable faith in the benefits of governmental Jacobinism?”

Does their criticism of what makes them suffer go beyond criticism of individuals? Does it rise to criticism of the principles upon which Capital, wage-labour and their creature – the State – reside?

Does the idea of an international union of all the oppressed establish itself amongst them, and likewise do their hearts bleed at the news of the massacres committed at Fourmies or Berlin, Chicago or Vienna [?]? Do they include the pack of international exploiters in the same hatred, be they Japanese or French, German or English, patriots?

Born within the people, under the inspiration of the people in the International Workers Association, and now strengthen with all the support it finds in [scientific] research, the idea must return to the people, grow in its midst, inspire it with its irresistible spirit.

Only there will it reach its full development. Only there will it take shape and find its forms to replace the departing old world and reconstruct society on the basis of equality, the complete freedom of the individual, fraternity between all men.

the liberation of the worker becomes the liberation of *man*

Anarchy and its means of struggle, the International

“L’Anarchie et ses moyens de lutte, l’Internationale”, *Les Temps nouveaux*, 21 August 1909

For some time now, there has been an intellectual movement of some importance amongst European and American anarchists. In our circles we are beginning to feel the need to become fully aware of the very foundations of anarchy, to deepen them, and to see if our practical activity corresponds to our goals, to our ideal. We also wonder, why, in spite of the increase in the number of anarchists of all sorts of factions and all sorts of shades, the results that we achieve today have not grown in proportion to our numbers? Why do we rather notice a decrease in results, compared to what we obtained twenty years ago?

This need, which can be seen just about everywhere, obviously finds an echo in our press, especially in our newspapers in France, in *Le Réveil*, *Le Libéraire*, *Les Temps Nouveaux*; in Spain in *Tierra y Libertad*; in the Italian press, especially in *Battaglia*, of San-Paulo in Brazil; *Era Nuova*, of Paterson in the United States; *Cronaca Sovversiva* of Barre, Vermont, etc., and, also partly, in German newspapers.

All these newspapers have recently published articles of great value on these subjects. And, as always happens in our anarchist press, despite the absence of general councils and “directives” from above, this review was carried out with striking agreement; and, as far as can be judged, there is already a certain agreement as to the conclusions.

In the year 1870, when the anarchist trend began to take shape within the International, the attitude of the anarchist and his aims were determined by the very milieu in which our movement had arisen. And when, after the split which occurred at the Hague Congress in 1872, the federal pact was drawn up at St Imier between the workers’ Federations of the Latin countries – a pact which was, so to speak, the charter of worker anarchy – the theoretical attitude of the anarchist and his means of struggle were clearly determined.¹

The anarchist movement of the second half of the nineteenth century began in a working-class environment, so it was there that it had to continue.

It arose from the desire of Latin workers to find a *new form of production and consumption* that was independent of both private capitalism and State capitalism. Already in 1848, Pecqueur and Vidal had, under the name of collectivism, sought to propagate State socialism in France. And, at the beginning of the

International, State socialism again found defenders in German ideologues. These, being the children of a nation which had experienced neither the People’s Revolution of 1793, nor the overthrow of the monarchy and the uprising of the proletariat in 1848, nor even less the communalist movement of 1871, could, no doubt, be passionate about the State socialism of Louis Blanc.

The socialism of the forties, which was already a thing *of the past* for France, was just beginning to penetrate Germany. But in the Latin countries, the workers were already beginning to see that State socialism was not the real solution to the social question: that it would kill freedom, the little that we have, without leading to a socialist society, and that in the meantime it would even hinder the development of a revolutionary situation. And then a new solution began to take shape in the minds of the Latin workers, the anarchist solution.

In addition, the Latin workers already had an insight on how little democracy could give them. They saw it at work in Switzerland, and they saw its sterility. They also saw how easily almost all the democrats forgot their youthful oaths as soon as they arrived in government, even a republican government.

More than that. They saw, in the International itself, revolutionaries like Marx stoop to the lowest intrigues simply to maintain the power which the International had had the imprudence to entrust to them.

A whole series of observations of this kind, made since 1848 and confirmed during the communalist movement in Paris, as well as during the 1873 revolution in Spain, had led workers to the conclusion that any statist organisation is an absolutely useless evil. The organisation of society must be made not from above, by some power (hereditary, installed by force, or elected). It must be the result, always living and always changing as are all living beings, of *free agreements, elaborated by the producers and consumers themselves, in their free communes and their productive federations.*

The nations themselves, which we see in the form of States, not only must cease to oppress other nations or be oppressed themselves: they must be *divided into free federations*, which would constitute themselves, like the Jura Federation of the International, in the form of *regions of economic production*, sometimes including (such as the Bernese Jura and the French Jura), territories which today belong to several States. The

¹ The resolutions of the St. Imier Congress, along with other documents from the Federalist International, can be found in

the last issue *Black Flag Anarchist Review* (vol. 2, no. 2). (*Black Flag*)

very idea of separate States, and therefore hostile to each other, should thus disappear.

Finally, as in 1793, the idea of an anarchist organisation had come from the Revolution and the need for the people to organise various branches of urban life in its sections (See the *Great [French] Revolution*, chapters XXIV, LVIII and LX), likewise in 1872 the hope of one day elaborating an anarchist organism, capable of living, was suggested by the success of an International Workers' Association. In this association, the workers saw the medium which could be used for the development of an anarchist organisation.

The spirit of the International at that time was the direct struggle of Labour against Capital – not through Parliaments – but on the land, in the factory, in the mill. The recent attempts of the Communes of Paris and Barcelona supported this hope, for it was obvious that if these two Communes had survived, a communist revolution would necessarily have come following the communalist revolution which had proclaimed the independence of the Commune. One could therefore, in the circles of the International, believe at that time that the workers, taking advantage of a revolutionary situation which would one day present itself in one of the Western nations, would proceed to the expropriation of the capitalists and would lay in the midst of their great Association the initial foundations of a libertarian communist society, composed of consumers and producers.

Under these conditions, there could be no doubt for the anarchist concerning the milieu in which he had to work. Obviously, his place was where the anarchist movement had originated; where the first outlines of an Anarchist Society might occur – in the workers' International.

However, this possibility did not last long. External and internal enemies soon knew how to destroy it.

On the one hand, governments – the bourgeoisie and the ruling classes in general – united their efforts to kill the International. They had well understood – much better, perhaps, than the workers – what a force the International would soon represent if it intelligently took advantage of an initially political revolution, to bring about the revolutionary triumph of its ideas by a vast expropriation of land and capital. What a force, indeed, if the International sought not to “conquer power” in the bourgeois State, as Louis Black and the French “social democracy” of 1848 had tried, by sending their men to the

Kropotkin in *The Commonweal*

Peter Kropotkin described the Chicago affair as a retaliation upon prisoners taken in the virtual civil war that was going on between the two great classes. Against this idea of retaliation we must constantly protest; it inevitably led to cruelty and injustice. It was unavoidable that as the struggle grew more keen this kind of thing would recur more frequently. The people of no one country can afford to neglect the affairs of another; the essence of the workers' movement is its internationality, and the wrongs of one part are the wrongs of all; and while they cannot counsel revenge and so follow their "rulers" into wrongdoing, the workers of each country should encourage the workers of others to resistance of such things as this Chicago affair.

– “The Condemned Men at Chicago”, *The Commonweal*, 22 October 1887

Kropotkin dealt with the decentralisation of social life and the increased scope for development of the individual that Socialism would bring about, and insisted on the elevation of character that would result.

– “Farewell to Mrs. Parsons”, *The Commonweal*, 8 December 1888

Peter Kropotkin (Freedom Group) drew attention to this being the eighteenth anniversary of the Commune, and said that since '89 no government in France had lasted more than eighteen or nineteen years. It was almost certain that the government of rascals that now cursed France would have to follow the precedent, and give way to something else. Whatever that was, it would not be parliamentarism, of which the people was thoroughly tired, not merely of this one government. Events were ripening fast, and who could tell when the Commune should revive itself, this time for ever? The revolution would concern itself with no parties, and he thought that the people would rely less on authority and more “on their own fist.” He cited the testimony of Zola, among others, that the present system was tottering to its fall, and urged the workers to note the change which is taking place, and to prepare themselves at a thousand centres; to do the work that lies near to their own hand, and to take that which was requisite for the satisfaction of their own needs. All work, all preaching, will influence the movement; the propaganda must be concentrated nowhere, but spread everywhere. Then the next Commune could not be isolated, and its foes would find no standing ground, the flames would burst up everywhere under their feet, and the international proletariat would free itself.

– “The Commune of Paris: Celebration at South Place Institute on Saturday, March 16, 1889”, *The Commonweal*, 23 March 1889

Kropotkin thought there were two kinds of trade unions. There is the trade-union of the aristocrats of labor, and the trade union more properly so called the idea of the trade unionists originally, was the making of a general conflagration throughout Europe. All this was altered by the Marxist party who directed the movement into the 8 hours channel. Hence the greater necessity for working in the trade unions. In this work he would not direct his attention to the old trade unions.

– “Anarchists and the Labour Movement”, *The Commonweal*, 7 November 1891

Kropotkin thought that we had arrived at a crisis in the history of Socialism. We had recently seen at the Brussels Congress, a repetition of the events, which had destroyed the International Workmen's Association at the Congress of Hague in 1873. The present labour movement like that of the International was a purely economic one. The original idea of the new movement was to bring about a series of Great Strikes to end in a General Strike of all European workmen and the Social Revolution. But now their Social Democratic leaders had decided that the movement should in future be political, but in the meantime, what had become of Socialism. The workmen's party in Germany were advising the workmen to shoot down the poor Russian peasants of whom twenty millions were starving at the bidding of the young Imperial despot. These leaders were as much at service of the German Emperor as the English working class leaders were at the disposal of the Liberal and Tory parties. What could be done, when the best men were brought thus to abandon their flag and betray their cause. They knew that their only hope was the formation of an International Revolutionary party. It was not necessary in this party, that every one should obey and march like a soldier. A revolutionary ideal is the negation of every part of the present system. For the coming revolution, we must accustom, every man to act on his own initiative, and take all the responsibility of his own acts.

– “The Chicago Celebrations”, *The Commonweal*, 21 November 1891

Luxembourg [Palace] and, later, their deputies into the Parliament of the bourgeois Republic; or else as the Blanquists and Jacobins had done in 1871, by shutting themselves up in the General Council of the Commune, where the revolutionary minority found itself paralysed by the majority – democratic, without doubt, but also essentially bourgeois. – What power of action, if, remaining with the workers and taking advantage of the momentary weakness of power, the steadfast men of the International set to work to accomplish *their* own work; that is to say, to organise communist consumption in their sections and communist production on the lands and the in factories taken from the exploiters. Our grandfathers in 1792 had tried it out on a fairly large scale, and some members of the International were willing to try it out in Paris in 1871 – especially the “Bakuninist” Varlin, his friend Malon and some socialist comrades.

The bourgeoisie understood this danger perfectly, and they immediately opened their campaign. In France, Spain, Italy, the International was furiously pursued. France, was defended by an exceptional law which delivered Internationalists to police trials, to inflict on them up to five years in prisons, by judges who always obeyed the orders of the government. In 1873, there was a series of trials of the International in the South [of France]. In 1878, it was the turn of Paris, where Costa with Pedoussaut went to prison. In 1882, it was the Lyons region which was attacked and at the Lyon trial, fifty comrades saw themselves sentenced to many years.¹ Later, fierce persecutions were directed against the miners of Montceau-les-Mines, who retained the traditions of the International, and the most active men of the region were transported to New Caledonia.

¹ It should be noted that Kropotkin was speaking from experience here, as he was one of these anarchists subject to a show trial in Lyons. He was found guilty in January 1883 of belonging to the International and sentenced to five years imprisonment. He was released in a general amnesty in 1886 and left France for Britain, where he helped found *Freedom*. (*Black Flag*)

² A reference to the Montjuïc trial which took place after a bomb was thrown into the Feast of Corpus Christi procession in Barcelona on June 7, 1896, killing at least 12 people. 87 alleged conspirators were accused and tried, with 5 executed and 67 imprisoned as a result of forced confessions and torture of defendants. An international campaign highlighted the state-approved torture, with deportees baring their scars before appalled meeting halls in the United Kingdom and

In Italy, in Spain, the International necessarily became a clandestine organisation, and the workers fought with admirable enthusiasm and a spirit of sacrifice, without being stopped by the death of their best men. In Spain, the secret groups of the International, strong in their close relations with the trade union organisations of the industrial workers in Catalonia and groups of agricultural labourers in Andalusia and peasants in

Valencia, were able to sustain a serious struggle for ten years or so. But the struggle became more and more difficult, and the bourgeoisie, while patronising the legal and parliamentary socialists, became more and more relentless against the anarchists of the International, who had remained faithful to the principle of the direct struggle of Labour against Capital. And when the anarchists had recourse to violent means, the united bourgeoisie and clergy went so far as to re-establish torture in order to get rid of the bravest and most active men.²

In Italy, it was also an all-out struggle of the bourgeoisie against the old anarchist groups

of the International. Hundreds of comrades were put in prison or transported to the islands³... And yet, there is one thing that is certain. It is that if the ruling bourgeoisie finally got the better of the sections of the Anarchist International, the work of this International, in Spain and in Italy, was immense. Indeed, we can affirm with certainty, without fear of being contradicted by events, that this spirit of anarchism, widespread in the workers' organisations of combat and resistance to Capital, will be found the day when some event will create a revolutionary situation in one of these two countries.⁴

United States. Italian anarchist Michele Angiolillo assassinated Prime Minister Cánovas on 8 August 1897 in retaliation for his role in the trial and its executions. It should be noted that the initial bomb was thrown into the end of the procession, amongst poorer working-class churchgoers rather than the rich bourgeoisie at its head, suggesting that it was the work of agent provocateur. (*Black Flag*)

³ Confirmation of these predictions was not long in coming. We already have it in Spain.

⁴ One will find in a small pamphlet by Darnaud a short summary of the revolutionary events in Spain over a period of years, as reported by *Lé Révolté*, and, for Italy, in a series of articles by James Guillaume published this year by *Il Risveglio* of Geneva.

The Anarchist Principle

Le Principe anarchiste (Publications des « TEMPS NOUVEAUX », 1913)¹

At its beginnings, Anarchy was presented as a simple negation. Negation of the State and of the personal accumulation of Capital. Negation of all kinds of authority. Negation again of the established forms of Society, based on injustice, absurd egoism and oppression, as well as of current morality, derived from the Roman [Law] Code, adopted and sanctified by the Christian Church. It was by a struggle, undertaken against authority, born in the very heart of the International [Workers' Association], that the anarchist party constituted itself as a distinct revolutionary party.

It is obvious that minds as deep as Godwin, Proudhon and Bakunin could not limit themselves to a simple negation. Affirmation – the conception of a free society, without authority, marching toward the conquest of material, intellectual and moral well-being – closely followed the negation; it was in fact its counterpart. In the writings of Bakunin as well as in those of Proudhon, and also of Stirner, we find profound insights into the historical roots of the anti-authoritarian idea, the part that it has played in history, and that which it is called to play in the future development of humanity.

“No State,” or “No Authority,” despite its negative form, had a deeply affirmative meaning in their mouths. It was a philosophical and a practical principle at the same time, which signified that the whole of the life of human societies, everything – from daily relationships between individuals up to the great relations between peoples across oceans – could and should be reformed; and would necessarily be reformed, sooner or later, according to the great principles of anarchy – full and complete liberty of the individual, natural and temporary groupings, and solidarity, passed into the state of a social habit.

That is why the anarchist idea suddenly appeared great, radiant, capable of enticing and inflaming the best minds of the time.

Let us say the word, it was *philosophical*.

Today, we laugh at philosophy. They did not, however, laugh at the time of Voltaire's *Philosophical Dictionary*, which, by placing philosophy within everyone's reach and inviting everyone to gain general notions about everything, was a revolutionary work, whose traces are found in the uprising of the countryside, in the great towns of 1793, and in the passionate spirit of the volunteers of the Revolution. At that time, the starvers [of the people] feared philosophy.

But priests and businessmen, aided by German academic philosophers with incomprehensible jargon, have been very successful in rendering philosophy

useless, if not ridiculous. The priests and their followers have asserted so often that philosophy is nonsense that atheists ended up believing it. And the bourgeois businessmen – the white, blue and red opportunists – laughed so much at philosophy that even sincere men have fallen for it. Which shady dealer on the Stock-Exchange, which Thiers, which Napoleon, which Gambetta did not repeat it, the better to pursue their business? So, philosophy is somewhat held in contempt these days.

Well, no matter what priests, businessmen, and those who parrot what they that been taught say, Anarchy was understood by its founders as a great philosophical idea. It is, indeed, more than a mere motive for this or that action. It is a great philosophical principle. It is a general perspective derived from a true understanding of social phenomena, of human history, of the true causes of ancient and modern progress. A conception that we cannot accept without feeling ourselves changed by *all* our assessments, big or small, of great social phenomena as well as of the little relationships between us in our daily lives.

It is a principle of the daily struggle. And if it is a powerful principle in this struggle, this is because it sums up the deep aspirations of the masses, a principle, distorted by statist science and trampled underfoot by the oppressors, but always vital and active, always creating progress, despite and against all oppressors.

It expresses an idea that, throughout history, since there have been societies, has sought to modify mutual relationships [between people], and one day transform them, from those that are established between people living under the same roof, to those who think of founding international groupings.

A principle, finally, that demands the complete reconstruction of all physical, natural and social science.

This *positive*, reconstructive aspect of Anarchy has continued to develop. And today, Anarchy has to carry on its shoulders a far greater burden than that which arose at its beginnings.

It is no longer simply a struggle against a comrade in a workshop who has arrogated some authority to themselves within a workers' grouping. It is no longer simply a struggle against rulers, as was once the case, nor even simply a struggle against a boss, a judge or a police officer.

¹ A different translation can be found in *Direct Struggle Against Capital: A Peter Kropotkin Anthology*. (Black Flag)

It is all these things, of course, for without the everyday struggle – what is the point of calling yourself a revolutionary? The idea and action are inseparable, if the idea has taken hold of the individual; and without action, the idea itself withers.

But it is even more than that. It is the struggle between two great principles that, throughout history, have found themselves at conflict within Society, the principle of liberty and that of coercion: two principles which, at this very moment, will once again engage in a supreme struggle, to inevitably achieve a new triumph of the libertarian principle.

Look around you. What remains of all the parties that once declared themselves as eminently revolutionary? Only two parties remain: the party of coercion and the party of liberty; the Anarchists, and against them – *all* the other parties, whatever the label.

It is because the anarchists, against all these parties, are the only ones to defend the principle of liberty in its entirety. All the others boast of making humanity happy by changing or softening the form of the whip. If they cry “down with the hemp rope on the gibbet,” it is to replace it with a silken cord applied on the back. They cannot conceive of society without the whip, without coercion of one sort or another – without the whip of wages and hunger, without that of the judge and police, without that of punishment in one form or another. We, alone, dare to affirm that punishment, police, judge, hunger and wages have never been, and never will be, a part of progress; and that under a regime that acknowledges these instruments of coercion, if there is progress, progress is achieved *despite* these instruments, and not *by* them.

This is the struggle we undertake. And what honest young heart would not beat [faster] at the idea that they too can take part in this struggle, and against all oppressive minorities lay claim to the most beautiful part of man, the one which has created all the progress around us and which, despite that, for that very reason, was always trampled underfoot!

But that is not all.

As the division between the party of liberty and the party of coercion has become more and more

pronounced, the latter clings more and more to the dying forms of the past.

It knows that it faces a powerful principle, capable of bestowing an irresistible strength to the revolution if one day it is clearly understood by the masses. And it works to seize each of the currents that together form the great revolutionary current. It lays its hand on the

communist thought which is appearing in France and England. It seeks to take over the workers’ revolt against the bosses that is taking place the world over.

And, instead of finding allies in socialists less advanced than us, we find in them, in both these areas, an adroit adversary, relying upon on all the strength of acquired prejudices, causing socialism to deviate from its direct path and which will eventually erase the socialist direction of the labour movement, unless the workers realise in time and abandon their current opinion-makers.

The anarchist is thus forced to work without rest and without

delay in all these areas.

They must stress the grand, philosophical principle aspect of Anarchy. They have to apply it to science, because by that they will help to reshape ideas: they will fell the lies of history, of social economy, of philosophy, and they will aid those who already do so, often unwittingly, out of a love for scientific truth, to place an anarchist stamp on contemporary thought.

They must assist the daily struggle and agitation against oppressors and prejudices, sustain the spirit of revolt everywhere people feel oppressed and have the courage to revolt.

They must thwart the clever machinations of all parties, formerly allies but now hostile, who work to divert into authoritarian paths movements born as a revolt against the oppression of Capital and State.

And finally, in all these areas, they have to find, to predict by the very practice of life itself, the new forms that groupings, whether of work, regional or local, may take in a free society, liberated from the authority of governments and the starvers [of the people].

Is not the magnitude of the task to be accomplished the greatest inspiration for the person who feels the strength to struggle? Is it not also the best way to appreciate each separate event which occurs during the course of the great struggle that we have to sustain?

The anarchist... must assist the daily struggle and agitation against oppressors and prejudices, sustain the spirit of revolt everywhere people feel oppressed and have the courage to revolt.

They must thwart the clever machinations of all parties... who work to divert into authoritarian paths movements born as a revolt against the oppression of Capital and State.

On Class War

Kropotkin is best remembered for his classic books and pamphlets on anarchism. *Words of a Rebel* is primarily an all-too-relevant onslaught on capital and the State, *The Conquest of Bread* a guide to the essential activity needed to make a social revolution successful, namely the expropriation of wealth by and for the masses. His pamphlets – such as *Anarchist Communism: Its Basis and Principles* and *Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Ideal* – seek to convince people to become anarchists.

What is missing from these is his perspective on how to get from here to there, to the situation where a social revolution is a possibility. While this is mentioned in these works, their focus is elsewhere and we need to look at his articles for the anarchist press on current events to gain a better understanding of his class struggle politics. For nearly fifty years he studied and reported on what he called “the labour war”, seeking evidence to show that anarchy was no idle dream but rather a possibility produced by the struggle against oppression and exploitation by those subject to both.

This engagement can be seen in these articles, commenting on the Haymarket events and strikes in Britain, using these as examples for urging anarchist involvement in the labour movement. Thus Kropotkin, alongside the likes of Malatesta, Turner, Mowbray and Merlino, discussed the issue and resolved the following in late 1891:

The following items of the agenda were agreed to, (1) The necessity of working more in the Labour movement. (2) We ought to join our trade union when there is opportunity for Anarchist propaganda. (3) Try to induce the unions to dispense as far as possible with committees and officials, but when there is no chance of making propaganda, start new unions on Anarchist lines. (“Anarchists and the Labour Movement”, *The Commonweal*, 7 November 1891)

Not only does this predate both the 1892-4 bombings in France which are often considered as the catalyst for the rise of syndicalism and Fernand Pelloutier’s famous 1895 article in *Les Temps Nouveaux* urging anarchists to join the labour movement by four years, it repeats his arguments raised in *Le Révolté* ten years earlier. That he was an early champion of what became known as syndicalism can also be seen from his discussion of *ca’canny* (or sabotage), given that it predates Émile Pouget’s advocacy of it by six years.

More articles could easily be added to what we include here – for example, we have excluded Kropotkin’s many articles on the general strike for our next issue, which will discuss “Anarchism and the General Strike” in more detail. We simply note that other articles on the class war can be found in *Direct Struggle Against Capital: A Peter Kropotkin Anthology* and his earliest articles on the labour movement in the new edition of *Words of a Rebel*.

Imagine a Trade Union movement not only for increasing wages and reducing hours, but inspired by the grander idea of getting rid of the drones and taking possession of the works
– “The Development of Trades Unionism”, *Freedom*, March 1898

The Social War

“La Guerre Sociale”, *Le Révolté: Organ Communiste-Anarchiste*, 11 September 1886

War! All-out war against socialists of all shades! Examination, if possible, of all workers who dare to revolt against the reign of capital! – This is what American democracy offers us at the moment.

Seven death sentences in the Chicago trial; countless convictions for boycotting, for striking. Discretionary powers given to mayors. Demands for summary executions from top to bottom of the bourgeois press. – This is the record of the capitalist regime in the United States. Never, not even in Russia, have we seen in any trial anything so despicable as the Chicago trial. It is established, proven, by witnesses even in the pay of the State that out of the seven condemned to death for murder that two were not in Haymarket Square and that three left before the bomb exploded. All the same they are condemned to death, and the bourgeois press applauds.

As for the other two convicts, a witness paid by the State – a pimp and conman – *believes* he saw Spies light the fuse of the bomb but contradicts himself twice. He saw it in the front, he only saw the back! Spies was in black; and when it is proven that he was in grey – “Yes,” affirms the conman, “he was indeed in grey!”

On which the jury hastens to sentence Spies to death. He is intelligent, active – that is enough.

Our friends are convicted of murder. And the mayor of Chicago says that the speeches of Spies, Fielden and the others called for so little violence that he, the mayor, ordered Bonfield to send the police home. The anarchists, in fact, having resolved not to attempt an uprising, the meeting was quite peaceful.

They found bombs and dynamite at our friends’ homes. But neither American law nor custom is against this. O’Donovan Rossa, the Irish patriot, makes no secret of having explosives in his office, and the bourgeois arm many soldiers to massacre workers.



Finally, the agent provocateur, the Brenin of the affair, is not missing. It is a certain Seeliger who taught the art of making bombs in the armed anarchist section and had them made before his eyes. Like Brenin, he makes no secret of having been paid. And, as it is quite possible that Cleveland would not do like Grévy (we know that Grévy hastened to pardon Brenin last July) the agent provocateur Seeliger only appears in the trial as a witness.¹

That is the trial.

As for the press – democrats, republicans, radicals welcomed the sentence with loud cries of joy.

This sentence must be the prelude to a whole series and the raging cowards are simply demanding the summary execution of all anarchists.

Only a good massacre could satisfy them, and they will do it at the first opportunity.

– “Those damned women and children who come to their meetings!” cried Chief Police Officer Bonfield to a bourgeois travelling salesman, who went to the court to repeat these words. – “Those damned women and children! Otherwise I would have drove three thousand of those socialist scoundrels into a dead end and there I would have quickly finished them!”

This is the Bourgeoise at work!

Workers, reflect on this trial, reflect on this attitude of the bourgeois democrats!

Woe to you if you let yourselves be defeated at the next taking up of arms! Woe to your wives and children!

It will be relentless, ferocious extermination!

Do not lose a single moment to disarm the bourgeoisie and do not forget that its weapon – more powerful than its guns – is the capital it possesses.

¹ Claude Brenin was a miner who became an agent of the police in October 1884. He was ordered to join a secret organisation of miners in Montceau-les-Mines called the “Black Band” and gave a younger colleague a bomb and a revolver for an attack. Caught in the act, the colleague denounced the perpetrators of previous attacks. Brenin was

sentenced to five years of hard labour, commuted to five years’ imprisonment the following year. This trial followed the famous Lyons anarchist trial of 1883 in which Kropotkin was sentenced to five years imprisonment for being a member of the International. (*Black Flag*)

Before The Storm

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Socialism, December 1888

A speech delivered by P. Kropotkin at the meeting held at South Place, November 29, to bid farewell to Mrs. Parsons.

I think I cannot address better farewell words to our friend Mrs. Parsons than to ask her to transmit to our American friends the impression under which we, the advanced parties of the Socialist movement, are now living in Europe.

When Arthur Young, the great English agriculturist, was travelling France, exactly one hundred years ago, on the eve of the great Revolution, he often heard misery-stricken peasant-women saying, "Something will happen some time very soon to improve our

condition. What it may be we don't know, but *something* will happen." Exactly the same feeling exists now all over Europe. If our friend had had the time to go over to the Continent, or to travel in this country, she would have heard the same feeling continually expressed among the sufferers from the present system. Everybody expresses it in France and Spain, very many in Italy, many in Germany, Austria, and this country, and almost everybody – peasants and educated men as well – in my mother country Russia.

And the richer classes know that. They also frankly recognise in private that something is going to happen, that great changes are pending. In France they openly recognize it in the press. "Something will happen; it cannot last as it is" – such is the opinion growing all over the civilised nations of Europe amidst the poorer and the richer classes alike.

Now, the student of human societies will understand what that growing feeling means. As long as there is in the masses mere discontent, that feeling can last for years and years, without being manifested otherwise than by individual acts of revolt. But when the feeling of discontent becomes associated with hopes of a near change, then the change must come; the revolt of the masses is near at hand.

What will be this "something" nobody can foretell. It may be the Communist Commune in some larger cities of France. It may be the Federative Republic and the Commune in Spain and Italy, and the Unitarian Democratic Republic in Germany. It most probably will be a peasants' outbreak in Russia and a consequent abolition of absolute rule there. It may be land nationalisation in this country, or some wider attempt at social reorganisation.

But, whatever it may be, tell to our American friends that two ideas are sure to come out of the change. One of them will be a very wide extension of Home Rule, and, in the more advanced countries, a disintegration, a disjunction of the present governments, so as to take from their hands the numberless functions which they have concentrated now. More free understanding, more free association for achieving the ends now monopolised by the municipalities and the parliaments are sure to come out of the change. The centralised governments which gather in their hands all

functions of human life – the defence of society, its education, its economical life, and so on – have been rendered an impossibility; disintegration of those functions must follow both in the state and the free commune.

And the other idea which is sure to come out of the change, will be the disappearance of many a monopoly, the socialisation of, at least, the first necessities of life and production.

Two grand ideas which will revolutionise the whole life of our present society.

Now as to the question how this change will occur, we cannot answer it. It will not depend upon us; it will depend upon the privileged classes. If they understand the necessity of the change, and make timely and

A PUBLIC MEETING

in commemoration of the legal murder and imprisonment of the

Chicago Anarchists

will be held on

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 11th, 1891, at 8 p. m.,

at the

SOUTH PLACE INSTITUTE,
South Place, Moorgate Street, E. C.

Speakers: Alfred Marsh, S. Merlino, Touzeau Parris, Trunk, Peter Kropotkin, Malatesta, D. J. Nicoll, Louise Michel, Jas. Tochatti, S. Yanovsky, C. Mowbray, W. Wess, J. Turner.

LOCAL MEETINGS will be held as follows:

Saturday, November 7th, International Working Men's Club, 40, Berner Street, E.

Sunday, November 8th, Autonomie Club, 6, Windmill Street, Tottenham Court Road, W.

Monday, November 9th, Scandinavian Club, Rathbone Place, Oxford Street, W.

Tuesday, November 10th, Forward Club, (Commonweal Group), Charles Square, Hoxton.

OPEN AIR MEETINGS

will be held on Sunday, November 8th, at 11 a. m., Regent's Park and Hyde Park; 3 p. m. Victoria Park.

substantial concessions, and do not conspire to overthrow the work of the revolution as they did a hundred years ago in France, then civil war may be avoided. If not, it will break out.

The masses will *not* insist on civil war, but they will not be satisfied with mere sham reforms. They will fight, if necessary, in order to obtain substantial changes.

Which of the two courses will events take? We cannot foretell. But, we must say that the lessons now given to the masses by their educated rulers are working precisely in the direction of preparing war. These rulers teach us cold contempt and disdain of humanity. To speak of humanity, to preach loftier ideas, is considered by them as wicked sentimentalism.

The other day the President of the Bristol Association was reviewing the recent achievements of engineering. Do you think he dwelt upon the St. Gothard tunnel, the canal of Panama, or the proposed tunnel across the Channel? No, he became really eloquent just when he began to speak of the art of killing men. He spoke without disgust, nay, with the enthusiasm of an artist, of a gun which could be put at Richmond and so pointed as to throw shells, weighing 380 pounds, and charged with dynamite, into a space 200 yards square around the Royal Exchange, where shells would be “vomiting fire and scattering their walls in hundreds of pieces with terrific violence,” thus killing the passers by.

What a grand idea! what a grand lesson to gloat over the possibility of throwing these hundreds of pounds of dynamite from a distance of twelve miles into the midst of the crowd of men, women and children! But, such are the lessons given by the upper classes. “No sentimentalism in warfare,” they say; “cold contempt for human life!”

”If you can, bombard peaceful cities,” so they taught us during the last naval manoeuvres. “Vomit death amidst the crowds and into the houses. No matter if you kill women and children. No sentimentalism in warfare!”

Bombard Alexandria, if by this means you can get possession of a new market! Such are the lessons given by the upper classes.

Again, suppose a country, like Ireland, longs for Home Rule. Home Rule for Ireland menaces the interests of

Birmingham manufacturers, of English landlords, and, especially, of the London money-lenders and the English insurance companies to whom the mortgaged lands of Ireland really belong. Therefore the ruling classes throw the advocates of Home Rule into prison, turn the peasants who have *made* the soil out of their houses into the mud and snow of the road, men, women

and children; and, when it serves their purpose drive them to despair, provoke an insurrection and then crush it in blood! Such are again the lessons we are taught by the upper classes.

And if a workers’ movement menaces the interests of the rich, as it did at Chicago, slaughter the workers, pick out a few energetic men and hang them without much caring what is the truth about the

crimes imputed to them; hang them to terrorise the masses!

Such are the lessons given by the upper classes.

Well, let us hope that the workers will be better than their teachers. Let us hope that the numbers of rebels will be so great and important and their leading ideas exercise so powerful an effect, that they will be strong enough not to resort to the wicked means now resorted to by a ruling minority, which knows that its days are already numbered. Strength, force, can be generous; wicked feebleness never.

Such are the conditions in Europe.

And now, dear friend, tell to our American comrades that their heroes did not die in vain.

There is not a single city worth naming in Spain where the bloody anniversary was not commemorated by enthusiastic crowds of workers. Not one in Italy. Not one in Germany where the names of Parsons, Spies, Engel, Schwab, Fischer, Lingg, Neebe and Fielden were not invoked by workers who met in small groups, as they were not allowed to hold big meetings.

The commemoration of the Chicago martyrs has almost acquired the same importance as the commemoration of the Paris Commune.

Many have already died for the grand cause of Freedom, but none of the martyrs of Freedom have been so enthusiastically adopted by the workers as their martyrs. And I will tell you why.

The failure of the middle classes is now complete, and you, the workers, must take into your hands the inheritance. Consider all that vast accumulation of cultivable lands, these railways, these ships, this accumulated knowledge as yours, take hold of them... undertake the management of all treasures for the benefit of all.

– “The Eleventh of November”, *Freedom*, December 1898

The workmen know that our Chicago brethren were thoroughly honest. Not one single black spot could be detected in their lives, even by their enemies. Not one single black spot! Mark that, young men and women who come to join the Socialist movement. The masses are honest and they ask the same from those who come to help them in their work. While a black past goes for nothing in the ranks of the politicians, the workers ask from their combatants to be pure of any reproach, to live in accordance with the grand principles they are preaching.

They were honest all their lives through, these martyrs of the labour cause, and once they had joined the Anarchist movement, they gave themselves to it, not by halves, but entirely, body and heart together.

And – they had no ambition. They were Anarchists and understood when they became Socialists, that it was not that they might climb themselves upon the shoulders of their fellow-workers. They did not ask from the masses

a place in Parliament, in a Municipality, or on a School Board. They sought no power over the others, no place in the ranks of the ruling classes. They asked nothing but the right to fight in the ranks, at the post of danger. And there they died.

Only such men could die as they have died, without making the slightest concession to the enemy, loudly proclaiming their Anarchist principles before the judges who said that Anarchy is on trial, amidst the lawyers who whispered: “Renounce Anarchy, and you will be saved.”

They proclaimed their principles during the terrible year spent on the threshold of death; they proclaimed them on the scaffold, and they hailed the day on which they died for those principles as the happiest of their lives.

Such men can inspire the generations to come with the noblest feelings. And so they do, and will do. The idea which lives in such men will never die – it will conquer.

The action of the masses and the individual

“L’Action des masses et l’individu”, *La Révolte*, 24 May 1890¹

Our comrades are perfectly right to say [in their letter] that the May strikes are a consequence of general economic conditions. If the return of work to the mines and in the iron industry, and if dreadful poverty in the other trades did not exist, there wouldn’t have been any strikes at all, as there weren’t any on such a large scale ten years ago. But what our comrades ignore is that, *outside all socialist organisations*, right now, within the workers of all nationalities, an immense work to press on to a general strike is taking place. Democrats, trade unionists, socialists, anarchists, have absolutely nothing to do with it. – “We are overwhelmed by this movement” we were told, two years ago, by a Belgian socialist. In England, in a big city, at least socialists took hold of this movement. They were well received at first; but when people realised that they wanted to enlist it to an electoral aim, they threw them overboard.

Whether it is enough to say that this international movement comes from America; that it is taking form outside all [existing] organisation; and that we find ourselves faced with one of these facts that have always characterised the great popular movements – tacit understanding that becomes established outside newspapers, committees, agitators. A word put out in a workshop is enough and they tell each other: “So be it, see you on the 1st of May!” Then a worker goes from England to Austria, or from Austria to England, and expresses the same idea, and the idea – since it results from an economic necessity – is accepted straightaway.

Every strike of the last two years, in Belgium, in England, in Moravia, etc., etc., are due to this *spontaneous* spreading of the idea. If ever there was a

movement anarchist by its essence and a propaganda essentially anarchist in its processes, it is this one. Because there is no secret – it is a tacit agreement that becomes established.

Our comrades from Geneva are mistaken to attribute the 1st May to the Paris Congress. It was made absolutely outside of the Congress, *against* the will of the social-democrats, *against* the will of trade-union committees and *despite* indifference of socialists, anarchists and authoritarians. It is precisely for that reason that we attach significance to it.

In a Congress where Liebknecht enjoyed royal rights, an unknown coming from Australia makes the proposal. The flabbergasted chiefs do not dare to renounce it, because the worker delegates – the unknowns – acclaim it unanimously. Then, the proposal is forgotten. The watchword of the socialist press is to not breathe a word of it. Socialists and anarchists treat it as a joke. Democrats oppose it. And meanwhile the workers spread the call [for a general strike] amongst each other: see you on the 1st of May. And fifteen days before the 1st of May the trade unionist, socialist and democrat leaders learn with dread that the working people will be on the street on that day. So they put on a brave face at this bad news, then they try to curb the demonstration and they end up joining it. But still, they expect a demonstration of no significance – and there is the whole of working London coming out of its hovels, a third of Vienna going to the Prater, the whole of Hamburg on its feet, and a general uprising of miners starts in Moravia, in the Basque provinces, etc.

¹ Translation by N.C.

In fact, we are persuaded that what the popular initiators of the movement wanted for the 1st of May was the general strike – as they had wanted it, a few years ago, in America. And we are persuaded that the idea of a general strike has only been postponed and that popular agreement will find in a year or two another date, unforeseen by those in power, to start the general strike.

* * *

We think that these facts are generally unknown and are the best reply to our comrades' letter and for that very reason we had to set them out at length

“Individual initiative?” –

Damn it! Let us practice it as much as possible! Let us not talk: let us act! But when we face a spontaneous movement of the masses – in front of an individual initiative of millions of workers – let us not put a spanner in the wheels of what is being done without us in the name of individual initiative, which will be excellent when it is taken but which, on its own, will not make the revolution.

The strong point of individual initiative is *to awake the spirit of revolt in the masses* – because without the masses, no revolution. But once the masses awaken, once they move and descend onto the street, at the risk of sleeping that night on the barricades (it was the idea in Vienna), where does individual initiative have to go?

The answer is obvious – Where the masses are! And on the very day when the masses arrange to meet up! For us, it is absolutely obvious that in Moravia, in the Basque provinces, in Barcelona, in Valencia and elsewhere, those amongst the workers who really have some individual initiative and who wait for the watchword from the anarchists no more than from the democrats, told themselves: “While the troops are in Vienna or in Madrid, we will start the revolution here, in Moravia, in Barcelona or in Bilbao. And we will do it precisely on the 1st of May (or rather on the 2nd of May) whilst the troops are still in Vienna or in Madrid, and not on the 15th of May or on the 15th of June, when they will be back in our provinces”.

They have not been supported, precisely because the initiative was lacking elsewhere.

As for the arrests of anarchists – it is time to anticipate them in advance. Every time there is agitation in the masses, wherever it is from, the government will arrest anarchists – if they do not take precautions. That will take place before the revolution, during the revolution

and after the revolution. We need only to remember Marat and so many others, less known, who were forced to live in cellars right in the middle of 1793, while aristocrats were guillotined by the dozens. Anarchists will be arrested because – sometimes wrongly, but most often rightly – governments will tell themselves this: “When the people are in the street and that individual initiative is lacking amongst these masses marching to storm society, it is from the anarchists that the initiative of a movement will be able to come, not from the legalists”.

And, let us note, that it will be absolutely the same thing during the revolution itself, as long as the revolution, in its development, has not reached the anarchist phase. Therefore, let us not speak of it.

* * *

Let us also add that if, on the day of a large popular demonstration, a movement in a big city hardly ever takes place, it is always a few days after such a demonstration that the movement starts. We

counted ourselves, we understood its strength, we were offended by the brutality of the police, we were enraged by the blood shed at a peaceful demonstration: the soldiers themselves are furious at the leaders who made them shoot women and children; and then, on a call that, once more, is born spontaneously in the masses – we prepare another demonstration. But, before that day, the revolution already breaks out.

In short, let us turn the question over and over as much as we like, but we cannot reach another conclusion than this one: “whether we are the partisan of individual action or action of the masses – and it is obvious that both are necessary – the man of action's place is where the masses are. If he carries out an individual act; if he responds to a policeman's kick with a pistol shot; if he rebels against such iniquity; if he extinguishes the fire in some working factory, or if he breaks its windows (as was done in Moravia); if he goes to prison for spreading some propaganda amongst the troops or if he carries out quite another act of individual courage – his act will only have more impact, since it was done in the eyes of the masses, openly and publicly, while the press will talk about it in all details, while every worker will talk about it in the workshop”.

It is so simple, and we are so certain that all revolutionaries are of the same opinion, that there can only be debate on it by misunderstanding.

**without the masses, no
revolution. But once the
masses awaken ...
where does individual
initiative have to go?
The answer is obvious –
Where the masses are!**

The Labour Movement in England

“Le Mouvement Ouvrier En Angleterre”, *La Révolte: Organe Communiste-Anarchiste*, 13 September 1890

The Trades-Union Congress had a very special relevance this year. Following these congresses for fifteen years, we initially saw them representing 600,000 workers. Then, the number of workers represented was reduced by half. At the same time, apart from the miners and the mechanics of the North, these congresses increasingly represented the privileged worker, the one who has a more or less secure job and who is relatively well paid. The parliamentary committee of the trades unions became more and more a branch of the liberal party, that is to say, of the bourgeoisie. And the delegates themselves, received at banquets by the Lord Mayor of the City of London, rubbing shoulders with the Prince of Wales and upper-class gangsters in general, became more and more bourgeois. For the workers more miserable than them, for the day labourers and for women who toil in the factories, they had nothing but contempt. It was the nascent fourth estate; haughty and selfish of course.

But this year, everything has changed. We recall the women’s strike in the match factories of that arch-exploiter, the Bryant and May Company, and the pressure that Mrs. Besant had to exert on the Trades-Union Committee to force it to support the strike and to recognise the Young Matchmakers Union as part of the unions in general.¹

Then came the great movement of the dockworkers and the great strike in London.

Like a wildfire that ignites at the slightest spark, the movement spread throughout England. Dedicated men and women understood that any socialist or even unionist (to raise wages) movement will fail as long as a great army of unprivileged workers remains outside the movement. As long as there are millions of unskilled day labourers and women who have never heard of, not only socialism, but even the simple possibility of rebelling against exploitation and fighting by uniting – it is useless to dream of a thorough revolution, these men and women said to themselves. And they went to organising just those workers – day labourers, unskilled toilers, ship loaders, navvies, and so on.

It is good to imagine that popular movements are self-made. Nothing is more comfortable to excuse doing nothing.

Historians have even made this a whole theory that many socialists share only too much.

It is enough, according to the lazy, that there is misery for the enraged brute, the “lower class” (this is the language of the academics) to revolt.

Nothing is more demoralising, nothing is more harmful than this way of seeing things. Time and time again we have said, and we never stop repeating it, that if a *sudden* misery surprises, it can awaken the spirit of revolt. But a *gradual* misery which creeps little by little into workers’ households, demoralises them; it renders them incapable of rebelling; it kills their energy. Every popular awakening has always coincided with periods of increased well-being and the awakening of hope.

This is what happened in England. The recovery of industry arriving after the crisis of 1884-1886, awakened the energy of the workers most familiar with misery. Hope has awakened. And then there were men and women – a considerable number of volunteers – who, not belonging to any of the socialist parties inclined to forget the masses for electoral victories, began to organise the most poorly paid trades, those which do not require an apprenticeship and are recruited from the poorest sections of the proletariat.

Whatever the criticism revolutionary socialists level at [John] Burns and at so many other dedicated men and women who have done as he has done, it is certain that all of them have done more to awaken the most wretched and most intractable masses to socialism than all the socialists taken together.

It is good to say that the people will awaken by themselves. But you have to give twenty, thirty speeches a week in the open air, you have to live with the masses, be with them in their dark hovels, patiently listen to the arguments, even though to us socialists and especially anarchists they seem childish. You have to call meetings, talk to them – not philosophy, but a language that can be understood. In short, you have to devote yourself body and soul to this work, endure all the fatigue and all the setbacks, before you get any result.

That is what a whole legion of men and women who do not even dare call themselves socialists have been doing for the past two years in England.

And when socialists come to reproach them for not having given the movement a more revolutionary or more socialist character, they could well answer:

¹ The Union of Women Match Workers was formed following the successful matchgirls strike at the Bryant and May factory in Bow, London. Its first secretary was Annie Besant and by October of 1888, 666 members had been

enrolled. It changed its rules and name, becoming the Matchmakers Union, open to both men and women by the end of 1888 and the following year saw it sent its first delegate to the Trade Union Congress. (*Black Flag*)

“But why the devil did you not do the same thing! Why did you not use the same energy to reach the masses? Why, instead of discussing or writing endlessly, did you not go every evening and every morning to work amongst those *who are resistant to socialism*, instead of spending your evenings amongst friends already won over to your causes?”

If, instead of [trade] unionists, it had been socialists or anarchists who had done the same work, the tendency of the masses would already be more socialist and more anarchist than it is at present. The republicans before 1789 had worked well in the countryside to prepare it for the revolution. It is our turn to do the same work amongst the masses resistant to anarchy, to communism and even to socialism, if we want to prepare a communist revolution.

In any case, returning to the [trade] unionist congress, held their year in Liverpool, this work has been done. This is why 1,470,000 workers found themselves represented at the congress instead of the three to four hundred thousand of previous years.

At the same time, the character of the congress has totally changed. The President’s opening speech was such that much of it could have been written by socialists. The new unions are no longer formed to guarantee everyone a few francs a week in the event of illness and enough to pay for more or less elegant undertakers. They are formed exclusively for the struggle against capital.

Finally, the eight-hour day will soon be a given. The English workers do not yield: eight hours for work, eight for sleep, eight for fun. The miners have decided not to work more than eight hours, the big trades agree and the eight-hour day, established *in fact*, will soon

become a reality. On this, the one and a half million workers represented in the congress are in agreement.¹

They also demand nationalisation of the land, of the mines and of the railways; the elimination of middlemen; production by municipalities, by cities of all that is necessary for the city’s consumption.

This is not socialism and even less anarchy. But it should also be noted that the majority of the unions are in agreement on this; while some unions are much more advanced.

In any case, this congress will make a mark in the history of the labour movement. It has broken the old [trade] unionist tradition. It opens a new path. It is now up to socialists to sow their ideas in this new environment which is no longer the former reactionary environment. And that is what a number of anarchists – and it must be said that they are multiplying rapidly – are already doing in the provinces.

The barrier that separated the [trade] unionists from the socialists is broken; and even the social democrats [in the provinces are not infatuated with parliamentarism. We could see it in the very heart

of the [trade] unionist congress.

To sum up – we are faced with a great movement, certainly spontaneous, but immensely aided by a host of men and women, too modest to show off, who work every day to awaken the most miserable workers to get them to the stand together.

What will come out of this movement? It will depend on the energy that the socialist workers display now. If the socialists are energetic, the first victory of the proletarians – the eight-hour day – will not satisfy them. They will go further; the idea of the communist commune is already germinating in people’s minds. Will it ripen? That will depend largely upon us.

¹ Writing in *Freedom* in October 1907, Kropotkin recalled how “[p]etty electoral considerations took the place of the outspoken revolutionary language of the previous years... And when, in the year 1890, the First of May movement reached this country, and the workers rushed in their hundreds of thousands to the First of May demonstration, with the hope of bringing out in this way a General Strike and obtaining a great victory, cold water was again thrown on

their enthusiasm by their leaders, who came to say: “No General Strike! A General Strike is general nonsense! Send us to Parliament, and we shall get you in due time *the Legal Eight Hours!*” *Freedom* fiercely combated that policy; but the force was theirs; they won the day — and they buried the Eight Hour movement.” (“1886-1907: Glimpses into the Labour Movement in this Country”, *Direct Struggle Against Capital*, 396-7). (*Black Flag*)

The English Strikes

“Les Grèves Anglaises”, *La Révolte: Organe Communiste-Anarchiste*, 21 February 1891

While the socialist parties are increasingly disintegrating, as the leaders give up hope of reaching Parliament and lose patience, the working world is wrought to its depths by the struggle against Capital.

No sooner had the Scottish railway strike ended than new impressive strikes broke amongst dockers in Cardiff and Liverpool, centres of ocean trade.

In Leeds, where there was a recent strike by the gas workers, a new strike is about to break out, and last Monday it was decided to leave the city in darkness again, if certain workers (the most active of the last strike) fired by the bosses are not immediately taken back.

Needless to say, in America too there is the same movement. The quiet times, which brought such fine profits to the shareholders, are gone forever. It is strikes constantly. So at this very moment it is announced that the workers who manufacture coke are going on strike by the tens of thousands. If it grows, it will shut down nearly the entire American mining industry.

One fact to note is that in all these strikes we no longer see the quiet submission of times past. Every strike threatens to turn into a revolt and lead to ransacking and plundering. Secret government agents (detectives) go into the area as soon as there is a work stoppage. They investigate, and after two days they report that minds are so excited that anything can be expected. Everywhere bosses and mayors are asking for troops. They guard the docks, the pits, the palaces of the rich.

The strikes persist

There is something else. We read in the newspapers: “The strikers have returned to work” and we believe that everything is over.

That is not so. The strike is simply suspended. In the past, when the workers returned to work it was over. That is not the case today.

The strike ends and not a week goes by without the strike starting again.

On such-and-such a ship, they saw a man who does not belong to the union. All the dockers leave the ship, and

the ship which was due to leave the following day remains forty-eight hours in the dock waiting for loaders.

Here, a shipowner begs workers to toil two extra hours after their nine-hour day, so his ship can leave the next morning. He offers twelve francs for these two hours and they flatly refuse. He then hires a few temporary loaders. Immediately the ship is blacklisted; the sailors quit it and if the owner hires new ones, all his boats are boycotted, abandoned and remain for entire weeks without being able to put to sea.

At the moment there

is no official strike in London or Glasgow. Make no mistake though, the ships of three or four companies are deserted. The boats no longer leave at the agreed times and such-and-such a line which boasted for twenty years about the regularity of its voyages can no longer guarantee the departure dates.

The slightest pretext is seized to abandon work. It is a habit. “Ah, you wanted war, well, you will have it”. Not the great war of armies in line, we are not strong enough to sustain that, but the war of a rebellious people who harass the bosses, who sting them every day, where they least expect it and cut off supplies to the exploiters whenever the slightest opportunity rises.

The method is preached from the podiums, skilfully developed at meetings. “Defeated, but not defeated,

Prince Kropotkin

The Herald (Melbourne) 1 July 1905

Mr J. W. Fleming, who signs himself “Anarchist-Communist,” has observed a paragraph in “The Herald” stating that efforts were being made to get Prince Kropotkin to visit Australia, and sends us a letter received from the eminent Russian, one sentence of which is as follows: “I am quite sure that the improvements which the working men of Australia can obtain through their labour representatives going to Parliament will only be Insignificant. But I hear that you have, apart from the politician workingman, strong labour organisations.” Upon the latter, rather than upon the labour members in Parliament, Prince Kropotkin seems to rely for the improvement of the condition of the working masses.

struggle at every opportunity, however small, ruin the exploiters. *They must be ruined* by all possible means!”

And if you cannot strike – remember ca’ canny!

Ca’ Canny

This is a new term, coined very recently. It means: “Go easy! Don’t strain yourself, work little and badly!”

The method has always been practiced by English trade unions. Today it is becoming a battle cry. When a French or German worker enters an English factory and starts to work hard, his comrades warn him not to foolishly ruin himself – “*Go easy*”. That is the first lesson they teach him in the workshop. If he does not take it, they put him in the doghouse; if he perseveres, life is made hard for him.

Today, they are building the process into a system. *Ca’ canny* is preached in manifestos, explained as a principle.

The other day one of the staunch supporters of *ca’ canny* was dragged before a court in Liverpool, and there he developed his thesis: “When the English manufacturers were asked to supply very cheap cotton goods for India – what did they do? After being prudish for a moment, they ended up sending cotton goods that contained more filler than cotton. When we asked the manufacturers for cheap cloth – they concocted *shoddy* yarn, obtained by combing old clothes, saying ‘for the price of rags, you will have a cloth from rags.’ Well” – continued the accused – “we say to the workers: ‘bad pay – bad work!’” That is all there is to it.¹

You can imagine the howls of the bourgeois press – “People without faith or law demoralise *our* workers!

What will become of English industry? What will be left of our dividends?”

But the term took hold. They are passionate about preaching it and putting it into practice. “When a temporary docker, taken on to replace strikes, pushes a coal tub, it sometimes happens that the tub rolls into the river and the docker with it,” said one of the propagandists. “But you, skilled workers, don’t deserve to be called intelligent men if you don’t know how to push the tub into the river – without falling in yourselves. Put the coal into the water, stay on the dock and watch the face the boss makes!” And the speaker explained at length how you can hang full sacks from the chain of a crane so that they fall onto the deck; “but don’t be stupid enough to be under the sacks”, he showed how cranes are damaged, how to load coke ovens badly, how to be careless in all situations.²

All this is not grandiosely revolutionary. But it shows how much the working masses are at this moment wrought with brand new ideas. In the past, we would have been booed, manhandled, if we had dared to preach such a thing in England. Today it is vigorously applauded.

And then, propaganda as propaganda, we admit this propaganda undermines respect for property, the boss, the established order, better than the algebraic formulas of the doctrinaire socialists; “Ruining industry!” with this response they used to silence the staunchest socialists. Just think, ruin the sacred industry of the sacred fatherland!! Today, they care about this joke like last year’s snow. – “Go away, if this ruins you!” is the only answer that is given in the meetings with the mouthpieces of the nation’s industry. “Go away, “ say the workers, “we have no need for you!”

the anarchists... do not seek to constitute, and invite the working men not to constitute, political parties in the parliaments. Accordingly, since the foundation of the International Working Men’s Association in 1864-1866, they have endeavoured to promote their ideas directly amongst the labour organisations and to induce those unions to a direct struggle against capital, without placing their faith in parliamentary legislation.

– “Anarchism”, *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*

¹ Émile Pouget includes a similar account in his article “Le Sabotage” (*Almanach du Père Peinard*, 1898) and in his later pamphlet of the same name. (*Black Flag*)

² A reference to Glasgow dockers’ strike of 1889 when the defeated workers were told before they returned to work the following by a union leader: “You are going to return to work today at the old rate. The employers have repeatedly said that they were delighted with the services of the farm workers who have replaced us over the past few weeks. We have seen them; we have seen that they don’t know to walk on a boat,

that they have dropped half the stuff they carried; in short that two of them can’t do the work of one of us. However the employers have said that they are delighted with the services of these people; let us therefore do the same and practice ca’ canny. Work like the farm workers worked. Only it happened that several times they fell into the water. It is useless for you to do the same.” (quoted by Geoff Brown, *Sabotage: A Study in Industrial Conflict* [Nottingham: Spokesman Books 1977], 5) A few days later, the workers got the pay rise they had failed to get by striking. (*Black Flag*)

Co-operation and socialism¹

“Coopération et socialisme”, *Les Temps Nouveaux*, 27 July 1895

It is necessary to refer to the thirties and forties of this century in order to realise the enthusiasm with which co-operation was envisaged, or “association” as they used to say in France, and to appreciate the audacity of Proudhon who dared to attack it head-on.

Association, in the ideas of that time, was to change everything. In order to avoid paying a formidable tribute to the intermediaries of commerce, a group of workers co-operated to buy a sack of flour together, and sold it to the members of the group at cost, plus some minimal administrative expenses. And, little by little, by dint of privation and struggle, this group succeeded in attracting others and providing each other with whatever they consumed at 20 or 30 per cent below the prices of commercial suppliers.

This little experiment was to gradually reform the world. The small co-operation would spread, it would eventually encompass all workers. It would remove intermediaries. Bread, meat, housing would be provided at the cost price: the worker would emancipate himself from the intermediate culture. He would gain the habit of association, of managing his own affairs. He would see at first hand the advantages of communism and gradually acquire broader views on national and international relations.

Then, using a share of the profits to expand business, we would create producer groups. Instead of purchasing cloth or shoes from the capitalist manufacturer, associations for production would be formed which would provide consumer associations with all they buy today from capitalist cultures. Gradually, these would be eliminated from production as well as from consumption. And if the workers succeeded in forcing the State to open credit for production for them (the Louis Blanc project, later adopted by Lassalle and still in vogue in socialist democracy), the economic revolution would be made.

The worker, freed from the capitalist, would be in possession of the tools necessary to produce. He would

enjoy the full product of his work. With the aid of labour notes [*bons de travail*], which enabled the worker to buy without waiting until his products are sold, it was the social revolution accomplished.

* * *

It would not be fair to treat the cooperative movement as insignificant. On the contrary. In England and Scotland, more than 1,600,000 people and households are members of consumer cooperatives. Cooperatives are found everywhere, especially in the towns and villages of the North. Their business amounts to billions of francs. And the central wholesale co-operative in Manchester, which supplies everything to local cooperatives, is a tremendous establishment with multi-storey shops covering a whole neighbourhood, not to mention its huge warehouses in the docks of Liverpool. It sends its five or six ships to look for tea in China, it buys sugar from India, butter from Denmark, cotton goods from the largest producers, and so on... – “Suppose [there was] a social revolution in Manchester,” I asked the administrators, “Could you feed and clothe the whole city, and distribute produce in all neighbourhoods?” – “With our equipment, our arrangements and men of good will, it would be done in twenty-four hours. Provide money or credit to buy - there would be no shadow of difficulty,” was the immediate answer.

And that is true. You must see the establishment to understand the correctness of the statement.

* * *

Moreover, the tendency has been for some time to form associations for production on a large scale that manufacture essentials. After a number of failures, the English [and Scottish] co-operators succeeded in making their shoe factories, their flour mills and their bakeries run smoothly. Already, a third of the bread eaten by the 686,000 inhabitants of Glasgow is provided by co-operatives.

¹ *Economic Expedients*, II [“Les Expédients économiques” was published in *Les Temps Nouveaux* on 13 July 1895 and is included in *Direct Struggle Against Capital – Black Flag*]

In a word, the English and Scottish co-operators have had considerable success; they are a force that is still growing. Only, this success is such that the first co-operators would have turned away in disgust; for, until the last three or four years when the socialist spirit began to pervade the co-operatives as well as the bourgeoisie itself, the English co-operatives remained the fortresses of worker bourgeoisism.

* * *

As for their direct effects on the well-being of the worker, these are very small.

Our Swiss readers will remember the misery that reigned at La Chaux-de-Fonds in 1877-78. They opened a municipal canteen where they had a good meal at a low price. But already two months after the opening of the canteen, the rent of the rooms within a half-kilometre radius of the canteen had risen by at least five francs a month – “But Monsieur can pay five francs more for the room as he will be a stone’s throw from the canteen,” replied the ladies with a sweet smile.

The English big bourgeoisie did more: it imposed the profit sharing due to the co-operatives. A few years ago, a Newcastle co-operator brought us to an old miner who was to familiarise us with the advantages of co-operation and he did so in these terms:

“Well, you see. With wages of 9 shillings per week, I live today just as well as I lived twenty years ago with 16 shillings. And this [is] thanks to the co-operatives. The house belongs to me; I bought it through the co-operative and have no rent to pay. I save at least thirty percent on everything I buy. And my nine shillings are enough where sixteen hardly sufficed.”

Our question is anticipated: “But why did he earn only 9 shillings instead of 16?” And the response is likewise anticipated: “The work is not required; we only work three days a week!”

In other words: since the capitalist has every interest in keeping an army of miners who will work only three days a week and who, at the moment when coal prices rise, will be able to double production – he does. He does on a large scale what the good ladies of Chaux-de-Fonds did on a small scale. He profits from the co-operative.

These two sketches – two small parts of reality – summarise the history of co-operatives. The co-operative *can* increase the welfare of the worker; that goes without saying. But in order that the worker may not lose all the benefit as a result of a wage-cut, increased unemployment, economic rent on land and, therefore, rents always going up, and taxes always growing – for the benefit gained by the abolition of the middle-man not to be stolen by the landlord, the banker, the boss and the State, he must attack head-on this new co-operative of vultures; he must fight them by the hunger or the torch of strikes, by conspiracy and revolt.

And if he does not do this – he has worked for the other co-operative, that of the vultures.

We always come to the same point. The struggle, the war against the exploiter always remains the only weapon of the exploited.

But there is worse.

While struggle, by the strike, the war with the machines, the war against the landlord (which takes a thousand different aspects according to the localities), and the revolt against the State *unites* workers – these expedients, such as co-operatives, *divide* them.

Indeed, until the last three or four years there were no worse bosses in England than co-operators. Their congresses of 1886 and 1887 were striking in this respect. The selfishness of the co-operators, especially in the North, has been one of the greatest obstacles to the development of socialism in this part of England. The fear of losing the little that they had acquired after so many struggles – man always loves what he has fought for – stood like a barrier against all propaganda for solidarity, either during strikes or in the propaganda of socialist ideas. It was much easier to convert a young bourgeois to socialism than bring a co-operator to it.

* * *

This is changing now, we hasten to openly admit. Certainly, this is changing; but the “how” of the change is highly instructive. This is changing, *because others alongside them have done better.*

Indeed, during the last miners’ strike in Yorkshire everyone read with amazement that the Manchester wholesale co-operative had donated in one go 125,000 francs into the strike fund. We can imagine the effect of this contribution on the outcome of the strike. But they did better. We are told that the central co-operative has provided credit of nearly one million francs to the small local co-operatives in the miners’ villages, and whoever knows how much the denial of all credit is an article of faith amongst co-operators will even better appreciate this advance which permitted the local co-operatives to provide credit to the miners.

Reliable friends tell us, furthermore, that in new production associations the relations between worker-workers and worker-bosses are changing completely, and we hasten to admit that this is the case.

* * *

But where does this new wind which is blowing in the co-operatives come from?

The “theoreticians,” of course! The co-operatives also feel the breath of socialism which makes recruits today even in the enemy camp of the bourgeois.

Fifty years ago, two distinct currents took shape within the socialists. One wanted to be “practical” and launched themselves into a series of expedients. “Since

the workers are not communists,” they said, “they must be made communists by personal interest. The co-operative based on personal egoism will accustom them to communism.” And for fifty years they have practiced this expedient, with the results that we know.

But, fortunately, there were also “theoreticians,” the “hare-brained,” amongst the socialists. They did not want to hear talk of the communist spirit developed by narrow financial selfishness. They have turned their backs on expedients (just as we anarchists turn our backs today on political and economic expedients). They followed their natural course.

Two divergent lines have thus been produced in this way. The men of expedients followed one, the socialists followed the other. – “You are theorists, dreamers, fools, madmen,” they said to the others; “you should become practical, create co-operatives and the rest!” To which they replied with lofty defiance and followed their path – the path of propaganda and revolt against *the whole entirety* of modern civilisation, against all forms of exploitation simultaneously.

* * *

And they were a thousand times right. The two lines diverged more and more. And now, when socialism, in its entirety, and anarchy, in its entirety, have made a profound impression on the ideas of the century, when the revolt against all economic and statist exploitation has made recruits in all social strata – the “expedientists” are also reached and their league begins to pour into the socialist current.

It will be forced to pour into it entirely. Otherwise, it would belong to the world that is departing and would be condemned to disappear.

* * *

Can we ask, after this, whether the socialists were right to refuse compromises and remain “theoreticians,” as the bourgeois liked to say? If they returned to the co-operative current – false at its very root, since it was based on the partial liberation of the individual, in only a small part of his servitudes – if the socialist current poured into co-operation, it was drowned there, it became unrecognisable, it lost its very essence; it became neither flesh nor fowl – a compromise.

But it preferred to remain in its isolation. Rather be a few than lose its distinctive features, sacrificing the best of its thought! And it ended by forcing the other current to give everything it had to give, to fully develop and, then, pour its waters into the socialist movement.

Absolutely the same thing happens with the anarchist current. We know that in the social revolution the association of consumers and producers will be one of the forms of the emerging society. But not this association which aims to pocket its surplus-value or its profit. And we spread all our thought, we fan all our revolt against the world that is departing. We spread our ideas everywhere, in the trade union, in the co-operative as well as in the unorganised working masses – and by doing this – since we are in the right – we will eventually pour all these partial currents into one great current: anarchy.

The Labour War

Free Society: A Periodical of Anarchist Thought, Work, and Literature, 14 December 1902

Bellamy has, in “Looking Backward,” a prophecy which apparently is going to be realised. Gigantic strikes and labour wars – he wrote – brought about the social revolution, the results of which he described in his utopia. Now, the philosopher follows the utopian. Herbert Spencer, impressed by the greatness and social importance of the last coal strike in America, has written to an American paper predicting that the necessary outcome of the growing conflicts between capital and labour will be a terrible war, a social revolution – unsuccessful, he thinks; but we must not forget that the philosopher is very old and has never seen the labour movement from the inside.

However, there was somebody – the workingman himself – who, much before the utopian and the philosopher had foreseen and predicted that the social revolution *would be an outcome of labour conflicts* (not of parliamentary warfare), and for the last thirty years has worked in order that it should be so. More than thirty years ago, in the International Workingmen’s Association, the Paris sections brought before one of the Congresses of the great association the question of a

general strike, as a necessary prelude and appropriate beginning of the Social Revolution – a revolution which would not merely change the government, but would hand over the land, the factories, the mines and the railways to those who bring them into the service of man: to the labourers themselves.

Accusations of headless utopianism met this proposal; but the federalist and revolutionary sections of the International made of it a prominent point of their programme, while among the workers themselves an unseen and noiseless propaganda of the general strike idea has been going on since, for thirty years, notwithstanding all the opposition of the politicians, and with the excellent results that we see now in Europe and America. This propaganda took all possible names. In America, in 1887, it were the Knights of Labour who worked hard promoting it, and from America the movement spread to Europe, finding an especially favourable ground in Belgium. Later on, when Powderly had disgraced the good name of the Knights by selling himself to the middle classes, the movement took other names; but it was continued and soon

honeycombed the labour movement in Belgium and parts of France and Germany, as also, apparently, in Poland and Western Russia. The quite unsuspected unanimity with which the workers all over the world came out for the first First of May Demonstration in 1890, was the result of that unseen preparatory work; and when the May-day movement was invaded by all sorts of politicians who entirely emasculated it, and when the labourers lost interest in it the more active men left the May-day fetes to speech-makers of all denominations, and found a much better field of work in preparing the minds and solidarity feelings of the workers for the great strike movements which now break out with such a wonderful unity in action.

At the same time, several attempts at forcing upon the capitalists an eight-hour day were made quite independently of the May-day fetes. The great strike of the London engineers; the numerous, well-prepared, and well-planned and enthusiastically supported strikes, by which the Barcelona trades have succeeded in re-introducing the eight-hour day which many of them had lost during the terrible Montjuich persecutions; and finally, several great strikes of miners – all these were as many preparatory steps.

Gradually, but surely and steadily, the international alliance within all separate trades (the miners, the dock labourers, the weavers, the railway engineers, etc.) and between all trades is being established. Robert Owen's "International Trades' Union" (union of all trades) is in an excellent way of progress. The recent strikes; their extension and obstinacy; the amount of support, both national and international, which they have found; the facility with which workingmen's unions of different nations correspond; and the degree of sympathy and solidarity which they find with each other, even tho the middle classes use all means to excite national hatred – all these facts which the constant readers of the labour press have continually under their eyes, how steadily that inconspicuous work of consolidation of labour has been going on. But the best of it is that it has been accomplished entirely apart, and independently from, all political parties, whether Radical or Social Democratic.

A striking feature of this movement is its *independence*. The workers jealously watch that their unions should not become the bone of contest between politicians. In the Spanish papers one even sees that while international federations of trades are loudly called for, the reconstitution of an International Workingmen's Association is not desired, from fear that the General Council of such an association might bring about the

same political intrigues as one saw in the Marxist council of the old International.

The last labour congresses are especially interesting on this account. The British Trade Union congress has absolutely broken with Social Democracy. In proportion as Socialist ideas (Socialist – not Collectivist) spread more and more among the British workers, the latter become more and more cautious of not being led astray by Social Democratic politicians, with their unavoidable and most undesirable alliances. They will rather have their own representation in parliament than trust it to Social Democratic politicians.

The very same was distinctly brought to light at the French Syndical (trade union) congress, from which the political agitation carried on by Socialist politicians was also lately excluded, while the general strike was the subject

of full discussion and sympathetic votes. And the same again was apparent at the miners' congress at Commentry, where the miners stood for an immediate strike, while the politician leaders preached "calm, calm and calm," from fear to compromise their parliamentary position in a strike which may end no one knows how. And it was still more evident at the labour congress in Germany. The German workers, too, notwithstanding the efforts of the politicians, are also going to join the great international wave of labour revolt. Nay, even in dull Geneva, we have lately seen a general strike breaking out, merely for the support of a few striking comrades.

Of course, all the strikes which have lately disturbed the digestion of the capitalist serf-owners – notwithstanding the admirable and often touching features of workingmen's solidarity which were displayed during them are not yet "The Labour War." The workers themselves look upon them as upon preliminary skirmishes which consolidate the growth of workingmen's solidarity irrespective of trade and national distinctions. Mere trials of his force by the slumbering giant. Mere warning and merely a foretaste of the war that is coming. Moreover, the workers are still seeking their way as to the future. They don't know *yet how to pass from the present private ownership to the use of the necessaries for production by the workers themselves*. The way, and the most appropriate ideal, too, have yet to be found, and to be fully discussed. But as this will not be done by the Social Democrats, who are too absorbed by elections and do not care at all for a revolution, the duty of doing it consequently falls upon us.

it has been found that those of our comrades who directed their efforts to work among the trade unions were right

Everyone knows that the most active men in the labour movement in Spain have always been Anarchists, and that the two labour papers, *Tierra y Libertad* and *Rivista Blanca*, are Anarchistic. It is the same now in France, both in those syndicates which show real signs of life and in the chief labour papers (*Voix du Peuple*, *Pota Colle*, etc.). And the same is also in Geneva paper: *L'Emancipation*, where all the fault of the last strike was thrown by the local politicians – not upon the greedy capitalists, but upon the Anarchists. That much has been done, and so far it has been found that those of our comrades who directed their efforts to work among the trade unions were right. But now, a further step is required. Taking advantage of the intellectual movement which goes on in the labour unions, we must try to *formulate the ideas which develop inside the unions as regards the best ways of abolishing private*

ownership and of organising production by the workers themselves without the interference of the State. This task is incumbent upon us.

The old philosopher, Spencer, is right. Yes, the labour war will go on growing. Yes, it will bring about a social war. Yes, it will bring about the Social Revolution. Our duty is, then, to strain all our activities towards one result: that the coming revolution should be a real, substantial step towards the abolition of State and Capital. Not only that it should be *successful* – all revolutions *are* successful, each of them abolishes some evils of old; but that the success should be as great, as wide, and as durable as possible; that it should go to the root of the evils.

– [October-November, 1902] *Freedom*, London

Anarchists and Unions

“Les Anarchistes et les Syndicats”, *Les Temps Nouveaux*, 25 May 1907¹

My dear friend,

I had no intention of intervening in the debate between Pierrot and Lagardelle, especially since Pierrot conducts it very well, and I have so many other things to do. But since Lagardelle felt obliged to muddle the debate by using my name and by insinuating that there exists a mysterious letter in my name against syndicalism, which Pierrot will not go so far as to publish – I leave it to the reader to assess this method [of debate] – I am forced to talk about this letter.

Fortunately, I have found the rough draft, or rather the original, and I send it to you. Generally, I do not write a rough draft – at least, until now, I did not take this precaution – but after writing this letter I added, as you can see, some passages and it was necessary to copy it. This done, I put the original in a box, to consult one day for a work which I was preparing on socialism and the development of the workers movement.

Pierrot is quite right; I refused to write the foreword to the pamphlet of the Socialist Students not because I disapproved of the substance but because I disapproved of the form, the shape of the first draft. Moreover, if anyone is interested, here is what I said:

“Dear Comrades

“I had agreed to write a preface to our pamphlet *Les Anarchistes et les Syndicats* [Anarchists and Unions], before having read it. Now, after reading it, I see that I should have to write, not

a preface, but a critique, and even a quite trenchant one in some places.

“Instead of simply limiting themselves to highlighting arguments that can be made in favour of taking a more active part in the struggles of the unions, the authors have proposed general ideas on anarchy, which I do not share, and in passing they subject those who think differently to them to petty attacks with which I cannot associate myself.

“The conception of Anarchy that dominated in the collectivist and federalist International is certainly not that of comrades today and nor is it mine (p. 10). There has been a whole evolution accomplished during these 30 years – backwards, perhaps some will say – forward, in my opinion. Between the *Idée[s] sur l'organisation sociale* [Ideas on social organisation] of the Jura Federation and *La Société Nouvelle*, *La Société au lendemain ...*, *La Conquête du Pain*, etc., there is a whole generation which, in my view, has neither stayed in the same place nor gone backwards, and which would have been welcomed by Bakunin himself, if he were alive today.²

“The notion ‘Anarchist because Communist’ is yours. Fine. It has, perhaps, the advantage of emphasising the importance of communism; but at least admit that it is not shared by a great number of anarchists; that for many liberty is as

¹ This was translated as “Anarchists and Trade Unions” and appeared in *Freedom*, June 1907 and that version is included in *Direct Struggle Against Capital*. This is a new translation of the French original which differed slightly from what appeared in *Freedom*. (*Black Flag*)

² Today we better understand the necessity of *immediate expropriation* and the necessity of *Communism*. (A note which I have added)

cherished as bread (I am amongst those);¹ — that many call themselves anarchists *although* communists, and that absolutely sincere comrades think that communism and anarchy are incompatible (which does not prevent many of them from discovering that there is much to be done in the unions).

“In the third part of your pamphlet you allow yourself to be led by your thesis to the point of making several assertions which you would be hard pressed to justify. Certainly, when entering a union, the anarchist makes a concession — just as he does by going to register the title of his newspaper, asking for permission for a meeting in Trafalgar Square, even signing the lease of his housing or his co-operative farm, or by letting himself be handcuffed without responding with punches. To treat as ideologues those who demonstrate that there is a concession is neither just nor justifiable. Without these ‘ideologues’ they would still flog you in prison, as they do in England.

“By entering a union, we make a concession, and when you say that the concession is less than is generally believed, that is simply correct. But let us not deny it. It is one of those concessions which, like the rest (the authorisation, the lease, the handcuffs), make us hate the present system more.

“When entering Union Life, we certainly can get carried away by our surroundings, as in Parliament.²

“Only the difference between a union and parliament is that one is an organisation for *fighting* Capital, while the other (parliament, of course) is an organisation for *maintaining* the State, Authority. One sometimes becomes revolutionary, the other never does. One (parliament) represents centralisation, the other (the union) represents autonomy, etc., etc. One (parliament) is repugnant to us on *principle*, the

other is only a modifiable and modified aspect of a struggle that most of us approve of.

“If unions give themselves a social-democratic hierarchy, we could not enter them until it has been demolished.

In short, there is enough to say on the usefulness, for anarchists, to try to wrest unions from the politicians and to inspire them with broader and more revolutionary ideas, without seeking in this to limit this possibility of action to those who conceive of anarchy in a certain special way. I know anarchists of *all* shades who have taken part in workers unions. Once I work in some trade, it is only natural that I associate with my comrades in the factory, without asking them to understand socialism or anarchy in such a way or another. That has nothing to do with it.”

On that my original [letter] ends, on the eighth page. Probably I would not have added much [to it]. As for the date, I wrote on this draft: “Unions and Anarchists. April 1898.”

Now that I have answered M.

Lagardelle’s little insinuation, I shall allow myself to ask him a question: Was there nothing more interesting to say about syndicalism than to gossip about this letter? Is he reduced to this? Supposing I had been a rabid enemy of syndicalism, would that have changed the relationship between anarchy and the union movement in any way? Are these just *personal* relationships? And would this not be the duty of someone who claims to be scientific, specifically to disentangle the *ideas* of Anarchy and those of the Union Movement?

Finally, if M. Lagardelle absolutely wished to speak of my ideas on the union movement, had he not, if it really interested him, my articles in *Le Révolté*, *La Révolte*, and *Les Temps Nouveaux*. (as I am not French, they can easily be recognised by their style). Leafing through

government, flattered by the royal family, they lost their combativeness. Workers often complain of the bourgeois-ism of their immense clique of officials, like the German social democratic workers. (A note which I have added)

¹ I will just point out the countless strikes for the workers’ *human* rights; in general, they are the most bitter. A fact that I often mentioned in my articles on the labour movement. (A note which I have added)

² Observe England. 40 years ago, the English trade unions were fighting organisations. Becoming rich, protected by the

these collections for the years 1886-1898, I find during certain times of workers' struggles one or two articles in each issue (feature and social movement articles) wherein I always return to the same ideas: Workers organisations are the real force capable of accomplishing the social revolution, after the awakening of the proletariat has been achieved, first, by individual actions, then by collective actions of strikes, revolts which are increasingly widened; and where workers organisations have not let themselves to be captured by the "conquest of power" gentlemen and have continued to walk hand in hand with the anarchists — as they did in Spain — they obtained, on the one hand, immediate results (the eight-hour day in [certain] trades in Catalonia), and on the other made good propaganda for the Social Revolution — that which will come, not by these lofty gentlemen, but from below, from workers organisations.

I have perhaps annoyed my readers by returning too often to this subject, but now I wonder if it would not be useful to make a selection of these articles to publish them in a volume.

What is most important is, that if we consult the collection of anarchist newspapers which have followed the *Bulletin de la Fédération Jurassienne* and *L'Avant-Garde* until *Les Temps Nouveaux*, we see that those anarchists who have always thought that the labour movement, organised by occupation, for the direct struggle against Capital — today in France it is called syndicalism and "direct action" — constitutes real strength, capable of *bringing about* and *achieving* the

social revolution, by the egalitarian transformation of consumption and production, those of us who have thought in this way for the last thirty-five years have simply remained faithful to the guiding idea of the International, as conceived by the French in 1864 (*against* Marx and Engels), and such as it was always applied in Catalonia, in the Bernese Jura, in the valley of Vesdre [in Eastern Belgium] and partly in Italy. The International was a great syndicalist movement which accordingly posed everything that these gentlemen claim to have discovered in syndicalism.

We anarchists do not pretend to have discovered a new idea or a new religion. We say that we simply remained faithful to the practical idea that inspired the third awakening of the French proletariat and of the Latin proletariat in general. We refused to associate ourselves with the hiding away of this idea, which was done by the Germans and a few French Jacobins at the Hague Congress in 1872, when taking advantage of the defeat of the French proletariat, they tried to divert the International from its economic struggle to launch it into the conquest of power in the bourgeois State. And now that the proletariat, disgusted with parliamentary social-democracy, returns to the old idea of direct international struggle against Capital, and that there are again gentlemen who are seeking to divert this movement to make it a political stepping-stone, well, we will fight against them, as we fought against their forerunners, to always uphold the same idea of *the liberation of the proletariat by the direct and aggressive struggle against its exploiters*.

The English Elections

Freedom, April 1910

(from the *Temps Nouveaux* of February 19)

If more confirmation were needed to prove that Parliaments exist, not to reform abuses, not to abolish existing monopolies, but to prevent democratic reforms, to maintain and consolidate the monopolies, the recent English elections give us the demonstration.

It is a long time since England has had an electoral struggle so hotly contested as this one has been. In many constituencies four-fifths of the electors went to the poll. Not for many a year has so much passion been shown in an election.

And what has such a heated contest been about? Little enough, after all! But little as it was, the monopolists of all sorts have felt the Budget to be a menace, and that was enough for all who live by exploitation to unite to check those disturbers of their feast, Lloyd George and Asquith.

It has happened exactly as it happened in 1886, when Gladstone carried into power by the Radical vote, wished also to slightly curtail the big monopolies.

For twenty years after his fall, from 1886 to 1905, with a short interruption in 1892-94, England was governed by the Conservatives, Undoubtedly, the difference between the Conservatives and the Liberals or Radicals is meagre. In the event of a conflict with the working men, each of them would show the same ferocity against them. And yet the difference is important, since the Conservatives represent a strong Government, while the Liberals represent a weak one; and a strong Government always means the obstruction of all progress.

The difference is vital, above all in England, where the Conservatives, with their land monopoly, represent a feudalism of the past, to which have been added all the great monopolies of the brewing, mining, and shipping interests, as well as all the great robber companies both in England and the Colonies.

The English Revolution of 1648 did not touch the property of the great feudal landlords. Feudalism continues to exist in England side by side with

bourgeois capitalism, and it becomes more and more menacing in proportion as the immense industrial and commercial development of England brings in formidable incomes to the landed proprietors, to the extent of making them millionaires and multi-millionaires. And these extremely rich landowners, supported by all other monopolists, possess, besides, their wealth, an immense political power in the House of Lords. They can oppose their veto to any measure passed by the Commons if it should in any way menace their wealth or power.

What makes the situation still worse is, that besides the hereditary peers – great landowners for the most part – the House of Lords contains also a large number of peers created by Royalty: financial speculators like Rothschild, Colonial adventurers like Millner, big manufacturers and railway magnates, and above all, the brewer lords, with whom are associated the whole band of rich publicans and wine merchants, all ready to fight to the last in support of all the great industrial and financial monopolies.

All these people, one can guess, are with the Conservatives; and one can see the influence the Conservatives possess when they are in power and are aided by all the interests of landlordism and the exploiting classes. It is the survival of the *ancien regime*, supported by the gang of bourgeois profit-mongers and the powers of the modern centralised State.

We know that it is often maintained in England that the Conservatives represent the landed interest, while the Liberals are the representatives of industrial capitalism. This might

have been true (if it ever was) fifty years ago, but it is true no more, since all sorts of capitalism have grown up, and immense fortunes have been accumulated quite independent of industry. It is now known that the incomes of this country derived from monopolies – banks, railways, navigation, water, and so on – secured in England, in *the Colonies*, and all the world over, are far greater than the incomes derived from industry. And besides, particularly since the formation of the Unionist Party, an immense majority of the industrial lords have joined the Conservatives in their hatred and contempt for every democratic and Socialist movement. The Conservatives are the nucleus round which all the enemies of popular progress unite.

During the twenty years of Conservative rule we have seen the cessation of that rich intellectual movement, and the emasculation of all that democratic spirit which animated England in the years 1860-85. The progress of the great Socialist movement which began to flourish in the years 1880-86 was also checked with the coming into power of the Conservatives. In the destruction of these two popular forces we have a fact of the first importance.

It was above all things, to crush the rising spirit of the new-born Socialism that the middle class, in 1886, threw themselves into the arms of the Conservatives. From this it would have seemed that the Socialists ought necessarily to have used all their forces to prevent the return of the Conservatives to power . . . But they have done precisely the reverse.

It would take too long to explain here the reason for such reactionary tactics of the English Parliamentary Socialists; but the fact remains that already in the elections of 1885 and 1892, but more particularly in 1895, they did all their power to prevent the return of the Liberals. In their meetings and in their press they attacked only the Liberals, and during the elections they prevented their return by putting up Socialist candidates who had not the least chance of success, but who took votes from the Liberal candidates.

The triumph of the Conservatives was completed in this way. And then, in all the great questions which interested the country there came a general reaction. Instead of discussing the great problems which the Socialist revival had brought to the front, the British worker was compelled to fight for retaining his most elementary liberties: the right of combination and the right of striking, non-sectarian education, freedom from conscription, cheap food free from import duties, and so on.

In the years 1884-86, workmen were discussing in their meetings the expropriation of the docks and the railways, in order to transfer them to working men's associations. They spoke of dwelling houses becoming the property of municipalities, which would rent them at cost price. "Municipal Socialism" was discussed, and Municipal Communism was in the air. The nationalisation or the communalisation of the land was a favourite topic, and the eight-hour day gradually began to be introduced in the workshops of the State, and certain municipalities. The idea of a general strike was whispered in factories...

Now we had to forget all that. Different matters were introduced.

No sooner had Salisbury got into office than, by the stupid arrogance of his diplomatic notes, he brought England within an inch of war with the United States over the Venezuelan affair. Then a war with Russia was within measurable distance. And finally, that absurd turncoat, Chamberlain – Republican in 1876, coquetting with Socialism in 1886, and Conservative in 1892 – was teaching "good manners" to France, and nearly provoked war in consequence of the Fashoda incident.

And then came the Boer War, the ignominious failure of the would-be Unionist statesman, the defeats inflicted on the British Empire by a handful of peasants, and

thereupon, as a result of these defeats, the hysterical revival of militarism and national self-conceit.

A little later, war with Russia was on the point of breaking out over the Dogger Bank incident, when Germany mobilised her fleet to prevent it; and since that time Europe has had the menace of Anglo-German war suspended over its head.

It is easy to understand that under such conditions further development of advanced ideas was completely stopped. Socialism was shelved and packed away, and the middle classes, always very clever, took full advantage of the respite for accumulating immense fortunes in the meantime, and for dividing the working classes and tying to demoralise them.

The Conservatives lost no time in pursuing their policy against the workers. They attacked positions that had been considered as most firmly established, and instead of going forward, the workers found themselves compelled to defend rights that hitherto had been regarded as 'most sacred.

The decision of the judges in the Taff Vale case left the workers henceforth responsible for the losses of the masters caused by striking without due notice. The Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants had to pay £35,000 to the masters for a single strike.

Then the new law on education was introduced, The Conservatives abolished the School Boards, elected by popular suffrage (women included), for the organisation of primary instruction; and, gave new powers to the Church of England, which is the church of the rich. All continuation instruction, introduced by the School boards, was abolished. "Who is to do the menial work, if our servants learn the piano and want time for reading?" was the chorus of all those parrots reciting their lessons – the dames of the Primrose League, the powerful organisation of Conservative women for gaining votes, by fair means or foul, for the Conservative Party, and the boycotting of those who remained independent..

And the same thing happened in all directions.

It needed the defeats of the Boer War, and the fall of Consols from 105 to 79, to arouse popular resentment against the Conservatives. At the elections of 1906 the Liberals obtained an unexpected majority. They held

373 seats against 168 held by Conservatives (Tories and Unionists), and there were besides 46 Labour representatives, practically with the Liberals, and 83 Irish Nationalists. The Conservatives, it is true, made little effort to maintain their position. They preferred that their war debts should be left as a burden to the Liberals.

Lloyd George, the Radical, and John Burns, the ex-Socialist, were taken into the new Liberal Ministry. It must not be imagined, however, that this Ministry started out to make Radical reforms. Far from that. It introduced old-age pensions – a small thing in itself, but containing some promise for the future. A promise was also given to deal seriously with the unemployment question and to inaugurate Labour Bureaus, which will

pave the way for Labour officialism. They promised also to revise the Education Act and law regarding strikes and an Act was passed making the land more accessible to cultivators in Scotland. They began to nibble at the land question – a question which socialists of the German Social Democratic school had taken care not to touch.

These reforms, however, required money, and money was not to be had, especially as the middle classes would have at any price a strong Army and an immensely increased Navy.

Then Lloyd George tad the quite natural idea of taxing the immense incomes of the rich. It is known what

fabulous incomes the landlords receive from their lands, more especially in the neighbourhood of the great cities; and the worker understands already that it is himself and not the proprietor who gives this great value to the land, Also, it is beginning to be known what huge sums this nation of moneylenders, which the English are becoming, takes in interest every year for the moneys lent to various foreign States, to cities, railways, canals, navigation, banks, and industries abroad.

The great bulk of this colossal revenue escapes all taxation. And it was but a small part of this revenue that Lloyd George proposed to tax in his Budget. But his greatest crime was, that in reedy to the landowners, who said they were totally ruined by democratic legislation, he proposed to make a national inquiry into all land values and to tax them in proportion to the valuation. Not in proportion to what these lands bring in now as private parks or being rented as game preserves, but in

proportion to what they would be worth if they were used for agricultural purposes. What sacrilege!

We know the result: the refusal of the Lords to sanction the Budget – contrary to Constitutional usage, which gives the Commons absolute power in finance matters – and then the new elections.

These elections were followed everywhere with the greatest interest – with anxiety by the international clique of monopolists. Nearly all advanced people have had some illusions about their possible results.

Now we have the result, and it is such as we might all have foreseen. *The English middle classes have taken fright at innovations that threatened their pockets, and have gone over to the Conservatives.* The same thing happened to Lloyd George as happened once to Gladstone, who also had a conflict with the Lords over a programme of reforms more or less advanced, and who as a result lost the confidence of the English bourgeoisie.

“We have drawn the teeth and clipped the claws of the Socialist tiger,” exclaims with jubilation that Conservative journal, the *Spectator*.

The Liberals in reality have lost more than 120 seats. Together with the Labour Party, they will probably have a majority of about 40 votes over the Conservatives,

They will have with them about 85 Nationalists ready to vote against the Lords. But they will probably make the stipulation of Home Rule for Ireland, and this is what the middle class of England are opposing by all means.

The elections this mean the end of the Liberal Ministry and the victory of the Conservative elements. The Liberals may remain in power, but they will be unable to accomplish anything.

The Budget will probably be accepted by the Lord; but this is the end of all promised reforms. It is the maintenance of the *status quo* and a speedy return of a Conservative Government – a return into the quagmire in which England has been paddling from 1885 till 1905.

And the working men? we shall be asked. Since they have joined as a party in Parliamentary politics, they are helpless. Of their 78 candidates, some 30 have been piteously beaten, and the others have entered Parliament only with the support of the Liberals. But this fact would require some explanation, which must be left for another occasion.

For the moment, we have received a great object-lesson. *Parliaments exist for preventing serious reforms, not for aiding them.* If the working men want to have reforms – even the most moderate ones – they must impose them. They must threaten Parliaments, not enter them cap in hand.

Worker Solidarity

“Solidarité Ouvrière”, *Les Temps Nouveaux*, 11 October 1913

An event of some importance for the labour movement has just take place in England. We have known for some time that there has been a major strike in Ireland, in Dublin, and we have read in the newspapers about the outrage of the police beating workers in the streets.

Well, Irish workers have shown strong solidarity with their comrades in Dublin during this strike. The Irish Transport Union has just organised the shipment of food for the strikers. And three halls and offices of the Transport Union in Dublin – Liberty Hall, which is its centre, and two branches (High Street and Croydon Park) – have just been assigned to the food

distribution service. Croydon Park House, where there are bread-making facilities, will be their central store

and from Thursday, the 25th, supplies for the strikers began to be deposited there.

In addition, in England, the Congress of English Trade Unions, which took place in Manchester, allocated the sum of 125,000 francs to send provisions to

their brothers in Dublin. Better than that. The English trade unionists had the good sense not to confine themselves to sending a sum of money. They came up with a new idea: they approached the co-operative of



The Dublin Lock-out, 1913

co-operatives (the Wholesale Co-operative) in Manchester, asking it to supply the provisions, and they themselves chartered a ship, *The Hare*, which they loaded themselves and which will carry the provisions to Dublin. It will already be there the day after tomorrow, the 27th, and the Dublin strikers will themselves unload it and distribute the food through their organisation which I have just mentioned.

Notice how quickly everything was done. Tuesday evening, the 23rd, the Congress voted for 125,000 francs for relief; the next morning, four envoys from the Congress arrived in Manchester and reached an agreement with the co-operative. On the same day a vessel was hired which was in the harbour and which the Manchester dockers, who were on strike, offered to unload first and then quickly load it with the provisions. Thursday morning began the unloading of *The Hare*; the dockers in Manchester are working hard, eagerly, to send the supplies to Dublin as quickly as possible. The same is done at the Co-operative, where 60,000 packages are prepared, each containing a packet of butter, tea, a pot of jam (with bread, this replaces the butter) and a bag of sugar – enough for eight days for a family of five. In addition, a shipment of biscuits is sent for the kids.

Here, then, is a new element which is looming in the struggles of Labour against Capital; it is a new mode of action which will give workers a new awareness of their strengths.

– Only a workers' Co-operative could undertake to make 60,000 packages in such a short time, said a member of the Congress, and only workers' unions could organise the loading of the ship so well – *without government*, bourgeois or socialist.

This reminds me of a conversation I had about twenty-five years ago at the Manchester Co-operative. We had lunch with five or six workers, administrators of this Co-operative, seated at a very simple table, covered with an oilcloth. At the time there was much talk of the socialist revival in England and I asked my hosts:

– Suppose that the Commune of Manchester is proclaimed some time in the future. Suppose it has the good sense to declare that the Commune is responsible for providing the food that will be wanted by each

family. Not luxury, that is understandable, but what we consider necessary today. Suppose the Commune comes to you for distribution. How long would it take the Co-operative to organise door-to-door distribution?

– Someone will pay for the food?

– Yes, the Commune, by making the purchases through you.

– Then no problem.

And they began to discuss very seriously amongst themselves, as if it were a matter of the next day, as might occur.

– In ten days, let's say twelve, everything would be back in perfect order, they replied after eight or ten minutes. Our apparatus, with the good will of the workers, would suffice. Each family would receive at home what they needed. Provided, of course, that there is no stoppage in payments for purchases. That would be the main difficulty.

– Mutual credit from co-operative banks would help, wouldn't it? So it's not money that bankers lend to each other; *it's credit*.

– Certainly.

The seriousness with which these co-operators greeted my question struck me very much and I often reflected upon it. It was if they themselves had already asked such questions. The ideas of Robert Owen seemed to live amongst them.

In any case, the essential thing in this new order of ideas amongst the English workers is the *constructive, organising spirit* that we see in this new way of coming to the aid of the strikers; it is above all the collaboration, not only of the workers' meagre purses, but also the dockers contributing *by their work and by the spontaneous organisation* of a company that arises from the needs of the moment.

It is only in this way – *by building while we destroy* – that the workers will achieve their emancipation. We must see that the bourgeois is worse than harmful: that it is unnecessary.

P. Kropotkin

London, 25 September

The International Workers' Association... had to be... a vast federation of workers groups representing the seeds of a society regenerated by social revolution: a society where the current machinery of government and capitalist exploitation would disappear... if the people... made themselves managers of production and directed them towards the production of what is necessary for life of the nation, we would achieve without difficulty an ample supply for all the needs of society. – *Modern Science and Anarchy*

On Marxism

Kropotkin was always clear that anarchism was a branch of the wider socialist movement and, moreover, that Marxism – in the shape of Social Democracy – was a hinderance to that movement, pushing it into the dead-end of electioneering and compromise with the bourgeoisie. In this he followed Bakunin’s critique of Marxism within the International Workers’ Association, although it is surely the case that Kropotkin was not happy to see these predictions become a reality during his lifetime.

It must be stressed that Kropotkin’s critique of Marxism was not some abstract moralising. He presented an analysis of why Marxism failed (parliamentarianism, hierarchic and centralist organisational prejudices) and presented a clear alternative – a labour movement based on “the direct struggle of labour against capital”. Still, perhaps the rise of Social Democracy should not surprise us, as it is far easier to form a political party and stand in elections than organise a union and wage strikes. Regardless, the fact is we are further away from socialism than ever – as a tactic, electioneering has failed.

Marxism is best viewed a transitional ideology by which the labour movement moves from a radical, revolutionary movement to a reformist one. This was not Marx’s intention, of course, but his advocacy of “political action” and centralised parties created the environment within which reformist and bureaucratic tendencies developed and grew. These days, Marxists generally like to suggest that Social-Democracy was not Marxist and confuse where it ended with how it started, while of course forgetting Bakunin’s and Kropotkin’s predictions on the matter. If we are to aspire to a scientific socialism, then surely this combined with the dismal fate of the predictions of Marx and Engels on Social Democracy should be of note?

Kropotkin regularly wrote articles on the degeneration of Marxism, here we present just three. The longest, *The Coming Rival of Socialism*, was originally serialised in *Freedom* between August 1903 and March 1904. Given the rise of syndicalism in the UK and the intense class struggle between 1910 and 1914 (see “Tom Mann and British Syndicalism”, *Black Flag Anarchist Review*, vol. 1, no. 3), its claims were prescient. Likewise, with Kropotkin’s warnings that a centralised State Socialism was little more than State-capitalism, as the Bolshevik revolution proved.

But... the International also represented a too enticing milieu for bourgeois politicians not to attempt to enter it... Assimilate the phraseology of the Social Democrats... And, with that, they could go far. Endowed with formulas and a great deal of opportunism, they were sure to make their political career in a few years, provided that the workers abandoned the idea of fighting Capital in the mill and factory and that they go and talk about it with the bourgeoisie in Parliaments.

– “The Reactionary Work of Social Democracy”, *Les Temps Nouveaux*, 4 September 1909

The Crisis of Socialism

The Rebel, November 1895¹

Our friend Domela Nieuwenhuis published in the *Societe Nouvelle* of Brussels (March and May 1894), two remarkable studies of German Social Democracy: “The Divers Courses of the German Social Democracy,” and “Socialism in Danger;” and he follows these two studies by a third “Libertarian Socialism and Authoritarian Socialism,” published in the September and October numbers of the same review.

In these articles, based entirely on what has been said and published by the chiefs of the party themselves, and entirely divested of the element of polemics, Nieuwenhuis has demonstrated how the party, by its very essence, is forcibly brought to become bourgeoisist [the mere representative of the well-to-do middle class] to abandon its socialistic program and to become more and more the password, not of the proletarians, but of the radical petty bourgeois. Formerly when the Anarchists said this to their social-democratic friends they were treated as calumniators. Today it is admitted in the official organ of the party, by one of its most esteemed chiefs, Bebel.

In these articles Nieuwenhuis shows clearly that – to use the words of Bebel – “this defilement and this debilitation (*Verwaesserung*) of the party” necessarily results from diverse causes: the principles themselves, enunciated in their program of Erfurt; authoritarian organization and authoritarian principles, and finally, the economic basis of the life of the party, – the emolument of the editors and agitators, and the “little socialist trade” practised on a big scale, which greatly increases numbers, but

Social democratism, plainly spoken, means the conquest of power within the present State, in order to realise socialism by this power, to abolish class distinctions and thus to bring about a change which would make the State unnecessary.

But anarchism says: it is a contradiction to work for conquering power within the present State for the purpose of abolishing this State. We must work from now on to hinder or diminish the increase of the State, the belief in the State, and all authority of the State, in whatever direction we can, and we must right now elaborate those forms of life which render unnecessary the State and the capitalist.

These two standpoints are quite antagonistic and render in every way, in every single case co-operation impossible.

– Letter to Dr Fritz Brupbacher (from *Peter Kropotkin: the rebel, thinker, and humanitarian*)

finishes by causing the petty bourgeois to dominate. It follows that when Vollmar, the chief of the “right” of the party, went so far as to turn completely over to bourgeoisism, even to voting in the Bavarian diet the budget of the government, and that an important faction of the democracy, with Bebel at the head, wished to censure him for it, the Congress passed a sponge over it by saying that his conduct was absolutely in conformity with the principles enunciated at Erfurt, at that time the constitution of the party; that it conformed in every point with all preceding parliamentary practices.

In other words: the development into bourgeoisism was foreseen; it was willed by the very enunciation of the principles. The moral “considerations” were only a far-off ideal, an ornament. Let us add here the absolute absence of the critical spirit. For fear of destroying the unity of the party, all criticism is eliminated in

advance. Whoever dares to criticise, be it the principles or the theoretic ideas in vogue, the tactics, or the acts of any of the “men of trust” who constitute what has been called “the future dictatorship of the proletariat,” is immediately torn to pieces, thrown as prey to the journalists and orators whose capacities and degree of

¹ “Le Crise du socialisme,” *Les Temps Nouveaux*, 26 October 1895

advancement are measured very often (according to the just remark of Richard Calwer) by their “venomous tongues;” (they do not discuss; they preach or they insult; again one of the distinctive features of the party.) Also, while economic ideas are gaining in depth, even in the bourgeois science, under the whip of socialistic criticism, and new questions and new perceptions are surging forward – as it always happens with science under the official seal, the science of the party is motionless. It is arrested at the “Communist Manifesto,” which dates fifty years back, and at Marx’s “Capital”, which, whatever may be said of it, has had its day. Whether there be dissensions in the German Social-Democracy or not, whether there be divisions with outbreaks or no, scarcely interests us. The governmental socialist party is already divided into so many warring factions in France and England, that a division more or less would not make any difference. The German Social-Democracy is also divided – we are well aware of it: there are the Vollmar, Bebel, and Liebknecht factions, and still others. Exterior unity only is maintained – above all by the ever-renewed persecutions – and if this show of unity disappeared also, hardly anything would be changed. The essential thing for us, is this. This is, undoubtedly, a time of arrest in the development of Socialism. The time has arrived when the socialistic workers, after having been blindly ranged under this or that flag, put to themselves the question as to the essence of socialism. And this question, once put, they will be forced to treat it, to elucidate their ideas, to become exact. And we are persuaded, that if political events do not precipitate us too suddenly into the fiery furnace of wars and revolutions – which is very possible – governmental socialism, split everywhere into parties and divers factions, will be forced to change its tactics completely.

We see this renovation and rejuvenation coming, and we hail it with joy. We see, betrayed by a thousand various indications, the need of revising throughout the fundamental principles of governmental socialism penetrating further every day. And we are persuaded, by the thousand little facts which we observe in the movement, by the change of language even and the new ideas which permeate the socialist writings and discourses, that this need is making itself felt more and more. It only seeks its constructive formula to affirm itself in broad daylight.

Hence can we believe, can the workers believe, in this “revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat,” which

formerly inspired so many millions of workers? Vague formulas, which constituted the “Communist Manifesto,” which they accepted in its poetic generalization without fathoming it, and which we have seen translated in Germany by the “men of trust,” in France by blanquisme – government, in a word, by the secret society. Does anyone believe in it now?

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Incapable of bringing to a safe harbour a single party, is this lie of a dictatorship of the proletariat capable of inspiring the masses? No, assuredly no.

Again, do they, in Germany itself, believe in the popular parliament – in the *Volkstaat* or popular State – represented by a parliament of electors, who will seize all lands, mines, machines, railways (leaving the inhabited houses and stores to their owners, according to the formula, or perhaps taking possession of them also) and regulating from Berlin the laws and customs concerning the possession of land, the price of the possession of machines, their

supply of raw materials and their manufacture, the carrying of merchandise, exportation and foreign commerce, sending out “armies of agricultural workers” to tear down hedges and make the steam engine go under orders from Berlin, etc., etc.? Do they believe in this, as Marx and Engels believed in it in 1848, and as it was believed in in Germany after the success of the armies of Moltke, when men knew nothing of the war but what the lying bulletins said of it? No, they believe it no longer, even in Germany. Certainly not in the Vollmar faction, not among those who have addressed the peasants and who have taken good care to mirror to them the ideal formerly preached by the authoritarian communists. And certainly they no longer believe it in Berlin where they have had a close view of what a parliament is, what it must be from its very essence, what it would be again after a revolution. As to France and England, the people do not believe too much in even municipal socialism; and at Paris they are suspicious even of the socialism of a revolutionary Commune.

And in the constructive economic ideal, a revolution almost as profound has, for twenty years, been taking place among the thinkers. Twenty years ago, not understanding any too well the terminology of Marx, one might still speak naively of the grand discovery of “surplus value,” and win applause by saying: “Surplus value to the worker!” But to-day he who hazards this tirade is speedily engaged in recollecting that surplus

value means the exploitation of some one by another; that the worker will have none of it, and that the question is to know “what to do in order that all things may be produced in such quantities, that each may have his necessities gratified at his discretion and luxuries to satisfaction – that which is luxury today becoming the necessity of tomorrow!”

Finally, in Germany itself, the belief in the popular and socialistic state is greatly shaken. Not only is the impossibility of it perceived, but the people commence to understand that since they have parted with the idea of “the conquest of power” in the actual State, they will be forced to work for the maintenance of the State in general – that is to say, for the maintenance of the phase of civilisation which, throughout all history, (the empire of Alexander, the Roman empire, and the modern empires) has corresponded to the destruction of all liberties, to the enslavement of the producer, to the formation of industrial and land monopolies – a phase which leads, inevitably, either to Caesarism or to the

destruction of the State from top to bottom by the social revolution; and that, in the actual conditions, the chase after power must lead, has led, to the abandonment of socialism, to any and every accommodation with industrial exploitation, and to political and military servitude.

Well, these ideas, we say, have penetrated the masses. And this is why it is no longer a question of one simple division more, in the womb of the great governmental-socialist party.

Complete revision of fundamental principles is demanded. Socialism, such as has been propagated up to our days, must change its plan entirely, under pain of disappearing.

It must become communistic again. And since, in becoming communistic, it cannot remain authoritarian without falling into absurdity, it must become anarchistic.

Collapse of anti-revolutionary socialism

“Effondrement du Socialisme AntiRevolutionnaire”, *Les Temps Nouveaux*, 29 September 1900¹

At this moment we are witnessing an interesting event. It is the collapse, in theory and practice, of the anti-revolutionary current which, under the name of social democracy, had ruled the roost in the European socialist movement for more than a quarter of a century.

In 1871 the French proletariat – until then the incubator of revolutionary socialism – underwent a terrible defeat. Without France the International could not exist and collapsed: its Latin federations, supported by some French revolutionaries, were barely enough to prevent triumphant reaction from reaching its final frontier: restoration in France, the total crushing of the proletariat.

Germany, until then recalcitrant to the teachings of French and English socialism, then became an incubator of socialism. After the war its bourgeoisie launched itself with youthful enthusiasm into large industry. Strengthened by the experience of England and France, buoyed up by a widely developed system of primary and technical education, taking advantage of the powerful new means of communication, the German bourgeoisie made great strides in that direction. Not as fast, doubtless, as those being taken at the same time in the United States, or even in Japan, but enough to create in the great industrial centres an intelligent proletariat, imbued with republican democratic ideas (as in France before 1848), which then received an admixture (again, as in France before 1848) of vaguely socialist aspirations.

That movement has existed for a quarter of a century. It has won victories in the elections: it has had the time and the chance to affirm itself. So one can evaluate it coldly, by its results.

It is first of all an essentially democratic, *republican* movement. At one moment it had its urges towards Caesarism, with the appearance of William II; but they were soon dispersed by William himself. The attack against the autocracy of Bismarck and the Williams, the struggle against monarchical habits, customs, and laws (military service, laws of lèse-majesté, etc) form the most salient trait of the struggles of this party. They form the basis of its electoral programmes, they fill up its newspapers, they, above all, preoccupy their members of parliament.

But, like the French republicans before 1848, the German republicans are for the most part theoretically socialists. Their socialism has as its theoretical basis the theories of Saint-Simonism (concentration of capital, dominant role of the economic factor, proletarianisation of the masses, etc), and, as its goal – the statist socialism of Louis Blanc, in which, however, worship of the state, governmental centralisation, hatred of the federative principal (which the German socialists due to their modern history are unable to imagine except in the particularist form of little kingdoms), discipline, and dictatorship, are grotesquely exaggerated. Only now making their entry into that part of modern history which France has been going through since the Great

¹ <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/petr-kropotkin-the-collapse-of-counter-revolutionary-socialism> (slightly revised)

Revolution, they are still at the stage of adoring Robespierre, the Jacobin clubs and dictatorship, and they still mistrust, like Robespierre, the people's commune. And however much they talk to the first comer about the preponderant role of the economic factor, they prefer to fight on the political terrain, for the conquest of political power within the bourgeois state, mistrusting the direct economic struggle and the organisation by trades of the unions of labourers, factory workers, and farmworkers.

Their socialism has obviously tried to differentiate itself from French and English socialism.

To succeed in Germany, especially after the war, it had to appear national, German. And it separated itself from the socialists, its predecessors, by seasoning itself liberally with the reactionary metaphysics of the philosopher Hegel. Aided by their ignorance of the literature from before 1848, that allows the German socialists to dress up their Saint-Simonian statements in a pseudo-scientific jargon, incomprehensible to the masses, and even to pass off (as Tcherkesoff has demonstrated so well) elementary propositions of the economists (for example, the law of wages) as "scientific discoveries" of the German spirit, as important as those of Darwin in biology.

Little by little, however, their socialism, which has added nothing, neither in theory nor in aims, to that of Louis Blanc, became what it necessarily had to become under the influence of the ideas of governmental centralisation: not even a *state socialism*, but pure and simply *state capitalism*, the *centralised state becoming the single capitalist*.

They denied it in the Congresses of the German party. But the fact is there: the programme which social democracy follows in Switzerland, where it is less distracted by political struggles, is absolutely the system of *state capitalism* applied at this moment in Russia by the finance minister, Witte. What this party has tried to win through the "referendum" in Switzerland is exactly that: all the railways bought back by the state, the banks monopolised by the state, sale of alcohol to become a state monopoly – measures already realised almost completely by the Russian aristocracy. Every step in the

direction of centralisation, indeed even the "trusts" or bosses unions in America, is welcomed by the socialists of this school as a step forward *preparing the advent of the state as lone capitalist*.

The German socialists... prefer to fight on the political terrain, for the conquest of political power within the bourgeois state, mistrusting the direct economic struggle and... organisation by... unions

Finally, to achieve that end, German social democracy has necessarily become the policeman of Europe against any popular or individual revolutionary attempt. It had to be. Feeling too weak to resist the serious persecutions on the part of a Bismarck, it had to try to persuade the bourgeoisie of its anti-revolutionary nature. It tried to persuade the German workers that the only way to "get there" was to prevent any

popular uprising in Germany which might trigger reaction; that through elections *alone*, they, who had 2, 7, 9 deputies at the start could arrive *in so many years, before the end of the nineteenth century* at a majority in Parliament, which would allow them to 'carry out the revolution' without spilling a drop of blood. As long as there were no 'premature attempts'¹

And, once more of necessity, to prevent the emergence of a revolutionary spirit in Germany the party had to denigrate any attempt at an uprising, any demonstration of the spirit of revolt in the whole of Europe. The economic 'laws' of development, discovered by the German Darwins and unknown to the Latins, would do everything by themselves. And when the pear was ripe, the people would only have to name their dictators to pick it.

You can understand what an enfeebling and demoralising effect these theories, preached with all the metaphysical jargon in which they had been enveloped, with all the wisdom of people in sole possession of science, and all the fervour of people "who have only read one book" – their bible, or rather its commentaries – you can understand what effect all that had to exert on the European socialist movement.

It was a "period of pause" – an intellectual pause as much as one of action. The party was certainly increasing in size in Germany, where the beauties of the Bismarckian regime, of militarism and of police

going this growth without interruption until it swamps the ruling governmental system, that is our main task. And there is but one means whereby the steadily swelling growth of the militant Socialist forces in Germany could for the moment be stemmed, or could even for a time be thrown back: a collision on a large scale with the military, a bloodletting like that of 1871 in Paris." (*Black Flag*)

¹ In 1895 Engels had written an introduction to Marx's *Class Struggles in France* which stated that "the German Social Democracy holds a specific position... The 2,000,000 voters whom it sends to the hustings... form the most numerous, the most compact "shock troops" of the international proletarian army... it is growing apace uninterrupted... If this goes on... we shall come to be the decisive power in the land... To keep

bureaucracy were swelling the ranks of the republicans, while the ferocious capitalism of nascent industry awoke a hatred of capital. The number of malcontents was swelling, without increasing the economic might of the party.

But for the development of the socialist idea, for the elaboration of practical means of socialisation, for the development of working-class initiative and thought, for the grouping of forces with the aim of waging an *economic* battle – it was a pause, stagnation, the triumph of formulas over reality, of passive obedience over the spirit of revolt.

Praise then to the French workers who, at their last trades union congress, have just ripped open the veil which was enveloping us. Finally, for the first time in thirty years, the French worker has freely spoken out. He has again spoken the language of his fathers, the

language of the International, and, in words that are simple, clear, and full of good sense, declared his intention to take back control of the struggle, and to give battle on a field where this question will be decided: to whom by right, in fact, and by virtue of simple good sense do the workshops, the factories, the fields, the riches of every kind belong? To the boss, to the State, or to the workers grouped together to use them?

At the same time there is also the complete collapse of the *theories* with which people have sought to obscure the intelligence of the working class. In Russia, where above all the theoretical struggle has taken place recently, there is the collapse, the retreat, with the wounded abandoned, of Marxism. But we will need to discuss that another time.

The Coming Revival of Socialism

Freedom Press, 1904

I

There is not the slightest doubt that we are on the eve of a new revival of the Socialist movement in this and other countries. In what form the revival will shape itself we cannot yet foretell with certainty, we can only guess. But some such revival as we had in the forties, and again in the eighties, is undoubtedly near at hand.

It is self-evident that when we speak of a revival of “Socialism,” we don’t mean a revival of “Social Democracy.” The writers of this last school have done all they could to make people believe that Social Democracy is Socialism, and Socialism is nothing but Social Democracy. But everyone can easily ascertain himself that Social Democracy is only *one fraction* of the great Socialist movement: the fraction which believes that all necessary changes in the Socialist direction can be accomplished by Parliamentary reforms within the present State; or, at least, that only such reforms need be spoken of; and that when all main branches of production shall be owned by the State, and governed by a Democratic Parliament, and every working man will be a wage worker for the State – this will be Socialism. This is their creed. There remains, however, a very considerable number of Socialists who maintain that Socialism cannot be limited to such a meek reform; that it implies much deeper changes, economical and political; and that even the above reform cannot be realised within the present State by its representative institutions. Many begin thus to see that it is not by acquiring power in Parliament – under the unavoidable penalty of ceasing to be a Socialist party, and gradually becoming a “Moderate Radical” party – that the changes required by *Socialism* can ever be realised. Social Democracy is the right wing of the great Socialist movement – not this movement itself. It is, then, a revival of Socialism altogether that we see

coming – one of its causes being precisely the failure of Social Democracy to bring about the great changes which mankind needs and claims at the present moment of its history.

What immediate cause will provoke the coming revival of interest in Socialism it is difficult to say, because there are so many causes which may produce it. It may be a severe industrial crisis – such as was lived through in these isles in the forties, and again about 1886; or it may be some great international cause, including great wars, which may result in a revival of the international Labour movement; or it may be an intellectual revival, such as we had in 1857-1865, when it was combined with the political revival that was provoked by the efforts of Italy and the glorious campaigns of Garibaldi. To speculate about the probable immediate cause would be idle. But it will not be idle to examine into what can be done, in order that the experience of the preceding movements in the forties, the sixties, and the eighties should be utilised, and should help us to make of the next movement a real step in advance upon all previous ones.

When we examine the state of mind of the democracy in this country during the years which culminated in the French Revolution of 1848, we can sum up its distinctive features as follows: The movement was religious to a great extent. It was Republican, Democratic, but it was not revolutionary. Economical questions were prominent, but the most advanced writers and thinkers did not go beyond State aid to associations of workers. Experiments with such associations, as well as with agricultural and mixed associations, were in great demand.

Under the influence of the Christian Socialists, Socialism was often represented as a return to Christianity. "The Christ a Socialist" was a favourite saying. True, that the preaching of Robert Owen was independent of Christianity, and that Fourier's criticism of Christianity was superior in substance, if not in its form, to that even of Nietzsche. But Lamennais, with his *Words of a Believer*, had produced a deep impression; so did also Maurice and Charles Kingsley, with his *Message of the Church to the Labouring Man*. Among the middle-class Socialist writers there was a decided tendency to represent Socialism as a religion, so beautiful that it would be sufficient to prove its relation to the teachings of Christ in order that it might conquer the world. Natural sciences at that time had not yet made the sudden progress which they made twenty years later.

The movement in England was not revolutionary. The Socialists, when they had seen to what terrible lengths the middle classes were prepared to go in the repression of the Labour movement – a free distribution of sentences of hard labour in Australia was their reply to Robert Owen's "Trades' Union" – when they saw this, they submitted. They began preaching co-operation on the one side, as a means of accumulating money in the hands of the working classes for future struggles, and secret Labour unions on the other hand. Besides, many of them fell into an error which we still see existing at the present day: that of expecting from the Royal power and the landed aristocracy – the King and the Tories – help for the emancipation of the factory workers. The teaching, and partly also the practice, of the Socialists was directed towards this end. When they saw what resistance they would meet with from the middle classes, they began to show a leaning towards Toryism: Kingsley, for instance, supported the House of Lords! They flirted with the Pretender to the throne of France, Napoleon, in the hope that he, who had written a book on the proletarians, would be the man to accomplish Socialist reforms if he became Emperor; just as at a later epoch the German Socialists supported Lassalle in his flirtations with Bismarck, helping the iron minister to defeat the Liberals and to govern without Parliament. It was only natural, therefore, that the Radicals of the forties, both English and foreign (Mazzini, Herzen,

Ledru-Rollin), should look on the Socialists with suspicion.

On the other hand, the British Radicals themselves were only Radicals half-way. After having obtained the abolition of the corn laws, some extension of the

suffrage, and some factory legislation, they took no more interest in the economical conditions of the labourers. The campaign which had been started for "the land for the people" was dropped. The rapid extension of the industries of Great Britain, due to the rapid extension of the railways and steam navigation, promised such sources of enrichment for the country, if she could only be first, in the conquest of distant markets, that the economists had no difficulty in persuading the working classes to keep quiet: they would benefit from that growth of commerce, provided they would support their Government in such a policy and let the British producer take hold of the

markets – an illusion which really *was* accepted by the British workers, *is* nourished still, and has prepared the latest evolution of Imperialism.

All attempts at compelling the factory owner and the landlord to share the immense revenues accruing to them from the sudden growth of the industries and the world trade, were thus dismissed by most Radicals as too Utopian and dangerous to the very foundations of the economical life of the country. The Republicanism of the earlier Radicals was gradually abandoned, too, as dangerous for the security of trade; and in proportion as the more uproarious elements of the country found an outlet in emigration, both to the [United] States and to the now rapidly growing Colonies, and in proportion as the trade-unionist movement began to be more and more legalised (as a first step towards the muzzling of it, which is attempted now), Radicalism became tamer and tamer. It chiefly made its influence felt in religious matters and in the slow, constructive, educational work, especially in the industrial centres.

**Many begin thus to see
that it is not by acquiring
power in Parliament –
under the unavoidable
penalty of ceasing to be a
Socialist party, and
gradually becoming a
"Moderate Radical" party
– that the changes
required by *Socialism* can
ever be realised. Social
Democracy is the right
wing of the great
Socialist movement – not
this movement itself.**

As to the economical conceptions of the Socialists, they also underwent a gradual deterioration. Formerly the very word "Socialism" did not exist. There were Communists only, who did not make any difference between what is needed by the worker for *producing*, and what is needed for *living*. They proclaimed the right of everyone to live, and discussed the means of guaranteeing this. But then, gradually, they began to speak of "Socialism," instead of Communism, and limiting their conceptions thereof more and more, and going from one concession to another, they came to represent Socialism as the State's aid to working men's productive associations.

After the defeat of the Revolution at Paris, in 1848, and the crushing down of the Paris proletarians, even that was found too advanced. Socialism was almost forgotten; the Socialist literature, which was so abundant before 1848, disappeared, and there came a blank of nearly twenty years before a new revival of the movement began, in the sixties, on the Continent, and brought about the foundation of the International Working Men's Association.

The echoes of this second movement in England, and the effects of the great war which broke out in 1870 between France and Germany, and put an end to this new phase of the Labour agitation, were so important that we shall speak of them at some length in our next chapter.

II

"We are on the eve of a new revival of Socialism," we said – not, of course, of Social-Democracy, because this party, at the present time, has ceased to be Socialist – but of true Socialism. And "Socialism" means, of course, all the great movement in favour of a production which would aim at the satisfaction of the needs of the workers, and not at the largest profits for the few, and in favour of a cessation of the wage system, which lies at the root of all present evils. A revival of such a movement is coming, and in order better to see what the coming revival might be, and ought to be, we analysed the previous movement, in the forties (before 1848); and now we have to analyse the second revival which took place some twenty years later, i.e., in the sixties.

When the revolution of 1848 was crushed in Europe, especially in its last act – the uprising of the working men at Paris in June 1848 – a dark cloud hung all over Europe. Stern reaction set in everywhere. The French Republic, in the hands of the frightened middle-class people, was progressive no more, and three years later Napoleon became the Emperor of France, after having made a *coup d'état*, during which the people were shot in the streets without provocation, and the best Republicans had been either massacred, or transported to the colonies, or compelled to flee abroad. In Austria, in Italy, and, of course, all over Germany, reaction was

triumphant, and a dark night spread once more over Russia.

All hopes of a universal Republic – of a United States of Europe, composed of independent and free nationalities – which was the aim of the French and British Republicans, of Young Italy and even Young Germany – had to be given up.

The worst of it was that while Radical ideas had received so severe a blow, the Socialist movement had simply been killed outright for the next fifteen or twenty years. It became dangerous even to be named a Communist. As to publishing anything in the Communist direction – it was out of the question. Even the word "Socialist," which had been invented as a harmless substitute for "Communist," was no more a safe flag to sail under. A still further concession was made then in inventing "Collectivism." To these years, indeed, belonged the two great works on Collectivism, by Vidal and Pecqueur, whose works, re-hashed lately by German vulgarisers, are now described as "Scientific Socialism" discovered in Germany.

The few revolutionary Communists who had remained true to their ideals had emigrated to England and to the States. But here, too, it was dangerous to preach Communism or anything of the sort, and only owing to their limited circulation one or two brave French papers – forerunners of Anarchism – were tolerated in the United States. The others laid quiet, or openly abjured their Communist ideas.

Before 1848 there was a very bulky and varied Communist and Saint Simonist literature in circulation. The French Fourierists and Saint Simonians – especially their younger followers – had circulated such a rich and popular literature of pamphlets and books, that one can hardly understand how it could all disappear. But it did disappear entirely, probably having been destroyed by timorous owners and booksellers and by the reactionists. There happened something which would simply seem impossible in our century. With a few exceptions the very teachings were forgotten. The very tradition of Communism was broken, so that later on the Germans, especially Engels, could claim, for himself and Marx, for a period of thirty years, the discovery of what they described as Scientific Socialism, before it was proved (by Tcherkesov, and now by Professor Andler) that they had only copied, or re-written (in a bad, metaphysical German), the ideas of Considerant and other Fourierists and Saint Simonians, which at that time were of everyday currency amongst the Socialists.

Yes – this was a reaction, the depth of which we realise only now, when we learn that it was capable of effacing even the teachings of Socialism in such a thorough manner. The "White Terror" has always been infinitely more sweeping than the Red one.

The intellectual revival which began some ten to twelve years after the defeat of 1848, had already taken a new character.

First of all it was anti-religious. The religious and Christian sentimentalism of the forties (Lamennais, Kingsley) was laid aside. It so happened that in those years – 1856-1862 – took place the great revival of natural sciences, of which Darwin, in this country, was one of the chief representatives, and which produced a complete revulsion in the then current ideas. A new comprehension of both the universe and all human matters was worked out in those years. (More about this interesting subject will be found in *Modern Science and Anarchism*.) And the result was that the progressive movement henceforward separated itself entirely from the religious movement. Bradlaugh, as is known, who boldly preached in those years against religious superstition, at the same time as he boldly attacked aristocracy, the land monopoly, and the monarchy, became the greatest favourite with the masses of the British workers.

On the other side, the war of 1859 for the liberation of Italy, and the heroic campaign of Garibaldi, had broken through the spell of reaction which hung over Europe. A new spirit was awakened. Again the idea of the universal Republican federation was asserting itself. The Italian patriots had been defeated in 1848, but they had not died in vain; the day of liberation of Italy from the Austrian yoke was at hand. Poland was preparing an uprising, which Britain and France had promised to support, and which was going to free her from the Russian yoke.

“Down with the kings! Long live the United States of Europe!” became once more the watchword of the advanced Radicals in Europe.

However, the working men, while willingly joining the Republican secret societies, and thus contributing to rend the black cloud of reaction, had not yet come forward by themselves to revive the Socialist movement. It was only in 1862-1864 that those French workers who had always retained the idea launched first

by Robert Owen in his great Trades’ union (union of all trades grouped across the frontier) and had developed it in their papers (like *L’Internationale*) published in the United States, took advantage of the International Exhibition of 1862 for making a step in this direction. They induced the British working men trade unionists (at that time they were labourers, wore no silk hats, and did not dine with Lord Mayors) to start an organisation of their own.

This is why the International Working Men’s Association was started, and for the next seven years, till the defeat of the Paris Commune, it became the soul of the labour movement.

We have often spoken of this movement, and need not exaggerate anything in speaking of it. IT WAS A MOVEMENT FOR THE DIRECT STRUGGLE OF LABOUR AGAINST CAPITAL. It was in direct and open opposition to every sort of political agitation. Labour has its own interests, which not only cannot enter into the programs of existing political parties, but cannot be settled by legislation. It is not only more wages that

Labour wants. Not only shorter hours. Not only capitalist responsibility in case of accidents. It agitates for the disappearance of the capitalist system. It wants to expropriate the capitalist, to take all into its own hands – fields, docks, railways, flourmills and storehouses and to organise everything in the interest of those who produce.

This it was that the International Working Men’s Association had gradually come to perceive as the final aim of the war against Capital which it had begun; and this it was which after the defeat of the Paris Commune the Germans succeeded for thirty years in preventing the workers from aiming at.

We shall see next how this was done. But one question rises before us now. Ought it not to be the aim of the next coming revival of Socialism to press this question upon the minds of the workers? Openly, frankly, honestly to put it before them? Or must we shut our eyes to the great question which has grown before civilised mankind, and go on discussing the petty side issues with which the clever and educated middle-class men amuse the workers?

III

The International Working Men’s Association was a vast organisation of trades unions, which it was

intended to spread all over the world, and which would have carried on, with international support, the direct struggle of Labour against Capital. This was its leading idea, in which the Paris Proudhonians and the English Owenites united when they founded the Association in the years 1862-1864.

Therefore its fundamental principle, inscribed at the head of its program was: "The emancipation of the working men must be the work of the working men themselves"; and its other principle, so fiercely advocated by Proudhon, was, that "economical agitation must be the main object, and all political agitation must be subordinated to it." Consequently, during the first six years of its existence, until the Franco-German war, strikes supported internationally were its main means of action. Its sections were trade unions, to which one "section of propaganda," consisting of members of different trades, or of no trade, was added in each important city; and the "federations" were all the sections of a given industrial region grouped together – sometimes irrespective of national frontiers, as was, for instance, the Jura Federation, which comprised both French and Swiss sections belonging to the same industrial region of the Jura Mountains.

At the same time the sections of the International Association became permanent schools of social economy for the working men. Every question submitted to the next congress of the federation, and next to the yearly congress of the whole Association, had to be discussed first in the sections, whether it was a question of the day, or a question of future organisation; and in this way thought and research were stimulated in a thousand centres, and the discussions went on amongst the working men themselves or under their control, and with the aid of their special knowledge of each trade.

Three different schemes of Socialistic reconstruction of society had been proposed, and were under discussion amongst social reformers at the time when the International was founded: (1) The authoritarian Communism of Cabet, Leroux, and Considerant (Marx had advocated it, in 1848, before the Germans in his *Manifesto*); (2) Collectivism, which had been worked out in 1848-1850 by Pecqueur and Vidal, in serious elaborate works – the former insisting that the French Republican Assembly should legislate to introduce "Collectivism," now vulgarised by the German and French Collectivists under the pompous name of "scientific Socialism"; and (3) the most favourite teaching amongst the French founders of the International was Proudhon's "Mutualism," that is, the exchange of produce among working men's associations by means of labour cheques issued by the National Bank, this new form of economic life being brought into existence, partly by the operations of the Bank itself, which would render capital unproductive,

and partly in consequence of a social revolution, which was described then as a "Social Liquidation."

To these fundamental currents of thought various others of less importance ought to be added. As, for instance, the idea of Louis Blanc, advocated later on by Lassalle in Germany, of State aid to the labour associations, which would thus become the owners of the factories, the mines, etc.; or the idea, so popular in England, of co-operative societies permitting the working men to save the necessary capital for becoming the owners of the factories, the mines, etc.; or, again, the teachings of Collectivism of Collins, which laid stress upon the nationalisation of land, and were especially popular amongst the Belgians. However, the two main currents were; the State Communism, advocated formerly by Cabet, Weitling, etc., and, how advocated by Marx and the Germans, and the various currents originating from Fourier's "free associations," variously combined with Mutualism and Collectivism.

The eminently practical and democratic minds of the Paris working men, who were the leading spirits of the International at the time of its foundation, perfectly well realised that it would be foolish to expect that some genius should find for them the best forms of a future economical organisation of society. All that men of genius could foresee was already known to the Fourierists, the Saint Simonians and Robert Owen. But that only would have any chance of *realisation* in life, which would appear as realisable and practical to the working men; consequently the working men had themselves to come to certain general conceptions as to the broad lines upon which the social revolution was to take its first steps; all a thinker could do would be to find later on a more distinct expression of these aspirations, after they had been outlined by the labourers themselves.

Unfortunately, it was only in the Latin countries that the International Working Men's Association really developed and worked in the way just described. All that could be done in Germany was to start a secret organisation, in which the adherence, in a body and in general terms, of a few labour organisations could be assured. The impossibility of acting openly, and the necessity of being led by a handful of leaders, necessarily laid their stamp upon the whole of the subsequent Socialistic movement in Germany. It may seem paradoxical to say so, but the reality is, that Socialism in its various currents has never been properly discussed in Germany. The Marxist expression of it was taken on faith, and all others were suppressed. Even the criticisms which Marx wrote of the program of the party, both in its theoretical and practical portions, were not allowed to be printed until their existence became known many years later on, through indiscretion. A serious discussion of the principles of Socialism, Collectivism, Communism, Mutualism,

Anarchism, and so on, has yet to be made by the German workers, in the same way as it has been done in Latin countries. Till now, even the facts, the elements of a serious discussion have not been laid before them.

The same has to be said to a great extent about the mass of the English working men, even though something was done in that direction during the next revival of the eighties. In England, too, the International Working Men's Association existed only in name. The trade unions had adhered in principle and in a body to the International Association, but they never took a lively part in it, apart from the support of a few strikes; and as they took no part in the discussions of the reform questions in which the Latin working men took such an intense interest, the great and wholesome educational influence of the International was lost to them. The penetration of Socialist thought (and by "Socialist" we mean, of course, in its entirety, including Anarchist Communism) did not take place in England as it did in France, Spain, Belgium, Italy, and French-speaking Switzerland. Consequently the revival of the sixties was Radical in politics, and even Republican, Freethought, trade unionist, and vaguely revolutionist; but the Socialist conception – the necessity of getting hold of everything required for producing wealth – remained almost even more remote than it was in 1840.

The English agitators of the sixties remained mainly Jacobinists, in the French sense of the word (like Felix Pyat or Ledru Rollin), without trying to understand Socialism; while the trade unionists, moderately Radical in temper, did not want to look further than the struggle for better wages and shorter hours. To drive the capitalist out of the factory and the mine, seemed to them so far off that they did not care to discuss this eventuality.

Besides, the Radicals of those years looked upon the Socialists with suspicion. In 1840-1848 the Socialists were, to a great extent, religious – "Christ a Socialist," and "Socialism is true Christianity," were favourite sayings – while, owing to the general awakening of natural science in the sixties, scientific materialism was rapidly gaining ground, even in England, and the hostile attitude of all the Christians towards the great scientific conquests of those years (Darwinism, Physical

Psychology, Indestructibility of Motion, etc.) rendered a conciliatory attitude quite impossible.

There was, however, a still deeper cause of distrust towards the Socialists. They attached too little importance to the political liberties and the democratisation of English institutions that had been won in this country after a bitter fight that had lasted all the century; while the working men saw, quite rightly, in these Radical conquests a necessary guarantee for their further struggle against Capital. It is known that Fourier and Robert Owen were not free from the idea that benevolent despots, even a Nicholas I, might aid them in spreading their schemes of Communistic settlements. On the other side, many Socialists dreamed of an enlightened autocrat who would give State support

to labour associations, and thus make a beginning for Louis Blanc's scheme of social reform. The friendship of Lassalle with Bismarck, and the friendly relations he retained at the same time with the German refugees in London, and the fact that one of these refugees (Max Bucher) had become before that a secretary to Bismarck, were not made to dissipate the suspicions of Caesarism which weighed upon the Continental Socialists. Still less so the flirtation in which Napoleon III indulged with regard to the Paris proletarians, and even

the anarchists completely differ from all the factions of the statist-socialists in that they deny that we can find a solution to the social problem in the *State-Capitalist* taking ownership of production... The postal service or the railways in the hands of the current State, directed by the ministries appointed by Parliament, is not the ideal that we seek. We only see in that a new form of wage labour and exploitation.

– *Modern Science and Anarchy*

with the founders of the International, to whom he promised his support on the condition that they should insert a few words of trust in his devotion to the cause of the proletarians. Many more traces of "Caesarism" will surely be found some day, and one can guess why the Republican wing of the refugees in London (Mazzini, Herzen, Ledru Rollin) were so distrustful of many of their Socialist contemporaries, and why the English Radicals had no trust at all in the English Socialists.

These were the faults of the Socialists. As to the Radicals themselves, their Radicalism, as well as their "Freethought," went only half way. Most of the freethinkers, even the few of them who had the courage of their opinions, were half Deists; while in their economical conceptions they did not go beyond free

trade, Malthusianism, and the hope that with some freedom of combination for the workers and plenty of freedom in the exploitation of the less industrially advanced countries, the well-being of the workers would so much increase that they would drop all their “dreams” about becoming the owners of the factories, the mines and the land.

This is why the revival of the sixties, which had such a formidable effect in Europe on the Continent (the Commune of Paris, the Communalistic movement in Spain, the growth of Social Democracy in Germany, the development of international solidarity, etc.), left relatively so few traces in Britain. It certainly brought about a further democratisation of institutions as well as half-hearted, but not to be neglected, reforms in education. But the very same progress, and relatively even more, was accomplished in Germany and in France; while all that educational influence which the few years of the existence of the International had had on the Continent was still missing in England. We thus have to come to the next revival of the Labour Movement in the eighties to find anything similar to what had been done on the Continent in the sixties.

IV

The revival of Socialism which took place in the sixties, under the banner of the International Working Men’s Association, left deep traces amongst the Continental nations. It determined the lines of their future development.

In France it had culminated, after the unfortunate Franco-German War, in the Paris Commune. Of course, this uprising, which lived only seventy days – under the guns of the Germans, ready to be turned against it – had not had the time to produce all it was capable of giving. A popular revolution, beginning, as it usually does, upon some event of secondary importance, always requires some time before it finds the proper expression of the leading ideas which underlie popular discontent. With all that, the Commune gave us something very important. It indicated the political *form* which the coming social revolution will have to take, the form which will render the revolution possible. *Not* the form of a centralised “Popular State,” but that of independent Communes, more or less communistic. The most advanced cities taking the lead in the working out of new forms of communistic life; accomplishing the social revolution themselves, in various degrees, on their own territories – instead of trying to find in a central parliament a sort of *average* for the nation – an average which would compromise with the past, and, satisfying nobody, would only hamper the future without avoiding the violent opposition of the dispossessed ones. Acting, in a word, as the cities of the eleventh and twelfth centuries acted, when they opened by their revolts a new era for European civilisation.

This was the lesson of the Paris Commune, the beacon it planted for the future. And it must not be forgotten that attempts at proclaiming the Commune were also made (even during the war) at Lyons and Marseilles; and that the example of Paris was followed by St. Etienne in France, and by Carthage and Alcoy, in Spain. It is certain that the idea of the revolutionary Commune taking the lead in the social revolution has become familiar in Latin countries.

Another consequence of the revival of the sixties was that it conquered more or less all European nations for Socialism. Till then, Socialism was limited to France and partly to England. Now it spread to Germany and all other countries of Europe.

France had had Fourier, Saint-Simon, Babeuf, and these three had originated quite a phalanx of Socialists: Considerant, Cabet, Pierre Leroux, and so on. She had produced, moreover, that original and powerful Anarchist and “Mutualist” writer – Proudhon. Even the novel in France was deeply imbued (by Eugene Sue, George Sand, etc.) with Socialist and revolutionary ideas. Besides, the secret Communistic societies exercised a deep influence on general politics; and the insurrections at Lyons and elsewhere, followed by the great insurrection of the Paris proletarians in June, 1848, had definitively traced a gulf between middle-class and working man politics. In this country we have had Robert Owen and his theoretical followers, the Christian Socialists (corresponding to Lamennais in France), and a strongly organised, semi-secret, Labour movement.

But Germany remained deaf to the Socialist ideas which so deeply agitated France. The few German Communists, like Weitling or Grün, had been unable to awaken Socialist or Communist thought in Germany itself; and it was only in the sixties that Lassalle started on Teuton soil a short-lived Radical Socialist movement.

The first impulse for the awakening of Socialist thought in Germany was given by the International Working Men’s Association, which was joined by a few German leaders (Liebknecht, Bebel) and to which were affiliated – in principle – a few German working men’s organisations.

Now, after the war, Marx, Engels and Liebknecht began in Germany itself a large propaganda of the ideas of the French socialists (chiefly of the Saint-Simonians in their theories, and of Louis Blanc in practice), clothing them, however, in a metaphysical garb, which apparently suited German educated minds; while Bebel, a devoted Fourierist, who had also retained the comprehensible and elegant style of his French masters, especially contributed to familiarise the German working men with the Fourierist aspects of French Socialism.

It was immediately after the war that the German Social Democratic party was formed, taking since then its well-known development – the result being that Germany stands now where France stood before 1848. She is on the eve of a Republican revolution, in which some concessions will be made to the workers in the sense of a State regulation of capitalist production, so as to mitigate some of its worst effects, but as bitterly opposed to any attempt at a real social revolution (by which we mean, of course, the expropriation of capitalists) as the French Republic of 1848 was, to any step in this direction.

The pernicious effects which the military triumph of Germany on the battlefield has had in Europe – by reviving faith in a centralised State, supposed to be benevolent towards the exploited masses, and by making of Europe a military camp – these effects of the war of 1871 have often been mentioned in these pages. So also the effects of the bitter opposition to the Latin revolutionary spirit, and the passionate condemnation of all attempts at revolt, which came for the last thirty years from the

German Social-Democratic camp. It must be owned that through this policy something was certainly gained in making adepts to some innocent sort of State Socialism amongst the middle classes. This has certainly been done and need not be minimised. But whether this gain compensates the losses made in the energy of the revolutionary spirit amongst the workers, and in the precision of the Socialist conception – is more than doubtful. At any rate, the fact must be noted that since the revival of the sixties a considerable number of the German working men have been won over to some sort of vague Socialism and moderate Radicalism, while formerly Germany stood outside the movement.

Spain and Italy, Switzerland, Belgium and Holland, Austria and Hungary, and even Servia, were also during these years won over to the Socialist movement. Before the sixties, their part in the great movement of Socialistic thought was nearly nil. Belgium had had Collins, but his ideas were known only in a very narrow circle. Spain, and especially Italy, had powerfully contributed to the Democratic, Republican and

revolutionary movement in the forties. The secret societies of the French Communists, which flourished before and after 1848, certainly had numerous adepts in Italy. But in none of these countries was there any movement in any way comparable to that of France, and nowhere had it enveloped large masses of working men who would understand that on the *social* question they are separated from, and hostile to, the middle classes. Now they joined the International and gave to it its most active federations, which continued its work even when France became closed for the great Association.

Nay, even Russia felt the influence of the great movement of the International. The movement towards the people was largely due to it and the Commune.

Britain alone remained quite isolated. The great wave of thought which had rolled over Europe, and had inspired its working men populations, broke on the shores of these islands.

Never, for a long succession of years, had English manufacturers, money-lenders, and shipping agents realised such immense profits as

they had realised during and immediately after the war of 1870-71 (by the way, this is precisely what the protectionist swindlers of now-a-day do *not* say in the campaign they have started for the benefit of the landlords and the company promoters). Speak to any manufacturer in Lancashire or in the Birmingham region, and he will tell you with gleaming eyes of the profits he made in those years. The industries of France had been ruined. Alsace – a great centre for cottons and all sorts of textiles – was laid waste, the Lyons and the St. Etienne iron districts were totally ruined. This was England's time! As to loans, they were concluded in such quantities and at such rates of interest and "realisation" that no stock exchange shark had ever dreamt before of anything of the sort.

Immense fortunes were made in those years by the middle classes; but it hardly need be said that mere trifles, mere crumbs of this enrichment reached the workers; and yet even these crumbs were capable of perceptibly improving the conditions of those who had work, to an extent that made of the seventies an epoch in the history of wages and earnings.

To tell the workers that they will be able to introduce the socialist system *while retaining the machine of the State* and only changing the men in power; to prevent, instead of aiding, the mind of the workers progressing towards *the search for new forms of life that would be their own*—that is in our eyes a historic mistake which borders on the criminal.

– *Modern Science and Anarchy*

As to Socialism, it made no progress in Great Britain. "Socialism, and all that sort of nonsense, is only good for hungry Frenchies or for stupid Germans. We, the British nation, need nothing of the sort. Where others lose, we make money! Only you, workers, must not hinder us: you, too, will have some share in the loot."

This is the language we have heard in those years – the language we hear again in Birmingham. The few leaders of the Labour movement or of the agricultural labourers' revival passed like comets on the horizon and were soon buried in the lobbies of Westminster. The Labour movement that was beginning then, and seemed to take such a serious character during the Law Courts' strike, or during the campaign of Arch, fell flat. All that intellectual wave which passed over Europe, and by lifting the intelligence of the worker and widening his intellectual horizon has done more for the success of industries on the Continent than whatever the States would have done otherwise for education – all that movement went past this country. And this is why at the present moment we find it so backward all along the line, and so ready to run after any impostor who promises it to be a saviour.

V

The revival of Socialism in the years 1884-1890 is still fresh in our memories. The visit of Henry George to this country and the appearance of his impressive work, "*Progress and Poverty*"; the founding by Hyndman of *Justice*, the organ of the Social Democratic Federation; the writings of Edward Carpenter, and the conversion of William Morris to Socialism – all these undoubtedly gave an impetus to the growth of Socialism in England. But there were also much deeper causes. Ireland was ablaze from 1881, and the action of both the Land League and the Fenians, the resistance of the Irish to wholesale evictions, and the "No Rent" Campaign, produced a deep impression in England and Scotland; while a number of Irishmen took a lively part in spreading in Great Britain the unionist agitation which the Knights of Labour, in full force still in America, had by this time brought over to England. Besides, a deep impression had been produced on the minds by the enthusiasm of Russian Socialists and the desperate struggle of the Terrorists; and to this impression must also be added the interest awakened by the sudden and violent movement amongst the miners and the weavers in South-Eastern France, followed by a scandalous trial at Lyons. On the other side, in Britain itself, great hopes were awakened by the arrival of the Radical Ministry of Gladstone, to which the eyes of the Radicals had been turned in expectation for a long time. And finally, since 1882 the country had entered a period of diminishing and badly paid exports, which reached its lowest ebb in 1886. The crisis was so acute that in the first part of that year parties of working men paraded every day all the streets of London and its suburbs appealing to charity, while hundreds of unemployed came together at nights

in Trafalgar Square to sleep there in the mud, with no other blanket than an occasionally found newspaper.

The Trafalgar Square riots, during which a crowd dashed, after a meeting, up Regent Street, breaking a few windows in the best shops and compelling fine ladies to alight from their carriages, fell like a thunderbolt upon the rich of London. They saw rising before them a vision of 1780 – East London marching to sack the West-end mansions – and the rich hastened to show their sympathy "with the poor poor" by subscribing some £30,000 in a few days for relief work: All England – the poor with hope, the rich with terror – began to talk Socialism. The papers were full of articles sympathetic to the working men and with schemes of reform. The visions of 1780, 1789, 1793, floated before the eyes of the rich, and it must be said that their fears were not unfounded. The Government itself had ascertained that if Burns, Hyndman and Champion, arrested after the Trafalgar Square riots, had been punished severely, retaliation would have followed.

The most striking feature of the whole movement was the revolutionary note that rang through it. Was it the influence of an unseen, Knights of Labour, under-current which was felt amongst the working men? or was it the other just-mentioned influences combining together? At any rate the leaders felt a revolutionary temper amongst the working classes and they followed it. The Social-Democratic and Anarchist Press and meetings were quite outspoken as to their aims and methods. It was written and said that the aim of the movement was a revolution, the result of which must be the taking back of the land for the people – with *no* compensation, the docks, and all other sorts of municipal capital returning to the municipalities, the mines to the miners, the factories to the factory hands.... all this being done on the spot by those themselves interested. Even the inveterate politicians spoke of the necessity of getting rid of both the Houses of Lords and Commons, and convoking a Convention, which would revise all institutions in a revolutionary sense.

A distinctive feature of the movement was the readiness of passing from words to acts, or at least to such manifestations as are the forerunners of revolt. Piccadilly riots, Norwich riots, Trafalgar Square meetings, Battersea Church Parades, morning calls of the unemployed at the vestries, Hyde Park meetings, during which the very poorest of the poorest Londoners came together in scores of thousands and growled with fury as they marched past the mansions, these were the favourite means of agitation.

Even so late as in 1890 Burns spoke of letting his Battersea candidature alone and of going to the country for organising agricultural labour, "in order to get at the root of the labour question" (*Freedom*, September, 1890). And when the First of May movement came to

Europe from America, and brought to us the idea of preparing a General Strike by means of First of May demonstrations, the Socialist League, with Morris at its head, was immediately won to this Anarchist idea. Even the Social Democratic Federation was revolutionary then, in the years 1884-1887. Feeling that they were hopelessly remote from getting any seat in Parliament, they held quite revolutionary language, and we had Hyndman in our ranks saying "Well done" when he spoke of the Chicago bomb. The enthusiasm was general. Even those middle-class people who now have but words of disdain for the Social Revolution, were far ahead of the Anarchists in their hopes of a speedy revolution going to settle everything right away. *Freedom* noted at that time the very disappearance of the various Socialist bodies as such: "The Socialists were everywhere, but political humbug had disappeared" it was said in "Notes." Unity of action prevailed.

The great strikes of the dockers and the great coal strike deeply impressed the middle-class Socialists who had joined the movement, especially when they saw the organising capacities displayed by the working men. All elements were then in favour of some sort of action...

But, beginning with 1890, the movement began to subside. Towards the end of that year it seemed as if it had spent its last energy in the First of May demonstration – and it soon came to a standstill. The enthusiasm was gone. We entered that period of apathy which lasts till now.

VI

What was the cause of the apathy which suddenly developed in the English Socialist movement about 1890?

Everyone who has lived through these years will probably give the same answer. It was the craving after seats in Parliament which split the Socialists and subdivided them into groups which paralysed each

other. It was parliamentary action which sowed amongst the working men distrust towards those whom they had hitherto followed; and the reactionaries took full advantage of those discords and that distrust.

Reinforced by all those ex-Radicals of the richer classes who had been frightened by the vision of the slums and hastened now to join the so-called Unionist party, the Black Tories saw that their time had come once more. Rome, with its powerful secret organisations and secret

influences, gave them a hearty support.

All of a sudden that mass of middle-class people and intermediates between the middle classes and the working men, upon whom the British working men, hitherto kept in ignorance of Socialism, had unfortunately had to rely for the written and verbal propaganda – all of a sudden these began to turn a cold shoulder to the movement. The news that all landed properties in Ireland, into which the life insurance companies had invested their moneys, had been depreciated by more than one-third of their value, owing to the Home Rule agitation, produced quite a change of mind amongst the rich middle-class people who had hitherto been ardent Home Rulers. In twenty-four hours they became Unionists, this

Besides, the strikes, especially when they attain great dimensions and are supported internationally, awake general attention, and are infinitely better opportunities for spreading broadcast Socialist ideas than electoral meetings, in which, for the very success of the election, Socialists will often be compelled to compromise with the middle classes... In the struggles for political power Socialism would soon be forgotten...

– *Politics and Socialism*

name being a suitable screen for covering Black Toryism.

Their fears, their ambitions which Gladstone had failed to satisfy, and those ambitions which could be stimulated by promises of support at the next elections – all was set into action in order to break the powers of the Socialists and to drive away from them those of the middle-class people who for one reason or another had joined them. To frighten away some, to lock away the others. As to the enthusiasts, their very enthusiasm was the cause of their defection. As it so often happens with the middle-class supporters of the Labour agitation, they had been attracted to it by the prospects of a revolution being at hand. The grand effects of a revolution had seduced them; and they deserted the cause of the people as soon as they saw that the revolution was not yet

coming: that a long, slow, preparatory work was required to make it break out.

What then should be the character of the next coming revival of Socialism in this country?

Many causes are at work at this moment in Europe which can throw all the civilised nations into a series of interminable wars. The partition of Africa is nearly accomplished, but the partition of Asia, both in the Near and the Far East, is only beginning, and nobody can foretell into how many wars the partition will involve the chief military nations of Europe and America. We can foresee these wars, but we cannot discount their possible consequences. Leaving, therefore, this disturbing influence out of our account for the moment, let us see what aspects the coming revival would take in this country, if exterior causes did not disturb the national life for a few years to come.

It is certain, to begin with, that the moment a new agitation begins against the privileged classes, the great, all-dominating Land question will be put in the foreground. Already in 1886 this was one of the chief and deepest causes of discontent. True, the Marxist Social Democrats, plunged into their metaphysical schemes of economic evolution, did not understand the importance of this question. But the Socialists as a whole, especially those of the Socialist League, fully understood it, and therefore considered that the expropriation of the landowners, in the interest of the people, without compensation – this was especially insisted upon – was the first point to be obtained.

Many reasons have contributed since to give even a still greater importance to the Land question. The “unearned increment” has been growing lately at an enormous, scandalous rate, and every new step in “municipal Socialism” increases it in a still greater proportion. Besides the value of land under an intensive culture, which was exemplified in small portions in many parts of the country (Preston, Worthing, etc., etc.), was brought into prominence, and the facts were made widely known owing to the discussion of the last twenty years and to the Red and Yellow vans propaganda; while the working men in towns have become aware of the growing value of allotment lands, as well as lands bought, or intended to be bought, by both municipalities and co-operative associations. All these have shown to the working masses of Britain of what riches they are robbed by those who own the land, and who in order to maintain their political influence prevent the people of these islands from taking the best advantage of their land.

And then, the very Land law for Ireland, unsatisfactory though it is, renders it unavoidable now that similar claims on the land will be heard on behalf of the people

of Great Britain as well. Something must be done, and there is no better ground for a serious agitation than the Land question, which now acquires additional interest in connection with municipal enterprise, municipal dwellings, and municipal gardening for the unemployed.

Another important feature which we see coming in the next revival of Socialism is this. At the beginning of the last Socialist movement in this country, it was to an immense degree under the influence of German Social Democratic teachings. The English Socialists had got their Socialist education from the Germans. The Socialist League had been an attempt at emancipating the English movement from that German influence and of giving it a British character. But the chief spirit of the League, William Morris, never freed himself entirely from the influence of one of his teachers, and after a time returned under that influence once more.

“Will it not be the same in the next revival?” it may be asked. But we think it will not. German Social Democracy has shown so much during the last few years that it is nothing but the left wing of the middle-class Democratic movement, that it never will have again the authority which it had twenty years ago when it claimed to represent a synthesis of Democracy with Socialism. Everyone knows by this time that the 85 Social Democratic representatives in the German Parliament are even less offensive for the noblemen’s and the middle-class monopolies and privileges than an equal number of Liberals at Westminster was under Gladstone’s leadership, and incomparably less offensive than the British trade unions. The Krimmitschau strike, just terminated by a defeat of the weavers, has shown what a nice-looking but weak bubble this Social Democratic parliamentary party is: the labour hours in Germany are eleven, as in Russia, and the protection of the children remains what it was made by a law passed forty years ago, when there were no Social Democrats in Germany! Never was the predominant importance of trade unionism for everything relating to the protection of labour so strikingly demonstrated as it was this year in Germany.

On the other hand, never was the weakness of trade unionism alone so well demonstrated as it was demonstrated this year in this country. And this demonstration, too, will contribute – has contributed already – to explode the Social Democratic bubble.

“There is no difference,” the British working man was told, “between a Tory and a Liberal Government,” and under this pretext both the Social Democratic Federation and the Independent Labour Party, instead of abstaining from the elections as we did, played into the hands of the Tories. Consciously or not, the fact is that they helped them to get a majority which gave them full

powers for all the harm they have done: the destruction of the School Boards, free gifts to the landlords and the clergy and, finally, dagger-thrusts into the very heart of trade unionism by means of the Taff Vale and Denaby Main decisions.

These last have opened the eyes of the workers. They have seen whereto the game which their German-taught leaders had induced them to indulge in was leading them. And one may be sure that henceforward the mass of the British working men will not agree any more to play that game, the stupidity of which was, in our opinion, verging almost on crime.

It is thus evident that when the next revival of Socialism comes it will not be used any more to bring grist to the Tory mill, so as to disgust the working men with Socialism.

Nor will the British labourers trust – so we hope, at least – to the debilitating theories of the German Social Democrats.

They will not fold their hands in the expectation of a “historic process” which is supposed to destroy some day later on the capitalists. They will see that the number of capitalists and their force grow every day in this country. And they will know that “to keep their powder dry” is better than to trust to all sorts of middle-class professors. Force can only be met with force. Only slaves trust to a goddess that shall bring them freedom, while freemen take it themselves.

They will also see through the sophisms of that “pacific parliamentary revolution.” They will understand that the best fighter in Parliament is good only so long as there is the clamour of the crowd in the street to spur him on;

that bookish previsions are of little value; and that, as the land is needed by the people now, today, it must be taken now, leaving the discussion of “economic periods” to the bookworm tacticians. And they will see that as the movement for the socialisation of various necessities of life has begun already in the cities not in the Westminster talking boxes – so it must be continued. Gas, water, electricity; schooling; means of communication, motive power; coal mines for getting motive power, have already been municipalised. The municipalisation of all houses, not only of working men’s dwellings, must necessarily follow. Not only schooling, but also feeding of all children. If coal mines can be got by towns in order to get motive power – why not for supplying the inhabitants with fuel? Light, why not fuel? If Torquay has municipal dairies, why not municipal kitchen gardens, and no workhouses? If co-operative dairies are such a success all over the world, why not co-operative farming, co-operative horticulture, and so on?

In short, the spell has been broken. From beneath – not from above! From the village, the township – not from Westminster! From individual, local action (insurrectional and constructive) – not from party legislation, pacific and destructive of good! This is the teaching of the last few years, the lesson given to the patient crowd by the Upper Ten burglars.

The coming revival will have to take all these currents into consideration. And it will have to come to that necessary generalisation – *Expropriation*.

But how? Through Acts of Parliament? Through party legislation? No – through *Local Action*: peaceful, if peaceful it can be: and insurrectional if the nation cannot break otherwise the privileges and the monopolies bequeathed to it by its fathers.

Well, when these days come – and it is for you to hasten their coming – when a whole region, when great towns with their suburbs have got rid of their rulers, our work is marked out, it is necessary that all machinery be returned to the community, that social assets held by individuals be returned to its true master, everyone, so that each can have their full share of consumption, that production of all that is necessary and useful can continue, and that social life, far from being interrupted, can resume with the greatest energy. Without the gardens and fields that give us produce essential for life, without the granaries, the warehouses, the shops that contain the accumulated products of work, without the factories and workshops that supply the fabrics, the metalwork, the thousand objects of industry and craft, as well as the means of defence, without the railways and other means of communication that allow us to exchange our products with the free communes of the surrounding area and to combine our efforts for resistance and for attack, we are condemned in advance to perish...

– “Expropriation”, *Words of a Rebel*

On Revolution

Kropotkin's writings on Revolution take three main forms. First, his accounts of previous revolutions and the lessons to be drawn from them. These include the Great French Revolution, the Paris Commune of 1871 and, to a lesser extent, the 1848 Revolution. Second, his analysis and commentary of revolutionary situations of the time, not least the Russian Revolution of 1905 and its aftermath as well as the Bolshevik Regime under which he spent his last years. Third, as well as studying and learning from previous and current revolutionary situations, Kropotkin also sketched what he thought a social revolution should be like to be successful.

Undoubtedly, the Paris Commune was the most discussed in Kropotkin's writings, indeed *The Conquest of Bread* can be viewed as a contribution to what it should have done and expanded upon the critique presented in chapter on "The Commune of Paris" in *Words of a Rebel*. Here we include two ("The Paris Commune" and "Past and Future") of the many speeches and articles he wrote about 1871, neither of which have been reprinted since original publication. However, in spite of this reflection on specific revolts, it is important to remember that, for Kropotkin, the revolution was not an event but a process, as shown in "The Day After the Revolution". Thus talk of a "transition" period was mistaken as the revolution was a dynamic, changing transformation even if all the goals hoped for could not be implemented immediately or initially completely – expropriation and workers' control were neither the first acts of a revolution nor its final ones.

We also include "The Revolution's Capital" (perhaps better called "The Revolution's Resources"), which saw Kropotkin address the issue of what stocks a social revolution would inherent. In it he shows that those anarchists who thought that revolution would simply lay hold of ample stocks of goods were wrong, that capitalism simply did not work that way. To be fair to Kropotkin, in his writings on Expropriation (in *Words of a Rebel*, for example) he always noted the need to restart production as soon as possible and never denied the difficulties a revolution would face (whether economic or military). However, explicitly looking into this issue made him more interested in innovative agricultural and industrial techniques, so leading – eventually – to his famous book *Fields, Factories and Workshops* (1898).

Lastly, there is the pamphlet *Will the Revolution be Collectivist*, a reprint of an earlier article in *La Révolte* (25 June 1892) which stresses that it is the activity of anarchists – along with others – which would influence the outcome of the Revolution. This was confirmed in the negative sense in 1917, when the anarchists in Russia were too disorganised to significantly shape the direction of the revolution unlike in the Ukraine, and in the positive sense in 1936, when industry and land were expropriated in Spain and placed under workers' management.

More on this subject can be found in *Direct Struggle Against Capital*, which has sections on both actual revolutions as well as Kropotkin's writings on a hoped social revolution.

The Paris Commune

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist-Communism, April 1887

(A Speech delivered by P. Kropotkin at the Commemoration at South Place on the 17th of March, 1887)

Sixteen years have elapsed since the last serious attempt of the best representatives of the European *proletaires* – the workmen of Paris – to shake off the yoke under which they are labouring – and suffering.

Sixteen years! and already we are again on the eve of one of those great uprisings which periodically visit Europe – of the great social revolution which is looked at with so much hope by the workmen of all civilised nations, with so much fear by all those who know their wrongs.

Much has been written since the outbreak of the Paris Commune about the uselessness of like “unsuccessful, unprepared revolutions.” The theory-makers who fancy that revolutions are prescribed by a General Staff have condemned it. “What is the use of unsuccessful attempts?” they say, with a great display of would-be science. And yet, the workmen all over Europe and the United States have taken up the anniversary of the Paris Commune as their – the workmen’s – anniversary. Tonight and tomorrow there will not be a city all over West Europe and America which you may perceive on a medium-sized map where the workmen will not unite together to commemorate the uprising of the people of Paris. Even in Greece and in South America, at Cape Colony and in Australia, they will meet together under the red banner of the oppressed. And while the workmen of different nationalities are incited by the middle-class writers to seize one another by the throat for the greater glory and enrichment of their employers; while our middle-class rulers are scheming manslaughter for the spring on a scale unparalleled as yet in history, Frenchmen and Germans, Italians and Englishmen, Spaniards and Swedes will meet together, and their hearts will beat as one great heart – that of Humanity. Their wishes will be wishes for the wellbeing of all humanity – not of those only who grasp for themselves the fruits of the common human labour.

Whence comes this attraction exercised by the Paris Commune on the minds of all those who suffer and long for Equality and Freedom? If we go through the acts of

the Paris Commune, we find but little, nearly nothing, which might answer to any extent to the desires and longings of Socialists. The measures initiated by the Government of the Commune had no Socialist character. The Paris Commune did not even issue to the world one of those great appeals which might have moved men’s hearts, awakened their energies, shown the way towards a better future.

Why, then, this irresistible force of attraction which it exercises on the minds of men?

It is because popular movements are not judged by what they have achieved under given circumstances, but by the aspirations expressed in the movement. And the

aspirations which moved the Paris workmen to proclaim *their* Commune were those which still inspire the workmen all over the world. They were: the abolition of the oppression, economical and political, exercised by our present rulers.

For several months they had sustained a war, a siege, in Paris; and they had seen that even during so great a calamity as war, the bourgeois had remained what they are in time of peace: the same greedy people, having only one worship – that of profits – even when the workmen were starving. Even in a beleaguered city, where hundreds of thousands of people without work and earnings, often without a roof over their heads, were plunged in unheard-of misery, the middle-classes knew only one object: wealth and its enjoyment. There is a document – one of the most awful I ever saw – a testimonial of thanks to a fashionable restaurant-keeper in Paris, signed by the fine people of the upper ten thousand, among whom several members of the Academy of Sciences, to testify that during both sieges these worshippers of the stomach had never perceived that they were in a beleaguered city.

And that – in a city where the wives and children of the real defenders of the bastions were literally dying from want of food!

COMMUNE OF PARIS.

THE NINETEENTH ANNIVERSARY of the PROCLAMATION of the COMMUNE OF PARIS will be celebrated on

WEDNESDAY MARCH 19th, at 8 p.m.,

At South Place Institute,

SOUTH PLACE, FINSBURY, E.C.

(Close to Moorgate Street and Liverpool Street Stations)

The following Comrades will address the Meeting:—

JOHN TURNER, H. H. SPARLING, D. J. NICOLL, C. W. MOWBRAY,
WM. MORRIS, E. MALATESTA, PETER KROPOTKIN, R. B. CUNNINGHAME
GRAHAM, M.P., B. FEIGENBAUM, and EDWARD and ELEANOR MARX
AVELING.

Revolutionary Songs will be sung during the evening.

To overthrow the detestable state of things which permitted like abominations was the aim of the Paris workmen when, on this very night of the 17th of March, the bourgeois, who had lost their sleep since they knew that the Paris workmen were in possession of cannons – in a civilised country cannons are good only when they are ready to fire against the people – on this very night of the 17th of March the bourgeois government sent its artillery-men to seize the cannons of the workmen of the Montmartre hills. The working women perceived that; they raised the alarm; and in a few minutes it spread throughout the suburbs. Without waiting for any orders, the working women mixed with the artillery soldiers, retook possession of the cannons, and while the rich, the bourgeois Paris, was yet sleeping, the workmen were gathering around the Mansion House of Paris – the Hôtel de Ville.

One cry broke from a hundred thousand breasts – “La Commune.”

The Government fled away before this unanimous, spontaneous uprising. It abandoned Paris; and the darkness had not yet come over the 18th March before the city learned that it was free.

It was master of its own destinies.

A great principle was proclaimed.

In 1848, when the middle-class king, Louis Philippe, had been overthrown and left Paris in a hired cab, beneath the contempt of the great city, the first thing that the revolted workmen did was to nominate a Provisional Government for all France.

Now, a new principle was proclaimed. Paris said to the world that it did not pretend to govern France. The Paris workmen loudly announced that they should not wait until all France was ready for a social revolution, that they were willing to begin it within the walls of their own city. That each city, each village, was free to join the movement and to reconstitute those great federations of revolted communes which have played so immense a part in the history of civilisation in the twelfth century, as well as in starting the great Revolution of the last century.

But Paris did not pretend to give a government to France. Let each commune free itself first; then the freed communes will be brought to unite their efforts.

A great principle which has not died, notwithstanding the defeat of the Paris workmen. Nobody in France doubts that the next revolution, which we shall see in a few years, will be made to the cry: La Commune, the independent commune, as the starting point for the Social Revolution. Nobody doubts that at the next movement in France, Paris will proclaim its commune, Lyons will proclaim its commune, so also Marseilles, Bordeaux, the miners of Creusot, and so on.

There is no doubt now that what induced the Paris people to make their rush on the 18th March, 1871, was the desire of remodelling completely the existing economical conditions. “What is to be done?” they asked. And all this immense city was inspired with the desire of putting an end to the present execrable condition of the working-classes.

Eh bien, marchons de l’avant! “Let us go forward,” they said; not only these great sufferers of humanity who produce all riches and starve, but even they, the wealth-grabbers, many of them at least, were ready to make a new start, and to abandon their monopolies to save their lives.

But, following the old traditions, the workmen of Paris accepted, elected a Government.

Never were elections as free as these. Never were they more truly representative of the real mind of the people. All the best men in whom the oppressed had been accustomed to place their hopes, were elected. All the prominent democratic writers and popular public speakers were elected; and with the deepest conviction, I may say, that never, never in history, was a Parliament composed of so remarkable a set of thoroughly honest and just men, ready to sacrifice their lives for the cause of the people.

And yet these eighty men, even these men, were unable to do anything to realise the aspirations of those who had elected them.

Why? Because a deep revolution – an economical revolution – was necessary; and an economical revolution can be made only by the people itself, not by orders from above. Because, like all governments, this government was a compromise with the past.

They were short of food in the suburbs. No work, no employment, no wages, and no food! The house rents were unpaid and the proprietors of the houses exacted the rent, notwithstanding the general stagnation of trade. The People hoped that the Commune would reorganise labour, and give the possibility of an honest living to those who were willing to work. But the Government of the Commune could not do this. The workmen themselves ought to take possession of the houses, of the abandoned workshops. But they did not; and seeing that their Government did not so for them, they abandoned the Commune. No more than 15,000 men cared to defend the walls of Paris in April.

It is obvious that if the Commune could have held out against the besiegers for a longer time, the people would have perceived that its new rulers, however sincere and revolutionary, could not perform the great task of making an economical revolution for the workmen.

The old spirit of popular initiative would have been aroused in the end. And so it was, in fact, by the second half of May.

But then it was too late. The troops of Versailles were already closing their iron circle around the city. They approached the walls. When they entered them, and Paris learned of the terrible massacres which accompanied their advance, the men of the suburbs again left their houses, and seizing their arms, defended each barricade, each street of the suburbs, with the courage of despair.

Shall I relate the terrific, the base revenge by which the Bourgeoisie crowned its victory? – The carnage, the burning of heaps of corpses mingled with yet living wounded men?

Comrades, the time we are living in is most serious. For the last five hundred years Europe has witnessed at the end of each century a great revolution. And all we see around us leads us to infer that the end of this century will not be an exception to the rule.

In centuries past, the revolution which broke out in one country could remain limited to that country, and not spread its influence into neighbouring countries. But '48 has shown that it will be so no more. Now all countries are too closely connected with one another.

Let the Revolution break out in Germany or in France, in Italy or in Austria, it will find an echo in other countries. If France or Germany, overturning their Governments, undertake a violent and rapid rebuilding of their social institutions, all other countries of Europe and the United States will feel their influence. Railways,

telegraphs, trade, commerce, and intellectual intercourse, so closely connect the whole civilised world, that no disturbance can affect any one country without affecting the others at the same time. The workmen of all countries are united too closely by their common aspirations for it to be otherwise.

It will depend upon yourselves whether the coming movements be a mere disturbance, or a real transformation of the existing state of affairs.

Be sure there will be plenty of people who will endeavour to bring the movement to a standstill, who will undertake themselves to reform everything – and will be able to reform nothing.

But it will depend upon yourselves either to trust to these would-be saviours or to act for yourselves. Trust to nobody. Believe in yourselves, and realise immediately yourselves what you think best.

If you will be successful never forget that within 24 hours after the beginning of the movement, the workmen and workwomen and their children must see that it is the Revolution of the People. Within 24 hours they must know that there will be nobody who will experience a want of food; nobody compelled to sleep on London Bridge while there are plenty of palaces to lodge in.

But to realise that you must trust to nobody. Nobody will do as well for you as yourselves!

Rely upon your own initiative!

it will depend upon yourselves either to trust to these would-be saviours or to act for yourselves. Trust to nobody. Believe in yourselves, and realise immediately yourselves what you think best.

The Day after the Revolution

“Le Lendemain de la Révolution”, *La Révolte*, 31 March 1888

One of the main objections to anarchist ideas is this: it would not be possible for a nation to live in anarchy, as it would first have to defend itself against other powers united against it and also to fight the bourgeois who would surely try to regain authority in order to restore anew their domination. That to counter this situation it would be absolutely necessary to preserve the army and a centralising power which alone could carry out this task. A transition period, they say, must be definitely gone through because it alone can bring the possibility of anarchist ideas taking root.

If those who make these objections were willing to recognise what a social revolution could be, what it must be, they would see that their objection is groundless and that the transitional methods they preach

would have the effect of halting this revolution which they have the responsibility of making a success.

Given all the institutions, all the prejudices that the social revolution will have to demolish, it is quite obvious that it cannot be the work of two or three days of fighting followed by a simple transfer of power, as have been previous political revolutions. For us, the social revolution to be achieved takes the form of a long series of struggles, of continuous transformations that will last for a shorter or longer period of years, where the workers, defeated at times, victorious at others, will gradually succeed in overcoming all the prejudices, all the institutions that crush them and where the struggle, once begun, cannot end until, after having finally felled all obstacles, humanity will be able to evolve freely.

For us, this transitional period that those thirsty for governmentalism want at all costs to go through to justify the authority they claim to need to ensure the success of the revolution will be precisely this period of struggle that will have to be sustained from the day when ideas that have acquired enough strength will attempt to pass into the realm of facts. All the other transitional methods that are recommended to us are only a disguised way of clinging to this past that they pretend to fight, but that shows that they are fleeing with difficulty before the ideas of justice and freedom.

Indeed, it is quite obvious that if the revolution broke out in France, for example – we take France since we are there, but the revolution can just as easily breakout elsewhere – and it succeeded, the bourgeois of other countries would not delay in forcing their government to declare war, a war a hundred times more terrible than that declared by monarchist Europe against Republican France in 1789, and whatever energy and resources the revolutionaries might have at their disposal, they would soon succumb under the number of their adversaries whom fear would arouse on all sides.

You must be truly visionary to suppose that it would be enough to give ourselves a government to prevent the Holy Alliance of the bourgeois threatened with losing their privileges. This government could only be accepted if it renounced its revolutionary origin and used the forces it possessed to subdue those who brought it to power. This would inevitably happen, since every government is inevitably retrograde by the fact that it is the barrier that those of the present oppose to those of the future.

So, it is to draw a false conception of the social revolution to believe that it can prevail all at once; it is to draw a far greater one than to believe that it can be localised and above all – if this happened – to believe that it could triumph.

The social revolution can triumph only if its spreads throughout Europe. It will be able to prevent the alliance of the bourgeoisie only on the condition of

giving them each enough work at home to remove their desire of addressing what is going on with their neighbours. The workers of a nationality can triumph and emancipate themselves at home only if neighbouring workers emancipate themselves too. They will be able to rid themselves of their masters only if the masters of their neighbours cannot come and assist theirs. The international solidarity of all workers is one of the *prerequisites* for the triumph of the revolution. Such is the rigorous logic of anarchist ideas that this ideal union of the workers of all countries, that they pose in principle, that they recognise as truth, arises from the outset as a means of struggle as well as an ideal.

Therefore, the first work of anarchists, when a revolutionary movement breaks out somewhere, will have to be to seek to make others erupt further afield. Not by decrees that will subjugate those to whom they are addressed, but by preaching by example, by seeking to interest them from the beginning in the new state of affairs that will occur.

So, for example, if an attempt at realising anarchist-communism were tried in any great centre, from the beginning it would be necessary to seek to attract the workers of the surrounding countryside, by immediately sending them all the objects necessary for existence: furniture, clothing, agricultural implements, luxury goods as required and which exist in superfluous numbers in the stores of the big cities; you will not bring them to the revolution by contenting yourself with sending them proclamations which would not be followed by any action. But if, as well as telling them to revolt, the objects of which they lacked were sent to them, there would be no doubt that we would interest them in the revolution and that we might bring them to take part, because they would immediately find an improvement in their lot and it is then possible to make

Without a doubt, we would be quite ignorant of the laws of history if we imagined that, all of a sudden, an entire vast country could become our field of experiment. France, Europe, the world, will not become anarchists by a sudden transformation; but we know that on the one hand the insanity of governments, their ambitions, their wars, their bankruptcies, and on the other hand incessant propaganda of ideas will result in great ruptures of the equilibrium, that is to say revolutions.

– “Expropriation”, *Words of a Rebel*

them understand that their emancipation is possible only with that of the workers of the cities.

It is obvious that, considered from this point of view, the social revolution we are faced with is a long series of movements one following the other, with no other link between them than the goal to be attained. It may happen that this movement is suppressed in the city before the countryside has responded to the advances of the instigators of the movement and has risen to support them, but it could do so when the reactionaries try to take back from it what the revolutionaries have given it. Then, the example is contagious. These acts, moreover,

are accomplished only when the ideas are in the air and disseminated everywhere. With one movement strangled in one locality, ten others will respond the following day. Some will be completely defeated, others will obtain concessions, still others will arise which prevail and, from defeats to victories, the idea will continue its path until it will be established permanently. There cannot be a transitional period. The *Social Revolution* is a road to be travelled, to stop on the way would be the same as turning back. It can only halt when it has accomplished its journey and has reached the goal to be conquered: the free individual in a free humanity.

Past and Future

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist-Communism, April 1889

A Speech delivered by P. Kropotkin at South Place Chapel at the Commemoration of the Paris Commune.

We are commemorating to-day the eighteenth anniversary of the Paris Commune, and this number of eighteen years, elapsed since the last uprising of the Paris workers, has a great signification. Eighteen years of life is about the average life of the different governments which have succeeded each other in France since the beginning of the century, Napoleon Bonaparte ruled less than that. The Bourbons did not last more than fifteen Years: in 1830 they were swept away. Then the Orleanists ruled for eighteen years till 1848 sent them 'away, covered with general contempt. Then came the dark period of the Empire, which lasted nineteen years, and again it was swept away as soon as it reached that critical period of less than twenty years' life.

Now eighteen Years already have elapsed since the Commune was proclaimed in Paris, and when we examine the present system of government – the Third republic, or rather the *bourgeois* republic – we cannot but say that its years already are counted; it cannot drag on its existence for more than a very few years in any case. The system has been undermined, it has fallen so low in the public opinion that it cannot live. It is not merely against the men who now govern France that the wave of popular feeling is rising: it is against parliamentary rule altogether, against parliamentarism itself. There are countries, like France, where the vices of a system of government come to the front in the most prominent way, in the most striking forms. Remember how the royal power, the parliamentary monarchy of Louis Philippe and the Caesarism of Napoleon III appeared in France in such a manner as to display in the most abhorrent forms their inherent vices. So it has happened also with the parliamentary middle-class republic. In some odd eighteen years all the vices of the system have been brought to the front in such an obvious and revolting way, that France is now sick of that system, as it was sick of Caesarism in 1870, of

Parliamentary Monarchy in 1848, and of Absolute Monarchy in 1789.

Nobody believes any longer in France in the parliamentary republic; nobody trusts it, and that is why a man like Boulanger who has not one single idea, who represents no principle – nothing but himself – could acquire the importance he has acquired. That all reactionaries – monarchists, Bonapartists and financiers – gather around him is nothing to wonder at. Boulangism is the last attempt of the reactionaries of all descriptions to re-establish monarchy. Having nobody in their own houses to represent the past, the Orleanists and Bonapartists make use of Boulanger as of a battering-ram. And all the reactionaries gather around him. It is the richest classes in France which furnish him with the money he lavishes so freely.

But, you may say that there are also workers who support him. Yes, unhappily there are. Workers who know only that he preaches the dissolution of the present system and, without caring about what he means to put in its place, support him on that account. "Destroy what exists, whatever may come will be better than what is now." That is what they think while they vote for Boulanger. Nobody expects from him anything but to be the battering-ram.

And yet, even that kind of support given to him is most regrettable, because when the next revolution comes in France, it would be desirable to have no futile political struggle to meddle with it and to obstruct it. There should be the workers on the one side, the possessing classes on the other side, and the social economical problem in its purity between the two.

However, it is certain that even his agitation only helps to bring about the downfall of the present middle-class rule. If the reactionaries who gather around Boulanger succeed in their plans, the French people will seize the arms, and when the people of Paris is armed it acts. And its act will be the proclamation of the Commune.

Socialism in France has passed through three different periods. At its beginnings it was philosophical and religious. It tried to convince, and believed in the force of argument. Fourier, who for ten consecutive years went every day to a certain house, waiting for the millionaire who would come to help him to start his community, was a striking illustration of that belief in the force of argument and religious creed. But the millionaire did not come, while the exploitation of the working class was becoming worse and worse.

Then in 1848 the Socialists tried to introduce Equality and Liberty through the government: they expected that the republican government would organise labour. You know the result. When the middle classes saw that the workers were in earnest, and really meant to reorganise labour on Socialist principles-the revolution was drowned in blood.

For the third time the workers of Paris tried to get rid of the exploiters by means of the Commune. Of course the Commune did not even attempt so much as to realise those vague ideals which inspired the Paris workers. It lived only seventy days. But it is notorious that by the end of the Commune, it was decided to take possession, in the name of the Commune, of those factories which had been abandoned by their owners. And this first step undoubtedly would have led to the idea of considering all the factories as the common property of the city. They took possession of the houses abandoned by their owners, and it was loudly said that the empty apartments ought to be taken for those who still inhabited the slums; and if the Commune had lived it would have been led to take possession of all houses and to administer them as the common property of the Commune. And these two steps would have necessarily led them to consider the stocks of food as common property; nay, the first steps in that direction were already being made.

Now it is evident-it is almost a historical law-that the next Commune will begin where the preceding one ended. The workers of Paris know what an unsuccessful

revolt against middle-class rule would mean. One of the speakers who spoke before me has told you some of the horrors of the massacre which followed the fall of the Commune. But if any one were to take "La Semaine Sanglante" – a book in which Camille Pelletan has embodied the results of a most careful inquiry – read you a few of its pages to show what the bourgeois

repression was, you would listen but a very short time before you would break into the most violent rage against the exploiters. The French workers know these horrors, many are alive to tell them, and therefore be sure that when the next revolt comes, they will do all they can to secure victory for themselves.

They will act in such a way as not to have great numbers of the urban proletariat indifferent to the revolt; they will not forget the emancipation of their peasant-brothers. They will act so as to secure the land to the agricultural labourers. The Commune of 1871 did not meet with the support of the rural population, which was indeed rather hostile to the Paris workers. But

now, the misunderstanding will be removed. And that is not my personal opinion only. Listen to Zola who wrote that if the next Commune only proclaims the abolition of the land-taxes and the end of the military conscription, the French peasants will cry all over France "Vive, la Commune!"

The present condition of France shows that we shall not have long to wait for the next revolt, I should not be astonished at all if next year, instead of commemorating the past, we were engaged at this very same date in preparing the future. But I am sure that two or three more commemorations of the Commune will not have passed before some new great revolution occurs in France.

Moreover we may be sure that the next Paris Commune will not be so isolated as it was in 1871. At that time it was surrounded by German armies: the flower of the French working men had been taken to the battle-fields, and massacred for the glory of Napoleon III. Half of the French territory was occupied by German armies.

were we to wait for the Revolution to display an openly communist or indeed collectivist character right from its initial insurrections, that would be tantamount to throwing the idea of Revolution overboard once and for all. For that to be a possibility, it would require that a large majority be already in agreement upon effecting a communist change, which is generally not the case, since it is primarily the turns taken by a revolution that can draw the masses over to communism

– "Insurrections and Revolution",
Les Temps Nouveaux, 6 August 1910

And yet the Commune was proclaimed also at St. Etienne, Lyons, Marseilles and some smaller towns. It went over to Spain, and the Commune of Carthagena was even more revolutionary than the Commune of Paris. And people who know Vienna used to say at that time that if the Paris Commune had lived, Vienna might also have seen something like a Commune proclaimed.

We all begin to understand that if a great change is to be made in our present economical conditions, the start must be made with a small unit. We cannot expect that a whole nation of thirty or forty millions will come at once to Socialist opinions and be ready to begin a Socialist life. This would be contrary to all that history has taught us. History shows that intellectual development always spreads in some centres in advance of others. And therefore it would be the duty of a big centre like Paris, or like London, to begin the necessary reorganisation without waiting until the whole country was ready to make the same changes. It would be its duty to preach by example. Take for instance Switzerland. The Swiss did not wait till all Europe was converted to republicanism, they founded their small republics, and amidst the great monarchies of Europe this small place remained where freedom was to be found.

So it will probably be during the next movement. Paris will perhaps take the lead, and its example will be followed by Lyons, Marseilles, maybe Bordeaux, and so on. We do not believe that these Communes will make a full application of our Anarchist principles. But we do believe that while the revolution will be the result of all revolutionary parties, our ideas, our teachings also will have their effect. There surely will be less reliance upon authority, and very much more upon our own efforts.

We may be sure that as soon as separate groups of workers are able to alter the present bad system, they will try to do so. If they can take possession of a factory they will. And from these separate efforts will result the revolution, extending its sphere, co-ordinating and combining the separate acts.

But the fast work of every revolution ought to be to see that the people have food to eat immediately the movement begins. What is the use of making a revolution if several hundred thousand men, women, and children remain for months without bread and lodging? That would be no revolution at all. We can produce plenty of food for all, we can provide decent houses for everybody; and so, to provide the necessaries for those who are most in need of them, and then set to work to reproduce what will be consumed – that will be the duty of every revolution to come.

The Revolution's Capital

“La Capital de la Révolution”, *La Révolte: Organe Communiste-Anarchiste*, 7 March 1891

In speaking of “Our Riches” we have in mind the immense resources possessed by a civilised nation as a force of production, as the possibility of producing.¹ On arriving in the world, the child of a civilised nation finds himself in possession of an immense inheritance, accumulated by our ancestors, in the forms of cleared fields, roads, houses, public buildings, perfected machines and above all – science, technical knowledge. We are wealthy by what we can create in a short time throughout the world.

But there is something else that often preoccupies revolutionary thinkers. One wonders: What does a civilised country, for example France or England, have at a given moment in terms of food, clothing, the raw materials necessary for production? What, in a word, will the Revolution have to ensure comfort for all if work were to stop today?

On this, opinions differ widely. Some indulge in the rosiest of dreams. According to them, a people in revolution could live a year, two years, without working, just with what the nation already has in its stores. Others, on the contrary see things gloomily. According to them, the revolution would be starved

after eight or fifteen days, if everyone had enough to eat.

Admittedly, exact information is lacking. With all our statistical committees, we don't even know what a nation has. Every civilised nation always has a certain stock of wheat, flour, sugar, iron, coal, cotton and wool. But – how much this stock amounts to – we do not know. As the prices of any commodity rise as the supply runs out, trades are certainly keen to know the state of supplies. They gather private information, inquire as best they can from all around.

But generally, those who are best informed on this subject do not want to hand over their information to other trades, even less advertise it. They speculate themselves on rising and falling prices. So if you were to ask the gentlemen of the government how much wheat, iron or coal France has in stock at a given moment, they would be very embarrassed to answer. The gentlemen of the Municipal Council could not answer this question any better as far as Paris alone is concerned.

¹ A reference to the article “Nos richesses” (“Our Riches”) published in *La Révolte* between July 26 and August 31,

1890. It was later included as the first chapter of *La Conquête du Pain (The Conquest of Bread)* in 1892. (*Black Flag*)

So, after having searched, we only found some information, approximate and incomplete, for England. There are end-of-year reviews that no doubt have nothing in common with the question which interests us, but which aim to determine what influence the fluctuation in prices has had on the country's wealth, evaluated in money, compared to the beginning of each year: "Last year we had so many tonnes of iron in stock; they were worth so many millions of francs. This year, the stock of iron amounts to so many tonnes, which is equivalent to so many francs. Therefore, the national wealth has increased, or decreased, so much for iron; so much for wheat, and so on."

As can be seen, the authors of these reviews have no interest in either increasing or decreasing the numbers, and since they go to the best sources, their figures can be considered fairly accurate.

We give these figures, adding those of annual consumption, and reserve the right, however, to return to them if we find more accurate figures or if we find the same figures for France.

Suppose the revolution breaks out in England on January 1st – What will we find in stock to live on before the gaps begin to be filled by reorganised production?

As of 1st January 1889, it was estimated that there were 4,000,000 tonnes of cast iron in stock. The annual production appears to be about 8,000,000 tonnes in England. The annual consumption of cast iron to make iron, steel, etc. (exported in part) ranges from 6 to 7 million tonnes. This means that they would therefore have a guaranteed consumption for about seven months. After seven months, they would have no more cast iron if they did not fill the gaps.

In terms of copper they had in January 40,000 tonnes in stock, and 10,000 tonnes of tin. Consumption is unknown.

For coal, exact figures are lacking. It is known that the annual extraction of coal amounts to 150 to 170 million tonnes, of which around 25 million are exported, 30 million are used for domestic consumption, and the rest is burned by industry, railways and shipping. In ordinary times, it is estimated that there is in stock enough to meet all needs for about three months; but the

stock is subject to very great fluctuations. We would therefore have enough to keep industry and the railways going for three months. As for heating – today two-thirds of the English are forced to deny themselves a fire or to make considerable economies on coal, since average consumption is only 4 tonnes per family whereas with the heating system in full force, it would be necessary to triple it not to be cold. Well, suppose that nothing is exported, that they continue to be

parsimonious. They will have enough to heat themselves for three months.

In terms of cotton, they had 200,000 tonnes in stock. And as English factories consume 680,000 tonnes annually, they would have enough to run them for 3 ½

months. Let us add that the United Kingdom (England, Ireland and Scotland) only consumes a third of the cotton goods it produces. The rest is exported for bread and meat. But you must not believe that the English are so rich in cotton goods. If a fifth of the population squanders them, and another fifth has just enough, more than half the nation lacks cloth, clothing, sheets (in which cotton plays a large part). If England did not export cotton goods and cotton yarn, or if it only exported a fifth of what it produces, there would not be much to spare for the country. It would have just enough to live in hygienic conditions.

Taking all that into consideration, let's say that they have enough raw cotton in stock to produce enough cotton goods for the English for six months, eight months if you wish. At the end of this time, they will have no more.

And now the main thing, wheat. In terms of wheat, in January they had something like 10 million *quarters* in stock. That is nearly 3 million hectolitres. The annual consumption of wheat (flour included) amounts to just over 8 million hectolitres, of which 3 ½ million are imported from abroad. They would therefore have guaranteed consumption for a little less than four and a half months, if consumption remains what it is today (21 decalitres per inhabitant) – and for three months, if it is what it should be.

Finally, in terms of sugar, they had 250,000 tonnes in store. This would be close to 15 pounds per inhabitant and would ensure consumption for three or four months, as long as nothing was wasted.

To begin with, the sole fact of having laid hands on middle-class property implies the necessity of completely reorganising the whole of economic life in workshops, in dockyards, and in factories.

– "The Decentralization of Industry", *The Conquest of Bread*

These are some figures that already make it possible to judge the situation. It would be very interesting to know what they have in terms of meat. But the figures are lacking. It is highly probable, however, that they are not immensely abundant and that on this subject it would be necessary to make sure of the situation and anticipate the future well, before embarking upon a somewhat considerable consumption.

Let us also add that the general tendency of present-day commerce is to keep very few things in stock and to produce on a day-to-day basis.

“In recent years”, says the report from which we take the figures above, “there has been quite a revolution in the country’s supply methods. Trades adopted the one day to the next system. Instead of the middlemen who once held their stores full of goods, commercial agents have taken it upon themselves to supply the merchant as and when requested, week by week, according to the one day to the next system (*hand-to-mouth method*). The extension of the railways, telegraphs, parcel-post, etc., has expediated the means of communication, and today, instead of the large stocks of yesteryear, trade is carried on with small stocks which are renewed as they run out.”

It is therefore a general tendency today to live from one day to the next, and it was astonishing during the London dockers’ strike to see how quickly the socks which were believed to be inexhaustible had emptied after a few weeks. They were already running out of sugar, rice, pasta, etc.

Thus, all things considered, it may be said that if nothing is wasted, a civilised nation will have before it three or four months of assured existence if a social revolution produced a general cessation of work. This is true even for England which imports agricultural products from abroad for more than a third of its inhabitants.

In France it will be much the same if the revolution breaks out one spring. To have bread assured for a year, it would have to break out only in autumn. Then, with its harvest of 100 million hectolitres of wheat, France would have assured bread for fifteen months. And when you have bread – and audacity – you do the rest.

Recognising all as equals and renouncing the government of man by man is again expanding the freedom of the individual to a point which no other form of grouping has ever admitted, even as a dream. It becomes possible only after the first step has been taken: when man has his existence guaranteed and is not forced to sell his strength and intellect to whoever wants to give him a pittance to exploit him.

– “Communism and Anarchy”, *Modern Science and Anarchy*

As we can see, the old world, as it collapses, will not leave much in stock for the young revolution.

But it will leave it something much more important than stocks of wheat and cast iron. It will leave it the powerful, immense, magnificent means of filling these stocks with all the speed desired.

Speaking of agriculture, we have already seen the powerful means available to man. Let him only want it, and in three months he

will harvest under glass (“under greaseproof paper”, exclaimed the practical author of *Le Potager moderne*, M. [Vincent Alfred] Gressent!) all he needs to feed himself well on the products of the earth.

And if he lacks meat, he will use those methods of *producing* poultry by means of the artificial incubator already in operation almost everywhere, and above all in Egypt, where they give such surprising results.

This, or something else. Man, having three or four months before him, *will find* the means to produce food – necessities and luxuries – provided he thinks about it. Until now, he has rarely thought about it – political economy having always been the science of the enrichment of individuals in isolation. He will think about it the day he understands that there is only one science of economics – the study of needs and the means of satisfying them.

With time before him to rush at the most urgent issues, he will find what he needs to live. Only let him say the words of Danton: *Audacity, audacity and more audacity*.¹

Audacity! Not to cut off heads, which produced little or nothing. But the audacity to *dare to think* otherwise than his stupefiers have made him think to this day.

¹ Danton’s words to the Legislative Assembly in 1792 were *De l’audace, encore de l’audace, toujours de l’audace et la*

Patrie sera sauvée! – Audacity, more audacity, always audacity and the Fatherland will be saved! (Black Flag)

Will the Revolution be Collectivist?

La révolution sera-t-elle collectiviste?, Publications des *Les Temps nouveaux*, 1913¹

Very often we hear, from anarchists themselves, that Anarchy is a very distant ideal; that it has no chance of being realised in the near future; that probably the next revolution will be collectivist and that we will have to go through a workers State before reaching a communist society without a government.

This reasoning appears completely wrong to us. It contains a fundamental error of appreciation concerning the course of history in general and the role of the ideal in history.

The individual can be guided in his actions by a single ideal. But a society consists of millions of individuals, each with his own ideal, more or less conscious and settled; so that at a given moment we find in society the most varied conceptions – that of the reactionary, the Catholic, the monarchist, the admirer of serfdom, the “free contract” bourgeois, the socialist, the anarchist. However, *none* of these conceptions will be realised in their entirety precisely because of the variety of conceptions existing at a given moment and the new conceptions which arise long before any of the previous ones has attained its realisation in life.

Every step forward of society is the *outcome* of all the currents of ideas that exist at a given moment. And to affirm that society will realise such-and-such an ideal first, then another, is to misunderstand the whole course of history. Accomplished progress always bears the stamp of *all* the conceptions that exist in society in proportion to the energy of thought and action of each party. This is why the society that will arise from the Revolution will not be a Catholic society nor a bourgeois society (too many forces and the whole history of humanity are working to demolish these two kinds of society) nor a workers State by the very fact there exists an anarchist current of ideas and anarchists are sufficiently powerful as a force of action and as a force of initiative.

Indeed, look at history. The Republicans of 1793 past dreamt of a Republic built on the model of the republics of antiquity. Their dream of a universal republic and to make this new Rome or Sparta triumph in France was killed in the snows of the Alps, on the plains of Belgium, Italy and Germany.

Did they achieve this Republic? No! Not only did the old regime, bearing down on them with its full weight, pull them back. But *new* ideas have pushed society forwards. And when their dream of the universal Republic is one day realised, this Republic will be more *socialist* than anything they dared to dream and more *anarchist* than anything Diderot dared to conceive of in his writings. It will no longer be a Republic: it will be a union of more or less anarchist peoples.

Why? Because before the republicans had attained their ideal of the egalitarian republic (of citizens *equal* before the law, *free* and tied by bonds of *fraternity*), new conceptions, almost imperceptible before 1789, arose and grew. Because this very ideal of freedom, equality and fraternity is unrealisable as long as there is economic servitude and misery, as long as there are republics – States – necessarily driven to rivalries, to divisions within and outwith.

Because the ideal of the Republicans of 1793 was but a small part of the ideal of Equality and Freedom which re-emerges today under the name of Anarchy.

Or take the communists of the thirties and forties of the nineteenth century.

Their ideal was Christian communism, governed by a hierarchy of elders and scholars. This ideal had an immense impact. But this communism was not realised – *and will never again be achieved*. The ideal was false, incomplete, obsolete. And when communism begins to develop in the coming revolution, it will no longer be Christian nor Statist. It will be a libertarian communism at the very least, based not on the gospel, not on hierarchical submission, but on the understanding of the individual's needs for freedom. It will be more or less anarchist for the simple reason that as the current of ideas expressed by Louis Blanc worked to create a Jacobin State with socialist tendencies – new currents of anarchist ideas were already emerging – currents whose spokesmen were Godwin, Proudhon, Bakunin, Coeurderoy and even Max Stirner.

And it will be the same for the ideal of the Workers State of the social-democrats. *This idea can no longer be achieved: it is already outdated.*

The ideal was born of Jacobinism. It inherited from the Jacobins its confidence in the governmental principle. It still believes in representative government. It still

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Pierre KROPOTKINE

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¹ Originally published: “La révolution sera-t-elle collectiviste?”, *La Révolte*, 25 June 1892 (*Black Flag*)

believes in the centralisation of the various functions of human life in the hands of a government.

But long before this ideal came close to its practical realisation, a conception of society – the anarchist conception – appeared, proclaimed itself and grew. A conception which sums up a popular distrust of government, which awakens individual initiative and proclaims this principle which had become more and more evident: “No free society without free individuals” and this other principle proclaimed throughout our century: “Temporary free agreement as the basis of any organisation or grouping.”

And whatever society may emerge from the European Revolution, it will no longer be republican in the sense of 1793, it will no longer be communist in the sense of 1848, and it will no longer be a Workers State in the sense of social democracy.

The number of anarchists is always increasing. And even today social-democracy is obliged to reckon with them. The dissemination of anarchist ideas is made not only by the action of anarchists but – moreover – independently of our action. Examples – the anarchist philosophy of Guyau, the philosophy of the history by Tolstoy, and the anarchist ideas we encounter every day in literature and of which the Supplement of *La Révolte* and *Les Temps Nouveaux* is a living testimony.

Finally the effect of the anarchist conception on the ideal of social democracy is evident; and this effect depends only in part on our propaganda; it mainly results from the anarchist tendencies which appear in society of which we are only the spokesmen.

Let us recall only the rigidly Jacobin centralising ideal of the social-democrats before the Paris Commune. At that time it was the anarchists who were talking about the possibility of the independent Commune, of the communalisation of wealth, of independent, internationally organised trades unions. Well, those points are now accepted by the social-democrats themselves. Today the communalisation of the means of production – not nationalisation – is acknowledged and politicians can be seen seriously discussing the issue of municipalising the London docks. “Public services,” the other idea which the anarchists previously had to sustain so many battles against the centralising Jacobins in the Congresses of the International, today it makes the possibilists pale.

Or else, take the general strike for which we were treated as crazy and anti-militarism for which we were treated like criminals by social democracy...

What is today for us ancient history and which evokes in us no more than a dreamy smile like an old faded flower found in an old book – makes up the bulk of the current programmes of social democracy, so much so that it can be said without exaggeration that *all* the progress of ideas which has been accomplished by social-democracy during the last twenty years has been merely to collect the ideas which anarchy dropped on its way, as it was still growing. Only re-read the Jura

Collectivism, as we know, does not abolish wages, though it introduces considerable modifications into the existing order of things. It only substitutes the State, that is to say, Representative Government, national or local, for the individual employer of labour. Under Collectivism it is the representatives of the nation, or of the district, and their deputies and officials who are to have the control of industry. It is they who reserve to themselves the right of employing the surplus of production

– “Food”, *The Conquest of Bread*

[Federation] reports on public services, *Idées sur l'organisation sociale* [*Ideas on Social Organisation* by James Guillaume], etc. for which the learned scholars of socialism treated the “Bakuninists” as enraged madmen. It is from these sources that social-democracy drinks at this moment.

Thus Anarchy has *already* changed the ideal of the social-democrats. It changes it every day. It will change it again during the Revolution. And whatever comes out of the Revolution – *it will no longer be the Workers' State of the collectivists*. It will be something else – a result of our efforts, combined with those of all socialists.

And this outcome will be all the more anarchist as the anarchists develop more energy – more force, as they say in mechanics – in *their* direction. Plain and simple, the more they put individual and collective, mental and muscular energy, will and commitment at the service of *their* ideal; plain and simple, the less they seek compromise, the more clearly they affirm by word and their life the communist ideal and the anarchist ideal – will the *outcome* all the more tilt towards Communism, towards Anarchy.

On Other Libertarians

Kropotkin, as would be expected given his prominent place in the movement, met other leading libertarian thinkers and activists.

One such figure was the English socialist William Morris with whom he worked during the latter's anti-parliamentary period with the Socialist League. While Morris never proclaimed himself an anarchist, indeed sometimes going out his way to stress he was not one, his socialism was profoundly libertarian both in aims and in strategy (his arguments for socialist anti-parliamentary action reflects the anarchist case made from Bakunin onwards). Unsurprisingly, two of the most libertarian of British socialists – pre-war Syndicalist Tom Mann and Guild Socialist G.D.H. Cole – were influenced by him. So as well as being a friend to Kropotkin, he was also a comrade who shared many of the same ideas and aspirations, although Kropotkin had little time for Morris' opposition to machines and industry.

One person he never met was Michael Bakunin. As he recounted in *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*, while visiting the Jura Federation in Switzerland during 1872, he did not take the opportunity to visit his fellow Russian revolutionary. However, he considered himself as a collectivist, a revolutionary anarchist, and on his return to Russia sought to orientate the growing Populist movement towards the working masses of both town and village. He continued in this vein during his long exile in Western Europe. Kropotkin's debt to Bakunin can be seen in his all his writings, particularly in his arguments for anarchist involvement in the labour movement. Yet Kropotkin rarely mentioned Bakunin – beyond his accounts of the history of anarchism, such as in *Modern Science and Anarchy* – so it is useful to reprint his thoughts on the anniversary of his death. Also of note is his article marking the 100th anniversary of Bakunin's birth, published in *Freedom* and reprinted in *Direct Struggle Against Capital*.

Finally, we include Kropotkin's reminiscence of meeting James Guillaume, written for the French syndicalist journal *La Vie ouvrière* for its issue marking Guillaume's 70th birthday. It expands upon Kropotkin's account in his *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* and reiterates what drew him to the Federalist-wing of the International, so starting a lifetime of anarchist activism and writing. Guillaume was a close associate of Bakunin, a direct link between Kropotkin and his fellow Russian revolutionary. Kropotkin's recollections help us understand why – as he later recalled – “after a week's stay with the watchmakers [of the Jura], my views upon socialism were settled. I was an anarchist.”

After my visits to the manufactories I took a liking to strong and perfect machinery... In our present factories, machinery work is killing for the worker, because he becomes a lifelong servant to a given machine, and never is anything else. But this is a matter of bad organization... Overwork and lifelong monotony are equally bad whether the work is done with the hand, with plain tools, or with a machine... I think that William Morris's hatred of machines only proved that the conception of the machine's power and gracefulness was missing in his great poetical genius. – *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*

In Memory of William Morris

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist-Communism, November 1896

William Morris was such a grand figure in the Socialist movement, and he occupied in it such a unique position, that I am afraid not to be able to do full justice to his memory in the few lines which I can write now, in my present state of health.

As a poet, he stood quite alone in modern poetry. Amidst the whining and morbid poets of our own time, who are plunged into self-analysis and self-complaint, and are utterly devoid of energy for struggle, he was

almost the only poet of the joys of life – the joys which man finds in the conquest of freedom, in the full exercise of all his powers, in work – the work of his hands and his brain. No modern poet has been known to inspire men with a like love of liberty, and labour with the like vigour, like hope and trust in human nature, like confidence in the happiness that men can find in conquering full freedom and freely associating with their equals. A true poet of the Norse Vikings, of the free labourers, of free men.

These same elements he brought into the Socialist movement.

When he joined it, he, like all really powerful men, did not seek in it the position of a wire-puller or a leader. Not even that of a teacher. He simply undertook to express what the masses think and what they vaguely aspire to. He joined the ranks, and brought with him his hatred of oppression in all possible forms, and his love of equality and freedom – which he understood in its broadest sense.

This is why, when he undertook to write his own romance of the future – “News from Nowhere” – he produced perhaps the most thoroughly and deeply Anarchistic conception of future society that has ever been written. As he combined in himself the broad view of the thinker with a wonderful personification of the good practical sense of *collective* thought (the mood of thought of the masses when they occasionally, in revolutionary times, set free to work) – his ideal society is undoubtedly the one which is most free of all our State and monastic traditions; the most imbued with the feelings of equality and humanitarian love; the most

spontaneously glowing out of a spirit of free understanding.

Two tendencies struggle in present society. On the one side, the tradition of the centralised State of imperial Rome and of the Church, built up on the same plan – the tradition of slavery, submission, oppression, military and canonic discipline; and, on the other side, the tradition of *the masses* who endeavoured to build up their society outside the State – the tradition of the

customary law, as opposed to Roman law; of the free guilds and fraternities; of the free cities revolted against the bishop and the king; of the artisans and peasants revolted against Church and Empire. Morris entirely and unreservedly belonged to this second tradition. He was the bearer of that Scandinavian, Celtic, Teutonic, Slavonic spirit which for the last ten years has struggled against the Roman tradition. And this is why he was so little understood by all the unconscious followers of the Church-and-State tradition.

For the last few years of his life, Morris had abandoned the Socialist movement, and he frankly explained his reasons in a lecture which he delivered for the Anarchists at Grafton Hall in 1893. If the movement had gone on developing and bringing England to a Social Revolution, Morris undoubtedly would have gone

under the red flag as far as the masses would have carried it. But the endurance of the workers, who patiently support any amount of capitalist oppression, deeply affected him.

Moreover, Morris, who would have gone any way with the *masses*, could not go with *parties*; and when the Socialist movement in England became a party warfare, with all its wire-pulling and petty ambitions, which he hated so deeply, he did as Garibaldi did after he felt wounded in the fight between his Italian volunteers and the Italian royal troops. He retired to his Caprera.

But the love of the masses has followed him in his retreat; and the deep traces of his activity remain with us. If the Socialist movement in England did not take that authoritarian and functionarist character which it took in Germany, Morris's influence was immense to prevent that disaster; and this influence will be felt more and more in proportion as his Socialist writings and his writings altogether are read more and more by the masses of Socialist workers.

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Bakunin

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist-Communism, June-July 1905

Written for the Bakunin Anniversary Number of The Yiddish "Workers' Friend"

Old Blanqui used to say that the influence of events is better measured by their indirect consequences than by the direct ones – the former being always more important than the latter.

Speaking of Bakunin, we also must measure his influence, not so much by what he has done personally, as by the influence he exercised upon those who stood round him – on their thoughts and their activities.

His literary productions were not many. *The Idea of the State and Anarchism*, *The Historical Development of the International Working Men's Association*, *God and the State* – these are the three small books he wrote. The remainder – *The Knouto-Germanic Empire*, *Letters to a Frenchman on the Present Crisis*, *Theological Politics and Mazzini*, *The Bears of Bern*, and so on – all these were pamphlets which he wrote to answer some question of the day, or letters which he began to write to comrades, and which attained the size of a pamphlet. Even the above-named books had the same origin.

Bakunin sat down to write a letter on a question of the moment. But his letter soon became a pamphlet, and the pamphlet a book, because with his deep conception of the philosophy of history, and his immense stock of information about contemporary events, he had so much to say that the pages were rapidly filled up.

If we only think of what he and his friends – and his friends were Herzen, Ogareff, Mazzini, Ledru Rollin, and all the best men of action of that revolutionary period of the forties – had thought over the dreams they had lived through, and felt during those years of hope which preceded 1848, and of despair which followed it – if we only remember what a period they had lived

through, we understand at once how thoughts, images, facts, and arguments, borrowed from the knowledge of real life, must have impressed themselves on Bakunin's mind. We see why his generalisations in the philosophy of history were so richly intermingled with facts and thoughts taken from contemporary reality.

It must be noted, however, that every pamphlet by Bakunin marked a turning point in the history of

revolutionary thought in Europe. His speech at the Congress of Peace and Liberty League was a challenge thrown out to all the Radicals of Europe. Bakunin declared that the Radicalism of 1848 had had its day, and that a new era – the era of Labour Socialism – had come. That by the side of the question of Political Liberty there was the question of Economical Independence, the question of property rights, and that this would be henceforth the dominating factor in European history.

His pamphlet addressed to the Mazzinians announced the end of the period of conspiracies for national independence and the beginning of the Social Revolution,

as also the end of the sentimental Christian Socialism, and the beginning of the atheistic, realistic Communism. And his famous letter to Herzen about the International and Bazaroff's realism had the same significance for Russia as the former had for Italy.

The Bears of Bern was a parting word said to the Swiss Philistine democratism, while his *Letters to a Frenchman*, written during the war of 1870-71, were a litany to the radicalism of Gambetta, and an appeal for the new era which soon found its expression in the Paris Commune – this uprising casting aside the Louis Blanc idea of State Socialism and proclaiming the new idea of

As to MIKHAIL BAKUNIN.... his work belongs chiefly to the International Working Men's Association... if advanced thought in Russia has always remained true to the cause of the different nationalities... oppressed by Russian czardom, or by Austria, it owes this to a very great extent to Ogaryoff and Bakunin. In the international labour movement Bakunin became the soul of the left wing of the great Working Men's Association, and he was the founder of modern Anarchism, or anti-State Socialism, of which he laid down the foundations upon his wide historical and philosophical knowledge.

– Russian Literature: Ideals and Realities

the Communist Commune. The Commune, rising for the defence of its territory, and beginning the social revolution within its own walls – this was what he recommended as the means for repulsing the German invasion.

The *Knouto-German Empire* was a prophetic vision of the old revolutionist who saw perfectly well, since then (1871), the reaction which would pervade Europe for the next thirty or forty years, as a consequence of the triumph of Bismarck's military state, and at the same time of the German State Socialism of which the godfather had been this same Bismarck patronising Lassalle. This pamphlet also marked a completely new tendency of modern thought in Latin countries towards No-State-Communism, or Anarchism.

And finally, *The Idea of the State and Anarchism*, *The Historical Development of the International*, and *God and the State*, albeit their combative pamphlet form (which they owe to their having been written for the needs of the moment), contain for the thinking reader more practical thought and more philosophical comprehension of history than heaps of university and State-Socialist treatises, in which the absence of deeply thought ideas is concealed under foggy dialectics.

They contain no ready-made recipes for political cooking. Those who expect to find in a book the solution of all their doubts, without having to pass themselves through the process of thinking, will not find that in Bakunin's works. But if you are capable of thinking for yourself, if you are accustomed to look upon a book as upon material to be thought over independently – as a talk with an intelligent man who wakes up your own intellect – then the hot, sometimes disorderly, and sometimes luminous and brilliant generalisation of Bakunin will help you more in your revolutionary development than all the above-mentioned treatises.

However, the main force of Bakunin was not in his writings. It was in his personal influence. He made Byelinsky¹ what he became for Russia – the type of the unflinching Socialist, Revolutionist, and Nihilist, which was personified later on in our admirable youth of the seventies. It was Bakunin who provoked the new birth of Byelinsky. "You are my intellectual father," he wrote to Bakunin.

At Paris in 1847, and in Germany in 1848, his influence upon all men of mark of his time was immense. Bernard Shaw (in his *Perfect Wagnerite*) tells in a jocular way that in Siegfried, who knew no fear and carried away Brunhild by the force of his fearless love, Wagner impersonated Bakunin, by whose side he had stood during the Dresden Revolution. Most probably it was

not Bakunin personally, but the daring Revolutionist altogether who was Wagner's prototype of Siegfried, but in his creation Wagner surely was deeply impressed by his fearless friend. And not only on Wagner, but also on George Sand, on Herzen and Ogaroff, and on all the circle of French Socialists who were then in Paris, as well as on Young Germany and Young Italy, and even on the young Swedes, Bakunin exercised in his time a most powerful influence. "It was impossible to approach him and not be infected by his revolutionary spirit – not to be carried away by his powerful revolutionary argumentation." So his contemporaries spoke of him.

He was the same when, in 1862, he once more rejoined his friends in London, after his escape from Siberia, and immediately on his return he began organising the revolutionary forces.

It is possible that, as his friend Herzen reproached him after the failure of the Polish uprising, he often placed more hope in those who approached him than they deserved. But was not the same thing said about Mazzini and every other sincere Revolutionist? This is perhaps why he exercised such a magical influence, because *he believed in man*, believed that the great cause of which he made him a partner would arouse in the new-comer all that was best in him. And so it did. Under Bakunin's influence the man gave to the Revolution all the best that he was capable of. He appealed to the higher qualities of man; and if some of those whom he tried to inspire did not fully answer to his appeal, the rampant politician traders in Socialism who swarmed in the ranks of his Marxist adversaries never succeeded in gaining his confidence.

Herzen has told in a humorous way how Bakunin easily accepted men and gave them commissions in the East. But was it so? At any rate, those men whom Bakunin grouped in his famous Alliance – Varlin, Elisée Reclus, Cafiero, Malatesta, Fanelli (his emissary to Spain), James Guillaume, Schwitzgubel, and so on, and so on – were the best men whom the Latin races had produced at that moment. I should say, on the contrary, that Bakunin's judgement of men was wonderfully good. Read, for instance, what he wrote about Netchaieff, whose good and bad features he had so wonderfully indicated. Who could add anything to his character sketch?

But there was something else in his influence upon men. What is most striking is the extremely high moral level of those men who were grouped round him in Western Europe as his intimate friends. I did not know Bakunin personally, but I have known very intimately most of those who worked with him in the International Working Men's Association, and whom Marx and

¹ Byelinsky was the great Russian critic in the forties. Towards the end of his life he became Communist and Revolutionist, and only his death prevented his arrest.

Engels and Liebknecht persecuted with their most vituperant hatred. And I maintain the above in the face of those who hated them so bitterly. History, I am sure, will confirm this appreciation of mine. The Social Revolution has certainly had amongst them quite a phalanx of its best supporters and promoters.

As to the activity of Bakunin within the International Working Men's Association, I have briefly sketched it in my "Memoirs". At a time when the crushing defeat of France, the murder of 35,000 Paris working men after the fall of the Commune, and the triumph of the German Empire had opened a new period of reaction, which lasts till now, and when Marx and his friends endeavoured by means of all sorts of intrigues to transform the International Association, created for the purposes of a *direct struggle against capitalism*, into an arm of parliamentary politics in the hands of those workers who were going to pass over to the Philistine camp – at such a time the Federalist federations of the

International, inspired by Bakunin, become the only stronghold against all European reaction.

To Bakunin and his friends we owe thus in a great degree that in Latin lands the revolutionary spirit, which was widely spread by the International within the *labour* masses of these countries, was maintained, and was thus enabled to prevent the backward movement that began amidst the once Radical middle classes, from carrying with it the working men as well.

Amidst these working men grew up then the young power which, abandoned soon by the once revolutionary Radicals, took up the struggle for freedom in Europe and developed gradually into Communist Anarchism with its ideal of economical and political equality, and its bold negation of the exploiting of man by Capital and State alike.

P. Kropotkin
June, 1905

A Reminiscence [of James Guillaume]

“Un souvenir”, *La Vie ouvrière : revue bi-mensuelle*, 20 February 1914

I met James Guillaume in 1872. Disgusted with what I had seen in the Romande Federation in Geneva, where the Marxists, led by the Russian [Nikolai] Utin, were working to divert a great workers' movement which was grouped around the Temple Unique onto the parliamentary path – disgusted to see this, I went to find the “Bakuninist” Joukovsky and asked him to give me some recommendation for the Jura Federation. He sent me to James Guillaume in Neuchâtel.

There, I found myself in a completely different environment.

In Geneva, they were small committees of leaders who plotted in their secret meetings and spoke in the name of the workers. Thus, at the moment when a general strike was being prepared amongst the building workers, the leaders of the Temple Unique were working to prevent it, to smother it. – “A strike, you understand,” Utin told me, “would compromise Amberny's candidacy.” Now, Amberny was a radical lawyer, for whom the interests of the building workers offered as little interest as last winter's snow; but with him, they told me, they got their foot in the door! It was therefore necessary to sacrifice the interests of the workers.

In Neuchâtel, it was quite different. You found James Guillaume – the one who was called at the Temple Unique “the leader of the Jura Federation” – in a smock, working as a supervisor in a printing press. That day he was correcting the last proofs of a new little newspaper which was to be published by that printing press, and writing on strips the addresses of the people to whom the newspaper was to be sent. – “Today, I won't have an hour or half-an-hour off until eleven o'clock

tonight,” he said, showing his work. “And it will be the same for three days.”

I offered to write down the addresses, so that he could give me an hour of discussion. But it was not possible. He wrote them from memory, or else by taking them from a sheet covered with cabalistic signs: “G. m. b S., N. f r. C., R. N.”, etc., which meant for those trained in watchmaking: Giraud, assembler of boxes, Sonvilliers; Nicollet, spring maker, Chaux-de-Fonds; Albert Robert, Neuchâtel”, and so on. What could an outsider understand?

“And this afternoon,” added Guillaume, “we will have to fold the newspaper and package it.”

A solution presented itself. I hastened to grab it.

“That, for example, I can do as well as you. I'll do it.”

And here I am with a stack of newspapers, the wrappings and the glue pot. Beside me, a comrade doing the typesetting, and Guillaume who wrote on the wrapping, exchanging a few remarks or a joke with the typesetters from time to time.

What a contrast! I could not believe it.

That evening we had a lively conversation with Guillaume, which familiarised me with the international movement in Europe. And the next day, I went “into the mountains” of the Bernese Jura, to Sonvilliers and Saint-Imier, where I found the same spirit of equality, the same independence, the same fraternity.

It was a hive, where new ideas were being developed which would one day allow the proletarians to build a new society.

I did not return to the West until four years later, in 1876.

The first letter I wrote when I landed in England was to James Guillaume. It was on the eve of the Bern Congress, during which, Guillaume wrote to me, it was hoped to establish, on the still fresh grave of Bakunin, an agreement, or at least a *modus vivendi*, between the Federalist International and the German Social-Democrats. Guillaume thought it possible, he worked hard on it. Vain illusions, as we know.

I found myself in the Jura a few months later, in Neuchâtel and in Chaux-de-Fonds, and I stayed there all winter, in continuous contact with Guillaume, and then I formed a deep friendship with him.

He is sometimes portrayed as a fanatic – stern, abrupt, obstinate. Nothing could be more fanciful. When it is necessary to work for the cause, he is a serious toiler, hard working, like all good workers. When it is necessary to answer an adversary, he is a sharp polemicist. But when it comes to seriously discussing the course of action to be taken, or some step to take, one could not be more conciliatory, more ready to seek a practical, acceptable solution, provided that the essential principles remain intact. His deep sincerity has always struck even his adversaries. It shone in his eyes.

But above all he had to be seen in an informal evening amongst the workers. Always ready to respond with a joke, to sing one of those revolutionary songs in which he excelled, or to discuss with a comrade a question of principle or of action. You had to see him there to understand the egalitarian, deeply popular spirit that drove him.

Like Bakunin, like Elisée Reclus, like Errico Malatesta, James Guillaume had come to the labour movement – not to lead it, but to offer it his skills, his knowledge, his enthusiasm. And he thereby contributed, for his part, to giving it the egalitarian character of mutual relations and the spirit of anti-authoritarian aspirations which is absolutely lacking in political movements, from the

Girondins of 1792 to the social-democratic Girondins of the twentieth century.

I write these lines, and I know that a socialist-politician reader will not understand why I attribute so much importance to this “populist” trait.

“Are we not all democrats?”, he will ask.

Well, there is something infinitely more important that “democracy” in this “populist” character which the International took on in the Latin countries, especially after the Congress of Ghent in 1872, and which Guillaume and his Latin friends personified so well.¹ It is *the awakening of the proletarian spirit*.

For the Social Revolution to succeed, it *will have to create new forms of social life*, and this creative force can only come to it from the popular masses – from those who themselves forge and plough, transform with their arms raw materials and constitute the hive of the producers.

It cannot come from books. Books are the past. They can sometimes arouse the spirit of criticism and of revolt. But they are worthless for foretelling the future. For that, we must ask *life itself* for suggestions. The best books just relive the past. Fourier’s phalanx, the collectivist State of Vidal, Pecqueur and the Marxists is still Plato’s *Republic*, without even excluding slavery, which they revive in the form of wage-labour. And what is good in Fourier is still taken from the popular surge of Year II of the Republic, when the French people wanted to socialise the exchange of products necessary for life.

“But you are a long way from our friend, James Guillaume!” you will tell me. I do not believe that. But if so, he will forgive me. To say that he was, by all his nature, the turn of his mind, his hatred of all authority, one of those who helped to awaken the constructive genius of the working masses, he knows that I could not give better praise to a friend.

Peter Kropotkin

The theoretical aspects of anarchism, as they were then beginning to be expressed in the Jura Federation, especially by Bakunin; the criticisms of state socialism — the fear of an economic despotism, far more dangerous than the merely political despotism — which I heard formulated there; and the revolutionary character of the agitation, appealed strongly to my mind. But the egalitarian relations which I found in the Jura Mountains, the independence of thought and expression which I saw developing in the workers, and their unlimited devotion to the cause appealed far more strongly to my feelings; and when I came away from the mountains, after a week’s stay with the watchmakers, my views upon socialism were settled. I was an anarchist.

– *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*

¹ Kropotkin seems to have got his congresses mixed up here. The 1872 Congress of the Federalist International took place at St. Imier while there was a World Socialist Congress held in Ghent in 1877, which a number of anarchists attended. He

is presumably referring to the former Congress, given its significant place in the history of revolutionary anarchism. (*Black Flag*)

On Eugenics

Eugenics sought to improve the quality of a human population by various methods. While now firmly associated with the right, in the first decades of the twentieth century it had support in many sectors of society including some on the left. Its advocates generally argued that various types or groups of people (usually judged to be inferior) had to be discouraged or stopped from having children while others (judged as having superior traits) should be encouraged to. In bourgeois circles, this goal was pursued by authoritarian means (such as forced sterilisation of criminals, the poor and others deemed “unfit” and “degenerate”) and was applied in various countries before it became completely discredited after the Nazi regime applied it.

Kropotkin was invited to the 1912 Eugenics Conference in London. This, undoubtedly, reflected his standing as a scientist who, in *Mutual Aid* (1902), had applied Darwinian ideas to human society just as advocates of eugenics falsely thought they did. Unsurprisingly, he took the opportunity to critique the bourgeois assumptions of the eugenics mainstream as shown by his contribution which was written for *Freedom* (it was also published in *Mother Earth*). We have included the version which appeared in volume 2 of the Conference’s official proceedings. We also include a longer, two part article, from *Les Temps Nouveaux*, in which Kropotkin addresses the arguments of the advocates of Eugenics in detail as well as their underlying class prejudices. We also include a short summation of his contribution to another debate.

Like Darwin, Kropotkin stressed the importance of the environment in shaping individuals of a species. Improve the surroundings, he rightly argued, then you would improve both species and individuals, with no need for authoritarianism so beloved of bourgeois elitists – who also fail to wonder who were the “fittest”, those who labour to produce the world’s wealth or those who live off them.

It is interesting to note that the Spanish Anarchist movement took a keen interest in eugenics and the famous 1936 CNT resolution on Libertarian Communism included this passage:

Libertarian communism proclaims free love regulated only by the wishes of the man and the woman, with offspring being assured of the care of the collectivity and the latter being spared human aberrations through the application of eugenic-biological principles.

Likewise, good sex education at school will lead to selective breeding according to the aims of eugenics and conscious procreation, with the intention of producing healthy and beautiful offspring. (quoted in José Peirats, *The CNT in the Spanish Revolution* (Hastings: The Meltzer Press, 2001), volume 1).

Needless to say, like Kropotkin the CNT rejected mainstream, authoritarian, elitist eugenics in favour of a voluntary approach based on improving (sex and general) education, access to birth control and societal transformation to improve social hygiene (see Richard Cleminson’s *Anarchism and Eugenics: An Unlikely Convergence, 1890-1940* [Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019]).

The Sterilisation of the Unfit

Freedom, October 1912

The following speech by P. Kropotkin is taken from the Minute of the Eugenics Congress held in London in August last.

Permit me to make a few remarks: one concerning the papers read by Professor Loria and Professor Kellogg, and another of a more general character concerning the purposes and the limitations of Eugenics.

First of all I must express my gratitude to Professor Loria and to Professor Kellogg for having widened the discussion about the great question which we all have at heart – the prevention of the deterioration and the improvement of the human race by maintaining in purity the common stock of inheritance of mankind.

Granting the possibility of artificial selection in the human race, Professor Loria asks: “Upon which criterion are we going to make the selection?” Here we touch upon the most substantial point of Eugenics and of this Congress. I came this morning with the intention of expressing my deep regret to see the narrow point of view from which Eugenics has been treated up till now, excluding from our discussions all this vast domain where Eugenics comes in contact with social hygiene. This exclusion has already produced an unfavourable impression upon a number of thinking men in this country, and I fear that this impression may be reflected upon science altogether. Happily enough the two papers I just mentioned came to widen the field of our discussions.

Before science is enabled to give us any advice as to the measures to be taken for the improvement of the human race, it has to cover first with its researches a very wide field. Instead of that we have been asked to discuss not the foundations of a science which has still to be worked out, but a number of practical measures, some of which are of a legislative character. Conclusions were already drawn from a science before its very elements had been established.

Thus we have been asked to sanction, after a very rapid examination, marriage certificates, Malthusianism, the notification of certain contagious diseases, and especially the sterilisation of the individuals who may be considered as undesirables.

I do not lose sight of the words of our president, who indicated the necessity of concentrating our attention upon the *heredity* aspects of this portion of social hygiene; but I maintain that by systematically avoiding considerations about the influence of *surroundings* upon the soundness of what is transmitted by heredity, the Congress conveys an entirely false idea of both Genetics and Eugenics. To use the word *à la mode*, it risks the “sterilisation” of its own discussions. In fact, such a separation between surroundings and inheritance

is impossible, as we just saw from Professor Kellogg’s paper, which has shown us how futile it is to proceed with Eugenic measures when such immensely powerful agencies, like war and poverty, are at work to counteract them.

Another point of importance is this. Science, that is, the sum total of scientific opinion, does not consider that all we have to do is to pay a compliment to that part of human nature which induces man to take the part of the weak ones, and then to act in the opposite direction. Charles Darwin *knew* that the birds which used to bring fish from a great distance to feed one of their blind fellows were also a part of Nature, and, as he told us in “*Descent of Man*,” such facts of mutual support were *the chief element for the preservation of the race*; because, such facts of benevolence nurture *the sociable instinct, and without that instinct not one single race could survive in the struggle for life against the hostile forces of Nature*.

My time is short, so I take only one question out of those which we have discussed: Have we had any serious discussion of the Report of the American Breeders’ Association, which advocated sterilisation? Have we had any serious analysis of the vague statements of that Report about the physiological and mental effects of the sterilisation of the feeble-minded and prisoners? Were any objections raised when this sterilisation was represented as a powerful deterring means against certain sexual crimes?

In my opinion, Professor McDonnell was quite right when he made the remark that it was untimely to talk of such measures at the time when the criminologists themselves are coming to the conclusion that the criminal is “a manufactured product,” a product of society itself. He stood on the firm ground of modern science. I have given in my book on Prisons some striking facts, taken from my own close observation of prison life from the inside, and I might produce still more striking facts to show how sexual aberrations, described by Krafft Ebing, are often the results of *prison nurture*, and how the germs of that sort of criminality, if they were present in the prisoner, were always aggravated by imprisonment.

But to create or aggravate this sort of perversion in our prisons, and then to punish it by the measures advocated at this Congress, is surely one of the greatest crimes. It kills all faith in justice, it destroys all sense of mutual obligation between society and the individual. It attacks the *race solidarity* – the best arm of the human race in its struggle for life.

Before granting to society the right of sterilisation of persons affected by disease, the feeble-minded, the unsuccessful in life, the epileptics (by the way, the Russian writer you so much admire at this moment, Dostoyevsky, was an epileptic), is it not our holy duty carefully to study the social roots and causes of these diseases?

When children sleep to the age of twelve and fifteen in the same room as their parents, they will show the effects of early sexual awakenings with all its consequences. You cannot combat such widely spread effects by sterilisation. Just now 100,000 children have been in need of food in consequence of a social conflict. Is it not the duty of Eugenics to study the effects of a prolonged privation of food upon the generation that was submitted to such a calamity?

Destroy the slums, build healthy dwellings, abolish that promiscuity between children and full-grown people, and be not afraid, as you often are now, of “making Socialism”; remember that to pave the streets, to bring a supply of water to a city, is already what they call to “make Socialism”; and you will have improved the germ plasm of the next generation much more than you might have done by any amount of sterilisation.

And then, once these questions have been raised, don't you think that the question as to *who are the unfit* must necessarily come to the front? Who, indeed? The workers or the idlers? The women of the people, who suckle their children themselves, or the ladies who are unfit for maternity because they cannot perform all the duties of a mother? Those who produce degenerates in the slums, or those who produce degenerates in palaces?

Kropotkin's Speech

Problems in Eugenics: Report of Proceedings of the First International Eugenics Congress, Held at the University of London, July 24th to 30th, 1912 (London: The Eugenics Education Society, 1913) vol. 2

Prince KROPOTKIN said that Profs. Loria and Kellogg had widened the discussion. Prof. Loria had asked by what criterion artificial selection was to be guided. This was the most substantial problem for eugenics, and for the Congress. He had been regretting the exclusion from the discussion of the domain where eugenics came into contact with social hygiene, an exclusion which was producing an unfavourable impression outside, but the two papers in question had helped to remove it. The foundations of eugenics as a science had still to be worked out ; yet they had been asked to discuss a number of practical measures, some involving legislation, such as marriage certificates, Malthusianism, the notification of certain contagious diseases, and the sterilisation of individuals considered undesirable. The President had insisted on concentrating attention on the heredity aspect of social hygiene; but by avoiding the consideration of the influence of surroundings, the Congress conveyed a false idea of both genetics and eugenics. Separation between surroundings and inheritance was impossible. Prof. Kellogg had shown the futility of eugenic measures when such powerful agencies as war and poverty were counteracting them. Science did not justify a mere verbal homage to the principle of sympathy, and action in the opposite direction. Darwin knew that the feeding by birds of their blind fellows was an instance of the chief element in the preservation of the race. Such benevolence nurtured the social instinct, without which no race could survive in the struggle against the hostile forces of nature. The Congress had not seriously discussed the Report of the American

Then came the question, who were the unfit? – the workers or the idlers?

Breeders' Association, which recommended the sterilisation of criminals. Sir John Macdonnell had been quite right in maintaining that the criminal was a product manufactured by society itself. He (Prince Kropotkin) had given facts in evidence of this in his book on Prisons, and he could produce still more striking facts showing how sexual aberrations were the results of prison nurture. To create these perversions, and then to punish them by sterilisation, was one of the greatest of crimes. It killed justice; it was an attack on race-solidarity. Before recommending the sterilisation of the feeble-minded, the unsuccessful, the epileptic (Dostoyevsky was an epileptic), was it not their duty to study the social roots and causes of these diseases? If children slept, till the ages of 12 or 15, in the same rooms with their parents, they would show the effects of early sexual awakening ; these effects could not be combated by sterilisation. At present 100,000 children were in need of food, through the Dock Strike. Eugenics ought to study the effects of prolonged privation of food. By destroying slums, building healthy dwellings, abolishing that promiscuity between children and adults to which he had alluded, they would improve the germ-plasm of the next generation more than by any amount of sterilisation. Then came the question, who were the unfit? – the workers or the idlers? The women of the people, who suckled their children themselves, or the ladies who were unfit for maternity because they could not perform all the duties of a mother? Those who produced degenerates in slums, or those who produced degenerates in palaces?

Discussion On “Eugenics”

The British Medical Journal, 2 August 1913 (Vol. 2, No. 2744)

Prince P. Kropotkin said that after having heard the eugenists he was not astonished to learn that up till now the British Medical Association had not been over enthusiastic about eugenics. All that had been said in defence of eugenics was so unscientific. Natural selection was spoken of not as Darwin understood it, when, in his second great work, *The Descent of Man*, he considered it not as a struggle between all individuals of the same species, but as a struggle of the species against adverse surroundings (those species, he wrote, which contained the greatest number of mutually sympathetic individuals having the greatest chance of survival). Eugenists also said a good deal about “the elimination of the unfit,” but no criterion of fitness was given. The two factors upon which the character of progeny depended were heredity and environment. To discuss the relative importance of these two factors would be useless. Medical men of experience would probably agree that the rate at which degeneracy was spreading in modern communities was so great that degeneracy could no longer be combated by any amount of “elimination” of the degenerates. The inhabitants of the slums were a reserve army, without which British industry could not live and give the profits it was giving. What was needed was the elimination of the conditions which produced every year hundreds of thousands of those whom eugenists describe as “the unfit.” Medical practitioners knew it well, and the British Medical Association was quite right in having hitherto given its chief attention to combating right in having hitherto given its chief attention to combating the causes of degeneracy by means of social hygiene.

How to fight against degeneration

Conclusions of a Professor of Physiology

Les Temps Nouveaux, 8 and 15 November 1913

[I]

The bourgeoisie, assisted in this by a number of pseudo-scientists, is very busy at this moment with the issues of heredity and the measures to be taken to prevent the procreation of those whom the bourgeois courts have identified as “degenerate” or “criminals.”

Last summer (1912), an international congress, specially convened for this purpose, was assembled in London under the title of *Eugenics Congress*.¹ For such is the name given by some English scientists to a science which would study the means of improving the human race by selective mating.

To be concerned about the economic and social conditions of existence of the poor classes is, according to these gentlemen, sentimentalism. The real way to prevent humanity declining would be “Eugenics.”

For five or six days, during this congress we witnessed a flood of speeches, throughout which could be seen all the hatred of the upper classes of England against the

poor of their nation. These, to hear the “scientific” advocates of the ferocious rich, could only be a collection of drunks, idlers, degenerates who by their presence poison the life of the well-to-do classes, and who must be got rid of at any cost.

we witnessed a flood of speeches, throughout which could be seen all the hatred of the upper classes of England against the poor of their nation.

The pièce de résistance of the Congress was the report of a eugenic committee based in the United States. There was much praise for the results of what the report called the sterilisation of around a hundred individuals, locked up in the prisons of the North-American republic. The report did not utter a word about the physiological results of these “sterilisations”: it limited itself to affirming that many of the sterilised people were delighted with it – an assertion that we must accept at face value.

A young American professor, Kellogg, distinguished by his work in biology, made some very apt but far too moderate observations to combat the conclusions arrived at by most members of

¹ The First International Eugenics Congress took place in London on July 24–29, 1912 and was attended by around 400 delegates. A report by Bleecker van Wagenen presented information about American sterilization laws and propagated

compulsory sterilisation as the best method to cut off “defective germ-plasm”. The final address extolled eugenics as the practical application of the principle of evolution. (*Black Flag*)

the congress.¹ He showed which degeneration sprang from militarism and permanent armies; and an English prison chief, MacDonnell, opposed this idea of the “sterilisation of undesirables” with knowledge and good sense. For my part, taking advantage of the seven minutes that were allowed in the discussions to those who had not sent reports in advance, I made some observations. I pointed out that “eugenic” science did not yet exist: that it was barely constituted, and that the most barbaric legislative measures were already being demanded in the name of a future science. I indicated that it was impossible to fight degeneration by “sterilisation” while at this moment, in London, tens of thousands of children, deprived of food following a big strike of dockers were wasting away every day and would feel the effects all their lives; while one-third of the total urban population of England lived “below the poverty line,” as English statisticians say (that is, earning less than 22 fr. 50 [centimes] per week and per family, not counting periodic unemployment), and that hundreds of thousands of families lived with four, five, ten, and twelve people in a single room. I concluded by asking: Who are the “degenerates” that were doomed for sterilisation? Women workers who raised their children despite their misery, or the ladies of the world, no longer able to breast-feed their children? The degenerates in the slums, or the degenerates in the palaces?

But these few observations by the three of us were only one drop beside the eugenics torrent.

All those who spoke at this congress spoke, it goes without saying that, in the name of Science. However, we must distinguish between Science and “Scientists.” For there is Science, which is *the whole* of our knowledge of Nature, such as it gradually emerges from research; and there are the Scientists, some of whom, out of laziness of mind, take a dim view of anything that exceeds the level they reached in their youth, and others, who finally reaching the summits of academia, entirely embrace the interests of the wealthy classes, and bend their pseudo-science in this direction.

Fortunately, there are always, especially amongst young scientists, a number who do not distort their conclusions to please the powerful, and are not afraid to reach heretical conclusions. This is the case of a young professor at the university of Moscow, N. Kabanoff, whose recent book – *Sketches on the Physiology of the Human Body, in a state of health and illness* (Moscow, 1912) – very scientific, although written for a wider

public than that of learned societies, interests us in his conclusions concerning heredity and degeneration.

Mr Kabanoff first studies the causes of degeneration, and he naturally finds that there are *two* sets of causes for degeneration. There is *heredity*, but there is also *the influence of the environment* – the physical and moral conditions of existence. And, comparing the effect of these two causes, he notes, as you might expect, the immense, preponderant, effect of the second cause – that of the conditions of existence.

Families, in which degeneration is transmitted from father to son, do not last forever. Either they wither and disappear or else they improve by cross-breeding with healthy families.

The great danger to society is therefore in the continual production of *new* families of degenerates and new causes of degeneration, by virtue of social and economic conditions. This obviously leads the author to conclude that the great problem of medicine and social hygiene is to *eliminate the conditions which always produce new degenerate families*.

This conclusion will undoubtedly be answered by repeating what we all have heard so often in the daily newspapers: they cite the case of the United States family that gave rise to 1,200 degenerates and criminals. And they will not notice that this fact, if it is true, would represent the most terrible indictment against the means by which they are now seeking to combat the scourge of degeneration. For what has society been able to do for generations of degenerates, drunkards and “criminals” from a degenerate ancestor? – *Nothing*, but committing the crime of perpetuating and exacerbating their degeneration by putting them into prisons – which are themselves nurseries of physical, sexual and moral degeneration, and Universities of criminality. Indeed, let them read only this book, so terrible in its sincerity, *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist*, by A. Berkman (New York, 1912); they shall see what prisons are in this respect, whether they be old or modern.²

[II]

What is needed to combat degeneration – says Mr Kabanoff very well – is to *increase the adaptability of the organism*, and, hence, its adaptation to the new urban environments created by modern civilisation. This is the goal of any progressive culture. But, to reach that, we need not only sufficient food and a healthy and attractive home; we must also *increase the intensity of life* – of all the vital processes. But this can only be achieved by the *variety of work*, by *the interest and*

¹ Vernon Lyman Kellogg (1867-1937) was a U.S. entomologist, evolutionary biologist, and science administrator. A delegate to the congress from the American Breeders' Association, he gave a talk entitled “Eugenics and Militarism.” (*Black Flag*)

² Berkman is the young anarchist who shot at Frick, the head of the Homestead factories, after the big strike in which Pinkerton gunmen slaughtered the strikers. He was in prison for fourteen years, and he recounted his life during these fourteen years in a book, remarkable as a veracious document and as a literary work.

stimulation it gives when it ceases being monotonous overwork, by the exercise of *intellectual and artistic* faculties – in short, by variety of interests, by the development of *individuality*¹ – by *one's intellectual enlargement and expansion*.

Modern progress helps to make these things possible. The decentralisation of industries, the dispersal of industries in garden-towns, the possibility of combining industrial work with work in the fields, the possibility for women to emancipate themselves from the yoke of the individual household, the possibility of setting up co-operative institutions [*établissements sociétaires*] for the education of children, and so on – all this, says Mr Kabanoff, helps to make the complete development of individuality more and more possible.

The freedom, conquered by modern societies, to establish all kinds of societies to improve their conditions by all kinds of application of mutual aid and co-operation – freedom to which is added the ever growing autonomy of village and urban communities (that is to say of administrative organs approaching closer and closer to the population itself), as well as the free school that elevates the faculties of the child instead of depressing them – all this contributes to the same direction.

After showing once again how much it is necessary to exercise your intellectual faculties in a variety of directions (intellectual, poetic, artistic, love of nature, etc.), as the first condition for obtaining the necessary strength of resistance for the nervous system; and having indicated that the conditions of social hygiene required to achieve this do not yet exist, Professor Kabanoff concludes his work with the following few pages, which I translate in full.

“From the above it is clear,” he says, “that the most essential condition for combating morbid heredity [*l'hérédité malade*] and the degeneration of society is to organise all life on the principles of mutual aid and co-operation.

“Indeed, it is doubtful that there exist other conditions that can yield the same maximum degree of impressions, increase the vigour of the individual, contribute to the development of his individuality and

promote the same degree of social education, than co-operation, based on “mutual aid” and not on charity.

“But, apart from that, mutual aid and co-operation are of the utmost importance in the fight against all that prevents the real sanitation and progress of society, in other words, against that which hinders the action of measures aimed at combating morbid heredity.

“For, indeed, it is only through the free play of all varieties of mutual aid and co-operation that we can arrive at the complete development of the individual, which is not only the condition of all progress, but also its essence, its goal.

“In order to apply the principles of co-operation and mutual aid in life, the complete freedom of organisations is indispensable. It is necessary that all varieties of collaboration and

mutual aid, co-operation and companionship can develop freely. And at the same time, it is also essential that a corresponding change in economic and social conditions take place, so that everyone can take part in the various kinds of co-operation and consider their relations with other individuals in a conscious and intelligent way. In other words, a certain material well-being, a certain leisure and a sufficient intellectual development are the first conditions.

“Finally, it is also necessary that the principles of local autonomy (of *self-government*, as the English say) are applied at all levels; it is necessary, in addition, that this local autonomy must be applied so that, as far as possible, the population itself, and not representatives, take a direct part in all local affairs. And it is necessary for this autonomous organisation of small administrative units to possess the broadest rights, the largest freedom in the management of local affairs and in the performance of local firms.

I omit here some repetitions made by the author to better explain his idea.

“Organised in this way” – continues the author – “the local administration, *representing a special form of free co-operation*, would be, with all other forms of co-operation and mutual aid, the best school for developing social instincts, social solidarity and public initiative. At the same time, it would also be the best means to achieve *economic* freedom, as well as *political* freedom; that is to say, the freedom to dispose of your time and

¹ We speak, understandably, not of *individualism*, which diminishes and narrows individuality, as will be understood one day, no doubt, by those who are still infatuated with

Nietzsche, with his “blond beast,” and Stirner, with his bourgeois “association of egoists.”

your person in general, the possibility of rest, the freedom to move – not in theory only, but in reality; in short, a freedom which represents material well-being and independence: *intellectual* freedom, that is to say, liberation from tradition, the freedom of a being which thinks, and finally *moral* freedom. For moral servitude is submission to the established traditions of good and evil, even though these traditional conceptions are not in accord with what we consider as bad and immoral in the depths of our thought.

“To liberate yourself of this dependency (as to achieve intellectual freedom), it is obviously necessary to have at the same time a profound respect for every human person, for every individuality. For, indeed, there can be no personal freedom if we do not practice *the same freedom for everyone*. The conception of freedom, by its very essence, *is a reciprocal conception* (and this is especially true if you seek to raise the moral health of society); because *moral freedom* means the absence of any imposition, including the moral imposition of one individual on another.

“Only when this freedom, broad and expansive in every direction, exists, will each individual be able to develop all his faculties and his forces. Today, with our

privileges of birth and of fortune, of education and of class, which exist alongside black misery and ignorance, men are placed in extremely unequal conditions in the struggle for existence. That is why it always happens that victory in this struggle belongs to those who are ill-adapted by their natural capacities to the needs of society, or to families that have fallen into degeneration, which becomes a cause of harm for society. Furthermore, those who are well adapted, thanks to their natural abilities, not only cannot develop all their strengths and faculties, but often they perish in the struggle, which is again an unmitigated waste for society. These two causes thus diminish the proportion of well-adapted individuals and contribute to the degeneration of society, taken as a whole.

“Thus, it is only by guaranteeing a full and broad freedom to all members of society, and by organising all life on the basis of co-operation and mutual aid, that the progress of degeneration in a society can be reduced to a minimum and brought back to their natural limits.”

Here is finally a sensible and *scientific* voice that is heard and which, obviously, contradicts the rantings of the “eugenicists.

Few books have exercised so pernicious an influence upon the general development of economic thought as Malthus's *Essay on the Principle of Population* exercised for three consecutive generations. It appeared at the right time, like all books which have had any influence at all, and it summed up ideas already current in the minds of the wealth-possessing minority. It was precisely when the ideas of equality and liberty, awakened by the French and American revolutions, were still permeating the minds of the poor, while the richer classes had become tired of their amateur excursions into the same domains, that Malthus came to assert, in reply to Godwin, that no equality is possible; that the poverty of the many is not due to institutions, but is a natural law. Population, he wrote, grows too rapidly and the new-comers find no room at the feast of nature; and that law cannot be altered by any change of institutions. He thus gave to the rich a kind of scientific argument against the ideas of equality; and we know that though all dominion is based upon force, force itself begins to totter as soon as it is no longer supported by a firm belief in its own rightfulness...

True, the formidable growth of the productive powers of man in the industrial field, since he tamed steam and electricity, has somewhat shaken Malthus's doctrine... But agriculture is still considered a stronghold of the Malthusian pseudo-philosophy.... But the deeper one goes into the subject, the more new and striking data does he discover, and the more Malthus's fears appear groundless.

– *Fields, Factories and Workshops*

On War

Kropotkin's reputation as a revolutionary suffered a severe set-back when, in 1914, he seemed to forget everything he had argued as regards war to support the Allies in the First World War. This is particularly the case as war was a concern for Kropotkin for many decades, he had continually wrote and spoke of an impending European conflict. Yet, when it finally broke out, his response was one which shocked and dismayed almost all anarchists across the globe.

Both Malatesta and Berneri referred to this in their evaluations of Kropotkin's ideas and legacy. This is unsurprising, given the nature of his error and his prominence within the movement. Marxists – from Lenin onwards – have made much of this, incorrectly suggesting that Kropotkin was reflecting the opinions of most anarchists. In reality, this was not the case – the vast majority of anarchists remained true to their Internationalism and anti-Militarism and, as a consequence, Kropotkin swiftly lost his influence within the movement and his access to its newspapers.

Here we reprint his pre-1914 thoughts on war so that we may see both how far Kropotkin fell and what the consistent anarchist position was, as championed during the war by the likes of Malatesta, Berkman, Goldman and Rocker. These show that there is a reason why, for example, Anarchists in Britain and America continued to sell his pamphlet *Wars and Capitalism* while its author ignored its arguments. His analysis of what drives war in the modern age remain valid as does his solution, revolution, even if in 1914 he failed to apply them.

Which raises an obvious question: why? Why did Kropotkin forsake anarchist ideas at such a critical time?

Simply put, Kropotkin before 1914 expected a German invasion of France to be met by a social revolution and so defence of the nation and defence of the revolution would be one-and-the same. When no such revolt took place, his somewhat romantic view of France as the home of the revolution, his well-established thoughts on national liberation struggles and a general dislike of Germany got the better of him. This is reflected in various comments made before 1914 on why the long expected social revolution had not taken place, which he blamed on the defeat of France in the Franco-Prussian war which saw a newly unified German State dominate European politics and German Social Democracy dominate the labour movement. These views, combined with the view that national liberation had to come *before* addressing the social question (when, in fact, both had to be combined), meant that Kropotkin was – in spite of his revolutionary ideas – ill-prepared for a war unaccompanied by rebellion.

Finally, we must note that for all his anti-Marxism, Kropotkin in 1914 advanced the position of Marx and Engels in taking sides in capitalist wars while Lenin embraced Bakunin's position – and the consistent anarchist one – of opposing class war to imperialist war. Thus Lenin supported the “progressive” Japan in the 1904-5 war while Kropotkin, rightly, rejected taking sides in that clash of imperialist powers.

What to do?

“Qüe Faire?”, *Le Révolté: Organe Communiste-Anarchiste*, 8 January 1887

What if war breaks out in the spring? What can we do – we workers? We anarchists and revolutionary socialists?

Fold our arms? Do nothing? – No, a thousand times no!

If we could induce a general strike against the war; if hundreds of thousands of soldiers in France, in Germany, in Italy, refused, by common agreement, to obey the brigands who govern them – certainly, that would be marvellous!

But – for this it was necessary to act in this sense as early as the war of 1870. It was necessary to work to establish international understanding across borders against the orders of the bourgeois, in spite of laws. It has not been done – for whatever reason. Let us not complain, let us just state the fact. It would be too late to do the work at this moment.

The workers will obey the orders of their masters; they will kill each other to enrich the exploiters. It is incredibly painful to witness – but it is so.

What to do, though?

Issue manifestos? Protest against the invasion? Appeal to the German workers? Oppose the ideas of international brotherhood to the narrow spirit of the German State, to selfish patriotism, to chauvinism? – Alright, let us do that. Let us write manifestoes, let us launch into the world these great ideas for which the French proletariat has always fought. When it proclaimed the Republic or the Commune, it aimed at the emancipation of the world.

Yes, let us do it. But let us not attach to pieces of paper more importance than they deserve. Paper will remain paper, while acts are needed.

Yes acts! And their programme has already been drawn up by the European proletariat, during the great awakening of 1868 to 1871.

– “What, have you come to talk to us about the homeland?” the Viennese workers wrote in 1868. – “We are exploited workers, always deceived, always

oppressed by you; and all workers, whatever nationality they belong to – exploited and oppressed proletarians of the whole world – are our brothers. And all bourgeois – our oppressors, our rulers, our exploiters – are our enemies.”

French or German – the bourgeois is the enemy. This is the programme drawn up by our predecessors. The French bourgeois is doubly an enemy, because it is to the French bourgeois that we owe the invasion, and it is again with the German bourgeois that they reach an understanding against the French people. They already did it in 1871, they would do the same in 1887.

The cause of modern wars is always competition for markets and the right to exploit nations backward in industry... In fact, all wars waged in Europe during the last hundred and fifty years were wars for commercial interests, rights of exploitation.

– “War”, *Modern Science and Anarchy*

The bourgeois – that is the enemy. And it is by overthrowing it, by removing its wealth and its power – by expropriating it – that we will overcome the German bayonets. Not otherwise.

It is by driving the lord from the land and the bourgeois from the factory and administration; by restoring the land to the

peasant, the factory to the worker and freedom for all; by raising the banner of the Social Revolution, that we will overcome the foreign invasion.

Paris – a communist Commune, that is the only bulwark we can oppose to the German batteries.

Lyons, Marseilles, Bordeaux – communist Communes – that is the only centre from which will arise the forces capable of driving the Prussian soldier from French territory and at the same time disarming the French army – a docile instrument of oppression in the hands of the bourgeois.

The countryside in revolt – the countryside taking the land that has been stolen from it since 1789 – that is the only barrier we can oppose to foreign invaders.

Let only three large cities rise at the approach of German soldiers. Let them burn the paperwork of the banks, let them loudly proclaim in all the villages that henceforth mortgages are abolished and that the cities will no longer send bailiffs into the countryside to force the peasant to pay his creditors. Let the peasant know that he has to choose between “The Social [Revolution]” or the yoke of the banker and the lord restored by the Prussians – and he will no longer go to meet the German armies to offer them bread and wine

after having refused them to the French soldier, as he did in 1871.

Let a Paris-Commune, let a Lyon-Commune proclaim the Social [Revolution] within their walls. Let housing be free in the Commune and let bread, as long as there is some, be for all. Let each worker know that by defending his Commune he is defending the future, for his children and the emancipation of the European proletariat; that he fights for the Revolution so long called for by his hopes. Let him know that in dying for his Commune, he dies for the emancipation of the human race, for Equality and Liberty for all – and the Prussian guns will be paralysed as they were in 1791. They will turn against the German kings and bourgeois.

France undergoing the Social Revolution – that is what can stop the conquerors of the European coalition.¹

Without the Revolution, oppression, servitude, going back two centuries, the triumph of the State, of reaction.

With the Revolution – it will be liberation of the country. It will be the triumph of civilisation; it will be the torch of the Social Revolution thrown into the enemies' camp and setting the whole world ablaze.

This is the task before us.

Do not rely on anyone for that. Do not rely, please, on politicians. These will do nothing: they will hand us over bound hand and foot to the enemy.

Let us rely on ourselves and no one else. We are not many; we have the Truth on our side, and with it as our ally, our voice will be heard. Let us be True and Just – and the masses will be with us.

This is *our* historic task. We *must* accomplish it.

War or Peace?

(*Proceedings of the International Worker's Congress, London, July-August, 1896* [Glasgow/London: The Labour Leader, 1896])

Next Sunday the workers of all nations are going to make an important peace demonstration, and they are sure to well represent in this case the opinions of the workers all over the world.²

But who are those who want war? Whose war-cries resound every day in our ears? Who will be conspicuous by their absence at the international peace gathering of the workers? – the ruling classes!

Always *they* have been the instigators of wars in times past, and so they are up to the present time. In times past it was the kings who waged wars in order to re-fill their cash boxes, to distribute new provinces amongst their “war companions,” to give “occupation” to the gang of robbers, drunkards, and gamblers of whom their following was composed. It was the wizards, the witches, and the high priests who, pretending to be in direct intercourse with supernatural forces, promised the support of the gods for war as soon as they saw that war would increase their powers upon men or accrue to their wealth. It was the noble lords of the land – smaller kings themselves – who made of war their profession, in order to always get new slaves or serfs, and to better enslave those whom they possessed of old. And so they went on – the Triple Alliance of those times – sacking and burning, killing and plundering the peasants and the artisans within and without the borders of their own countries.

The peasants and the artisans, on the other hand, did always all in their powers to escape from the war obligations, and to stay at home while they were ordered to join the armed bands. They cursed war when it was successful for their rulers, and they cursed it when it was unsuccessful and brought the enemy upon their fields and in their houses. They started immense secret unions to resist war and to prevent it, and as soon as they felt in force the peasants besieged the nests of war – the castles – and destroyed them when they could; while the artisans erected walls around their towns and prohibited their access to any armed man – robber, lord, or king. They joined immense conjurations for maintaining “God’s peace,” and later on, at the beginning of the Reform, they started widely spread religious movements to oppose war. And when those movements had been defeated and the peasants had been massacred, the survivors started in Moravia and elsewhere their communities, in which scores of thousands of peasants and artisans joined, taking the oath of never unsheathing the sword; and they prospered in those communities until these Communal houses were pillaged and destroyed by the triple alliance of King, Church, and Lord.

War always came from above – from those who did not live on the work of their hands, but lived upon the blood and the sweat of the manual workers. And so it is up to

¹ A reference to what became known as the War of the First Coalition which was a set of wars that several European States fought between 1792 and 1797 against the French

Republic, aiming to end the revolution and restore the monarchy. (*Black Flag*)

² A reference to the International Peace Demonstration held on 26th July 1896. (*Black Flag*)

the present date, with the only difference that the kings, having now lost their importance, the real instigators of wars are the lords of the land, of the factory, of the mine, and of the Stock Exchange.

Was it the *people* of Japan and China who waged lately that terrible war? Was it the kings? No; it was the capitalists! Two years before the war broke out a serious work was published in Germany about the growing industries of Japan; and its conclusion was that the sudden growth of the big factory system in Japan must very soon result in a war. "The people of Japan being too poor to buy what the big factories manufacture, Japan *must* wage a war for markets against its nearest neighbours." Such was the writer's conclusion.

And the war came. Japan had become an industrial country; it had become also a modern *State* – that is, a perfect organisation for pumping money out of the people – and war was unavoidable. European capitalists freely granted loans; the ironclads and the ton-guns were gladly supplied by the big war establishments of this country – which are hypocritically described by their pious owners as "workshops for the guarantee of peace" – and thousands of Japanese and Chinese were massacred for the enrichment of Japanese, and especially European, capitalists; while the newspaper people of Europe made money by relating, with relish, how transport ships having thousands of men on board were sunk to the bottom of the ocean by torpedoes, how men and women were massacred, how thousands of wounded were landed, and so on.

Was it not the same with the Franco-German war? The fashion is now to throw the fault for that war upon Napoleon III. But who was it who made the power of that highway adventurer? Of whom was composed the throng in his Babylonian palace? The middle-classes to whom he had promised free hand for enrichment, and a strong hand against the Socialist workers. The middle-classes of both Germany and France were long since preparing that war. Their literature was full of incitements to hatred between the two nations. The best novelists of the time had their share in that wicked work. Who would rule the markets – France or Germany? Who would have a free hand for sweating the industrially backward nations? This was the gist of the terrible war which has cost millions of lives, and whose black shadows still float over European civilisation.

That was *then*. But now, is it not the same again? How many middle-class papers can the worker read without finding in them the same incitements to national hatred and war, in whatever language the paper may be written?

In this country *all* has been done lately by a part of the ruling classes to awaken the lust of war. In illustrated papers, imaginary wars, ending in the capture of Rotterdam by the English and the triumph of England over the world, were minutely described.

Ironclads were sunk, in print and on engravings, populous cities were bombarded, war was waged between balloons in the air, between miners under ground, and between boats under the water – not for describing the horrors of war, but to delude peaceful clerks and workers who know nothing of war, and to make them believe in the grandeur and the splendour of war, to breed emotional hatred, to raise the Jingo spirit. The Napoleon legend was revived, the bloody battles of the past were re-told and embellished, the worship of "national heroes" – Stanley and Rhodes inclusive – was brought into fashion, and thousands of pounds were sunk by rich volunteers to put on the stage "patriotic dramas" which, it must be owned, fell flat nevertheless.

Was not also the invasion of Pretoria and the proposed capture of its capital part of a vast plan intended to revive the war spirit in this country and prepare it for the creation of an empire which would have extended from the Cape to India, and in which gold-digging, Matabele-hunting, and Egypt-scorching would have offered "new issues" for "the poor rich ones" who so loudly complain of the pinch of the times.

The worst is that the whole of the press submits to that same influence. In one column we find lamentations about the warlike spirit of man or the cruelty of the ladies who wear heron feathers on their hats; and in the next column we read: "*Our* artillery made splendid work," "the rebels were mowed down by *our* shots," and so on. Rebels! Those unarmed, miserable men whose "cattle and women" are taken by the filibusters, whose women and children are not spared, and of whom the young English sportsman writes: "*It is great fun potting niggers off and seeing them fall like nine pins!*"

And what is done in this country is done all over the world, in the press, in the school, in the speeches, and in private conversation, by all those who have made up their minds to make money out of the sweat of the masses and the blood of the war-conflicts.

To this crusade of war the workers are bound to oppose their united action. They must loudly denounce that wicked propaganda which is preparing the shedding of streams of blood in a near future; they must put a stop to it.

They must raise their mighty voice and loudly affirm that they will *not* allow the mercantile writer to breed cruelty amongst our children, and to accustom them to utterly despise human life, to attach no value whatever to it; and to believe that in the interests of the State, or of separate classes, human lives may be destroyed to

any amount. The lessons of cruelty and despising of human life with which modern middle-class literature is permeated already bear their fruit, and they menace, if they continue, to throw the next generation a century aback by wiping out of our civilisation the humanitarian progress that had lately been achieved.

It may be in the interest of French capitalists to conquer provinces on the Rhine, and of German capitalists to annex Burgundy or the Baltic provinces. It may suit the Russian and British manufacturers to make a partition of Armenia, or to fight upon the corpses of the Armenians; and it may be very profitable for the international bankocracy to ruin the nations by war preparations and to plunge them into endless wars. . . .

But the workers have nothing to win at wars, and they have nothing to expect from wars but that a further lease will be granted to the upper classes for living upon the

fruits of the labour of the proletarians, and that the international solidarity which now begins to be established among the workers of all nations, will again be destroyed, as it was destroyed for many years by the war of 1870.

And at the same time an immense work – a heavy duty towards themselves and their own children – lies before and upon the workers. They have their own conquests of quite a different kind to achieve – not abroad, but at home. They have to conquer Liberty, which for a wage-slave is a vain word. They have to conquer Equality, which cannot exist between the ruler and the ruled, the palace-owner and the slum-dweller, the university man and the miner's boy. And they have to establish Fraternity, which will remain a mere sarcasm so long as the State organisation will give to the few the means to drive millions of men against each other for mutual extermination.

The Last War

“La Dernière Guerre”, *Les Temps Nouveaux*, 12 June 1897

It is an established fact for Turkey. As we said in our last issue, the war for the annexation of Thessaly was decided upon and paid for in the salons of financiers in London and Paris.

But it is complicated for Greece. There is the Cretan insurrection on the one hand and, on the other, the intervention of the Greek kingdom.

It is true that in the newspapers of the English Conservative Party and in those of the Triple-Alliance, it is common practice to assert that all the uprisings of the Serbs, Bulgarians, Montenegrins, Armenians and Cretans were artificial movements, bought by Russian rubles.

And, however sad it is to note, it is a fact that in the social-democratic newspapers they have the same language, they follow the same tactics. For that, they make use of any means, and, the other day, it sufficed for that brute Bismarck to hurl that the apostle Paul had already said that the Cretans were liars and thieves for that same biblical argument to be quickly repeated against the Cretans in the columns of a social-democratic newspaper to prevent any sympathy with their insurrection.

I do not want to seek the causes of this accord now. But what is important to note is that nothing in the very essence of socialism explains this attitude.

First, in all these uprisings of nationalities which were or still are part of the Ottoman Empire there is *an economic aspect*. For the Serbs, and especially the Bulgarians (as well as the Romanians in 1853-1856),

there was the question of serfdom, which existed in Bulgaria until 1878 for the behalf Ottoman landlords. Laveleye has highlighted this fundamental fact in his book on the Balkan peninsula; and we know that up to the present day Bulgarian peasants pay their former Muslim landlords redemption for the abolition of serfdom.

It is very likely that in Crete as well national hatred is complicated by the same land question – as in Ireland – if it is not simply a question of serfdom.

In Armenia, it is indeed the case that the *agrarian* revolutionary propaganda which was made by some Armenian anarchists amongst Turkish farmers as well as amongst the Armenian peasants – in both languages – found a resonance in the Turkish peasants, in spite of the difference in nationality, as well as amongst the Armenians.

Since there is thus at the bottom an *economic* question, these uprisings should by now have found sympathy with every sincere socialist, anarchist, unionist or social democrat.

Furthermore, the revolt of all these nationalities in the East is against the ignominy that each Muslim official (often Armenian, Bulgarian or Greek origin) exercises, as he pleases, towards the population of the Ottoman Empire, especially Christians. Attacks against the life, the person, the modesty of women are the rule.

In addition, every act of personal revolt against these ignominies of the Turkish rulers, and especially every act of collective revolt and more or less general

insurrection, is punished by Turkey simply by massacres of entire families, villages, populations.

The soldiery, the police, the Bashi-bazouk or the Kurds receive free rein for massacres, and 30,000 men, women and children in Bulgaria in 1876, 200,000 people in Armenia are massacred after an attempted revolt, as if they were dogs.

It must be a crass ignorance, or to have the bad faith of a Beaconsfield, to deny this fact.

* * *

Thus, the *Turkish yoke* (of the empire, of course, and not of the Turkish peasants, who everyone depicts with fullest sympathy), the Turkish yoke is not a figure of speech; it is a nightmare that weighs over the ages. It is a constant source of hatred and latent revolt, waiting for the slightest glimmer of hope to become an open rebellion.

This was also the case in Crete. For seventy years rebellion has been constantly there – as in Cuba against Spain, as in Poland against Russia, as in Ireland against England. The least glimmer of hope, the slightest possibility of being supported, or of seeing the Turkish army occupied elsewhere – and rebellion breaks out; bands are formed, the population attacks Turkish forts, the island is in open insurrection.

To treat these insurrections as bribed, in unison with holders of Ottoman funds, is as despicable as saying, for example, that the great insurrections of Poland against Russia in 1799, 1831, and 1863 were paid for by someone.

In 1863, the Poles could count on the support of Napoleon III – some probably did. But to dare say that the insurrection was made by Louis Napoleon would be despicable, as it would be despicable to affirm that Chamil was bribed by English money when he took advantage of the Russo-Turkish wars of 1828 and 1853 to try and stir up the Caucasus, and shake off the Russian yoke.

It is the same infamy to assert it about the Armenians. The Armenians could certainly count, in 1895-1896, on support from outside. Some counted, I think, on England, others on Russia – perhaps also on revolutionaries from all countries. But their insurrections sprang from the very force of things – hatreds accumulated for a long time.

The same was true of Crete.

* * *

It is fashionable amongst socialists to say that all these movements do not concern us, that the worker is himself under the yoke and that he does not have to bother himself with others.

First, the yoke of the worker is not comparable to that of oppressed nationalities. If, in addition to the economic yoke that these nationalities are subjected to – ever more brutal still – the European worker was subjected to the yoke suffered by the Armenian, the Cretan, the Pole, and also the Irish, he would have rebelled a long time ago, differently than he rebels today.

If tomorrow ten bosses rape ten female workers in the middle of Paris; if tomorrow they throw the worker – I do not say French or English, but even the German worker – into prison and they cut his throat because he did not want to hand over his daughter to the police officer – and Paris and Berlin would be in full insurrection.

There is something that man cherishes more than bread: it is respect for his personality.

* * *

How then can workers be told that, since they are oppressed themselves, they do not have to be interested in others, oppressed like them and who are in addition

forbidden to speak Polish, to wear a green scarf or sing the *Emerald Isle* [*Verte Erin*] in the streets of Dublin, or has his throat cut in Turkey when they take away his daughter!

On the contrary, the cause of *all* the oppressed is dear to the socialist worker.

Doubly dear the cause of the oppressed *who revolt against their masters* – with or without the element of nationality in addition.

Wherever revolt breaks out, wherever men arm themselves against their exploiters – the other oppressed must be with them. Widen the meaning of their revolt, raise amongst them a flag which represents a higher ideal – without doubt, always! But do not keep quietly aside. Still less decry the revolt because it has not reached the level of the ideal that you think you possess!

* * *

Thus for Crete and all the popular uprisings which we shall yet see – because rebellions, because uprisings, have played such a powerful role in the past to awaken

the spirit of revolt and to produce the current socialist movement.

As for the intervention of Greece, that is quite another matter. Here we enter into the intrigues of palaces and diplomats.

Initially, from the very moment when Greece showed that it wished to annex Crete, it was decided in the corridors of the English Parliament that Greece would never have this island.

– But why not, since the inhabitants want it?

– Greece, sir, is bankrupt. It has not been able to pay its share of the Ottoman debt for the annexation of Thessaly. Twice already it has missed the payment of its debt. You understand that we are not going to give it Crete, with the part of the Ottoman debt that would return to the island, when it cannot pay?

That was what was said, affirmed, decided from the beginning, both on the London Stock Exchange and in the corridors of the English Parliament.

The Stock Exchange was unanimous on this point and Salisbury expressed it in his speech: “All our personal sympathies are with the Cretans, but as a minister I am a trusted man (of finance) and I can only fail.” In Parliament there would have been a 300 vote majority against the annexation of Crete by Greece.

* * *

But what has pushed Greece to war?

We were told about the popular fervour – but can we believe it? We know what the demonstrations in the big towns which cry “war!” are worth. We learn today, moreover, that the society *Ethnike hetairia* is led by monarchists...

In a *people's* war, a thousand men do not desert all at once as they did at Thessaly. And if the war was a popular impulse, Ricciotti Garibaldi, who went there in good faith, would not have telegraphed his brother, Menotti, the following:

– “If possible, do not undertake anything. It would be regrettable that Italian blood was shed again for the comedy that is being played in Greece, to the detriment of the people and of humanity.” (Telegram published by the *Messagero*, of Rome)

Yes, it was staged. But by whom?

By the king, firstly, to save his dynasty. Unpopular, detested, he made “his war,” like Eugenie.

But would he have launched it if he did not believe it was supported?

This seems very unlikely; and then we wonder: On whom was he counting? Who was pushing him to war?

My opinion – absolutely personal and based on inductions rather than on facts – is that the Greek king was pushed by Italy, which acted on behalf of England. I think that England's goal was to seize Crete as well as other islands (Chios, Rhodes, etc.) by a swift attack – and to remain there. Greece, defeated, crushed, as it was to be, with an army of fifty thousand men against a hundred thousand Turks – and the Russian know what Turkish troops are worth – England would take possession of these islands, and established itself on the great commercial route of the future – from Salonica to the Suez Canal.

The plan having failed, it is now satisfied with an autonomous principality in Crete, with some relative of the Queen appointed prince. The “plan” will be for later.

What then could socialists do in such a bedlam?

* * *

When Greece launched its troops into the island of Crete, against all the rules of international law, it rendered a service to humanity.

It was an act of rebellion which for the two hundred thousand Cretans who will be freed from Ottoman rule was of immense importance. We only regret that, instead of [Timoleon] Vassos, it was not bands of socialist and revolutionary volunteers who landed on the island. These would have done better.

But from the moment when the Greco-Turkism war started, the role of the revolutionary ended. The whole thing passed into the hands of the brigands of diplomacy.

* * *

However, the Crete revolt is not the last in the series of national revolts. We shall see many more – and hope that socialists of every shade will not let them pass in indifference; that they will see popular uprisings, to which we – especially anarchists – can bring our revolutionary fervour, and whose scope we can broaden.

During the Polish insurrection, two parties were present: the monarchical, landlord, aristocratic, catholic party and revolutionary, popular, anti-landlord party, from which later emerged Dombrowski and Wroblewski of the Commune. The monarchist party was the most numerous, it got the upper hand – and Poland was bled white by the Russian Tsar.

But it is not to say that it will always be the same. We very much hope that in the next revolution in Poland the revolutionary, egalitarian and socialist people will get the upper hand. In any case, we will help with our forces and then who knows whether regenerated Poland will not become one of the strongholds of the social revolution.

The Panamists of Patriotism

“Les Panamistes du Patriotisme”, *Les Temps Nouveaux*, 28 January 1899

Previously, it was said that patriotism is the last refuge of the scoundrel. Today, we have discovered better. Patriotism has become the Panama of journalism.

They begin by wearing the Phrygian cap. They throw quasi-anarchist articles in every issue of their journal. They campaign against this or that government. It pays well – for the novelty of the subject. This creates a clientele amongst the workers and the disgruntled of all sorts.

But soon he stops reporting. The workers, delighted with the criticism, ask the journalist to go further: let him follow them in their socialist demands; that he shows a revolutionary programme in deeds – not only in words.

But socialism is poverty. It is a very modest life. A socialist squandered money on the costumes of his lady, for boxes at the Opera, for banquets and the rest would soon be dismissed by the people. And this is what happens to these false brothers. The people quickly turn their backs on them; the circulation of their newspaper falls.

Do you understand the simple terror of the journalist when he is told these terrible words: “The circulation is falling!”

So my journalist hastens to jettison “all those jokes” overboard. He keeps just enough to still preserve a small halo of the former revolutionary – and he becomes *patriotic*.

* * *

Patriotism, as they understand it, pays. It pays very well, better than Panama stock, or the Sahara railways. They leave these to the fools – the Presidents of the Republic – while the journalist, more cunning, begins to exploit the Panama of patriotism.

It is so simple! The art of producing the patriot is taught in five to six lessons. Easier than the art of riding a bicycle! Buy ten issues of “patriotic, anti-Semitic and anti-Dreyfusard” newspapers and you will learn this art in eight days.

Nothing could be simpler than following the beaten path. In order to be an anarchist or even a social-democrat, you still have to think. You have to produce

some sort of programme. You have to be able to say something new, something considered – otherwise you talk nonsense.

For patriotism everything is done, Ideas can be dispensed with: slogans replace them. And these slogans are found forged, a thousand years ago, by other cunning men. You only have to bring the old clichés up to date. It is just the right mash for journalists who lose their teeth and their talent.

* * *

And then it pays! Boy, does it pay! Only read the 15 January column of the jingoistic newspapers. Read the happy thoughts of the patriotic columnists with regard to *Figaro*. Its clientele, assured in the past, made their mouths water. It is now leaving! It is going to them! Two years ago, the shares of *Figaro* were sold at 1,075 francs each. As soon as it showed its Dreyfusist inclinations, they fell to 990 francs. And here they are, no longer quoted on the stock exchange, at only 780 francs. “*Figaro* loses its clientele – win these gentlemen; it is to us that its readers come! That proves that we are in the right!”

That pays – so we have to follow the flow. Pornography would, perhaps, pay better. But it requires talent – so let us be patriots!

Any cretin can be. That is why they had so much fondness for that thief, Katkoff, who through Cyon – the Jewish alliancist – if you please, Boulanger’s friend, taught then the art of enriching themselves by changing the revolutionary mantle for the gaudy clothes of the patriot. We can understand the tears – of envy – they poured over his grave.

* * *

Ah! We know that there are patriots. Whatever we may say and whatever we may do, as long as there are different languages, different civilisations, national songs, varied landscapes, the man who spoke such-and-such a language from childhood, who grew up in the midst of such-and-such a landscape and civilisation, who was lulled [as a baby] to the sound of such-and-such a song, will love this song, this civilisation, this

landscape, this language above all other civilisation, language and song.

As long as this civilisation and this language feel oppressed, or that country is under tyranny – he will love it more, with passion.

Yes, certainly, patriotism in this sense exists, even for those without a homeland, the tramp, who despite all his hatred for the oppressors of his native land, loves only more fondly the language, the hills or the mountains, the customs and traditions.

This feeling exists, and it is quite possible that the more a man becomes an internationalist, the more he will love the local individualities which comprise the international family; the more he will seek to develop its local, individual traits. It is the same as anarchy which raises, strengthens the individual instead of forcing all individualities into the same mould.

Yes, there are patriots who love their native country.

It would be shame and a scandal to confuse these people with those – the lovers of their native land with the scoundrels of supposedly patriotic Panamism.

* * *

When you love someone, an actual person or an abstract persona, country or nation – you first respect it. You seek to see it beautiful, respected by the whole world, honoured for all its qualities.

See the patriots of Young Italy in the past! See the Polish or Finish patriots. Read, for example, that admirable book by George Brandes – the great critic of the day – on Poland. Everything in Poland is devoted to love of the country. This love breaks through in every line of their poets, their journalists. Even the international socialists of Poland, more internationalist than so many others, still love their country, even more so than the Polish nationalists.

Creating a beautiful, great, literature full of ideals – that is where their self-esteem is located. Bragging – they despise it. Recognising what great things other nations have done and to show that little Poland, in all its misfortunes, has remained great – that is their ambition. To place it amongst the top ranks [of countries] by its literature, [by] its arts, by popular education, by the energy of its international socialist party, by its noble spirit, by its sons rushing to the international revolution – that is their ideal.

Those are without doubt patriots.

* * *

Well, would it be permissible, after that, to place them alongside the panamists of patriotism in France?

These people who despise the French people and see only one way of raising it up – that of giving it... who?

A lump like Boulanger for a master, or a little Bonaparte, or some other Caesar, forged for them with the collusion of the court of Russia!!

These gentlemen who believe that they will manage to overcome a nation as formidable as Germany – by what? By little secrets, by the little papers they steal here and there, by the morons Sandherr, Esterhazy and Henry!! – O the stupidity of half-wits! We must be stupid to follow these high priests of the court martials for a single moment! To believe for an instant that these defenders of the war tribunals see anything than their god – circulation!

A man in love holds above all the dignity of the woman he loves. But these gentlemen who are petty, despicable, shamefully despicable, to please a Katkoff or a Tsar who holds them in contempt in spite of their platitudes – is that what they would dare call love of their country?

Pimps of love, perhaps! But certainly not patriots of love.

The Propaganda: Reports

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Communism, January 1891

Leicester. – Tuesday, Nov. 18, Comrade Kropotkin lectured in the Co-operative Hall, his subject being “Is Socialism Practicable.” He met the objection to Socialism and Anarchism, which is continually brought forward when these forms of development are advocated, i.e., that they might be suitable some hundreds and thousands of years hence, but at present they were quite impracticable, by showing that the only obstacle in the way of realising Socialism was the basing of our industry not on principles of satisfying the wants of the community, but on the giving a certain benefit to employers. The ideal of Socialism was that everything necessary for producing riches must belong to the whole community and not to individuals. Realisation of this ideal must take place either with or without fighting. If there was blind opposition on the part of the ruling classes there would be fighting, but through the ripening of public opinion the solution of the question might be arrived at with the least possible amount of disturbance. What the English working-man lacked was, not intelligence, but audacity to take the bull by the horns. As to Anarchy it was the agreement of man with man, not a government. The greatest things of this century had been done by voluntary agreement. Those who were Anarchists should apply their principles in their mutual relations as it would prepare for their use on a large scale in the future. Everything that tended to limit the functions of government and promoted the growth of the community would be an advance in the real direction of progress. A discussion followed and several questions were asked and answered. There was a very large audience.

Caesarism

Freedom, April, May and June 1899

Translated from *Les Temps Nouveaux*.¹⁰⁸

I

Day begins to dawn at last on that great trial called the Dreyfus affair, which has really been a trial of the commanding officers and the General Staff,

We now know of what metal were the men who professed to defend France against invaders and to frustrate their conspiracies. We have seen them at work.

The Kaulia affair made me surmise that all the secrets of “national defence,” so much spoken of, had been sold to Germany. To-day we know that, a whole gang trafficked in these secrets, Some for ready money, others for the purpose of obtaining secrets in exchange; the latter being duped by their adversaries. We know that all were more or less implicated in this traffic, and that if we went to the bottom of the Dreyfus affair, half the generals and the whole of the Intelligence Department would be arrested. We also know that the practice of forgery had become prevalent among the General Staff, and that it would have been as difficult to unravel the truth about information concerning, the military secrets of neighbouring powers, as it would have been to see clear through the secret police reports, so full of lies, mentioned by Andrieux in his book on police regulations.

It is just like in the days of Napoleon III, when the French believed themselves to be possessors of the “mitrailleuse” (machine-gun) secret, while Russia was ordering mitrailleuses of the same pattern in the Bolted States – and no offence to partisans of the alliance – these mitrailleuses arrived in Copenhagen from America just when the war broke out, and were given to Germany by Alexander II. The gross ignorance prevailing in Paris about German and European affairs is absolutely as bad as during the “terrible year.” We know at last what these men are.

Members of an exclusive caste, who profess a supreme contempt, for all – civilians or soldiers – not belonging to their caste, and who, in spite of many differences arising from selfishness and vanity, march like one man against civilian or soldier who dares to meddle with them. A caste that sticks at nothing, not even, at forgery or “suicide” to suppress those who thwart it. A caste like the convent, the monastery, like the Rome of the Jesuits; formed in the same mould as the cloister and the Vatican.

Would that it were no worse! But besides this evil, the caste consists of men of the most stupendous ignorance.

All these brothers in ignorance, Henrys, Esterhazys, Paty de Clams, are going to lead the French army in time of war!!!

They are going to fight Germany, but how many of them are there who know Germany at all? How many of them who know what Germany is? Are there even two or three among them who know anything of Europe except the war offices, who have the faintest notion what part the different European nations will play as intellectual powers, in time of war?

It is easily understood that they are capable of everything like the Jesuits – it was to be expected from such an institution – but their ignorance has startled the world! And these men posed as “the brain of the army.” They boasted of being a match for the General- Staffs of other countries that, as a rule; consist of well-informed men. We can understand the contempt for those ignorant monks, these Patys, Henrys, and Esterhazys, rather openly expressed by the officers of the Russian General Staff in spite of the propriety imposed on them by the alliance. “Should war break out the French soldier will fight like a lion, but the General Staff will lead him straight to butchery!” That is what is said in Russian military circles. That is what the partisans of alliance have gained among other things by their campaign on behalf of the General Staff!

This affair is drawing to a close at last. One way or another it will soon be over. But can it end for good and all? – It will only end to begin again.

For we must not make any mistake. The campaign carried on by Boulanger and the present campaign are one, When Boulanger was dead and buried the same forces, the same men name together again to carry on the campaign on behalf of the General Staff. The same alliance among the monarchists of all colors – Bonapartists, Legitimists, and Orleanists – among Republicans desiring a military dictatorship and Caesarian Republicans represented by the *Intransigent*, formed itself anew to shield the Esterhazys and the Paty de Clams.

Same men, same public!

Bad horse, General Boulanger? Take another, there are the generals and the staff to choose from. If the one chosen is found wanting, try again; there is a Marchand, there is a Bonaparte if he will only aim at dictatorship, and as long as he has the stuff of a Caesar in him.

¹⁰⁸ Originally published in *Les Temps Nouveaux* as “Césarisme” in five parts between 3 December 1898 and 21 January 1899. (Back Flag)

Some see in a Caesar the return of monarchy, others “revenge” – and they act in concert. They have been told in Petersburg, “Find a King, an Emperor, a dictator – then we shall help you.” And so they go forth in quest of a Caesar.

To have a Caesar they must have an army that walks in the dark under the orders of a general and his staff. That is, at any rate, their idea, the idea of Caesarians, of Bonapartists, who do not know the A B C of war, and who believe that a Caesar and discipline are the only requisites to achieve victory.

And they, therefore, go in quest of a “general.” If they were to find a Bonaparte tomorrow – and there is a Bonapartist pretender qualifying at the Russian court today – Monarchists, Republicans in favor of military dictatorship and Republicans haunted by “revenge” would be ready to offer him the same platitudes as they have already offered the Imperial Russian Government.

Caesarism – that is the truth underlying all agitations that have occurred since many years in France. The truth underlying Boulangism and the Dreyfus affair. We said so at the time of the Boulangist campaign, we say so now, and we shall have to repeat it.

II

We shall probably be told that Rochefort and “Caesarism” cannot be unused in the same breath. Is the name of Rochefort, the valiant revolutionist under the Empire, the over-thrower of strong governments, the worker’s and rebel’s champion, the friend of oppressed nationalities, not alone sufficient guarantee against Caesarism?

But there are situations more powerful than men; situations which, accepted by an error of judgment, drive men in a very different direction to the one they would have chosen had they kept their liberty of choice.

It is therefore infinitely more to the purpose to consider situations and tendencies of thought than to busy ourselves about men who represent these opinions. Instead of speaking about the editor of the *Intransigeant* and explaining the causes that make him act one way or another, it is infinitely more useful to speak of his readers. These alarm us by their desire for a dictator, by their fatal drift toward Caesarism.

The horror of the situation, the tragical side of modern France, is that during the last seven or eight years the *Intransigeant* with its Boulangist dictatorship, as bowing down to Russian despotism, its Anti-Semitism and its defence of a military tribunal as well as of Esterhazy and his associates, has always represented more than a hundred thousand Republicans in Paris and several million Republicans in the provinces.

The danger lies in that mass of Republicans ever ready to acclaim a military *coup d'état* so as to have their revenge; just as they were ready in 1851 to hail a

Bonaparte who would find “the solution of the social question.”

It is faith in a Saviour, love of a victorious Caesar that agitates us. As to Rochefort, he only follows the current. He may have strengthened it, but he did not create it.

Since the Empire, these Republican bourgeois have learned nothing.

Why did they reproach Napoleon III when they attacked him? Was it because he was an Emperor? Not the least in the world! They reproached him because he was Napoleon *the Little* instead of being Napoleon *the Great*.

If he had solved the social question as he promised! If he had paraded the tricolour flag in Europe and in America! If he had been able to checkmate Prussia after Sadowa, create an empire under a French protectorate in Mexico, imposing all the while “Treaties of Paris,” as he had imposed one on Russia! And if his wife, instead of being a Montijo, had been a German princess, like the one who a little while since made Republicans shed tears at the mere sight of her driving through Paris with her baby! – Then they would have forgiven him anything.

And when the “brave general” offered himself in person as a dictator, how eager they were to forgive him!

All Geneva knew of his visit to Prince Napoleon. We ourselves, who take so little interest in this stepping-stone of Monarchist pretenders, knew the precise date of the visit. But Caesarian Republicans soon overlooked these peccadilloes.

Who, then, does not know that Boulangist money came from Orleanists and even from Russia? Who except those who wished to remain ignorant, did not know that in the eyes of the Russian Government Boulanger was the Pretender to dictatorship, and was supported by the Russian Court *to prepare the return of Monarchy to France?*

Indeed, it was only necessary to read the Russian *Official Messenger* to learn it, But these Republicans wished to know nothing about it. ‘They had found their Caesar, and they shut their eyes to the rest. They run after the General’s black horse even into the stables of a Prince Napoleon,

We may be told that these partisans of dictatorship were too simpleminded and suspected nothing; that they were duped. Maybe; it has always been such simple-minded men, half closing their eyes till they only see the plume they wish to run after, who have in all times done the greatest mischief to their country. Men like these are paving the way for fresh misfortunes at the present time.

And let them not tell us either that “it does not matter so long as Boulanger retakes Metz! Should he get troublesome later on, he can be stabbed!” This is humbug – one of those theatrical phrases that kill the

true heart of a nation. There was much talk, but it was not so easy to find a Brutus to stab Napoleon III, or the ferocious Thiers.

See, again, Caesarians at work clueing the Russian Alliance, the “Cursed Alliance” as it will someday be salted by French historians.

Once upon a time, it was said, with much semblance of truth, that this Alliance was Queen Victoria’s work. When William II came over to the Cowes Regatta for the first time, he said to his grand-mama that the armaments imposed on Germany by France were ruining the Empire, and that he had resolved to put an end to it, once and for all, by a new war. The Queen then summoned Lord Salisbury (so they say), and ordered him to write to Alexander III in her name: that the only way to avoid a disastrous war for Europe was to oppose a Franco-Russian Alliance to the Triple Alliance. She endeavoured to make him conclude such an alliance

Be this; version true or not, be it a legend if you will, it proves one thing: that about ten years ago the necessity of a Franco-Russian Alliance, opposed to the Triple was recognised by rulers.

It is true that another way of paralysing the formidable Alliance that threatened the dismemberment of France was by removing Italy from it. But this would not have suited the Jesuits.

What would His Holiness, the Pope, have said to a French alliance with a King whom he looks upon as a thief? And as Clericalism governs France, and Catholics like Drumont and Déroulède are on friendly terms with Caesarian Republicans, we understand that the latter could not even dream of entertaining a proposal that would separate them from their Caesarian co-religionists at a stroke. From time to time Rochefort spoke of a Latin Alliance; but he found no echo and thought no more about it. It became, therefore, necessary to turn to Russia.

Russia, menaced by Germany and England, was in great need of a friend. Why, then, were Russians not eager for an alliance with France?

Why, to be sure, because the French Republic has always been the pet aversion of the Tsars of Russia! A Republic in France has always been more detested by them than Englishmen in Constantinople.

When in September 1870, after the proclamation of the Republic, all Russia was unanimous in desiring that this Government should prevent Germany from crushing France, Alexander II eagerly allowed the armies of Germany to buy furs in Russia for the winter campaign. He was even prodigal in his affection towards the victors. He was stupidly transported with joy on hearing of their victories.

When the Republic was established, he sent to Paris his most intimate friend, a certain Abaza, who remained there till his death, and conspired with the d’Orleans for their return to the throne of France. Besides an official ambassador who was in treaty with the Republic, there was this beloved friend of the Tsar in league with the d’Orleans. We know how much champagne was drunk by Russian Princes on their visits to the d’Orleans.

When, in 1876, Alexander II with his well-known brutish manners, sent away the Ambassador, General Appert, what did the reptile organs of the Russian Government say? We could hardly credit it had we not read it ourselves in the *Novoie Fremia* that took its order’s from official circles:

“We do not need a French Ambassador; any hairdresser would do to represent the Republic. If we allow France to send us an Ambassador, it is only by *virtue* of her historical past – not in consideration of her present strife.”

Is this clear enough?

The Tsars of Russia have never for a moment abandoned the idea of re-establishing monarchy in France. The Republic was the obstacle to an alliance. How, then, was that obstacle removed?

By very simple means. By giving pledges that, in accord with St. Petersburg, they would *also work in France* for the restoration of Monarchy.

That is the true basis, the only serious basis of the famous Russian agreement.

Far be it from me to think that Rochefort was ever invited to accept this basis, or that Russian diplomatists or their sub-agents would be stupid enough to speak to him about it. – To what end? If he only promised to be silent and to let things take their course; if he only promised to work for the alliance without examining its motives – what more was needed?

Did not the Republican press open its columns to insert reports like those concerning the massacre of our brothers in Vakutsk, and the flogging to death of Madame Schida? And that lying report that there were no longer any political prisoners in Siberia? We read this report in the *Intransigent*

Did not the same Republican press make ample apology for its Republicanism by sending a wreath to the tomb of that arch-blackguard Katkov, that fatal genius of both Alexanders who drove Alexander II from reaction to reaction right under the bombs of revolutionists, and who in company with Andrieux – always those same fatal men of Boulanism – insisted, at the Court of Alexander III who was hesitating and ready to assemble representatives of the people, that the Tsar should do nothing of the sort, but confine himself to bringing police from France, exterminating revolutionists, mid proclaiming, himself more of an Autocrat than ever?

Did not the Republican press, by becoming Caesarian, work enough for Monarchy? – “Find a general and we will support you,” had been suggested to them from St. Petersburg, which in plain language signified: “Our conditions are that you prepare a Monarchy.” And they at once began to shout “Give us a Caesar!”

Never will all the harm this Alliance has done to France, nor all the misfortunes it still holds in reserve for her be fathomed. Let us hope there will not be a fresh disaster or a new dismemberment!

– “But our revenge!” They still cry: “It is for our revenge that we make all these sacrifices of ourselves, of our opinions, of our dignity.”

Well, then, let us speak of this revenge that serves to hide so many crimes

III

We know the answer that will be given us by the Monarchist-Caesarian coalition beforehand.

We shall be told: “It is all very well far you Anarchists, who live on dreams, to treat these national questions lightly. But for us who know that the German Empire is only awaiting a favourable opportunity to wrest now provinces from us, to dismember France, or to crush us by exacting contributions, to occupy our towns, to rule us with the Prussian sabre; for us it is a question of life or death. And that is why we are ready to sacrifice our liberties to rid us of this nightmare of invasion.”

It would be enough to read again what Bakunin said during the war of 1870, in those “Letters to a Frenchman on the present crisis,” or what he wrote immediately after the war in his “Knutto-Germanic Empire,” it would be enough to read what we have written so often on the question of nationalities to understand that such an answer cannot apply to Anarchists.

We do not treat questions of nationality lightly, and we are firmly persuaded that as long as there are States, be they called Empires, Kingdoms, bourgeois Republics or even Social Democratic Republics, the danger of a weak nation being invaded, crushed and exploited by its more powerful neighbours will remain.

However weak France may be, did not Ferry, hardly fifteen or sixteen years ago; propose to Germany, Italy and Austria to divide Switzerland? – It is known today. If Germany refused to join this enterprise, it was only because its rulers did not think the time propitious.

While the middle-classes are the rulers, and so long as there are States, so long will there be danger of invasion for the weaker countries. The danger exists in stern reality for France.

Nay, more. We are convinced that the triumph of Germany in 1870 has retarded the social revolution for many years.

In two ways. The triumph of Germany was the triumph of militarism in Europe, of military and political despotism; and at the same time the worship of the State, of authority and of State Socialism, which in reality nothing but State capitalism, triumphed in the ideas of a whole generation. If these ideas crib and confine the European mind at present, and even the minds of revolutionists, we owe it in a great measure to the triumph of the military German Empire. On the other hand, if France is inclined to slide down the slope of Caesarism instead of being the vanguard of the Communist-Communist movement towards which her evolution tended, it is also in consequence of the disaster of 1870.

A nation that a day’s march from its capital, has an alien fortress like Metz, with other fortresses at its flanks, where half a million soldiers with arms and baggage can be

mustered in time of peace and attack the capital in twenty-four hours; a nation under these conditions is forcibly arrested in its natural development. Metz and Strasburg have on France the same effect as the Russian citadel that dominates Poland in Warsaw, the same effect that the Four Austrian fortresses had on Italy, the same effect that Turkish fortresses had keeping Serbia under their cannons till 1878, the effect of retarding all evolution in France, of directing the mind to foreign affairs instead of keeping it fixed on business at home. And what we mark with regret is that even advanced parties in Germany, that is to say the more or less socialist Democratic party, does not understand this and does not ask for Metz to be razed to the ground like Luxemburg.

To resume its evolution, France must get rid of German fortresses near the gates of Paris. She must cease feeling a well-founded fear of an invasion and a dismemberment weighing on her. She must feel capable of resisting an enemy who is only waiting for a propitious moment to hurl an army, numerically stronger than the French army, on French territory.

We do not treat questions of nationality lightly, and we are firmly persuaded that as long as there are States, be they called Empires, Kingdoms, bourgeois Republics or even Social Democratic Republics, the danger of a weak nation being invaded, crushed and exploited by its more powerful neighbours will remain.

Is this clear? The present military situation is a danger. It is a hindrance to normal development in France. It must cease. But what has to be done to put an end to this danger? That's the question!

We must understand to begin with that in the phase of development represented by France and England, they are the two nations the most advanced towards a social revolution; and that at the risk of going astray and consequently retrograding, which for a nation, as for an individual or a party, is always, without exception, a menace of death, these two nations are compelled to march boldly onwards, without loss of time towards the solution of the social question.

France, represented by her best men, the workers and honest educated individuals, should have put herself at the head of the social movement as a whole. At least those who pretend to enlighten public opinion should have taken the initiative. It was the duty of the "uncompromising" Radical press, a far more sacred duty than that of standing up for military justice, to put itself at the head of this movement towards the socialisation of the means of production on the one hand, and towards the abolition of that bloodsucker, the State, on the other.

Had France placed herself at the head of the social movement of our time, for it was her duty, clearly proved by the two great revolutions she had undergone, while Germany is only now preparing her 1848; had France become the centre where the great questions of the clay could have been fully debated with the lucidity of the French mind and with the practical force of spontaneous organisation that the French nation possesses in the highest degree (we say it consciously, and are ready to prove it), then France would have become invincible, Not by her cannons, but: by the force of attraction that she would have exercised on the whole of Europe. All popular Europe would have been with her. But when we see the so-called uncompromising Radicals of today run after the horse of a military man, or after the train of an Empress, or walk arm-in-arm with an Esterhazy, than these Monarchists and Caesarians inspire contempt for France in Russia, Germany, and England, because Russians, Germans, and Englishmen mistake them for the representatives of the French nation, while they are only its traitors.

Traitors and fools! For they must be to still believe that it was the great captains and generals who made the success of the French armies from 1793 to 1811, when the real strength of the army was due to great principles such as the abolition of serfdom which took place wherever the tricolour flag was carried by the ragged sans-culottes. From the time that the abolition of serfdom no longer followed the army of Napoleon in Russia, the great Napoleon was as stupid as his successor the little one, and as all his successors will be who are being prepared by Monarchists, Caesarians and

their allies, and those who rally to them, Once Napoleon had ceased to be a destroyer of feudalism, he made one mistake after another. The greatest, not to mention others, was that of having to fight in Russia against an army that was determined to hold its own, because it saw in the French, not liberators, but mere plunderers; while in the earlier part of Napoleon's career, in Germany and in Italy, he was received by the people with open arms, and had only to disperse soldiers who were only too willing not to fight, as they looked upon Frenchmen as their liberators.

To make France a true home for the worker and the peasant, and the vanguard of progress marching towards the social revolution would have been worth while working for? In short, it would have been an easier task to make that land of the Commune, France, progress towards the abolition of the centralisation that is killing her; towards the destruction of those parasites, those functionaries that gnaw her, to make her communes real communes, freed from Caesarian and Imperial yoke, that after twenty seven years of Republic crushes the vitality of the country as much today as it did under Napoleon

By what right do these "Radicals," these Caesarians call themselves Radicals, if they never do anything even to republicanise France? If the social question leaves them cold? If the well-being of the worker only comes back to their memory when they want to shine at the head of a subscription? If the liberty of communes, only solid basis of a republic, does not interest them? If all their so-called Radicalism consists in a few words of sympathy addressed from time to time, under Petersburg censorship, to a few rebels, or in the dragging in of some red herring such as the separation of "Church and State" that can mean anything you wish.

Yes, we know the answer that will be given to us:

"France is not prepared for this." Firstly, it is a sorry lie as it needed all the priesthood's power, all the Monarchists' money and all Rochefort's talent to arrest France's movement towards Socialism, and to impassion the country for Boulangism., Anti-Dreyfusism and anti-Semitism. But even if it were so, what have Caesarian circles done to awaken progressive trends of thought? Nothing, absolutely nothing, They preach the contrary, the return to military dictatorship, to Caesarism!

– It is Boulanger who is going to do all this for us!" This is the refrain that exploiters and Panamists of journalism have sung to us: Boulangism, alliance, anti-Semitism, militarism.

But now let us descend another degree; let us not speak of an ideal to them that they have so well succeeded in stifling. Let us examine them on common-place questions such as the defence of France and see what they have done.

The British Workers and the War

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

For the last years the Labour Movement in this country has been going on very indifferently. There was a great enthusiasm for Socialism in the years 1886-87, but in proportion as that enthusiasm died out in the few middle class people who had joined the socialist movement, and in proportion as the latter began to look upon it as upon a means of becoming M.P.'s, the movement began to lose its energy. Undoubtedly the ideas have been spreading, but the workers, too indolent, failed to make out of it the powerful and the indomitable movement which it ought to be by this time.

Again, there was a revival in the year 1890 when the Eight Hours Movement began. The workers conceived for a moment the hope

of storming the position by means of immense May Day demonstrations which, if they had retained their original character, would have ended in strikes, nearly *general*, and in great labour movements. However, here again the first impetus was not maintained.

Politicians stepped in, and the May Day demonstrations soon fell to the level of First Sunday in May gatherings devoid of any vigour. The demoralising idea of

utilising the movement for electoral purposes gained the upper hand, and at the present moment these gatherings have lost all the importance they promised to acquire ten years ago. The great movement fell flat.

And, finally, the intervention of the different fractions of British Socialists in the last elections in favour of the Conservatives, gave a last blow to the Socialist movement. The result of these most unhappy tactics was not to give to the Liberals and Radicals the lesson which the promoters of these tactics expected to give. It was only to give a free hand to the Conservative party in their reactionary inner policy in favour of the Church and Landlordism, and to their foreign policy of Imperialism.

Three times already, since the Salisbury-Chamberlain Ministry came to power, this country was brought to the verge of war. Once with the United States on the

Venezuela question, when most submissive excuses and appeals to a common Anglo-Saxon origin had to be made by the British literary people and the leaders of London "Society" to appease the anger aroused in the States by the arrogant tone of the Salisbury despatches.

War with Russia was only prevented by the skilled move of Russian diplomacy which convoked a Peace Congress and thus gave the English Liberals the possibility of starting a Peace agitation.

And, for a third time, this country was on the eve of being plunged into the most fratricidal of all wars – a war with France – when most arrogant notes were sent across the Channel in connection with the rather

insignificant Fashoda incident. It was only the advice of the Russian diplomats and the coolness of M. Delcassé (who probably saw the Transvaal war coming and foresaw its consequences) which prevented the two nations from being thrown by the British landlords, Church people and capitalists into a war of extermination against each other.

At last the Transvaal war broke out. The handful of unscrupulous

capitalists who have got hold of the public opinion of this country had evidently decided, in their wisdom, that the two peasant republics (whose aggregate *white* population hardly reaches 520,000 inhabitants, and whose aggregate Boer population hardly equals that of Leeds or Newcastle, *i.e.* 350,000 men, women and numerous children included) could be smashed and annexed in a couple of weeks. To go hundred against one (38,000,000 British against 350,000 Boers) and thus to annex to Britain one of the richest goldfields in the world, was too good an opportunity to be missed. The Boers don't allow the blacks to work in the gold mines; and we were told lately by the Company directors that the value of the shares of the different South African companies would double and treble if black labour could be introduced in the Transvaal gold mines.

The blacks have been brought by *English law* into serfdom, and are compelled in Kimberley to work for

they do still talk of "political preponderance," but... you will see that it is quite simply *economic preponderance* in international markets. What Germany, France, Russia, England, Austria seek to conquer at this moment is not military domination; it is economic domination. It is the right to impose their goods, their tariffs on their neighbours; the right to exploit industrially backward peoples

– "War", *Words of a Rebel*

whatever wages a Company chooses to pay them; black labour would thus be an excellent means to get rid of the white labourers, who insist upon being paid high wages. This prospect of introducing the Kimberley slavery at Johannesburg was again too good to be lost by our rulers and swells, most of whom are important shareholders in those companies.

Is it not touching indeed, to see all the Chamberlain family, down to the new-born babies, inscribed as holders of shares in the South African companies (25 shares being held by the babies and up to 1,000 being held by the full-grown members of this pernicious family)! And is it not still more touching to learn that in the Kynoch Company, which supplied ammunition to the Boers, the brother of the head of the dynasty (Mr. Arthur Chamberlain, brother of Joseph) is the chief director? True that Mr. Arthur Chamberlain has confessed, in his organ *The Birmingham Post*, having supplied ammunition to the Boers only *up to the year 1896*; but we know too well the value of such “confessions with a limitation” to attach much importance to the latter. The “brother” has confessed that it is with Kynoch’s bullets and Arthur’s cartridges that British soldiers have been shot on the Tugela and the Modder. What can we expect more from his modesty?

The result of this war is well known. *Fifteen thousand men* (3,000 prisoners and 12,000 killed, wounded and dead from disease¹) are the item of the losses incurred by this country in breaking through the first line of defence of the Boers: the line which they had drawn *on British territory* and by means of which they have prevented, for four months in succession, a 38,000,000 strong nation, supported by her colonies, from invading Boer territory. If we add to the British losses the losses of the Boers, and put them at one-half only of the former, it will mean that no less than 6,000 Boer farmers have been mowed down. Men who demanded nothing but to be left cultivating their fields and bringing under culture such parts of the globe as no one else has ever desired or shown himself capable of cultivating.

More than 20,000 men have thus been sacrificed, during the *first* act of the drama, to the greediness of the Rothschilds, the De Beers, the Rhodeses, the Chamberlains and other international bloodsuckers of the Lombard Streets of London and other European capitals.

How many thousands more will have to be sacrificed now the Boers have taken to their *second line of defence*, which they have drawn across their own territory and which their women, in addition to their children, will aid them to defend?

The laager abandoned recently near Arundel was found to contain all sorts of women’s attire, and even feeding bottles for babies, which had been left behind. Even outside of their own territory, in Cape Colony and in Natal, the Boer women share by the side of their men all the hardships of war. The “non-combatants” make in every army about one-third of the soldiers. But, when a nation takes to arms to defend her independence, everyone must be a combatant, and the Boer women, carrying their babies at their breasts, undertook to be the Non-combatants who cook the food for the men while they lie in the trenches, and who attend to their horses, to the loading and unloading of the waggons, and so on.

This was in the first line of defence; but now that the Boers have to defend their second line, on their own mother land, we shall certainly see the women, rifle in hand, defending their trenches. The children, down to sixteen years of age, are already in the trenches. The boys under that age, from ten to sixteen, are already practising with their rifles, as we saw in a photo taken by a Russian photographer in the Transvaal. Now their mothers will join them. Since the beginning of the war they have been pressing upon Kruger to permit them to form women-commandoes, and the old man was at last compelled to promise that such commandoes will be formed if the British invade the Transvaal.

The Boer mothers can safely go with the men to the trenches. From their fathers and brothers they will not hear a word that may offend their ears. They will not be in the company of those whom barrack life is rearing, and will be received as mothers and sisters.

And now, when we ask ourselves: “Who is the cause of all that bloodshed?” our pen refuses to write down the names of the Chamberlains, the Rhodes, the Rothschilds and other Christian or Jewish gold-grabbers. These are only the leaders of a current whose deepest springs are in the hearts of the whole of the British nation.

Yes, the whole English nation has been abetting the commission of this crime in South Africa. The British workers as well as their Jingo masters!

From the time of John Bright, when the British proletarians turned their backs to the Socialists who worked amongst the Chartists, the workers of this country have been induced to believe that the more their masters plunder in distant lands, the richer they will be themselves.

Under the pretext of finding new “markets” and keeping “open doors”, the British workers have supported their masters in their policy of sucking the blood out of Turkish and Indian peasants, Egyptian fellaheen and Negro slaves. All the world had to be turned into a field of exploitation for the British, and the British workers

¹ The British casualties now total more than 18,000.

have supported this policy with all their hearts for nearly half a century.

When the open town of Alexandria in Egypt was bombarded by the British ironclads, without even showing the mere pretext of “resistance”, and when the church bells rang all over England to glorify this massacre: where were the English workers to protest against this act of highway-robbery in which France refused to join? When the Matabeles were shot “like nine-pins,” their cattle were taken, and serfdom – true serfdom, I mean – was imposed upon the survivors, what did the British workers say to that? They gave their approval.

“After all,” the worker said, “there is competition all round to our manufactures; so it will not be bad at all if so rich a country as Egypt be brought under English rule, and if so many millions of blacks are enslaved to us.” The idea that the wealth of a nation is measured by the number of rich men in the nation, is so deeply rooted in England that by this time many millions of so-called “free-born Britons” feel happy to have thousands of rich men in the country, and themselves to earn their living as servants, as valets, as gardeners, as butchers and grocers in the service of those who plunder distant lands, or by supplying luxuries and amusements to those adventurers when they retire to a mansion or a cottage in Surrey or the Isle of Wight.

Britain is literally studded with such mansions and houses belonging to officers and officials retired on full pensions after a short service in India and the Colonies, to bankers enriched abroad, to serf-owners in Africa and the like. The main wealth of the nation is no longer made by the country’s manufactures. Her chief net income is the £80,000,000 that she gets every year as interest upon the more than £2,000,000,000 distributed as loans all over the world: loans mostly twice repaid already (as Hyndman has proved, figures in hand) by Egypt, but still inscribed to their full value on the books of the Egyptian Treasury. Banking (*i.e.* trade in money), not the sale of British manufactured goods, is now the great and profitable occupation of the British in every town of the far East and far West. England is no more “a nation of shopkeepers,” as Napoleon I said and Mr. Huxley repeated with pride, but a nation of moneylenders and traders in gold. And, this being so, the British workers become more and more the servants and pleasure providers for rich moneylenders, for

“administrators” of India who have brought it to the verge of starvation, for bankers trading in money in Asia and elsewhere, for the Armstrongs and Whitworths, with their sub-Armstrongs and sub-Whitworths, all enriched in providing the British nation with a fleet in order to maintain these sources of income.

Masters enriched by plundering all over the world, and well paid servants to those masters: this is what the British nation is going to become with gigantic strides. The present war was only the means of making a further great step in this direction.

The worst of it is that, far from condemning this policy of the nation, the great mass of the British workers, and especially the London workers, openly support it. The ideal of the “free Briton” seems now to be a well-paid servant to the man who has made a fortress at

Johannesburg, at Cairo or at Hong Kong; his ambition is to have his daughter wearing the slavey-bonnet in the rich man’s mansion, and his son running in a butcher, grocer or milk cart to take orders at the “gents” doors; to be employed in the stables or the gardens of an African Croesus and to glory in the horses and gardens of his master; to carry all over England the mistresses of the rich men on their holiday trips; to amuse them in the theatres and circuses; to sweep the streets for them; to build them mansions; to light them by electricity and to supply them with luxuries from all corners of the world. To be a servant to the rich who plunder the world: this now seems to be the highest ideal of the “free Briton”, and the war is nothing but an attempt to go further and further in that direction.

When an agitation was started in this country, in 1886, to nationalise the land, to return it to culture, to give the mass of the English nation access to their own land and to create a wealthy agricultural population which would be the best customer to British manufactures: what echo did that agitation find amidst the British workers, apart from platonic resolutions voted at the Trade Union Congress and forgotten as soon as the Congress was over?

No, to cultivate the land may be good for Boers and Hungarians; not for us. Is it not far better to say to our masters: “Plunder the world, and, provided you bribe us

But modern wars are not just the slaughter, the madness of massacre, the return to savagery. They are also the destruction of human labour on a colossal scale; and we continually feel the effect of this destruction *in time of peace* by an increase in the misery amongst the poor, parallel to the enrichment of the wealthy.

– “War and Industry”, *Modern Science and Anarchy*

with some share of the spoil, we shall give you full power for that; we shall stand by you, glorify you, erect you bronze statues, and throw eggs and pen-knives at your opponents.” And this was what the British workers have never ceased to say to their masters: when they seized Egypt, when they shot down the Matabele, when the great Empire took for itself the cattle of these starvelings and imposed serfdom upon them amidst a Jesuitic talk about Liberty!

Let us hope, at least, that the heroic struggle of the Boers for their independence, and all the blows that this war is going to give the just-mentioned policy of Britain in Asia and everywhere will at last open the eyes of the British workers and show them that a policy of robbery and of sharing the spoil is not always the easiest way to well-being for a nation any more than for individuals. The “Mafia” system carried on by a nation is as risky for it as the “Mafia” organised in Italy by individual robbers.

An Urgent Need: A Labour Convention

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist-Communism, September-October, 1900

People begin to realise that the prospects for this country are gloomy. We shall not ask why all this suffering has been inflicted upon the Boers? why a thrifty, laborious nation has been ruined? Men seldom realise the harm they are doing. But we ask how the British workmen judge the results of the South African war which they themselves have now to face?

It was to have been ended victoriously last Christmas; but it is not ended yet, and every additional month that it lasts means for this country new losses, in addition to the 70,000 or 90,000 men already lost. Not all of them, of course, will be buried in Africa; but two thirds of those who return will be incapacitated for life, and about one half of them are already invalids who will have to be cared for the rest of their days. Roberts, Methuen and Kitchener are great men-destroyers who have killed more English soldiers than all the Boer commandoes.

As to the money cost of the war, it will be realised soon when the income tax is raised next winter to 1/8 in the pound, and other taxes are levied. In addition to the £75,000,000 already squandered, there are the large stores of war material, accumulated for years and valued at £50,000,000, which have been destroyed through this war. They will have to be refilled, and in one shape or another the tax-payer donkey will have to pay the £50,000,000 as well, and to learn that the waving of flags is the costliest of all amusements.

Then, every sensible man understands that if the Transvaal and the Free State are “annexed,” an army of occupation, 50,000 strong, will be required to keep South Africa in the sort of “order” that Russia keeps at Warsaw. The War Office has no illusions upon this point, and knows that 50,000 men in South Africa cost as much as 100,000 at home.

you will have war... if the Revolution does not come to put an end to this situation, as absurd as it is despicable.... Only the revolution, having put the tool, the machine, the raw material, and all social wealth into the hands of the producer and reorganised all production so as to satisfy the needs of those who create all, will be able to put an end to wars for markets.

– “War”, *Words of a Rebel*

Then, the misdeeds of the missionaries, of the railway engineers, and especially of that gang of plutocrats at Shanghai, who are anxious to begin in China the landgrabbing and the “going to Brighton” (to use Salisbury’s *simile*) which the Chamberlains, the Rhodeses and the titled bankers have carried on in Africa – the misdeeds of all this precious lot have proved to be too much even for Chinese patience. The mass of

the Chinese people have had enough of those Catholic and Protestant swindlers who played upon the inexperience of a boy, the Emperor, making him issue edicts against the habits, customs and religion of a civilisation much older than ours; and the old land was aroused by the cry: “Down with the foreigners!” The Harmsworth- Rhodes’ lies-shop at Shanghai is hard at work to induce the British to rush into a war in the far East. This is precisely what the eastern Rhodeses and the local Harmsworths, Kynochs and Chamberlains want. They want war and annexations in the East.

But there is so much inflammable material on those coasts of the Yellow Sea, that one fine morning the country will perhaps awaken and find itself at war with some new foes, not so deadly in earnest as the Boer heroes, but only the more dangerous on account of their proximity.

Be it as it may, coal stands already at famine prices, and everything will rise in price in proportion. The fifty or hundred thousand workers who may find employment in the making of war material are but a trifle in comparison to the 5,000,000 workers engaged in supplying the daily needs of the British nation, and the sum total of purchases of what they manufacture is sure to fall to an immense extent within the next year. Strict economy is already the watchword of the richer classes.

Another crisis, much worse than that of 1886, is thus at our doors. Every sensible man in the country feels it and foresees it.

What have we, then, to do in these circumstances?

If the Boer war had been the work of the fatal Chamberlain family, of Rhodes and of banking dukes and lords only, the evil would not have been so great. The confiscation of the British estates and of the South African spoil of these war-promoters might have helped to cover the expenses of the war. The independence of the Transvaal would have been recognised, and so on.

But the worst is that all the nation – and the British workers above all – are responsible for the South African war. To plead ignorance is of no use: the British workers did not want to know the truth; and instead of making their mighty voice heard in the matter before, during the war, or even at this last moment, they stoned, or allowed to be stoned, the few daring enough to tell the truth.

The abdication by the British workers of their right and duty to control the affairs of the nation, this surrender of the workers to the upper ten thousand is not of yesterday's date. It dates from 1886.

Everyone remembers the great awakening of Socialist thought which took place in that year, amidst the then prevailing crisis.

Two roads were opened then before the British working men: One was to boldly hoist the flag of the Social Revolution, or at least of an era of great social reform. Speaking of reforms only, and only of those which were already ripe in the minds of the thinking portion of the people, the nationalisation of land, the socialisation of mines and docks, wide municipal enterprise in a

Socialist direction, and a powerful organisation of all trade-unions for wresting from the capitalists substantial concessions: these were the points upon which a formidable agitation could already be started. It was started; but the workers turned their backs to it.

The other road was to follow the leadership of the capitalists.

And this the workmen did. "Only remain quiet, only support us," the capitalists said, "and we promise you that, with the formidable resources for robbery which England possesses, we shall make so many annexations in all parts of the world, defying all principles of international law and custom (we are strong enough to do so), that we shall prepare for you an era of prosperity which has never been witnessed in the history of England. Only fancy the spoil of Egypt, the riches which millions of black slaves in Africa, and yellow slaves in Asia, will pour into the country when we compel them to work for us. All this will enrich us capitalists first; but streams of gold will flow into your pockets as well! Leave all that Socialist trash for starving foreigners on the Continent. We shall conquer the world, and rule world – and pocket all the money. You know by experience that nothing is more profitable than to be the ruling class! So follow us! Give us a free hand! And – Britain forever!"

And now, thanks to these Boer heroes, all this splendid picture of world-robbery falls to pieces. The *prestige* is gone. "Two hundred thousand British soldiers cannot conquer forty thousand Boer burghers," is whispered far and wide in Asia and Africa. And where formerly a few red uniforms would do "to keep order" scores of thousands of khakis will hence be required. As soon as India recovers from the present famine, the plague, the cholera and all the other blessings of British rule, we shall see so powerful a Mussulman movement beginning in Asia against the Europeans, that in comparison with it the Boxers will appear mere babies,

The climax of the policy of robbery has been reached. Annexations no longer pay. And the Cains of the family – the Kynoch-Chamberlains – will take care to supply with small and big arms, the Mussulmans, the Negroes, the Hindoos and all other "annexed" nations, British or otherwise. *Annexations will not pay any more*; and the British, like all other nations, will have to look to their own work and their own land to get from them the well-being which the workers strive for.

The country is thus bound to revert to the point at which it parted with Socialism in 1886, and to undertake a complete revision of all the principles of our present economic life. Otherwise it will have to go where Holland, Genoa and Spain went in the centuries past.

We think, therefore, that the convocation of a general Convention of all those who take to heart the question of Labour and Capital is now of absolutely necessity.

The results of the elections prove its urgency.

The Land-nationalisers, whom the Socialists have hitherto treated with insufficient attention, ought to be invited. All the Socialist organisations, of all possible shades of opinion (Independent Labour Party, Social Democrats and

Anarchists), the Trade Unions, the Co-operators and all those who care to revise the present conditions of Labour and Capital ought to be asked to join that Convention.

It is evident that such a Convention ought to keep free from all party and electoral politics. We don't mean that the political parties should abandon their policy. This is not possible. What is wanted – supremely wanted at this moment – is to sound the alarm before the nation, in a voice that would be heard far and wide, above the party divisions and factions.

The Convention need not be numerous, but it must be outspoken. What is wanted at this moment is a frank, bold voice coming from men of all advanced parties, which would arouse workers all over the country, to whatever party they belong, and show them that their interests are separated from, and opposed to, the interests of *all the money-makers*, Tory, Liberal, Unionist or whatever their names may be.

Party discussion may be totally avoided at such a Convention, and they will not be introduced if only the great questions of nationalisation, or rather Socialisation, of land, coal mines, railways, docks,

dwelling houses, stores and so on, are seriously brought under discussion, and if a few men, at least, come to it with the earnest desire of making a new and a great effort to awaken the workingmen and to unfold once

more the banner of Socialism in its broadest and widest sense. And if we leave the Convention with the firm intention of working hard after it, of convoking local conventions in every city and every county of Britain for the same purpose, *all* the advanced parties will feel the effect of a new life beginning in each

Besides, we must not forget that the industrial wave, in rolling from West to East, has also invaded Italy, Austria, and Russia. And these States are in their turn asserting their “right” – the right of their monopolists to the feeding frenzy in Africa and Asia.

– “War”, *Modern Science and Anarchy*

of them.

We earnestly submit, therefore, to our friends of all advanced parties who feel the necessity of a Socialist awakening, the idea of a LABOUR CONFERENCE. All those who understand the need of a Socialist revival, all those who accept, however partially, Socialist ideas, without distinction of creed and party, ought to come together – not to a formal congress, but to a private conference for a couple of days to settle what is to be done for widely spreading Socialist ideas and ideas of Socialisation amongst the British workers. All advanced parties, we repeat, will only gain if such a conference takes place and if it pledges itself to do its utmost to spread Socialist ideas broadcast through the country.

[PS. These lines were written before the International Socialist Congress took place at Paris. Now that it has taken place and half the time has been wasted in futile disputes, while the questions of Socialism proper were dispatched in the Commission without even being discussed at the Congress, and now that the elections have shown how little English workers have hitherto assimilated Socialist ideas, the necessity of a Conference for the promotion of Socialist propaganda appears only the more urgent. Nothing but Socialism can put a stop to the growth of Imperialism.]

Literature, science, and art must be cultivated by free men. Only on this condition will they succeed in emancipating themselves from the yoke of the State, of Capital, and of the bourgeois mediocrity which stifles them.

– “The Need For Luxury”, *The Conquest of Bread*

One War Over — When is the Next?

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist-Communism, June 1902

The South African war is over. A territory larger than that of France has been laid waste. The rich farms that covered it have been burned; the cattle have been slaughtered; the population – men, women and children – have been murdered, carried away, decimated by disease; and the survivors will speak of the British invasion as the Russians speak still of the Mongol, or the Hungarians speak of the Turkish invasion of times gone by. Some thirty thousand of the invaders themselves have been killed in the battlefields; a hundred thousand of them have been incapacitated for life; and the whole of the invading nation has been thrown fifty years back in its intellectual, social and industrial development, in its social institutions and political ideals. Intellectually and morally the nation has gone back to what it was in the times of the last Georges.

And why was this war waged? For getting hold of certain gold mines, without which the South African companies – of which all the upper ten and titled robbers are either shareholders or debtors – would have become a mere stinking bubble that would have burst some time ago on the Stock Exchange. For becoming the only masters of millions of blacks, and after having destroyed their village-communities, taken their land and cattle, and imposed upon them a tax which they are quite unable to pay – to deliver these blacks to the gold-mining companies, saying to them: “Here are plenty of cattle for you. Make that cattle work for any wages you like, or no wages if you prefer! They are your serfs – slavery is antiquated, you know, but serfdom *is not*, and we introduce it! This is the reward for the willingness you have always shown to oblige the titled aristocracy with your shareholders’ millions.”

Three years they have sown death and devastation in Africa to achieve this result. They refrained from no cruelty and no barbarity in subduing the heroic little nation of 300,000 inhabitants, all told, which had defied the British Empire; – and when this result has been achieved, when peace is going to be concluded between the two bleeding combatants – what we have to ask ourselves is this: “The South African war is over, – when will the North African war begin?”

There is no use, indeed, in shutting our eyes to the real condition of things. The conquest of the Transvaal means *in an immediate future*, the conquest of Egypt. The conquest of the Johannesburg gold mines is only the first step towards the Cape to Cairo – “railway,” as they say when in reality they mean the Cape to Cairo

British territory. The South African war has rendered the North African war an historical necessity.

Every intelligent Britisher must have realised, indeed, by this time, that the conquest of the Boer republics was only possible on account of specially favourable conditions which prevailed on the continent. The German emperor preferred to take from Britain four or five good bribes, for keeping quiet. Even knights-errant become commercial in this age, and the German knight took, in exchange for the menace contained in his bellicose telegram, the following bribes: (1) the right of building a German railway in Asia Minor, (2) the right of putting his nose in the Yang-tse-kiang region, (3) the Samoan archipelago, and (4) – we undertake to make a little prediction – the port of Beira in the coming partition of Portuguese Africa. As to France, she was hampered by her ally, Russia, who can do nothing so long as her robberies on the Pacific and in Manchuria are not “consolidated.”

However, such favourable conditions will not last for ever, and the British statesmen’s dream is the complete annexation of Egypt and the Soudan. How much easier, indeed, it would have been to fight the Boers, if Britain could have moved against them fifty thousand Soudanese – which she could *not* do, as she is not yet the master of Egypt. An African empire, without an African army, would be as bad as India would have been without a native army in the hands of the British. But where to get this army? It cannot be composed of Boers. It can only be found in the Soudan, – and consequently the conquest of Egypt, even at the cost of an immediate war with France, is rendered absolutely unavoidable. British statesmen know it, and during the Fashoda incident they had tried to force France to accept a war with Britain, before the Boer war; to which the French statesmen wisely replied: “Fight the Boers first.” This has been done, and now a war with France for the “consolidation of the African empire,” as they say, will have to be fought.

Wars, wars, wars, – we have a provision of them in view for fifty years to come, and no one can say what will be the result of those wars for these islands. In Napoleon’s times this country had a resolute which other countries had not. It was totally exhausted by the Napoleonic wars, but it felt that, after the wars were over, it could and should become the pioneer of industrialism and conquer the world trade. Now, it has not that resource, – an easy enrichment having undermined the vital forces of the country, while so

many young and energetic competitors have grown round her. No one can, therefore, foretell the result of the policy of conquest which has been inaugurated in 1895, and of which the Transvaal war is only the first and the least dramatic incident.

But whose fault is it that the country has been thrown into that policy of war adventures?

Is it the fault of Chamberlain? of Rhodes? of the Stock Exchange?

No, certainly not.

It was, first of all, and above all, *the fault of the British worker*. They, the workers, ran like a flock of sheep behind Chamberlain. That man was *their* representative, *their* incarnation. One word from them, one important labour manifestation would have prevented the war from being declared. They did not want to say it.

Since 1885, when the first Socialist awakening began in this country, the British workers had been told by those middle class people whom they listened to, that they must not let themselves be dragged into the Socialist or

the Anarchist camp. "That is good for hungry and stupid Frenchmen, – not for the solid British worker who is accustomed to a well-being that the hungry German and Frenchee can never dream of!" – they were told, and they believed it. "Leave revolutions for those

continental fools! We have better things to do. Let us conquer Africa, China! More territory! More serfs all over the world! That will make us rich, and we, amalgamated dukes, princes and stockbrokers, will share our riches with you, brave British workers." And so they do now. They share the bread-tax in equal parts.

"Down with all you rascals! Give me back my land, my factories, the railways I have built and created – and I need no slaves in Africa!" – this is the only cry that the British workers ought to have had for all these bloodsuckers. And if

he is not intelligent enough to see where he is being driven by his leaders – the awakening will be sad, both for him and the whole of his country. Carthage, Genoa, have already perished from having had too many slaves. And England will be driven to the same dilemma: Either death or the Social Revolution.

The [economic] forces which could have provided harmony, well-being, and a new flowering of a libertarian civilisation if they had free play in society—when implemented within the framework of the State, that is to say, an organisation specifically developed to enrich the wealthy and to absorb all advances for the benefit of the privileged classes—these same forces become an instrument of oppression, privilege and endless wars. They accelerate the enrichment of the privileged, they increase the misery and subjugation of the poor.

– "War and Industry", *Modern Science and Anarchy*

The Russo-Japanese War

"La Guerre russo-japonaise", *Les Temps Nouveaux*, 5 March 1904

There has been much discussion recently, in the press, on the probable influence of war on the revolutionary movement in Russia. The German Social Democrats, the English, as much as some Russians, have the strangest expectations of a beneficent influence that this war might have in bringing about a regime of freedom in Russia.

Here is the letter with which our friend Kropotkin replied to the editor of *Le Soir*, who wrote to him asking his opinion.

Sir,

You ask me if the information published in several newspapers according to which I have recommended to my friends in Russia that they should not engage in any uprising against the Russian government for the duration of the war is correct or not?

I have given no such advice, because I am convinced that those on the ground will know perfectly well how

to guide themselves in their actions, by their own state of mind.

But, what I do maintain – contrary to a very widespread opinion in the west – is that this war is a calamity which will necessarily set back the development of a revolutionary movement in Russia. It will cost the Russian people enormous suffering, and will detract their attention from serious internal problems.

Indeed, I predict, sadly, that revolutionary agitation, which had grown so greatly amongst the Russian people – peasants and industrial workers – will necessarily be slowed, halted perhaps for a long time by the war. Instead of those grand questions – landed property, industrial, decentralisation etc., etc. – which made the general situation in Russia so similar to that of France on the eve of 1789, and promised that the collapse of absolutism – already well advanced – would be achieved at the same time as a profound, revolutionary change in economic conditions – instead of that, agitation will now be reduced to certain minimum questions. People will agitate over whether the war is prosecuted with more or less skill; whether this or that minister warrants confidence.

And if there is some great disaster, some new Plevna in the midst of the soldiers' acts of heroism – then patriotism even chauvinism will dominate the situation and cut short even purely political agitation.

Every war is evil – whether it ends in victory or defeat. Evil on the one hand for the combatants and on the other for the neutrals. I do not believe in “beneficent” wars. It was not defeat in Crimea which led to the abolition of serfdom and to reform in Russia, just as it was not war that brought the abolition of slavery to the United States, independence to Italy, nor the radical and rational movement of the mind in 1858-1864 all over Europe. Russia today *farà da sè* [will succeed by itself], without expecting its freedom from abroad.

As to those other very interesting questions that you put to me, you will perhaps find some answers in the following reflections:

It is a misfortune for the Russian people that, in Russia's quest to the East, it has not encountered any civilised people already in possession of the Manchurian Pacific Ocean coast. It is a misfortune that it has had to cultivate the deserts along the Amur and to build a railroad across those of Manchuria. This country will never be Russian. Chinese colonists have already invaded. And if, for example, the United States, wished to take possession of it tomorrow, the whole world, Russia included, would gain thereby.

But, does it follow that it would be desirable to see a United States as belligerent, and as full of imperialist dreams as Japan establish itself in Manchuria? I do not

think so. Certainly it would not, in the past, have been in the interests of European civilisation that England had added to her maritime power that of a continental nation, by establishing herself in Brittany or the Low Countries. Incidentally, Japan herself would soon lose whatever is appealing in her civilisation. The fruit of centuries of peace will disappear beneath a European uniform accompanied by the sound of a bad translation of *God Save the King!*

When we fight today, it is to ensure to our great industrialists a profit of thirty percent, to ensure the financial barons domination on the Stock Exchange, to the shareholders of mines and railways revenues of a hundred thousand francs... if we were a little bit more consistent, we would replace the birds of prey on our flags with a golden calf, their ancient emblems with a bag of gold... We would at least know for whom we slaughter.

– “War”, *Words of a Rebel*

I have not read the article by Mr Hyndman that you speak about; but, I have read many others in the English press, all inspired by the same “pro-Japanese chauvinism”! For my part, having no sympathy for the dreams of conquest of Russian moneygrubbers, I have not the slightest drop for the dreams of conquest of the capitalists and feudalists of a modernised Japan. Because, it is not in hopes of dumping their surplus population that the ruling classes of Japan dream of conquering Korea, Manchuria and... Peking. It is for the disposal of goods,

produced by the odious exploitation of women and children, among an impoverished agricultural population (read Rathcan!). It is to govern and to enrich themselves – in European style.

The Rhodes and the Whitaker-Wrights, yellow and white, Japanese, Russian or English, are equally hateful to me. I prefer to stand on the side of the young Japanese socialist party. As small as it is, it has expressed the deep feeling of the Japanese *people* (in those brief moments of rest and recovery allowed it), in pronouncing *against* the war in its proud proclamation and its letter addressed to the *Daily News*.

I expect, moreover, with great anxiety, that the conflict waged in the Far East is but the prelude to a conflict, infinitely more serious, long in preparation, to be played out along the Dardanelles, and perhaps even in the Black Sea – thus preparing new episodes of war and militarism for the whole of Europe...

In short, I see in this war that has broken out a calamity, a danger for the whole progressive movement in Europe. A triumph of the worst instincts of modern capitalism, how could it contribute to the triumph of progress?

Yours sincerely,

Peter Kropotkin, Bromley, 18th February 1904.

Antimilitarism and Revolution

“Anti-Militarisme et Révolution”, *Les Temps Nouveaux*, 28 October 1905 and 4 November 1905

I

A press incident forces me to talk about myself. During my recent brief stay in Paris at *Les Temps Nouveaux*, we had a lively discussion amongst comrades and friends on antimilitarist propaganda.

Needless to say, I consider propaganda and action against militarism and war in general *an absolute necessity*. We must make this propaganda and action internationally as much as possible, and within every nation separately.

But I pointed out to friends, we would be on the wrong track, and we would be spreading an idea that is not right in preaching the conscripts strike at times “of war”, and saying that, since the worker has no country, he should be uninterested in the defence of France.

We should not understand our propaganda in a wrong manner. If France is invaded by some military power, the duty of revolutionaries is not to fold their arms and allow the invader free rein. *It is to begin the social revolution, and to defend the territory of the revolution, to continue it.* The phrase “conscript strike” does not say enough. It has the disadvantage of being silent on the essential purpose of propaganda, and it gives rise to misinterpretations. It says nothing about the revolution, and says nothing about the necessity in which revolutionaries will be placed – that of defending, arms in hand, every inch of the French territory that has carried out the revolution against the bourgeois and imperialist hordes of German, English

and perhaps Russian invaders. Are these hordes better than those of Versailles?

This necessity must be recognised even today. We must not deny the possibility of this, as was the done on the eve of 1870. We must prepare the mind of the French people for it. To those who preach respect for the army

we must reply: “Only the people revolted against its leaders and exploiters will defend the soil of France. The army – whether it performs miracles of valour – will be heavily outnumbered. Revolution, popular war, war by the peasant who has regained the soil, is the only weapon France can oppose to the coalitions of bourgeoisie, ready to launch their obedient flocks – see the recent speeches by Bebel – against the nation which produced

1793, 1848 and 1871, and which prepares a new, social, revolution.”

* * *

The echo of this conversation reached the Parisian press. The *Temps* included an article by M. Mille, in which the author gave, via hearsay, some garbled passages of our conversation, and as he left out what I had said about revolution he obviously travestied its meaning. Other journals went further in the same direction.

That is why I sent a letter to the *Temps*, in which I set out my ideas on militarism. As it has not appeared yet, I am forced to wait until the next issue to reproduce it.

II

Here is the corrective letter sent by our friend Kropotkin to the newspaper the *Temps* and which the editor of the major daily newspaper kept in his files – we wonder why? – for more than eight days without publishing it.

Mister Editor

I have just read in your October 19 issue an article by Mr. Mille entitled; *Esquisses d'après Nature : Pierre Kropotkine*. Allow me to address some inaccuracies.

M. Mille reproduces some remarks from a conversation on antimilitarism which he did not attend but which he heard of in Paris. I am sure he does so with the best of Intentions of being accurate; but, by giving only a few comments from this conversation, he completely distorts its meaning.

Yes, I said:

– I am sixty-two years of age, I am not sentimental towards France, I have been condemned to imprisonment there, I am still subject to an expulsion order... Well, if France were invaded by the Germans, I would regret one thing. It is that with my sixtieth year passed, I would probably not have the strength to pick up a gun to defend it... *Not as a soldier of the bourgeoisie, of course, but as a soldier of the Revolution*, in the free legions of revolutionaries,

similar to those of the Garibaldians and the guerrillas of 1871.

Make the Revolution and race to the frontiers, that is the essence of the opinions I expressed in this conversation, and the sentence I have just quoted and which struck Mr. Mille was the conclusion.

Since you were kind enough to mention my ideas on anti-militarism, you will allow me to clarify them, will you not?

When I see how easily rulers throw people into dreadful wars, undertaken in the interest of the bourgeoisie and since I know with what unpardonable levity the rulers of France – on an insignificant promise made by an English imperialist minister – have recently been on the point of throwing France into a war which it would have come out of, perhaps, with a crushing worse than that of 1871, I understand the necessity of a strenuous antimilitarist propaganda, fearlessly made by workers. And I fully understand that the French workers, the vanguard of the working class of the whole world, should take the initiative, without knowing exactly how far they will be followed by the German workers.

– But, I said, in the conversation which Mr. Mille provided you a passage, the conscripts strike at the moment when war is declared is not the right way. The strike is good for neutral nations. When two States go to war, the workers of the neutral nations should completely refuse all work used to fuel the war. This was the campaign which we had to conduct during the last Russo-Japanese war.

But if the Germans invade France, as they will doubtless do, at the head of a powerful coalition and forcing the hands of the small neighbouring States (Belgium, Switzerland) *then the conscripts strike will not suffice*. We must do as did the sans-culottes of 1792 when they established in their sections the revolutionary Commune of August 10th, overthrew royalty and the aristocracy, raised the forced levy on the rich, compelled the Legislative to make the first *effective* decrees on the abolition of feudal rights and recovery by the peasants of communal lands, *and marched to defend the soil of France while also continuing the Revolution*. This is also what Bakunin and his friends tried to do at Lyon and Marseilles in 1871.

The only effective barrier to oppose a German invasion will be the people's war, the Revolution. That is what we must anticipate and openly proclaim today.

Yes, I also said that France marched at the forefront of other nations. And that is true. Not as an intellectual, artistic or industrial culture, for in these the leading European nations and the United States are marching together, and if one of them takes the lead in one direction, it is overtaken in another. But France marches at the head of other nations in the path of social revolution. It is because it made 1789-93, because it had 1848, and it planted a milestone in 1871, while Germany has not yet finished abolishing its feudal regime, England made its great revolution just to conquer the political and religious liberty of the individual without demolishing feudal property, and Russia is still in 1788-89.

Under these conditions, a new crushing of France would be a misfortune for civilisation. The triumph of the German centralised military State in 1871 gave Europe thirty years of reaction, and to France it gave the cult of the military, Boulangism, the Dreyfus affair, and the halting – I will say more: the oblivion for thirty years of all the socialist development which was taking place towards the end of the Empire.

It is because I have *experienced* the social and intellectual reaction of the last thirty years that I think that antimilitarists of all nations should defend *every* country invaded by a military State and too weak to defend itself; but above all, when it is invaded by a coalition of bourgeois powers which especially hate in the French people its role as vanguard of the social revolution.

Here, sir, are the ideas which I have developed during the conversation which Mr. Mille has engaged your readers.

To finish, allow me to raise some inaccuracies of a personal nature in Mr. Mille's article.

I am pleased to contradict Mr. Mille in that my wife has not died, and Mr. Mille, if he came to Bromley – only, please, not as a reporter – would find her pretty much such as he saw her at Acton. And, for my part, Mr. Mille not only makes me commit a pretty large error *of fact* (sentenced to five year's imprisonment, we served only three), but he also attributes to me in connection with this imprisonment language which I would never have spoken. I ignore the comments that Mr. Mille attributes me concerning *reporters*: it is too personal.

Thank you in advance, accept, Mister, etc.

Peter Kropotkin

The State... cannot take this or that form at will. Those who think they can do so give the word "State" an arbitrary meaning, contrary to the origin, to the entire history, of the institution... The State is necessarily hierarchical, authoritarian – or it ceases to be the State.

– "Communism and Anarchy", *Modern Science and Anarchy*

An Interview and Letters

Given Kropotkin's background – a Prince turned revolutionary anarchist – and the general dislike of the Tsarist regime within Liberal circles, it is unsurprising that he made a regular appearance in the newspapers of his time and was often sought for interviews. Here we present a rare interview in a Dublin newspaper from 1887 in which he answers questions primarily on his personal history before commenting upon the Haymarket events and his ideas on anarchy.

Unsurprisingly, given his fame and influence, Kropotkin was a prolific letter writer – to comrades, anarchist journals and the capitalist press, the latter undoubtedly reflecting the advantage his aristocratic background provided. This was particularly helpful in alerting the world to the crimes of the Tsarist regime, particularly during and after the failed revolution of 1905. So it is important to note that anarchist newspapers were not alone in publishing his letters – or, indeed, news of his activities and opinions.

The letters included here, however, mostly appeared in the anarchist press. It is interesting to note that news of Kropotkin as well as his writings appeared in Chicago's *The Alarm* before the Haymarket events and when the newspaper was edited by Albert Parsons. When it was relaunched in 1887, this relationship continued and the paper published his articles and letters, including a rare discussion by Kropotkin about the struggles of women (while he undoubtedly favoured the equality of the sexes, like most male socialists of his time he usually mentioned it in passing). Likewise, his views on Proudhon – which were of particular interest to *The Alarm's* then editor, revolutionary mutualist Dyer Lum.

He put pen to paper to comment on current events (particularly Tsarist repression) or developments in the labour movement, or as reproductions of speeches which his ill-health prevented him from giving. Many letters were written in the last years of his life, partly to reassure friends and comrades that he was still alive or at liberty (rumours of the Bolsheviks killing or imprisoning him were rife and reported in the capitalist press). Just as he had written to the world's press exposing the horrors of Tsarist autocracy and its repression, under the Bolsheviks he wrote warning the workers and socialists of the world to learn from the mistakes being made in Russia and not to follow that path to its inevitable dead-end. Sadly, he was not listened to – partly, perhaps, due to the loss of moral authority he suffered due to his support of the Allies in the Imperialist slaughter which was the First World War. Yet he did not simply warn about the errors of the Bolsheviks, as a revolutionary he was also clear that neither the Whites nor Imperialist military intervention should not be supported as this made the regime both worse and more secure – as blame for its failings could be laid by the regime purely at the door of the counter-revolution.

Repugnant tasks will disappear, because it is evident that these unhealthy conditions are harmful to society as a whole. Slaves can submit to them, but free men will create new conditions, and their work will be pleasant and infinitely more productive.

– “Agreeable Work”, *The Conquest of Bread*

Prince Kropotkin

The Freeman's Journal (Dublin), 27 October 1887

“Who is Prince Kropotkin?” “Oh, he is the great Russian Anarchist, who attempted to overthrow the Government, was flung into prison, escaped, and is now the most distinguished apostle of anarchy all over the World.” And so people look upon Prince Kropotkin as a ferocious sort of individual, albeit a fool, and regard him much as they would one of the inhabitants of the Zoological Gardens at Regent’s Park. The real Prince Kropotkin, whatever maybe his peculiar views, and we have nothing to do with them, is, as his rank denotes, an accomplished gentleman and scholar. He has been described as an “amiable Anarchist,” and he is, in truth, one of the most kind-hearted of men. He is a man 45 years of age, and he devotes his life to the advancement of views which he regards, however erroneously, as of benefit to the human race. To break down in all countries the system by which the few thrive on the labour of the many is his aim. But how did Prince Kropotkin, whose rank and position might have been supposed to have kept him far aloof from the destroyers of empires, come to hold his present views? This was the question which I put the Prince, and he answered with agreeable frankness:

Q.—What has been the course of events which led to your present position?

A.—I entered the Russian Military School in 1857 and pursued my studies with zest. I had a very good time there, and enjoyed the work very much, although I did not care a great deal for military duties. The tendency of my mind was always in the direction of civil rather than military affairs.

Q.—How long were you at the Military School?

A.—Five years.

Q.—Is it known that you took a distinguished place in the course of your studies at the school?

A.—Yes. I did very well. When leaving the school I was entitled to choose my own regiment and to select the district where I should serve. I might, if I liked, enter the Guard at St Petersburg, but I was anxious to travel and see the condition of our people in remote places. I resolved to join the Cossacks of the Amur, and to go to Eastern Siberia. Many of my friends tried to dissuade me from this course, and to persuade me to settle in some place where I should have an easier time. I had, as a boy, been a page in the Winter Palace. The Grand Duke Michael wished me to make another selection, but I was resolute, and accordingly I became a Lieutenant of Cossacks and when I came to Siberia I was appointed the aide-de-camp to the Governor of Transbaikalia.

Q.—When was that?

A.—In 1862. While in Siberia I was engaged rather in the civil administration than in military matters. I was deputed to make many investigations and inquiries into the administrative system, and to report on it. I found the system most defective, and in my reports urged the necessity of reforms. But no heed was taken at St Petersburg of any reports of the Siberian Administration, and it seemed to me a mockery to be making inquiries and reports which never come to anything, and I resolved to leave the service. It was my wish at this time to alleviate, wherever I could, a great deal of misery and injustice under which I saw masses of my fellow-creatures suffering, while I myself, and a great many like me, had a good time. But I felt I could do no good for humanity in the Administration, and I resolved to leave it. I did leave it in 1867, and returned from Siberia to St Petersburg.

Q.—What course did you then pursue?

A.—I devoted myself entirely to science. There were no objections taken by anyone to my leaving the army. My friends did not take exception to my change of life, and all facilities were given me to follow my new occupation. I became secretary to the Physical Geography Section of the Geographical Society, and held that position from 1867 to 1874.

Q.—Well, did you find that science was more favourable for the advancement of your views in the interests of human progress than the army?

A.—Not much. I did not see how I could practically advance those views by devoting myself solely to scientific pursuits. The vast amount of human suffering which prevailed among the masses of the people in the world, while comfort and ease were the portion of, for the most part, an idle minority, greatly exercised my mind. It was the men who laboured [who] were worse off. It was those who did nothing who had the best time of it. This was, and is, a great and startling fact. In 1872, I visited the International Workingmen’s Association in Switzerland and Belgium. All I saw and learned there made a deep and lasting impression on me. I saw how in Western Europe, despite its more advanced political institutions, labour is still crushed by capital; and I saw the workmen growing conscientious of the state of affairs and preparing for a great revolution if an effort is not made to secure to the labourer in all lands the full rewards of his industry. When I returned from Switzerland I considered [it] as my duty to join the great party of the social reorganisation of society. I joined its Anarchist fraction.

Q.—Did you join a Socialistic society?

A.—I did, in St Petersburg. I went among the working classes, and, with others, taught them by books and

conversation to co-operate and struggle for the benefit of their class and humanity at large.

Q.—Were you arrested?

A. —Yes, in 1874, I was arrested as a Socialist, and kept in prison for over two years without trial. I then escaped in 1876, and came to England.

Q.—I suppose you are Interested in the fate of those condemned Anarchists at Chicago—Spies, Schwab, Fischer, Engel, Parsons, Fielder, Neebe, Lingg?

A.—Yes, very much. They were tried in August, 1886, for conspiracy, after a bomb had been thrown against a body of police charging a meeting held at Haymarket, Chicago, to protest against the brutality displayed by the police against the strikers. The bomb caused the death of some policemen. They were convicted, and sentenced to death.

Q.—Will the sentence be carried out?

A.—I hope still that the sentence will not be executed, for the men have been wrongly condemned.

Q.—Has there not been an appeal from the conviction?

A. —Yes, but to the same judges who tried the case in the first instance and who sat as a Supreme Court of Illinois. They were found guilty in August, 1886; they were sentenced to death in September of the same year. Then came the appeal, and the appeal has just been decided in September of this year. The judges have affirmed the sentence, and the men are to be executed on the 11th of November next.

Q. —You say they were innocent?

A.—It is certain that not a single charge has been brought against them to prove that any of them has thrown the bomb or has contributed in throwing it. They have been condemned for conspiracy, and you know what “conspiracy” means on such occasions. Here is what happened – The Knights of Labour, who are connected in no way with the Socialists or Anarchists, organised the eight hours’ movement. Those knights attacked the “scabs” who betrayed them and began to work more than eight hours a day at the McCormick’s works. The policemen came upon the scene and brutally attacked the Knights of Labour. The Anarchist organ of the Press, which was edited by Spies, commented upon the affray and condemned the action of the police. Then

a meeting was convened by the Anarchists to discuss the whole question and to protest against the brutality of the police. This meeting was on May 5th, 1886.¹ The Mayor of Chicago swore on the trial that it was a perfectly peaceable meeting. But the police interrupted the meeting and violently attacked it. The chief of the police, Bonfield, against the orders of the Mayor, had made up his mind to make short work of the “Socialists,” to use his own expression. Then, while the people were dispersing, a bomb was flung. It burst and killed a number of the police. Who flung the bomb? That was and remained a question; and mark, but one bomb was flung, and they are going to hang seven men – for Nebe is condemned to hard labour – for what must

have been the act of but one man. Assuredly that is monstrous.

Q. —Well, that was the point raised by Mr. Bright in the case of the Manchester Fenians. Three men were hanged for what must have been only the act of one man, if any of the men were guilty at all, for only one shot was fired. Mr. Bright thought this monstrous, too.

For us, it is a question of abolishing the exploitation of man. It is a question of putting an end to the inequities, the vices, the crimes that result from the idle existence of some and the economic, intellectual, and moral servitude of others.

– “Expropriation”, *Words of a Rebel*

A.—Just so.

Q.—But what was the evidence against the prisoners?

A.—The principal witness was an informer named Gilmer, and he swore that he saw Spies give a light to another man to fire and throw the bomb.

Q.—Is that other man among the prisoners?

A.—No.

Q.—But how do the seven men come to be convicted?

A.—By the law of conspiracy. It is alleged that they came to the meeting resolved to fling this bomb, and to make a general uprising. In fact, they brought their wives and children to the meeting. Is it likely they would have done this if they had meditated an uprising, or even an armed conflict with the police?

Q.—Do you know those men?

A.—No. I never met any of them. But I know them perfectly well from their speeches, acts, and their newspapers; in fact from all their activity for six or seven years; and any honest man would be honoured to have men like Spies, Parsons, Fielder, and the others for his friends.

¹ The meeting actually took place on the evening of 4th May. (*Black Flag*)

Q.—Do you think this bomb was flung by an Anarchist?

A.—I have absolutely no idea as to who flung the bomb. At any rate it is proved, and materially established by the Court itself, that none of the seven condemned did throw the bomb. And the chief accusation against them is that they are professing ideas of Anarchy; of course, they have loudly proclaimed before the Court that they do so.

Q.—Will you tell me shortly what it is you exactly mean by Anarchy?

A.—No Government. That is, such a state of society where all necessities for production – land, mines, railways, machinery, and manufactures – belong to society as a whole; where the man, ready to work, is not compelled to pay a tribute to the owner of the land, the manufacture, and all other necessities for production, as he is compelled now, and when he enjoys the whole produce of his labour; a society which is not divided, as the present is, into a mass of workers, who produce everything we see round us – houses, roads, corn, cottons, railways, schools, and universities, in short, all necessities for life and all luxury, and who are compelled to a life hardly worth that of a human being; and on the other hand a number of people, of idlers to a very great extent, who reap all the benefits of our

steadily increasing powers of production because they are the sole owners of all the necessities for production. In such a society force is necessary for maintaining a quite abnormal state of things. But in a society where no such division exists, force and government become absolutely useless. Men will freely combine together for the satisfaction of all their needs, as they already begin to do in so many branches, and by proceeding from the simple to the complex – from the group of producers and consumers to the township, and thence to a more complicate[d] federation – they will organise themselves much better than they are organised now. We are Socialists, but while the State-Socialists tend towards a further increase of the Governmental powers we proclaim No Government as our ultimate aim – Home Rule – real, but not sham Home Rule – for each free organisation growing up for the satisfaction of any of the numberless needs of humanity; free play to the individual in a society where all [the] sad inheritance of the past – i.e. private appropriation of land, machinery, and all necessities for production has disappeared. I know that our ideas are in contradiction with many a current doctrine as to the benefits of authority. So I can only ask to judge our ideas after careful consideration. For that purpose I have begun in the *Nineteenth Century* a series of articles which will permit [you] to judge our ideas for what they are worth.¹

To Women of America

The Alarm, 18 August 1888

PRINCE KROPOTKIN'S LETTER TO THE WOMAN'S NATIONAL COUNCIL, WASHINGTON. D.C.

“IT IS STILL THE WOMAN WHO BENDS LOWEST BENEATH THE INIQUITIES THAT WEIGH UPON MANKIND”

Women of America: It is with profound sympathy that your labours have been followed by my compatriots, the women of Russia. At the two extremities of the civilised world the problem that presents itself is one and the same, to abolish the privileges that have been created for the benefit of one half of humanity to the detriment of the other half.

Under a despotic government which considers the ignorance of its subjects as the best guarantee of its own supremacy and hastens to crush freedom of thought under whatever form it shows itself, the Russian women have nevertheless succeeded by their persevering efforts in constructing for their sex a whole vast system of instruction. For the institutes of old times (a sort of convent) they have substituted 430 lyceums which at

this moment contain 91,000 pupils. Under the title of lectures on the art of teaching they have created for themselves against the wishes of the government, which found itself forced to yield, a course of secondary education, preparatory to the studies of the universities. And under the modest titles of lectures for the “Higher Education of Women” they have created four universities, which were giving instruction absolutely equal to the best German and French universities to eighteen hundred students when the government ordered their abolition.

They have done more. By taking an active and devoted part in the great movement for the emancipation of the people which has been taking place during the last twenty-five years in Russia, they have conquered their

¹ A reference to two articles published *The Nineteenth Century* during 1887. The first, entitled “The Scientific Basis of Anarchy” appeared in February and the second, “The Coming Anarchy” in August. These were included (without footnotes) by Albert Parsons (1848-1887) in his 1887 collection *Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Scientific Basis as Defined by Some of its Apostles*, along with contributions

from his fellow Haymarket Martyrs and other anarchists. The two articles were later revised and published by Freedom Press as a pamphlet entitled *Anarchist Communism: Its Basis and Principles* in 1891 (Freedom Pamphlet No. 4) and reprinted many times – most recently in *Anarchism, Anarchist Communism, and The State: Three Essays* (Oakland: PM Press, 2019). (*Black Flag*)

rights as citizens. It was by working to liberate the Russian people that they have prepared the way for their liberation.

They have shared all the hardships of the struggle, all the pain of the persecuted. In prison, in exile, at the mines, dragging their chains beside their brothers, they have known how to inspire them with their nerve courage, and they have pleaded their rights to be recognised as citizens by mounting the scaffold, like Sophia Perovskaya, with calm front and lofty bearing, uniting in her last words the names of her beloved mother and the Russian peasant for whose liberty she had lived.

If it were not for the despotic government, which at this time moment is harassing Russia by its furious pursuit of the faintest mark of sympathy toward every flight of emancipating thought, Russian women would surely be amongst you today, taking part in your labours and exchanging with you their ideas, their experience, their confidence for the future?

But it is not only as a Russian, a witness for the noble struggle of the women of Russia for liberty, that I permit myself to address you.

Women of America, in your country, as in all civilized lands, you have the supreme happiness to live at an epoch which history will certainly characterise as the epoch of the awakening of the masses; the epoch of the bold criticism of all the institutions bequeathed to us – children of the nineteenth century – by the centuries of barbarism and of war; the epoch where the march of humanity toward equality and liberty is leading us to fraternity!

Living for more than ten years in the very midst of the European workmen and having the opportunity to see, to feel this enormous intellectual movement that is now taking place amongst the masses; seeing day by day the birth of the great ideas of freedom and of fraternity in the bosom of those whom the rich and powerful have condemned to remain forever beneath their domination. Noting day by day for ten years the dawn of ideas, of rooted convictions, and of earnest devotion in the heart of the workers, and drawing inspiration myself from this glorious awakening, I long to tell you at this moment it is all over with the system which condemns the masses of mankind to poverty, to overwork, to privation of all those pleasures of knowledge and of art that alone are capable of rendering human life a source

of happiness, and all this to obtain leisure, wealth, luxury, for a mere handful amongst us.

The system is condemned, and I affirm, in full knowledge of the surroundings in which my life is framed, that the century will not end before the toiling masses make a supreme effort to transform from beginning to end a state of things which is unjust, degrading, hurtful to humanity, and a bar upon progress.

You will see this magnificent struggle of the workers for their liberation taking a more and more important

and serious character. But on which side will you be found? What position will you take in the strife?

Will you be on the side of the written law without asking yourselves if this law be not contrary to justice? Or else will you be with those who struggle against the law – that miserable legacy of an obscure past – but for justice, for the equality of all human beings without distinction of class, race,

or sex, the only solid base of true fraternity?

It is your duty to take a place in the struggle. You can no longer remain mere spectators if you desire it. The strife forces itself upon your notice by the gallows of Chicago, the fusillades of Paris, the exterminations of rebels in Ireland. But to take a part in the struggle you must know its cause; you must make clear to yourselves the meaning of this contest which is being carried on everywhere under the name of socialism, beneath the shadow of the star-spangled banner of the United States, as beneath the shade of the imperial eagle of Russia, in the German monarchy as in the French republic, in the new world as in the old.

Under penalty of one day discovering that you are amidst the oppressors acting against the oppressed, you must find for yourselves the true signification of this strife between the rich and the poor, between workmen and capitalists, between the creators of social wealth and those who take possession of it.

And when, after having gazed into the abyss of the suffering and iniquities of our existing society, you return home and see there your ornaments, the luxury of your house; that luxury and those ornaments will disgust you, as they disgusted Sophia Perovskaya and so many others.

You will ask yourself, “Whence comes this fortune? My father,” you will say, “worked.” But that girl who, with her weak frame shivering beneath a thread-bare gown,

Only let us fully understand that a revolution, intoxicated with the beautiful words Liberty, Equality, Solidarity would not be a revolution if it maintained slavery at home.

– “Agreeable Work”, *The Conquest of Bread*

hurries each morning to the factory, entreating to be killed, her father worked too!

The rich will hate you for this. They will pursue you with foolish abuse, with base insults. No matter! They did the same to the first abolitionists. Are they not venerated today? Women of America, I personally belong to that great school of socialism – anarchism – which seeks to free the human beings from the yoke of authority, at the same time as from the yoke of capital.

After having been with Mrs Beecher-Stowe, your venerable president, Mrs Cady Stanton, in the vanguard of the good cause, will you ever admit the possibility of finding yourselves with the modern enslavers hunting to death the revolted slaves of modern times.

Away with the idea. During your congress you will discuss the political rights of women, and you will find yourselves face to face with this question: man or woman, has the poor the same political rights as the rich? Girl or boy, has the poor the leisure to instruct himself, when from the age of thirteen or fifteen years he or she must exhaust an ill-nursed body in the mill, the mine or the factory! Stealing education in the hours of necessary repose, can the poor take the part in the affairs of his or her nation, or city, that can be taken by professional politicians, who enjoy leisure because they live upon the produce of the labour of others.

You are about to study the judicial rights of women. You will censure such an unjust law as that which permits the man to seize upon the woman's fortune. But what judicial rights does the woman enjoy who has nothing but the shawl upon her shoulders, and who all her life has tolled to produce the fortune and provide the demands for the other; for the woman who never went near a machine, never lifted a spade.

You are about to speak of that loathsome fact – prostitution. And you will be forced to ask yourselves why has bread been wanting for this child who sells herself, when markets are overflowing with corn? Why has she, who is bred to work, never been able to buy

herself those dresses and ornaments which the idler's wife displays in the street?

You are about to speak of the industrial condition of women, of their wages inferior to the wages of men. And you will be brought to ask yourselves why a woman accepts starvation wages at all? Is it not because all that she requires to produce new wealth – the soil, the instruments of labour, machinery – all that would enable her merely to live, have been appropriated by the minority?

Seek the truth for yourselves; judge for yourselves the divers schools of socialism, and perforce you will be brought to join the ranks of militant socialists... But you can obtain the complete liberation of woman only by working for the liberation of humanity.

“My husband writes.” Good! But the husband of that other woman writes as much or more. Why has she to struggle with poverty in bringing up her children? And why then am I living in opulence? What are my rights to this opulence?

“Is not my wealth woven of the poverty of my sisters?”

But if this question confronts you, you will have to do as Sophia Perovskaya did. Flee this luxury; join the ranks of the workers; bring them your enlightenment; aid them in their struggle for freedom.

But I will not even attempt to convert you to my principles.

Seek the truth for yourselves; judge for yourselves the divers schools of socialism, and perforce you will be brought to join the ranks of militant socialists.

The great mass of mankind groans beneath the privilege bequeathed to it by history. But here, as elsewhere, the grand martyr, the one who suffers the most from this privilege, the one who bears the heaviest burden, is still and is always the woman.

Rich or poor, maiden or mother, it is still the woman who bends lowest beneath the iniquities that weigh upon mankind.

Work for her liberation. All our wishes, all our sympathies go with you. But you can obtain the complete liberation of woman only by working for the liberation of humanity.

PRINCE PIERRE KROPOTKIN

March, 1888

We do not advocate Communism and Anarchy because we imagine men to be better than they really are; if we had angels among us we might be tempted to entrust to them the task of organising us, though doubtless even *they* would show the cloven foot very soon.

– The Place of Anarchism in Socialistic Evolution

Kropotkin on Proudhon

The Alarm, 15 September 1888

My dear Lum,

I am so glad that THE ALARM appears again and continues the good fight. It is always with the greatest interest that we read it as well as your letters to Mrs Wilson.

It was easy to foresee that the hunting down of the anarchists which was began at Chicago would momentarily disorganise the party. But I am sure that the circumstances

themselves will give the party a new form soon. When people see how those whom they trusted most easily abandon their socialist programmes, as soon as they have in view any slightest possibility of taking place amidst our middle-class governors – when people see a few more examples like those given by Henry George, they will better understand why we do not meddle with all that rotten world.

I see that THE ALARM most earnestly tries to find out its right way amidst the different solutions proposed by various socialist schools, and that is the best guarantee that it will find it out.

Mrs W must have written you about our Freedom meeting's discussions. In connection with them I have re-read what Tucker writes and re-read again

Proudhon, the writer whom I like best of all those who wrote about the social question. I think that it is a very great mistake to give the name of anarchy to Proudhon's mutualism. Proudhon, at least, was never guilty of such a mistake. He knew that anarchy is anarchy and mutualism is mutualism, and he considered his mutualism only as a stepping stone towards the abolition of the state. Surely, when he proposed "a

revolution by decrees" – such as was asked by his friends in '48 – he never christened that with the name of anarchy.

I give hearty applause to Tucker's translation of Proudhon. When the Americans know Proudhon better, they will like him much more – as a critic of present conditions, as a writer whose writings are more suggestive than those of any other writer. But they will judge also at their real value his compromises. Like

most compromises they were valueless, and bad moreover as such compromises were, and are, they are quite unrealisable.

I should very much like also that somebody went through his eight volumes of Correspondence and wrote an article upon them like I saw in a Russian review. His writings would be much better understood then, as also the three phases of "evolution" he went through. But enough. My hasty note grows to be a letter. I propose one day or the other to treat the whole in an article for Freedom. But there are so many things much more necessary. And, as a rule, the best way to oppose the critics is not to polemicise, but to put down our own ideas. The more they are elaborated, the better can they be compared with

It is evident, as Proudhon has already pointed out, that the smallest attack upon property will bring in its train the complete disorganisation of the system based upon private enterprise and wage labour. Society itself will be forced to take production in hand, in its entirety, and to reorganise it to meet the needs of the whole people. But this cannot be accomplished in a day or a month; it must take a certain time thus to reorganise the system of production...

– "Food", *The Conquest of Bread*

others' ideas.

My heartiest wishes for your success, and best greetings to friend Most,

Yours sincerely,

P. Kropotkin

Harrow, England

...the point of view of Proudhon, the only one which, in my opinion, was really scientific...

– "Edward Bellamy", *Freedom*, July 1898

Kropotkin on the Geneva Tragedy

Freedom, October 1898

We think it opportune and interesting to insert the following letter which Kropotkin has written to Georg Brandes, the eminent Danish critic, on the Geneva tragedy, in answer to a personal attack upon him in a Danish paper. This letter has been published by Brandes in the "Politiken" with a preface. After a few words of a personal character, Kropotkin writes:

Like you, like everyone else, I felt my heart aching when I learned of the death of that new victim of the social struggle – the Empress of Austria. An old lady, whose life was unhappy long before she had lost her son, is especially phased to appeal to pity in the eyes of those who know the intimate history of her life. Women and children, at least, ought to be spared in the terrible struggle amidst which we live, and in those struggles, still more terrible, which we see coming.

If it were sufficient to give my life to spare even a very small portion of the victims which I saw falling round us during the last thirty years in the streets and on the scaffolds, I would have done it without hesitation. Scores of our friends would have done the same. But that would not be sufficient. Men must be compelled to reason.

Analyse Luccheni. Born on a seat of a Paris boulevard, he has known neither mother nor father. He was brought up in a "foundling house," at Paris first and next at Parma. At *the age of ten* he was thrown into the streets, where he had neither parents nor friends, but had to find food (here it is that my heart bleeds even more, when I think of this child and of so many thousands of others who are suffering the same). When he was twenty-one years old, he was taken to a barrack, and there he was taught to kill: to kill numbers of people, without pity; to kill father and mother, to kill women and children the day that he would be told that he must kill for the salvation of the country. In such case, he was taught, human life must not count for anything. Then he was sent to kill in Africa. Later on, he was a valet to a cavalry officer – is it there that he could learn respect for women? And finally, in Switzerland, living amidst fugitives coming from Italy after the revolt in Milan of the famine stricken people and the wholesale killing of peasants – what did he hear? That starving peasants had been massacred, more or less, all over the country; that at Milan the shooting down of the people went on for three days, and workmen were killed by the hundred; that grapeshot was discharged in the streets, without inquiring whether the women and their children who would fall pierced with the bullets were in any way responsible for the insurrection, nor upon what the children would live when their fathers had been killed; that the moment one shot was fired from a house, the order was given to shoot at all windows in the house,

killing the inmates – women and children; that the rich ladies of Milan distributed flowers to the soldiers and petted them, saying: "Free us, rid us of those mobs; strike hard, aim straight!"

Well, dear Brandes, imagine *our* children grown in such surroundings, receiving *those* Impressions, and tell me if they, too, would not have run the risk of losing the very instinct of pity, if they too would not breathe hatred against all those who are rich and never think of the misery out of which the riches are made?

It has often been said that our present society dances upon a volcano; and that is quite true. They do not realise the hatred which grows up in the hearts of the disinherited ones. I know it; it is terrible! And, with that hatred growing up, have we not quite a recognised teaching, judiciary and military, to whisper in their ears, every day, through nearly every newspaper: "Don't talk of human life! Down with sentimentalism! If it were necessary, some day or another, to execute a hundred men and women in one batch and kill a hundred-thousand men in the streets, in order to maintain society by terrorising the rebels – it must be done, without hesitation."?

And people are astonished to discover, after that, that there are poor who return the argument and say that if it were necessary to kill a hundred men or women in the street, and exterminate a hundred-thousand middle-class people, that must be done!!

To believe in the magic force of executions – but that is the first, corner-stone article of the modern confession of faith.

Politicians, clergymen, philosophers profess it. And they would like that the poor should come, by intuition, to broader and higher views; that they should cease to believe in executions; that they should not say, like Luccheni "Strike no matter whom of the rich ones: that will make them think about social injustice!" To ask the poor to come to that higher conception of social life which hitherto remains inaccessible to the educated ones? – But this is simply absurd.

During those very days when the Empress of Austria was so much spoken of, four attempts to wreck trains were made, on four successive days, in England in the neighbourhood of Northampton. Big blocks of stone and logs of wood were laid upon lines belonging to different railway companies, with the intention of wrecking express trains. It would have been far more horrible than the death of one person. Women and children, and fathers of working-class families would have been killed if an express train had run full speed upon those stones and sleepers laid on the rails. Who has done it? Surely not Socialists or Anarchists; but in

all probability, some man in whose heart misery must have kindled a pitiless hatred against all society, and who will have said to himself: "Strike anywhere; that will make them think of our misery." – There is the volcano upon which society is dancing.

To strike a woman in the heart, exclusively because that heart has never beaten for the sufferers of mankind – surely it is terrible. But so long as there will be such

massacres as those which we have had the other day in Italy; so long as contempt for human life shall be taught to men; and so long as they will be told that it is good to kill for what one believes to be beneficial for mankind – new and newer victims will be added, even though the rulers should guillotine all those who take side with the poor, who study the psychology of poverty and courageously tell what they have learned of that psychology.

Meetings: Trafalgar Square Demonstration against the outrages of the Russian Government on Students and Workers.

Freedom: A Journal of Anarchist Communism, July 1901

[...] our comrade Kropotkin, who was unable to be present, sent the following eloquent letter which was read by comrade Turner and was received with great enthusiasm:

Friends,

We are here to protest against the abominable treatment of students and working men in Russia by their Government.

From all the main cities of Russia the same news has been coming lately, and is coming still. Peaceful unarmed crowds of students, men and women, are charged by the Cossacks. With their lead-weighted horsewhips the Cossacks cut open the faces, or break the skulls of men and women alike. At St. Petersburg – on one single day, the 17th of March – they have actually killed with their whips seven men, and wounded seventy-five men and thirty-two women.

At the same time, the workmen are surrounded by troops in their suburbs. They are provoked, and as soon as they come together, or attempt to hold a meeting they are shot down. "The hospitals are full with wounded working men" – these are the very words of the Reuter telegram which you saw in the papers on the 28th of May. And the prisons of St. Petersburg are literally overcrowded with people arrested.

And what was the cause of this massacre? Peaceful meetings with a view of a strike at the Steel works of the Crown, near St. Petersburg, so peaceful that the *Standard*, and the *Times* make a special mention of the quiet attitude of the workers and the absence of any act of violence.

To terrorise the workers into absolute submission to the cotton and iron lords; to loose upon them the "White Terror" – this is the watchword of the Russian Government, which Gladstone, if he were alive, would have branded with the name of *KING KNOUT*.

My friend, Volkhovsky, will tell you what were the grievances of the students after a twenty years' Police management of the Universities. And you know how

the peaceful expression of their grievances was repressed by the Czar, by sending over 200 students to become soldiers.

Not to perform in the Army a duty which is imposed upon all Russian citizens, but as a special personal punishment.

Not in accordance with the law of the country, which regulates who is exempted from military service and for how many years, for such reasons as being, for instance, the only son in a family, but in violation of a law which is a fundamental law of the country.

A Punishment, assisted by packed and secret Courts, acting in absolute secrecy; a punishment which brands the young man as he enters the Army as a criminal who must be treated and ill-treated in the ranks as a felon, provoked by every brute of an officer, and shot at the slightest breach of discipline.

Two students thus sent to the Army have already been shot at Kieff; others are already Court-martialled, and will be shot if an end is not put by the clamour of all freedom loving nations to the misdeeds of the young despot.

As to the Russian working men, forty years ago they were slaves: slaves of the landlord, of the factory owner, of the last police official.

But now they are slaves no more. They have turned the last forty years to good account. The great number have learned to read, and they have learned all about the struggles of the West European and American working men for Justice and Liberty. Most of them are sick of a twelve hours' labour day, of confinement in the factory barracks under the truck system, of the miserable pay they get for their hard work. And they have started amongst themselves in nearly every industrial centre their labour unions.

Secret and rudimentary unions, of course, like the early unions of fifty years ago in this country – because all unions and meetings in Russia are treated as a conspiracy. But even these incipient unions prove to be strong enough to permit the working men winning in 1895 their strikes at St. Petersburg and elsewhere, and to compel the Government to pass an eleven hour's labour day.

The Russian Government has done all in its power to prevent the most elementary ideas of freedom from spreading amongst the working men. Those of us who tried thirty years ago to do something in this direction, and those of the workers who began to think and to speak about Capitalist oppression were arrested, kept in the dungeons of the fortress, sent by the hundred to Siberia.

A whole generation was wiped off from life in this way. The Press was put under the most rigorous censorship; to comment on the labour movement in Europe was forbidden. The factories were inundated with police spies, and hundreds of working men were summarily arrested every year, and sent back to their villages under strict police supervision, or transported to Siberia without any sort of judgment.

But the labour movement in Europe and America is too powerful a factor in human life to be kept out of the knowledge of the Russian workers. The middle class Press itself contributed to acquaint them with the battles fought and the victories won by the working men in Western Europe and the States.

With what incidents, indeed, would they have relieved the desperate dullness of their papers, if it were not with reports of Pittsburgh and Dock Labourers' Strikes, with May Day Demonstrations, with Socialistic elections in Germany, and with the Anarchists in France? Surely not with the doings of the Kings – which are so insignificant – or the usual reports, that "Nothing was done during this Session" of the Parliaments!

All that was progressive in the life of the civilised world for the last thirty years was centred round the labour movement. And the Russian middle class Press – nay, even the official Press itself – by continually speaking with horror of strikes, of Trade Union Congresses, of

Socialist and Anarchist agitation, spread widely and broadly in Russia the notion of what was going on amongst the workers in Europe. It is your spirit, working men of England and the World altogether, your struggles and your ideals which inspire now the working men of Russia.

They are your brothers in body and spirit, fighting under your red banner for Justice and Liberty.

And then the Russian students and the educated youth altogether have helped in spreading amongst our workmen the hopes and the aspirations of their Western brothers and sisters.

Notwithstanding the vigilance of the Police, in the face of all prosecutions, notwithstanding the thousands of arrests which were made every year, and the hundreds

which were sent every year into exile, they aided the working men in circulating information about the Western labour struggles, in spreading the love of Liberty and the hope of final success.

A Labour movement spread broad and wide in the industrial centres of Russia. From Poland it gained West Russia, then the capitals, St. Petersburg and Moscow, and finally the Eastern and Southern Industrial centres.

And when, two months ago, Nicolas II took the extravagantly foolish

measure of punishing all students involved in University disturbances by sending them to the Army – in violation of the laws of the country – and when the students made their demonstrations in the open thoroughfares of all University cities – the working men joined them in their protests.

This was the beginning of an organised, planned-beforehand massacre of the workers. A massacre thoughtfully planned by a clever hand in order to terrorise the working man into full submission.

The autocrat and his councillors have understood the danger which menaced their unlimited power if the working men of the great cities joined hands with the educated classes. It would have been the end of autocracy, and they decreed – White Terror.

On March 17th, when the students made a demonstration in the centre of St. Petersburg, the working men were going to join them.

Anarchist Communism sums up all that is most beautiful and most durable in the progress of humanity; the sentiment of justice, the sentiment of liberty, and solidarity or community of interest. It guarantees the free evolution, both of the individual and of society. Therefore, it will triumph.

– The Place of Anarchism in Socialistic Evolution

Consequently, since the early hours of the morning the suburbs had been flooded with troops. No workers were allowed to enter the central parts of the city, and when groups of working men begun to be formed the troops were let loose upon them. While the Cossacks killed the students with their leadweighted horsewhips, the workers were killed by rifle shots.

The same was repeated at Moscow, at Kharkoff, and in several other towns.

And when the workers of the Crown Steel Works near St. Petersburg, arose, on May 18th, claiming Justice for their arrested brothers, and menaced to strike unless Justice be done, a new well planned massacre took place. How many were killed no one knows, but the fact

is this: "The hospitals are full with wounded workers," and the prisons are full and overflowed with arrested workers and their sympathisers of all classes

It is to you, the workers and the organised Trade Unions of Great Britain, that we, Russian refugees in London, have decided to appeal. It is your brothers who are massacred by the satraps of the Russian autocrat.

Let your mighty voice be heard all over the world. Brand the assassins on the face. And tell to Young Russia that the day she rises against the Czar-Knout – as Young Italy rose one day against King Bomba¹ – you will be with her, as you were with Young Italy – with the people against the assassins.

An Anarchist's Letter

The Age (Melbourne), 22 September 1905

Writing from Etable, France, to Mr. J. W. Fleming, of Melbourne, under date 13th August last, Prince Kropotkin, the widely known Russian Anarchist, says:

Thank you very much for your letter.

Things must be worse than I thought if the Labour organisations are entirely in the hands of politicians. I have still the hope that, apart from those working men who lay their hopes in Parliament, there are men who understand that the prayer of labour unions is not politics, but what in Latin countries is described by the working men as 'direct action.' Do you follow the movement in France? The syndical (trades unions) movement, which, for a number of years was in the hands of political Socialists, is now freeing itself from these bonds, and we see really a new birth of what was the International Workingmen's Association before the Franco-German war. Their aim now is to direct action against capital and Philistine rule.

Even when they want to obtain something from Parliament they think – and quite right – but it would be better to impose their will by strikes, &c., instead of begging. They prepare, as you know, the general strike for 1st May, 1906. What are you doing in Australia for this eventuality?

I would be so happy to go to Australia to help the Labour movement in any way, but since I have had an attack of the heart I have had to give up all lecturing. Are you receiving regularly 'Freedom'? There is a general revival of the movement in Europe.

P.S. – I am for a few weeks in France, but return to Bromley, Kent, about 10th September.

It is a question of organising in every town resistance societies for all trades, to create resistance funds and to fight against the exploiters, to unify the workers' organisations of each town and trade and to put them in contact with those of other towns, to federate them across France, to federate them across borders, internationally. Workers' solidarity must no longer be an empty word but must be practiced every day, between all trades, between all nations. – "Workers' Organisation", *Le Révolté*, 10 and 24 December 1881

¹ Ferdinand II (1810–1859) was King of the Two Sicilies from 1830 until his death in 1859. During the 1848 Revolution, Sicily proclaimed its independence on 13 April 1848. In response, the King dispatched an army of 20,000 to subdue the revolt and restore his authority. A naval flotilla

sent to Sicilian waters shelled the city of Messina for eight hours after its defenders had already surrendered, killing many civilians and earning the King the nickname King Bomba ("King Bomb"). (*Black Flag*)

A Correction

Les Temps Nouveaux, 27 April 1912

There is a quite serious revolutionary movement among the peasants in northern Mexico, and the republican government is unable to master it.

There are expropriations of landlords by the Indian farmers there. From time to time there have been battles fought and *Regeneración* is not alone in mentioning these battles. From Los Angeles I have been sent several Mexican newspapers of *varying opinions* with the passages marked that relate to the encounters between government troops and the “insurgents” and this is happening all the time and it is not always the former who come off best in the fighting.

“Skirmishes” might be a more appropriate term for these encounters, as the word “battle” should be used for encounters between larger forces. But it would be an absolutely false idea of what *all* agrarian movements are, including those of July-August 1789, not to see that the movement in northern Mexico has the character that all peasant movements have always had.

This, for me, explains why some friends are disillusioned about the “Mexican revolution”.

Like so many other Italian, Russian, etc., etc., friends, they have probably dreamt of Garibaldian campaigns and found nothing like it. Peaceful plains, countryside, wary (and with good reason) of strangers and – from time to time – sometimes here, sometimes twenty leagues east, south or north of that point, seven, eight days away, another village drives out the exploiters and seizes the land. Then, twenty, thirty days later, a detachment of soldiers “of order” arrive; they execute rebels, torch the village, and at the moment they head back “victorious”, they march into an ambush from which they escape only by leaving half the detachment dead or wounded.

This is what a peasant movement is. And it is obvious that if young people dreaming of a Garibaldian campaign arrive there, full of military zeal, they found only disappointment. They quickly realized their uselessness.

Unfortunately, nine tenths (perhaps ninety-nine hundredths) of anarchists cannot conceive of “revolution” other than in the form of battles on barricades, or triumphant Garibaldian expeditions.

I imagine the disappointment of young Italians or French understanding “the revolution” through the books and poems of bourgeois revolutionaries had they turned up in 1904 during the peasant uprisings in Russia. They would have returned “disgusted”, those who dreamt of battles, bayonet charges and all the warlike trappings of the Expedition of the Thousand.

And yet today we have a detailed account of this movement – about which social democrats and anarchists had no idea, and which *none of them* supported, in any way (“Wait for the signal for a general uprising”, these intellectuals told them), now that we have documented investigations into this movement, we see what *immense importance* it had for the development of the revolutionary movement of 1905 and 1906.

But so what? Would they not have had the same disappointments if they had turned up in Siberia when 3,000 kilometres of the Trans-Siberian [railway] were on strike and the Strike Committee, negotiating as equals with Linevitch, the commander of an army of five hundred thousand men, made a superb effort to bring one-hundred-and-fifty thousand men home in one month.

And – for us – that unarmed strike, *that expropriation of the State* (which owned the railways), that *spontaneous organisation* of thousands of railway workers across several thousand kilometres, was it not a formidable object lesson – which to this day no anarchist has yet told the French workers in all its simplicity and all its prophetic significance – just as no one has yet told the story of 1789–1793 peasant, in all its innermost simplicity, without cocked military caps [*képis*], without red sashes, but more effective than caps and sashes.

P. Kropotkin

An Appeal to the American and British Workmen

Mother Earth June 1912

Comrades and Friends

You know already, from the press, about the horrible massacre of workmen in Russia, which took place at one of the mines of the Lena Goldfields, on April 13th last, and the result of which was 163 men killed and over 150 men wounded.

We have now the details of this quite unprovoked, horrible slaughter of a peaceful crowd of unarmed workmen. The daily press, all over Russia, has published them in full. Even the ultra-conservative paper, *Novoye Vremya*, which is always siding with the government, openly blames it this time in the

subservient Duma, four different parties – the Octobrist-Centre, the Constitutional-Democrats, the Social-Democrats, and one fraction of the Right, the Nationalists – have addressed an interpellation to the Ministry about this affair; and one of the two ministers who spoke on this occasion, the Minister of Trade and Industry, M. Timasheff, recognized that the fault of the bloody conflict, so far as his information goes, does not lie with the workers.

In fact, from all the data at hand, it appears that the shooting in the Lena Goldfields was an exact repetition of what happened at St. Petersburg during the Bloody Sunday, on January 22nd, 1905.

The Lena Goldfields – the richest in Russia, as they yield every year about 36,000 lbs. of gold – are situated amidst a most arid region covered with mountains, 6,000 and 7,000 feet high, under the both degree of latitude, between the Lena and its tributary, the Vitim. I

know well these dreary mountain tracts, intersected by impenetrable gorges, and covered with thin larch forests and immense boulders, as I explored them in 1867. With the exception of a few spots at the Goldfields, they are absolutely desert, the nearest inhabited spot being a landing-place on the Vitim, connected with the gold mines by a railway, 165 miles long.

The nearest “town,” Kirensk, with its 2,000 inhabitants, is 1,000 miles away. When I visited the Lena Gold Mines, forty-five years ago, they belonged to private owners; but now, after much booming in the London papers, a Company has been floated to exploit them, 75 per cent. of the shares being owned by British capitalists. The head director of the Company is, however, a Russian, M. Timiriàzeff, an ex-deputy-Minister of Finance.

The nearly 10,000 workmen of these Goldfields were treated in the most cavalier fashion, the managers ignoring both the conditions of their agreements with the workmen, and the conditions about lodgings and sanitary measures imposed, in Russia, upon the employers of labor, by the law of June, 1903. The result was, that a strike broke out on March 13th last.

The demands of the workers offered nothing extravagant. They demanded : (1) The abolition of the truck system, the workmen having hitherto been paid

with checks that were acceptable in the stores and shops of the Company, and this system being explicitly forbidden by the Russian law; (2) The improvement of the organization of medical aid; (3) The recognition by the Company of a Committee of Workmen, which would control the measurement of the number of cubic feet handled by the men ; and also have a voice in the cases of dismissal of individual workmen; (4) An increase of from 10 to 30 per cent. of the wages; and (5) The eight hours’ day, instead of the ten hours’ day, which is in force at the mines.



Victims of the Lena massacre

Some of these claims were so reasonable that already in January last, the Minister of Trade and Industry had received a complaint from the Government Board of the Mines of Siberia against the illegal treatment of the workmen by the Lena Company. The representations made to the Company by the Mining Board

were, however, ignored, as we now learn from the reply given by the Minister of Commerce and Industry to the interpellation in the Duma. As to the increase of wages, it must be said that the average wages were from 3 to 4 shillings a day, while the cost of living in this Siberian Klondyke is high, as everyone will understand. The conditions of labor are still as I saw them forty-five years ago. The miner stands, with his feet – sometimes almost up to the knees – in water, the temperature of which is that of freezing point, as it results from the thawing of the frozen soil. It is very rare to find men who are not incapacitated through rheumatism after two or three years of such work. Scurvy is epidemic. I pass over some abominable details concerning the dwellings of the workmen in the Company’s barracks.

For a whole month the strike was running quite peacefully. There were a number of blacklegs working in the mines, but they were not interfered with by the strikers. More than that: the strikers themselves took care of the horses and of the water-pumping machinery, in order to prevent the flooding of the mines. They also had their own patrols to look after the safety of the works.

On the other side, the Company, having obtained from the local Justice of Peace an order against a number of strikers, evicted them from the lodgings they occupied

in the Company's barracks. To execute this order was, however, materially impossible, the whole region being buried in snow, and the nearest town being a thousand miles away; so that the Governor of Irkutsk had to stop it by cancelling the order.

Altogether, since the beginning of the strike, the Strike Committee had enjoyed the confidence of the administration of the mines, and very probably the strike would have soon ended in a compromise, when orders were sent from St. Petersburg to put at once an end to it.

I do not know whether there is any truth in the rumours reported by some Russian papers about a "bear" speculation on the stock exchange, in connection with the strike; but the fact is, that the order that came from St. Petersburg was to bring things to a climax.

A Captain of the Gendarmes, Treschenko, accompanied by the Public Prosecutor and a Mining Engineer, Tulchinsky, were sent for that purpose from Irkutsk, and the first act of these messengers of war was to arrest the Strike Committee, This was done on April 2nd. Thereupon a crowd of 3,000 men went to the prison where the Strike-Committee were incarcerated, to obtain their release; three hundred and forty soldiers, under the orders of the Gendarmes' Captain, stood there ready, under arms, and without the slightest provocation from the crowd, the troops were ordered by the said Captain to fire. They killed on the spot one hundred and thirteen persons, and wounded more than one hundred and fifty. Forty out of the latter died the same day.

All testimonies which I have before me, and not one of which was contested by the Minister of Interior in his speech before the Duma, show that there was not the slightest attack made upon the soldiers – none of them received even a scratch. On the contrary, the men in the front rows of the crowd were peacefully parleying with the mining engineer, Tulchinsky. He was quite in sympathy with the strikers and fully confirms their peaceful attitude. He himself escaped death only because several strikers standing in front of him were killed, and they all fell on the ground in a heap. Two more volleys were fired, one into the heap, and another into those who fled after the first volley.

As to the hero of this slaughter, the Gendarmes Captain, it appears now that he belongs exactly to that class of men who are the favourites of the present rulers of Russia. In the years 1906-1907, Treschenko, then a subaltern police officer at Nijny-Novgorod, won his palms by sending no less than eighty workmen of the industrial centres of that province to be hanged by the Courts Martial. Now he reappears in the Lena Goldfields, with a higher grade and with rights of life and death over hundreds of men. And when the Minister of Interior was interrogated in the Duma on the doings of that man, his reply was: – "Workmen have been shot before on similar occasions, and *they will continue to be shot*"

Comrades and Friends – This slaughter of your brothers in Russia is not an isolated case. It only surpasses the others by the number of victims, Terrorizing the workmen by periodical massacres is part of the present methods of the government of Russia. "Slaughtered they have been – slaughtered they will be," is our rulers' reply to the revolted conscience of the country.

In the name of the solidarity of Labour all over the world, I appeal to you. Brand these murderers in the face. And whenever you are asked to give them your support, be it only by giving them some portion of your work, – remember that every one of the present rulers of Russia has traces of the blood of the Russian people on his hands,

All over Russia and Siberia, the workmen, under the menace of imprisonment and exile, are making now twenty-four hours' and two days' strikes, to protest against the Lena massacre. They protest, they fight against all odds. Any word, any token of sympathy, coming from you, will show them that all over the world the toilers are one family; that they are inspired by one common feeling towards those for whom the slaughter of two hundred workmen counts for nothing in their race for power and wealth.

Yours fraternally,

Peter Kropotkin.

May 5, 1912.

Communist organisation cannot be left to be constructed by legislative bodies called parliaments, municipal or communal council. It must be the work of all, a natural growth, a product of the constructive genius of the great mass. Communism cannot be imposed from above; it could not live even for a few months if the constant and daily co-operation of all did not uphold it. It must be free.

– Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Ideal

A Letter from Peter Kropotkin

La Voix du Peuple, 21 December 1912

At the meeting of Scientific Societies, where an enthusiastic crowd gathered to celebrate the seventieth birthday of Peter Kropotkin and pay homage to his long life working for the liberation of humanity, Jean Grave read the following letter:

Dear comrades and friends

I cannot tell you how touched I am by the expressions of friendship which reach me from various quarters, and how happy I would have been to be with you, if my health permitted it.

Naturally I today look back to assess the path travelled. I am thinking back to the year 1878, when, at the first signs of the awakening of the French proletariat after the crushing of Commune, an early affirmation of the direct struggle of Labour against Capital was made by our Jura comrade Balivet, at the Lyon Congress, and the anarchist idea was again asserted in public meetings in Paris by a few comrades, one of whom, at least, is still amongst you, Jean Grave.

In measuring the progress made since then, it is impossible not to see how right were the fundamental ideas of anarchy that were asserted thereafter, and how productive they were in preparing the people's revolution against their oppressors.

At this very moment we are living on the eve of great historic events. We all feel their approach.

A general awakening of workers has recently occurred in Europe and America. A revolutionary tremor is felt in the working masses. Even our adversaries admit it.

And, as of today, we can affirm that in this looming awakening of the masses, we will see the anarchist idea assert itself publicly – to seek its practical realisation in life, to influence the course of events.

How far will it reach? We cannot predict that. A revolution only comes to the end of its development if it lasts a few years. But what is certain is that it will not stop at these innocuous reforms that are now called socialism. This limit that they wanted to impose on the upcoming revolution has already been exceeded. And it will depend on vigour – but above all also on the creative force that the anarchists, walking hand in hand with the people, will be able to deploy in the Revolution to develop new communist institutions – it will depend on these two elements to push the revolution to the complete liberation of society from the double tyranny which oppresses it: *that of Capital* – principal support of the State – *and of the State* – this father of modern capitalism, its principal support and its most faithful servant.

Wholeheartedly with you,

Peter Kropotkin.

“Brighton, 6 December 1912.

Another Letter

La Voix du Peuple, 28 December 1912

On the occasion of his seventieth birthday, comrades sent Kropotkin a gold watch.

Here is his letter to them:

Dear, dear companions, brothers and friends,

I do not know how to thank you for your letter in the *Réveil* and for your beautiful gift with its fraternal inscription.

Both touched me to the point of tears. I have done so little, and the little I have done, it is still to you and the Russian peasants that I owe it.

The guiding idea of anarchy, its developments, its practical applications – and with these, its philosophical foundations which were discovered later – all this did not come from books. It is first of all to have been in close contact with the people of the Russian countryside, and here, in the West, to have lived amongst you, and later, in close contact with the

English worker. It is to have seen, felt, how free men can live, organise themselves; what energy the young can put into their struggles for the reconstruction of society, – to have breathed, *lived* all this, – which allowed me to understand where the real forces of the future are and what needs to be done to march *with* progress towards the demolition of the two enemies of the human race: the capitalist exploiter and the statist exploiter.

And then, there was the independent, jovial, friendly and inventive spirit of your mountains, your spirit of revolt against the abominations and old men of the past – all of this is enough to leave its mark. Keep this spirit, cultivate it: soon you will feel its power.

I embrace you with all my heart, dear companion, brothers, friends.

Brighton, 14 December 1912.

Peter Kropotkin

A Greeting

Mother Earth January 1913

Dear Comrades and Friends:

First of all, let me express to you my warmest, heartiest thanks for all the kind words and thoughts you have addressed to me, and then to express through your pages the same heartiest thanks to all the comrades and friends who have sent me such warm and friendly letters and telegrams on the occasion of my seventieth birthday.

I need not tell you, nor could I word it on paper, how deeply I was touched by all these expressions of sympathy, and how I felt that “something brotherly” which keeps us, Anarchists, united by a feeling far deeper than the mere sense of solidarity in a party; and I am sure that that feeling of brotherhood will have some day its effect, when history will call upon us to show what we are worth, and how far we can act in harmony for the reconstruction of Society upon a new basis of equality and freedom.

And then let me add that if all of us have contributed to some extent to the work of liberation of exploited mankind, it is because our ideas have been more or less the expression of the ideas that are germinating in the very depths of the masses of the people. The more I live, the more am I convinced that no truthful and useful social science, and no useful and truthful social action is possible, but the science which bases its conclusions, and the action which bases its acts, upon the thoughts and the aspirations of the masses. All sociological science and all social action which would not do that would remain sterile.

With full heart with you,

Peter Kropotkin.

Celebration of Kropotkin's Birthday

Freedom, January 1913

Dear Comrades and Friends,

I had so much cherished the idea of being to-morrow in your midst for a few hours, and I hoped to be able to do so till to-day. But the fatigue of the last few days has told heavily upon me, and I see myself compelled to give up, that pleasure. I need not tell you how it grieves me. The more so as we are living through a great historical moment, and at such moments one feels especially the need of being in close touch with his friends and comrades. Everyone feels the general awakening that is *going* on amidst the toiling masses all over the world. More than that: one may feel already that this awakening is not going to spend itself in mere words. Great events are nearing us. And already now we may say that the Anarchist idea will have to say its word in these events. The labourers all over the world will not be lulled with mere patchwork reforms of the present conditions. They will go beyond the limits which socialist reformers-tried to impose on them. And in their efforts in so doing they surely will ask us, the Anarchists, to show the boldness of our thought, and to aid the people to display in full its *creative* powers for working out new institutions, leading to free Anarchist-Communism. Upon our foresight and energy will depend to a great extent the distance that will be covered in the struggle of mankind against its two enemies *Capital* – the chief support of the State-and *the State* – the chief creator and support of modern Capitalism.

From a full heart with you, dear brothers, comrades, and friends,

Brighton, December 12, 1912

Peter Kropotkin.

Free workers, on free land, with free machinery, and freely using all the powers given to man by science, could with the greatest easiness grow the necessary food for the whole of the population of the country, even if it should soon be doubled, and supply all the necessaries for a comfortable living for all members of the community.
– “Communist-Anarchism”, *Act For Yourselfes*

Letter to an Anarchist Congress

Les Temps Nouveaux, 23 August 1913

Dear Comrades and Friends,

I so regret not being able to be with you and associate myself with your work. So here I am forced to join you in thought and to send you my best wishes for success in your work.

Everywhere, parliamentary socialism has demonstrated its inability to help free the workers from the double yoke of capital and the State.

Even as palliative measures to improve the conditions of the workers ever so slightly, parliamentary socialism has been unable to do anything which could not have been done better by the pressure of the trade unions on bourgeois legislators.

As for accomplishing the educational mission attributed to parliamentary socialism, it has only shown how to develop in the working class the statist prejudice and the hunt for governmental positions, which already threatens to corrupt even the trade unions.

In terms of education, it gave only one: that of proving how harmful was the parliamentary road which the proletariat has followed during the last thirty or forty years.

But as parliamentary socialism is discredited, it is toward anarchy that the eyes of the exploited of all nations turn with hope.

And this new orientation of the workers' thought imposes new duties upon us.

The critique of the State is needed more than ever. But it needs to be deepened. And it alone is no longer enough. "The State is an obstacle to the liberation of labour: that is understood! But, what will we put in its

place?" For a social animal, individualism is not a principle of organisation. Demolition alone would not be enough. Besides, it would be too superficial if it were not inspired by new principles of societal organisation. You only demolish thoroughly when you see something better taking shape in front of you that will replace the old hovels. Without that, you do not know how to demolish enough: you stop halfway.

What then will be these new principles which are recommended in our idea for a new society?

What new forms of grouping are we going to recommend to those who ask for our option?

Individual revolt, collective revolt, the union to make this revolt wider and deeper – very good, we will be told. It is the organisation of the battle that will have to be fought one day.

And after? What form of society is taking shape before our eyes, what ideal disappears, for which we going to fight our struggles? Because these struggles will not end in a single day. They will last for years. Without doubt, it is during these struggles that the forms of the new society will take shape. But still, its broad outlines must be drawn for us today. For the liberating struggles *have already begun*.

Well, it is to discuss and establish these broad outlines that we are meeting today; in action, or in thought, we are all here, all imbued with the same liberating idea, and seeking the same solutions.

With all my heart, dear comrades and friends, I am with you.

Peter Kropotkin

To Luigi Bertoni

Bordighera, March 2, 1914¹

Thanks very much for your letter and the copy of "La Grande Rivoluzione". You may well imagine how much the polemic raised against you by Guillaume, saddens me.

My opinion is absolutely that which Malatesta has expressed in "La Volontà" of Feb. 7, 1914, and at which you jest.

The syndicate is absolutely necessary. It is the only form of workingmen's groups that permits of maintaining the direct struggle against Capital, without falling into Parliamentarism. But evidently it does not take that trend mechanically since we have in Germany, France and England syndicates rallying to

Parliamentarism and in Germany orthodox syndicalists who are very powerful, etc. The *other* element is necessary, the element of which Malatesta speaks and which Bakunin has always practiced.

Only, my friend, for very important reasons, it would be better worth while to put the quickest possible termination to that polemic. It threatens to extend itself, to divide those, who at present work together, to produce interior discord, as you have seen in the last number of "Les Temps Nouveaux".

In any case, my friend, remain firm upon the precise province of principles. It is necessary that the "Reveil" and the "Temps Nouveaux" should give the example of

¹ *Peter Kropotkin: the rebel, thinker, and humanitarian* (Berkeley Heights, N.J.: Free Spirit Press, 1923)

true, salutary discussion without personal attacks. Your arguments, -- or rather the questions you put to yourself as well as to your comrades, -- as they are exposed by Pierrot, -- are perfectly founded. Every one must put them to himself. I am going to write immediately to Guillaume about this.

In polemics he has his defeats, but, after all, he seeks, as we all do, the revolutionary solution of this difficult question and he has kept throughout his nature these qualities which made us love him so much in the Jurasienne. It is this nature that I have shown up in the note I have written in the "Vie ouvriere" for his 70th birthday.

In a preceding letter he wrote me (I have not yet written to him on the above question: it is on Brupbacher's article "Social- Democrat *and* Anarchist" that I wrote him) that the criticism of the syndicates seemed to him especially ill-placed because in France he asks himself every morning if there will not be some coup d'état before the day is over, or if war is not going to break out from one day to another.

The syndicate is absolutely necessary. It is the only form of workingmen's groups that permits of maintaining the direct struggle against Capital, without falling into Parliamentarism. But evidently it does not take that trend mechanically... The *other* element is necessary, the element of which Malatesta speaks and which Bakunin has always practiced.

As for the last contingency we have still two months of respite, and from the present to that time things may ease up or grow worse. As to the possibility of a coup d'état, I would never believe it probable. However, if Guillaume speaks of it, such must be the opinion of the Frenchmen with whom he treats. But aside from that there are interior dangers.

This letter has dragged along for several days. We have with us Mme. Sophie Lavroff, of whom I have often spoken to you; 72 years of age, she has come from St. Petersburg (3 days and 3 nights in a railway carriage) to see us. Then Jean Grave with his companion, an Englishman, Dr. Clark, and visits, -- and letters without

end -- among others, one concerning the absurd illustrations of the Spanish edition of the "Grande Révolution" (rods of lictors and all the ridiculous crowd, drawn in the "Histoire de la Revolution" of Louis Blanc, edition illustrated by Larousse). How grateful I am to you for the beautiful Italian edition! Our Russian edition progresses, 496 pages printed! ...

I embrace you with all my heart.

Peter

To Georg Brandes

[28 April 1919]¹

My very dear friend,

At last I have the opportunity of writing you and I make haste to profit thereby without being sure, however, that this letter will reach you.

Both of us thanked you heartily for the fraternal interest you have taken in your old friend when there was a rumour of my arrest. This rumour was absolutely false as were also the tales concerning the state of my health.

The person who will deliver this letter to you will tell you of the isolated life we lead in our little provincial village. At my age it is practically impossible to participate in public affairs during a revolution and it is not in my nature to occupy myself with them like an amateur. The last winter we spent at Moscow, I worked with a group of collaborators in order to elaborate the elements of a federalist republic. But the group had to disperse and I have once more started on a book on Ethics which I began fifteen years ago in England.

All I can do now is to give a general idea of the situation in Russia... .

At this moment we are experiencing what France lived through during the Jacobin revolution from September 1792 to July 1794, with the addition that now it is a Social Revolution which is in progress.

The dictatorial method of the Jacobins was false: It could not create a stable organization and it necessarily bordered on reaction. But, nevertheless, the Jacobins accomplished in June 1793, the abolition of feudal rights which was begun in 1789 and which neither the Constituent nor the Legislative wanted to conclude. And they resolutely proclaimed the political equality of all citizens. Two immense, fundamental changes which, during the course of the nineteenth century spread throughout Europe.

An analogous fact is brought about in Russia. The Bolsheviks are striving to introduce, through the dictatorship of a fraction of the Social-Democratic party, the socialization of the land, industry and

¹ *Peter Kropotkin: the rebel, thinker, and humanitarian* (Berkeley Heights, N.J.: Free Spirit Press, 1923)

commerce. This change which they are trying to accomplish is the fundamental principle of socialism. Unfortunately the method by which they seek to impose a communism recalling that of Babeuf in a state strongly centralized -- and in paralysing the constructive work of the people -- makes success absolutely impossible. Which is preparing for us a furious and evil reaction. The latter already seeks to organize itself in order to bring back the ancient regime while profiting by the general exhaustion produced first by the war and then by the famine we are undergoing in Central Russia and by the complete disorganization of exchange and production, inevitable during a revolution as vast which was accomplished by degrees.

They speak, in the West, of re-establishing "order" in Russia by the armed intervention of the Allies. Well, dear friend, you know how criminal toward all social progress of Europe, in my opinion, was the attitude of those who wrought to disorganize the power of resistance of Russia -- which prolonged the war by a year, brought us the German invasion, under cover of a treaty, and cost oceans of blood to prevent conquering Germany from crushing Europe under the imperial heel. You know my sentiments in that respect.

Nevertheless, I protest with all my strength against any kind of intervention of the Allies in Russian affairs. Such intervention would result in an access of Russian chauvinism.

It would once more bring about the chauvinistic monarchy -- signs of it are already apparent -- and, mark this well, it would produce among the entire people of Russia a hostile attitude toward Occidental Europe -- an attitude which would have the saddest results. The Americans have already comprehended this well.

They perhaps imagine that by supporting Admiral Kolchak and General Denikin that they are supporting a liberal republican party. But that is already an error. Whatever be the personal intentions of the two military chiefs, the great number of their partisans have other designs. Of necessity, what they would bring us would be a return of the monarchy, reaction and seas of blood.

Those of the Allies who already clearly see events, should be bound, then, to repudiate all armed

intervention. So much the more that if they really desire to come to Russia's aid they will find a great deal to do in another direction.

Throughout the immense vastitudes of the central and northern provinces we are lacking bread.

In order to procure a pound of black rye bread in Moscow, or here at Dimitroff, ... delivered by the State at the very high but relatively modest price of one rouble and sixty kopecks per pound, (formerly this was four francs) -- it is necessary to pay 25 to 30 roubles (62 to 75 francs) a pound of 450 grams. And still it is not to be obtained! There you have famine with all its consequences: A whole generation is fading away.... And they refuse us the right to buy bread in the West! -- Why? Can it be in order to bring us a Romanoff again?

We learn in Russia how Communism cannot be introduced... when it comes to build up quite new forms of life -- especially new forms of production and exchange -- without having any examples to imitate; when everything has to be worked out by men on the spot, then an all-powerful centralised Government... proves absolutely incapable of doing that through its functionaries, no matter how countless they may be

**- "Message to the Workers of the Western World",
Labour Leader, 22 July 1920**

Everywhere in Russia we are lacking manufactured articles. The peasant pays giddy prices for a scythe, an axe, a few nails, a needle, a yard of any material whatsoever -- a 1000 roubles (formerly 2500 francs) for four wheels attached to a rickety Russian cart. It is still worse in the Ukraine: No merchandise is to be found at any price.

Instead of playing the role Austria, Prussia, and Russia played in 1793 toward France, the Allies ought to do something to help the Russian people emerge from this terrible situation. Moreover, they would shed oceans of blood to have the Russian people return to the past -- they will not succeed.

It is to work out a new future by the constructive elaboration of a new life that is already unfolding despite all odds, that the Allies ought to help us. Come without delay to the aid of our children! Come to help us in necessary constructive work! And for that, let them send us, not diplomats and generals, but bread, implements for its production, and those organisers who knew so well how to help the Allies during these five terrible years to prevent economic disorganization and to repulse the barbaric invasion of the Germans... .

I am reminded that I ought to terminate this already too long letter. I do so by embracing you fraternally.

Peter Kropotkin

A letter from Peter Kropotkin

“Une Lettre de Pierre Kropotkine”, *Les Temps Nouveaux: Revue internationale des Idées Communistes Libertaires*, June-July 1921

[Dessihore 5 May 1920]

My dear Alexander

I let myself be carried away by my work and I did not reply to your letter of April 22.

If I have undertaken to work on *Ethics*, it is because I consider that work as absolutely necessary. I know very well that books do not create movements and that it is the opposite that is true; but I also know that books are absolutely necessary for a certain definite current of ideas to be elaborated; books must, with the necessary fullness and scope, express the fundamental principles. To lay the foundations of a morality freed of any religious spirit and far superior to any religious morality, to any morality awaiting its reward “in the other world”, we need good works which would penetrate to the very bottom of the issue.

At this moment, when we waver between Kant and Nietzsche, that is to say between Nietzsche and Christianity – for Kantian morality is, despite its efforts to cover itself with a philosophy, a religious morality – such a work becomes absolutely necessary.

It is curious (I learned this recently) that after the crushing of the Paris Commune, Bakunin, retired to Locarno, also felt the need to elaborate an *ethics*. Someone has to do it and the ground has to be prepared for it; and since my mind urges me to seek new paths in this domain as well, I must at least do so in order to trace the guidelines. I have very little time left to write: the heart slowly strikes the beats that remain to be struck. Just today, I almost fainted without any apparent cause: it is the heart that “falters”.

And so, my dear friend, I am putting all my strength into *Ethics*, especially because I feel that during the moment we are passing through it is difficult to do anything serious for Russia by militant agitation when there are only weak and scattered forces. Considerable forces are at play which are by no way individuals forces.

What is happening now in Russia had been in the making for thirty years: we alone, with our exceedingly modest forces, have fought the current dominant trend. But our forces were unable to group together; moreover, the strength of the centralist spirit of social-democracy was not appreciated highly enough, and also it was not believed that the great social upheaval was so close.

I believe in the future with all my heart. I believe that the trade-union movement, whose recent congress

represented twenty million workers, will become in the next fifty years a great force capable of achieving a communist society without authority. If I were in France – which is currently the centre of the trade union movement – and if I felt stronger, I would give myself body and soul to this movement, a movement which is that of the First International, not the Second nor the Third, both of which usurped the idea of the workers’ International for the benefit of a party – social democracy – which is not half composed of workers. I also believe that in order to establish a socialist, or rather communist, society amongst the peasants, the co-operative movement – especially the Russian peasant co-operatives – will provide in the next half-century nuclei capable of creating and developing a communist life. This movement will not be mixed with any religious element, because mere human reason will be sufficient for pushing the creative forces of the land to develop in the communist direction. The impulse may come from Russia and partly also from the United States.

I firmly believe this; but I feel that in order to infuse these two movements with an active force, to give them firm foundations, to help these weapons of defence become powerful weapons for the transformation of society in a communist direction, forces younger than mine are necessary and above all the collaboration of workers and peasants. These forces will be found; they already exist in the two movements in question, but they are not yet creating their future, they are not yet sufficiently aware of it; they are not sufficiently imbued with the socialist ideal.

I also believe that, once the great States are shattered, the small peoples, the small countries, will tend towards a form of social life without a State: 1. because this would avoid the danger of a militarism of conquest; 2. Because to men who have got rid of the Idol of our time – governmental centralism and the “powerful State” – it is easier to adopt a form of society without authority, that is to say that of independent communes federating amongst themselves.

I send you a big hug, my dear Alexander.

I have just reread my letter. Of course, it is not intended for the press: the thoughts are barely sketched. But that is the advantage of friendly letters: in being understood by reading between the lines.

Peter Kropotkin

To lay the foundations of a morality freed of any religious spirit...

Prefaces to *The Conquest of Bread*

Undoubtedly, *The Conquest of Bread* is Kropotkin's most famous anarchist work. This may be explained by it being the only one of his explicitly anarchist works to be fully translated into English during his lifetime (1906 with a slightly revised second edition appearing in 1913): *Words of a Rebel* and *Modern Science and Anarchy*, only appeared in complete editions in 2022 and 2018, respectively (an incomplete edition of *Words of a Rebel* was issued in 1992). The works which appeared first in English – *Mutual Aid* and *Fields, Workshops and Factories*, both compiled from articles written for the British liberal press – were works of popular science rather than anarchist books as such (although written from a libertarian perspective).

Here we include the first English-language translations of the prefaces Kropotkin wrote for the Russian editions of his classic plus a new translation of Élisée Reclus preface for the French edition. The English-language edition of the book did include a preface by Kropotkin, although Reclus's preface was not included in spite of it being published in *Freedom* (July, 1892) when the first few chapters were serialised in *Freedom* between September 1892 (Chapter 1: "Our Riches") to November-December 1892 (Chapter 7: "Clothing"). Chapters 4 to 7 were subsequently published as a pamphlet entitled *Expropriation* (London: Freedom Press, 1895) after the title of the book's fourth chapter. These translations were revised for the publication of the whole book in 1906.

The book presents an idealised version of a possible social revolution, taking its main inspiration from the Paris Commune of 1871. It seeks to give the reader a guide to action, to encourage socialists to think seriously of what a social revolution needs to succeed and so stresses the prime necessity of economic transformation once the political system becomes paralysed by popular revolt. As Kropotkin makes clear in his preface to Pouget's and Pataud's *How We Shall Bring About the Revolution*, he did not consider this work as something to be mechanically applied but rather a source of ideas, some of which could be utilised by those in revolt as objective conditions allowed. It presented a "general idea" for a future social revolution rather than a set of instructions, as would be expected from a *libertarian* communist.

The great weakness of *The Conquest of Bread* is its failure to discuss what we needed to do *now* to be in a position to apply its ideas in practice, in short how do we generate a revolutionary situation and ensure that anarchist voices are listened to and acted upon? The same can be said for *Words of a Rebel*, although *Modern Science and Anarchy* is more forthcoming. For this, we need to turn to the articles he wrote for the anarchist press and also to certain of his pamphlets (*Politics and Socialism*, springs to mind). Without those writings, the book appears more utopian than its author intended.

What a sad satire is that name, Political *Economy*, given to the science of waste of energy under the system of wagedom! – "Objections", *The Conquest of Bread*

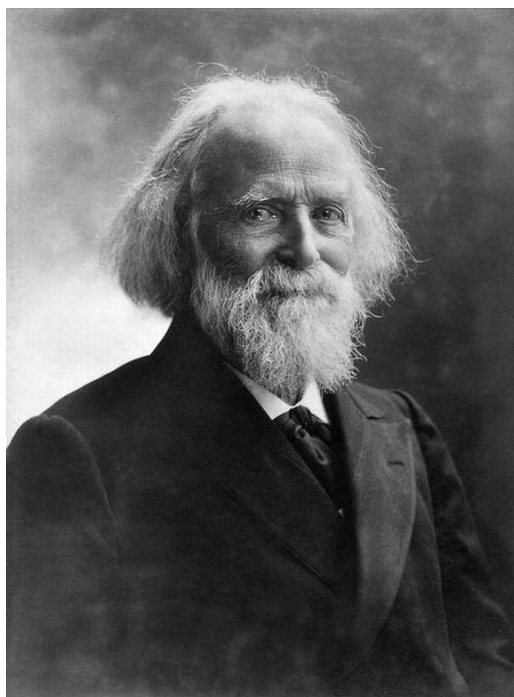
Preface to the first French Edition of *The Conquest of Bread* (1892)

Elisée Reclus

Peter Kropotkin asked me to write a few words at the beginning of his work, and I comply with his wishes, with a certain embarrassment in doing so. Not being able to add anything to the array of arguments that he presents in his work, I risk weakening the force of his words. However, friendship excuses me. While for the French “republicans” supreme good taste is to prostrate at the feet of the Tsar, I like to get closer to the free men whom he would have beaten with rods, whom he will lock in the dungeons of a citadel or hang in a dark courtyard. With these friends, I forget for a moment the abjection of the renegades who, in their youth, made themselves hoarse by crying “Liberty! Liberty!” and who are now trying to combine the two tunes of *La Marseillaise* and the *Bozhe Tsarya Khrani*.¹

Kropotkin’s previous work, *Words of a Rebel*, was above all an ardent critique of bourgeois society, at the same time so ferocious and so corrupt, and appealed to revolutionary energies against the State and the capitalist regime. The current work, following *Words*, has a more calmer bearing. It is addressed to men of goodwill who honestly desire to assist in social transformation, and presents to them in broad outline the phases of imminent history which will enable us to finally constitute the human family on the ruins of banks and States.

The title of the book, *The Conquest of Bread*, should be taken in the broadest sense, because “man does not live by bread alone”. At a time when the generous and valiant are trying to transform their ideal of social justice into a living reality, it is not conquering bread, even with wine and salt, that our ambition is limited to. It is also necessary to conquer all that is necessary, or even simply useful, for life’s comforts; we must be able to assure to all the full satisfaction of needs and pleasures. As long as we have not made this first “conquest”, as long as “there will be poor with us”, it is a bitter mockery to give the name of “society” to this



Elisée Reclus (1830-1905)

group of human beings who hate and destroy each other, like ferocious animals locked in an arena.

From the first chapter of his work, the author enumerates the immense riches that humanity already possesses and the prodigious machinery that it has acquired through collective labour. The products obtained each year amply suffice to supply bread to all men, and if the enormous capital of cities and houses, of arable fields, of factories, of transportation routes, and of schools became communal property instead being held as private property, comfort would be easy to conquer: the forces that are at our disposal would be applied, not to

useless or contradictory work, but to the production of all that man needs for food, housing, clothing, comfort, scientific studies, artistic culture.

Nevertheless, the recovery of humanity’s possessions, expropriation, in a word, can only be accomplished by anarchic communism: it must destroy the government, tear up its laws, repudiate its morality, ignore its agents, and set to work following its own initiative and grouping itself according to its affinities, its interests, its ideals, and the nature of the work undertaken. This question of expropriation, the most important in the book, is also one of those which the author has dealt with in the greatest details, plainly and without violent words, but with the calm and clarity of vision that the study of an imminent revolution, now unavoidable, requires. It is after this overthrow of the State that the groups of freed workers, no longer having to toil in the service of the monopolisers and the parasites, will be able to devote themselves to attractive occupations of freely chosen labour and proceed scientifically to the cultivation of the soil and to industrial production, interspersed with recreation given to study or pleasure. The pages of the book which deal with agricultural work are of vital interest, because they relate facts

¹ The national anthems of the French Republic and the Russian Empire, “God Save the Tsar!” (*Black Flag*)

which practice has already confirmed and which it is easy to apply everywhere on a large scale, for the benefit of all and not just for the enrichment of a few.

Some like to speak of the “Fin de siècle” to mock the vices and failings of the elegant youth; but it is now a matter of much more than the end of a century; we are coming to the end of an epoch, of an era of history.¹ It is the entire antiquated

civilisation that we see coming to an end. The right of force and the caprice of authority, the harsh Jewish tradition and the cruel Roman jurisprudence no longer impose upon us; we profess a new faith, and as soon as this faith, which is at the same time a science, has become that of all those who seek the truth, it will take shape in the world of achievements, for the first of historical laws is that society models itself on its ideal. How could the defenders of the antiquated order of things maintain it? They no longer believe; having neither guide nor flag, they fight haphazardly. Against the innovators they have laws and guns, police officers with clubs and artillery divisions, but all of that cannot offset a thought, and whole regime of arbitrariness and oppression is destined soon to be lost in a sort of prehistory.

Certainly, the imminent revolution, however important it may be in the development of humanity, will not differ from previous revolutions by making a sudden leap; nature makes none. But we can say that, by a thousand phenomena, by a thousand profound changes, an anarchic society has already been in full growth for a long time. It shows itself wherever free thought emerges from the letter of dogma, wherever the genius of the researcher ignores old formulas, wherever human will expresses itself in independent actions, wherever sincere men, rebelling against any imposed discipline, unite of their own free will to educate each other and to regain together, without a master, their share of life and of the complete satisfaction of their needs. All that is anarchy, even when it is unaware of itself, and more and more it comes to know itself. How could it not triumph, since it has its ideals and the audacity of its will, while the crowd of its adversaries, from now on without faith, abandon themselves to destiny, crying “Fin de siècle! Fin de siècle!”

The coming revolution will therefore be brought to pass, and our friend Kropotkin is acting in his right as a

¹ *Fin de siècle* is a French term meaning “end of century”, which encompasses both the meaning of the similar English idiom turn of the century and also refers to the closing of one era and onset of another. It is typically used to refer to the end

historian by placing himself now on the day of the revolution in order to present his ideas on the taking possession of the collective assets due to the work of all, and by appealing to the timid, who are perfectly aware of the reigning injustices, but who do not dare to openly revolt against a society upon which a thousand ties of interest and traditions make them depend. They know that the law is iniquitous and lying, that the

magistrates are the courtiers of the strong and the oppressors of the weak, that a law abiding life and continual probity of labour are not always rewarded with the certainty of having a piece of bread, and that the cynical impudence of the speculator, the harsh cruelty of the pawnbroker are

The party which has done the most revolutionary agitation, which has demonstrated the most life and daring, this party will be the most heeded on the day when action becomes necessary, when it will be necessary to march from the front to accomplish the revolution.

– “The Spirit of Revolt”, *Words of a Rebel*

better weapons than all the virtues for the “conquest of bread” and of well-being; but instead of adjusting their thoughts, their wishes, their undertakings, and their actions according to their enlightened sense of justice, most flee into some sideways dead-end to escape the dangers of a frank attitude. Such as the neo-religious, who no longer confessing the “absurd faith” of their fathers, indulge themselves in some more original mystagogy, without precise dogmas and losing themselves in a fog of confused feelings: they become spiritualists, Rosicrucians, Buddhists, or thaumaturges. Pretend disciples of Shakyamuni, but without taking the trouble to study the doctrine of their master, the melancholy gentlemen and vaporous ladies feign to seek peace in the annihilation of Nirvana.

But since they constantly talk about the ideal, these “beautiful souls” can be reassured. Material beings that we are, we have, it is true, the weakness of thinking about food, because we have often lacked it; it is currently lacking for millions of our Slavic brothers, the subjects of the Tsar, and millions more; but beyond bread, beyond well-being and all the collective wealth that can come from the implementation of our agitation, we see emerging in the distance before us a new world in which we will be able to fully love each other and satisfy this noble passion for the ideal that the ethereal lovers of beauty, ignoring material life, say is the unquenchable thirst of their soul! When there is no longer either rich or poor, when the hungry will no

of the nineteenth century, considered by many as period of social degeneracy but at the same time a period of hope for a new beginning. (*Black Flag*)

longer have to look at the sated with an envious eye, natural friendship will be able to be reborn between men, and the religion of solidarity, stifled today, will take the place of that vague religion which draws fleeting images on the vapours of the sky.

The revolution will achieve more than its promises; it will renew the sources of life by cleansing us of the impure contact of all politics and by finally freeing us of those vile preoccupations with money which poison our existence. It is then that everyone will be able to follow their path freely: the worker will do the work which suits him; the researcher will study without ulterior motive; the artist will no longer prostitute his ideal of beauty for his livelihood and all now friends, we will be

able to achieve together the great things foreseen by the poets.

Then the names of those who, through their devoted propaganda, paid for by exile or prison, have prepared the new society will undoubtedly be remembered. We think of them in publishing *The Conquest of Bread*: they will feel somewhat strengthened by receiving this account of the idea we share through their prison bars or in a foreign land. The author will certainly approve if I dedicate his book to all those who suffer for the cause, and above all to a very dear friend whose whole life has a long fight for justice. I do not have to say his name: by reading these words of a brother, he will recognise himself by the beatings of his heart.

Preface to the first Russian Edition of *The Conquest of Bread* (1902)¹

In the book now offered in the Russian translation, *The Conquest of Bread*, I tried to sketch out an ideal of how a social revolution could be realised on the basis of anarchist communism.

Earlier, I took up a criticism of the existing order from the economic and political point of view along with an examination of the current prejudices about representative government, as well as law and power in general, which I try to undermine in *Words of a Rebel*, (in Russian – *Breakdown of the present society or Rebel Speeches*). The conclusion of this critical analysis was the need for expropriation, that is, the necessity of society seizing the land and all of the accumulated wealth humanity needs for production and life but which are currently under private ownership... With that, my work – it was published in the form of leading articles in the newspaper *Le Révolté* – was interrupted by arrest and prison in France.²

After leaving prison three years later, I undertook the continuation of the same work, in our same newspaper, *Le Révolté*, transferred in the meantime to Paris and subsequently forced by a prosecution to change its name to *La Révolte*.

Embarking upon the presentation of how, in our opinion, the social revolution could and should be realised, I thought that it would be better not to describe the ideal in general but take a real example and use it to show how, acting boldly and wisely during the revolution, it might be possible to transition from the current order to a non-authoritarian, anarchistic communism; how the circumstances themselves will

push in this direction and how it will depend on us: whether to realise the aspirations already emerging in modern society or, paying tribute to entrenched and still far from eradicated prejudices, continue upon the old roads of the servile past, without establishing anything substantial in the direction of communism.

I used Paris as the real example, and I did so for the following reasons.

Every nation, even the most civilised and the most advanced, is by no means one whole, brought to a common level. On the contrary, its various parts are always at completely different stages of development.

Even France, notwithstanding her two great revolutions of 1789-1793 and 1848, despite the enormous internal material progress made in the country over the course of the nineteenth century (not externally, as in England, which obtained half its riches by plundering India and other colonies), despite the great work induced in minds of all classes of the population by its tempestuous political life of the last hundred years, notwithstanding all that, France is still an agglomeration, that is, a disjointed cohabitation of the most diverse parts. Even now its northwest is at least half a century behind its eastern parts. The Great Revolution, that is, the great peasant movement, during which time the bonds of serfdom were destroyed and the peasants took back the land seized from them over the previous two or three hundred years by landowners and monasteries, as well as the town uprisings which had the aim of destroying the urban, semi-feudal dependence of the artisans and liberation from almost autocratic royal power – this

Kropotkin drafted the defendants Declaration (this and his defence speech are in *Words of a Rebel* [PM Press, 2022]). He was sentenced to five years but released after three as part of a general amnesty due to national and international pressure. (*Black Flag*)

¹ Translation by Sarah Slye.

² A reference to the infamous Lyons Trial of January 1883 which saw Kropotkin and over 60 other anarchists tried for being members of the International Workers' Association, which had been banned as a result of the Paris Commune.

popular uprising spread mostly in the south-eastern, eastern and north-eastern parts of France, whereas the northwest and west remained the stronghold of the gentry and king and even took to arms in the Vendée uprising against the Jacobin Republic. But the same division of the country into east and west exists even to this day; and when, in the beginning of the establishment of the present republic, the elections to the chamber had to decide what France wanted – a republic or a return to the monarchy – the map of republican successes (the election of 363 republican deputies) coincided with amazing accuracy to the map on which I once placed all the peasant and city rebellions of 1788-1792 known to me. Only since the establishment of the present republic did republican ideals start to penetrate among the peasants of north-western and western France.

The west and east of France, its southwest and northeast, its central plateau and the Rhône Valley remain separate worlds. And this difference stands out sharply not only among the rural population of these areas (the rural semi-industrialised craftsmen of the French Jura and the Breton peasant are two different peoples) but even among the urban population. Compare only Marseille or Saint-Étienne and Rouen with Rennes, where the power of the priests and faith in the king persist even today!

France, despite entire centuries of state centralisation, Italy even more, and even more so Spain are countries of a local, independent and distinct life unified only superficially by the metropolitan bureaucracy. In essence, the Latin countries, including even France, are deeply federalist countries, which, by the way, the German Statesmen and German Jacobins – who eternally confuse the “particularism” they so despise (which grew up around the Saxe-Coburg-Anhalt and similar courts) with federalism, that is, the desire for

independence among the population of certain regions and cities – are completely incapable of understanding.

In light of this, for me there is not even the slightest doubt that the social revolution in France, whatever course it takes, will have a character that is local and communal, and by no means Jacobin or all-state. Every progressive Frenchman who knows his country and is not obsessed with Jacobin centralisation understands perfectly well (as Pi y Margall understood it in Spain¹)

that any revolution will happen in France in the form of declaring independent communes – as it was in 1871, when communes were declared in Paris and Saint-Étienne and attempts were made by “Bakuninists” to declare communes in Lyon and Marseille. No matter what national parliament or convention sits in France, the beginnings of the social revolution will not be worked out in it but in the individual cities, which will obey parliament as little as Paris obeyed the terrible Convention in 1792 and 1793.

Kropotkin’s aim to prove that communism at least partial – has more chances of being established than collectivism, especially in communes taking the lead, and that free, or anarchist-communism is the only form of communism that has any chance of being accepted in civilised societies; communism and anarchy are therefore two terms of evolution which complete each other, the one rendering the other possible and acceptable.

– “Anarchism”, *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*

It is also quite likely that the development of the revolution will be different in different cities and that, depending on local conditions and needs, in each commune that has risen up and declared its independence, the people will try to solve in their own way the great question of the twentieth century – the social question. In other words, if a social revolution starts in the Latin countries, then this revolution will, undoubtedly, take on that same living, diverse, local character which the “revolution of cities” in the twelfth century, so wonderfully described by Augustin Thierry, took on at its inception.² The very same will happen, without a doubt, in England, as well as in most cities of Belgium and Holland. And for me there is also no doubt that no steps in the socialist direction (in the sense of the socialisation of the instruments of production) will be taken in Russia until, in different parts of our immense fatherland with initiative of the cities, attempts

¹ Francisco Pi y Margall (1824-1901) was a Spanish federalist and republican politician and theorist who served as president of the short-lived First Spanish Republic in 1873. The son of a textile worker, he translated several of Proudhon’s works and placed the federal idea at the centre of his republicanism. (*Black Flag*)

² Kropotkin discusses this movement in both *Mutual Aid* and *The State: Its Historic Role* (the latter included as Part III of the 1913 expanded edition of *Modern Science and Anarchy*). (*Black Flag*)

begin to socialise the land, and some of the factories, and to organise some agriculture as well as, maybe, some factory production on a social-co-operative basis.¹

Since I was writing in *Le Révolté* for French workers, I took France, of course, and Paris specifically, as the most advanced city in France, and I tried to show how even such a large city as Paris could realise a social revolution within itself and in its surroundings, and how it could make it take root, even if it had to – as

Republican France had to in 1793 – withstand the onslaught of all the defenders of the rotten past.

At the end of this book, I was brought to the study of the question “what and how to produce?” And I examined it, to the best of my ability, in my next book, titled in English *Fields, Factories and Workshops* (in Russian *Polja, fabriki and masterskie*).

P. Kropotkin

January 1902²

Preface to the second English Edition of *The Conquest of Bread* (1913)

One of the current objections to Communism, and Socialism altogether, is that the idea is so old, and yet it has never been realised. Schemes of ideal States haunted the thinkers of Ancient Greece; later on, the early Christians joined in communist groups; centuries later, large communist brotherhoods came into existence during the Reform movement. Then, the same ideals were revived during the great English and French Revolutions; and finally, quite lately, in 1848, a revolution, inspired to a great extent with Socialist ideals, took place in France. “And yet, you see,” we are told, “how far away is still the realisation of your schemes. Don’t you think that there is some fundamental error in your understanding of human nature and its needs?”

At first sight this objection seems very serious. However, the moment we consider human history more attentively, it loses its strength. We see, first, that hundreds of millions of men have succeeded in maintaining amongst themselves, in their village communities, for many hundreds of years, one of the main elements of Socialism – the common ownership of

the chief instrument of production, the land, and the apportionment of the same according to the labour capacities of the different families; and we learn that if the communal possession of the land has been destroyed in Western Europe, it was not from within, but from without, by the governments which created a land monopoly in favour of the nobility and the middle classes. We learn, moreover, that the medieval cities

succeeded in maintaining in their midst, for several centuries in succession, a certain socialised organisation of production and trade; that these centuries were periods of a rapid intellectual, industrial, and artistic progress; while the decay of these communal institutions came mainly from the incapacity of men of combining the

village with the city, the peasant with the citizen, so as jointly to oppose the growth of the military states, which destroyed the free cities.

The history of mankind, thus understood, does not offer, then, an argument against Communism. It appears, on

¹ Kropotkin uses the word “artel” which was Russian for a co-operative association. He discusses these in, for example, “Co-operation: A reply to Herbert Spencer” (*Freedom*, December 1896 and January 1897 – included in *Modern Science and Anarchy* [AK Press, 2018]). (*Black Flag*)

² Kropotkin, like other Russian Anarchists, championed the need for expropriation of land and industry during the 1905 Russian Revolution as part of a series of measures to weaken the political and economic power of the bourgeoisie. While

he did not think the objective conditions in Tsarist Russia made Anarchy immediately realisable, he rightly saw the need for the working classes to raise economic demands while fighting to end the autocracy (see *Direct Struggle Against Capital* for three of Kropotkin’s articles from this period). During the 1917 Revolution, these ideas were taken up by more widely while the peasants took the land and workers formed factory committees to challenge and then replace the bosses, so showing his prescience. (*Black Flag*)

the contrary, as a succession of endeavours to realise some sort of communist organisation, endeavours which were crowned here and there with a partial success of a certain duration; and all we are authorised to conclude is, that mankind has not yet found the proper form for combining, on communistic principles, agriculture with a suddenly developed industry and a rapidly growing international trade. The latter appears especially as a disturbing element, since it is no longer individuals only, or cities, that enrich themselves by distant commerce and export; but whole nations grow rich at the cost of those nations which lag behind in their industrial development.

These conditions, which began to appear by the end of the eighteenth century, took, however, their full development in the nineteenth century only, after the Napoleonic wars came to an end. And modern Communism has to take them into account.

It is now known that the French Revolution, apart from its political significance, was an attempt made by the French people, in 1793 and 1794, in three different directions more or less akin to Socialism. It was, first, *the equalisation of fortunes*, by means of an income tax and succession duties, both heavily progressive, as also by a direct confiscation of the land in order to subdivide it, and by heavy war taxes levied upon the rich only. The second attempt was a sort of *Municipal Communism* as regards the consumption of some objects of first necessity, bought by the municipalities, and sold by them at cost price. And the third attempt was to introduce a wide *national system of rationally established prices of all commodities*, for which the real cost of production and moderate trade profits had to be taken into account. The Convention worked hard at this scheme, and had nearly completed its work, when reaction took the upper hand.

It was during this remarkable movement, which has never yet been properly studied, that modern Socialism was born – Fourierism with L'Ange, at Lyons, and authoritarian Communism with Buonarroti, Babeuf, and their comrades. And it was immediately after the Great Revolution that the three great theoretical founders of modern Socialism – Fourier, Saint Simon, and Robert Owen, as well as Godwin (the No-State Socialism) – came forward; while the secret communist societies, originated from those of Buonarroti and Babeuf, gave their stamp to militant, authoritarian Communism for the next fifty years.

To be correct, then, we must say that modern Socialism is not yet a hundred years old, and that, for the first half of these hundred years, two nations only, which stood at the head of the industrial movement, i.e., Britain and France, took part in its elaboration. Both – bleeding at that time from the terrible wounds inflicted upon them by fifteen years of Napoleonic wars, and both enveloped in the great European reaction that had come from the East.

In fact, it was only after the Revolution of July, 1830, in France, and the Reform movement of 1830-1832 in this country, had begun to shake off that terrible reaction, that the discussion of Socialism became possible for a few years before the revolution of 1848. And it was during those years that the aspirations of Fourier, St. Simon, and Robert Owen, worked out by their followers, took a definite shape, and the different schools of Socialism which exist nowadays were defined.

In Britain, Robert Owen and his followers worked out their schemes of communist villages, agricultural and industrial at the same time; immense co-operative associations were started for creating with their dividends more communist colonies; and the Great Consolidated Trades' Union was founded – the forerunner of both the Labour Parties of our days and the International Working-men's Association.

In France, the Fourierist Considérant issued his remarkable manifesto, which contains, beautifully developed, all the theoretical considerations upon the growth of Capitalism, which are now described as "Scientific Socialism." Proudhon worked out his idea of Anarchism and Mutualism, without State interference. Louis Blanc published his *Organisation of Labour*, which became later on the programme of Lassalle. Vidal in France and Lorenz Stein in Germany further developed, in two remarkable works, published in 1846 and 1847 respectively, the theoretical conceptions of Considérant; and finally Vidal, and especially Pecqueur, developed in detail the system of Collectivism, which the former wanted the National Assembly of 1848 to vote in the shape of laws.

However, there is one feature, common to all Socialist schemes of that period, which must be noted. The three great founders of Socialism who wrote at the dawn of the nineteenth century were so entranced by the wide horizons which it opened before them, that they looked upon it as a new revelation, and upon themselves as upon the founders of a new religion. Socialism had to be a religion, and they had to regulate its march, as the heads of a new church. Besides, writing during the period of reaction which had followed the French Revolution, and seeing more its failures than its successes, they did not trust the masses, and they did not appeal to them for bringing about the changes which they thought necessary. They put their faith, on the contrary, into some great ruler, some Socialist Napoleon. He would understand the new revelation; he would be convinced of its desirability by the successful experiments of their phalansteries, or associations; and he would peacefully accomplish by his own authority the revolution which would bring well-being and happiness to mankind. A military genius, Napoleon, had just been ruling Europe. Why should not a social genius come forward, carry Europe with him and translate the new Gospel into life? That faith was rooted very deep,

and it stood for a long time in the way of Socialism; its traces are even seen amongst us, down to the present day.

It was only during the years 1840-48, when the approach of the Revolution was felt everywhere, and the proletarians were beginning to plant the banner of Socialism on the barricades, that faith in the people began to enter once more the hearts of the social schemers: faith, on the one side, in Republican Democracy, and on the other side in *free* association, in the organising powers of the working-men themselves.

But then came the Revolution of February, 1848, the middle-class Republic, and – with it, shattered hopes. Four months only after the proclamation of the Republic, the June insurrection of the Paris proletarians broke out, and it was crushed in blood. The wholesale shooting of the working-men, the mass deportations to New Guinea, and finally the Napoleonic *coup d'état* followed. The Socialists were prosecuted with fury, and the weeding out was so terrible and so thorough that for the next twelve or fifteen years the very traces of Socialism disappeared; its literature vanished so completely that even names, once so familiar before 1848, were entirely forgotten; ideas which were then current – the stock ideas of the Socialists before 1848 – were so wiped out as to be taken, later on, by our generation, for new discoveries.

However, when a new revival began, about 1866, when Communism and Collectivism once more came forward, it appeared that the conception as to the means of their realisation had undergone a deep change. The old faith in Political Democracy was dying out, and the first principles upon which the Paris working-men agreed with the British trade-unionists and Owenites, when they met in 1862 and 1864, at London, was that “the emancipation of the working-men must be accomplished by the working-men themselves.” Upon another point they also were agreed. It was that the labour unions themselves would have to get hold of the instruments of production, and organise production themselves. The French idea of the Fourierist and Mutualist “Association” thus joined hands with Robert Owen’s idea of “The Great Consolidated Trades’ Union,” which was extended now, so as to become an International Working-men’s Association.

Again this new revival of Socialism lasted but a few years. Soon came the war of 1870-71, the uprising of the Paris Commune – and again the free development of Socialism was rendered impossible in France. But while Germany accepted now from the hands of its German teachers, Marx and Engels, the Socialism of the French “forty-eighters” that is, the Socialism of Considérant and Louis Blanc, and the Collectivism of Pecqueur, – France made a further step forward.

In March, 1871, Paris had proclaimed that henceforward it would not wait for the retardatory portions of France: that it intended to start within its Commune its own social development.

The movement was too short-lived to give any positive result. It remained communalist only; it merely asserted the rights of the Commune to its full autonomy. But the working-classes of the old International saw at once its

But if we... ask Nature: “Who are the fittest: those who are continually at war with each other, or those who support one another?” we at once see that those animals which acquire habits of mutual aid are undoubtedly the fittest. They have more chances to survive... it favours the development of such habits and characters as insure the maintenance and further development of the species, together with the greatest amount of welfare and enjoyment of life for the individual, with the least waste of energy.

– *Mutual Aid*

historical significance. They understood that the free commune would be henceforth the medium in which the ideas of modern Socialism may come to realisation. The free agro-industrial communes, of which so much was spoken in England and France before 1848, need not be small phalansteries, or small

communities of 2000 persons. They must be vast agglomerations, like Paris, or, still better, small territories. These communes would federate to constitute nations in some cases, even irrespectively of the present national frontiers (like the Cinque Ports, or the Hansa). At the same time large labour associations would come into existence for the inter-communal service of the railways, the docks, and so on.

Such were the ideas which began vaguely to circulate after 1871 amongst the thinking working-men, especially in the Latin countries. In some such organisation, the details of which life itself would settle, the labour circles saw the medium through which Socialist forms of life could find a much easier realisation than through the seizure of all industrial property by the State, and the State organisation of agriculture and industry.

These are the ideas to which I have endeavoured to give a more or less definite expression in this book.

Looking back now at the years that have passed since this book was written, I can say in full conscience that its leading ideas must have been correct. State Socialism has certainly made considerable progress. State railways, State banking, and State trade in spirits have been introduced here and there. But every step made in this direction, even though it resulted in the cheapening of a given commodity, was found to be a new obstacle in the struggle of the working-men for their emancipation. So that we find growing amongst the working-men, especially in Western Europe, the idea that even the working of such a vast national property as a railway-net could be much better handled by a Federated Union of railway employees, than by a State organisation.

On the other side, we see that countless attempts have been made all over Europe and America, the leading idea of which is, on the one side, to get into the hands of the working-men themselves wide branches of production, and, on the other side, to always widen in the cities the circles of the functions which the city performs in the interest of its inhabitants. Trade-unionism, with a growing tendency towards organising the different trades internationally, and of being not only an instrument for the improvement of the conditions of labour, but also of becoming an organisation which might, at a given moment, take into

its hands the management of production; Co-operation, both for production and for distribution, both in industry and agriculture, and attempts at combining both sorts of co-operation in experimental colonies; and finally, the immensely varied field of the so-called Municipal Socialism – these are the three directions in which the greatest amount of creative power has been developed lately.

Of course, none of these may, in any degree, be taken as a substitute for Communism, or even for Socialism, both of which imply the common possession of the instruments of production. But we certainly must look at all these attempts as upon *experiments* – like those which Owen, Fourier, and Saint Simon tried in their colonies – experiments which prepare human thought to conceive some of the practical forms in which a communist society might find its expression. The synthesis of all these partial experiments will have to be made some day by the constructive genius of some one of the civilised nations. But samples of the bricks out of which the great synthetic building will have to be built, and even samples of some of its rooms, are being prepared by the immense effort of the constructive genius of man.

Brighton

January, 1913.

Preface to the second Russian Edition of *The Conquest of Bread* (1919)¹

Over twenty-five years have passed since I wrote this book, having in mind mainly the social revolution in France. The generation that took part in the founding of the First Workers' International and the activists of the Paris Commune who survived the defeat were then still alive; and, seeing the total victory of reaction all around them, lost faith in the possibility of a socialist revolutionary movement.

The idea of a social revolution continued to live on only among the Blanquists – advocates of centralised, state Communism – and among a handful of anarchists from the First International who adhered firmly to the fundamental principles of stateless anarchistic communism or collectivism. It was these ideas – our understanding of the measures a community can take when freeing itself from the chains of Capital and State – which I tried to formulate and present in this book.

Of course, I did not imagine that it would be possible to outline an exact plan for social reconstruction. But I thought that it was necessary to sketch such a plan so

that revolutionaries could ponder over the immense challenges that the social revolution would face.

In Spain, the ideas put forward in this book immediately obtained the sympathy of the workers. *The Conquest of Bread* (as the book was titled²) became a popular saying among the workers, most of them anarchists. In a country where the centralised state had always been considered a great evil, carrying out the social revolution through free communes was met with full sympathy.

But the reaction in Europe grew ever stronger. The Social-Democrats of all countries were teaching the workers that, considering the state forces' high level of development, revolution was impossible for the time being – until the “concentration of capital” drastically reduced the number of capitalists and destroyed small-scale industry and petty trade. These teachings won out. Faith in the imminence of the social revolution increasingly waned, and it got to the point that even some of our friends began to talk about how useless it

¹ Translation by Sarah Slye.

² The Russian translation of *The Conquest of Bread* was entitled *Bread and Freedom* (*Khleb i volya*), which was also the title of a Russian anarchist-communist group and journal Kropotkin worked with in the early years of the 20th century. (*Black Flag*)

was to debate the forms the social revolution could take. “When will it happen though? Maybe in two hundred years!” some said.

Meanwhile, the world war of the past five years has shown how erroneous such hopeless views were. On the one hand, both among the Allies and in Germany, the war advanced state socialism, which was introduced out of necessity, without any revolution. In England, during these years of war, the state became the main provider of bread, meat and sugar for all trade, wholesale and petty. It even assumed the management of the railways and the coal mines; moreover, it became the main promoter of the intensive cultivation of food products. On the other hand, in France and Italy, city administrations started taking upon themselves the procurement of food and its distribution.

Consequently, the first social disaster in Europe led indeed to *Communism and the distribution of goods according to need*.

The conjecture expressed in this book was, thus, confirmed in real life on an enormous scale.

Another demand of the workers was also confirmed; they decided to participate themselves in the

management of factories and mills, and in the organisation of production; and this demand, considered utopian, that is, unrealisable, before the war, was not only recognised in England but even the governmental Commission recognised the necessity of a new “Labour Parliament” representing the production interests of all industrial workers.¹

Finally, here in Russia the large-scale attempt to totally restructure the economic life of a nation of 150 million people upon communist foundations is already in its second year. And the huge mistakes made in this attempt – the result of the statist, centralised, bureaucratic character given to the reconstruction – these mistakes themselves show how necessary it was to have been long ago studying the conditions under which

¹ Presumably a reference to the setting up, as strikes spread across Britain, of a *Commission of Enquiry into Industrial Unrest* which recommended in its report of July 1917 the setting up of “National Industrial Councils, District Councils, and Shop Committees” – amongst other reforms – as a possible solution to the social unrest taking place across the country. (*Black Flag*)

a real and *enduring* transition from capitalist to social production and consumption would be possible.

As life does not stop at the first unsuccessful attempt, and since more or less deep transformations in the same direction (many having already started in various countries) will unavoidably follow it, then it is natural that every socialist has a *duty, an obligation to humanity and to himself* to apply the power of his mind and energy to the study of the conditions under which the transition to a better, non-capitalistic order could be actualised without the destruction, suffering, pain, mad waste of energy, development of the worst profit instincts, and so on, that we are currently enduring.

The First Workers’ International, founded in 1864 by French and British workers, had in mind precisely the study of the conditions of the transition from a capitalist order to a communist one.

But the bourgeoisie and internal intrigues destroyed this formidable force, and in its stead was created the Second International – not out of workers’ unions like the first but Social-Democratic *parties*; and it gave itself the task of firstly the “Conquest of Power” and only then a socialist revolution with the help of this power.² Those of us who talked about the reconstruction of society from below, at the

local level, not by the orders of a central authority, but through popular construction, started to be called vacuous dreamers.

But – in the past we were not strong, and so we will leave these arguments behind, and we will remember one thing. For all of us to whom the future is dear, and whoever wants to see a successful, enduring social revolution in the future, all of us have to think seriously about the conditions under which such a revolution could take place – and be successful. Science has to study the real forces of society and the possibilities for reconstruction; whereas we must study the conditions of life – not from books and pamphlets but by taking an active part in it – in the village, in the workshop, in the factory, on the railway, in the mines and so on. We must learn the strength of the old order’s opposition, discover

² Kropotkin often noted that rather than the socialists conquering Power, the opposite had happened – the socialists had become reformist and so Power had conquered them, a point made explicitly in the article “The Conquest of Socialists by Power” (*Les Temps Nouveaux*, 21 April 1900) which was included in a previous issue of *Black Flag Anarchist Review* (Vol. 1, No. 1). (*Black Flag*)

To attack the central power, to strip it of its functions, to decentralise, to disperse power would have been to abandon its affairs to the people, it would have run the risk of a truly popular revolution. This is why the bourgeoisie seeks to further strengthen central government...
– “Representative Government”, *Words of a Rebel*

the reasons for its resilience and awaken the new, constructive forces of a new order.

One of the possible directions for reconstruction is indicated in this book. And there is no doubt that communal production and consumption will be applied widely in the Latin countries, along with the federation of communes for regional and national questions.

Another possible direction, also anarchistic, was indicated by our comrade, the syndicalist [Émile] Pouget, in the book *How We Shall Bring About the Revolution*. In it, he presents the social revolution as many syndicalists understand it, from the point of view of trade unions – syndicates; and I hope a Russian translation of this book will soon be published.¹

I also hope an account will finally be published in Russia of how Proudhon and his follower in the United States, Bellamy, in the book *Equality*, understood the social revolution.² Let us also hope that the idolatry of German Social-Democracy will now generally weaken in Russia and the desire will arise to get acquainted with

The spectre of the people, armed and insurgent, demanding from the middle classes their share of the national wealth, never ceased to haunt those members of the Third Estate who had attained power... It must be said also that, by degrees, the revolutionary education of the people was being accomplished by the Revolution itself, and that the masses were by degrees emboldened to demand measures imbued with a communist spirit, which to some extent would have contributed to efface the economic inequalities.

– The Great French Revolution, 1789–1793

what is being done in England in the areas of municipal and “guild” socialism³ and in the Latin countries in the direction of “Communalism,” that is, the communal socialisation of consumption.

A general familiarisation with these questions, which life has raised for the socialisation of agriculture, industry and trade, is insufficient. Life, now, will require *deep changes*. And if we all keep living in the former *ignorance of life*, then every new attempt will inevitably lead to failure.

Everyone will understand with what emotion I had reading this book now. Let it serve as one of the very many stones which must be hewn in order to build a durable edifice of a new society out of them, based not on blind obedience to power but the *free cooperation of all*.

P. Kropotkin

Dmitrov

June 1919

¹ Kropotkin wrote a sympathetic but critical preface to the 1913 English Translation of this French Syndicalist classic. It is included in *Direct Struggle Against Capital: A Peter Kropotkin Anthology* (AK Press, 2014). (*Black Flag*)

² Edward Bellamy (1850-1898) was an American author, journalist, and political activist most famous for his utopian novel *Looking Backward* (1888). He published *Equality*, a sequel to his best-known work, the year before he died. He used “Nationalism” rather than Socialism to describe his non-competitive state-run utopia. Kropotkin was impressed with his work, although critical of its authoritarianism he liked how it ended the link between labour done and income received, and discussed it on many occasions: “Le Vingtième Siècle” (*La Révolte*, 30 November, 14, 21 and 28 December 1889); “Bellamy’s ‘Equality’” (*The Independent*, 2 December 1897) and an obituary “Edouard Bellamy” (*Les Temps Nouveaux*, 4 June 1898), the latter translated (“Edward Bellamy”, *Freedom*, July 1898). (*Black Flag*)

³ Kropotkin discusses the municipal socialist movement in “Municipal Socialism” (*Freedom*, December 1902 – included in *Act for Yourselves* [Freedom Press, 1988]). Guild

Socialism was a predominantly British movement which aimed at workers’ control of production in the years immediately before and after the First World War. It named the new national bodies “Guilds” after the artisan organisations of the Middle Ages (see chapters 5 and 6 of Kropotkin’s *Mutual Aid*). The movement had a wide range of advocates, some closer to anarchism than others – G. D. H. Cole (1889-1959) was closest to anarchism as shown in such works as *Self-Government in Industry* (1917) and *Guild Socialism Restated* (1920). Like British Syndicalism, it unfortunately did not survive the appeal of the Bolshevik revolution within the British left (Cole being a notable exception, who opposed Bolshevism and remained sympathetic to Guild Socialism despite becoming associated with the Labour Party). Kropotkin repeatedly discussed trade unionism, municipal socialism and co-operation as tendencies pointing towards anarchy, noting on one occasion how workers should follow the example of the Guilds and replace the boss with their trade unions in “The Development of Trade-Unionism” (*Freedom*, March 1898 – included in *Direct Struggle Against Capital*). (*Black Flag*)

Towards a more complete Peter Kropotkin Bibliography

Iain McKay

Given how Kropotkin's articles and letters appeared in journals (both anarchist and non-anarchist) across the globe, in a multitude of languages and that many of them were unsigned, it would be unlikely that a complete bibliography of his writings could ever be achieved. Various people have produced partial attempts, including myself.¹

Here, I add a few more articles and letters to my previous work and hope they will be of use to anarchists and historians for as Nicolas Walter noted in 1971:

to study Kropotkin properly it is still necessary to read him in the original publications – not only his books, but also and especially his many articles and pamphlets, which he himself said were “are more expressive of my anarchist ideas”... Over the years I have found more than two hundred important items which have never been published in book form, and there must be as many more.²

This remains the case, for while more material has become available – not least thanks to the anthology *Direct Struggle Against Capital* and new, complete editions of *Words of a Rebel* and *Modern Science and Anarchy* – there is still plenty of material which remains hidden in archives (albeit slowly appearing on-line) and awaiting translation (particularly Russian works). Yet Kropotkin's class struggle politics are best seen in his writings for the anarchist press on events and tendencies within the labour movement and its struggles. It is no coincidence that the best account

of Kropotkin's ideas – Caroline Cahm's *Kropotkin and the Rise of Revolutionary Anarchism 1872-1886* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) – did precisely this.

Such investigations do more than help clarify our understanding of Kropotkin's ideas, they also show his influence across the globe. For example, it is interesting to note that two articles by Kropotkin were translated from *Le Révolté*, for *The Alarm*, once at the end of 1884³ and the other, “Expropriation”, an “Anarchistic Programme” shortly before the Haymarket events⁴ and, moreover, that the newspaper reported on his and Louise Michel's travails in the French penal system. With the relaunch of *The Alarm* in 1887, Kropotkin's articles (ones which were included in *Words of a Rebel*⁵) and letters appeared regularly. Likewise, Lucy Parson published articles by Kropotkin in her paper *The Liberator* as did Emma Goldman in *Mother Earth*.

This would be expected given the I.W.P.A.'s evolution towards communist-anarchism and should not really be worthy of note, except for the suggestions of the likes of Caroline Ashbaugh and James Green – and gleefully parroted by various Leninists – that the Chicago anarchists were not anarchists. Kropotkin – like anarchists across the globe – considered them as anarchist martyrs and they considered themselves as sharing the same ideas, as seen by actually looking at the contents of their newspapers rather than relying on summaries by others (whether driven by an agenda or, at best, reflecting shocking ignorance of the movements

¹ “Sages and Movements: An Incomplete Peter Kropotkin Bibliography”, *Anarchist Studies* (volume 22, number 1) and “Kropotkin, Woodcock and Les Temps Nouveaux”, *Anarchist Studies* (volume 23, number 1).

² Nicolas Walter, “Kropotkin's Anarchist Communism,” *The Anarchist Past and other essays* (Nottingham: Five Leaves Publications, 2007), 112. Sadly he never published this list.

³ “Order and Anarchy: A Statement of the Principles of Capitalism and Anarchism”, *The Alarm*, 13 December 1884 (“L'Ordre”, *Le Révolté*, 1 October 1881 – later included as Chapter IX of *Words of a Rebel*)

⁴ “Expropriation”, *The Alarm* (Chicago), 20 March 1886 (“L'expropriation”, *Le Révolté*, 23 December 1882 – later

included as section III of Chapter XIX of *Words of a Rebel*). It is interesting to note that this article contained lessons from the 1877 Great Railroad Strike which many of the I.W.P.A. had been part of or saw first-hand.

⁵ I should note that this makes some of my “Bibliographical Sketch” in the new edition of *Words of a Rebel* (PM Press, 2022) incorrect as English translations of certain chapters had first appeared in *The Alarm* rather than in the 1992 edition of that book published by Black Rose. I must also note, that as well as appearing in *The Alarm*, the *Anarchist* in Sheffield serialised several chapters of *Words of a Rebel* between March 1894 and March 1895.

they claim to be reporting on). Likewise, both Goldman and Parsons being revolutionary communist-anarchists would have reprinted Kropotkin's writings – any personal animosity to each other not blinding them to what they and Kropotkin shared in common, a commitment to revolutionary class struggle politics based on direct action, solidarity, the general strike and social revolution.

What becomes clear from an awareness of the “hidden” Kropotkin (a somewhat misleading term, as he regularly mentioned this aspect of his ideas in even the most general of his introductions to anarchism) is that some of the conventional wisdom on the development of anarchism is at best incomplete, at worse wrong. Thus we discover that Kropotkin rather than Pouget first raised sabotage (*ca'canny*) within the anarchist press (in 1891).¹ Likewise it was Kropotkin rather than Pelloutier who initially championed anarchist involvement in the labour movement in 1890.² So we discover Kropotkin attending a meeting in London the following year which resolved:

The following items of the agenda were agreed to, (1) The necessity of working more in the Labour movement. (2) We ought to join our trade union when there is opportunity for Anarchist propaganda. (3) Try to induce the unions to dispense as far as possible with committees and officials, but when there is no chance of making propaganda, start new unions on Anarchist lines.³

Kropotkin's contribution to the discussion was summarised as follows:

Kropotkin thought there were two kinds of trade unions. There is the trade-union of the aristocrats of labour, and the trade union more properly so called the idea of the trade unionists originally, was the making of a general conflagration throughout Europe. All this was altered by the Marxist party who directed the movement into the 8 hours

channel. Hence the greater necessity for working in the trade unions. In this work he would not direct his attention to the old trade unions.⁴

This was, of course, in the context of the New Unionism which developed after the London Dock Strike of 1889 and which saw the rise of mass unions which differed from the older, more exclusive, craft unions which generally organised skilled workers (members of the so-called labour aristocracy). As such, the call for new unions was reflective of actual developments within the British Labour movement just as his articles on anarchist tactics for the 8 hours movement and marking May Day reflected French conditions.⁵ Yet this was no new development and, in fact, repeated his arguments from ten years previously on the necessity of anarchist activity within the labour movement.⁶ However, in the 1890s there was more success in France – as was ruefully noted when he asked a prosecution witness at the Lyon trial in 1883 whether he had succeeded in having “the International reconstituted” and received the reply: “No. They did not find it revolutionary enough.”⁷

Reading his articles for the anarchist press places Kropotkin squarely at the centre of key developments within the anarchist movement such as the rise of syndicalism.⁸ Just as he noted syndicalism's similarities with the Federalist-wing of the International, so his ideal of a libertarian labour movement was embodied in that organisation. Like the syndicalists themselves, he traced his ideas back to Bakunin and his championing of the syndicalist ideas which had developed within the International by militant trade unionists across Europe.

Likewise, reading Kropotkin's contributions to a series of publications shows how he, like any good writer and propagandist, tailored what he wrote to his intended audience. The language, rhetoric and examples used differed between articles written for the anarchist press and those intended for, say, *The Nineteenth Century*, a leading British Liberal

¹ “Les Grèves Anglaises”, *La Révolte*, 21 February 1891.

² For example, “Le Mouvement Ouvrier En Angleterre”, *La Révolte*, 13 September 1890.

³ “Anarchists and the Labour Movement”, *The Commonweal*, 7 November 1891.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ See, for example, the three-part article “1st May 1891” included in *Direct Struggle Against Capital*.

⁶ The relevant articles can be found as “Supplementary Material” in *Words of a Rebel* (PM Press, 2022).

⁷ *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1989), 420.

⁸ See my “Precursors of Syndicalism III: Kropotkin's Anarchist Communism”, *Anarcho-Syndicalist Review* 77 (Summer 2019) and “Precursors of Syndicalism IV: The Anarchist-Communist Critique”, *Anarcho-Syndicalist Review* 78 (Winter 2020)

publication with a polite middle-class readership. As Matthew Adams notes:

Alongside journalistic pieces for *Freedom*, his main avenue [to reach a British audience] was James Knowles' periodical *The Nineteenth Century*, a self-consciously intellectual vehicle with a middle-class readership. Here Kropotkin continued to propound his anarchism, but the motifs of British urbanism superseded illustrations plucked from rural Russia and revolutionary Paris: museums, free libraries, parks, pleasure grounds, and tramways. His point... was that as forms of social organisation already existed that rejected compulsion in favour of mutuality, the common objection that anarchism held an unrealistic appreciation of human nature was unfounded. While not models to implement, these institutions allegedly showed the practicality of anarchism's organisational ethos.¹

An obvious example of this is Kropotkin's well-known 1891 pamphlet, *Anarchist-Communism: Its Basis and Principles*. Revised from two articles written for *The Nineteenth Century* shortly after his exile in Britain began.² Happy to utilise this opportunity to get an account of his ideas to a new readership, Kropotkin tailored his articles to an audience unfamiliar with Anarchist ideas by relating them to those that his readers *were* familiar with: British liberalism and State Socialism. In other words, rearticulating libertarian politics in the language of British radicalism.

A passage in this pamphlet, for example, reflects an earlier discussion which contrasted the "disorder" of the struggle for freedom by the many and the "order" of oppression and exploitation by the few.³ Kropotkin knew that the examples used would be viewed sympathetically by the *Nineteenth Century's* readership and hoped to show it the contradiction between supporting rebels against political and religious autocracy and opposing

working-class rebels against economic autocracy.

This also means that the examples drawn from the class struggle which appear in his articles for the anarchist press are lacking here, so potentially giving an incomplete – perhaps even misleading – ideas of his politics which would be dispelled by a wider reading and understanding of his works.

Given all this, the importance of bibliographical work becomes clear. Yet we need to be selective, particularly given that Kropotkin was also a noted scientist and earned his living writing scientific articles. So here, as before, I concentrate on his anarchist writings and exclude, say, his "Recent Science" columns in the *Nineteenth Century* and other scientific work, although we should never forget his standing as a scientist while we mark his contributions to anarchism.⁴ Yet this would make a lengthy task even longer and while of interest, not as pressing for anarchists seeking a better understanding of our past to help us in current and future challenges. For any engagement with Kropotkin is not – or at least should not be – driven by historical curiosity, but rather to help us win the class war which Kropotkin, as a revolutionary anarchist, also sought to win.

To end by reiterating my initial comments, it is doubtful that a complete bibliography of Kropotkin will ever appear: he wrote too many letters to both anarchist and non-anarchist newspapers as well as unsigned articles for *Le Révolté*, *La Révolte*, *Freedom* and *Khleb i volja (Bread and Freedom)*, not to mention that many of his articles appeared in anarchist newspapers across the world.

This does not make it a worthless task, far from it. This task is an important one – even if it will never be completed – for it gives us a better grasp of Kropotkin's influence and ideas. His engagement with developments in the class struggle and current affairs can only be understood by reading these writings, seeing which ones were deemed important enough at the time to translate, all help to free Kropotkin's ideas from the distortions and condescension inflicted upon them by those who

¹ Matthew S. Adams, *Kropotkin, Read, and the Intellectual History of British Anarchism: Between Reason and Romanticism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 144.
² "The Scientific Basis of Anarchy", *The Nineteenth Century*, February 1887 and "The Coming Anarchy", *The Nineteenth Century*, August 1887. These were included (without their footnotes) by Albert Parsons in his 1887 collection *Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Scientific Basis as Defined by Some of Its Apostles* (Chicago: Lucy E. Parsons, 1887).

³ "L'Ordre" *Le Révolté*, 1 October 1881 (included as chapter IX – "Order" – of *Words of a Rebel*).

⁴ Lest we forget, Kropotkin contributed to the ninth, tenth and eleventh editions of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (published between 1875 and 1911), although his entry on "Anarchism" for the eleventh edition is undoubtedly the most famous and the one which is best remembered and republished.

would sooner repeat the false summations handed down by previous uninformed commentators than spend the time and effort to discover what he

actually thought and advocated – and why he was so influential within the movement for so long.

Books

This includes new translations of books, whether they have appeared before or not.

Year	Original	Notes
2018	<i>Modern Science and Anarchy</i> , Edinburgh: AK Press	Translation of <i>La Science Moderne et L'Anarchie</i> , (Paris: P. V. Stock et Cie, 1913). Also includes various supplementary texts.
2022	<i>The Great French Revolution, 1789-1793</i> , Oakland: PM Press	Includes 'The Great French Revolution and its Lesson', <i>The Nineteenth Century</i> , June 1889
	<i>Words of a Rebel</i> , Oakland, PM Press	Translation of <i>Paroles d'un Révolté</i> (1885), including the Italian (1904) and Russian (1919) prefaces as well as the Russian (1919) Afterward. Also includes various supplementary texts.

Pamphlets

This is a list of Kropotkin's pamphlets, whether published during his lifetime or not.

Year	Original	Notes
1898	<i>La liberté par l'enseignement (L'école libertaire)</i> , Publications du Groupe d'initiative pour l'école libertaire	Kropotkin one of the signers of the statement.
1909	'Kropotkin's speech (Memorial Hall, October 21st)	Five thousand leaflets printed in November as a protest against the execution of Ferrer
1970	<i>Peter Kropotkin</i> , Freedom Anarchist Pamphlets, No 4	Includes: 'Order' and 'The Situation' from <i>Words of a Rebel</i> (1885) and the pamphlet <i>Politics and Socialism</i> (1903)
	<i>Peter Kropotkin</i> , Freedom Anarchist Pamphlets, No 5	Includes: 'Anarchism and Revolution (extracts from 'Must We Occupy Ourselves with an Examination of the Ideal of a Future System', 1873), 'Note to the English Edition (1895)', 'Preface to the Italian Edition (1904)' and 'Postscript to the Russian Edition (1921)' of <i>Words of a Rebel</i>
1975	<i>Fatalité de la révolution</i> , Toulouse: Editions CNT.	A collection of nine articles from <i>La Révolte</i>

Anthologies

This lists any new collections of Kropotkin's articles and/or pamphlets.

Year	Original	Notes
2014	<i>Direct Struggle Against Capital: A Peter Kropotkin Anthology</i> , Edinburgh: AK Press	
2019	<i>Anarchism, Anarchist Communism, and The State: Three Essays</i> , Oakland, PM Press	Includes 'Anarchism', 'Anarchist-Communism: Its Basis and Principles' and 'The State: Its Historic Role'

Anarchist articles, letters and prefaces by Kropotkin

This is a comprehensive, but incomplete, listing of articles by Kropotkin along with letters, prefaces, introductions and postscripts added to new editions of his works.

Year	Original	Notes
1881	'A la Presse Suisse', <i>Le Révolté</i> , April 2	
	'Droit d'asile, ou Droit à l'asile?', <i>Le Révolté</i> , April 16	
1884	'Order and Anarchy: A Statement of the Principles of Capitalism and Anarchism', <i>The Alarm</i> , December 13	'L'Ordre' <i>Le Révolté</i> October 1, 1881.
1886	'Une Lettre de Kropotkine', <i>Le Révolté</i> , January 31	
	'Expropriation', <i>The Alarm</i> (Chicago), March 20	'L'expropriation', <i>Le Révolté</i> , 23 December 1882.
1887	'Prince Kropotkin', <i>The Freeman's Journal</i> (Dublin), October 27	An interview

1888	‘Anarchy in the Evolution of Socialism’, <i>The Alarm</i> (Chicago), January 14, 28, February 11	Translation of <i>L’Anarchie dans l’Evolution Socialiste</i> (Paris: Le Révolté, 1887), better known as <i>The Place of Anarchism in Socialistic Evolution</i> .
	‘Le Lendemain de la Révolution’, <i>La Révolte</i> , 31 March	Included in <i>Fatalité de la révolution</i>
	‘Expropriation’, <i>The Alarm</i> (Chicago), April 28	Part III of “Expropriation” in <i>Words of a Rebel</i> .
	‘Order and Disorder’, <i>The Alarm</i> (Chicago), June 23	“Order” in <i>Words of a Rebel</i> .
	‘Power of Minorities’, <i>The Alarm</i> (Chicago), June 30	“Revolutionary Minorities”, <i>Words of a Rebel</i>
	‘The Situation Today’, <i>The Alarm</i> (Chicago), July 7	“The Situation”, <i>Words of a Rebel</i> .
	‘To Women of America’, <i>The Alarm</i> (Chicago), August 19	Letter to the Woman’s National Council, March 1888
	‘Kropotkin on Proudhon’, <i>The Alarm</i> (Chicago), September 15	Letter to the editor
1889	‘Appeal to the Young’, <i>The Alarm</i> (Chicago), November 24, December 8, 15, and 22	‘To the Young’, <i>Words of a Rebel</i> .
	‘Fatalité de la Révolution’, <i>La Révolte</i> , 7 April	Included in <i>Fatalité de la révolution</i>
	‘Théorie et Pratique’, <i>La Révolte</i> , 29 April	Included in <i>Fatalité de la révolution</i>
	‘La Grève de Londres’, <i>La Révolte</i> , 21 September	Included along with ‘Ce que c’est qu’une grève’, <i>La Révolte</i> (7 September 1889) in the pamphlet <i>La Grande Grève des Docks</i> (1897)
1890	‘Égoïsme ou Solidarité ?’, <i>La Révolte</i> , 28 September	Included in <i>Fatalité de la révolution</i>
	‘Esclavage, Servage, Salarial’, <i>La Révolte</i> , July 5	Included in <i>Fatalité de la révolution</i>
	‘Possibilities of agriculture,’ <i>The Forum</i> , August	
1891	‘Kropotkin’s Letter’, <i>Freedom</i> , December	Sent to Chicago Commemoration Meeting
	‘L’Entente II’, <i>La Révolte</i> , April 11	Translated by N.W., “May Day and Anarchist Propaganda”, <i>Freedom</i> , 1 May 1971. Abridged.
	‘Objections to Anarchism’, <i>The Commonweal</i> , October 17	Extract from <i>Anarchist Communism: Its Basis and Principles</i>
	‘L’idée Anarchiste et ses Développements’, <i>La Révolte</i> , October 31	Included in <i>Fatalité de la révolution</i>
	‘La Propriété’, <i>La Révolte</i> , 14 November	Included in <i>Fatalité de la révolution</i>
	‘Le Mariage’, <i>La Révolte</i> , 21 November	Included in <i>Fatalité de la révolution</i>
1892	‘Communisme, Individualisme’, <i>La Révolte</i> , 23 January	Included in <i>Fatalité de la révolution</i>
	‘Commemoration of the Paris Commune’, <i>Freedom</i> , April	
1893	‘La révolution sera-t-elle collectiviste?’, <i>La Révolte</i> , June 25	Published as a pamphlet in 1913.
	‘Une Conférence sur l’Anarchie,’ <i>La Révolte</i> March 18 to September 2	Ten instalments, revised as a pamphlet <i>Les Temps Nouveaux (conference faite à Londres)</i> , 1894
	‘Sommes-Nous A La Hauteur Des Événements?’, <i>La Révolte</i> , May 4	Partly summarised in ‘A Word in Season’, <i>Freedom</i> , June 1898
1895	‘Kropotkin on Colonisation,’ <i>Liberty</i> (London), March	
	‘The Workers’ Congress of 1896,’ <i>Liberty</i> (London), September	
	‘P. Kropotkin on Laws for the protection of property’, <i>The Firebrand</i> , November 24	Extract from <i>Law and Authority</i> (a chapter of <i>Words of a Rebel</i>)
1896	‘Kropotkin’s Address,” <i>Liberty</i> (London), January	Kropotkin’s speech at Sergius Stepniak’s funeral.
	Note, <i>Anarchist</i> (Sheffield), January 20	
	‘Kropotkin on Past and Future Communes,” <i>Liberty</i> (London), April	Extract from the <i>Freedom</i> pamphlet “The Commune of Paris.”
	‘Agriculture,” <i>Liberty</i> (London), July, August, September/October	
	‘War or Peace?” <i>Proceedings of the International Worker’s Congress, London, July-August, 1896</i> , Glasgow/London: The Labour Leader	
	‘The Trade Union Congress’, <i>Freedom</i> , October	Unsigned – Identified by Max Nettlau
1897	‘Kropotkin on Co-operation’, <i>The Firebrand</i> , April 18	
	‘Anarchy’, <i>The Firebrand</i> , August 1	From <i>Words of a Rebel</i> (“Order”)
	‘Co-operation in Russia’, <i>The American Co-Operative News</i> , November	
	‘Bellamy’s “Equality”’, <i>The Independent</i> , December 2	
	‘What Man can Obtain from the Land’, <i>The Co-operative Wholesale Societies, Limited, England and Scotland : annual for 1897</i>	

1898	‘Law and Authority’, <i>Free Society</i> , January 2, 9	
	‘A European Revolution Predicted’, <i>Clarence and Richmond Examiner</i> (Grafton, NSW), February 8	
	‘Anarchist Morality’, <i>Free Society</i> . March 20 to April 3	
	‘The insurrections in Spain and Italy’, <i>Freedom</i> , June	Handwritten draft in the Alfred Marsh papers
	‘Revolutionary Government’. <i>Free Society</i> , June 19	
	‘The Wage System’, <i>Free Society</i> , June 26	
	‘Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Ideal’, <i>Free Society</i> , July 17 to 31	
	‘The Eleventh of November’, <i>Freedom</i> , December	Handwritten draft in the Alfred Marsh papers
1900	‘The Revolutionary International Labor Congress,’ <i>Free Society</i> , March 25	
	‘Le manifeste du Tzar’, <i>Le Réveil socialiste-anarchiste</i> , March 28, April 11	
	‘Prince Kropotkin on Land Monopoly and Co-Operation,’ <i>Comradship</i> , No. 13, April	Included in <i>Modern Science and Anarchy</i> (2018)
	‘An Urgent Need: A Labor Convention’, <i>Freedom</i> , September-October	Unsigned – Identified by Max Nettlau
1902	Preface to the Russian edition of <i>The Conquest of Bread</i> , January	Called <i>Bread and Freedom</i> in Russian.
	‘Organised Vengeance called “Justice”’, <i>Free Society</i> January 12	Reprinted from <i>Freedom</i> , October 1901
	‘Revolutionary minorities’, <i>Free Society</i> , May 25	Chapter of <i>Words of a Rebel</i> (1885)
	Preface to the Russian translation of <i>Memoirs of a Revolutionist</i> , July	
	‘The Spirit of Revolt’, <i>Free Society</i> . August 3	Extract of <i>Words of a Rebel</i> (1885)
	‘The Labor War’, <i>Freedom</i> , October-November	Reprinted in <i>Free Society</i> , December 14
1903	‘To the unemployed’, <i>Freedom</i> , January	
	‘Place of Anarchism in Socialistic Evolution’, <i>Free Society</i> , February 8 to 22	
	‘The Reaction in the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century’, <i>Herald</i> (Adelaide), March 14	Presumably a translation of ‘La Réaction au commencement du dix-neuvième siècle’, <i>Les Temps Nouveaux</i> , 20 December 1902.
	‘Le manifeste du Tzar’, <i>Le Réveil socialiste-anarchiste</i> , March 28 and April 11	
	‘Kropotkin’s Letter to the Commune Meeting’, <i>Freedom</i> , April.	
	‘The General Strike in Holland’, <i>Free Society</i> , May 3	Translation of ‘Le Grève Générale en Hollande’, <i>Les Temps Nouveaux</i> , 11 April 1903.
	‘A chapter from Prince Kropotkin’, <i>The Craftsman</i> , June	A chapter from <i>Mutual Aid</i> (The Medieval City)
1904	‘La guerre russo-japonaise: Lettre de Kropotkine’, <i>Le Soir</i> , February 26	
	‘The War in the Far East’, <i>The Speaker: The Liberal Review</i> , March 5	Reprinted as ‘The War in the Far East,’ <i>Free Society</i> , April 3
	‘Europeans in Western Asia’, <i>The Speaker</i> , March 19	
	‘Préface à l’édition italienne des “Paroles d’un révolté”’, <i>Le Réveil socialiste-anarchiste</i> , June 4	Included in <i>Direct Struggle Against Capital</i> (2014) and <i>Words of a Rebel</i> (2018)
	‘The Jews in Russia,’ <i>The Speaker</i> , June 25	
	‘A Character Sketch of the Tsar’, <i>The Speaker</i> , August 6 and 13	
	‘Herbert Spencer’, <i>Free Society</i> , October 9 to 30	
	‘The New Departure in Russia’, <i>The Speaker</i> , 26 November	
1905	‘A New Work on International law’, <i>The Speaker: The Liberal Review</i> , April 1	
	‘The Revolution in Russia and the General Strike’, <i>Freedom</i> November-December	Signed “S.” but translated under Kropotkin’s name as ‘L’ Action directe et la Grève générale en Russie’, <i>Les Temps Nouveaux</i> , 2 December 1905
1906	‘Anarchy in the Evolution of Socialism’, <i>The Liberator</i> , 7 and 14 January 1906	Presumably a reprint of the version which appeared in <i>The Alarm</i> (Chicago) in 1888.
	‘The Revolution in Russia’, <i>The Liberator</i> , 14 January	Presumably a reprint of ‘The Revolution in Russia’, <i>Freedom</i> , November/December 1905

	'The Revolution in Russia', <i>Freedom</i> , June	Reprinted in <i>Mother Earth</i> , July 1906
	Letter on Rural Home Letters, <i>The Speaker</i> , March 10	
	"'Administrative Exile" in Russia', <i>The Times</i> , October 19	Letter to the editor
	'A Glimpse into the Future', <i>Freedom</i> , May	Extract from <i>The Conquest of Bread</i> (Part VI, Chapter XVII: Agriculture)
1907	'The conquest of bread: Prince Kropotkin's views on the relation of art to life, science to labor and machinery to the domestic problem', <i>The Craftsman</i> , September	
1908	'The Scientific Basis of Anarchy', <i>Labor Call</i> (Melbourne), July 9	Reprint of 'The Scientific Basis of Anarchy', <i>The Nineteenth Century</i> , February 1887
	'Appeal to the Young', <i>Labor Call</i> (Melbourne), August 13	
1909	"'La grande Révolution " (1789-1793)', <i>Le Réveil socialiste-anarchiste</i> , May 1	A chapter from <i>The Great French Revolution, 1789-1793</i> ('Le mouvement communiste')
	'The Tsar's Visit', <i>The Times</i> , July 29	Letter to the editor
	'Insurrecciones y Revolucion,' <i>Tierra y Libertad</i> , August 3	Abridged translation of 'Insurrection et révolution', <i>Les Temps Nouveaux</i> , 6 August 1910
1910	'Tolstoy's Influence in Russia', <i>The Independent</i> , December 1	
	'Production et consommation', <i>La Voix du Peuple</i> , December 31	
	'Une évation', <i>La Voix du Peuple</i> , February 25	
1911	'Les mouchards', <i>La Voix du Peuple</i> , May 20	
	'Kropotkin on Socialists', <i>The International Socialist</i> (Sydney) June 17	Extract from <i>Mutual Aid</i> (Chapter 8: Mutual Aid Amongst Ourselves)
	'L'ordre', <i>La Voix du Peuple</i> , August 19	
	'Une page d'histoire', <i>La Voix du Peuple</i> , April 6	
	'Agreeable Work', <i>Westralian Worker</i> (Perth, WA), October 6	
1912	'Fifteen Millions Starving: Prince Kropotkin on the Russian Famine', <i>The Telegraph</i> (Brisbane), June 10	
	'An Open Letter from Prince Kropotkin', <i>The Socialist</i> (Melbourne), June 21	Reprint of 'An Appeal to the American and British Workmen,' <i>Freedom and Mother Earth</i> , June 1912
	'The Massacre of the Lena Miners', <i>The International Socialist</i> (Sydney) June 29	Reprint of 'An Appeal to the American and British Workmen,' <i>Freedom and Mother Earth</i> , June 1912
	'Une lettre de Pierre Kropotkine', <i>La Voix du Peuple</i> , December 21	
	'Une autre lettre', <i>La Voix du Peuple</i> , December 28	
	'Un journal', <i>La Voix du Peuple</i> , February 1	
1913	Speech at meeting, <i>Les Temps Nouveaux</i> , June 14	Account of speech given by Kropotkin in the article "En l'honneur de P. Kropotkine" by J. Guérin as recalled by an attendee.
	'Lettere dalila Svizzera', <i>Avant!</i> , July 16	Interview with Kropotkin with the subheading: "A seventy-year-old young man! After six decades! - If Germany invaded France... - The general strike in case of war - Desertion is not useful!"
	Letter to Anarchist Congress, <i>Les Temps Nouveaux</i> , August 23	Included in the article 'Notre Congrès'
	'Un souvenir', <i>La Vie ouvrière</i> , 20 February	On James Guillaume as part of a special issue marking his 70 th birthday.
1914	'L'entraide', <i>La Voix du Peuple</i> , June 20 to July 18	
	'A propos de la cause de la guerre', <i>La Voix du Peuple</i> , December 12	Also published in <i>Le Réveil communiste-anarchiste</i> , 12 December 1914
1917	'An Open Letter of Peter Kropotkin to the Western Workingmen', <i>The Railway Review</i> , June 29	
	'After Forty Years' Exile.: Kropotkin s Farewell', <i>Worker</i> (Brisbane), October 18	Presumably a reprint of 'Kropotkin's Farewell Letter', <i>Freedom</i> , July 1917
1919	Preface to Russian edition of <i>The Conquest of Bread</i> . June	
	Preface to Russian edition of <i>Words of a Rebel</i> , December	Included in <i>Words of a Rebel</i> (2018)

	Afterward to Russian edition of <i>Words of a Rebel</i> , December	Included in <i>Direct Struggle Against Capital</i> (2014) and revised in <i>Words of a Rebel</i> (2018)
1920	‘Kropotkin’s Letter’, <i>The Sun</i> (Kalgoorlie), April 18	Reprint of Kropotkin’s 28 April 1919 letter to Georg Brandes. The article notes it had appeared in <i>L’Humanité</i> and the <i>Manchester Guardian</i> .
	‘Une lettre de Kropotkine’, <i>Le Réveil communiste-anarchiste</i> , July 31	
	‘Une Lettre de Pierre Kropotkine’, <i>Les Temps Nouveaux: Revue Internationale des Idées Communistes Libertaires</i> , August 15	A translation of “Letter to the Workers of the Western World” (1920)
	‘Kropotkin’s Message’, <i>The Socialist</i> (Melbourne.) September 24, October 1	Reprint of ‘Message to the Workers of the Western World’, <i>Labour Leader</i> , 22 July 1920
1921	‘Une Lettre de Pierre Kropotkine’, <i>Les Temps Nouveaux: Revue Internationale des Idées Communistes Libertaires</i> , June-July	
	‘Le gouvernement (1886)’, <i>Le Réveil communiste-anarchiste</i> , June 11	
	‘L’Anarchie – L’Anarchie dans l’évolution socialiste, 1886)’, <i>Le Réveil communiste-anarchiste</i> , June 25	
	‘Choses de Russie : lettre de Pierre Kropotkine à Alexandre Atabekian et article nécrologique de Alexandra-P. Kropotkine’, <i>Le Réveil communiste-anarchiste</i> , July 9	
	‘Une Lettre de Kropotkine,’ <i>Le Libéraire</i> , July 22	A letter written in August 1920
	‘Tout est à tous (1886)’. <i>Le Réveil communiste-anarchiste</i> , July 23	
1922	‘Lettres reçues de Pierre Kropotkine’, <i>Le Réveil communiste-anarchiste</i> , February 11	
	‘Le réveil ouvrier (1903)’, <i>Le Réveil communiste-anarchiste</i> , February 11	
	‘L’amoindrissement des Idées (1907)’, <i>Le Réveil communiste-anarchiste</i> , February 24	
1923	‘Fragments from Kropotkin’s Uncollected Works’ and ‘Miscellaneous Letters To’, <i>Peter Kropotkin: the rebel, thinker, and humanitarian</i> , Free Spirit Press, Berkeley Heights, N.J., 1923	Short extracts of articles which appeared in <i>Act For Yourselves</i> (1988) and Letters to various people sent at various times, including Luigi Bertoni and Georg Brandes.
1924	‘Ce n’est pas Machin qui a écrit cela... C’est l’Anarchiste Pierre Kropotkine’, <i>La Vie Ouvrier</i> , August 15	A pro-war letter written in September 1914
1925	‘Lettres de Pierre Kropotkine’, <i>Le Réveil communiste-anarchiste</i> , 3 January	Three letters, including one to Georges Herzig which was later reprinted as “Une Lettre de Kropotkine” in <i>Le Réveil anarchiste</i> , 9 January 1932 and included in <i>Words of a Rebel</i> (2022)
	“La fédération comme un moyen d’union”, <i>Plus Loin</i> , May 15	
1926	‘Bakounine’, <i>Plus Loin</i> , June 15	
1927	‘Une lettre de P. Kropotkine sur l’individualisme – P. Kropotkine et M. Nettelau’, <i>Plus Loin</i> , February 15	
1929	‘La législation du travail’, <i>Le Réveil anarchiste</i> , May 1	<i>La Révolte</i> , 26 April 1890
	‘Un logement’, <i>Le Réveil anarchiste</i> , May 18	
1930	‘Révolution sociale et reconstruction économique’, <i>Le Réveil anarchiste</i> , May 1, 17	A translation of the Afterward of the 1919 Russian edition of <i>Words of a Rebel</i> .
1931	‘Dumartheray jugé par Kropotkine’, <i>Le Réveil anarchiste</i> , September 1931	
1932	‘Une lettre de Kropotkine à Herzig et Dumartheray (30 Juin 1886)’, <i>Le Réveil anarchiste</i> , June 30	
	‘Conclusion’, <i>Le Réveil anarchiste</i> , 22 October	Conclusion of <i>Fields, Factories and Workshops</i> .
1934	‘Trop de théorie?’, <i>Le Réveil anarchiste</i> , July 8	<i>La Révolte</i> , 5 December 1890
1935	‘Le Capital et la Révolution’, <i>Le Réveil anarchiste</i> , February 16	‘Le Capital de la Révolution’, <i>La Révolte</i> , 7 March 1891
	‘L’entente’, <i>Le Réveil anarchiste</i> , February 16	‘L’Entente II’, <i>La Révolte</i> , 11 April 1891

Kropotkin and War – Today

Wayne Price

In 1914, World War I (then called “The Great War”) began, centred in the big countries of Europe. It was greeted with enthusiasm by most of the populations of the warring countries. It was endorsed by most of their socialist and labour parties and by their unions. Most of the leading Marxist theoreticians took pro-war positions or were at best wishy-washy, not wanting to break with the militaristic majority. Only a small section of revolutionary Marxists opposed the war totally (including Lenin, Luxemburg, Trotsky, and Debs).

Unlike the Marxists, most anarchists opposed both sides of the war, with the significant exception of a small minority. This minority supported the Entente (the Allies) against the Central Powers. It included the most well-known and respected anarchist, Peter Kropotkin. Kropotkin (1842-1921) was widely regarded as one of the “founders” of anarchism. Most of the anarchist movement at the time was surprised and disappointed about Kropotkin’s pro-war stance. Today, anarchists still read his works and respect his contributions to our theory and history. Yet, most who comment on Kropotkin believe that he was gravely mistaken in his views on the war and agree with his anarchist critics from that time.

However, a few writers on anarchism have concluded that his views should be re-examined and reconsidered. In the light of World War II and more current wars, perhaps he was not so wrong after all, they suggest. (Kinna 2017; Ryley 2017)

This question may appear to be abstractly historical. But, as I write this, a terrible war is raging between the Russian state and the Ukrainian people, with the latter getting aid from the imperialist states of the U.S. and NATO. Wars are also being fought in other countries around the globe. Imperialism, nationalism, the exploitation of weaker countries by the rulers of stronger ones, and the existence of a world capitalist market – all continue from Kropotkin’s time to ours. What attitude should revolutionary anarchists take toward these various wars and conflicts? These issues were debated back then and are still illuminating in our current conditions.

Referring to arguments over U.S. intervention in the Middle East and Central Asia, Peter Ryley writes, “*The*

issues that Kropotkin raised have not gone away....The schism among anarchists in 1914 is not an historical curiosity; it is a live debate.” (2017; p. 50) **I believe that Kropotkin was deeply wrong about World War I.** I agree with his critics then and now. But I think it can be valuable to review the discussion.

The War

The war was an inter-imperialist conflict. This was not particularly subtle. On one side was the British Empire, the Russian Empire, and the French Empire, eventually joined by the Italian Empire and the Japanese Empire, and finally by the United States of America. On the other side was the German Empire, the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, and the Turkish Empire. The only one not officially calling itself an empire was the United States. With its

domination of Latin America and the Caribbean and parts of the Pacific, it was hard to see it as anything else.

To justify supporting one of the sides, it was necessary to find qualitative differences among the empires. The German social-democrats pointed to a threat from the cossacks and hordes of Czarist Russia which would destroy German Kultur. Actually, Czarist Russia was a very authoritarian state, but it was weak by then and on the verge of collapse – as it did under the pressures of the war. On the other side, supporters of the Entente pointed to the ruling German junker class, and the threat of Prussian militarism.

It is worth pointing out that the German monarchy, while quite authoritarian, was not the same as the later Nazi regime. There was an elected parliament (the Bundestag), even if generally powerless. Its largest party was the Social-Democratic Party. True, the German rulers were more aggressive than the British and French rulers, if only because the British and French already held most of the world as colonies. They were the “have” imperialists. It was said that the sun never set on the British Empire nor did the blood ever dry. If the rising capitalists of Germany, and the German state (the “have-not” imperialists), were to expand now, they had to challenge the British and French, they “had” to be the aggressors. This did not make the Allies more “peaceful”, just more satiated.

Kropotkin's arguments for supporting the Allies were rooted in fear of German militarism. If the Germans were to win the war, he thought, it would set back progress toward an anarchist transformation. He saw the horrors of the German state, its military rulers, and its repressive bureaucracy, but he did not distinguish between the state and the whole German nation, including its working class. He had repeatedly denounced Marxism and statist socialism (social-democracy) as reflecting German culture. Kinna writes of "*Kropotkin's antipathy for German social democracy and this conflation of all things German with statism.*" (2017; p. 187) He saw the victory of libertarian communism as requiring the victory of the "Latin" peoples over the "Germanic" peoples, and therefore the victory of the Entente over Germany. He had a romantic view of France. The French state had imprisoned him and then expelled him. Yet he saw France as the mother of revolutions, the centre of revolutions in Europe, and the inspirer of revolution for Russia. It must not be conquered by the Prussian army!

Like Bakunin and other anarchists, Kropotkin had long supported the idea of national self-determination. "*True internationalism will never be attained except by the independence of each nationality....If we say no government of man over man, how can [we] permit the government of conquered nationalities by the conquering nationalities?*" (in Miller 1976; p. 231) He supported all national movements against foreign oppressors, such as the British in India and Ireland, the Turks in the Balkans, or the Russians in Poland. Solidarity with the oppressed people did not mean anarchists should give any political support to their leaders and rulers, their capitalists and landlords. Kropotkin thought it was important to combine "economic" demands, such as land to the peasants, with national demands.

In World War I, he applied national self-determination to France and Belgium, which had been attacked, invaded, and partially occupied by German forces. He ignored the difference in these cases, that they were not exploited and oppressed nations but imperialist powers with their own colonies (the French state ruled about 15% of the world and the Belgian state ruled the Congo). He ignored the likelihood that France would do the same to the Germans if it won the war.

During the Franco-Prussian War of 1870 (which culminated in the Paris Commune of 1871), Bakunin had urged the French to resist the invading Germans. But he advocated this be done by forming revolutionary armies of workers and peasants, unconnected to the French state and in revolutionary opposition to it. In the years before the world war, Kropotkin had also advocated such a popular and revolutionary armed defence of France against a German attack. Yet when the war actually began, Kropotkin declared that it would not be possible to create such forces in time. The only

realistic way to resist the Germans, he declared, was to support the Allied governments and their regular armies.

When the idea was floated of an end to the war through a negotiated compromise, Kropotkin protested. (Riley 2017) A negotiated peace would only allow the Germans to re-arm, he argued. Nothing would do but the complete and unconditional defeat of the Germans.

In 1917, the first phase of the Russian Revolution broke out (the "February Revolution"). Czarism was overthrown, and a more-or-less liberal "Provisional Government" took power, balancing itself against the popular democratic councils (soviets). Kropotkin returned to Russia. He continued to demand Russia's participation in the war, even though the war was ruinous to the Russian peoples. He advocated not anarchism but a constitutional republic, modelled on the federalist U.S.A. That is, he called for a capitalist state. He did not only oppose a Leninist type of authoritarian revolution, but any kind of further socialist revolution. This was tied to his desire to continue the war.

In his history of the revolution, Trotsky was to sneer, "*The superannuated anarchist, Kropotkin...made use of the war to disavow everything he had been teaching for almost half a century.*" (Trotsky 1967; p. 223) Unfortunately, it was a fair criticism. (After the "October Revolution" – when the Bolsheviks took power – Kropotkin did write public appeals to the workers of Western Europe to oppose their governments' military attacks and quarantines of Russia.)

The Anarchist Response

Only a handful of anarchists agreed with Kropotkin. Although no more than about a hundred signed the various pro-war anarchist statements, this did include some of the most well-known such as Jean Grave, Charles Malato, and Paul Reclus. (Woodcock & Avakumovic 1990) Besides the socialist-anarchists, the war was supported by Benjamin Tucker, the leading U.S. individualist anarchist (then residing in France). Anarchist-syndicalists had played a major role in building the main French union federation, the CGT, although it came to be dominated by apolitical union bureaucrats. That union also endorsed the war while a group of revolutionary anarchist-syndicalists, including Pierre Monatte, organized against it.

Most anarchists were not impressed with Kropotkin's view of the differences between the two war camps. A number wrote responses. After a period of debate, he and those who agreed with him split from the British anarchist journal *Freedom* which he had once co-founded. Important essays were written by Errico Malatesta (1853 – 1932). (Price 2022) He had worked with Bakunin and been a friend of Kropotkin. He wrote, "Anarchists Have Forgotten their Principles," and "Pro-Government Anarchists." (Malatesta 2014)

To Kropotkin's argument that the militarism of the Central Powers was qualitatively different from the Allies, Malatesta wrote,

“Personally, judging at their true value the ‘mad dog’ of Berlin and the ‘old hangman’ of Vienna, I have no greater confidence in the bloody Tsar, nor in the English diplomats who oppress India, who betrayed Persia, who crushed the Boer Republics; nor in the French bourgeoisie, who massacred the natives of Morocco; nor in those of Belgium, who have allowed the Congo atrocities, and have largely profited by them...not to mention what all Governments and all capitalist classes do against the workers and the rebels in their own countries.

“...The only hope is revolution....” (Malatesta 2014; p. 382)

If the revolutionaries were too weak at that time to inspire a revolution, that did not mean that they should therefore rely on the states. The states caused this terrible war and, however it was resolved, so long as capitalism and the state continued, this war would be followed by another, *“a new war more murderous than the present.”* (same)

If the anarchists were not able at this time to overthrow the states, at least they should not strengthen them. They should stick to their values, their programme, and their principles and continue to be anarchists, preparing for an eventual revolution. To Kropotkin this was a hopelessly unrealistic approach, but Malatesta saw it as supremely realistic. It was what made him an anarchist. (Turcato 2017)

Was Kropotkin Right After All?

In recent years some anarchists have come to re-evaluate Kropotkin's views on the First World War. Malatesta and other anarchists had accused Kropotkin of betraying anarchist principles. Kinna comments, *“Whether or not Malatesta was right to condemn Kropotkin's stance, his charge of treachery is difficult to maintain: Kropotkin's position was consistent with his conception of anarchism...”* (2017)

It is confusing to begin this topic by not saying *“whether or not”* you believe revolutionary anarchists should have condemned Kropotkin's pro-war opinions. Similarly, Riley writes, *“Whether Kropotkin was right or not about Wilhelmina Germany remains contentious.”* (2017; p. 65) They do not actually say that

Kropotkin was correct to support the Allies but neither do they say he was wrong. Without taking a stance on the first inter-imperialist world war, the rest of the discussion is incoherent.

Kinna asserts, *“Kropotkin's position was consistent with his...anarchism.”* But it was his *“conception of anarchism”* which had been inconsistent. One strand of his beliefs advocated revolutionary anarchist-communism. He opposed all states, all capitalism, and all imperialism, which he blamed for modern wars. Not long before the war, Kropotkin wrote that the real cause of war was *“the competition for markets and the right to exploit nations backward in industry.”* (in Miller 1976; p. 225)

On another strand – another complex of ideas – he saw the Germany of his time as the greatest threat to peace and freedom in Europe while romanticizing the French. He did not distinguish between the national self-defence of an oppressed and exploited people and an inter-

imperialist war. He denied the class conflict within Germany and other imperialist nations, underestimating the possibility of revolution.

These two strands of Kropotkin's *“conception of anarchism”* could co-exist for a long time, so long as there was peace (more or less). His anarchist comrades could ignore the second strand. But once war broke out, Kropotkin had to follow one or the other set of beliefs. He does not seem to have wavered in adopting his pro-imperialist-war complex of ideas. This *was consistent* with some of what he had believed

for a long time – but it was a *betrayal* of the revolutionary internationalist anarchist beliefs which he had taught generations of revolutionaries.

The Imperialist Lie

Similarly, Ryley points out that almost no anarchists were absolute pacifists. They almost all accepted the use of mass violence in appropriate circumstances. *“...War could be a just and necessary instrument of self-defence and popular liberation. When Peter Kropotkin made his stand in support of the Entente powers it was from this tradition, a precedent wholly in keeping with his anarchism.”* (Ryley 2017; p. 62)

Except that anarchists believe that the claim of *“self-defence and popular liberation”* is only true if raised by a revolution or a national liberation struggle. Otherwise it is a lie raised by the imperialist powers. They are really fighting for *“markets and the right to exploit backward nations,”* as Kropotkin had written just before

the world war. To uphold this lie was not “*in keeping with anarchism.*”

Ryley buys into the imperialist lie when referring to World War II. He regards this war as justifying Kropotkin’s stance in retrospect. “*Kropotkin and Grave were a war too early for general acceptance.*” (2017; p. 64) He refers to nice-sounding general principles such as “*solidarity with oppressed peoples and the victims of aggression...to support self-determination and democratic aspirations...*” (Ryley 2019; p. 65) and quotes Kropotkin that the Western side of his war was “*striving to achieve progress through the steady growth of its inner forces, economic and intellectual...*” (p. 64) And Ryley declares, “*they are a precise description of Allied war aims in the Second World War.*” (p. 54) Such a statement is preposterous, at least for an anarchist.

During World War II, many anarchists argued that by this time the only way to stop the genocidal Nazis was to work with the Allies, at least in Europe. This did not require denying that the Western “democracies” were imperialist nor that Stalinist Russia was brutally totalitarian. Their real “war aims” (rhetoric aside) was for the U.S. to replace Great Britain as the world’s dominant imperialism, while the British ruling class hoped to hold on to as much of its empire as it could, and, for the Stalinist empire, to expand into Eastern Europe. (For further discussion of anarchist views of the Second World War, see Price 2015.)

Ryley’s other major argument is that Kropotkin had the only realistic program for ending the war (supporting the side of the Allies until it conquered the Central Powers). Malatesta’s program of revolution was unrealistic. Following it, Ryley charges, meant being passive as the war raged on, and giving de facto support to the Germans.

“Malatesta had gone up the blind alley of abstentionism.... They argued for social revolution alone. It was not convincing.... Denying the legitimacy of self-defence by anything other than popular insurrection is to invite catastrophe... adopting an impossible strategy....” (Ryley 2017; pp. 62-64)

What is remarkable about this statement is World War I did end through revolution! First there was the Russian Revolution, which ended up taking Russia out of the war. Then the German workers and soldiers overthrew the monarchist state and ended Germany’s participation in the war. Rebellions and insurrections spread throughout Europe and beyond. The Allies “won” the war, but this would not have happened without the collapse of the Central Powers due to revolution. Malatesta’s revolutionary program was far from unrealistic.

Unfortunately, the revolutions did not go all the way (with the ambiguous exception of Russia). This was importantly due to the reformism of the German social

democrats and a lack of sufficient numbers of organized revolutionary anarchists – following Malatesta’s program. The failure of the revolutions to go all the way to stateless, self-managed, cooperative community, led, as Malatesta had warned, to “*a new war more murderous than*” World War I.

(The Second World War was also followed by a wave of revolutions and near-revolutions in Eastern and Western Europe and Asia. These were almost entirely distorted, misled, or betrayed by the Communist Parties, in one way or another.)

Kinna does not compare Kropotkin’s strategy for World War I with that of the still-revolutionary anarchists. However, she makes it clear that she rejects the programme of revolution by the workers and their allies, as held by Bakunin, Malatesta, Fabbri, Goldman, Makhno, Durruti, and so on. She describes this as part of the “classical anarchist” tradition, which she regards as no longer viable, if it ever was. Kinna does not actually present arguments for this opinion (at least in this volume) but seems to take it for granted.

She knows that Kropotkin came out of this “classical” tradition and helped form it. (See Cahm 1989.) Yet she emphasizes aspects of Kropotkin’s thinking which fit in with more gradualist, alternate-institutional, and non-revolutionary types of anarchism (the “new anarchism” and “post-anarchism”). For example, she points to his work on voluntary associations being formed even within capitalist society.

Undoubtedly, the “classical” tradition of anarchism needs to be expanded, in areas such as gender or ecology (although Kropotkin had an ecological outlook and other anarchists of his time began to analyse sexual issues). However, I believe that the fundamental goal of working class revolution remains valid. Since Kinna does not agree, it is not surprising that she would not agree with the revolutionary opposition to both sides in the First Imperialist World War of Malatesta and the majority of anarchists then and now.

Ukraine

Some anarchists argue that Kropotkin’s fatal error was his support of national self-determination and national liberation. This belief, they say, led him to support the French and the Entente. Therefore, they conclude, anarchists should not support national self-determination. They should not support the Palestinians against the Israeli state, nor the Uyghars against the Chinese state. They do not take sides between the Ukrainian people and the invading Russian imperialist army. Whatever the arguments, this is an abandonment of anarchist solidarity with the oppressed and exploited.

However, Malatesta, like Bakunin before him, also supported national self-determination. Malatesta, who was so insistent on rejecting Kropotkin’s support of the Allies, had supported the Libyan Arabs fight against the

Italian attempts to conquer them, and had supported the Cuban workers and others when they waged a war of independence against the Spanish. (See Price 2022) He could tell the difference between an oppressed people which is waging war to prevent domination and exploitation by an imperialist power – and a war among imperialist powers, trying to defend or expand their ability to loot oppressed peoples.

Kropotkin lost his way because he failed to make this distinction. Anarchists today must be clear about it.

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Parish Notices

ABC Wien (Vienna) has produced a pamphlet (downloadable as a pdf), *Starting an Anarchist Black Cross Group: A Guide*: abc-wien.net

Advisory Service For Squatters (ASS) is an unpaid collective of workers who have been running a daily advice service for squatters and homeless people since 1975. It grew out of the former Family Squatters Advisory Service, which was founded in the late 1960s. ASS publishes *The Squatters Handbook*, the fourteenth edition of which is the current one, and has sold in excess of 150,000 copies since 1976: network23.org/ass

ACE has moved - The Autonomous Centre of Edinburgh has moved to a new temporary base at Edinburgh Palette, 525 Ferry Road, Edinburgh, EH5 2FF. As many will have heard, ACE is having to move since the West Montgomery Place premises, which have been rented since 1997, are being sold. The new postal address is ACE c/o 33 Tower Street, Edinburgh, EH6 7BN (mail only). Apart from the postal address ACE contact details remain the same. Email acemail@gmx.co.uk or ring 07421 388508 - calls are being forwarded to a mobile number and you will normally get a voicemail. Website: autonomous.org.uk

The Emma Goldman Centre at Blackcurrent Housing Co-op, Northampton, is re-opening. The space should be used for local needs and interests, and features a library with a wide variety of radical literature, and a projector with a sound system: blackcurrent.uk

Health Workers United are a group of people who work in and around the health sector and are in the early stages of

getting a network together - “Our main aim is to understand and support the struggles in our sector. We’re from different backgrounds in terms of work and organising, but share a perspective that in the end it is about working class control over the means for a healthy life, and that worker and patient control of healthcare is a step towards that.” healthworkersunited.wordpress.com

Members of ‘Organise!’ in the Republic of Ireland are producing a regular anarcho-syndicalist bulletin, *Class War*: organiseanarchistsireland.com/class-war

‘Strike Map’ was launched in December 2020 because there were no coordinated records kept of the strike action happening across the UK. The map is an attempt to start to catalogue the action taking place hopes to be useful to other workers. The site is a ‘worker-powered’ attempt to map the industrial action taking place in the UK and relies purely on the information supplied via their submission form. They do not claim to be an official account of all action across the country, or represent all the collective action and different tactics of disruption that people are engaged in. The organisers are trade union activists that work full time and are independent of any one union, party or candidate: strikemap.co.uk

‘DIY Conspiracy’ is a web journal for underground music and culture. As they put it themselves, “In DIY punk we see an autonomous, ever-evolving-in-its-anti-oppression-ideals, genuine community, which lets us live our lives to the fullest of possibilities.” Perhaps not everyone’s cup of tea but highly recommended by comrades who like that sort of thing: diyconspiracy.net

Peter Kropotkin

The Syndicalist (London), December 1912

On December 9th Peter Kropotkin celebrated his 70th birthday. All those who know of his devoted and unselfish work for the Social Revolution will join with us in paying our tribute of love and admiration which we have for him. Unfortunately, the mass of the workers have never yet been brought into contact with his splendid works. If Kropotkin had done nothing more than give the world his *Fields, Factories and Workshops*, his *Mutual Aid* and that



magnificent revolutionary study, *The Conquest of Bread*, he would have accomplished sufficient to have carved for himself a niche in the hearts of all those who wish Well-Being, Freedom, and Happiness for All.

He has devoted his whole life, regardless of comfort and security, to the work of emancipation. Everyone should read his *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* to gain some insight into the sweet and wholesome character of this man, who threw aside title, rank, honour, and wealth in order to devote himself to the self-imposed task of helping to rid the world of economic slavery and its twin evil – political government.

The best homage all can pay him is to study his works, imitate his unselfishness, and propagate his ideas. He will live long as one of the greatest of Emancipators of the Human Race.