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## Suggestions for Discussion

Alexander Berkman and Emma Goldman

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Suggestions for Discussion  
1928

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In 1928, Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman proposed a small gathering of sympathetic anarchists—including Goldman, Berkman, Max Nettlau, Rudolf Rocker, Luigi Fabbri, Marie Goldsmith, Sébastien Faure and Alexander Shapiro—to discuss the future of the anarchist movement. The meeting was to be a secret, even from most anarchist comrades. They circulated a “syllabus” of “Suggestions for Discussion,” asking for responses from those who could not attend and possible revisions for use in the discussion. Shawn P. Wilbur collects material related to the proposed gathering here.

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1928

know anything about the matter except Faure, perhaps Dr Pir-errot [Marc Pierrot?] and Puget. But we will not let them know until the very last because the French comrades talk too much, they simply can not keep important things to them selves.”

April 12, she sent a 2-page sent of “Suggestions for Discussion,” with the following note:

“Here is the syllabus which I wants you to take under your consideration at your earliest possible convenience. Please send me your comments, suggestions or additional questions. If possible I should like them in French as well as English or German. That will save double work. Everything I will receive from the comrades I am sending the syllabus to will be submitted to the gathering when it takes place. Now in as much as you will not be able to attend perhaps you will give us your consideration in writing.”

There is quite a bit of discussion in the Goldman-Nettlau correspondence around this time about revitalizing the anarchist movement, which is, of course, also roughly the same period in which Nettlau produced his “Eugenics of a Free Society: Thoughts on Roads to Anarchism.”

I’ve seen a copy of the questions in the Alexander Berkman papers at IISH and found some responses by Nettlau. I have not yet found any other responses or determined whether the conference took place. Has anyone else run across anything relating to the “syllabus” or conference?

— Shawn P. Wilbur

## NOTES

I've been looking at the correspondence between Emma Goldman and Max Nettlau and notice that in early 1928 Goldman was attempting to organize a small anarchist conference in Paris, to include at least Berkman, Faure, Schapiro, Fabri, plus Rocker and Nettlau, if they were able to travel. In a letter sent April 2, Goldman explains:

"I wrote to you a few days ago. But we had a little gathering in my room yesterday. Fabri, A.B. and two other comrades were present. I took up the project of a small conference of ten or a dozen comrades for the purpose of certain revisions of our ideas and tactics, or if not revisions at least new interpretations in the light of the events since 1914. Fabri and A.B. agree that such a gathering is important and might help to do away with the chaos and confusion in our ranks. They also agreed that we should avail ourselves of the nearness of Rocker and a few others who will attend the Syndicalist Congress in Liège and also your going to Spain. We feel that Paris would be the logical place since most of the comrades we want to the gathering are here, Fabri, Goldsmith, Faure, Shapiro, Berkman and I. But will you and Rocker be able to come here? That is the question? As you say you are going to Spain you will surely get a transit visa to France. It would be well if we could combine your passing through with the conference. We would like to hold it about May 20th to be through before the Syndicalist Congress in Liège begins. I would like to know what you think of the whole matter and if it will be possible to have your with us? The gathering is to be held privately and with only very few of us comrades attending. In fact we do not want the French comrades to

## Contents

<b>SUGGESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>RELATED CORRESPONDENCE</b>	<b>8</b>
[Emma Goldman to Max Nettlau—April 1, 1928] . .	8
[Emma Goldman to Rudolf Rocker—April 2, 1928] .	9
[Max Nettlau to Emma Goldman—April 5, 1928] . .	15
[Emma Goldman to Leon Malmed—April 11, 1928] .	18
[Emma Goldman to Max Nettlau—April 12, 1928] . .	19
[Max Nettlau to Emma Goldman—April 12, 1928] . .	19
[Max Nettlau to Emma Goldman—April 14, 1928] . .	25
[Alexander Schapiro to Emma Goldman—April 19, 1928] . . . . .	31
[Alexander Schapiro to Emma Goldman—April 21, 1928] . . . . .	33
[Emma Goldman to Max Nettlau—April 22, 1928] . .	35
[Rudolf Rocker to Emma Goldman—April 22, 1928] .	39
[Alexander Schapiro to Emma Goldman—April 23, 1928] . . . . .	39
[Emma Goldman to Joseph Ishill—April 24, 1928] . .	40
[Emma Goldman to Ba Jin—April 24, 1928] . . . . .	40
[Alexander Schapiro to Emma Goldman—April 24, 1928] . . . . .	40
[Max Nettlau to Emma Goldman—April 26, 1928] . .	41
<b>QUESTIONS FOR CONCOURSE.</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>NOTES</b>	<b>46</b>

## QUESTIONS FOR CONCOURSE.

- 
1. About the Anarchism present problem and means to bring up an internationally Ana[r]chist movement against the authoritarian reaction.
  2. As beginning of the societies organization, is the Anarchy revolucionary?
  3. If it is an Idea of the humankind, is the Anarchy proletarian?
  4. What education shall be given to the children, at the present time, so they will achieve their emancipation as quickly as possible?
  5. What path shall be given to the Art in America and Europa, to spread more anarchism at our surroundings?
  6. What do the comrades think about the Individualist tendencies dhe present labor movement?
  7. What is the value of the tradition and up to what limit shall we follow it?
  8. To go deeper as to destroy old believes remaining in the minds of the people, can the comrades make a bibliography as the origin, bases and standing of the Bible?

--  
If anarchists would only take a sincere, intelligent and practical initiative in all this, they would once more be the vanguard of real progress and become dear to all real humanitarian elements.

Whilst otherwise the fact that they publish a few small papers, express criticism, at long intervals do some courageous acts, etc., does really not affect the great march of mankind and the possibilities contained in the wonderful idea of real freedom are lying waste and barren.

Geneva, April 26, 1928.

N.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

It seems to me that our old pro-revolutionary Anarchist literature has ceased to answer the demands of the modern day. Without going now into any discussion as to whether Anarchist literature has ever adequately dealt with the practical application of our ideas, the question at issue now is whether the time has not come for a new and more popular interpretation of our ideas, particularly in light of the World War, the Russian Revolution and the subsequent vital social developments.

I feel that with the almost generally admitted fact of the bankruptcy of Socialism and the growing conviction of the failure of Bolshevism and of revolutionary party dictatorship, the opportunities for Anarchist propaganda have immeasurably increased. People demand to know what Anarchism really is; they want an exposition of our ideas that they can clearly understand; they demand to know how it will work and how it is to come about.

Now, can we refer them to the old Anarchist literature with any hope of their finding there a direct and clear answer to their pressing questions? I personally feel that we cannot.

Because of these considerations, very briefly state here, I have come to the conclusion that what is of the utmost need just now is a new Anarchist literature based particularly on the recent experiences of mankind; on the War, the Russian Revolution, the German Revolution, as well as on the modern development of capitalism and on the new forms that industrialism is assuming in international proportions.

The fundamental spirit of that new literature must deal primarily with the following matters:

1. The Anarchist attitude to modern life in its new political, industrial, agrarian and social aspects;
2. the problem of Anarchist propaganda in view of the new development of capitalism and of the changing relationships between capital and labor;
3. does the modern phase of capitalism justify the old Socialist and Anarchist conception of the meaning of the Social Revolution?
4. is the old conception of the social revolution not subject to revision? Have we not over-emphasized the destructive side of revolution at the great cost of its constructive phases?

The new character and the inter-relationship of the destructive and constructive sides of revolution.

5. a) The character of an Anarchist revolution; or at least of a revolution inspired by Anarchist ideas and spirit;
- b) the question of political parties, of dictatorship and of the State in the Revolution;
6. The place of the labor unions and the role of Anarcho-syndicalism in the revolution;
7. The manner and methods of the revolution developing along Anarchist lines toward the ultimate Anarchist society;
8. Means and ways of beginning NOW the educational and preparatory work of inspiring the revolution with the Anarchist spirit and ideals;

What is to prevent the repetition of the Bolshevik experiment in the next revolution?

9. The new literature dealing with these matters in a direct, concise and popular form and language.

The above is merely a brief general outline of the issues to be discussed, a few preliminary suggestions.

Every comrade receiving this Outline is requested to add his suggestions and topics, to be taken up at a PRIVATE gathering

If it is better, then why not prepare the way for it?

Anarchists are the people to do this, for whilst the smallest authoritarian fraction can theoretically expect to conquer exclusive power and the coerce or exterminate everybody else, anarchists, even if very numerous and arriving somehow on the top, would be faced by the problem: how to deal with all their opponents whom they cannot destroy physically nor coerce morally, unless they become dictators themselves.

So this problem (exclusive system or co-existence, convivance of social systems) will confront anarchists in any case—in the present stage when no section has won, in the revolutionary stage when one section will win, and even in the stage when the anarchists will have won. Then, why not grapple with this problem which is the direct outcome of the authoritarian, intolerant, exclusivist past acting upon anarchists as upon socialists?

This intolerance split already up anarchism in undersections (communist, collectivist, individualist...): this shows its harmful, corrosive, destructive character. It splits up humanity, formerly into religious, now into nationalist nations, it works in all organizations, constantly splitting them to no use.

It can only be overcome by a really great effort, as large as the effort which only very few centuries ago made science overcome religion. So here, in continuation of this same struggle which is fought now on other fields, let freedom overcome authority also in this form. The believer in an exclusive system is an **authoritarian** to the rest, be that system communist or individualist anarchism themselves.

This struggle for the friendly cooperation of all the non-coercive elements of humanity which are all threatened by exclusivism—just as the bolshevist autocracy paralyzed the Russian co-operators, strangled the Russian syndicalists, etc.): all these ought form the block of freedom, proclaiming: no more dictatorship, but also no more fanaticism, exclusivism, unique doctrines...

preparing to seize the means of production and the administration of public affairs for their own exclusive control, what are anarchists proposing to do in order to arrive at something better than:

the pre-revolutionary stage of mutual contempt, ignorance or indifference and useless quarreling of the adherents of all socialist conceptions among themselves, and

the revolutionary stage of a parliamentary majority dictatorship or a soviet direct dictatorship

which are all that present experience shows and permits to foresee?

To any other solution possible than one based on these principles:

the recognition of the right to live of every social doctrine which is not active in imposing it upon others against their will?

hence the possibility of social co-existence, convivance, of people propagating (at present) and practicing (later) such different social systems in a peaceful, not-interfering, not-coercive way;

the practical basis would be the apportionate use of social wealth and means of production by each section of opinion

and the determination to overcome difficulties otherwise than by fighting and defeating the opponents—means to arrive at this would be:

the general good will—as opposed to the present general evil will and wish to human and destroy the adversary,

the neutralization of objects and functions which it would be absurd to divide

and the adjournment of differences to later periods of greater experience, also

the easy and practical revision of all arrangements, etc.

To this better than rabid useless quarrels at present and to be treated as the one victorious socialist party (Russia) treats all other socialists?

of a small number of comrades, to begin May 15. The place will be announced later.

Kindly send in your suggestions or additional questions to the undersigned, at your earliest convenience.

Please consider this letter and your invitation to the gathering as strictly confidential.

Fraternally,

## RELATED CORRESPONDENCE

### [Emma Goldman to Max Nettlau—April 1, 1928]

Paris April 2nd.28

Dear Comrade,

I wrote to you a few days ago. But we had a little gathering in my room yesterday. Fabri, A.B. and two other comrades were present. I took up the project of a small conference of ten or a dozen comrades for the purpose of certain revisions of our ideas and tactics, or if not revisions at least new interpretations in the light of the events since 1914. Fabri and A.B. agree that such a gathering is important and might help to do away with the chaos and confusion in our ranks. They also agreed that we should avail ourselves of the nearness of Rocker and a few others who will attend the Syndicalist Congress in Liège and also your going to Spain. We feel that Paris would be the logical place since most of the comrades we want to the gathering are here, Fabri, Goldsmith, Faure, Shapiro, Berkman and I. But will you and Rocker be able to come here? That is the question? As you say you are going to Spain you will surely get a transit visa to France. It would be well if we could combine your passing through with the conference. We would like to hold it about May 20th to be through before the Syndicalist Congress in Liège begins. I would like to know what you think of the whole matter and if it will be possible to have your with us? The gathering is to be held privately and with only very few of us com-

I proposed Archinoff inasmuch as I saw that you want to give everybody the chance of having their say, and that you do not draw up a level under which (or over which) “manuscripts should be refused”!

I oppose Archinoff much more than you do. I opposed him when you all were with him, and the more do I oppose him tooth and nail that I—to the exception of many others—have absolutely no personal animosity against him, inasmuch as I kept myself aloof from him and his close friends from the very first day of his appearance abroad. Yet, I consider that he is thoughtful, that his is stubborn, that he sticks to his guns and that HE KNOWS WHAT HE WANTS: these are qualities flagrantly lacking among many of our friends to whom our personal sympathies instinctively go. And those qualities are very important when writing a book.

So then: if you are going to make an eclectic choice—Archinoff should come in. if you are going first to draw the line at some tendencies—and you want to draw the line on both sides—then with Archinoff may have to fall off others too...

When drawing up my list, I took no notice of geographical difficulties: I, thus, included—naturally—Borovoy, Borghi or Peiro. It will be difficult to get at them, and they may not have, perhaps, the necessary “ambiance” to sit down and write. Still, they must be reached and asked to say what they can do.

Here are some addresses:

[.....]

### [Max Nettlau to Emma Goldman—April 26, 1928]

Suggestions for discussion, by N.

As other social conceptions, anticapitalist and socialist, but authoritarian, are widely spread, propagated, organized and



1. Goldsmith
2. Archinoff
3. Maximoff

RUSSIA: 1. Borovey  
 FRANCE: 1. Besnard  
 ITALY: 1. Borghi  
 GERMANY: 1. Fritz Oerter  
 HOLLAND: 1. Müller-Lehning  
 SPAIN: 1. Piero  
 [ ] and in great hurry  
 Sania

As an afterthought: Is Bjork[ ] any good? I don't think so.  
 What about Ipsen, Denmark?

**[Emma Goldman to Joseph Ishill—April 24, 1928]**

**[Emma Goldman to Ba Jin—April 24, 1928]**

**[Alexander Schapiro to Emma Goldman—April 24, 1928]**

Dear Emma,

I enjoyed greatly your letter and I was fully successful in my provocation, because what you say about Archinoff shows the danger of letting yourself in with people whose opinions are not, in more than broad lines, our own. This is why I opposed the old crowd. If Archinoff is too much Bolshevik—and I fully agree with you—some others are too much “watery” and say nothing although would write volumes... And of the two extremes, I'd rather vote for Archinoff: there is at least something and somebody to fight against.

rades attending. In fact we do not want the French comrades to know anything about the matter except Faure, perhaps Dr Pierrot [Marc Pierrot?] and Puget. But we will not let them know until the very last because the French comrades talk too much, they simply can not keep important things to them selves.

Anyhow write to me by return mail. I feel so strongly in this matter that if we can not hold the gathering here a few of us will go to either Belgium or Switzerland to meet you, Rocker and Bertoni. But it would be better if it could be held here.

Hoping to hear from you soon.

Affectionately,

E. G.

**[Emma Goldman to Rudolf Rocker—April 2, 1928]**

Paris. April 2nd.28

Dear, dear Rudolfchen,

You are of course a very great sinner to have neglected me for so long. But being a “real Christian” I forgive you especially as you promise to “reform” and write me often. I confess I missed hearing from you. I was so lonely in deadly dull Toronto, so famished for a kindered spirit that I longed for your letters even more than I might have done had I been among interesting people. But I realized that your silence must be due to lack of time and not lack of willingness to keep in touch with me. Then too dear Millicen wrote occasionally though not as often as I wanted to hear from her. Anyhow I consoled myself with the thought that you still love me even if you failed to write.

Your letter and the news it contained gripped my heart almost to tears. That you of all people, the one real power in our movement in Germany should not have to go back to the bench to eke out a living by physical labor is really too awful

for words. And yet this is the lot before all of us of the older generation. The only trouble in our case is Sasha's and mine that we have to trade we might ply at home. To earn my living by any physical labor I'd have to go back to midwifery which I loath, or nursing which in Europe pays absolutely nothing at all, really means drudgery. As to Alex, what could he do? He could become a proof reader but that too hardly pays in Europe. If he'd got a position at all how could he stand the application and confinement of many hours and the train on his eyes? I shudder when I think of it. Yet his position is even worse than mine. I think if I went back to Toronto I could have work as a nurse. In fact I was offered a position as superintendent of the Jewish Hospital before I left. While I never would accept that I know the physicians I met would give me cases. But is it not tragic that our movement already so poor in intellectual workers should not support en the few there are. Where is one to find the strength to maintain one's faith? I can only hope dearest Rudolf it may not really be necessary for you to go back to the Pinsel. But I realize only too well that this would be preferable than depending on our so called comrades.

Dear, before I go further in your letter I want to write you about something important, not that the contents of your letter is not important. It is this; you remember my writing you some time ago that it is of the utmost importance to get together ten or a dozen of the comrades of our period for a conference. To see whether we could not come to some agreement that could be set forth in a manifesto at least which might help to do away with the terrible confusion and chaos in our ranks. My eighteen months in Canada have strengthened my belief that such a conference is really imperative. But how to accomplish it was the difficult question. Now there seems to be a way. It is to utilize your presence at the Syndicalist Congress in May to have you near enough to attend the little gathering I have in mind.

## [Rudolf Rocker to Emma Goldman—April 22, 1928]

## [Alexander Schapiro to Emma Goldman—April 23, 1928]

23.IV.1928

Dear Emma,

The choice is to be made between about 15–20 young names by picking out, say, half of them. That is why I did not give you the list of those which, personally, would be acceptable to me. But as you insist, I will give them at the end of this letter. I think they would be all capable of writing a serious look on one or other of the present day problems of anarchism.

I thoroughly disagree with you about Faure: he is doing nothing at all of any serious value and has no real opinion of his own about the great problems of the day. I daresay, we will disagree on other names too. I am suggesting them quite objectively, of course, as in some cases this list of mine contains names of people who would **not** write in my spirit.

As to Nettlau, I quite and fully agree with you as to his usefulness as adviser. But I wrote about Nettlau as author of modern books, and I continue to think that he would not be able to write for the plan you have in view.

Well, here is my tentative list (not knowing their ages, you may find here some of the "over 50").

SWEDEN:

1. Jensen
2. Welinder (very active mind, for years in America (IWW). Jensen should be asked about him.)

RUSSIANS abroad:

cho further. Well, all this questions I hope we will be able to discuss if you stop off at St. Tropez.

For the present I regret that you have not been more specific in your paper, that you were not more to the point and less spread out. You understand yourself that if the gathering should take place it would be wellnigh impossible to read such long papers before the friends, it would take much more time than we will have at our disposal. Another things is we must have your French text as there is no one here who has enough time to translate your paper.

If nothing should come of our gathering, or concise material for several works I think we might at least publish a sort of Monogram of the different papers that will be sent. But in that case everyone will have to take up one or two question he feels most deeply about and can present in a concentrated form, direct and to the point. For instance the suggestion you have treated only less spread out. I am still hoping something may come of the proposition of a gathering and that something may come out of it if it takes place.

Dear comrade be sure to see Bertoni and have him send me a reply to the text Fabri must have sent him. Also I am inclosing an extra French copy in the hope that a way may be found to get this to Malatesta. It is really of the utmost importance to get his point of you [view] on the questions.

I attended the dinner of the Plus Loin group. Pierrot announced there that you are to be with them May 20th. He told me Paul Reclus is supposed to have a letter from you to that effect. I am puzzled. Does it mean you have changed your plans? That you will really be here May 20th or that Pierrot got the date mixed. Please write.

Best wishes for your work in Spain. Do not forget that I will expect you in St. Tropez on your return if it is going to be the latter part of May for I myself will not get there until the 22nd.

Fraternally,  
E. G.

Yesterday I had Fabri at my place and Sasha was present. Both agreed that such a conference would do a world of good and should be held. The question is where? Of course Paris is the logical place because the comrades I have in mind are here, Fabri, Sasha Cahpiro [Schapiro], Volin, Faure, Goldsmith and myself. But I wouldn't not think of a conference without you. We also want Bertoni. And if we could get Malatesta the affair would be ideal. But the latter is altogether out of the question. Remain you and Bertoni. Fabri was doubtful whether B. can come here. What about you? Could you come illegally, if no visa can be obtained? I wish you'd write me by return mail as time is short and we want to get to work on the project.

The idea is to have our little gathering a week before the Syndicalist Congress, the 20th of May to last a week so we can have the necessary time to go over the whole ground of theory and tactics and see how far we can come together to issue at first a manifesto and also to agree on a series of articles or brochures or books treating various phases of our ideas by each according to his particular line. As to the publication of this that too we will discuss. I may be mistaken but I feel that money could still be raised in A. for such an important project. So important indeed that we need hope for no revival in our ranks, no constructive work until such a literature is created. I want to hear your opinion as quickly as possible.

In case your coming here is quite out of the question we thought that we might come together either in Bruxelles, we do not want to meet in Liège because the other affair meets there, or in Switzerland somewhere. Fabri is to write Bertoni to find out if we could enter there. The only trouble is that it would mean a great expense for so many of us to travel so far. Then too there is the danger of Fabri, Sasha and Sania not being readmitted here. No, it seems the other suggestion is preferable if only you can manage to come. And I really don't see why that can not be made possible. Of course we also want Nettlau. There is a possibility that he may be able to come. He is to go to

Spain for a month and would no doubt get a transit visa which could be extended for a week. I am writing him to day.

I am seeing Goldsmith to night so I will take the matter up with her and see what she has to say. I am very, very anxious to bring the project about because of its imperative value. For this reason I am even willing to postpone my departure from Paris to St. Tropez and to delay the beginning of my memoirs. I am most anxious to get started of course, but if we can have the gathering my memoirs will have to wait, it's waited 59 years, it will wait another extra month.

You are quite right my dear that intimacies are not for the world, nor do I have any intention of writing about them. But the people and events that lead to the intimacies are so much part of my life that it would be ridiculous to leave them out, my life would merely appear flat and uninteresting. You see it happens that unlike most rebels and people who lead an intense public life I also had an equally intense personal life, in fact so intense that the conflict between the one and the other very often came nearly wrecking my life. How can I avoid writing about that phase? On the other hand I know it is going to be excruciatingly painful to write about the two currents which ran like a red thread, crisscrossing each other, often causing me so much misery, such bitter disappointments and at the same time enriching my life. How I wish you were here Rudolf my dear. I'd give anything to be able to talk over with you the outline I have in mind. I want passionately to give a truly worth while work both in the historic and human sense. There is really no one to talk to. I could do it with you I am sure. Another reason why I am so eager for our little conference. It would give me some hours with you away from the others when I could tell you what I mean to do in re the autobiography. I had hoped to be able to come to Berlin for a month. But I know it will not be possible. I must remain here until S. is near the end of his book. If I should then go to Germany the whole summer would be lost before I could begin to write. I can not risk that. Yet I want

the revolution. The approach to Revolution as such was wrong and needs revision. In fact you yourself are point out this need in your reply. Well, only in this sense and certainly not in the theoretical sense did I refer to our prewar revolutionary literature.

But to come back to your paper, I gave it to Alexander last night so I can not go into each point. I only wish to say that while you have quite ignored my text you have raised a few new questions which I consider as important as any I have sent you. One is the need of an anti authoritarian block, the other, the need of analysis of revolution as a wonderworker which we certainly held in the past. Can the Revolution bring together the forces which until the Revolution were miles apart, intolerant, bigoted, fanatical and petty in their attitude to each other before the Revolution. If not how can we bring the forces together on some common plank before the approach of the great upheaval? Yes, this is a very important question you have raised and requires both thought and consideration.

Dear comrade I can quite understand your bitterness against the comrades who hold to the old biblical notion [of] an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, the idea that two wrongs make one right, does right to do the same cruel thing to Germany. But you are too sweeping and unfair to pile this stupid notion on all the anarchists. As far as I know only some German anarchists delivered themselves of such idiocy, mostly silly boys, or fanatical men of the Freieier Arbeiter outfit. Certainly not Rocker, or Berkman, or I, or any of the Freedom people. Why then blame everybody for what the few did? As to not protesting against the terrible injustice in the world, against subdued notions or groups of people. That too is not correct. We have and do protest as much as Roman Rolland or Barbusse. Incidentally the protest of Barbusse means nothing to me since he cheerfully condones the same wrongs in Russia. But we do protest. It is only that the voices of a Barbusse or a Roland ree-

heart. You can see why I insist that it is impossible to do too many things at once.

However, because I can not shake out articles from my sleeves as you do it does not mean I will do nothing else while writing my book. I have a very large correspondence which I consider important to keep up. And there are so many interesting works to read. And there will be friends coming to St. Tropez, and there will be my manage. Oh, I will be busy you can rest assured.

Your characterization of the different comrades is so funny it made me laugh to tears and it had the same effect on A. B. We simply roared. And what is most to the point it is very poignant and true. The joke of it is that Chapiro gave almost a similar description of some of those you mentioned including yourself. So you see dear comrade how critical we all are of one another and how little we know ourselves. Of course, I do not mind your frankness, nor need you fear it will go further.

About your Mss. You will not be provoked if I tell you that you have really not answered one question of those contained in my text. You devote an awful lot of writing to a defense of our old literature which was not at all necessary because I had no intention of even implying that our literature on the theory of Anarchism has lost its value. Of course the works of Kropotkin, Bakunin, Reclus, Malatesta, Nettlau will remain vital always. But as we are no adherents of saints we may point out that some of the prophecies of our "saints" and some of their practical suggestions have not come true nor have they proven practical. Sacrilegious as it may seem I consider that Bakunin's contention that "the spirit of destruction is at the same time also a spirit of construction" has proven fallacious and injurious to our movement. Most people have the spirit of destruction but only rare minds can construct. Anyway it has proven disastrous in the Russian revolution and it always will prove disastrous. The same is true of the general socialist inclusive anarchist idea that things will adjust themselves after

so much to see you and talk over a few things that oppress my mind and heart. In a pinch I may run over to Liège. I am fortunate not to need a visa. The trouble is when will we have time to ourselves? You'll be too busy at the Congress. Well, I hope the other venture can be realized.

I am going back to St. Tropez. I was able to get the lovely little house back I had two years ago. I will stay there until the end of Oct. Then if the mistral is too terrible I mean to go to North Africa for the winter. I understand one can live there very cheaply. I'll have to unearth such places as the fund raised for the memoirs is very limited. I really make no plans too far in advance. For the present I only have the summer in mind. I am very restless. I want to begin the task before me. But just now I have to stick here. And if the plan I suggested to you can be carried out I shall not mind going to St. Tropez two weeks later.

What you say about the scum in our movement is only too true. We are certainly cursed with the leavings from other social groups. I too have been thinking why they come to our movement. Is it because we have never stressed sufficiently the sense of responsibility? Or because we stressed too much the importance of the individual? What is it? Our tragedy is not only that we have so many wretched people in our ranks. It is even more so that they are so densely ignorant. Even the best of them remain terribly dull and stupid. Take for instance the Toronto group, among the best in Canada. It is unbelievable how ignorant the comrades are, Langbord, Seltzer, Steinberg and the rest. In fact the only person who reads is Dessler. He at least is hungry for knowledge. The others do not even want to know. And the pettiness among them, the back-biting, the gossip about each other, the envy if anyone has a cent more. It is too appalling for words. No wonder they can accomplish so little. Yet as I said the Toronto bunch is among the most active.

As to the Freedom business it is certainly horrible. And most horrible that people like Turner, Mme Tcherkesov, Wees and

others of the older group go in for the venom against Keell. I tried my damndest when I was in England to get them together, to get them to realize that it is cruel to keep up a feud even after our common enemies have made peace. But it was of no avail. I wrote Mre Tcherkesov yesterday urging her to let the dead bury the dead. But I doubt whether it will have the slightest effect. It seems to me Anarchists are more violent in their hatred than people holding other beliefs. I am at a loss to explain why it is. Well, dear Rudolf you and I will have to go our own way to the end. We know that our ideal is beautiful in spite of some [of] its adherents. Perhaps because it is so beautiful and so radiant the time for its real appreciation has not yet come and will not in our life time. What does it matter? It has sustained us through every pain and sorry. For to is the ideal has been real, ever alluring and fascinating. Hasn't dear Rudolfchen.

Give Milly my deep love. I got her last letter. I knew before I left Toronto that her sister had quite a siege of illness in the family. I am really a pig, she sent \$10 towards the fund which I should have acknowledged ages ago. I have not yet done so. But will in the near future. How I would love to see Milly. Is she going to the Congress with you? I should think it ought not to be difficult to get a French visa for her. I must enquire. Because if it could be gotten and Milly gets as far as Liège she simply will have to come here and then go as my guest for a month to St. Tropez. It would help to build her up very considerably. Don't you think it might be done? Remember how much Liebenstein helped her. Well, St. Tropez is a thousand times more marvelous.

I am expecting Mrs. Cornelissen and Sasha K's little girl. T[h]ough why she should be called Sasha K's I don't know. What a rotter than woman has become. Her stunts in America, her articles about the duty of woman in the home and to the man are so terrible they made me want to scream. Peter's daughter. Great heaven it is terrible.

So, stick to your initial plan. Find authors of books on various problems connected with Anarchism, and that they should write then under the sign of 1928, i.e. after wars and revolutions, and not under that of the XIXth century.

### **[Emma Goldman to Max Nettlau—April 22, 1928]**

Paris, April 22nd, 28.

Dear Comrade, I got your letter of the 12inst, some time ago but it was waiting to get your replies to the "Questions and Discussions." The latter came a day before yesterday. You are a marvel. How you can write by hand 20 pages with all the other writing you do is beyond any understanding. Writing must come very easy to you, or you could not achieve such a feat. No wonder you are at a loss to explain my reluctance of writing for our papers when I have other work before me. I simply could not write so easily. That's why I can no do different writing at the same time.

However, when I wrote you that it will not be possible to be a contributor to Freedom while I write my memoirs I did not mean that I would not contribute occasionally, provided some theme will come up which will arouse my interest, or indignation. Largely he latter is necessary for me to be able to write on a subject. I have I think explained to you that unless I am in the movement, actively engaged to meet the various issues that come up I simply can not write. And I will be out of the movement while I am in St. Tropez, or while I write my memoirs. Now unless something very startling happens in the world during that time, some important issue I will not be sufficiently interested to write articles. As I said, if writing came as easy as it evidently comes to you that would be another matter. But writing to me means drudgery, terrible agony of mind and

guard) a chance to have their say?" This question seems to us so much in contradiction with the plan you yourself exposed that I am now puzzling as to the actual aim you have in mind.

Of course, you can give yet another chance to, say, Nettlau to write a volume on Bakunin or on Anarchist bibliography; you can give another chance to Grave to write on Anarchism from the standpoint of the world war; you can give another chance to Faure to write another Universal Sorrow. But—when they have had their chance—will you be satisfied that, at last, you have the real answers to the real questions?

Is it not much safer—and much more to the point—to place the problem the other way round? We will give a chance to those who can actually answer these questions IN THE RIGHT SPIRIT. And if the old ones cannot answer in that spirit, well—they will have no chance (as a matter of fact, the old ones have always a chance to get their things published, while the young ones have a hard fight before they can manage it).

You say—and this is quite a new proposition—It would be good to have partial answers published “in our press” under the pen of our old guard. What is “our press”? Is not the old guard, as well as the young guard, ventilating its views in our press? Why, pick up any anarchist or syndicalist newspaper, and you will find nothing but old and young ventilating their opinions. But how will you follow up all this? It is impossible. It is just because I happen to read now and then what our old ones have to say in the year of our Lord 1928, that I conclude that they are hopelessly obsolete.

If, on the other hand, you want to “test” the old men at round table conferences—you will never do anything... The “Plus Loin” group is still discussing the War and is still proving that they were right.

The old ones are writing all the time. Let us search elsewhere. Or—have a review specially reserved for the ventilation of great problems. But such a review will cost a lot and will be read by a very few.

Please dear do not delay in writing and tell me frankly what you think of my suggestion and what can be done to have you present.

### **[Max Nettlau to Emma Goldman—April 5, 1928]**

April 5, evening, 1928

Dear comrade E. G.,

I just found your letter. What a pity as to my arrangements. They are so fixed now as to make me leave here about April 24, to be in Spain about April 29 and to stay, as I have been invited to do, for four weeks or will it become a month. Two things might happen: unwelcome reasons which make me leave Spain before the end of May—or pleasant reasons making me outstay the month for a very few days.

I will be back here about June 9, as very good friends travel here just then and I must meet them (not comrades; but all this is long since arranged and I cannot get back from it).

This leaves me a latitude of some few days, 2 or 3 in Paris, time to go from one of the few old friends to the other—and of course to time be in a little party of holiday makers as then, the week after Whitsentide [Sunday 28, Monday 29—and before and after].

So May 31 or June 1 or 3 would be practical days for a picknick. For is it not better when our friends have their own affairs off their mind and enjoy the picknick after: you will get R., but certainly not Ch.[?] to have an open mind for something except their affairs before these have not come off. [Besides] their impressions will be interesting to hear.

The sufferer would be you, delaying departure for the South; but this season is just the very best of the year and is pleasant anywhere. Do you know the gardens of Bagatelle, an enclosure within the Bois de Boulogne (northern side)?—There used to be

splendid hyacinths there in early spring—it is an oasis within the Bois de Boulogne oasis.

So either I will have to miss the picknick or I should do my very best to be present, if it takes place in the middle of the week beginning by Withsunday, May 27.

I heard by a Paris letter and read in an Italian Paris paper, that S. Faure is in a hospital, before two operations even, considered grave, if not ominous.

If there is any theoretical subject on which I could try to form an opinion here before my departure, it would be of interest to hear of it—for in Spain I will live in the period of from 60 to 30 years ago and may also look about me for Spanish life and scenery, but will not think of theories—whilst in these few weeks before I could spend some time over it.

I am sorry on your decision about the English paper. I think you interpret my meaning in a way too sweeping—I consider Keell able to do all work concerning the paper (except setting it up, which, but age, he has earned the right to abstain) and I think he would be willing to do it and do it conscientiously as he did everything. This could have worked, if by your and A. B.'s monthly articles, letters or notes the paper had some solid, attractive features, interesting also you American friends who would like to hear you talk, of other matter also than Russian prisoners. Perhaps part of it could have been what you also write occasionally for Freie Arb. Stimme. I thought you both must feel—whatever your daily occupations are—every few weeks the wish to speak up on some matter of actuality—and Fr. would have been one of your platforms for this.

Besides the paper could have been strengthened by literary help from John T., G. Cores and some of the young people not making their appearance (in the Bulletin No. 1) etc. I fear it would have to miss the help of Mrs. F. T. and W [ ], as these are 'diehards' in a cause which they consider the right one.

I never thought for a moment that you or A. B. or both should live in London and be absorbed by the paper as you had been

a still stronger conviction in the minds of those whom we are trying to win over to our ideas, that we are really utterly incapable of going beyond generalizations and beautiful phrases about a wonderful millennium.

Personally, I would not like such an experiment. I'd rather have no new literature than do something that might show to the world that we do not learn anything.

There are, I am certain, no more than barely half-a-dozen comrades of the old guard, all the world over, that could be of any use in giving us something valuable (in the sense of your propositions). And I am as certain that as many, if not more, could be found in the various countries who belong to the younger generation and who could give us as good, if not better, replies to the questions for which we are seeking answers.

You see where, according to my poor judgment, lies the danger of what the Frenchmen call a "four". And we have had enough failures in our ranks to have sufficient enthusiasm left to prepare yet another one.

Hearty greetings,  
Your Sania

### **[Alexander Schapiro to Emma Goldman—April 21, 1928]**

21. IV. 1928

Dear Emma,

I cannot help thinking that all I said in my letter to you is eminently practicable, possible and probable. The who question lies in the problem whether the old guard is actually capable of replying to modern conundrums. I think NOT and, therefore, I leave them well alone, unless you want to have just another book or pamphlet on questions outside the scope you have yourself laid down. You ask: "Why not give them (the old



2) Is Anarchism a driving force or a social system? (If it is a driving force, propaganda only is sufficient; if it is a social system, one needs, besides propaganda, a method to bring about that system and make it workable in everyday life.)

I accept your subdivision, but would like to add to it one other item: The question of Anarchism and War—Civil War, Class War and other wars.

As you see, I have no quarrel with your “considerations”, as set forth in your circular. But I do have a very serious objection to your letter which accompanied that circular. It refers to the direction in which you will be searching the answers to all these questions. You seem to be choosing the line of least resistance. You intend only to apply to those who, methinks, will be unable to reply to the questions unless in the same old way, i.e. as they already had replied to them in the past—by not replying at all, but by circumnavigating the protruding angles of our “Weltanschauung”.

Among the names you mention, there are those who never were able to concretize Anarchism, but who always loved generalizing. They may possess a beautiful pen, but mere attractive phraseology will not reply to the plain questions put by the plain man.

Others, again, have learned nothing and continue to stick to their old, rusty guns.

I would rather start searching in the various countries those who, belonging to at least one generation younger than our old fogies, have actually learnt from the various events of the last 20 years and are capable enough of setting forth problems in a modern way (inasmuch as you speak of our attitude to modern life). Their names may not be as well-known as those of the old guard. Publishers may jibe at the publication of stuff from such writers from the standpoint of mere “Sales”; yet, I am convinced that any start in the direction you wish the work to be carried out, if it is to be done by the old guard, may bring about another set of superficially interesting books, but will call forth

by M. E.—That was a magazine, and F. is a small monthly, but of such good stock that the very best people should gather round it and just not let it be swamped by the [ ] crowd.

Even the small Bulletin shows such a cooperation of good elements, you with them—why should this not continue?

Large installments of A. B.’s dialogues (as in F. A. St.) would be a good attraction—and article of actuality, not Russian, by you as well—an article based upon his experience by Turner then—in this way people would learn that a good strong paper is here again, not a languishing one—and the question of the modernizing of some of our ideas might be raised and put up for discussion, and all that.

I still hope that something of this kind will be done and it would be useful in any case to try to broaden and deepen the ideas of the small circle of friends of [ ], inspiring them in this way to do more, everyone in his way—they must see a new purpose for them, not the old routine.

I thought you would like to have such a platform, as you often complain of the magazines, even the Am. Mercury, where you are not quite free to speak up—here you would be free and welcome and this ought to pave the way for a more general recognition, as you are—in my belief—overmuch identified with Russia or American matters or the drama and not sufficiently know as e.g. the last chapter of your Russia book or A. B.’s anticlimax etc. show you as general libertarian thinkers who have very broad and actual things to say.

I thank you so much for writing to F. Arb. St.—somehow, by magnetic response to my thought wars or so, J. C. has since given to me a sign of life again in a letter date at one date and posted exactly 20 days later...

Many thanks and hoping we may meet once more: happy Easter.

Yours sincerely,  
M. N.

## [Emma Goldman to Leon Malmed—April 11, 1928]

Leon, my Dearest.

No letter from you this week. What can be the matter? I wrote you last week. There is nothing new here except what the enclosed copy of my letter to Rudolf will tell you. It is this which will keep me in Paris much longer than I care to remain. Not that Paris has ceased to be fascinating. I could be here ever so long and not tire of its beauty. But I feel restless about my memoirs. I'd like to get to work. That I can only do when I settle in St. Tropez. But the project about which I wrote Rudolf is very important and if I can carry it through it will be worth the extra two weeks.

I have already had an reply from R. He will try his utmost to come. Nettlau can not be here before the end of May and we can not wait so long. It will therefore have to be without him. And of course without Malatesta. He could never get out of that damn black shirted country. It is understood dearest that no one must know of the project until it is completed, so please do not mention it to anybody. I only wanted you to know why I have to remain here until the latter part of May, or rather about the 22nd.

I hope things are improving with you. I mean your business and other numerous affairs. I wish with all my heart that the day is not far when you load and burdens will be lifted. I wonder how your health is not that the warm weather is starting. Write to me dear. I think of you so much and what joy you could have in Paris. But will you ever be able to get away? I wonder.

Lovingly,  
E.

ered to be larger (though this also may have been an exaggeration).

Here we ought to look the facts in their face and not delude ourselves mutually.

14/4/28

## [Alexander Schapiro to Emma Goldman—April 19, 1928]

April 19th, 1928

Dear Emma,

Here are the few remarks I have to make on your "Suggestions for Discussion":

I quite agree with your introductory considerations but would mainly lay stress on the demand "to know how it (Anarchism) will work and how it is to come about". I think that, as far as Anarchist theory is concerned, we can fairly well rely upon Bakunin, Kropotkin, Proudhon, etc. We have also sufficient popular expositions on Anarch. in the various languages. But we have very little—whether books or pamphlets—as to the practicabilities of Anarchism and the ways and means to reach Anarchy the Anarchist stage of Society. And what we have (e.g. P.K.'s Conquest of Bread, J. Grave's "L'Anarchie, son but, ses moyens" and "La Société Future") does not give an answer to the questions that are now put to us. At best, they are answers to the questions that the authors had put to themselves.

Therefore, the center of gravity of the new literature is to be in the solution of problems and not in the exposition of new theory.

As corner stones I would consider the following lines of study:

- 1) Anarchism and the idea of Classes.

in some countries. But, instead, the intellectual corruption of the working class has set in by transforming socialism into social democracy, into bolshevism, by fostering protectionism, which engendered nationalism, which sowed the seed of wars, all this bringing about a state of enslavement everywhere under other forms.

In this state of things, we are forced to live and necessarily we cannot produce men with the free mind and hopeful spirit and expanding talent of those whom I call the socialist and anarchist classics. So much more we must preserve these classics, make them one of the main bulwarks for our most urgent work: that of creating an anarchist mentality—love and sympathy and toleration for anarchism, not one category of sympathy only: full acceptance (and then, from this pinnacle insults and sneers hurled at all who do not fully accept), but pleasure in and thankfulness for every degree of sympathy shown by such who are not or not yet fully convinced, but who feel respect before the anarchist aspirations and do not strive to interfere with them.

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This leads to the discussion of (8): “Means and ways of beginning now the education and preparatory work of inspiring the revolution with the Anarchist spirit and ideals” and (4): “Have we not over-emphasized the destructive side of revolution at the great cost of its constructive phases?”

Before the constructive and the destructive phase come the really creative educational phase which must create the anarchist mentality in sufficient quantity and quality that there will ever be a destruction and a reconstruction in our sense. Whether it will be possible to create this anarchist mentality on a large scale before destruction or collapse in a general way and reconstruction by very many others, not by anarchists alone, takes place, this remains to be seen—at present there is only an infinitely small chance of it, formerly the chances were consid-

## **[Emma Goldman to Max Nettlau—April 12, 1928]**

Paris. April 12/28

Dear Comrade,

Here is the syllabus which I want you to take under your consideration at your earliest possible convenience. Please send me your comments, suggestions or additional questions. If possible I should like them in French as well as English or German. That will save double work. Everything I will receive from the comrades I am sending the syllabus to will be submitted to the gathering when it takes place. How in as much as you will not be able to attend perhaps you will give us your considerations in writing.

Hoping to hear from you soon.

Fraternally,

E. G.

## **[Max Nettlau to Emma Goldman—April 12, 1928]**

April 12, 1928

Dear comrade E. G.,

To-day your letter came. I also obtained the French transit visum without the smallest difficulty—sans arrêt, for which I did not even ask. I heard that I will have to get in Spain the French visum to go back and then I will claim to stay a few days in France. So—if I remain 4 weeks in Spain, at the end of May or quite the beginning of June I may be able to see you at St. Tropez, if you think my presence (always pleasant to me, of course) can be of the slightest more general use.—All is now so arranged with Spain that I cannot alter the dates (end of April to the end of May), unless I fall ill myself or the young girl here,

my landlady, quite alone, falls ill: this, and nothing else, would be force majeure.

So I must miss the picnic, which, of course, ought not to keep you from your work longer than can be helped.

If there are questions, when ought I to think of them? I could do so now, the sooner the better, and if anything is sent to me, here, posted in Paris, latest the afternoon of Thursday, April 19 it will reach me here, and if it is posted in Paris the latest: Wednesday, April 25 afternoon and addressed to:

Mr. Jacques Gross  
(pour M. Nettlau)  
1, rue de Colombier,  
Servette,  
Genève, Suisse,

it will reach me in Geneva and I might have time to reply from there.

In Spain I expect to be very, very busy with the years 1868 to 1893 and will be accessible even to the years up to 1907 at an emergency and up to 1917 at the last extremity—but will be sealed up to the present.

Still, please keep my address for careful letters—it is that of the editor of the anarchist *Revista Blanca*, therefore a very conspicuous address:

Senr. Federico Urales  
por Max Nettlau  
calle Guinardó, 37  
Barcelona, España.

I hope to hear on those questions before leaving Vienna, then could think of it on the journey (a slow journey as far as Geneva—direct from there) and write from Geneva. (There I could also talk with Bertoni, if he is in town or if I do not miss him).

There are, of course, many other ways of anarchist propaganda, but here the literary propaganda alone is under discussion and replies to inquirers. Here I see that much of the presentday literature is insufficient, and much of the earlier literature also—but the classical literature mentioned here is presentable and ought to be felt to be indispensable, as it has not to any large extent—to my knowledge (limited under my present circumstances)—been replaced by equally remarkable recent literature.

There is nothing antiquated in the mass of general ideas presented by these classics and the newcomer best begins by them, as they belong to a more simple, less trained and distorted period than presentday publications and this just makes them accessible to the newcomer, exactly as a student of art will begin by standard classical works of high value and not by modern freaks. From cubism to real painting there leads no road—from painting to cubism there leads a downhill road of degeneracy, interesting to observers who will then understand the passing character of modern freaks and the lasting value of real art in so much clearer a light. Similarly an observer of many features of presentday socialism in its degeneracy will be so dismayed that he will be unable, unfit, unwilling to go back to lofty early socialism, whilst the connoisseur of early socialism will maintain his admiration for it, his faith in it, and not be depressed by the present degeneration but try to do better.

The real reason of this degeneracy is the awkward fact that 100 or 50 or 30 years of capitalist evolution have passed since the early socialists and anarchists wrote their classical works and this immense intensification of capitalism and its evils, has necessarily reacted upon its victims, the working classes, in a most terrible way. Capitalism first devoured the workers physically—in the century up to about 1880 when labour was almost unprotected physically. Since then, in the very interest of capitalist production, the physical decay in Europe was somewhat stayed by all sorts of reform, beginning even earlier

of the past which show intelligent discussion of the ideas, details of the movement, the devoted effort of so many of the persecuted, popular appeals in lively pamphlets, etc.

All this could not be done in any better way and the inquirer would feel that courteously and delicately the veil is lifted, that he is introduced to the best of people of an elevated standard of intellect and feeling; he would also see wonderful books giving insight in so many spheres of human evolution like *L'Homme et la terre* by Reclus, *Mutual Aid* by Kropotkin, the *Oeuvres* of Bakunin. He would be introduced to concomitant authors of antistatist character like Spencer, Guyau, Whitman, Tolstoi, to works of anarchist enthusiasm and imagination like the *Humanisphère* of Déjacque and the *Jours d'Exil* of Coeurderoy, and if he then wishes to see a more modern, broad and very thoughtful anarchism, he would examine the *Ideario* of Mella, the *Selected Works* of Voltairine de Cleyre, the *Aufruf zum Sozialismus* of Gustav Landauer and works by A. B. and E. G., and some others.

In all these works the inquirer would find ideas and feelings which will never become antiquated—and he will, just as he does in reading any classical author of any literature, deduct what is necessarily old fashioned and local. I hardly believe that at the present day the study of literature begins by the books of the year or the day, nor that the study of classical standard works is abandoned because the classics are not up to date. We do not look for modern information in Shakespeare and in Goethe, but for impressions to give our mind the very best basis to form our sense of the imaginary and of the beautiful—similarly to form a true anarchist mentality we must refer to the very best there is in our literature, and this will give the basis from which to think further, to think out our own anarchism ourselves. This everyone must do and to pick out his own opinions from strange pamphlets, lectures or other occasional sources is a very poor surrogate and breeds parrots and not free anarchists.

Now do you want a new spring or are you hunting for another prehistoric burialground, more authentic than that utterly questionable [ ]? In the latter case, old Grave would be of great use—as for heralding a new spring, I cannot imagine him in the spring angel's garbs.

I have a similar opinion of Faure who has no original mind, but is like that universal machine that will produce anything—you put a these into it and it will produce 3, 6, 12, or 25 arguments pro, arguments contra, all well arranged etc. Faure always proclaimed economic monotheism (communism)—now, in 1928, he proclaims the *synthèse* (dear to Voline), economic polytheism (several economic conceptions admitted on equal terms) and proves it, as usual, up to the [ ] by the always well arranged arguments. This is a little late and not very imposing.

I hope that I may speak plain to you and that these remarks are between us and A.B. I esteem immensely, personally and privately, our friend M. G. [Marie Goldsmith] and know her also, as constantly active—and more than ever—in real science (she gave me her *Comparative Psychology*, her special subject) and fully up to the requirements of science, a critical spirit and constant progress—but in ideas I consider here conservative, that is spellbound by duty and discipline: here she is before all rigorously conscientious to be disciplined as she was in the Russian movements, so dear to her—here she wishes to move when all move, when Kropotkin in his grave moves, and not an instant before—she would think that sacrilege to the cause to do an independent step, to have an independent thought.—If she were applying her scientific mind to our cause, she could do the best things—but she feels bound to apply to it her most faithful heart, modest submission to the generally accepted attitude—and this excludes any new thought, unless it is very generally agreed upon, not before.

Dr. Pierrot is very, very intelligent—is too intelligent for the usual movement and must look skeptical at blind faith and simplicism (short cuts, sweeping statements, imminent expecta-

tions and all that). This must keep him at some distance from the real movements—and I say even: so much the better, for movements often look best seen from some distance. He could do excellent work, if he could be brought to concentrate his effort on a given intellectual task.

R. R. [Rudolf Rocker] is seeing things very clear now, having gone through much disillusioning experience destroying the simplicist conceptions in his mind and breeding a keener, wider, deeper insight into things which is one of the hopeful assets of our movement.

As to Shpo [Schapiro], will he ever look up from his untiring organizing work to more general spheres of thought?

Well, I hope the best, but as one must be kept back by routine, retained by the fear to appear less revolutionary if he sacrifices one of the dogmas or looks facts right into the face, bound on enforcing his own opinion—or ready to talk and negotiate for days until something is generally agreed upon, everybody must be quite ready to be tolerant, dispassionate, ready to agree to disagree, ready to adjourn controversial matters and first to consider what unites and not what separates us,—able to see the right proportion of things, the important and the unimportant, etc.

If friends can make up their minds to do this, then a discussion is possible—also things generally agreed upon need not be mentioned. And the present situation of politics and economics and before all of general mentality must be faced with a real knowledge of its real state in most parts of the earth.

To the best of my belief I think only you, A. B., R. R., Dr. P-t, a comrade in France whom you may not know, Santillan in S. America. Malatesta, Bertoni and, indeed, Keell (whom you underrate a little) capable of doing useful work of this kind.

You do not mind—I think I may be sure of it—these plain remarks. They are just a forecast of mine from my limited point of observation. May all turn out better than expected.

then there is nothing better than our old literature, read in the proper spirit. There is nothing better than Bakunin and Reclus and a part of the work of Kropotkin to show this to an intelligent reader. For no one, or very few (Voltairine de Cleyre, e.g.) have written with such full conception of the totality of the subject, its high and permanent importance, and with such fervour, intellect, tact and talent.

Of course, the inquirer must be properly informed of the time and conditions under which these authors wrote, and this includes the frank admission of the propagandists that they were, as every author is, children of their age, that their ardour carried them into too rosy expectations sometimes, that they attributed, 60, 40, 20 years ago greater revolutionary will, energy and other qualities to the workers than they really seem to have etc.;—also that Kropotkin, in particular, was too much carried away by his personal ideas and thus is a scientist in some of his works only, an individual utopian in others. This latter qualification belongs absolutely to all our authors who elaborated forecasts, programs, plans for the constructive period and to a large extent also to those who expressed opinions on the destructive period (because here we know quite well what must be destroyed, but we ignore the forces then at work on all sides and hence can only formulate individual guesses and express personal wishes, advice and warnings).

If thus the existing old valuable literature is described to the inquirer in a critical spirit and not praised before him indiscriminately, by this literature (its masterpieces which ought to be available in good, full and cheap editions, books, not pamphlets alone) a reader can form an excellent idea on the general aims of anarchism, the fallacies of the authoritarian systems (from capitalism to social democracy and bolshevism) and the intellectual and moral equipment of a thinking anarchist. If he wished, he can be further informed on A. by historical works, by works demonstrating the fallacy of the State principles, by literary and artistic work in the free spirit, by the best papers

authoritarian mentality, living among themselves as they wish to live and upon adequate means of working for themselves, provide they coerce nobody and do not interfere with others.

This reply leaves to the inquirer the fair chance to range with one of these sections—comrades, sympathizers and a milder quality of opponents (such who, if defeated, will not have destruction or slavery before them, but the chance to live with their friends, thought without workers and servants, in their own way, until they see the good side of the free society and come over to it).

If the inquirer then wants to know, how Anarchists will live, he ought to be made to see that this will be their own affair and that, evidently, no cut and dry program can be placed before him, as it would be absurd to formulate programs beforehand.

He will see this for himself when he feels and thinks as an Anarchist.

But he can approach to this by becoming a student and then a sympathizer.

As a student he will see that the emancipation required cannot only be political (as in the past political revolutions) nor only social (as the socialist agitation of a century and over proclaims with narrow exclusivism),—it must also be intellectual (free thought, real science, criticism and an open mind) and moral (personal conduct, toleration, reciprocity, kindness) and apply practically to all features of individual and collective life.

This implies the exclusion of the opposites of freedom—authority and submission, obedience and servile spirit. It implies also the abandonment of all that is proclaimed stable, permanent, and of the totality of such institutions, the State. As in research and science a new better insight continually and peacefully replaces a less perfect opinion or conclusion so in every function of individual and social life new forms, new expressions step in the place of the older ones, peacefully as night follows day and dawn follows the dark.

If the inquirer wishes really to see all this by himself,

—But how will new studies, etc. be possible, if you are so determined to plunge into your very important biographical work? I understand well that it is a great pleasure to be able to devote entire attention to a subject and see the results grow day by day. But there is this, one of the most glorious inventions or habits acquired: the end of chapters. In the drama—which in Greece, if I am not wrong, was acted throughout, even entrecactes are very pleasant features originating by and by—just as in writing, consecuting on the earliest inscription, by and by [aliness] and interpunction were introduced —. At the end of good chapters the mind is drained like a well used by a huge caravan, and some interval is necessary for filling it up again.

Besides repose from work by work of another kind is the habit of the best of men—preferred by them to repose by idleness.

For both reasons I foresee many intervals in your biographical work and these will be used for other good purposes. Articles for R.to Fr. would in most cases be just as welcome to the readers of Freedom, just as they probably would also appear in F. A. St. [*Freie Arbeiter Stimme*] and, sometimes, in the Syndicalist. But let this be as it may happen to turn out. I shall not think small of the an. papers: just because they are mostly left to themselves, they are unimportant, unoriginal; where then will new comrades come from? James Guillaume and Kropotkin knew what they were doing when from 1868 to 1914 they gave their greatest care to produce quite exceptional papers in the Jura, at Genève, Paris and London Freedom, 1886-1914, and you had a similar American series from 1895 (Firebrand) onward. Landauer had the wonderful Sozialist series of 1891 to 1915. Santillan has the remarkable Suplemento since 1922, the finest record of anarchist thought in these present years.

There were always a very few papers which attracted the best talents, because they had an efficient mind producing and arranging the paper with special care.—This is why I trouble so

much about Freedom keeping up this standard and not dropping into insignificance.

The American Mercury seems not wishing to permit anarchism to come before the public on a par with other recognized ideas—it is not recognized by them, as it was already in 1884 and 1888 by the English reviews, when Reclus exposed his ideas in *The Contemporary Review* and Kropotkin, since 1888, in *The Nineteenth Century*.

Was not the situation rather similar? Kropotkin had before that written for years on Russian persecutions and tsarism, just as you and A. B. write since 1922 on Russian persecutions and bolshevist-tsarism.

Then the Lyons trial (1883) attracted general interest to anarchism—and this opened the English reviews to Reclus and Kropotkin.

Did not the S. and V. martyrdom of 1927 attract much wider attention than the Lyons trial of 1883—and why does the parallel end here? Why did in such a situation the Mercury consider anarchism not worthwhile to be placed before its readers in an authentic form, by one who is so widely known as you are?—Was it all because Kropotkin was an authentic Russian prince and you do not claim to be a Russian princess?—It was rather, I believe, because our ideas are no longer before the public in an original and modern way. This is not felt by most of the comrades themselves and so they live in a fool's paradise. For this, then, exceptional work in a few really good papers is one of the necessities. This must be done first, I believe—for otherwise a larger public will be inaccessible to us, as the doorkeepers of the magazines shut their doors against opinions which they consider unimportant and irrelevant when they see them only propounded in inefficient antiquated form, oversimplistic. First one must turn out better work, then this work will call for attention.

—You do good work by helping the afflicted comrade who also is a real poetess, fully penetrated by the spirit of our ideas.

I hope she may do well again. I saw her a few moments only, years ago, in Winkler's office.

Now, once more, do not mind my open talk; I feel friendly towards all, but some are—in my opinion—more efficient to-day than others—some have had their day, some are still advancing: this necessarily differentiates them.

With my best greetings.

M. N.

### **[Max Nettlau to Emma Goldman—April 14, 1928]**

The suggestions for discussion express very well what is meant by this discussion, and need no augmentation nor modification, only replies which investigate each subject, thought not necessarily in the order followed in the questionnaire. Such replies will propose and explain and briefly give the motives of, the opinions of those who reply.

To inquirers (how it will work, how it is to come about, what Anarchism really is), we can, as before, in intelligent propaganda, only reply that A. is a way to arrange our personal and social life so as to exercise, reciprocally, to receive the maximum of the good which freedom and solidarity bring to those who are truly devoted to them—that to follow such conduct anarchists are necessary, then, at least, tolerant sympathizers or assistants living their own life in non-aggressive, non-interfering, non-intrusive forms (whichever they be) and, finally that violent, coercive, aggressive opponents (from the State to individuals of every description) must be kept in check, somehow (by securing, as a minimum, non-interference and adequate parts of social wealth and all other social rights from them,—but fighting their power, otherwise, in every way conductive to this end, until, when they are really defeated and rendered powerless, they can be let alone as relics of ancient