

Freedom

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NOTES.

The Mining Settlement.

So the Government granted a subsidy after all. Mr. Baldwin acted like the young lady in "Don Juan": "And whispering, 'I will ne'er consent,' consented." The temporary settlement of the dispute was hailed as "a famous victory" by some Labour leaders, but the miners' leaders were wiser in regarding it merely as a truce in the struggle, as they know that the Commission appointed to inquire into the working of the coal industry is hardly likely to recommend nationalisation of the mines, and will certainly not recommend the increase of wages which the miners demand. So the battle will be resumed next May, when the subsidy ends. The Tories were furious with the Premier for surrendering to the "threat to the community," as they termed the solid front of the Trade Unions. Mr. MacDonald was also very cross. He said the Government had come to a conclusion that was sound, but "by a way that was abominably bad," as "it had increased the power, the reputation, and the prestige of every one of those elements that did not believe in politics at all." In the House of Commons both Mr. Baldwin and Mr. Churchill said the subsidy was the cheapest way out of the difficulty, as a struggle would have dislocated trade for years. Mr. Churchill hinted at a Dictatorship if there had been a general strike. "Some action," he said, "which in ordinary circumstances we should consider quite impossible would, just as in the case of the Great War, be taken with general assent and as a matter of course." But he said the public were unprepared, opinions were divided, and the mineowners "had stated their case in its least favourable form." Next time—that is, next May—they would be prepared. The mineowners have taken Churchill's tip and are flooding the Press with big advertisements in which they talk about the "Red poison" and say that the coal industry is being made the "battleground for the Class War." If this is the spirit in which they are going to meet the miners' claim for better conditions, they will bring on a class war. If men whose occupation is so arduous and dangerous cannot be guaranteed decent conditions, it is an admission that Capitalism has failed. Every man and woman who realises the possibilities of a more equitable society should take up the challenge thus bluntly thrown down by the exploiting class, who fear the end of their rule is approaching.

"Who are the Anarchists?"

The mining settlement was the cause of many foolish speeches. In the House of Commons members spoke about Anarchy and Bolshevism without the slightest idea of their real meaning. But it was left to the leader of the Labour Party to outshine all the others. As a student of Socialism, he cannot plead ignorance of Anarchist ideas, which he wilfully distorted in a speech at Elgin on August 29. He said:—"When the Government surrendered and gave the subsidy they threatened and spoke of Anarchy. Who are the Anarchists? Is it the miners or the Labour Party? Am I an Anarchist? The only Anarchist party at the present time is the Tory Party. . . . Is the Socialist an Anarchist? The Socialist has pinned his faith upon a creed which is to put an end to Anarchy. Go to the coalfields to-day and you will see real Anarchy, industrial, economic, commercial." Mr. MacDonald knows there is no more Anarchism in the Tory Party than there is in the Labour Party. Both parties are firm believers in government; in fact, last September he spoke of the spiritual kinship of the Labour Party and the nobility and gentry. As to what he terms the "Anarchy"—presumably he means chaos—in the mines, that is the result of monopoly backed by government. The private monopoly of the minerals of Great Britain is possible only under Government, which the coalowners and royalty owners rely on to uphold their privileges, regardless of the suffering caused

to the miners and the rest of the community by their mismanagement. Mr. MacDonald's misrepresentation of Anarchism is typical of the politician who plays on the ignorance of his audience in order to gain applause. Meanwhile, we are pleased to see that even the I.L.P. are beginning to tire of this gentleman's political jugglery. Writing in the *New Leader*, Mr. Brailsford, the editor, charges Mr. MacDonald and "his closest associate," Mr. J. H. Thomas, with "leading the party, openly and plainly, towards a reconciliation with Imperialism." Perhaps we had better leave him to be dealt with by his own disillusioned followers.

The Golden Foundlings.

The sale of the Foundling Hospital Estate in Bloomsbury for £1,650,000 is a striking example of the working of land monopoly. The 56 acres which comprise the estate were bought in 1741 for £6,500. Since then parts of the estate have been let on building leases, and when the leases fell in the buildings became the property of the estate. As the population of London increased so the value of those 56 acres increased. The trustees of the Foundling Hospital did nothing to increase their value; they confined their activities to looking after the unwanted babes left on their doorstep. But as the years rolled on generation after generation of worthy citizens toiled incessantly to pay the ever-increasing rents. The tenants very generously paid all the rates levied for the making and upkeep of the streets, for their drainage and lighting, and improving the district generally; and the more improvements they made the higher their rents were raised. The large open space surrounding the Hospital contributed little to the local rates, but as soon as the new landlords start building the lynx-eyed rate collector will appear with a bundle of demand notes. It is the same everywhere in this great metropolis. The Dukes of Westminster, Norfolk, and Portland, and other great landholders go about their usual daily life of leisure and pleasure, quietly confident that the generous citizens will provide them with all the luxuries considered necessary by those who have never done a productive day's work in their life. Some day, perhaps, some of these citizens will ask what they get in return for their generosity, but there is such an odour of sanctity about old customs and old parchment deeds that they probably regard it as sacrilege to question their virtues. As it says on the front of the Royal Exchange: "The earth is the [land] lord's and the fullness thereof."

"And See the World."

We all know those delightful pictorial posters on the hoardings inviting young men to "Join the Army and See the World." Many a simpleton has joined up under the impression that he was going to have a picnic or a world-tour at the Government's expense. But after his first day's experience with the usual hard-swearing drill sergeant he thinks there is some mistake, and would like to quit. It is too late then, however, for once you are caught in the Army trap you have to serve your time. Some young soldiers at Dover tried to break away from the trap recently. They went round the town smashing plate-glass windows. Some were fined and some were sent to prison. More windows were broken. As the culprits never stole anything, the magistrates were puzzled. But an officer who appeared in court one day said that the regiment to which these soldiers belonged, the Green Howards, had been ordered to "see the world" at Bermuda, and they thought that if they were sent to gaol they would dodge the trip. They must have been "Green" Howards if they expected to escape so easily, for the magistrates fined all of them and ordered them to be taken under escort to the ship, the fines to be stopped out of their pay. The moral for young men is plain. Look before you leap, don't believe everything you see on a Government poster, and if you really do want to see the world it would be better to pay your own fares.

Push the sale of "Freedom."

A LAST WORD ON BAKUNIN'S "CONFESSION."

It is not forgotten what rumours were spread and misrepresentations made some years ago about the statement obtained by the Tsar Nicholas I from Bakunin, his prisoner in a fortress, the so-called "Confession" of August, 1851. The readers of FREEDOM have been kept informed on this subject by several articles, one of which, by the way, also circulated in Russia, being translated in the now extinct Moscow Anarchist monthly *Pochin*, Nos. 8-9 of 1922. Some new materials now come to light add a final touch and may be welcome to those who have never swerved in respecting Bakunin's memory, which had been assailed.

I wish to say beforehand that there is good news all along, were it not that the man who placed it quietly before the public, the Russian historian, A. Korniloff, already paralysed when his book was being printed, died two or three days after it came out, late in April or early in May. We owe to him the wonderful volume on Bakunin's youth, based on the family papers, a 718-page volume (1925), and the present sequel, covering the years 1840 to 1857 (*Wanderjahre*), a 590-page book; he cannot now give us the concluding part of Bakunin's life as seen from the Russian private documents.

The new volume contains the secret letters which Bakunin managed to pass to his sister Tatiana when in February, 1854, she was permitted to see him in the fortress. These are the first free words which he had a chance to write after nearly five years of solitary confinement, and these also had to be guarded to reduce the risk to his sister and family, if discovered; moreover they respected the moderate and non-political opinions of his near relations. He says there:—

"This letter is my supreme and last attempt to get in contact again with life; once my position is made quite clear, I shall know whether I ought still to wait in the hope to be of use according to the ideas which I held, which I hold, and which I shall always hold, or whether I ought to die."

He describes in detail his terrible position, his mind still strong, but the body giving way; his intellect is lucid, his will is inflexible, but numerous ailments and unremitting oppressive pangs, the result of solitary confinement without bodily exertion, assault his physical organism. He feels that he never has had so many ideas, a more burning thirst for movement and action; this abundance of inner life tortures him beyond measure.

"You will never understand what it is to feel buried alive, to tell oneself every hour of night and day: I am a slave, I am annulled, reduced to impotency for life, to listen even in this cell to the rolling of the thunder of the great struggle preparing in which the most rightful questions of humanity will be decided, and to have to remain motionless and dumb. To be rich in ideas, a part of which might be useful, and to be unable to realise a single one; to feel love in one's heart, yes, love, in spite of this exterior petrification, and to have no means to spend it on something or on somebody. Finally, to feel full of devotion and heroism even to serve a cause which is a thousand times sacred and to see all these impulses break themselves against four bare walls, my only witnesses, my only confidants!—This is my life! and all this is nothing compared to an idea of quite other frightfulness: that of idiocy, which is the fatal outcome of such an existence."

He feels that this cannot last long and he says:—

"You will understand, I hope, that every man who has any respect for himself must prefer the most cruel death to this long and dishonourable agony. . . . Why have I waited so long? Ah, who can say; you do not know how tenacious hope is in man. Which hope, will you ask? That to begin again what has already landed me here, only with more [illegible] and more prevision perhaps; for prison had at least this good for me, that it gave me leisure and the habit of reflection, it solidified my mind, so to speak, but it changed nothing of my old sentiments; it made them, on the contrary, more ardent, more resolute, more absolute than ever, and henceforth all that remains in me of life is summed up in one single word: freedom."

The first sheet of the long letter ends here; the rest was destroyed by Bakunin himself, as he explains in the next of the three secret letters. From these and all the other prison letters now accessible the following, in my opinion, can be safely concluded:—

We can only now understand to what extent his family, with whom he had been in close touch all his life, had severed their connection with him since 1843, and how their reconciliation since he was in the fortress meant nothing on their part but resignation and very scantily doled out personal comfort, whilst nobody made a

serious effort to liberate him. He was as isolated and deprived of really helpful friends as any man ever was, whilst, as we see, his spirit was unbroken and his desire to obtain liberation or to look for death was unalterable. He knew that he could only depend upon himself. If he was like this in 1854, it is unlikely that he felt different in 1851, when he was given the rare chance in the "Confession" to do something, to speak up, to say many things which he wished to say after years of silence. He was even eager in 1854 for a similar opportunity, and he proposed to his sister to find means whereby Count Orloff, the Tsar's nearest and most powerful confidant, should permit him to write a letter to him (it had to be done in this way; these personages, who decided on every detail of his existence, had first to grant leave that a letter might be written to them before they would look at it). Bakunin hoped for success if he could only talk to him by letter, and mentions also in this connection the heir to the throne, the future Emperor Alexander II. This and the fact that the rolling of the thunder of the great struggle preparing in February, 1854, cannot have meant the coming revolution—there was the most complete lull of revolutionary movement then—but meant the coming collision between Russia on the one side and Turkey, the Western Powers, and, as was generally expected then, Austria on the other side, just the nationalist war of Slavonic liberation of which Bakunin had spoken in the "Confession." His personal opinion and feeling in 1854 was undoubtedly this, that Russia was likely to lose the war or to go uselessly to war if the war was confined to the usual military operations, whilst she had a unique chance of realising the Slavonic Federation by calling upon the Slavs within the territories of Turkey, Austria-Hungary, and Prussia for secessionist rebellions under Russian auspices. Bakunin also burned for such a war in 1848—when he was about to write to Nicholas in this sense, but finally destroyed his manuscript—as well as in 1862 and certainly at any moment between those dates. This is no defection from his ideas; to him nationality and freedom were as closely allied as they were to the great majority of mankind during the great War and all the years since. If in 1914 Kropotkin accepted Nicholas II as a protagonist for this principle, why should not Bakunin do the same in 1848, 1851, and 1854? Neither meant by this to work for Tsarism, but they meant Tsarism to work for them and accepted it as a subservient tool. They expected conditions to be created thus in which their full ideas of Socialism and freedom would more easily be realised. I have not to discuss here whether they were right or wrong; they were in any case in harmony with the majority of the most enlightened peoples.

The Tsar paid no attention to Bakunin's nationalist pleading in 1851; Bakunin hoped to have a greater chance in 1854 or to gain the ear of the heir to the throne. He failed again; they only removed him to a more remote fortress, a still stronger stone coffin, to Schlüsselburg. He understood that the Crimean War and the death of Nicholas crowded out his case from attention, and he bore up patiently. Finally, the only energetic woman in the family, apparently, began to help, Catherine M. Bakunin, a distinguished nurse in Sebastopol during the war, who worked upon the women of the Imperial family, whilst perhaps also the *amour propre* of Prince Gortchakoff was played upon skilfully by making him stake his prestige against that of the secret police, the absolute enemies of Bakunin, who saw through his tactics for liberating himself, opposed every step, and wished him to decay and die in the fortress. He was finally sent to Siberia in March, 1857, a step towards a complete liberation possibly; but as the secret police continued to block this, he regained his liberty by his well-known escape in 1861.

Those in Russia and abroad who since 1919 saw in the "Confession" a recantation, a defection, a moral breakdown, repentance, and all that, must feel rather surprised when they see V. Polonski, who first published the correct text of the "Confession," in 1923 (see FREEDOM, March-April, 1924), and wrote on it in a very severe mood in 1921, now write this in the second edition of his biography of Bakunin (Moscow, June, 1925):—

"If before the publication of the new documents . . . by A. A. Korniloff it was still possible to debate whether Bakunin shammed or not, whether he wanted to deceive Nicholas or whether he sincerely repented of his sins—now when we consider the hitherto unknown letters from the fortress there is no more room for debate. Bakunin did sham; he took that risk with consummate art, wonderful tenacity, and unusual boldness. His confessions, self-humiliation, and flatteries—all these are lies by which he wanted to buy his freedom. It was necessary to deceive Nicholas—so he was deceived. It was necessary to be prostrated

in humility—so he prostrated himself. It was necessary to deny his past—so he denied it, cursed it, made a cross over it,—all that to be able later on, if successful, to continue the previous struggle, to realise his old aim. At whatever cost, by whichever roads or means, but in furtherance of a good goal" (pp. 292-3).

This is what we all said since 1922, and that new chapter of Polonski's book, though I do not agree with the tenour of every observation, shows truth marching ahead in a pleasant way. He also discusses the historical location of the question, and raises a feature of the case which is worth attention, namely, the following. Bakunin—I will summarise this in my own way, without quotations—had undoubtedly had a hand in many things which, as they did not affect Saxony and Austria, had not been looked into by the criminal investigations made in those countries (1849-51), but which, affecting Russia and the Poles under her sway, might come to light incidentally if a searching judicial inquiry into his doings were to take place in Russia; his own case, looking dark enough, would take on a still darker aspect, and others would be inevitably compromised too. It was decidedly more agreeable to talk in his own way to the Emperor directly than to be exposed to a third-degree inquisition by ambitious judges bent on wringing his secrets from him. So Bakunin, having got the chance to talk to the Emperor, made the most of it by diminishing his individuality, posing as an isolated Quixotic personality, paralysed moreover by suspicious rumours about himself, etc., in order to make Nicholas believe that he really had nothing to tell and that it was not worth while to bother about him. And to make sure Nicholas left him to rot for ever in the fortress, but he also let him alone, which was all that could be expected. This point must not be strained, but there is something in it; the "Confession" had several strings to its bow, and this may have been one.

From Korniloff's book (p. 443) we learn that as everything, including the writing of the "Confession," soon leaked out, in the latter part of 1851 a Petersburg society lady wrote to another gossip in Moscow in a mixture of flippancy and caution:—"Your former acquaintance . . . lives now here on the very bank of the river [the fortress] and writes his memoirs, of course not for publication, but for the Tsar. He proves his case very cleverly, lissom as a serpent; he finds a way out of the most difficult situations, here by jokes against the Germans, there by repentance from a pure heart, there by enthusiastic praise. There is nothing to say, he is clever!" From another quarter, a man in high office, one of Bakunin's brothers heard about the same time: "He wrote in detail to the Tsar on his life, not compromising however any one of his foreign accomplices." This was the way contemporary people looked at the "Confession," and they kept their heads cooler, I should say, than very many who have been demeaning themselves in no end of ways about that document, the sop thrown to Nicholas, since 1919.

Polonski now points out from documents that not only in 1863 but also in September, 1870, the secret police urged the publication of the "Confession" in the form of extracts arranged in such a way as to ruin Bakunin's reputation during his periods of great activity; but the higher authorities countermanded the dirty move on both occasions. They knew better; they knew that the living Bakunin would have made short work of such a trick and exposed the cruelty used against him.

The closer one examines Bakunin's life, of which Korniloff's fine book so happily illuminates a number of hitherto obscure points, the more one sees the distance which separates the fullness of that life from the few morsels picked out in the "Confession" for the use of the Tsar. So this matter may now be allowed to rest, I think; time and effort would better be spent in studying and circulating the ideas of Bakunin. Collected editions of his writings are printed or publishing now in French, Russian, Italian, German, Spanish (Buenos Aires). Have they really no attraction for the Anarchist readers of other languages?

M. N.

July 30, 1925.

GENERAL IDEA OF THE REVOLUTION IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

By P.-J. PROUDHON.

Translated from the French by JOHN BEVERLEY ROBINSON.

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CHOOSING OUR MASTERS.

One fact that ought to strike even the most indifferent is that, whatever may be the form of Government presiding over our destinies, the complaints and criticisms passed are just the same; and that, with the exception of the new men who have been brought into the conduct of affairs, the discontented are also the same and are recruited from the same social categories. There is, accordingly, ground for the belief that existing abuses will not disappear, and that our sufferings will continue.

Certainly, on a superficial view, it seems that an abyss separates the Empire from the Republic. Yesterday France had at her head a chief who was irremovable, and consequently irresponsible; and to such an extent did France belong to him that his son was to inherit her, as one inherits a house or a herd of cattle. He had the right of peace or war, and he exercised it. He chose his Ministers at his own good will. He nominated the Senators; and the Deputies, elected by the people but bound by an oath of fidelity to the dynasty, could not touch one of the privileges the ruler enjoyed, and were reduced to absolute impotence. In a word, France was in one man's hands.

Under the Third Republic the chief's power is temporary, and he is elected by the nation's representatives. He has no longer the right of peace and war, or even of amnesty, all that is left him being that of exercising a generous clemency. The Ministers are absolutely dependent on Parliament. Parliament itself is all-powerful. It initiates the laws. It is master of the situation. At every step in the machinery of politics we have elections, and those elected are temporary. What a difference between the two regimes! This is what the wise men call the Organisation of Democracy. All Power comes from the People, through universal suffrage, and all Power is revocable. An inhabitant of the moon to whom all this should be explained would say that there was nothing left for us to desire. And what is the result?

Nothing! Not one liberty the more in the sphere of politics, and no amelioration whatever in the social sphere. This elected and temporary Power keeps us on the jump just as much as did the Power that was personal and hereditary. Not one reform. No progress. The street-sweeper who earned a franc and a half under Louis Philippe or Napoleon III earns it still under Thiers and MacMahon. He would be very much astonished if you were to tell him that an immense Revolution of our institutions had been accomplished when we passed from the Monarchical to the Republican regime, and from Despotism to Democracy.

How comes it that from regimes so different no real change issues? Nothing is more simple, and until we understand the reason we shall not get out of our present pickle, and shall continue to be slaves. The man at the head of the Power is only there for a time, it is true; but he is always at the head of the same Power; and the attributes of that Power, its means of action, its omnipotence, have not changed. Undoubtedly we can replace him every seven years; but it is exactly as if the King were to die every seven years, instead of at irregular intervals.

So long as there is a Power *above* the people that Power will be *against* the people, and you have had the proof of this ever since you have been living under what is supposed to be a Republic. If, when the slaves in the colonies were demanding their freedom, somebody had said to them: "You want your liberty, my dear friends? Nothing simpler. Henceforth, instead of being sold in the marketplace, you shall choose your own master"—if this had been the answer, the slaves would have shrugged their shoulders, knowing well that, choice or no choice, they would be exploited at the master's caprice.

—Translated from the French of ARTHUR ARNOULD,
in *Le Réveil*.

[TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.—This fragment from a great writer, although it deals only with conditions in France, and that half a century ago, is still as true as if it had been penned to-day to meet the conditions England now is facing. If one thing has been proved more clearly than another it is that every one of our parties stands utterly impotent before the great problems confronting us; and those problems have to be settled or they will settle us. We have to do away with the real Power which holds the masses helpless. That means, of course, that we must rescue this country, with all its enormous natural resources, from the clutches of Monopoly, and throw it open to the free and equal use of all. Until Monopoly is abolished Freedom and Order cannot come to birth.]

FREEDOM.

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The Coming Storm.

Out of all this increasing tension something has to come. It is inconceivable that this country, with its long history of energy and enterprise, will be content to remain for any great length of time in the condition of helplessness into which it now has drifted. At present it is entirely helpless. Neither those in power nor the masses have shown as yet any real capacity for coping with the problems confronting them. Unemployment increases, and with the coming winter will be more general and intolerable than ever. Housing, the coal question, the continuous decline of that foreign trade by which we live—all these huge evils still stare us in the face. They broke the Coalition Government. They broke the Labour Government. Now they are breaking the Tory Government, and incidentally smashing the Right-Wing Trade Unionists and Socialists all to bits. Some great change is already thundering at the gates. By no possibility can the present situation last.

Everybody knows this, and those at the head of public affairs know it best of all. But they also are helpless. They cannot provide a market for our coal. They cannot compel foreign nations, now walling themselves in behind protective tariffs, to buy our goods. They cannot stop the great land and money monopolists, who prey on the public's helplessness, from flaying it to the bone. Above all, they cannot allay the gathering discontent of over forty millions who, disciplined for centuries into reliance on the upper classes, have now discovered that even their time-honoured guardians are standing helpless. Faith in the upper classes as Saviours of Society is dead. Faith in the politicians, every one of whom has failed ignominiously, is dying fast. For the moment charlatans may catch the people's ear, but their goods are shoddy, and the hard weather coming on will rip them all to pieces. We are in for a storm which shams and make-believe compromises will not be stout enough to weather.

If the masses read the papers by which the ruling class forms its opinions, they would know that their masters have no delusions on this head. The *Morning Post* swings the alarm-bell incessantly. The Tory *Saturday Review* begins its leading article of August 15, headed "The Economic Revolution," with these words: "We make no apology for emphasising again the principal contention in our leading article of last week, that this country is entering on an economic revolution, and that the coal crisis and other such troubles must not be looked at separately, in relation to the great change which is upon us." That is, at least, straight talk. The ruling class, having leisure and intellectual training, is able to follow the trend of events, observe their logical development, and draw its conclusions clearly. This inestimable advantage the workers do not enjoy, and habitually they hope against hope. However, Life is a stern educator, and the old hopes are dying. The veterans in the Trade Union and Socialist movements, hypnotised by the platitudes to which habit has enslaved them, may cherish all sorts of easy-going fantasies, but the younger generation does not share them. It expects a struggle on a colossal scale, and is itching for it.

Naturally those now in the seats of power pursue a double policy. With Mr. Baldwin they coax, and with the Die-Hards they threaten. They understand clearly that a general resort to subsidies is more than ever an impossibility, but in an emergency they follow it. They talk emigration, knowing full well that our colonies have no intention of allowing us to dump on them our paupers, and that the vaunted remedy, therefore, is a fake. They have no real belief in the efficacy of protective tariffs, for they recognise that we exist only as worldwide traders, and that if we decline to buy from other nations they will not and cannot buy from us. Nevertheless, as a stopgap, they advocate Protection. Naturally they laud Patriotism

as the noblest of virtues, although they themselves habitually welcome any foreigner who is rich and powerful, and support by their investments any "enemy" enterprise that promises good returns. Of course also they are invariably strong on Religion and Ethics, although they worship Caste, which is an absolute denial of the Brotherhood of Man. To the discerning the reason for these tactics is obvious. They divide the masses and gain time.

On the other hand, there is the policy of threats and the appeal to violence. We are being reminded constantly that the laws against treason are still on the statute books, and that aliens who express their views too freely can be deported. All the armed forces are being strengthened steadily, and nursed with an indulgence hitherto unknown; for the Army is now a training-school of experts whose task it will be to lick into shape the conscripts ordered up to the colours when war is again declared. The Army and the ruling class believe in war. They sing its heroics incessantly. They seek to popularise it by staging its pageants with all the pomp and splendour at their command. War has been called the sport of kings, but it might be termed more correctly the last resort of a dominant caste that feels its privileges endangered.

These subterfuges and these relapses into barbarism mark always the passing of an epoch. They are the infallible signs of a system in the last stages of decadence, no longer able to solve its most essential problems, and therefore doomed. The transition may be delayed by astute strategy, or held in check temporarily by brutal force, but it is inevitable, and we should all recognise that even now we are suffering the pains of the new birth. We cannot hope to avoid them; but we should understand clearly that what we get out of them will depend exclusively on the energy, and the intelligent energy, put forth right here and now.

My own idea is that we should go straight for the complete abolition of economic slavery, and that this will be accomplished when we rescue from Monopoly the natural resources of this planet and throw them open to the free and equal use of all. Money systems we can reshape at will. If all existing machinery were swept out of existence, human labour would replace it within a year. But the earth is permanent. On it untold generations have been born, and under it innumerable generations will yet be laid to rest. It is the universal storehouse, and no revolution that fails to give the masses free and equal access to that storehouse can hope to abolish human slavery.

Nations make revolutionary changes only when events compel them. As I believe, that decisive moment is now, for Great Britain, close at hand; but we have still a breathing-space for education and reflection. We should utilise every minute of it, and everywhere, in all the tumultuous discussions into which this coming winter is certain to precipitate us, each of us should play, honestly and outspokenly, his conscientious part. We cannot afford to remain sectarian, and this is not the time for splitting straws.

W. C. O.

DEATH OF W. TCHERKESOFF.

We regret to announce that our Russian comrade W. Tcherkesoff died in London on August 18, after a short illness. His remains were cremated at Golders Green on the 22nd, in the presence of comrades and friends.

When a young man he joined the revolutionary movement in Russia, and suffered the usual fate—imprisonment and exile to Siberia. Escaping, he came eventually to London, where he lived for many years, and joined the Freedom Group. After the Revolution in Russia in 1905 he went to Tiflis, in Georgia, his native country; but when the reaction took place he came back to London. In 1917 he again returned to Georgia, where he witnessed the Bolshevik invasion and the overthrow of the Georgian Republic. These events made it impossible for him to remain, and he returned to London, and tried to enlist sympathy on behalf of Georgia.

He will be best remembered for his merciless analysis of Marxian theories contained in a series of articles published in the *Temps Nouveaux* and *FREEDOM*, which were published later on in book form under the title of "Pages of Socialist History: Teachings and Acts of Social Democracy" (New York, 1902). He wrote constantly for the Anarchist press, his articles in *FREEDOM* (1898–1900) on "The International and its Precursors" showing a wide knowledge of early revolutionary movements.

ROCKER'S INTERNMENT MEMOIRS.*

"Hinter Stacheldraht und Gitter" (Behind Barbed-Wire and Grill), by Rudolf Rocker, is a fragment from the awful chapter a so-called "Civilisation" busied itself in writing during the four years in which it wiped out of existence some ten million lives, crippled and wounded fully twice that number, and left everywhere behind it a sickening trail of desolation. On the other hand, it overthrew three brutal and decadent Empires, and gave birth in Russia to an epoch-making Revolution which has yet to grow out of its swaddling-clothes. These gains may be set to its credit; but it seems to me that the story of its worst discredits is only now beginning to be told. Of its glories we still hear incessantly, but of its unspeakable meannesses hardly a word is said.

I have read Henri Barbusse's terrible "Sous Feu" (Under Fire), but it did not shock me as has Rocker's book. Barbusse gives us a powerful picture of physical and mental suffering, but it also inspires one, perhaps despite oneself, with admiration for a race that can so greatly dare and endure. Rocker presents, with equal power, a different picture—one of the meanness of great Governments caught in the grip of abject fear. Let us, however, do them justice, and admit that they all had reason for their fear. Bombs rained on their cities from above, and torpedoes sank their fleets from below; they saw their commerce ruined, and not one of them knew but that starvation might bring them to extinction; they had unloosed forces of whose actual power they had never dreamed; and because of all this each one of them was hideously afraid. They were panic-stricken; and the cruelty of the panic-stricken, dominated by the basic instinct of self-preservation, knows no bounds.

In all the warring countries men saw spies at every turn, and traitors in their lifelong friends; were ready to swallow at a gulp any slander, however preposterous; were, in a word, completely abnormal and utterly beside themselves. Take Rocker's own case as an example. For years, as a speaker and editor of the Jewish Anarchist weekly, the *Arbeiter Freund* (Workers' Friend), he had been known as one who attacked German Imperialism and militarism remorselessly with tongue and pen. No matter; he himself was of German birth, and might be dangerous; so he was pounced on instantly, and kept under lock and key throughout the War. Thousands and thousands of others found themselves in the same case—petty tradesmen whose only thought had been their shops, and humble mechanics whose one interest was in their jobs; harmless old men, and helpless women who had married some naturalised foreigner, and discovered suddenly, to their profound amazement, that they were regarded as a menace to their native country, outside of which they had never set a foot. All were driven alike into the net; and it was all done in a frenzied hurry, under the management of men crazy with suspicion and intoxicated with the conviction that they were called on to save their Fatherland from ruin. Not for a moment do I believe it was worse here than elsewhere, for the English are a phlegmatic people, slow to anger and not easily alarmed. But they also had caught the universal madness, and they also were swept off their feet.

Throughout his internment Rocker kept a diary, just as Berkman did in Russia. In 418 large and closely-printed pages he has set out in detail his experiences from day to day, and such works are invaluable. Everybody who values truth should study them, because they show things as they are. I myself can understand now how I should have felt had I been hustled into the crowded concentration camp at Olympia, where men were herded like sheep, and the most ordinary decencies were simply impossible. I can follow step by step the life at the Alexandra Palace, with things somewhat improved as time wore on; or aboard the "Royal Edward," usually packed to suffocation; or in the Isle of Man, invariably regarded as a hell on earth; or at Stratford, which seems to have been little better. Above all, I can see and hear the howling Southend mob that jeered and cursed the helpless prisoners as their keepers marched them through the town for embarkation. You can easily comprehend that Rocker felt that far more keenly than all the physical trials. He remarks that he had always thought that Christ's real torture was not the actual crucifixion but the journey to the cross.

Unquestionably he is right. Physical suffering is bad, but one hardens to it. It is humiliation that thrusts a dagger into the heart; it is contempt that drives men mad; it is the sense of suffering injustice and being impotent to remedy it which wears the nervous

system to a frazzle. I confess myself amazed that Rocker was able to preserve such sweetness in the constant company of men who, distracted by the loss of everything that made life dear to them, and with nothing in the world to do but brood and brood, developed necessarily whatever in them was most detestable and base. Take one instance out of many recorded. After months of silence a man hears from his wife. She writes that his four sons have all been killed, that his daughter-in-law has gone insane, and that she herself is penniless. And he himself is powerless to help! All he can do is to sit and think and think, yet all to no intent. It seems to me that these are the real cruelties of war; mean cruelties without a single feature to redeem them.

Of course also there was heroism; an extraordinary amount of it. I cannot rid myself of the conviction that it is a comparatively easy thing to pit your physical life against that of your enemy, and especially under the influence of great excitement; but that to rise superior to these spiritual tortures calls for courage of an infinitely loftier type. It appears, however, that character can carry a man through anything; and Rocker's sturdy character was well known. He had had a great influence, and men of that type are always pretty sure to make their mark. It need not, therefore, surprise us to find that here also he rose above his circumstances, organised circles, kept up a propaganda on ideal lines, and became quickly recognised as a leader even by the authorities, who admired him for his outspokenness. This has not astonished me; but I confess myself amazed that he was able to uplift so many others; that his following was so large and full of vitality; that, being entrusted with authority, he was able to get most wonderful results by persuasion and unauthoritative methods. This is the cheering and inspiring portion of the record, for it shows how much of the fine and the heroic is latent, under all conditions, in the ordinary man.

This book should be translated and widely read, because it shows War stripped of its finery and standing naked to the world, the child of Fear. Fear drives dynasties to war. Fear forces nations to fly at each others throats; and I think that at the root of all our social troubles lies the fact that men are still afraid of one another. Perhaps at present they have good cause to be; but that is the very thing that must be altered.

SENEX.

A PLAINT TO MAN.

When you slowly emerged from the den of Time,
And gained percipience as you grew,
And fleshed you fair out of shapeless slime,

Wherefore, O Man, did there come to you
The unhappy need of creating me—
A form like your own—for praying to?

My virtue, power, utility,
Within my maker must all abide,
Since none in myself can ever be,

One thin as a phasm on a lantern-slide
Shown forth in the dark upon some dim sheet,
And by none but its showman vivified.

"Such a forced device," you may say, "is meet
For easing a loaded heart at whiles:
Man needs to conceive of a mercy-seat

Somewhere above the gloomy aisles
Of this wailful world, or he could not bear
The irk no local hope beguiles."

—But since I was framed in your first despair
The doing without me has had no play
In the minds of men when shadows scare;

And now that I dwindle day by day
Beneath the deicide eyes of seers
In a light that will not let me stay,

And to-morrow the whole of me disappears,
The truth should be told, and the fact be faced
That had best been faced in earlier years:

The fact of life with dependence placed
On the human heart's resource alone,
In brotherhood bonded close and graced

With loving-kindness fully blown,
And visioned help unsought, unknown.

THOMAS HARDY.

* "Stacheldraht und Gitter." By Rudolf Rocker. Mk. 4.50. Berlin O 34: Der Syndikalist, Fritz Kater, Kopernikusstr. 25.

FIRST PRINCIPLES.

There have been many arguments recently in the *Road to Freedom* and elsewhere about Anarchism and Revolution, and the relation of one to the other. One poor comrade who thought that Anarchism was only possible through evolution and permeation was properly "told off" for his heresy, the accepted belief being that an Anarchist must be a revolutionist who is prepared to defend himself if need be by the use of violence. The one belief, of social harmony being helped forward best by the power of love and sweet reasonableness, practised universally, with Tolstoy's warning, that "a spark neglected burns the house." The other belief, that the world is so full of hatred and bitterness that it is best to call in the stokers and have a jolly good blaze—the more sparks the brighter it burns—and then rebuild the world anew. Between these two schools of thought are many suggested remedies for tackling the world's problems, each being brought forward as a pet scheme, so that in the end we have quite a "doctor's dilemma."

Now definitions are generally very dead things. Rabindranath Tagore once wrote in an essay on "Art":—"In our zeal for definition we may lop off branches and roots of a tree to turn it into a log, which is easier to roll about from classroom to classroom, and therefore suitable for a textbook. But because it allows a nakedly clear view of itself, it cannot be said that a log gives a truer view of a tree as a whole."

However, definitions are useful and are a good guide when considering what is meant by a word or a phrase. A good many feel that Anarchism is a living force, something that cannot be lopped off to fit into a textbook; nevertheless, when considering first principles we have to make use of definitions in order to understand each other. Here are two definitions of "Anarchy," one from the "Century Dictionary": "Anarchy, a social theory which regards the union of order with the absence of all direct government of man by man as the political ideal: absolute individual liberty." The other taken from the "Encyclopedia Britannica": "Anarchy, an ideal to which the highest religion and philosophy look forward as the goal of man; not one, however, which can be forthwith reached through the wholesale destruction of the present framework of society, but through a long process of ethical and social improvement."

In comparison with the present order, this is a distinct revolution. As to how sharp, sudden, or drawn out it will be depends on our social development and desire for change. Both evolution and revolution take place, are taking place; the violence of revolution is largely determined by evolution, progressive or reactionary.

As to how far revolution can help Anarchism depends on the development of the minds of men and women towards that social harmony and greater freedom desired by Anarchists. Revolution in the sense of change would be very helpful; but it must be a revolution in thought, breeding new customs and a universal charity that would allow for the variation of temperaments. When you come to what folk call revolution by means of violence, you may get the violence but not the change, unless it be a change for the worse.

People who wish for a society without government, and who at the same time have ideas of an army or militia to bring it about, are setting up the very thing they wish to destroy, namely, government; they also run the risk of defeat, with a few martyrs; or worse, victory with a retaining force to defend their newly acquired power against counter-revolutionaries. To sum up, you will have had your revolution, and the only change other than the intense suffering which always follows war is a change in the form of government. The power will have shifted from one group of people to another, and we have no evidence to show that this power will not be used as unmercifully as before, whereas we have plenty of evidence to the contrary. The one thing that will not have been achieved or helped forward one iota is Anarchism; rather the chances are there would be reaction, and the ideals Anarchists strive for more distant than ever.

Personally, I support the idea of growth; of propaganda by means of permeation, by trying to instil into people's minds a desire for greater freedom, hoping others will do the same. To commit violence is an anti-social act and a breach of one of the first principles that Anarchists should hold, as by so doing they are denying that liberty to another which each should desire for themselves.

The reason why I lay stress on this point is because I believe human life to be sacred, and I want to see it grow and develop to the full, to become as it were "men like gods." I am here again

reminded of Tolstoy when he wrote: "Freedom, not imaginary, but actual, is attained not by barricades nor murders, not by any kind of new institution coercively introduced, but only by the cessation of obedience to any human authority whatever."

We have to declare war on social wrongs and bad customs, not on human beings, else we immediately set up the very things we condemn. So let us go on battling against worn-out customs and habits that are anti-social in character, and do all we can to rouse the people's will to throw off the yoke of every kind of slavery, and to make a bid for freedom, for equality of opportunity, for social well-being. Thus, whilst some of us are pacifists let us be active pacifists, not being content merely to live, but to live and help others to live well.

STANLEY OXLEY.

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