

Socialism from Below

A History of Anarchism

George Woodcock

1944

Contents

Chapter 1 the Nature of Modern Society	3
Chapter 2 Freedom and Organisation	8
Chapter 3 What is Anarchism?	12
Chapter 4 Precursors of Anarchism	16
Chapter 5 Michael Bakunin and the First International	24
Chapter 6 Peter Kropotkin and Anarchist Communism	31
Chapter 7 The Growth of the Anarchist Movement	37
Chapter 8 Anarcho-Syndicalism	40
Chapter 9 Anarchism in America	45
Chapter 10 The Russian Revolution and the Makhnovist Movement	48
Chapter 11 The Spanish Revolution	53
Chapter 12 Epilogue	58
Appendix	63

Chapter 1 the Nature of Modern Society

THIS IS A BOOK concerning Freedom. It attempts to expound in clear terms a social philosophy and a social method by which a practicable liberty can be obtained. It is based on the assumption that the most desirable human good is the social and economic freedom of the individual human being, and its theme is a society in which men will have liberty and space to develop their personalities and to advance, in a world where there exist no longer the bonds of poverty and coercion, towards the complete man of the visionaries.

From the birth of civilisation this ideal of freedom has led poets and philosophers, social theorists and thinking men. In ancient China and ancient Greece men talked and struggled for freedom and the fact that these ideals of personal liberty and of the man who fulfils himself in freedom have been perennial through history shows that the concept of freedom is natural to man and must strengthen as he becomes increasingly aware of his own inner potentiality.

If we survey human society today, engaged in the most evil war of history, we cannot fail to be impressed by the power of this concept of freedom. It is so powerful in the minds of men that its most ruthless enemies find themselves compelled to exploit it in order to hold the continued support of their followers. Thus the leaders of every country at war claim to be fighting for the freedom of their own people — often also for the freedom of others. In the same way there have been rulers in every age who have committed atrocious crimes against humanity and created slavery in the name of its antithesis, liberty.

Before we can discuss the nature of a free society in the future, and indeed, in order that we may determine the nature of that society, we must consider society as it exists today.

Politically, modern society is based on the system of government; economically, on the system of property concentrated in the hands of the few. Its political manifestation is the state; its economic manifestation is the capitalist system of production. Its tendency is centrifugal, so that political power becomes more and more concentrated in the state and economic power progresses from the system of many small capitalists to monopoly capitalism, which in its turn becomes state capitalism. So the totalitarian state is achieved by the coalescence of political and economic power in the same body. But this identity of the state and capitalism is no new thing.

For the state is in reality the translation into social terms of the economic form of society. It serves, in fact, as the executive instrument of those who, by virtue of the economic power conferred by property, are the effective ruling class of the country. And as property comes, through the growth and amalgamation of large scale business trusts, under the effective control of a class which grows progressively smaller and smaller, so the state itself becomes more and more concentrated until the apparent parallels of political and economic life meet in the totalitarian state.

Every major country has become, during if not before the present war, in some measure totalitarian. The circumstances of the war have tended to hasten the concentration of control of property in the hands of the few, and military necessity has enabled the ruling class to concentrate and make more and more intense the power of the state. Organisations, such as trade unions, which functioned before the war on an independent and voluntary basis and whose purpose was,

indeed, to some extent in opposition to that of the state, have now become virtually part of its structure, and serve the state rather than the people for whose protection they were formed. Similarly, small proprietors have either been liquidated by conscription or bombing or are subjected to a mass of regulations which limit their independence to such an extent that they are in effect minor distributive or productive bureaucrats who receive a guaranteed price instead of a salary and are preserved from extinction only insofar as they are willing to serve the state.

If the business unity of capitalism has become merged in this manner into the body of the state, the lives of individual men and women have become hardly less dominated by the totalitarian form of war society. Workers in many industries have returned to a state of virtual serfdom, being bound to their work under pain of imprisonment if they leave — or even if they are late. Conditions of labour have reverted to those of pre-Tolpuddle days. Long hours are again compulsory, and many people are forced to work seven days a week under the threat of being drafted into the army. The factory laws have been abrogated, and the safeguards won by the workers in a century of bitter struggle have vanished almost overnight.

The hours after work, which before the war were counted as the citizen's own time, in which to spend in leisure activities the meagre surplus of his income, are likewise at the command of the state, and the man who has worked sixty hours at some monotonous and tiring employment, may still find himself obliged to spend a further portion of his week in fire-watching or Home Guard duty.

The activities in which he can engage during the small leisure that remains are likewise limited, and almost all of them are used in some way for the transmission of propaganda that will induce him to accept totalitarian conditions. The cinema, music hall, radio, newspapers and periodicals combine to emphasise upon his mind the necessity of supporting the total war and by implication, the total state.

Today society in all countries assumes this totalitarian form, which negates the individual and deifies the aggregate. The difference between the so-called democracies and the open dictatorships is superficial and, for the most part, of degree. War or economic crisis has merely forced the dictatorships to become more open in their suppression of the individual. In the democracies coercion is incomplete, and while the people can be fooled into a course of action beneficial to the state their rulers refrain from forcing them. But even the democracies are forced more and more to use coercion to maintain the stability of the state, and in this way progress towards identity with the dictatorships. Thus the contention is virtually true, that this is a war between two kinds of Fascism and that the victory of neither can bring freedom to the peoples of the world.

It must be remembered that the present suppression of the individual could not have been achieved had it not been for the tacit agreement of the individuals themselves. One reason why the government is less ruthless in this country is that the mass of the English people have become peculiarly amenable to the persuasion of the ruling class, and can easily be convinced, without the terror that serves as persuasion in the openly Fascist states, that the dictates of authority represent their own desires.

For the last hundred years the English industrial workers have been subjected to a progressive conditioning administered by the most capable ruling class in history. By a clever application of a series of minor concessions the activities of the workers were turned away from the revolutionary trends of the 1830's to the reformism of the New Model Trade Unions. Workers' organisations were, by the corruption of their leaders, turned into instruments for assisting class rule, until,

today, the trades unions have been incorporated in the totalitarian state machine and the leaders of the Labour party, built on the workers' efforts and cash, act the most brutal parts in a reactionary government. By means of universal state education; the press, the radio, the cinema, the workers have been doped into an ignorance of social truths and a general mental unawareness far greater than that of their 'illiterate' ancestors of Owen's day.

By the granting, in easy stages and over a number of years, of universal suffrage, the workers have been encouraged in the illusion of political equality, the illusion that the possession of the vote gives them a say in the government of the country. The Jacob's ladder of social and economic advancement has been hung continually before them, manifested in a graded caste system among workers. Every worker can become a foreman if he is sufficiently servile. Every clerk can become a manager if he is sufficiently officious and unscrupulous. In their higher-paid ranks, skilled craftsmen, foremen, engine drivers, etc., the workers tend to become dovetailed into the petty bourgeoisie, imitating their manner of life and acquiring their social prejudices. A very high proportion of the proletariat has been completely demoralised by these golden apples of capitalism, and is devoid of any revolutionary consciousness. Not the least appalling result of this corruption of the workers of Britain is the fact that they have lost any real sense of self-respect, any desire to develop their personalities for something better than the social and economic scum of would-be go-getters.

While it would be ridiculous to contend that capitalism has given out its prizes to a majority of the workers, many have benefited from the exploitation of the empire, and their good fortune has given a hope to many more of their fellows. But they should keep no illusion of continued good fortune. Capitalism will not, cannot continue to offer such baits to the proletariat. English capitalism, if it survives, will have a poor time after the war. Then the English workers will begin to experience something nearer the life of their Indian comrades, on whose misery their comparative (if slight) well-being has been based. As the contradictions of capitalism drive it to act for its own eventual destruction, it will turn the screw ever more and more severely on the proletariat. Then, if not before, we can hope to see a revolutionary consciousness among the English proletariat.

This revolutionary consciousness is to be found more in countries with small industries and large peasant populations than in countries preponderantly industrial.

In the great western European industrial nations, revolutionary movements have failed on every occasion. Great organisations have been built by the political socialists among the industrial proletariat. Governments of social democrats have held power in England, Germany and France. And yet, not only have these socialist movements failed to achieve the social revolution, but also, when faced by a definite offensive by the forces of reaction they have, in Germany, England and France alike, failed to make effective resistance and have lost the social improvements gained over years of struggle.

On the other hand, it is among those countries where capitalism has been least developed that there have during these years been the few hopes of the social revolution.

In such countries men have not been subjected to the intensive conditioning imposed by efficient capitalism. The state, though perhaps more ruthless in theory, is, in practice, less efficient and subtle in its oppression. The workers have not been subjected to the demoralisation of bourgeois standards, of social and economic advancement. For them there have been no Jacob's ladders, no golden apples of the Hesperides. Having escaped the regimentation of great factories, of universal state education, of the giant press, they have retained their natural perceptions, their

human individuality and integrity, of which the workers of Britain have lost so much. In these countries the revolution has not retreated through the ineptitude of corrupt political parties that gulled the workers into giving their support to a fatal programme of reformism and appeasement.

Quite apart from the demoralisation induced by the policy of rulers, it seems that there is an inner, fundamental demoralisation in the factory system itself, with its usual accompaniment of a life divorced from any close or lasting contact with rural life. It takes considerable strength to withstand the spiritually destructive elements in a mass life, a life of regimentation and uniformity, of division of labour carried down to the absurdities of the Ford and Bedaux systems. Such a system is in itself a prime cause of the intellectual sterility that falls like a blight over the lives of the great majority of the urban proletariat.

In this connection it is significant to note that among the workers of Britain the most emotionally alive, culturally sensitive and socially conscious, are those whose circumstances of work and life bring them in some close contact with nature, or provide some form of work that allows a certain individual initiative or creativeness. Thus the miners, most of whom still live in fairly close contact with rural surroundings, are the most militant of the British workers.

The present condition of the petty bourgeoisie is more complex than that of the industrial workers, in that they are in transition from being servants of individualist capitalism to being more or less direct agents of the total state. Symptomatic of this is the increase of the civil service establishment since the commencement of the war from half a million to nearly a million bureaucrats. In addition to this we must consider the large number of typical members of the bourgeoisie who have obtained commissions in the army and in various civil defence services. In this way the petty bourgeoisie is rapidly changing into a new class of state parasites similar to the great middle-class bastions of authority that form the bureaucracy and ruling party in both Nazi Germany and Stalinist Russia. As we have already seen even that section of the petty bourgeoisie that continues in private business becomes gradually transformed into agents of the various state ministries, in fact into an unofficial bureaucracy supporting the bureaucracy proper.

This rise of the bureaucracy as a class in itself, rather than as the section of a class is the logical end of the development of industrial capitalism, running parallel with the gradual subjugation and robotisation of the industrial working class and the metamorphosis of individual capitalism into trust and finally state monopoly capitalism. It is a component of the development of the apiary society of totalitarianism, in which a graded and rigid authoritarian hierarchy replaces the partial individual freedom of liberal capitalist society.

These statements have, of course, only a general application. Workers and bureaucrats are first and foremost individuals, men with their own personalities and characteristics. They only become classes and masses when and in so far as they undergo a common reaction to common circumstances. And just as there are events or conditions which make a universal appeal transcending all class reactions, so there are special circumstances which impel the individual to diverge from the common way, and there are also men who remain isolated, to a very great degree, from the mass direction, and direct their lives and opinions as individuals.

Such individually minded men are found in all classes, but they are most frequent among the intelligentsia, and if we study the various trends of thought among intellectuals during recent years we can gain some idea of the tendencies among independently minded men. For individualists, even, form a class in a negative manner through their common reaction against the domination of authority.

The most significant of developments of the attitude among English intellectuals since the war is the swing from cut-and-dried systems, from dogmas, from that very totalitarian tendency which characterises modern society, towards a reintegration of the individual, towards a negation of political dogma and a general opposition to political movements and political action, in fact, towards a personal if not yet a social anarchism.

For the intellectual world the period up to September 1939 was an age of confidence in abstractions, of adoration for the restless, sterile intellect. Political and psychological systems laid out the world's needs and our own with encouraging simplicity. Demagogues and well meaning scientists prophesied our future with astrological self-assurance. Literary lackeys mirrored the accepted visions of party and politician. And the serious artists were likewise influenced by the prevailing feeling of sureness. But their sureness was pessimistic, of the inevitability of war, for instance, which characterised almost every significant poet.

The accepted systems had their counterparts in the extremes of literature and art. Communism was reflected in social realism, Freudian psychoanalysis in surrealism. The tendency to elevate intellect above emotions dominated various trends towards the intellectualisation and abstraction of poetry and art into conventionalised games with set codes of refined and obscure symbolism. In the representative poetry of the period, the work of Spender, Auden and their followers, we find elements of all three extreme approaches. Almost every poet had a determinist attitude of some kind that gave poetic conceptions a certain mechanistic flavour. The age in its pessimism showed the paradoxical culmination of the nineteenth century materialism with its optimistic belief in progress.

War came, and its complicated and unforeseen events broke the faith in systems. There was a retreat from communism, and surrealism, never robust in England, waned to a game of outdated cranks and phoneys. Above all, there was a general weakening of belief in the omnipotence of the intellect. Most of the near-communists of immediate pre-war years realised the essential identity of communism and fascism, the ineptitude of political parties and the futility of political action. Thus, not only did the younger poets after the early sterile months of the war express an individualistic attitude which in many cases combined with a hostile attitude to the state and war; but many of the older poets, such as Spender and Auden, dissociated themselves from the political movements they had embraced in the past and began to proclaim the necessity for recognising the fundamental importance of the individual.

This movement among the more acutely developed minds of our present society across and not with the contemporary social current is of great importance in demonstrating the awakening of a discontent with modern society more real than that expressed by the political malcontents who really desired an intensification in one direction or another of the attack on the individual by the total society. For the writers are expressing a feeling of hostility towards authoritarianism of which many individuals in all classes are gradually becoming aware.

To recapitulate, the typical form of modern society is the totalitarian state, and the totalitarian state is hostile both to freedom and to the individual. If we regard freedom as necessary, if we regard the free development of the individual as the greatest human good, then we must search for some form of social organisation which will give that freedom instead of the greater or lesser slavery offered by the various totalitarian states.

Chapter 2 Freedom and Organisation

SOCIETY IS THE aggregate of individuals, united for their common good. Society exists for the benefit of individuals and not individuals for the benefit of society. These statements are axiomatic, but they are also so important that they must be repeated. The highest common good of individuals is freedom. Freedom is both social and economic. Social freedom consists of the liberty of each man to live as he wishes provided he does not injure his fellows. But this liberty is dependent on the economic freedom conferred by a form of society that provides for each man a sufficiency of material goods to satisfy all his needs. To provide this sufficiency with as little labour as possible, it is necessary that men should co-operate in their work. Society in its pure form consists precisely in this working together for the common welfare.

Thus, men, like many other animals, find it convenient to live in society. Indeed, they have become so conditioned by social activity that it would be difficult for them to live apart from it, and this material helplessness of men outside the social group has given rise to ideas of the social unit as an organic body existing in its own right, to which the relationship of individual men is similar to that of members or cells to the human body. A little examination reveals the absurdity of this notion. A limb cannot live cut off from its body. But if a man of average resourcefulness were put on a desert island provided with a moderate plenty of natural resources, he would without doubt have a very hard time, but it would be possible for him to fill his belly and to evolve a life that might eventually provide certain mental satisfactions.

Nevertheless, despite its manifest absurdity, this idea of the community as an entity in its own right, above the individuals it comprises, has existed at all times in the history of civilisation. In modern times it is tacitly admitted in almost every country. In Germany the super-individual becomes the German Folk, in Russia the Socialist Fatherland, in England King and Country. In every land at war the conscript is incited to fight for his country — by which is meant the state in which he lives, or for some personification thereof, such as Adolf Hitler or the Mikado. He may be asked to fight for other things, according to the estimate his rulers have of his intelligence, but always the dominant idea behind a country at war is that of the state deified. This idea exists in peace, but it is in war that the subordination of the individual to the mass, to the artificial machinery of the impersonal and abstract state, reaches its most complete manifestation. In peacetime a man is ordered to curtail his freedom of action, to give up his money in taxes, to beget children so that the armies of the embattled state may be rich in cannon fodder. But in war he is ordered to give up his very existence that the state may live.

This state for which men are asked to die is a cruel abstraction of those who need a myth to enable them to maintain their rule over the majority of men. It is a lie — or a folly — to say that the state is above individual men. It is equally untrue — or foolish — to claim, that the state can exist apart from the men within it.

Men have arranged themselves into groups from the earliest days of human evolution, but solely for their own convenience — firstly, as animals do, for the protection of numbers and the reproduction of the species, secondly, because they found that social life made possible, by the

differentiation of function within the group, a higher standard of comfort and living. It is from these beginnings that the modern and gigantic centralised social aggregates have arisen. Still the fundamental function of the social unit — and the only function that can be justified with any degree of reason, remains that of the well-being of the men and women within it.

But the modern state has acquired other functions, which are anti-social in nature — insofar as one regards as social what is beneficial to all men within a society. It has become an instrument for the protection of the interests of certain classes in the community against those of the remainder, and its forces are used for such objects as the protection of private property, the restriction of personal liberties that may be detrimental to the interests of the ruling class, the conducting of wars of conquest to obtain new markets and sources of raw materials, and the waging of imperialist wars against other state communities whose ruling classes are pursuing similar objectives. In such circumstances the state becomes an organisation for the maintenance of class rule and class interests, and not a group organised for the benefit of its members — except in the limited degree to which the ruling class find it necessary or advisable to satisfy the needs or wishes of the remainder of the community (and it is surprising how far they contrive to regulate such needs or wishes through their instruments of suggestion). In order to maintain the state as conceived by them and as necessary for the preservation of their interests, the ruling class must resort to means which would be regarded as criminal and anti-social if practised between the individual members of the social unit. For instance, although its own law forbids the settlement of disputes between individuals by brute force, the state, embodying and acting on behalf of and through the ruling class, uses brute force in a dispute between one set of individuals and another, e.g. uses both police and soldiers to break strikes and political demonstrations. And the use of lies and deceptions which would be regarded as immoral between men in the same class, is conducted without shame by the ruling classes against the ruled.

These evils cannot be dissociated from the state. Where there is a centralised state, the conduct of communal affairs must, if the organisation is to work at all, devolve on a minority obeyed by the majority. Government, therefore, is inevitable in the state system, and government cannot exist without coercion and its means. And where government exists, with the power and the means to force the people to its will, history shows that the governing class will use its position to establish privilege and its power over the people to follow ends other than the common good.

It has been the error of almost every revolution in history to establish a coercive government in place of the government it overthrew, and to take over the machinery of the state in the hope of using it to establish a new form of society that will supersede the state. Instead of performing the liberation for which it was designed, each revolutionary government has found it necessary to apply measures even more coercive than those of the deposed government, has drowned its newly proclaimed liberties in the blood of the guillotines, and ended, if it survived so long, in the establishment of a privileged ruling class, a military organisation, and all the appendages of the embattled state, while the idealism of the original revolutionary leaders has given place to the selfish tyranny of a new exploiting class. So the civil war in England ended in the Cromwellian rule of the generals under which the true libertarian movements of the Diggers and Levellers were destroyed and the liberties of the individual circumscribed far more narrowly and efficiently than under the Stuarts. The French Revolution led, through the Convention and the dictatorships of Marat, Danton, Robespierre, to the eventual triumph under Napoleon of the state and government in forms even more tyrannical and evil than they had assumed before. Imperialism and war were invoked in the name of that glorious revolution whose liberty, equality and fraternity had

vanished in the rise of nationalist France and her emperor of murderers.

The Russian revolution was turned astray by the same illusion of a government, even a revolutionary government, being able to achieve a society in which freedom and justice would prevail. The specious doctrine of the dictatorship of the proletariat was applied in a country where the entire proletariat was a relatively small minority among the peasant masses. And in practice this dictatorship was not by the proletariat but over the proletariat by the Communist Party, itself a minority of between two and three millions in a population of nearly two hundred millions. Even within the Communist Party the vital decisions were taken by minorities in inverse proportion to the importance of the issue. So a pyramid was formed at the summit of which stood a handful of the Bolshevik leaders or, at a later stage of this 'revolutionary government', one man, who had displaced all his rivals for the tip of the pyramid. This man, Stalin, stands in the same relationship to the October Revolution with its demands for 'All Power to the Soviets' (i.e. the assembled people) as Napoleon did to the real French Revolution with its slogans of Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité.

Indeed, the study of revolutions confirms everywhere the melancholy conclusion of the nineteenth century historian, Acton, that "Power corrupts, absolute power corrupts absolutely."

In practice, any government, however good the intentions of its founders, becomes counter-revolutionary — if we assume revolution to mean the profound changes in social structure towards political and economic freedom, which in reality can only spring from the deep, spontaneous movements of individuals acting with a common will towards some goal they all desire passionately. Any government, because its existence demands the establishment and defence of some kind of order at the expense of individual action and initiative, is by its very nature conservative and socially destructive.

But if we reject government and the state, we have to find some other pattern of social organisation which, while granting the individual liberty of action and expression, will yet ensure the smooth and effectual working of society to give men those material and intellectual benefits which can be obtained only from a life of association and co-operation.

This was a problem whose existence was realised by many of the Victorian individualists, and the most famous of them, John Stuart Mill, declared, "the social problem of the future, we consider to be how to unite the greatest possible individual liberty of action with a common ownership in the raw material of the globe and an equal participation in all the benefits of combined labour."

But Mill, although he realised the failings of democracy and representative government, as they existed in his time, did not go far towards a solution of this problem, nor did most of the other Victorian radical thinkers, who realised the necessity of individual freedom and the evils of state power but could not pass beyond these realisations towards a social method and organisation which would give maximum liberty to the individual and at the same time prove more efficient than capitalist "democracy" in satisfying material needs.

Herbert Spencer, for instance, was led by his evolutionary beliefs to the view that humanity was advancing to a society "in which government will be reduced to the smallest amount possible, and freedom increased to the greatest amount possible." But he did not attempt to envisage the nature of such a society and, although he disagreed with the state as he saw it developing in his day, still clung to the idea of government. "Not only do I contend that the restraining power of the State over individuals and bodies, or classes of individuals, is requisite, but I have contended that it should be exercised much more effectively and carried much further than at present". It is true that Spencer favoured only the negative functions of government, but, in practice, the very

nature of the state forces it to make positive demands on the individual, such as demands for military service, etc. In government, as in the Church, Thou Shalt Not cannot be divided from Thou Shalt.

The answer to the liberal problem is that society must be organised, not on a political basis, but on an economic and functional basis. If we administer the production and distribution of worldly goods, to ensure to each man a share commensurate with his requirements, we shall have found a solution to our main social problem. With freedom of the individual man and an organisation of his functional life and economic satisfaction on a basis that will provide for all his needs, we can well leave society to find its own form, which can never be fixed and stagnant. If we establish the principle of “to each according to his needs”, we shall be half way to obtaining acceptance of the principle of mutual aid, “from each according to his ability”.

The social philosophy that has given the only satisfactory answer to this problem is anarchism.

Chapter 3 What is Anarchism?

ANARCHISM IS NOT a creed of terror and destruction, of social chaos and turmoil, of perpetual war between the individuals within society. On the contrary, it is the opposite of all these, a way of life and organic growth, of natural order within society, and of peace between individuals who respect their mutual freedom and integrity. It is the faith of the complete man, growing to fulfilment through social, economic and mental freedom. It is a social philosophy, but it is also a philosophy of individual aspirations.

Anarchism is the only true doctrine of freedom, because it denies all external authority, all domination of man by man. It proclaims the sufficiency of the individual human mind and spirit, and the inborn tendency of men towards peace and co-operation when their natural feelings have not been twisted and frustrated by the oppression of authority.

Socially, anarchism is the doctrine of society without government. It teaches that the major economic and social injustices are intimately associated with the principle of government, which inevitably, in whatever form it takes, creates privilege, and a class hierarchy, and, however much it may call itself democratic, must base itself on the coercion of the individual, at best to the will of the majority, most often to that of the governing minority. An authoritarian society — and every kind of society that bases itself on government is, in virtue of that fact, authoritarian — cannot survive if it does not create a governing class and a series of gradations of responsibility in its hierarchy which must inevitably destroy all forms of equality, whether of wealth, status or opportunity. The governing class, once created, will tend to harden into a caste and to gather to itself privileges that give its members substantial advantages over the other members of society. These privileges will first be granted in the name of expediency, but will be continued as a usurped right. Though rulers may set out with the most sincere intentions, the very necessities of maintaining the power they hold will force them to injustice, and the privileges they obtain will accomplish their inevitable corruption. The evidence of history is unvaried on these points.

True democracy cannot exist outside the imagination in a society based on coercion. Yet, even were democracy possible, the anarchist would still not support it, for democracy puts forward the will of the majority as the supreme law, and declares that society must be governed, and the individual, whether he agrees or not, be coerced by that will. Democracy then, is not based on freedom and differs only in degree from despotism in its negation of the individual. To the individual whose life is frustrated by the law of the State, it does not matter whether that law is the will of one man or the will of a million. What matters to him is that through its existence he is not free and therefore cannot become complete.

Anarchists seek neither the good of a minority, nor the good of the majority, but the good of all. They believe that a society based on the great super-individual myth of the State will inevitably in the end enslave all men in the interests not even of the majority but of the privileged few who form its ruling class. The anarchists have often been upbraided as impractical visionaries for their denial of the institution of government. But impracticality belongs, surely, to those who, in the face of the irrefutable historical verdict, still believe that some day a form of government

will appear which will not involve the exploitation of the ruled and the corruption of the rulers. These attributes are as natural to government as venom to the viper.

Anarchists believe that the institutions of government and the state and all other coercive instruments of administration should be overthrown. This destructive side of anarchism has received undue prominence among its enemies and among some of its more irresponsible friends, and has given rise to certain misconceptions, some frivolous and some serious, which have been deliberately fostered by those in authority.

Of the more frivolous is the idea, still prevalent among the majority of Englishmen, that the Anarchist is a man who throws bombs and wishes to wreck society by violence and terror. That this charge should be brought against anarchists now, at a time when they are among the few people who are not throwing bombs or assisting bomb throwers, shows a curious blindness among its champions. It is true that Anarchists have in the past, and particularly during the last two decades of the nineteenth century, used the weapon of terrorist assassination as a means of carrying on the social revolution. Some Anarchists, therefore, certainly have thrown bombs.' But so, also, have governments. And the difference in responsibility lies in this, that while the bombs thrown by anarchists have been very few and have always been directed against those who were guilty of the oppression and murder of their subjects, the bombs thrown by governments during this war alone can be numbered in their millions and have slain hundreds of thousands of men and women quite innocent of any crime against their fellows. And it must be remembered that the practice of individual terrorism was virtually abandoned by the anarchists some forty years ago, when the advent of anarchist syndicalism opened up the possibility of the more satisfactory tactic of revolutionary mass economic action.

Anarchists believe that a political or governmental organisation of society is incompatible with justice and liberty. They contend that society should be based on the free co-operation of individual men and women in fulfilment of their common functional and economic needs.

Here we reach a second and more serious misconception concerning anarchism, which has arisen among many people with a superficial knowledge of the movement; that anarchism is individualism carried to its extreme conclusion, and therefore admits of no organisation of society. A certain support would appear to be given to this notion by the fact that a few anarchist intellectuals have preached this extreme form of individualism by which a man would live independent of all ties with his fellows and concern himself solely with the development of his own personality and his own happiness.

Where, however, anarchism has existed as a social movement, its exponents have always envisaged the necessity for organisation, but a free organisation rising organically from the needs of man. Anarchism preaches freedom of the individual, but freedom cannot be isolated in society. A man's freedom is reciprocal, depending on the freedom of others, and therefore anarchism preaches that the concept of justice is as necessary as the concept of freedom, for without justice there can be no true freedom, just as without freedom there can be no real justice.

Work in common achieves more in a shorter time than solitary work, and a sane division of labour provides both plenty and leisure where a man dependent on his own two hands to provide the necessities of life would have to toil all his hours for a miserable standard of life. But the benefits of common work and common life cannot be enjoyed in full measure if the vital functions of production are not organised by the people who perform them.

This necessity for social organisation has been realised by all the leading anarchist propagandists, who have refuted on many occasions the contentions of the "pure" individualist anarchists.

In 1872 Michael Bakunin, the founder of the international anarchist movement, wrote defending participation in the First International:

“To whoever might pretend that action so organised would be an outrage on the liberty of the masses, or an attempt to create a new authoritative power, we would reply that he is a sophist and a fool. So much the worse for those who ignore the natural, social law of human solidarity, to the extent of imagining that an absolute mutual independence of individuals and of masses is a possible or even desirable thing. To desire it would be to wish for the destruction of society, for all social life is nothing else than this mutual and incessant dependence among individuals and masses. All individuals, even the most gifted and strongest, indeed most of all the most gifted and strongest; are at every moment of their lives, at the same time, producers and products. Equal liberty for every individual is only the resultant, continually reproduced, of this mass of material, intellectual and moral influence exercised on him by all the individuals around him, belonging to the society in which he was born, has developed and dies. To wish to escape this influence in the name of a transcendental liberty, divine, absolutely egoistic and sufficient to itself is the tendency to annihilation. To refrain from influencing others would mean to refrain from all social action, indeed to abstain from all expressions of one’s thoughts and sentiments and simply become non-existent. This independence, so much extolled by idealists and metaphysicians, individual liberty conceived in this sense would amount to self-annihilation. “In nature, as in human society, which is also part of the same nature, all that exists lives only by complying with the supreme conditions of interaction, which is more or less positive and potent with regard to the lives of other beings, according to the nature of the individual. And when we vindicate the liberty of the masses, we do not pretend to abolish anything of the natural influences that individuals or groups of individuals exert upon one another. What we wish for is the abolition of artificial influences, which are privileges, legal and official.”

This extract represents the attitude of anarchist militants. Anarchists accept the voluntary limitations necessary for reciprocal freedom. What they do not accept are the limitations imposed from above by coercive bodies such as the state.

Instead of the government of men, anarchists base society on the administration of things. It is on the economic plane alone, in the necessary production of goods consumed by men and in the provision of necessary social service, that they see the need for organisation, not from above but on a voluntary and co-operative basis, among the individuals whose work actually produces the necessities of a civilised life.

The functions of the modern state, represented by its paraphernalia of legal codes, bureaucracy, army and police, would be unnecessary in a society where common ownership had ended privilege and social economic inequalities. All these appendages of the modern state are intended ultimately not for the protection of men and women, but for the protection of the ruling class and the property by whose virtue it rules. In a society where there is no inequality of property, and where every man’s needs are satisfied, there will be no incentive to crime, except among the pathological, who are not subjects for prison or law courts. Where property rights have vanished

there will be no need for codified laws. Customs and not regulations are the natural manifestations of men's ideas of justice, and in a free society customs will adapt themselves to the growth of the ideas of that society. Under anarchism every man, once he has fulfilled his economic functions, will be free to live as he likes, provided he does not interfere with the lives of his fellows, and a free people can be relied on to see that the peace is maintained under such circumstances without the need of police or magistrates.

The economic ideas of the anarchist have found a concrete expression in anarcho-syndicalism. Anarcho-syndicalism, with which I will deal more fully in a later chapter, is both a technique of revolution and a means of organisation of a free society after the revolution. It advocates the organisation of the workers under capitalism in voluntary economic organisations, the syndicates, which differ from the trades unions in being controlled directly by the workers themselves and in having as their purpose, not the winning of reforms under capitalism, but the achievement of the social revolution by economic means. The withdrawal of economic co-operation, in the form of the general strike, is the basis of the anarchist conception of the revolution, and in this economic struggle the syndicates will play the vital role of uniting the efforts of the workers. After the revolution the syndicates will be the basic units of the network of economic and functional bodies, which will administer the satisfaction of the common needs of men and replace the system of authority and coercion.

Anarchism, it must be emphasised, is not a static and unchangeable social system. It is rather a dynamic philosophy that recognises the importance of evolution in human society, and the consequent futility of any attempt to plan social advancement on rigid lines.

Anarchists, therefore, deprecate the idea that the revolution can be planned and carried out through the seizure of power by a disciplined party organisation. Instead they contend that the revolution will arise only out of the spontaneous movement of the people against their rulers, and that in the ensuing struggle the role of the revolutionary will be to maintain in the minds of men the nature of the goal for which they strive. The revolutionary may preach freedom, but the people must take it for themselves.

In the same way, although anarchists consider syndicalism to be a practical means of the organisation of society after the revolution, they recognise that it may not be a perfect social pattern. Indeed, they envisage no static blueprint of a future world. For, when men have been freed from social and economic oppressions, the evolution of human institutions will undoubtedly attain forms we cannot conceive. Thus, though we can make proposals for organisation immediately after the revolution, these must not be regarded as something permanent and therefore dead, but as the bases of further social evolution.

The anarchist does not expect to achieve a society without flaw. But anarchism does offer the only possibility of a society based on freedom and justice, which will function efficiently and produce a degree of spiritual and material comfort far higher than men enjoy today. Anarchism may seem Utopian to those who are embittered by the corruption and injustice of modern society. But, as Wilde said, "Progress is the realisation of Utopias". And, for the very fact that it is based on qualities and aspirations towards freedom and peace that are fundamental in human nature, the Utopia of anarchism is literally realisable.

Chapter 4 Precursors of Anarchism

THE BELIEFS THAT lie at the core of the doctrine of anarchism, faith in the essential decency of man, the desire for individual liberty, the hatred of domination of man by men, are common to all ages and all races, and if that is all we require, then we can find the beginnings of anarchism in the works of many poets and philosophers, from Dean Swift to Oscar Wilde, and from Epicurus to Rabelais, whose Abbey of Theleme was as anarchist a community as one could hope to envisage.

But if by anarchism we mean a developed social creed, envisaging a form of society in which men could flourish in freedom, then we find our choice much more limited. In the ancient world, for instance, there was no developed doctrine of this kind. The nearest was probably that of the Stoics, who preached the necessity of individual freedom and the contempt of power and political action. "For your part," said Epictetus "do not wish to be a general, or a senator, or a consul, but to be free." But the Stoics envisaged an inner freedom, and held that a man could be free within an unfree society if he had the requisite contempt for power. For this reason they did not preach the need for endeavouring to bring about a changed form of society, for each man's freedom was his own concern, and their philosophy was thus mystical rather than social in its attitude to freedom.

In ancient China, however, there arose a school of teachers who realised that outside circumstance did prevent a man developing the virtues within him, and taught the necessity for removing restraints in order that men might grow naturally. Taoism was a definite social creed that envisaged a society without government and in this way could be regarded as the first anarchistic doctrine. For this reason I am devoting the first section of this chapter to Lao Tze, the founder of this school.

The remaining sections will deal with those figures in comparatively modern Western civilisation who preached anarchism before the rise of an anarchist movement after Bakunin, and whose ideas influenced in some degree the development of European and American libertarian thought. They are Winstanley, Godwin and Proudhon.

LAO TZE

Very little is known of the life of Lao Tze. He is said to have been born in 604 B.C., in the province of Tchu, and became curator of the Royal Library of Kao. Like Christ and Socrates, he became famous as an oral teacher, and many scholars listened to his teachings. In his old age he retired from the Royal Library, and went to seek a quiet retreat in the Ling Po mountains where he could spend the rest of his life in meditation. There a circle of disciples gathered round him, and at their request he set down in writing some of his teachings in his only written work, the Tao-Te-Ching, the Book of the Simple Way. When this was finished, he left his disciples and went alone into the depths of the mountains, from which he did not return.

His teachings, partly set down in the Tao-Te-Ching, but mostly recorded years later by Chuang-Tze just as the teachings of Socrates were recorded by Plato, became the basis of the cult of Taoism, which for the last twenty-five centuries has exercised a profound influence on Chinese

thought and the Chinese way of life.

Lao Tze taught the inherent virtue of man, and the necessity for a natural and unfettered expression of that virtue. He believed that goodness must spring up within a man and could not be imposed on him by external forces. He therefore taught, by implication, the need for man to have the freedom for the development of his inner good, and the fruition of his personality, and emphasised the necessity of non-interference in the lives of others.

Thus in its social application Lao-Tze's teaching was against authority and condemned the domination of man by his fellows. In this it opposed the benevolent Machiavellianism of Confucius, who believed that man could be made good from above. He reproved him thus:

“The chaff from winnowing will blind a man so that he cannot tell the points of the compass. Mosquitoes will keep him awake at night with their biting and just in the same way this talk of charity and duty to ones neighbour drives me nearly crazy. Sir, strive to keep the world in its original simplicity. And as the wind bloweth where it listeth, so let virtue establish itself.”

While Confucius counselled rulers to govern wisely, Lao-Tse realised that the flaw did not lie in the method of government but in government itself, and consequently he taught them that they could be successful only by governing not at all, in other words, by ceasing to be rulers.

“When the actions of the people are controlled by prohibited laws, the country becomes more and more impoverished. When the people are allowed the free use of arms, the government is in danger. The more crafty and dexterous the people become, the more do artificial things come into use. And when these cunning arts are publicly esteemed, then do rogues prosper.

“Therefore the wise man says: “I will design nothing, and the people will shape themselves. I will keep quiet and the people will find their rest. I will not assert myself and the people will come forth. I will discountenance ambition, and the people will return to their natural simplicity.”

The way of Tao cut right across the worldly objectives of wealth and power, and in Lao-Tze's triple doctrine of “Production without possession, action without self-assertion, development without domination”, it reaches a social and personal ethic which guards the spiritual development of the individual and is indistinguishable in its broad application from the way of anarchy.

Taoism was in no way an academic system, existing in a social vacuum. On the contrary, it sprang from the communal and mutualist principles which have always existed in Chinese society, and in its turn strengthened these principles and gave them articulate and coherent expression in a definitely social philosophy which has undoubtedly played a great part in Chinese life as a creed of the dispossessed and which may yet be one of the prime influences in the establishment of the free society when it reaches China.

GERRARD WINSTANLEY

When the English bourgeoisie triumphed over the autocratic monarchy during the Civil Wars of the 17th century, far from establishing the promised reign of liberty, they were already preparing a tyranny which would vary in degree only, according to which section within their own split ranks was triumphant. For the differences between Presbyterians and Independents were,

politically, superficial. Both wanted a bourgeois regime, and both proved hostile to the petty-bourgeoisie and wage earners. The freedom they desired was one of exploitation, like the famous Free Trade of the nineteenth century.

Before the end of the war the people began to realise the nature of the fraud that was being practiced upon them. By 1643 Parliament had to conscript its soldiers because the flow of volunteers had dried up, and from the beginning of the war there were riots among the peasantry.

In 1645 discontent began to take form in the Leveller movement, both within and outside the army, and for some years, until the defeat of the mutinous regiments of the West it seemed that the movement might well overthrow the Cromwellian dictatorship.

But the Leveller movement was essentially petty-bourgeois, and in no way proletarian. Although the Levellers were sincerely concerned for the poor, they defended property and opposed common ownership, and their proposal of extended suffrage excluded the wage earners.

The characteristic proletarian manifestations of the time were religious and mystical. A multitude of sects arose who preached, as Christianity had preached to the slaves in Rome, a heavenly kingdom where the poor should rule. Poverty itself became an asset, because it was the way to Heaven. Out of this movement arose, paradoxically, the most advanced social philosophy of the time, that of Gerrard Winstanley and the Digger movement.

Winstanley, a small City tradesman whose business had failed during the economic depression and who had moved to the country at Cobham, appeared in 1648 as the author of two theological pamphlets which differed in no fundamental way from the mass of contemporary mystical literature.

But his ideas developed rapidly. In the latter half of 1648 he published two further pamphlets, which showed that he had passed to a stage in which he envisaged a pantheistic god whom he identified with reason. "The spirit of the father is pure reason, which as he made so he knits the whole creation together in a onenesse of life and moderation, every creature sweetly in love lending their hands to preserve each other and so uphold the whole fabrique." From this conception of God arose a new theory of conduct based not on the arbitrary law of an anthropomorphic deity, but directly on reason and expediency.

"Let reason rule the man and he dares not trespassed against his fellow creatures but will do as he would be done unto. For Reason tells him is thy neighbour hungry and naked today, do thou feed him and cloathe him, it may be thy case to-morrow and then he will be ready to help thee."

In a few months Winstanley's ideas had crystallised into a definite social code, and in March 1649 he published "The New Law of Righteousnesse," in which he revealed an understanding of social problems in advance of any English social thinker before Godwin. He realised the corruption inherent in government "everyone that gets an authority into his hands tyrannises over others." He realised that economic inequality was the principal barrier to freedom and peace — "So long as such are rulers as calls the Land theirs, upholding this particular propriety of mine and thine, the common people shall never have liberty nor the land ever be freed from troubles, oppressions and complainings." He denounced private property — "Selfpropriety is the curse and burden the creation groans under." He realised too that the social system could be rectified only by the direct action of the poor. "The Father is now rising up a people to himself out of the dust that is out of the lowest and most despised sort of people... In these and from these shall the Law of Righteousnesse break forth first." The people should act, Winstanley contended, by seizing and working the land, which represented the principal source of wealth. He did not favour the forcible seizure of estates. These might be left while the poor settled on the waste lands (which he

estimated occupied two-thirds of the country) and worked them in common. From their example, he thought, men would learn the virtues of communal life and the earth become a “common treasury” providing for all men plenty and freedom. He ends his pamphlet with the promise of action. “And when the Lord doth shew unto me the place and manner how he will have us that are called common people to manure and work upon the Common lands, I will then go forth and declare it in my actions.”

The Lord did not delay. On April 1, 1649, Winstanley and his followers set out on St. George’s Hill, near Walton-on-Thames, to dig and plant the waste land. They were joined by other comrades, until they numbered between thirty and forty people. Winstanley believed that their numbers would soon be increased to 5,000, and invited the local populace to join them. All they gained, however, was the hostility of their neighbours, who regarded the Diggers’ ideas as a direct threat to their own property interests. A few days after their arrival, the Diggers were attacked by a large mob, who burnt their sheds, destroyed their tools, and imprisoned several in Walton Church.

This hostility of the local populace continued without abatement, time and again the Diggers were attacked, their persons injured, crops damaged, tools and sheds destroyed, time and again they were forced to leave the common, but for a whole year they kept returning and starting work again, maintaining their passive struggle with heroic persistence.

In March, 1650, the Diggers were finally driven from St. George’s Hill, but established themselves on a small heath in the vicinity. Even here their enemies would not leave them, and in April a clergyman led a mob who drove them away for the last time. Armed patrols were set to watch the common, and the Diggers did not return.

After the failure of the Surrey experiment, the Digger movement vanished. But during the months of struggle they had developed their social ideas, and they left a heritage of permanent value in the literature they published, remarkable for its depth of analysis and maturity of vision.

They perceived more clearly than any social thinker before Godwin the economic basis of social problems, and the necessity for evolving an economic remedy. It is for this reason that they were so insistent that the land (then the principal source of wealth) should be held and worked in common. “True religion and undefiled is this. To make restitution of the Earth which hath been taken and held from the common people by the power of Conquests formerly and so set the oppressed free.” They believed that many human faults originated in the social factor of exploitation “...I am assured that if it be rightly searched into the inward bondage of minds as covetousnesse, pride, hypocrisie, envy, sorrow, fears, desperation and madness are all occasioned by the outward bondage that one sort of people lay upon another.” They realised that the cause of war was economic rather than spiritual. “Propriety and single interest divides the people of a land and the whole world into parties and is the cause of all wars and bloodshed and contention everywhere.” Further, they realised the double role of the state as protector and tool of the property-owners — “...for what are prisons and putting others to death, but the power of the Sword to enforce people to that Government which was got by Conquest and sword and cannot stand of itself but by the same murdering power.” The only way to abolish oppression, they declared, was to abolish property; the only way to give men freedom was to give them a common share in the land and its produce. “True freedom lies where a man receives his nourishment and preservation, and that is in the use of the Earth.”

I have no space to detail their scheme for a communal society. But it did anticipate in many ways the society envisaged by anarchists today, a society of work according to ability and re-

muneration according to need, a society without money or armies or permanent bureaucrats, a society where “Law is a Rule, whereby men and other creatures are governed in their actions, for the preservation of the Common Peace.”

In this last phrase Winstanley anticipated Kropotkin’s idea of Mutual Aid, as he anticipated anarchism in so many other ways. It can indeed be said that this obscure revolutionary and his tiny movement represent the most advanced and clear-sighted social conception that arose in Europe until the days of the French Revolution.

WILLIAM GODWIN

Anarchism has suffered in England because it has been regarded by the general public as an exotic growth, a creed originating among Russians, Latins and other suspect races and therefore something to be avoided by good Englishmen. The anarchists themselves have tended to perpetuate this illusion by their continued reliance on foreign sources and their neglect of the English predecessors of anarchism, who should be studied not from any sense of racial loyalty, but for the fact that the writings of men like Winstanley and Godwin present a philosophical case for liberty in a more capable manner than many of the commonly read anarchist classics.

Winstanley’s ideas vanished quickly after the break-up of the Digger movement. Their influence, if it persisted, must be regarded as tenuous in the extreme, and it is with William Godwin, a century and a half later, that modern anarchism appeared in the wake of the French Revolution.

Godwin, a non-conformist minister, who had lost faith and discarded the cloth, was one of the leading figures of the literary circles of England during the Industrial Revolution and the romantic revival. His work had a profound — if in some cases transitory — effect on the ideas of such writers as Shelley, Wordsworth, Coleridge, De Quincey and Hazlitt, and his arguments provoked Malthus to reply in his famous Essay on Population, which, by the irony of history, came to enjoy a greater fame than the book to which it replied so unconvincingly.

Godwin wrote many books, including school text books and novels, of which the most famous was ‘Caleb Williams’, but the work which expounded his social theory and on which his influence rested was the ‘Enquiry Concerning Political Justice’, published in 1793; it was a work of great scholarship and consummate argument, and remains one of the best philosophical expositions of anarchism that have yet been written.

Godwin held that all discussions of the form of the desirable government were irrelevant, because government itself was the cause of the principal social evils.

“All government corresponds in a certain degree to what the Greeks denominated a tyranny. The difference is, that in despotic countries mind is depressed by a uniform usurpation; while in republics it preserves a greater portion of its activity, and the usurpation more easily conforms itself to the fluctuations of opinion. By its very nature a positive institution has a tendency to suspend the elasticity and progress of mind. We should not forget that government is, abstractly taken, an evil, a usurpation upon private judgment and individual conscience of mankind.”

He refuted the current Jacobin idea of government being based on a social contract:

“We cannot renounce our moral independence; it is a property we can neither sell nor give away; and consequently no government can derive its authority from an

original contract.”

The majority of the faults in society, he taught, sprang from the repressions of the individual, which were inseparable from the systematic, coercive and external rule of the state. Every human being had a fundamental will towards peace and freedom, and if authority were removed, this tendency would assert itself in individuals and cause them to desire and live towards a society based on justice.

“Normal man seeks the light just as the flowers do. Man, if not too much interfered with, will make for himself the best possible environment, and create for his children right conditions, because the instinct for peace and liberty is deeply rooted in his nature. Control by another has led to revolt, and revolt has led to oppression, and oppression causes grief and deadness, and hence bruises and distortion follow. When we view humanity we behold not the true and natural man, but a deformed and pitiable product, undone by the vices of those who have sought to improve on nature by shaping his life to feed the vanity of a few and minister to their wantonness. In our plans for social betterment, let us hold in mind the healthy unfettered man, and not the cripple that interference and restraint have made.”

Godwin repudiated the law, by which he meant the codified laws of organised states, and taught that in its place must be substituted natural justice, based on the elemental rights of man. Perhaps the most important section of Godwin’s treatise is the essay on Property. He realised, unlike the political radicals of his time, that men could only live together amicably if fair economic conditions prevailed and no man were subject to exploitation by another.

“However great and extensive are the evils that are produced by monarchies and courts, by the imposture of priests and the iniquity of criminal laws, all these are imbecile and impotent compared with the evils that arise out of the established system of property...” “Accumulated property treads the powers of thought in the dust, extinguishes the sparks of genius, and reduces the great mass of mankind to be immersed in sordid cares.”

The only just means of the distribution of property, Godwin held, would be one that ensured that every man’s needs were met, and that no man was idle in plenty while another toiled in poverty.

“If justice has any meaning, nothing can be more iniquitous than for one man to possess superfluities, while there is a human being in existence that is not adequately supplied with these. “Justice does not stop here. Every man is entitled, so far as the general stock will suffice, not only to the means of being, but of wellbeing. It is unjust if one man be deprived of leisure to cultivate his rational power while another man contributes not a single effort to add to the common stock. The faculties of one man are like the faculties of another man. Justice directs that each man, unless perhaps he be employed more beneficially to the public, should contribute to the cultivation of the common harvest, of which each man consumes a share.”

Godwin encouraged a society of individuals linked by free contracts relating to the common functions of society; unlike his predecessor Winstanley, he had evolved no scheme of full-scale communism in production and distribution.

He looked to the dissolution of political government “that brute engine which has been the only perennial cause of the vices of mankind”. In its place he visualised a federalist system of decentralised administration by voluntary bodies rising spontaneously to organise in freedom any

social functions that might be necessary. The revolution he thought could be achieved peacefully by education and example.

"Political Justice" had a great influence on the intellectual circles of Godwin's day and, in spite of Pitt's jibe that a three-guinea book would only be read by the well-to do, it reached the advanced workers, who often formed groups for the express purpose of purchasing the book. There is no doubt that the libertarian and anti-political character of the Owenite movements and the early Trades Unions was due in great part to Godwin's influence. To him more than any other we must attribute the antiauthoritarian strain that, in spite of betrayals, has existed in the British labour movement down to the present day.

PIERRE-JEAN PROUDHON

Proudhon was a French printer who became for some years the leading figure of the French labour movement, and whose ideas, in the years preceding the Commune, were extremely influential among the radical workers of Paris.

Proudhon had a brief period of political activity, when he sat in the National Assembly after the revolution of 1848, but for the rest of his life he was opposed to political methods and the political society. He was imprisoned twice for offences against the French press laws; and died in 1865.

Proudhon rejected the Jacobin tradition that dominated almost all his contemporary Socialists, and recognised the evil of the centralised state, and of economic monopoly, under whatever guise, capitalist or socialist, it might exist.

His ideas on property underwent certain modifications during the development of his social theories. In 1840 he wrote a book entitled "What is Property?" and answered the question with the celebrated definition, 'Property is theft'. Later on, however, he changed his position, and condemned property only when it was the product of exploitation. He held that the individual producer had a right to the means of production and to the full enjoyment of the value of his produce. This value would be based, for the purposes of exchange, on the amount of time involved in its manufacture. Proudhon condemned money and interest, and envisaged a system of the exchange of actual goods through exchange banks.

Thus he admitted capital in the form of the means of production, provided it did not involve the exploitation of others. In his society the only capitalists were the men, or groups of men, working with their own tools and machinery and receiving a return equal to their labours. There would be no place for the rentier who lived by owning machines and employing others to work them, at a rate of remuneration so far below the actual value of work done as to leave him a substantial proportion on which to live without work. In Proudhon's society a man would eat according as he worked.

Government and authority he rejected as alien to justice, and he proposed in their place a series of free contracts between free men. "That I may remain free, that I may be subjected to no law but my own, and that I may govern myself, the edifice of society must be rebuilt on the idea of Contract." He envisaged production being arranged by groups of producers bound in free mutual contracts, which would ensure to the individual producers the right to the entire product of their labour.

This economic pattern of individuals and small groups owning their own means of production became outdated and impractical with the rise of modern industry, and it was later superseded by the collective ownership theory of his disciple, Bakunin. Proudhon rejected the state and all

political forms of action.

“All parties without exception, in so far as they seek for powers, are varieties of absolutism, and there will be no liberty for citizens, no order for societies, no union among working men, till in the political catechism the renunciation of authority shall have replaced faith in authority. No more parties, no more authority, absolute liberty of man and citizen — there is my political and social confession of faith.”

While Proudhon talked of the revolution, in his latter phase at least, he did not envisage any sudden expropriation of the capitalists and abolition of the State.

Instead he advocated the method of practical example through the creation within capitalist society of co-operatives and exchange banks. The contrast between this system and the immoral system of capitalism would convince men of the justice of the new form of society, and the state and exploitation would vanish. Of the new society he wrote:

“The Revolution does not act after the fashion of the old governmental, aristocratic, or dynastic principles. It is Right, the balance of forces, equality. It has no conquests to pursue, no nations to reduce to servitude, no frontiers to defend, no fortresses to build, no armies to feed, no laurels to pluck, no preponderance to maintain. The might of its economic institutions, the gratuitousness of its credit, the brilliancy of its thought, are its sufficient means for converting the universe.”

Proudhon was the first of the important continental anarchists. He was in no way as brilliant a social thinker as Godwin, but, owing to his direct contact with the French workers and the stimulus he gave to the social development of Bakunin, his influence on the anarchist movement was the greater. He has a further claim to attention in that he was the first revolutionary actually to designate himself an anarchist.

Chapter 5 Michael Bakunin and the First International

THE GROWTH OF libertarian thought in the nineteenth century cannot be attributed to any one man, but although the influences of Godwin, Proudhon and many lesser figures were important, it was with the rise of Michael Bakunin that revolutionary anarchism emerged as a social doctrine and that an anarchist movement grew in Europe and became the vanguard of revolutionary endeavour.

Bakunin was a Russian nobleman by birth, but his whole life and work were characterised by great intolerance of injustice and coercion and a passionate devotion to personal freedom and integrity. Gigantic and commanding in stature, before his years of imprisonment and suffering Apollonian in physical handsomeness, by nature simpleminded, eloquent, courageous and generous to a fault, Bakunin had all the attributes that might have made him a successful man of the world, a commanding statesman or the hero of a national revolution, like his friend Garibaldi. Yet he sacrificed all prospect of a prosperous or distinguished future for the suffering and poverty, the misrepresentation, obloquy and apparent failure that fall to the lot of the social revolutionary. He had neither the scientific, methodical mind of a Kropotkin nor the talented cunning of a Marx, but for the devotion and personal heroism by which he built the libertarian movement in Europe, he remains probably the greatest and certainly the most dynamic revolutionary figure of modern times.

Bakunin's father was an ex-diplomat who held an estate of five hundred serfs in the Russian province of Tver, and who had planned for Michael, his eldest son, a respectable and patriotic career in the Tsar's army. It was in the family that Michael first attacked authority, and his early years were filled with stormy incidents in which he incited the Bakunin children to rebel against the parental will.

Michael himself was sent to the St. Petersburg Artillery School, where he showed little zeal for military studies. Although he gained a commission in the Artillery, he left the service of the Tsar at the first opportunity. He decided to devote himself to academic studies, and became a keen student of philosophy and a disciple of Hegel, then the fashionable sage of intellectual Europe. Soon he became restive in the frustrated atmosphere of Russian society, and in 1840, when he was 26, he left Russia to study the Hegelian philosophy in its own German environment.

He departed a loyal subject of the Tsar, but in Berlin he soon fell, like Marx, under the subversive influence of the young Hegelians and began to move towards a revolutionary outlook. He studied the early socialist and communist movements that flourished in France, and first manifested himself as a revolutionary in 1842, when he published in Arnold Ruge's *Deutsche Jahrbücher* an article entitled 'Reaction in Germany'. This article contained the famous phrase 'The desire to destroy is also a creative desire', which has been used by many of the more unscrupulous opponents of anarchism to misrepresent Bakunin as a monster who desired violence above all and for its own sake. In fact, Bakunin meant merely that the old form of society must

be ended before the new can be built. That he should have been devoted to violence for sadistic motives is contrary to all we know of his character. Indeed, he said on more than one occasion that violent revolution was at best an unpleasant and unsatisfactory necessity. "Bloody revolutions are often necessary, thanks to human stupidity; yet they are always an evil, a monstrous evil and a great disaster, not only with regard to the victims, but also for the sake of the purity and the perfection of the purpose in whose name they take place."

In 1843 Bakunin was in touch with Weitling, whose authoritarian communism he eventually rejected, and when Weitling was arrested in Switzerland; Bakunin's name was found among his papers. The Swiss police informed the Russian authorities, and in due course Bakunin was summoned home. He refused to obey, and in his absence was condemned to deprivation of his title of nobility and his inheritance, and also hard labour in Siberia. For his defiance the Russian government became thenceforward his most implacable enemy.

In the same year he met Proudhon and Marx in Paris. He was impressed by the two men, and in the following years his ideas, as they grew slowly through much effort and experience, were influenced by both of them. From Marx he learned that economics were more important than politics and religion, a fact which Marx revealed in his scientific analysis of society and forgot when he came to formulate revolutionary methods. From Proudhon he acquired the main bases of his future anarchism, the opposition to government and the doctrine of social decentralisation.

The following years saw Bakunin attempting to intervene wherever revolution appeared in Europe. At first he supported the Poles, until he was discredited in their eyes by a rumour spread by the Russian secret service that he was one of their own spies — a slander which followed him for many years and was afterwards revived by the Marxists to serve their own particular ends.

Then in February 1848, he hastened to Paris for the revolution against the regime of the Citizen King. He assisted enthusiastically at the barricades, but when he began to preach the anarchist ideas that were already beginning to appear in his mind, the Jacobins found him an embarrassment, and one of them remarked of him, "What a man! What a man! The first day of the revolution, he is a perfect treasure, but on the next day he should be shot!" The new 'revolutionary' authorities did their best to get rid of him, and when Bakunin realised the reactionary nature of the state that arose from the Parisian revolution, he decided to return to his efforts to foment the Polish insurrection.

He went to Breslau, near the Polish border, but again he found that the Poles distrusted him, and he went on to Prague. Here he was involved in another rising and fought on the barricades with the Czech students, but the insurrection was soon defeated, and he fled back to Germany, where he found a temporary refuge in Anhalt, a tiny liberal principality islanded in Prussian territory. He still intrigued with his friends in Bohemia, and in 1849 went illegally to Dresden in order to maintain closer contact with them. Here he was again overtaken by revolution and, although he had no sympathy with the German liberals, who were rising to maintain their constitutional democracy, he offered his services with a remarkably disinterested willingness and, when most of the leaders fled, remained at the barricades and assumed control of the revolution. He conducted himself so well that even Marx and Engels praised his ability and coolheadedness and, according to Bernard Shaw, Wagner, who fought beside him, was so impressed by his heroism that he used him as the model for Siegfried.

The Dresden revolution was defeated and suppressed with great brutality by Prussian troops sent to assist the Saxon king, and the surviving rebels — the majority had either been shot or

thrown into the Elbe — fled to Chemnitz, where most of them, including Bakunin, were arrested during the night. Wagner was one of the few who escaped.

For Bakunin capture meant the beginning of an imprisonment which was to last eight years, in the most terrible prisons of four countries, and to be followed by years of exile in the spiritual desert of Siberia. First he was kept in prison for more than a year by the Saxon authorities, then sentenced to death, taken out to execution, and reprieved at the zero minute. Then he was handed on to the Austrian government, who desired their revenge for his part in the Prague rising. Nearly another year passed in Austrian prisons, first the citadel of Prague and then, when a rescue was feared, in the castle of Olmütz, where he was chained to a wall for three months. Again he was tried and condemned to death, and again reprieved and extradited to the next country that desired to torture this formidable rebel.

This last country was his own land, from which, as he had already been sentenced, he could not even hope for the mockery of a trial. What he expected was an execution, this time stayed by no reprieve. Instead, he was condemned to the exquisite psychological torture of solitary confinement in the Peter and Paul fortress and the even more rigorous prison of Schüsselburg, where the enemies of the Tsar lived and died in solitary confinement for many generations of revolutionaries. He remained in these prisons some six years, during which he suffered terribly from his privations and became toothless and prematurely aged from the ravages of scurvy. He began to lose all hope of ever leaving his prison to rejoin the struggle for human liberty, which, even in his greatest despair remained always in his thoughts. In 1857, however he was released from his cell and sent to Siberia for a life's exile. He stayed there for four years, and then staged a sensational escape and returned, via Japan and the United States, to London, where his friends Ogarev and Herzen were living. Bakunin returned to freedom with a spirit, unlike his body, preserved in all its integrity and enthusiasm throughout the years of his long suffering.

Life on Paddington Green and the editing of a liberal paper with Herzen soon tired him, and he wished to resume the revolutionary struggle, which had been torn from his hands in Dresden twelve years before. When the Polish insurrection started in 1863 he endeavoured to assist the insurgents, but again the Polish leaders would have nothing to do with him, this time because his dream of a great federation of liberated Slavs ran counter to their own imperialist aspirations and his idea of a peasant uprising was diametrically opposed to their plan of an aristocratic class government. Bakunin would not accept their rebuffs, and went to Stockholm to join an expedition of Poles who planned to land in Lithuania. The project never matured, and Bakunin's experiences with the Poles finally taught him that the social revolution could not be achieved through nationalist movements. Thenceforward he moved rapidly towards the idea of an international revolutionary movement based on the working class.

During the ensuing years he lived mostly in Italy, where he gained a number of followers, and founded his first organisation dedicated to the achievement of an anarchist revolution, the secret International Brotherhood. This was followed by his joining the League for Peace and Freedom, an organisation of liberals with a vaguely pacifistic policy which held its first congress at Geneva in that year and which Bakunin hoped to influence with his revolutionary ideas.

Bakunin's attendance at the conference was the first public appearance of this now famous conspirator and revolutionary, and the aura attached to his name, as the hero of so many revolutions, of so many prisons, and of the sensational escape from Siberia, combined with his gigantic presence to rouse the greatest enthusiasm. One of those present wrote "As he walked up the steps to the platform... a great cry of 'Bakunin' went up. Garibaldi, who was in the chair, arose

and went forward to embrace him. Many opponents of Bakunin's were present, but it seemed as if the applause would never end."

At first Bakunin had high hopes of the League for Peace and Freedom. He was elected to the Central Committee of the League, and gained a small following therein including the brothers Elisée and Elie Reclus, who were later to become famous in the anarchist movement. But very soon he realised the essentially bourgeois nature of the League as a whole and, although he attempted some kind of fusion between it and the International, which he joined in 1868, he found that the membership of the League could not keep pace with his own development. He had now come into the open as a declared enemy of capitalism, and demanded the expropriation of the land and means of production, which would be worked collectively by workers' associations. At the Second Congress of the League he put forward proposals for the expropriation of wealth and the establishment of a classless society. When, as he had expected, these proposals were rejected, he left the League with his few followers, and turned to the International as the instrument of his revolutionary activity.

While he was still a member of the League for Peace and Freedom, Bakunin had founded his International Alliance of Social Democracy, whose nucleus was the membership of the old secret International Brotherhood and which grew to a strength of some thousands among the revolutionaries of Italy and Spain, and the Russian exiles in Switzerland. Bakunin sought for the admission of the Alliance as a whole into the International, but the General Council, led by Marx who was already regarding Bakunin as a menace to his own authority, rejected this proposal, and Bakunin had to dissolve the Alliance and allow its various sections to enter the International as separate branches.

Through the entry of Bakunin the International grew numerically, for he gained many members in Italy and Spain, where its influence had previously been negligible. But to Marx his value as an ally was more than counter-balanced by his danger as a potential rival. For Bakunin entered the International not as a member of the rank and file, but as the representative and mouthpiece of a large section of libertarian opinion. Not only did he retain his influence over the Italian and Spanish members, but he also gained the adherence of the internationalists in French Switzerland and also of many workers in France, notably in the Jura, Lyons and the Midi, and in Belgium.

The struggle between Bakunin and Marx did not, however, lie entirely or even primarily in the matter of personal influence or in the incompatibility of their widely differing personalities. There was also a deep and fundamental cleavage between their doctrines on the vital question of authority and the state. Bakunin expressed this difference clearly when he said:

"I am not a Communist because Communism unites all the forces of society in the state and becomes absorbed in it, because it inevitably leads to the concentration of all property in the hands of the state, while I seek the abolition of the state — the complete elimination of the principle of authority and governmental guardianship, which, under the pretence of making men moral and civilising them, has up to now always enslaved, oppressed, exploited and ruined them."

The prophetic truth of these words is borne out by a consideration of the achievements of Marxist Communism as they exist in Russia today.

The first open battle between the Marxists and the Bakuninists took place at the Basle conference of 1869, which Bakunin attended in person, Marx only by proxy. Bakunin submitted a

proposal for the abolition of the right of inheritance. This was opposed by the Marxists and defeated by a narrow margin. A counter proposal by the Marxists for a programme of increased death duties was also rejected by a narrow majority. The situation was somewhat ridiculous, but the fact that a resolution of the Marx-controlled General Council had been defeated for the first time, showed that the influence of Marx was at last challenged. Marx's chief lieutenant, the German tailor Eccarius, went away exclaiming "Marx will be very displeased!"

During the period immediately following the Basle conference both groups manoeuvred for influence and position. Marx and his followers, particularly the malicious Utin, who later made his peace with the Tsar, spread as many calumnies as they could invent regarding Bakunin. But these failed to influence any of the supporters of Bakunin and in the eyes of neutrals tended to discredit the Marxists themselves rather than their opponents.

The struggle was interrupted by the Franco-Prussian war and the revolution in France that deposed Napoleon III. Bakunin, scenting revolution from his retreat in Locarno, set off to Lyons where his followers were numerous, and late in September the anarchists of this city set up a Committee for the Salvation of France, which immediately declared the abolition of the State. There was a bloodless rising in Lyons, and for a short time the city was in the hands of the insurrectionaries. Preparations, however, had been inadequate, and certain members of the Committee turned out to be police, or Bonapartist agents. A body of the National Guard soon put an end to this very minor revolution, and Bakunin was captured and imprisoned. He was, however, rescued by his followers, and, after remaining in hiding for a time, escaped from France, without his beard and disguised in blue spectacles.

The struggle within the International continued in minor skirmishes until 1872, when Marx, alarmed at the progressive increase of Bakunin's influence and embarrassed by discontent among his English followers, decided to precipitate a showdown. In September of that year he called a conference of the International at The Hague. The Bakuninists protested that Switzerland would be a better locale, as most of their delegates had to travel from Mediterranean countries and some, including Bakunin, would be unable to reach The Hague in time as they could not enter the intervening countries. The General Council, however, refused to alter its proclamation, and the Italian anarchists then took the unfortunate step of boycotting the conference and thus reducing considerably the anarchist forces.

At the conference itself, the General Council admitted the falseness of its own position by refusing to allow voting on the basis of numerical strength. Marx had made his plans carefully, and the meeting was packed with his supporters, returned by fictitious branches of the International and by sections specially formed for the purpose of returning delegates.

Marx first surprised the Conference by demanding a transference of the General Council from London to New York, and sweeping extensions of its powers. This he realised would weaken the International, but he felt a move of such a nature would release it from the European Scylla and Charybdis of anarchism on the one side and English trade unionism on the other. The motions were carried by a narrow margin, after an extremely acrimonious debate. At this point the French Blanquist delegates resigned in a body.

In the political debate that followed, the anarchist programme was defeated and the General Council's proposal for a programme of political action was accepted. The remaining item on the agenda was the expulsion of Bakunin and his associate Guillaume on the ground that they had attempted to maintain a separate organisation within the International. The decision for expulsion was only obtained after Marx had appealed to the fundamentally bourgeois standards

of the delegates by raking up Netchaieff's blackmailing letter to Lioubavine in connection with Bakunin's translation of *Das Kapital* into Russian. There was no real evidence that Bakunin had any hand in this letter, but Marx succeeded in so misrepresenting the case that the conference decided to expel Bakunin and Guillaume.

The anarchists refused to recognise the decisions at The Hague and the federations of the Latin countries seceded and held a congress at St. Imier, in the Jura, where they agreed on an anarchist programme. The anarchist section of the International continued until 1878, by which time the increasing reaction in the Latin Countries made it difficult for open mass movements to continue. The Marxist rump, split by dissensions in its new home in America, had already expired in 1874, killed by its leader's megalomaniac desire for complete domination of the working class movement.

The years following the break-up of the International were, for Bakunin, dominated by misfortune and disillusion with the results of his efforts. His health began to break, and he was forced to live in poverty and often almost in starvation. He quarrelled with most of his friends and disciples, who could not understand his natural profligacy with money whenever it came into his hands and the way in which he would spend the money of others as if it were his own.

In 1873 the Spanish Revolution occurred, and Bakunin, in spite of his illness, desired to go there to fight what he felt must be his last struggle at the barricades. But he was penniless, and his friend Cafiero, who had been subsidising him, refused to find the money for his venture.

The following year, 1874, a rising in Bologna was planned by the Italian anarchists, and Bakunin decided to take part in it. His health had now completely broken down, he had just quarrelled with his closest friends and disciples, Guillaume, Sazhin and Cafiero, and he had little faith in the prospects of the rising. But he realised his death was near, and wished to end fighting in the streets as he had fought in Dresden a quarter of a century ago. He wrote a farewell letter to his friends in Switzerland, which ended on the note of resignation. "And now, my friends, it only remains for me to die. Adieu!"

The Bologna rising however was completely abortive and Bakunin had to return to Switzerland, this time disguised as an aged priest. It was the last of his revolutionary efforts and the remaining two years of his life were spent in abject poverty and declining strength. He despaired of the revolution taking place until the masses were impregnated with revolutionary feeling, and realised that the growing reaction in Europe made that more and more difficult. But he saw intuitively the shape of the future when he wrote to Elisée Reclus, "There remains another hope, the world war. Sooner or later these enormous military states will have to destroy and devour each other. But what an outlook!" He died on July 1st, 1876, in the hospital at Berne, and was buried quietly in that city.

Bakunin was essentially a revolutionary of the deed, a fighter at the barricades, an eloquent and inspiring orator. As a hearer said of him on one occasion, "The man was a born speaker, made for the revolution. The revolution was his natural being. His speech made a tremendous impression."

Perhaps it was because he was so much the man for action, for the impulsive deed, the impromptu appeal to the feelings of Men, that his best expositions of ideas are found in documents of such immediate importance as articles, speeches and memoranda to conferences, rather than in his fragmentary theoretical works.

Bakunin's teachings differed from those of his early master, Proudhon, on two principle points. Firstly, he realised that with the development of large-scale industry, Proudhon's idea of a soci-

ety of small proprietors owning their own means of production and exchanging their products through exchange banks, was not longer practicable. He therefore envisaged what he called collective production under which the means of production would be owned and worked collectively by co-operative associations of workers.

The means of production were thus owned in common, but Bakunin did not reach the later stage of common ownership of the products of labour, advocated by Kropotkin a few years later, and in his theory the producer would be entitled to the value of the product of his individual labour.

The second point on which he differed from Proudhon was that he believed the State could not be abolished by reformist methods or by the power of example, and therefore proclaimed the necessity of revolution for “the destruction of all institutions of inequality, and the establishment of social and economic equality”. He did not, however, advocate the political revolution of Jacobins and Marxists, carried out by organised and disciplined parties. “Revolutions are never made,” he declared, “either by individuals or by secret societies. They come automatically, in a measure; the power of things, the current of events and facts, produces them. They are long preparing in the depth of the obscure consciousness of the masses — then they break out suddenly, not seldom on apparently slight occasion.” He spoke as an expert in revolution.

Chapter 6 Peter Kropotkin and Anarchist Communism

IT WAS AMONG the generation of anarchists following Bakunin that anarchism received the scientific and sociological basis that up to then it had in a measure lacked. The philosophical reasoning of a Godwin, the intuitive social insight of a Bakunin had proved the reasonableness and justice of anarchism; it remained for men like Kropotkin and the brothers Reclus, who had already made for themselves considerable names as scientific writers, to bring to a study of economic and social problems the knowledge they had gained in the pursuit of natural studies and prove the scientific validity of anarchism as a social method. Of these the most influential and competent was Kropotkin. If Bakunin was the great revolutionary hero and orator of anarchism, Kropotkin was its great savant.

Peter Kropotkin was born in 1842, the year of Bakunin's conversion to revolutionary beliefs. He came of the highest stratum of the Russian nobility, and was a prince by right of birth. Like Bakunin, he was educated for a commission in the Tsarist army, and served in the early 1860's as an officer in a Cossack regiment stationed on the Amur river, whence Bakunin had just previously staged his sensational escape from Siberian exile. Later he travelled extensively on scientific expeditions in Siberia and Northern Manchuria, and his observations of natural history and primitive society during this period were to have a profound influence on his scientific and sociological ideas of later years. In 1867 he returned to St. Petersburg and spent four years there in the study of mathematics. He also began to attain an international reputation as a geographer, and was offered — but rejected — the Secretaryship of the St. Petersburg Geographical Society, under whose commission he made in 1871 a journey of exploration into the ice fields of Finland and Sweden.

During his various geographical journeys into the remoter parts of Russia, Kropotkin was deeply impressed by the miserable conditions under which the poorer classes lived. He presented reports on the subject to various government departments, but his representations failed to break down their apathy towards the misery of the peasants and the landless poor. It was this lack of elementary humanity in the governmental system of Tsarist Russia that drove Kropotkin steadily towards the realisation of the necessity for a social revolution.

He became an active revolutionary in 1872. In that year he made a journey to Western Europe and stayed some time in Belgium and Switzerland. There he made contact with revolutionary movements and became converted to anarchism during a visit to the militant watchmakers of the Jura. In Switzerland he joined the International, which in that region was under the influence of the Bakuninists. On his return to Russia in the same year, he took up secret revolutionary activity, and joined Tschaikowsky's conspiratorial group. The activities of the group were discovered by the Okhrana in 1874, and for his participation Kropotkin was imprisoned in the Peter and Paul Fortress, the celebrated political prison in which Bakunin, Netchaieff and many other famous revolutionaries were incarcerated before the Revolution and in which thousands of the intelli-

gentsia were murdered by the Bolsheviks after October 1917. From this terrible prison Kropotkin was one of the very few men ever to escape, which he did in 1876, after two years of confinement.

He went first to England, and in the following year proceeded to Switzerland. There he stayed until 1881, when he was expelled for his revolutionary activities. For a while he lived alternately in France and England, until, in 1882, he was sentenced in Paris to a second term of imprisonment, this time for five years, for membership of a prohibited association (the reformed International Working Men's Association). His experiences of this period and of his earlier imprisonment in Russia are described in his vividly written book, *In Russian and French Prisons*.

He was pardoned by the French authorities, and came to England, where he lived for the next thirty years, most of which he devoted to writing. During this period he participated in English anarchist groups, helped to run the anarchist paper *Freedom*, and was one of the founders of the *Freedom Press*. It was in this relatively quiet period of his life that most of his more important books were composed.

During the great war of 1914–18 Kropotkin gave his support to the Allies, contending that they were a lesser evil than the Central European powers and that therefore it was desirable that they should win rather than that Europe should be subjected to a German imperial hegemony. There has been much controversy concerning Kropotkin's attitude on this occasion, and from an anarchist point of view there is no doubt that he diverged from the true revolutionary attitude, which would have been (as it is to-day) to support none of the warring states and to attempt to bring about revolution in all of them, but particularly in the revolutionary's own country. All that can be said in defence of Kropotkin in this unfortunate matter is that at the time he was already an old and very sick man, almost worn out by a life of suffering and singularly vigorous activity. His attitude also seems to have been affected by that hatred of the German Empire and of German institutions in general which characterised so many of the Russian revolutionaries of his generation.

After the revolution of February 1917 in Russia, Kropotkin returned and gave it his support. When the Bolsheviks seized power at the end of the year, Kropotkin saw the true nature of their actions and purpose. He opposed their rule and their myth of the dictatorship of the proletariat, and denounced their methods of oppression and persecution. The last four years of his life were spent in poverty and as much obscurity as his enemies could induce. In many small ways the authorities made his life unpleasant; but they did not dare to use their ordinary Cheka methods against so great and famous a revolutionary. He died in 1921. The anarchists of Moscow organised his funeral, refusing to accept assistance from the Government, and tens of thousands of workers, intellectuals and students followed the cortege in demonstration of their solidarity with his opposition to the Communist dictatorship. True to character, the Bolsheviks, having promised to release all the many anarchist political prisoners for the funeral, released only a few of them for one day only.

Kropotkin was the principal advocate of communist anarchism, which differed from the collectivism of Bakunin in that not only the means of production, but also the products of labour would be held in common and each individual producer would receive from the common pool to the extent of his needs. This he regarded as more just and practicable, as under modern methods of production it would be very difficult to assess with any exactitude the value of individual labour, and as, with the technical resources of modern science and industry, an adequate supply of goods could be made available to give every person in society a comparatively generous share.

“The Anarchists cannot consider, like the Collectivists, that a remuneration which would be proportionate to the hours of labour spent by each person in the production of riches may be an ideal, or even an approach to an ideal, society. Without entering here into a discussion as to how far the exchange value of each merchandise is really measured now by the amount of labour necessary for its production, we must say that the Collectivist ideal seems to us merely unrealisable in a society that has been brought to consider the necessities for production as common property. Such a society would be compelled to abandon the wage system altogether. It appears impossible that the mitigated Individualism of the Collectivist school could co-exist with the partial Communism implied by holding land and machinery in common-unless imposed by a powerful government. The present wage system has grown up from the appropriation of the necessities for production by the few; it was a necessary condition for the growth of the present capitalist production; and it cannot outlive it, even if an attempt be made to pay the worker the full value of his produce; and hours of labour cheques be substituted for money. Common possession of the necessities for production implies the common enjoyment of the fruits of the common production; and we consider that an equitable organisation of society can only rise when every wage system is abandoned, and when everybody, contributing for the common wellbeing to the full extent of his capacities, shall enjoy also from the common stock of society to the fullest extent of his needs.”

Thus Kropotkin envisaged a distribution of consumption goods based not on service but on need. He successfully refuted the customary objection that under such a system it would be difficult to get anybody to work by showing that work is natural to man and that it is not work but overwork which men dislike.

“Overwork is repulsive to human nature-not work. Overwork for supplying the few with luxury – not work for the well being of all. Work, labour, is a physiological necessity, a necessity of spending accumulated bodily energy, a necessity that is health and life itself. If so many branches of useful work are so reluctantly done now, it is merely because they mean overwork, or they are improperly organised. But we know that four hours of useful work every day would be more than sufficient for supplying everybody with the comfort of a moderately well-to-do middle-class house, if we all gave ourselves to productive work, and if we did not waste our productive powers as we do waste them now. As to the childish question, repeated for fifty years: ‘Who would do disagreeable work?’ frankly I regret that none of our savants here have ever been brought to do it, be it for only one day in his life. If there is still work which is really disagreeable in itself, it is only because our scientific men have never cared to consider the means of rendering it less so: they have always known that there were plenty of starving men who would do it for a few pence a day.”

Kropotkin’s ideas of the possibility of a reduction of necessary work and a vast increase in production, both of food and industrial products, were not based on speculation merely. His scientific training had taught him the necessity of supporting his theories by a background of facts, and he went thoroughly into the question of the productivity, both of the soil and of industry, which could be obtained by an application of the scientific and technical knowledge then available. The results of his researches and the conclusions he attained from them are embodied in his important books, *Fields; Factories and Workshops*, *The Conquest of Bread*, and *Modern Science and Anarchism*.

His arguments in the matter of food production are of particular importance. Almost alone among revolutionary-theorists, he realised that bread is essential to the maintenance of a revolu-

tion, that without bread the revolution would be doomed from the outset. He therefore set out to study intensive methods of farming, and proved that, under a system not tied by the economic necessities of imperialist capitalism, it would be possible to grow on a country the size of England more than enough food to maintain the present population.

Kropotkin realised the unhealthiness of the excessive division of labour, and of a life spent in the performance of a single monotonous function. He saw the physical and mental evils of the mass life of factories and towns, of a life completely severed from nature and deprived of a healthy balance of work and leisure. He envisaged the gradual break-up of the large urban and industrial centres, and the decentralisation of industry into small factories and workshops set in the agricultural countryside, which would enable the workers to alternate land work with factory work and so preserve a better balance of physical and mental health. Thus he foresaw the elimination of both the factory system and the proletariat as we know it.

“When we thus revert from the scholastics of our text-books, and examine human nature as a whole, we soon discover that, while all the benefits of a temporary division of labour must be maintained, it is high time to claim those of the integration of labour. Political economy has hitherto insisted chiefly on division. We proclaim integration; and we maintain that the ideal of society is a society of integrated, combined labour. A society where each individual is a producer of both manual and intellectual work; where each able-bodied human being is a worker, and where each worker works both in the field and the industrial workshop; where every aggregation of individuals, large enough to dispose of a certain variety of natural resources — it may be a nation or rather a region — produces and itself consumes most of its own agricultural and manufactured produce.”

But important as Kropotkin may have been as the chief protagonist of anarchist communism and as demonstrator of the possibility, by the application of modern scientific methods, of attaining those increases in production and leisure which are essential in a free society, his most valuable contribution to anarchist thought was the scientific basis he gave to the anarchist theory of society in his sociological work *Mutual Aid*, a book which has since become one of the classic works on the nature of society.

In *Mutual Aid* Kropotkin attacked the neo-Malthusian doctrines of the survival of the fittest, which were preached by Huxley and his followers as providing the reasons for both animal and human evolution and the prime moving forces in the whole of the natural world. These theories had a great influence on many ‘advanced’ political thinkers of the time, and have persisted to this day among the Marxists; a fact which gives Communist pseudo-philosophy its peculiarly musty flavour of nineteenth century materialism. The slogan of the struggle for existence became the excuse for a new and more evil Machiavellianism that justified any method to gain the ends of the party that desired power — hence the steady deterioration of political morals since the middle of the nineteenth century. This idea was also used to justify any kind of repressive government, on the argument that only the class or nation could survive which was able most ruthlessly to gain and maintain power over the rest.

Kropotkin set out to disprove these ideas, and showed that, far from the struggle for existence being the dominant feature of animal life, the weaker species only survived because they lived in

groups and practiced certain forms of co-operation in satisfying the vital needs of life. Furthermore, these social species, although individually weaker than such solitary beasts as the larger carnivores, had a better chance of survival and of evolution to a higher form. While Kropotkin did not deny that there does indeed exist in nature a struggle for existence, he thought it was balanced by the contrary principle of mutual aid, and that in evolution, at least in the evolution of the higher animals; mutual aid was the more important factor. Kropotkin showed, by a study of the information then available concerning human history, that there was no evidence of man's existence at any time as other than a social animal, and that there was every reason to suppose he entered the evolutionary vista as a social species descended from one of the gregarious primates. He went on to demonstrate how this element of co-operation lay at the base of all human societies, and how in periods when men's activities were governed by mutual aid and not by authority the progress of culture and material well-being was most considerable. Human evolution has been such that in a natural state of existence, i.e. without the repression of government or dogma, man would be led by a feeling of personal responsibility and would co-operate willingly with his fellows for the good of society. This fundamental mutuality among men lies at the base of every creed of social ethics, and if it did not condition almost every act of a man's common life, the most austere of tyrannies could not prevent the disintegration of human social patterns.

In other works Kropotkin, like his friend Elisée Reclus, related the progress of human society to the law of evolution, and contended that the social revolution was a natural part of the evolutionary process. 'Order is the free equilibrium of all forces that operate on the same point; if any of these forces are interfered with in their operation by a human will, they operate none the less, but their effects accumulate till some day they break the artificial dam and provoke a revolution... Evolution never advances so slowly and evenly as has been asserted. Evolution and revolution alternate, and the revolutions — that is, the times of accelerated evolution — belong to the unity of nature just as much as do the times in which evolution takes place more slowly.'

The revolution was only a stage in evolution, not the end of evolution, for change is the law of the natural world. 'The idea hitherto prevalent, that everything in nature stands fast, is fallen, destroyed, annihilated. Everything in nature changes; nothing remains; neither the rock that appears to us to be immovable and the continent that we call terra firma, nor the inhabitants, their customs, habits and thoughts. All that we see about us is a transitory phenomenon, and must change, because motionlessness would be death.'

So human development continued beyond the revolution, beyond the breakdown of the state and the establishment of a society of mutual co-operation. In the millennium men would not just relax into a stasis of happy existence. On the contrary, human social and individual evolution, freed of repressive influences, would progress with an energy unparalleled in history, and the achievements of men would establish forms of society beyond the imagination of Kropotkin or any of his contemporaries. The revolution would merely release the natural process of human and social evolution.

In addition to his original contributions to anarchist thought, Kropotkin, in his numerous works, clarified and expanded the general theory of anarchism. In such works as his essay on *The State* he gave a historical backing to the anarchist denial of government, and in other works, such as *The French Revolution* he showed that a political revolution which replaced one government by another would end not in revolution but in reaction, a contention which has been proved by many examples in our own time.

Kropotkin, as the scientific interpreter of anarchism, has been unsurpassed since his day, and his main contentions have been doubly proved by the widening of scientific knowledge and the process of social evolution during the last fifty years.

Chapter 7 The Growth of the Anarchist Movement

THE BEGINNING OF the anarchist movement was Bakunin's secret International Brotherhood, which he founded in Italy in 1864. The Brotherhood consisted mostly of his Italian followers, with a few Poles, Russians, French and Spaniards. It was intended as a closely-knit organisation of conspirators who would initiate and lead the revolution, and it represented a period when Bakunin was still to an extent influenced by the methods, if not by the ideologies, of the national revolutionaries of his early days. (It resembled in some ways the Italian conspiratorial society of the early nineteenth century known as the Carbonari). In later years, as we have seen, Bakunin himself, in the light of his revolutionary experience, was to declare that revolutions can never be made by secret societies, but can spring only from the revolutionary urges of the people themselves.

Later, in 1868, Bakunin founded the International Alliance of Social Democracy, in which was merged the membership of the secret Brotherhood. The Alliance was an open organisation for furthering the aims of anarchism, which were expressed clearly in its programme, drawn up by Bakunin

“The Alliance declares itself atheist; it desires the definitive and entire abolition of classes, and the political equality and social equalisation of individuals of both sexes. It desires that the earth, the instruments of labour, like all other capital, becoming the collective property of society as a whole, shall be no longer able to be utilised except by the workers, that is to say, by agricultural and industrial associations. It recognises that all actually existing political and authoritarian States, reducing themselves more and more to the mere administrative functions of the public services in their respective countries, must disappear in the universal union of free associations, both agricultural and industrial.”

The Alliance rapidly gained several thousand members, mostly in Italy, Spain and France and among the Russian refugees in Switzerland. It was, as we have seen in the chapter on Bakunin, dissolved as a body in order that its constituent sections might join the First International, and for the next few years, until 1872; anarchist activities were mostly continued within the various sections of the International in the effort to further the aims of that body. Anarchist influence in the International increased rapidly in all the Latin countries, and particularly Spain, Italy, Belgium, the Jura districts of France and the French-speaking parts of Switzerland. When, in 1872, the irreconcilable ideological differences between anarchist and Marxist social philosophies came to a head at the Hague conference and Bakunin and Guillaume were expelled by a packed assembly on a framed-up charge presented by Marx, the anarchists denounced the Marxist sections of the International, and the Spanish, Italian and Swiss sections, together with a considerable body of

the French, Russian and Belgian membership, set up their own organisation and held the first congress at St. Imier immediately after the fraudulent Hague conference. The Anarchist International had in reality the better title to be called the true continuation of the first International, for the methods to which Marx had to resort to obtain Bakunin's expulsion proved, as Max Nomad has said, that the anarchists "were no longer a scheming minority but the actual majority within that organisation."

The International existed as an open body holding its public conferences, until 1878, when the reaction following the Paris Commune had reached such proportion's in the Latin countries that for a period of some years it had become virtually impossible to carry on open activities.

The Anarchist International was reorganised in London in 1881, largely on the initiative of Kropotkin. The conference at Geneva in 1882 adopted a manifesto that expresses in outline the policy maintained by the main stream of the anarchist movement since that day:

"Our ruler, is our enemy. We Anarchists, i.e., men without any rulers, fight against all those who have usurped any power, or who wish to usurp it. Our enemy is the owner who keeps the land for himself and makes the peasant work for his disadvantage. Our enemy is the manufacturer who fills his factory with wage-slaves; our enemy is the State, whether monarchical, oligarchical, or democratic, with its officials and staff of officers, magistrates, and police spies. Our enemy is every thought of authority, whether men call it God or devil, in whose name the priests have so long ruled honest people. Our enemy is the law, which always oppressed the weak by the strong, to the justification and apotheosis of crime. But if the landowners, the manufacturers, the heads of the State, the priests, and the law are our enemies, we are also theirs, and we boldly oppose them. We intend to reconquer the land and the factory from the landowner and the manufacturer; we mean to annihilate the State, under whatever name it may be concealed; and we mean to regain our freedom in spite of priest or law. According to our strength, we will work for the annihilation of all legal institutions, and we are in accord with everyone who defies the law by a revolutionary act. We despise all legal means because they are the negation of our rights; we do not want so-called universal suffrage, since we cannot get away from our own personal sovereignty, and cannot make ourselves accomplices in the crimes committed by our so-called representatives. Between us and all political parties, whether Conservatives or Moderates, whether they fight for freedom or recognise it by their admissions, a deep gulf is fixed. We wish to remain our own masters and he among us who strives to become a chief or a leader is a traitor to our cause. Of course we know that individual freedom cannot exist without a union with other free associates. We all live by the support one of another, that is the social life that has created us, that is the work of all that gives to each the consciousness of his rights and the power to defend them. Every social product is the work of the whole community to which all have claim in equal manner. For we are Communists, we recognise that unless patrimonial, communal, provincial and national limits are abolished, the work must be begun anew. It is ours to conquer and defend common property and to overthrow governments by whatever name they may be called."

From the time of the split in the International and the early 1890's, the tendency of the anarchists was to organise themselves into small autonomous groups for the purpose of conducting propaganda activities. This pattern of organisation was dictated at the time, to a great extent, by the persecution that anarchists suffered, particularly in Russia and Latin Europe; it has persisted in countries, such as England, where no large syndicalist movement has arisen to give a mass basis to anarchist activities.

During the 1870's and the 1880's there was a tendency among certain groups, particularly in Russia and the Latin countries, to supplement "propaganda of the word" by "propaganda of the deed", which consisted of terrorist acts against representatives of the state, capitalists and landlords. These acts were calculated to display in a spectacular form the anarchist hatred of authority and to bring to a symbolic reckoning the figureheads of tyranny. In Russia these terrorist acts were committed on a wide scale, by both the anarchists and the People's Will groups, but there was hardly a country in which leading figures of the state were not assassinated by anarchists. By the early years of the 1890's however, the propaganda value of these exploits began to appear problematical, and, except in Russia and Spain, the number of assassinations dwindled almost to nothing.

It was not merely the apparent ineffectiveness of terrorism in itself that precipitated a change in anarchist methods and organisation round about 1890. The principal reason was that with the rise of the syndicalist movement in Europe an opportunity came for anarchism to operate on a mass scale which had never before been possible, and the early years of the 1890's found the anarchists abandoning the struggle of small propaganda groups for the struggle to turn the new syndicates into effective instruments for the social revolution. This is described in the following chapter, after which I shall trace the development of anarchism in three countries America, Spain and Russia — in whose social life it has been a particularly significant influence.

Chapter 8 Anarcho-Syndicalism

THE FOUNDERS OF Anarchism, in rejecting the state, postulated a society that would be based on the satisfaction of the economic needs of man by means of voluntary functional organisations of the workers, acting in free co-operation. The necessity remained for the evolution of a method by which this could be attained and of a revolutionary tactic that could work through the workers' economic life under capitalism towards the overthrow of the state. This revolutionary method and tactic were to appear in syndicalism, which represents great strategy of the social revolution, the manifestation in concrete, immediate terms of the theory of anarchism. The development of syndicalism is closely associated with that of anarchism, springing from the same rooted hatred of external authority and the realisation that in their economic aspect the state and capitalism are most vulnerable.

Syndicalism might be described as an extension to the whole field of economic activity of the idea of producers' co-operation, by which men, instead of being organised downwards in political forms such as the state, would be organised upwards in economic or functional forms, such as the syndicate. The syndicate would be built up within the state society, and would become both the means of struggle for the change in society; the workers would control and work by free consent the various industries within the community. As the basis of society would be economic (concerned with 'administering things' instead of 'governing men') these syndicates, with their local and national federations would be the basic forms of voluntary social organisation.

Syndicalism favours a change in society, not through parliamentary means or a political revolution which would merely change one government for another, but by the direct economic action of the workers, expressed in such methods as the boycott, sabotage, ca'canny, the strike, above all the General Strike, and aiming at the true revolution and the abolition of property and the state.

Within the present system, syndicalism differs from ordinary trade unionism in that it has no allegiance with reformist politics and is uncompromising in its attitude to capitalism. It does not seek, by means of compromise, to get the best possible deal for the workers under capitalism. Syndicalists realise that the workers can gain no permanent amelioration of conditions under an exploiting system, and they are therefore entirely revolutionary in their aims. They maintain the day-to-day struggle for better conditions, but regard this primarily as a tactic for embarrassing their enemies and preparing the workers for the revolutionary struggle which is the only means of ending government and exploitation.

For this reason, the syndicalists in their organisations do not adopt the irrelevant functions of modern trade unions. They are not interested in friendly societies or coffin clubs. For them the liberation of the workers from the chains of property and the state is of paramount importance. Nor do they adopt the separatist tendencies of trade unions, which support the interests of one section of the workers in an industry, one craft or function, and so erect barriers among the workers and, by their own divisions, present a scattered front to their enemies. Syndicalists hold that the workers should be organised according to industry, not according to craft, and that the

workers in each industry should form a single syndicate and so present one front of attack against their masters.

The Syndicalists, realising the corrupting nature of power wherever it may arise, reject the centralist and authoritarian structure of the trade union. Instead, they adopt a federal organisation, in which local units are autonomous and carry out actions without reference to any central executive authority. In this way greater elasticity and speed of action is gained and there is no chance of the betrayal of the workers by a governing bureaucracy. Affairs concerning the syndicate as a whole are conducted by delegates, who are allowed only to voice the will of the workers who elected them, and there is a minimum of officials elected for short periods, after which they return to bench or field, and subject to recall if their actions dissatisfy the workers. In this way the rise of a bureaucracy divorced from the workers is avoided and the revolutionary nature of the syndicate preserved.

Just as in England the anarchist theory appeared in the work of Godwin several decades before the development of continental anarchism, so there arose in England the first manifestation of syndicalism, in the early revolutionary trades unions which grew under the influence of Robert Owen, the disciple of Godwin, in the early part of the nineteenth century. The most important of these unions was the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union.

During the latter part of 1833, Owen was working towards revolutionary organisation of the workers, and at a meeting of his followers in October he declared: "It is intended that national arrangements shall be formed to include all the working classes in the great organisation, and that each department shall become acquainted with what is going on in other departments; that all individual competition is to cease; that all manufactures are to be carried on by 'National Companies'." (In case "National Companies" should be taken to mean "nationalisation" it is necessary to explain that Owen meant organisations operated by the workers, and advocated no kind of state control.)

The Grand National Consolidated was founded in January 1834, in succession to the Society for National Regeneration, which had advocated direct action for the eight-hour day and other reforms. In some ways it resembled the modern trade union, e.g., in the centralisation of control, by which no strike for an advance in wages could take place without the consent of the Executive Council. Strikes against reductions could be declared by the local bodies. It also resembled the trade union in instituting funds for sick benefit and funeral expenses. Its difference from the trade union is shown in the celebrated Rule 46:

"That although the design of the Union is, in the first instance, to raise the wages of the workmen, or prevent any further reduction therein, and to diminish the hours of labour, the great and ultimate object of it must be to establish the paramount rights of Industry and Humanity, by instituting such measures as shall effectually prevent the ignorant, idle and useless part of society from having that undue control over the fruit of our toil, which through the agency of a vicious money system, they at present possess: and that consequently, the Unionists should lose no opportunity of mutually encouraging and assisting each other in bringing about A DIFFERENT ORDER OF THINGS, in which the really useful and intelligent part of society only shall have the direction of its affairs, and in which well-directed industry and virtue shall meet their just distinction and reward, and vicious idleness its merited contempt and destitution."

It is unnecessary to emphasise the similarity between syndicalism and the ideas expressed both in this declaration and in the various pronouncements of Owen. Nor did these statements constitute mere lip service to an ideal. Owen and the more responsible leaders believed firmly in the necessity for a revolutionary change. They also had an optimistic belief that this change could come “suddenly upon society like a thief in the night,” by the application of the millennial general strike. But they all underestimated the staying power of their enemies, and the Union spent itself in local strikes before it could attempt the great manoeuvre for the social revolution.

The early success of the Union was phenomenal and demonstrates the extent of revolutionary feeling at that time. Very soon its membership had reached half a million, and extended to many trades in which there had been no previous organisation — notably the agricultural labourers who produced its most famous heroes, the Tolpuddle Martyrs.

The Grand National fell because it was built on an easy optimism; both among leaders and the rank and file. All imagined capitalism would fall like the walls of Jericho at the first blast of the Owenite trumpets. They made little use of their opportunities, and there is no evidence that they attempted to make the great disputes of 1834 the basis for any wide revolutionary movement. They contemplated, setting up co-operative workshops for strikers and unemployed, but apparently had not thought of the seizure of the factories by stay-in strikes. Their ideas of direct action were rudimentary to a degree. Nor, in that interim between agricultural and industrial economy, before society had become reliant on certain forms of transport and power, could a general strike have had any success unless it had included the majority of agricultural workers and the transport workers, who seem at that time to have been little organised. For the time being the attentions of the workers were diverted to the political movement of Chartism and when the trades unions revived it was in the reformist character they possess today. Large-scale revolutionary unionism disappeared from Europe for some fifty years.

It appeared again when syndicalism grew out of the peculiar circumstances in which the French trade union movement arose during the 1880's. Throughout the early part of the nineteenth century, since the veto imposed by the ‘revolutionary’ Constituent Assembly in 1790, trade unions had been forbidden in France, because even the Jacobins could not bring themselves to admit the right of any free association to infringe on the prerogative of the divine state. In 1864, the Emperor Napoleon III, who had ingenious ideas of ruling by division, attempted to play the working class malcontents against the bourgeoisie by granting in principle the right of workmen to form trades unions. His edict remained a dead letter, and the legal persecution of the unions continued until, by a law passed in 1884, the Third Republic granted the right to form associations, for the *defence of economic interests only*.

The unions allowed by this act arose from a working class already impregnated with the revolutionary virus of the French nineteenth century. Many of the founders had fought at the barricades of the Commune and had maintained the underground struggle during the bitter years of tyranny under the Thiers administration. Moreover, political currents in France at the end of the nineteenth century had such an extreme and stinking turgidity that men with any integrity were turning aside in distaste from politics. In such circumstances many of the men who found their way into the new syndicates were in reality more concerned with the social revolution than with the day-to-day demands of the workers. Prominent among these were many anarchists, such as Pouget, Pataud, Pelloutier, Delesalle and Yvetot, who saw in the syndicates the kind of economic organisations which had already been foreshadowed by the anarchist theorists and by means of which the libertarian society could be established through the direct action of the workers.

The C.G.T., the French trade union organisation, was never completely revolutionary. It did, indeed, maintain for long an independence of political parties which made it a good seedbed for revolutionary ideas, but at no time were more than half of its members imbued with revolutionary motives. The remainder were reformists who saw in unionism the apparatus for safeguarding class interests within existing society. Nevertheless, the revolutionary syndicalists were extremely influential within the movement. Pouget and Pataud were secretaries of the Confederation, and Pouget edited its newspaper, *La Voix du Peuple*. The anarchist carpenter Torteilier introduced the conception of the General Strike, and Yvetot and other anarchists were responsible for the assumption of an anti-militarist and anti-governmental attitude.

Much attention has been given, particularly outside France, to the ideas of Sorel and his followers. For the most part their influence has been exaggerated. It is true that in 1899 Sorel, a middle-class intellectual, filled with enthusiasm for the new movement he saw rising about him, founded a periodical called *Le Mouvement Socialiste*, in which he elaborated an intellectual attitude towards syndicalism. But he had no direct connection with the syndicalist movement, whose ideas were evolved independently of and, indeed, before the appearance of Sorel, and the real syndicalists certainly did not support his mythical interpretation of syndicalism.

In the early years of the twentieth century the idea of syndicalism gained strength. In France the workers showed their growing awareness by a series of great strikes. Syndicalism as a mass movement spread to the other Latin countries, particularly Italy and Spain. In Spain the C.N.T. was founded in 1911, and, in spite of savage persecution, grew rapidly until by 1919 it was the largest revolutionary syndicalist organisation in the world with more than a million members.

In England the Syndicalist Education League was founded by Tom Mann and Guy Bowman, and for a period both before and after the 1914–18 war, syndicalism, although it did not reach the proportions of a mass movement, was very influential among the militant workers, particularly in certain industrial areas such as the Clyde. And in 1905 was founded in America the Industrial Workers of the World, an organisation whose objects were closely similar to those of syndicalists. The anarchists, who had carried out such a bitter campaign in the America of the nineteenth century, joined the I.W.W., and eventually came to guide its policy, with the result that it was, and has remained the only important revolutionary organisation in the U.S.A. and Canada.

The world war marked a hiatus in the development of syndicalism but the arrival of peace in a Europe sick with discontent and misery gave it a great impetus in the Latin countries and strong movements arose in some South American countries and Scandinavia. In December 1922 an International Conference was held in Berlin, where all the important revolutionary syndicalist organisations were represented, with the exception of the Spanish C.N.T., then forced to work underground through the Rivera terror.

This conference made a declaration of the principles of Revolutionary Syndicalism which closely resemble the ideas propagated by the anarchist theorists, and demonstrate the organic connection which exists between the two doctrines and which led naturally to their fusion in the synthesis of Anarcho-Syndicalism.¹

These principles, which included a repudiation of the fallacious theory of the dictatorship of the proletariat, are not merely a statement of belief. They represent also the reaction of the syndicalist movement against the Communist regime in Russia. The Bolshevik leaders, recognising the influence of syndicalism in the Latin countries and America, had attempted to draw the

¹ See Appendix.

movement into the ambit of the Third International. Negotiations were actually started, for the syndicalists still believed the October revolution to be a real social revolution, but the visits of delegations to Russia brought about a realisation of the true nature of Bolshevism, and as Bakunin in the previous century had found himself impelled to oppose Marxist Communism, so were the international syndicalists obliged to denounce its more grandiose manifestation in the twentieth century.

The Berlin conference marked the climax of the international syndicalist movement. The Marxists had an advantage by mere fact of the existence in Russia of a state that paid lip service to workers' control, and were able to divert many of the militant workers from syndicalism, with the consequence that, except in Spain where the C.N.T. eventually reached a membership of 2½ millions, the syndicalist bodies, although large, remained minority bodies.

In consequence, when totalitarianism spread over Europe, the syndicalists were prevented from decisive and successful action by the fact that the majority of the workers followed either communists or parliamentary social democrats, both of whom retreated and betrayed their supporters when the ruling class attacked. In Italy, for instance, the *Unione Sindicale Italiana*, in co-operation with the *Unione Anarchica Italiana*, declared a General Strike in 1922 to avert the impending threat of Fascism, but in this they were opposed by the other working class organisations and the strike failed because of its fragmentary nature.

But before the twilight of the total state settled over the continent, anarcho-syndicalism had, in one country, an opportunity of proving itself in practice. That country was Spain, where the working class revolution that broke out to combat Franco's reactionary assault resulted in a period of workers' control in industry and agriculture, during which the practice of syndicalism proved itself more efficient in the administration of industrial affairs than any of the systems that preceded it. The revolution and the system of workers' control were eventually destroyed, not by Franco but by the republican government and its jackals, the Communists, but not before the syndicalists of Spain had proved decisively that the methods of free organisation advocated by syndicalists and anarchists will actually work more easily than those of government parties and will cause an immediate increase in industrial efficiency and in the welfare of the workers.

Syndicalism may appear much weaker today than it was twenty years ago, but its eclipse will be temporary. The present world crisis has shown the failure of every other social doctrine that has promised to lead the workers to the millennium of freedom, and when the needs of the people are once again asserted in a revolutionary period, anarcho-syndicalism will stand as the one social method by which the free, classless society can be attained, and the evils of government be abolished for ever.

Chapter 9 Anarchism in America

ANYONE WHO DESIRES to enter the United States of America must sign a statement certifying that he is not an anarchist. Similarly, it was under laws against "Criminal Anarchy" that the working class organisations were attacked in the early years of the present century. These facts reflect the fear and hatred of the American ruling class towards the anarchist movement, and are in fact a tribute to the lead that anarchists have taken in American revolutionary action since the early 1880's.

The Anarchism against which the great State persecutions were instituted was not the mild and idealistic individualist anarchism of the native social critics, such as Thoreau, Josiah Warren (who advocated a form of mutuality similar to that of Proudhon and attempted to set up libertarian phalansteries) and Benjamin Tucker, the gentleman anarchist who believed in property and said that he would support the vigilantes against strikers who "unanarchistically" attempted to apply coercion to their employers! Sincere as most of these men were in their own way, profound as some of them (such as Thoreau) were in certain directions of social criticism, their attack on the American state remained almost completely intellectual and individual, and none of them induced, or even attempted to induce a mass feeling against the State or to initiate the class struggle for the destruction of property and government. The ruling class had nothing to fear from them and they were content to regard them as the harmless Liberal gentlemen they really were.

It was from outside, carried in the minds of immigrants fleeing from the regimented lands of Europe, that the dreaded form of Anarchism, revolutionary anarchism, deriving from Bakunin, reached America and terrorised its rulers.

Anarchism appeared in America as a vital force among the working class in the early 1880's, and the most significant event in its early history was probably the arrival of Johann Most, a former German socialist deputy turned anarchist, who fled from an unfriendly Europe in 1882 and, having been welcomed by the German immigrant population, set up in New York his Anarchist weekly *Freiheit*. Most was an orator of great eloquence and an extremely capable and industrious journalist, and his influence was a great contributory factor in the spread of anarchist ideas during the ensuing years.

The new revolutionary doctrine appealed more to the immigrant worker, with his insecure social and economic status, than it did to the native craftsmen, who had already built up their unions and established some kind of security without being forced to adopt a revolutionary method. The great depressions of the 1870's hit the immigrants much harder than the native workers, and did much to radicalise the Central European elements of the population, particularly in such centres of industry as Chicago and Pittsburgh.

The moderate socialist groups began to lose their militant membership, and in 1881 the malcontents formed a Revolutionary Socialist Party, predominantly German in membership, 'but containing some native Americans, such as Albert Parsons, later to play a tragic part in anarchist history.

Most's arrival, the establishment of *Freiheit* in its new setting, and his propaganda tours of the large towns of the East and the Middle West, gave a great stimulus to the revolutionary movement; and in October, 1883, at a Conference held in Pittsburgh, an American federation of the International Working Men's Association was formed for the prosecution of the anarchist struggle. By 1885 this organisation had eighty constituent groups and eight thousand members; and produced a German daily paper and an English weekly (*Alarm* — edited by Parsons) in Chicago, and Most's weekly, *Freiheit*; in New York.

In 1886 the Anarchists were very active in the great American campaign for the eight-hour day. Most himself did not support the campaign, as he held that it had no revolutionary significance and would gain no important benefit for the workers. The Anarchists of Chicago, on the other hand, while agreeing with Most that the eighthour agitation in itself had no revolutionary importance, believed that it might commence a great rising of American labour against the State and capitalism. For this reason they devoted all their energies to the eight-hour campaign. Five of them gave their lives as well.

The campaign was inaugurated by a general strike which commenced on May 1st, 1886. On May 4th the police attacked a peaceable demonstration outside the McCormick Harvester factory and killed and wounded many workers. Two days later a meeting was held in -the Haymarket Square to protest against the outrage. The Mayor of Chicago, Harrison, was there and declared the assembly to be peaceable. He instructed the police captain, Bonfield, that no interference would be necessary. Bonfield, however, marched out 180 armed policemen to disperse the crowd. As the police were about to attack the demonstrators, a bomb was thrown by a person whose identity has remained unknown to this day. Six policemen died, and, in retaliation, the state demanded the prosecution of eight Anarchist militants, who were tried for inciting the perpetrator of the bombing. The eight men were condemned, and five of them — August Spies, George Engel, Adolph Fischer, Louis Lingg and Albert Parsons were judicially murdered for an act of terrorism in which they had no hand. Their innocence was proved seven years later by Governor John Altgeld. They had been tried by a packed jury and a partisan judge, in a court that allowed faked evidence for the prosecution and prevented the calling of witnesses for the defence. The crime for which they really died was their opposition to the state and capitalism in the name of the freedom of the workers.

This was the first great frame-up trial of the American class struggle. Many more were to occur in the bitter struggle of the ensuing decades, and some, such as the trials of Mooney and Billings in 1916 and Sacco and Vanzetti in 1927, with their savage sentences against innocent men for no greater crime than defiance of the state, aroused indignation in a world where the American ruling class had not yet been beaten at their own game by such apt pupils as Stalin and Hitler.

After the Chicago events there was a marked increase in the persecution of the revolutionary elements in the United States, and, under threats to deport foreign agitators, many of the immigrants became respectable and left the anarchist ranks. But the revolutionary work continued, and the anarchists took an active part in the workers' struggle for better conditions.

Most, becoming doubtful of the revolutionary effectiveness of the small, loose groups into which the anarchists of the time formed themselves, was advancing towards the conception of an anarchist mass movement, and anticipated syndicalism, by declaring that the trade unions might be used for revolutionary ends, and that, in the formation of the anarchist society, they might become the basis of economic organisation. In this contention he was bringing forward

ideas which Bakunin had voiced twenty years before and which, in the next century, were to assume concrete form in America itself.

Meanwhile in 1901, President McKinley was shot by Leon Czolgosz, a worker of Polish extraction who claimed to be an Anarchist, but whose connection with the movement remains extremely obscure. This act resulted in a renewed persecution of the Anarchist movement. The law was passed to forbid the immigration of people with anarchist sympathies, Most was sentenced to a year's imprisonment for a violent article that appeared in *Freiheit* on the day of the murder, and it seemed as if an attempt would be made to suppress all Anarchist activities. The threat did not, however, materialise, and the Anarchist Movement continued, until, after 1905, its militants began to devote their activities to the new revolutionary organisation of the Industrial Workers of the World.

The I.W.W., known popularly as the "Wobblies", was the American counterpart of the syndicalist movement that had already established itself in Europe. It did not call itself Syndicalist, but the Industrial Union of the I.W.W. was in form very similar to the European syndicates and was designed to perform the same revolutionary function. It arose out of the needs of the unorganised mass of unskilled workers for whom the old craft unionism of the A.F. of L. offered no means of obtaining better conditions. The I.W.W., with its organisation by industry as against organisation by craft, and its advocacy of revolutionary direct action and the general strike for the overthrow of the capitalist state, had much in common with the French syndicalist movement. It was, however, a much more assorted movement than the French and contained among its leading figures representatives of almost every American radical trend.

The I.W.W. conducted many important strikes in the United States, and took an important part in the struggle for civil liberties in the Western States. Its actions aroused the bitter hostility of the reactionary elements, and the persecutions of its members were extreme and violent. Some, like Joe Hill, author of "Pie in the Sky" were executed after frame-up trials, others were lynched or tarred and feathered by their enemies, and thousands went to prison in the violent attacks that followed their militant opposition to the 1914-1918 War.

After the war the I.W.W. followed the example of the syndicalists of Europe by refusing to co-operate with the Third International and since that time their organisation, somewhat diminished in size since the earlier days of the century, has remained the most important revolutionary organisation in the U.S.A. and has supported the militant action of the workers wherever it has arisen.

Chapter 10 The Russian Revolution and the Makhnovist Movement

ANARCHISM IS A doctrine which in the past was associated as intimately with Russia as Communism is today. Two great Anarchists, Bakunin and Kropotkin, were Russians, and in Russia itself the anarchist movement reached formidable proportions and, by its widespread practice of terrorist assassination, made itself feared by the oppressors of the Russian people.

Anarchism was preceded in Russia by the movement of Nihilism, which has often been confused with both Anarchism and the Social Revolutionary Movement, but was really an intellectual current among the younger intelligentsia and never manifested itself as a political movement. Turgenev's best novel, "Fathers and Sons" dealt with the nihilist view of life. The nihilists accepted no established principle, code or creed, and from this position they built up an opposition to any kind of authority and demanded freedom for the sovereign individual. Thus, philosophically, the ideas of the nihilists were closely linked with those of the anarchists, but their exponents never attempted to convert them into revolutionary terms.

Nevertheless, nihilism evoked a state of mind among the educated classes of Russia that made them begin to doubt the justice of the existing society, and in doing this it prepared for the great revolutionary movements that were to arise in Russia in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Anarchism was introduced into Russia in the early 1870's by the disciples of Bakunin, particularly Nechaieff and Sazhin, who worked under the name of Armand Ross. Nechaieff was a young fanatic whose ruthless and Jesuitical methods did little good to the revolutionary cause, but who was later, during his long incarceration in the dungeons of Petropavlovsk, to expiate his errors in the most heroic struggle, carried on for years, to assist the revolution from his prison cell. It was Nechaieff who originated the doctrine of "propaganda of the deed", according to which the revolutionaries should attract the attention and support of the people by means of spectacular assassinations of the oppressors. This theory was followed by many of the Russian anarchists, and also by the party of the People's Will, better known as the Social Revolutionaries, whose ideas, while not truly anarchist, were libertarian in tendency and much influenced by the teachings of Bakunin.

The Russian anarchists of the pre-Revolutionary years were men and women of extreme devotion, and many of them acted fearlessly in terroristic exploits which they knew could end only in detection and punishment by death or a long and terrible imprisonment. The names of some, like Sergei Stepniak, became famous in Western Europe, but the majority went to the scaffold, or the not less real death of prison, without any fame beyond their immediate circle of revolutionaries.

Apart from the anarchist movement proper, there were also the followers of Tolstoy, who preached a form of non-violent anarchism, and whose method of struggle, if not his anarchism, was later to be adopted by the Indian leader Gandhi. The Tolstoyans were particularly active in their opposition to militarism, and for this reason they, like certain pacifist religious sects such as the Doukhobors, suffered very greatly from the persecution of the Tsarist authorities, a

persecution which was later to be continued by the Bolsheviks.

During the first decade of the nineteenth century the empire of the Tsars began to show evident signs of disintegration. The war against Japan ended in military defeat and economic crisis, and in 1905 the Russian workers rose against their masters. In this rising the anarchists took an active part alongside the members of other revolutionary movements, and when the insurrection was broken and suppressed with characteristic brutality, they suffered bitterly for their participation.

The years that followed were rendered difficult by increased oppression. Many anarchists were murdered by the State; many more were incarcerated in the political dungeons of Petropavlovsk and Schlüsselburg or exiled to the cold desert of Siberia. But they maintained their struggle throughout the dark years and it was largely owing to the propaganda carried out by the anarchists among both the urban workers and the peasants that there arose the demands for workers' control of factories and land which were to assume such importance during the Revolution of 1917.

The revolution, which in the decade following 1905 seemed even further away than it had before the abortive rising, was precipitated by external events. The strain of the Japanese war had violently shaken the stability of Tsarism. The war of 1914 with its enormous slaughter of the badly armed Russian troops, its thorough disorganisation of the economic and social life of the country, and its defeats on a far greater scale than those inflicted by the Japanese, brought down the rotten fabric in ruins. Early in 1917 the soldiers, peasants and workers rose against their oppressors, and the old regime was swept away.

During the February revolution the Anarchists were released from prison and returned from Siberia to take their part in the building of the new world of the revolution. Many exiles, including Kropotkin, Bill Shatov and Fanya Baron, returned from Europe or America. During the early months of 1917 the Anarchists worked among the industrial workers and peasants, inciting them to take the factories and land into their own hands and to set up councils of workers that would take the place of the government. This propaganda found a wide response among the Russian people, and during the months up to October there was a great movement for the taking of the factories by the workers and the land by the peasants.

The Bolsheviks, realising that an open propaganda for their political object of seizing and operating the government in order to set up a Socialist state would make little appeal to the Russians, decided on the Machiavellian tactic of appearing to support the anarchist ideas, and, led by Lenin, put about as their own slogans the demands already made popular by the anarchists of "All Power to the Soviets" and "The factories to the workers and the land to the peasants". These slogans were in fact diametrically opposite to their own objects of state socialism and a party dictatorship, but without them, as Lenin realised, they would have had no chance at all of gaining the power they desired.

By the time of the October Revolution, the real social revolution had already been achieved in the expropriation of private owners and the taking of the means of production by the producers themselves. The October revolution merely gave governmental recognition to what had already been achieved. But it did this in order to destroy that achievement. The Bolsheviks climbed to power on the pretence of destroying the old State and establishing workers' control of production. In fact, they perpetuated the state as a means of consolidating their own power and began very soon to destroy the workers' control of production that already existed by bringing all the functions of society under the control of the centralised Bolshevik state. The methods of treach-

ery and coercion they used to this end are well known and, indeed, are admitted and condoned by their own partisans on the grounds of political expediency.

Most of the Anarchists took part in the October Revolution under the impression that they were really helping to precipitate the social revolution. Throughout Russia they took an active part in the organisation of social services and food supplies to the cities, and in the expulsion from power of the reactionary forces. As soon, however, as the Bolsheviks had consolidated their control, they began to turn on their former allies, and the anarchists were the first to be attacked. In April, 1918, the Anarchist headquarters in Moscow was bombarded with artillery by the orders of Trotsky. Many of the Anarchists were arrested and all Anarchist activities were forbidden. In spite of this persecution, the Anarchists continued in their efforts for social, educational and economic reconstruction, in the hope that the Revolution could continue in spite of the increasingly authoritarian attitude of the Bolsheviks.

When the White interventionists attacked Russia, the Anarchists were foremost in their efforts to repel them. During the advance of Yudenich on Petrograd, Shatov and his fellow anarchists organised and led the workers out from the factories, an intervention which was decisive in saving Petrograd. But in this period the movement that was most important in defeating the White invaders was that among the anarchist peasants of the Ukraine, organised by Nestor Makhno. Makhno was a Ukrainian peasant who had become associated with the Anarchist movement just after the Revolution of 1905. At seventeen he was involved in the assassination of a Tsarist police captain, and for this was sentenced to death, which was afterwards commuted to imprisonment for life. He spent a decade in a Moscow gaol and then, in February 1917, was released with the other political prisoners and returned to his Ukrainian village of Gulyai Polye. His sufferings had given him considerable prestige among the local peasantry, and he became the organiser of the trade unions and the local soviet in his district. In August 1917, he led the peasants in the expropriation of the landowners, some months before the Bolshevik decrees "legalising" the accomplished facts.

At this time the Ukraine was a cockpit of conflicting parties. Firstly the Ukrainian Nationalists, under Petlura, attempted to set up a bourgeois reformist state. Early in 1918 the Red Armies entered the Ukraine and put the Nationalists out of power. Petlura appealed to the German Authorities, and in their turn the Red Armies were driven from the Ukraine. The Germans, however, did not reinstate Petlura, but instead set up their own puppet Skoropadsky. This situation was accepted by the Communists in the treaty of Brest Litovsk.

The peasants of the Ukraine fought back against the barbarity of the occupying armies and formed themselves into bands to maintain their resistance. Makhno started to organise the peasants of his district for guerrilla activity. Starting with a band of five men, he began a campaign against all the enemies of peasant freedom, Germans and Austrians, Whites and bourgeois nationalists. He soon gained many recruits, organised his men into mobile groups which conducted surprise attacks and ambushes, and armed them with equipment captured from the opposing forces. The peasants throughout southern Ukraine began to look towards these anarchist bands as their saviours from oppression.

The retreat of the German troops at the end of 1918 left their dupe, Skoropadsky, without any support, and his regime collapsed. For a short time Petlura managed to hold power in Kiev, but he was soon displaced by the Red Armies. While this struggle was proceeding in the north; the peasants of the south were organising free soviets in the country districts, and laying the foundations of an anarchist communist society.

Before long, however, the anarchists were faced by the danger of the White Armies under Denikin, who, assisted with money and arms from the Allied powers, were advancing north into the Ukraine. The guerrilla army succeeded in holding off the superior White forces from passing further north into the body of Russia, but the Bolsheviks saw their success with jealousy and feared the possibility of the Ukraine being held by an anarchist movement which had already gained such prestige among the peasantry. As soon as they felt secure enough, therefore, they declared Makhno an outlaw, and shot as many known anarchists as they could seize. Makhno, in hiding, continued to fight a guerrilla action against the Whites. Without his assistance the Red Armies were being pushed steadily out of the Ukraine, and at last Makhno decided to intervene. He issued an appeal to the anarchists who had remained in the Red Army, and they immediately deserted their Bolshevik commanders and rejoined him in the south. They formed an army of fifteen thousand men, and began another offensive against the Whites. They were, however, very short of ammunition (even during the period of so-called alliance the Bolsheviks starved the anarchists of war materials) and had to retreat, until eventually the anarchist columns were cornered a hundred miles from the Romanian frontier. But, by means of a successful ruse, the White army was routed. This action started the general withdrawal of the interventionist forces, which proved the turning point of the civil war and, ironically, saved Russia not for the Revolution but for the Bolshevik tyranny.

After Uman, the anarchists proceeded to free the Ukraine, taking by surprise the towns in the interior which had not yet learnt of the events on the sea coast. They even took the industrial centres of Ekaterinoslav and Alexandrovsk, and held them until typhus halved their effective power and enabled the main White Army, retreating from the north, to dislodge them.

The Whites were followed by the Reds, and again Makhno had to face the Bolsheviks. The Bolsheviks ordered the anarchist troops to the Polish frontier, but they refused to go, and fighting broke out between the two armies, which lasted for nine months, and was carried on by the Bolsheviks with the utmost brutality, including the execution of all prisoners.

This internecine struggle continued until, during the war between Russia and Poland, the Whites, who had continued to hold the Crimea, advanced once more into the Ukraine. For a time Makhno had to fight both the Bolsheviks and Wrangel, and it was not until the Polish war took an unexpectedly bad turn that the former decided to serve their own ends by accepting Makhno's proposals for joint action.

An agreement was made in October 1920. Among its political clauses were undertakings on the part of the Bolsheviks to set free all anarchists in prison and to allow freedom of press and propaganda. A further clause, subject to ratification by the Moscow authorities, allowed tentatively for the territory held by the anarchists to be granted "free organs of political and economic self-government, in autonomous and federative connection, based on agreements with the government organs of the Soviet Republic." It is in accordance with Communist morals that the last clause should never have been ratified, that the two former clauses should not have been fulfilled, and that during the period of the "accord" with Makhno the persecution of anarchists should have continued throughout Russia.

The campaign resulted in the rapid defeat of Wrangel, whose army was driven out of the Ukraine, back into Crimea, and there was totally destroyed. Having used the anarchists for their own salvation, the Bolsheviks now decided to remove the danger represented by the anarchist forces and the free Soviets in the Ukraine.

The Red Army moved into south Ukraine, and Makhno found himself once more an outlaw. Once

again he started a guerrilla campaign, but this time the forces against him were of greater numerical superiority than before and had managed to detach him from his own district. In addition, his own early success, together with the Tambov peasant revolt and the Kronstadt rising against the Leninist tyranny (described in detail by Alexander Berkman and Anton Ciliga), had awakened the Bolshevik leaders to the fact that they must make at least some concessions to the peasants if they were to remain secure in power. They therefore instituted the New Economic Policy, which placated many of the farmers and caused a split in the country districts, which robbed the anarchists of the solid body of support they could previously expect from the peasants.

Eventually in 1921, isolated with a tiny band of followers, Makhno was forced to fly south and seek refuge in Romania. He was put in a concentration camp, from which he later escaped to Poland, where he was again imprisoned. The Russians attempted to obtain his extradition, but the Poles refused, and in 1923 Makhno was allowed to leave Poland. He went to Paris and there lived in poverty and oblivion, until his death in 1934

Today, in Russia, his name is obscured and sullied by scandal, and the Anarchism he represented is driven into the recesses of men's hearts by one of the cruellest oppressions in history. But, when the governing class of Russia is destroyed in the revolution that will follow the present war, the libertarian beliefs that owed so much to Russians and had so great an influence in the 1917 Revolution will certainly reappear.

Chapter 11 The Spanish Revolution

THE COUNTRY IN which Anarchism became a great mass movement was Spain, where the libertarian doctrine numbered its adherents in millions. And it was in Spain that Anarchism made at the same time its most dramatic appearance on the stage of history and its chief experiment of a society based on the principles of freedom and mutual aid.

The working class movement in Spain commenced just over a hundred years ago, when, in 1840, a right was first granted to the workers to form associations, and Juan Munts, a weaver, founded the first trade union among the textile workers of Barcelona. The trade union movement spread to other industries, and by the 1850's the government had become frightened at the spread of working class organisation. They suppressed the union movement; as a result the first Spanish general strike was declared in 1855. The workers erected barricades in Barcelona and fought the government troops under the banner *Asociación ó Muerte*. The strike and its accompanying revolt failed because of their local character, and their defeat was followed by a ruthless and long-standing ban on working class organisations, which nevertheless continued underground. For a while the Spanish labour movement came under the influence of Proudhon's ideas, expounded by Pi y Margall, whose ideas were federalist and reformist. He advocated the eventual abolition of the state, but desired to attain this by gradual means, and was quite ready to hold office in the Spanish republican governments. He was an anarchist in no real sense, but the libertarian element in his teaching was important in its influence on the Spanish labour movement, and combined with the anti-centralist tendencies of the Spanish people and the communal element in Spanish peasant life to make Spain peculiarly receptive to the anarchist doctrine.

Anarchism appeared in 1868, after the declaration of the first Spanish Republic, when Bakunin appealed to the Spanish workers to join the First International and sent a delegation to preach the doctrines then held by the anarchists. So many Spaniards responded that the Spanish federation was the strongest in the International, numbering some 80,000 members. The Spaniards supported Bakunin in his struggle with the Marxists, and when he was expelled from the International they seceded and became a section of the Anarchist International. The Republic fell in 1874; and the International was suppressed. But the Anarchists continued their work in underground secret societies, carrying on their propaganda and issuing their periodicals during the years of suppression.

In 1881 the ban on workers' organisations was withdrawn, and the Spanish Workers' Federation was founded and rapidly gained a large membership. The years that followed were marked by periodical persecutions, of varying severity, but always of considerable brutality, both by the State and by such terrorist bodies as the *Camisas Blancas*, through which the ruling class sought to intimidate the revolutionaries by assassination and violence. Some of these acts of violence on the part of the Spanish authorities were so inhuman that they aroused the anger of the mild liberals of capitalist countries. Particularly notorious were the executions at Montjuich prison in 1893, and the judicial murder of the educationalist Francisco Ferrer in 1910. After 1910 the Anarchist movement was able to reconstruct itself on a mass basis, embodying

the idea of syndicalism as an important element both in the prosecution of the revolution and in the construction of the revolutionary society. The C.N.T. (National Confederation of Labour) was founded in 1911. Almost immediately its active leaders were thrown into prison, and the national organisation was broken up. The local sections, however, continued to operate in secret, and in 1915 the C.N.T. was reconstructed. Meanwhile the Anarchists who had existed since 1893 only in secret bodies, again in 1913 formed a public organisation, the Iberian Anarchist Federation, which worked as the Anarchist propaganda organisation in conjunction with the C.N.T. as the syndicalist organisation of the workers. The F.A.I. was never a large body, containing only the active revolutionaries, while the C.N.T. was the mass organisation of the workers united in their revolutionary syndicates.

By 1919 the C.N.T. had already more than a million members, and was by far the largest workers' organisation in Spain. In spite of violent repressions during the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera, of general lockouts by the employers and the assassination of hundreds of syndicalists, including Salvador Seguí, the General Secretary, who was murdered in 1923, the movement carried on its work and maintained its influence among the workers.

After the fall of the monarchy and the establishment of the Republic, the anarchist movement continued to grow and to prepare for the social revolution. Its opportunity came in July 1936, when the rising of the Fascist generals precipitated the revolution of the workers and the crushing of the coup d'état in Barcelona, Madrid and the major portion of Spain.

The events of 1936 placed the Anarchist Movement in a position of peculiar importance and opportunity, particularly in Catalonia, where the vast majority of the workers supported the Anarchist Unions.

An immediate and spontaneous movement arose in Catalonia for the expropriation of factories and workshops by the workers, organised in syndicates, and parallel with this ran a movement among the peasants for seizure of the land and the grouping of land holdings into agricultural communes. The C.N.T. guided this movement and united the efforts of workers, peasants, technicians and intellectuals in the reconstruction of Catalonian economic life, but it cannot be too much emphasised that the movement was based on the free initiative and co-operation of the workers themselves. It is true that they did not ask permission of the factory owners before they took over their plants (in any case a large proportion of the employers had fled into France or Franco territory). But the organisation of the economic units was based entirely on voluntary mutual co-operation, and the workers themselves took all decisions regarding both their own working conditions and the output of their plant. Administration was by delegate (not representative) committees, who had always to refer back to their workers and none of whose decisions were valid unless they had the approval of the workers. To avoid the creation of a new bureaucracy, these delegates and the few full-time officials were subject to recall to the workbench at any time, and in any event were elected only for short periods. The personnel of the co-ordination committee for the Barcelona transport service was changed twice in the first year of syndicalist control. Moreover, there was no material gain from positions of responsibility, as the workers' delegates were paid the recognised wages for their particular industry.

On the land the right of the small proprietor to retain his holding was respected. While three quarters of the land became collectivised and cultivated on a co-operative basis by the peasants' syndicates, a quarter remained in the hands of individual peasants — who were treated so fairly that some were given extra land by the collectives to provide holdings adequate for the size of their families.

The peasant collectives were autonomous and settled for themselves all their internal affairs. Their economic relations with society in general were arranged through the federations into which their syndicates were grouped. Under collectivisation, not only was the peasant standard of living raised, but technical improvements were made in agricultural methods — such as the introduction of machinery and chemical fertilisers (often into districts where before they had been unknown) which both increased the productivity of the land and reduced the labour necessary for its cultivation. In many districts the harvests were increased by a third during the first year of collective operation. Successful experiments were made in payment based on need, and many Catalan and Aragonese syndicates paid the members according to their family responsibilities.

One of the most impressive achievements of the anarcho-syndicalists was the taking over and working of the Catalanian railways by the railway workers. At the beginning of the Civil War almost all the technical and directive staff, being foreigners, had left for the safety of less turbulent lands. Nevertheless, the syndicates amalgamated the three railways and contrived to work and maintain them to a higher efficiency than before, so that, not only were the obsolete rolling stock and equipment renewed within the first year of operation, but also, for the first time in Spanish history, punctual services were provided.

There were similar improvements in transport in Barcelona itself, where the various services, including the buses, the tramways, the two underground railways and the two funicular railways, were taken over and administered by the transport workers in such a way, that, though each enterprise was independent so far as its internal affairs were concerned, their activities were co-ordinated by a central committee of delegates from each undertaking. The workshops were modernised, heavy repairs previously done by outside contractors were carried out by the transport workers, and new vehicles were built. Services were extended, and during the period of collective administration the traffic was increased by 150%. A substantial general increase was made in wages, but in spite of this fact and the higher cost of materials, fares were maintained at a scale lower than any other in Europe.

Another organisation important in the social reconstruction of Catalonia was the Sanitary Syndicate formed by the doctors, nurses, pharmacists and other persons concerned with the public health. This body established doctors in every village in the province, set up clinics in the country districts, and organised ambulance services so that peasants in the remotest villages could be brought to the modernised hospitals operated by the syndicate.

The teachers' syndicates ran the schools and modernised the entire educational system. Actors, musicians and other executants formed themselves into a Public Amusements Syndicate of 15,000 members who operated the theatres, concert halls, cinemas, etc., and raised the standard of entertainment in cities and towns besides sending touring companies to the country districts. The printing syndicates published a great mass of literature and achieved a standard of craftsmanship equal to any in Europe, as those will appreciate who have examined the remarkable books, posters and pamphlets they produced.

In Catalonia most of the industrial plants were operated through the syndicates, in almost every case with increased efficiency, and many new factories were constructed by the building syndicates and transferred to the syndicates controlling the industries concerned.

Nor was it in Catalonia merely that the anarchists attempted socialisation through the syndicates. The extensive textile industry of Alcoy, the wood industry of Cuenca, the metal industries of Castellon, were further cases in which the workers took over their industries, with good results in improved output, craftsmanship, working conditions and remuneration.

The collectivisation of industries and agriculture in Catalonia proved beyond doubt the capabilities of the Spanish workers to manage their own industries, and the good results accruing from such management. Everywhere that authority was removed there seemed a new joy in working for the foundation of a free and just society, and this new attitude towards the functional life had its reflections in the increased production of manufactured goods and yield in crops, the improvement in the standard of craftsmanship and of technical method in almost every industry, the provision of adequate transport services, the initiation for the first time in Spain of good organisations for public health and education, and, in general, the greater happiness and well-being of the people concerned in these changes.

It must be remembered that all this was achieved not within a completely anarchist society, but in a state structure within which there were strong authoritarian elements who regarded the anarchist experiments with a hostility that increased as they proved successful. Communists feared a practical disproof of their theories and foresaw a danger to any "proletarian" dictatorship they might attempt to erect. The bourgeois Republican elements saw as great a danger to the mitigated capitalism they hoped to establish at the end of the Civil War. In spite of the fact that the Anarchists fought beside them and had made a temporary renunciation of some of their major objectives in what they were naive enough to believe was a common cause against totalitarianism, their enemies within the Republican government and the Communist organisations used every opportunity of vilifying them and of attempting to sabotage their social experiments. As the war continued and the government was forced by its very nature to become more totalitarian and more like the systems it claimed to be fighting, the inner campaign against the Anarchists was accelerated. It was said that by attempting to establish a new social order during the Civil War they were fiddling while Spain burnt and undermining the Spanish "war effort". This argument took no cognisance of the fact that the factories under the syndicalist system were the most efficient and productive in Republican Spain.

At the beginning of the war, when the people rose against the Fascist generals, the state had for a time virtually ceased to function in Spain. There was a shadow government, but its army and its police had gone over to the Fascists, and the new army was at this time an army of the people, whose soldiers, like the workers in the factories, carried on their action without any regard to this insubstantial facade of a State. Unfortunately, however, both the Anarchists and the Spanish populace regarded this Republican Government with too much contempt, and neglected to disperse it at the beginning of the revolution. Later, some of the Anarchist leaders even went so far against their principles as to join the Government for a short while and so create that mask of unity behind which their own fall was planned.

The Republican elements in the government, powerless at first, set out to regain their authority, and in this they were assisted by the gold of the Bank of Spain, which remained in their hands, and by the enthusiastic aid of the Communist Party, which, at first a negligible party with little influence, became gradually a focus for the petty bourgeois elements in Republican Spain and proclaimed that the war must be fought not to gain the social revolution but merely, to preserve a "liberal" capitalism.

The Government set about organising a new police force, which was armed with the best equipment they could obtain. Later they started to turn the militia into a Popular Army, with a hierarchy and a discipline like any other army. In this they were again assisted by the Communists, who formed an auxiliary police force and a propaganda service for the reactionary elements in Spain.

When arms reached Spain from Russia, they were used deliberately by the government and the Communists to strengthen the power of the state and to sabotage the revolution. No arms were given to the Anarchist militia on the Aragon front, who fought with out-of-date rifles and little other equipment against the tanks and aeroplanes of the Italians and Germans. Instead, the police, the Assault Guard, and the Communist sections of the Army were equipped with all the modern equipment that could be obtained. The Government felt it more in its interests to crush the revolution than to use all its forces against Franco.

Early in 1937 the manoeuvres against the syndicates commenced, and in May of that year the trouble came to a head in Barcelona. The Communists attempted to seize the telephone exchange, which was operated by the C.N.T. The Anarchists resisted, and the barricades were raised. For nearly a week fighting went on in the town, until the Valencia authorities poured their crack troops into the city and the Anarchists had to accept a poor compromise.

During the Maydays many anarchist militants were murdered by the Communists, including the Italian Camillo Berneri, one of the best Anarchist theorists of our time. An excellent account by a non-anarchist of the Maydays, exposing the machinations of the Communists, occurs in George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia*.

After the Maydays the attack on the Anarchists continued. Those who had been foolish enough to enter the government were ejected, and the authorities increased their pressure on the syndicates in an attempt to bring the factories under State control. The Spanish OGPU intensified its campaign of imprisonment and assassination. And Lister, who was sent to Aragon at the head of a Communist column; with the ostensible purpose of assuming the offensive on that front; occupied himself in breaking up the peasant collectives.

Thus Franco only completed the destruction of the anarcho-syndicalist experiments already weakened by the attacks of the so-called "revolutionary" government. The failure of anarchist social reconstruction to survive in its one practical demonstration was due, not to intrinsic faults, but to outside circumstances mostly beyond the control of the anarchists themselves. In spite of the destruction of all they had built, the Spanish anarchists proved in practice what the theorists have expounded in ideas. They showed that men could be free and yet at the same time voluntarily submit themselves to an order without authority that would provide more (both quantitatively and qualitatively) of the necessities of life and ensure a more just distribution of these necessities.

Chapter 12 Epilogue

IN THE COURSE of the preceding chapters I have made certain references to the present world situation, as seen by the anarchist, and the object of the final chapter is to recapitulate these references in the form of a brief outline of the position maintained regarding the war, by the main body of anarchist opinion.

War springs not from the nature of man, but from the nature of the forms of society under which the majority of men live. Man is not by nature addicted to war; this fact is confirmed by the life of the surviving tribes which represent primitive man in the modern world, such as the Eskimos, to whom war is unknown not only in fact, but even in thought and language. In a society that is free, equalitarian and just, there is no reason for war, and human societies have become disinclined towards war insofar as they have approached such an anarchic form.

There are currently a number of theories regarding the causes of the war. There are the official theories that it is caused through the perfidy of certain German politicians, which tend now to merge in the stranger theory that it was caused through the perfidy of the whole German people. There is the theory that it sprang from some imperfection in the moral outlook of mankind in general, and the religious extension of this theory that it is a judgment of God on these same moral imperfections. There is the theory that it rises necessarily from the internal stresses of Fascism.

There are also the widespread economic theories, which take various forms according to the political position of their advocates. Some theorists, including the apologists for the fascist powers, talk of the existence of 'have' and 'have not' countries, countries possessing lebensraum ("living space" -ed.) and countries too crowded to 'be able to hold and feed their peoples, and blame the 'have' countries for not parting with their colonies and markets in order to satisfy the needs of the 'have not' countries. Currency fanatics blame the war on national, international, or Semitic finance. The majority of socialists blame the capitalist system of production, with its imperialist and expansionist tendencies, which results in a struggle for markets and empires between the various capitalist imperialisms and ends, after the failure of other political methods of struggle, in open war to conquer by physical force the right to exploit the markets of the world.

In almost all of these theories there is an element of truth. The perfidy of German politicians certainly played its part in the inception of the war — but so also did the perfidy of the English politicians who helped their former rivals to power and the Russian politicians who agreed at the outset to grant them the hegemony of Western and Central Europe. The fact that the German people failed to resist the actions of their politicians was also a contributory cause of the war, but so also were the actions against the German people of the Allied governments after 1918, which gave Hitler the excuses by which he was able to lead his dupes.

The theory concerning the wrath of God is somewhat ridiculous, but it is true that almost all the bourgeoisie and large sections of the workers in the larger countries have been morally corrupted by the standards of a money society and tend to support, from a desire for personal aggrandisement, the actions of the ruling classes.

It is true that fascism, alias totalitarianism, alias the union of the centralised state and monopoly capitalism in one monstrous body, is, at least in its present form, forced to use war in order to survive — a manner of keeping alive which is ultimately suicidal. But a corollary of this is also true, namely, that a country at war under modern conditions is bound sooner or later to adopt a totalitarian economic and political structure — as England and America are doing today. A totalitarian society is, as we have seen, one in which war is a necessary and perpetual factor; therefore the countries which set out to fight fascism by military means themselves attain the fascist need for a war structure which is likely to persist and cause the recurrence of wars until an economic and political collapse, opening the way for the social revolution, bringing the end of such a society.

There is a measure of truth in all the economic theories. The greed of the older imperialisms in wishing to retain the empires they had gained and their concern at the threat which totalitarian hegemonies in Europe, Africa and Asia would present to their own future markets were in fact among the major causes of the war. The machinations of financiers of all kinds also hastened the appearance of the war on the political horizon. The socialists in particular are right in criticising capitalist society, and in pointing out its imperialist and expansionist tendencies that lead eventually and inevitably to great wars such as the two that have laid waste the present century in the growth of man.

But they are wrong in assuming that a change in the economic system would alone suffice to cure the evil of recurrent war. War, as these various theorists have contended, is due to economic, psychological and moral causes. But it is due also to political causes, and by this I do not mean the political failings of particular countries, ideologies or politicians, but the principle of domination and government that underlies the political system of every civilised country in the world today.

This error arises partly from their misunderstanding of the nature of modern societies, and partly from their misunderstanding of the nature of the present war. The anarchist criticism of modern society has been elaborated in earlier chapters. Here I will deal briefly with the anarchist view of the nature of the present war.

This war is regarded by almost all those who support it, and by many who oppose it, as a horizontal conflict between two groups of states, either, according to the supporters of the war, to establish the advantage of justice over injustice, right over evil, or, according to its opponents, to gain the political and economic hegemony of certain parts of the world, Europe, Asia, etc. Some, even, combine these two attitudes by admitting the selfish ends of the governments on both sides, but by contending at the same time that the governments of the allied powers represent a better form of society and should therefore be supported, in spite of their admitted shortcomings. Most of the intelligentsia justify their compromise with the government by such poor sophistry. Their attitude is demonstrated in all its ineptitude in Day Lewis's poem, "Where are the War Poets?" which represents the inner weakness of so many of his generation.

They who in panic or mere greed Enslaved religion, markets, laws, Borrow our language now and bid Us to speak in freedom's cause.

It is the logic of our times, No subject for immortal verse, That we who lived by honest dreams Defend the Bad against the Worse.

That the English intellectuals lived by 'dreams' is true enough, even if one may sometimes have doubted their honesty. That they still live by dreams is equally evident.

The dream nature of their world is shown most clearly, in this fallacious view of the war as a struggle between the two sets of powers whose rulers have differing attitudes to the idea of free-

dom. Germany, Italy, Japan, Romania, Hungary; etc., are fighting for slavery; England, America, Russia, China, and all the ridiculous collections of waxworks who form the puppet governments without states are fighting for freedom. In their statements, if not in their thoughts, it is as simple as that. The entire superficiality of this attitude is seen simply by comparing the leaders of the 'democratic' powers with those of the 'Fascist' powers, or, alternatively, by comparing the tendency of social development in England with that in Germany. Or, again, one might ask why the politicians who champion the freedom of the Poles are so stubborn in refusing it to the Indians.

The answers are simple, even for dreamers. Mr. Churchill and Mr. Bevin differ only in degree and not in kind from Herr Hitler and Dr. Ley. All four are concerned to destroy the liberty of the individual, as their actions tell more truly than their speeches. The tendency of social development in England is, as was demonstrated by Burnham in *The Managerial Revolution*, identically similar to that in Germany, i.e. towards the consolidation of the state long prophesied by the anarchists and now manifested in the fusion of economic and political control, and the seizure of that control by a new ruling class of state and industrial managers.

The answer to the third question is that the rulers of England and America are, in fact, no more interested in the freedom of the Polish people than they are in the freedom of the Indian people. They merely want to use the Poles and a new Polish state in the destruction of German hegemony in Europe and the establishment of their own. As they already hold the power in India, there is no object in giving anything away to the Indians.

In fact, the conflict between groups of national states is the less important aspect of this war. What matters is not that England is fighting Germany, or America fighting Japan, that the Nazis are oppressing the Poles or the British sahibs oppressing the Indians. These in themselves are terrible facts, but expressed in this way they do not represent the real nature of the war. What is real to the workers, to individual men and women outside the privileged classes, is the manner in which the war is being used in a counter-revolutionary manner to strengthen authority and crush freedom in every country in the world. The significant war is not in reality the horizontal one between England and Germany, but the vertical one between the rulers of England, Germany, Russia, America, on one side, and on the other side the ruled throughout the world.

This real war can be seen in the steady and cumulative attack on the liberties of the individual, on the rights and conditions of the workers of every degree. This we can best observe in our own country, where the freedom of the people has been reduced to a very small fraction of the already limited freedom we enjoyed in the days of peacetime capitalism. It is true that in the more obvious respects there is slightly more liberty in England and America than in the Axis countries. But, under the pressure of total war and the consolidation of the state machine, the divergence in this respect between the two opposing sets of powers is becoming less real. England and America preserve a greater show of liberty in order to justify to some small degree the illusion that they are fighting for democracy. In this way they are the victims of a dilemma of, on one side, their declared purpose and, on the other, their real purpose and the methods they must use to encompass it. It is significant that their ally Russia, which has lived under a pseudo-Socialist dictatorship for a quarter of a century, does not need to make any such show of liberty. When the people have never enjoyed even a fragment of the substance, they are not likely to be influenced a great deal by the absence of the shadow.

In reality the existence of a little liberty in this country means almost nothing. What matters is that the principle of bureaucratic dictatorship now governs this country. Legally the representatives of the state can, as sergeants in the last war used to say, do anything with a man short of

getting him with child. The individual has no rights; Habeas Corpus is dead mutton. At present it is convenient and practicable for our bureaucratic rulers to allow us to retain certain of the liberties of capitalist democracy. When events render this position inconvenient for them to maintain, they will not hesitate to make the English state in all its aspects as ruthless as the German.

Against this tendency towards the breaking of all liberties and the political and economic enslavement of the man to the state war machine, a spontaneous resistance is already arising among the workers. The regulations which interfere with normal daily life tend more and more to be disregarded, by ordinary people as well as by self-conscious revolutionaries. The police courts are working overtime on offences against regulations which have only existed since the beginning of the war, and even the government admits that the prisons contain twice their pre-war population — not counting the thousands in internment camps and in the overcrowded military glasshouses.

But the most significant resistance begins to appear now in the industrial field, which is the Achilles heel of the state. In spite of the illegality of strikes in wartime, the workers are in fact taking direct action in many instances where their liberties or working conditions are attacked. There have been strikes among munitions workers, aircraft workers, dockers, and miners in all parts of the country. All the strikes that are takings place do not reach the attention of the public through the press, and there are many other unpublicised methods of economic attack that the workers are putting into use against their bureaucratic masters. The disgruntled miners, for instance, have, in spite of all the personal appeals of Churchill and his lackeys of the Labour and Communist Parties, reduced the per man output of coal in almost every pit in the country.

The class struggle is reaching a dynamic phase as the war situation continues and war organisation becomes more highly developed. The resistance of the workers increases and, while the employers and the state may for the time being give small concessions in an endeavour to placate them, the necessity of their situation will in the end force them to increase their pressure on the workers and so produce an ever-deepening resistance on the part of the oppressed.

This struggle between the classes is, as I have said, the real war on whose outcome depends the liberty of mankind. Whether the Allies defeat Germany or Germany defeats the Allies will not matter a great deal to the workers, in the long run at any rate. The choice of Churchill or Hitler is merely the choice between two masters of slightly differing brutality, but equal rapacity. On the other hand, it matters a great deal to mankind whether the ruling class or the workers are successful in the war of classes that exists between them. The solution of the social problem is the only way to solve the other problems, such as war, which are dependent upon it. The society in which we live will inevitably produce war, by reason of the economic and political stresses inherent in its structure. To solve the social problem the only means that can be efficient and complete in its operation is the social revolution, which overthrows authority, class and property, destroys the wages system and money relationships, and ends the state and every other form of the domination of man by man. Until then, there can be no better world, no perpetual peace, no increase in freedom, whether social or economic, and no guarantee of that economic security without which the worker cannot be truly free or the intellectual, artist or scientist develop to fulfilment.

I do not state that such a social revolution is imminent. But I do contend that there is a general trend in social affairs towards a revolutionary situation, in the maturing of which this war is but an incident. The oppositions of the class struggle are becoming daily more clear, and there is a growing realisation among men of all kinds that the social choice before them is not one between

two forms of authoritarian society, such as democracy and Fascism, but between authority in any form and the completely free society of anarchy. Society in its evolution is moving towards one of those sudden breakings of the dams of oppression when social development leaps forward in the flood of revolution.

When the true social revolution comes, it will not be an insurrection made by trained revolutionaries. The revolutionaries will take part in it, but the people will make it out of their angers and their needs. The revolutionary will not direct their deeds; his sole function will be to clarify their ideas, to keep before their eyes the nature of the goal to which they struggle, and to warn them of the dangers of re-erecting the institutions of power they have overthrown.

That is the role of the anarchist. When anarchy rises from the ruins of the state his task is finished, and he becomes one among the individuals living in the growing body of the free society. Until then he must struggle by example and teaching to imprint the doctrines of freedom so clearly on the minds of men that, even were all the anarchists slaughtered, society would still move on to anarchy.

On the 11th November, 1887, August Spies, standing on a Chicago scaffold with the rope round his neck and the cloth over his face, spoke to his murderers. "There will be a time when our silence will be more powerful than the voices you strangle today". He spoke the message of anarchism to the rulers of the world.

Appendix

Principles of Revolutionary Syndicalism adopted by the International Congress of Revolutionary Syndicalists at Berlin, at Berlin, December, 1922.

I

REVOLUTIONARY Syndicalism basing itself on the class-war, aims at the union of all manual and intellectual workers in economic fighting organisations struggling for their emancipation from the yoke of wage slavery and from the oppression of the State. Its goal consists in the re-organisation of social life on the basis of Free Communism, by means of the revolutionary action of the working-class itself. It considers that the economic organisations of the proletariat are alone capable of realising this aim, and, in consequence, its appeal is addressed to workers in their capacity of producers and creators of social riches, in opposition to the modern political labour parties which can never be considered at all from the points of view of economic re-organisation.

II

REVOLUTIONARY Syndicalism is the confirmed enemy of every form of economic and social monopoly, and aims at its abolition by means of economic communes and administrative organs of field and factory workers on the basis of a free system of councils, entirely liberated from subordination to any Government or political party. Against the politics of the State and of parties it erects the economic organisation of labour; against the Government of men, it sets up the management of things. Consequently, it has not for its object the conquest of political power, but the abolition of every State function in social life. It considers that, along with the monopoly of property, should disappear also the monopoly of domination, and that any form of the State, including the form of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" will always be the creator of new monopolies and new privileges: it could never be an instrument of liberation.

III

THE DOUBLE TASK of Revolutionary Syndicalism is as follows: on the one hand it pursues the daily revolutionary struggle for the economic, social and intellectual improvement of the working class within the framework of existing society. On the other hand its ultimate goal is to raise the masses to the independent management of production and distribution, as well as to the transfer into their own hands of all the ramifications of social life. It is convinced that the organisation of an economic system, resting on the producer and built up from below upwards, can never be regulated by Governmental decrees, but only by the common action of all manual and intellectual workers in every branch of industry, by the running of factories by the -producers themselves in such a way that each group, workshop or branch of industry, is an autonomous section of the general economic organisation, systematically developing production and -distribution in the interests of the entire community in accordance with a well determined plan and on the basis of mutual agreements.

IV

REVOLUTIONARY Syndicalism is opposed to every centralist tendency and organisation, which is but borrowed from the State and the Church, and which stifles methodically every spirit of initiative and every independent, thought. Centralists is an artificial organisation from top to bottom, which hands over en bloc to a handful of men, the regulation of the affairs of a whole community. The individual becomes, therefore, nothing but an automaton directed and moved from above. The interests of the community yield place to the privileges of a few, variety is replaced by uniformity: personal responsibility by a soulless discipline; real education by a veneer. It is for this reason that Revolutionary Syndicalism advocates federalist organisation; that is to say, an organisation, from below upwards, of a free union of all forces on the basis of common ideas and interests.

V

REVOLUTIONARY Syndicalism rejects all parliamentary activity and all co-operation with legislative bodies. Universal suffrage; on however wide a basis, cannot bring about the disappearance of the flagrant contradictions existing in the very bosom of modern society; the parliamentary system has but one object, viz., to lend the appearance of legal right to the reign of lies and social injustice, to persuade slaves to fix the seal of the law onto their own enslavement.

VI

REVOLUTIONARY Syndicalism rejects all arbitrarily fixed political and national frontiers, and it sees in nationalism nothing else but the religion of the modern State, behind which are concealed the material interests of the possessing classes. It recognises only regional differences, and demands for every group the right of self determination in harmonious solidarity with all other associations of an economic, territorial or national order.

VII

IT IS FOR THESE same reasons that Revolutionary Syndicalism opposes militarism in all its forms, and considers anti-militarist propaganda as one of the most important tasks in the struggle against the present system. In the first instance, it urges individual refusal of military service, and especially, organised boycott against the manufacture of war material.

III

REVOLUTIONARY Syndicalism stands on the platform of direct action, and supports all struggles which are not in contradiction with its aims, viz., the abolition of economic monopoly and of the domination of the State. The methods of fight are the strike, the boycott, sabotage, etc. Direct action finds its most pronounced expression in the general strike which, at the same time, from the point of view of Revolutionary Syndicalism, ought to be the prelude to the social revolution.

IX

ALTHOUGH enemies of all forms of organised violence in the hands of any Government, the Syndicalists do not forget that the decisive struggle between the Capitalism of to-day and the Free Communism of to-morrow, will not take place without serious collisions. They recognise violence, therefore, as a means of defence against the methods of violence of the ruling classes, in the struggle of the revolutionary people for, the expropriation of the means of production and of the land. Just as this expropriation cannot be commenced and carried to a successful issue except by the revolutionary economic organisation of the workers, so also the defence of the revolution should be in the hands of these economic organisations, and not in those of the military or other organisations operating outside the economic organs.

X

IT IS ONLY in the revolutionary economic organisations of the working class that is to be found the power able to carry out its emancipation as well as the creative energy necessary for the reorganisation of society on the basis of Free Communism.

The Anarchist Library
Anti-Copyright



George Woodcock
Socialism from Below
A History of Anarchism
1944

Retrieved on 2020-04-02 from libcom.org

theanarchistlibrary.org