measures represent a return to the worst period of the Middle Ages and religious wars, and are undeserving of people who have taken it upon themselves to create a future society on communist principles? Whoever holds dear the future of communism cannot embark upon such measures… "Won't this be regarded as a sign that you consider your communist experiment unsuccessful, and that you are not saving the system that is so dear to you but only saving yourselves?"

–Peter Kropotkin, Letter to Lenin, December 21, 1920

The Russian Counterrevolution

CrimethInc.

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Peter Kropotkin

Peter Kropotkin was an old man by the time of the 1917 revolution. Desiring to legitimize Bolshevik authority with the reputation of a universally respected anarchist, Lenin maintained cordial relations with Kropotkin; Communist Party propagandists[1] took advantage of this to publicize the lie that Kropotkin was more or less in favor of Lenin's program. In fact, Kropotkin opposed their authoritarian program, as he made clear in a series of statements and protests. Far from endorsing Lenin's seizure of state power, Kropotkin is quoted as saying "Revolutionaries have had ideals. Lenin has none."

Kropotkin's funeral, on February 13, 1921, was arguably the last anarchist demonstration in Russia until the fall of the Soviet Union. Alexander Berkman, Emma Goldman, and many other prominent anarchists participated. They managed to exert enough pressure on the Bolshevik authorities to compel them to release seven anarchist prisoners for the day; the Bolsheviks claimed they that would have released more but the others supposedly refused to leave prison. Victor Serge recounts how Aron Baron, one of the anarchists who was temporarily released,addressed the mourners from Kropotkin's graveside before vanishing forever into the jaws of the Soviet carceral system.

> "Is there really no one around you to remind your comrades and to persuade them that such

[1] For example, V. D. Bonc-Brujevic, who included a highly suspect account of Kropotkin's meeting with Lenin in his Reminiscences of Lenin 1917–24.

methods, imposed by the center. Their seat in St. Petersburg will dictate the will of the party to all Russia and command the whole nation.Your Soviets and your other local organizations will become, little by little, simply executive organs of the will of the central government.In place of healthy, constructive work by the laboring masses, in place of free unification from the bottom, we will see the installation of an authoritarian and statist apparatus which will act from above and set about wiping out everything that stands in its way with an iron hand. The Soviets and other organizations will have to obey and do its will. That will be called 'discipline.' Too bad for those who are not in agreement with the central power and who do not consider it correct to obey it! Strong by reason of the 'general approbation' of the populace, that power will force them to submit."Be on guard, comrades!"Watch carefully and remember."The more the success of the Bolsheviks becomes established, and the firmer their situation, the more their action will take on an authoritarian aspect, and the more clear-cut will be their consolidation and defense of their political power. They will begin to give more and more categorical orders to the Soviets and other local organizations. They will put into effect from above their own policies without hesitating to use armed force in case of resistance."The more their success is upheld, the more that danger will exist, for the actions of the Bolsheviks will become all the more secure and certain. Each new success will turn their heads further. Every additional day of achievement by Lenin's party will mean increasing peril to the Revolution."

Contents

Golos Truda, The Voice of Labor

Golos Truda was a Russian-language anarchist newspaper founded by Russian expatriates in New York City in 1911. After the February Revolution toppled the Tsar, the Provisional Government declared a general amnesty for exiles, and the entire staff of *Golos Truda* agreed to move the periodical to St. Petersburg. They left Vancouver on May 26, 1917 on a ship bound for Japan. During the trip, the anarchists performed music, gave lectures, staged plays, and even published a revolutionary newspaper, *The Float*. From Japan, they made their way toSiberia and thence St. Petersburg. Their first issue in Russia appeared on August 11, 1917. The staff included Voline, future author of *The Unknown Revolution* , and Gregori Maksimov, who later authored *The Guillotine at Work: Twenty Years of Terror in Russia*.

The Bolsheviks banned *Golos Truda* in August 1918. The group founded another paper, but the secret police suppressed the group definitively in March 1921 with a wave of arrests.

Immediately after the October revolution, the editors of *Golos Truda* foresaw precisely how the Bolshevik seizure of power would end:

> "Once their power is consolidated and 'legalized,' the Bolsheviks—who are Social Democrats, that is, men of centralist and authoritarian action—will begin to rearrange the life of the country and of the people by governmental and dictatorial

Falcon, falcon,
Do not laugh at me now,
That I should find my destiny in jail,
I was higher than you in the heavens, above the earth,
I was higher than you and the eagle.

I saw many celestial bodies unknown to you,
I learned many great secrets;
I often spoke with the stars,
I flew as high as the bright sun.

But the day quickly passed and the next one came,
And I burned with a rebellious flame.
I was pursued by the enemies of freedom,
My brothers were the wind and thunder.

But once in the dark night of the steppe
During a fatal storm I became weak
And since then here I sit like a thief in his chains,
Like an unfaithful and captured slave.

Falcon, falcon, when you chance to fly
Into the limitless and mountainous space —
Don't forget to give the clouds my greetings,
Tell all that I shall break my chains,
That my life in jail is only a twilight nap,
Only a spectral day-dream.

—A poem Anatoli Zhelezniakov wrote in prison, summer of 1917

"Whatever may happen to me, and whatever they may say of me, know well that I am an anarchist, that I fight as one, and thatwhatever my fate, I will die an anarchist."

quoted in Voline, The Unknown Revolution

Introduction

Since the mid-19th century, anarchists have maintained that the key to liberation is not to seize the state but to abolish it. From Paris to St. Petersburg, from Barcelona to Beijing, one generation of revolutionaries after another has had to learn this lesson the hard way. Shuffling politicians in and out of power changes nothing. What matters are the instruments of rule — the police, the military, the courts, the prison system, the bureaucracy. Whether it is a king, a dictator, or a Congress that directs these instruments, the experience on the receiving end remains roughly the same.

This explains why the outcome of the Egyptian revolution of 2011–2013 was not all that different from the outcome of the Russian Revolution of 1917–1921 or the French Revolution of 1848–1851. In each case, as soon as the people who made the revolution stopped attempting to carry out social change directly and shifted to investing their hopes in political representatives, power consolidated in the hands of a new autocracy. Whether the new tyrants hailed from the military, the aristocracy, or the underclass, whether they promised to *restore order* or to incarnate the power of the proletariat, the end result was roughly the same.

Government itself is a class relation. You can't abolish class society without abolishing the asymmetry between *ruler* and *ruled* . The first condition for any government is that it must achieve a monopoly on coercive force. In struggling to achieve this monopoly, fascist despotisms, communist dictatorships, and liberal democracies come to resemble each other. And in order to achieve it, even the most ostensibly radical party must

ultimately collude with other power players. This explains why the Bolsheviks employed tsarist officers and counterinsurgency methods, why they repeatedly took the side of the petite bourgeoisie against anarchists, first in Russia and later in Spain and elsewhere. History gives the lie to the old alibi that Bolshevik repression was necessary to abolish capitalism. The problem with Bolshevism was not that it used brutal force to push through a revolutionary agenda, but that it used brutal force to crush it.

It's not particularly popular to acknowledge any of this today, when the flag of the Soviet Union has become a dim, receding screen onto which people can project whatever they wish. A generation that grew up after the fall of the Soviet Union has renewed the pipe dream that the state could solve all our problems if the right people were in charge. Apologists for Lenin and Stalin make exactly the same excuses for them that we hear from the proponents of capitalism, pointing to the ways consumers benefitted under their reign or arguing that the millions they exploited, imprisoned, and killed had it coming.

In any case, a return to 20th century state socialism is impossible. As the old Eastern Bloc joke goes, socialism is the painful transition between capitalism and capitalism. From this vantage point, we can see that the temporary ascendancy of socialism in the 20th century was not the culmination of world history foretold by Marx, but a stage in the spread and development of capitalism. "Real existing socialism" served to industrialize post-feudal economies for the world market; it stabilized restless workforces through this transition the same way that the Fordist compromise did in the West. State socialism and Fordism were both expressions of a temporary truce between labor and capital that neoliberal globalization has rendered impossible. Unfettered free-market capitalism is about to swallow up the last islands of social-democratic stability, like Sweden and France.

Anatoli Zhelezniakov

An anarchist sailor from Kronstadt, Anatoli Zhelezniakov first entered the stage of history in June 1917 during the defense of the Dacha Durnovo, a villa in St. Petersburg that anarchists had squatted to serve as a social center. The villa had belonged to the man who served as Governor-General of Moscow during the repression of the 1905 uprising, and the anarchists had opened it up to serve a wide range of working people including a bakers' union and the children of the surrounding neighborhood; nevertheless, the Provisional Government and the St. Petersburg Soviet opposed the occupation. Zhelezniakov was captured during a police raid on the villa and sentenced to 14 years in prison. A few weeks later, he escaped and resumed his participation in revolutionary activity, cooperating with the Bolsheviks and leading the actions that broke up the Provisional Government in the October Revolution of 1917 and dispersed the Constituent Assembly in January 1918. Aspiring to abolish all state structures, he got this far, at least.

When Trotsky imposed military discipline on the Red Army, putting tsarist officers in positions of authority and eliminating the system of self-government among the rank and file, Zhelezniakov rebelled and broke with the Bolsheviks. However, the Bolsheviks made peace with him when the White Army invaded Russia, just as they struck a temporary and opportunistic peace with Makhno.

Zhelezniakov was killed in the struggle against the White Army on July 26, 1919. After his death, the Bolsheviks dishonestly claimed him as one of their own.

stituting' itself for the Party, the Central Committee substituting itself for the Party organization, and finally the dictator substituting himself for the Central Committee."

–"Our Political Tasks," Trotsky, 1904

The future may hold neoliberal immiseration, nationalist enclaves, totalitarian command economies, or the anarchist abolition of property itself—or all of those—but it will be increasingly difficult to preserve the illusion that any government could solve the problems of capitalism for any but a privileged few. Fascists and other nationalists are eager to capitalize on this disillusionment to advance their own brands of exclusive socialism; we should not smooth the way for them by legitimizing the idea that the state could serve working people if only it were properly administered.

Some have argued that we should suspend conflicts with proponents of authoritarian communism in order to focus on more immediate threats, such as fascism. Yet widespread fear of left totalitarianism has given fascist recruiters their chief talking points. In the contest for the hearts and minds of those who have not yet chosen a side, it could only help to distinguish our proposals for social change from the ones advanced by Stalinists and other authoritarians.

Within popular struggles against capitalism, state oppression, and fascism, we should grant equal weight to the struggle between different visions of the future. Not doing so means assuming defeat in advance. Anarchists, Mensheviks, Socialist-Revolutionaries, and others learned this the hard way after 1917.

The good news is that revolutionary movements don't have to end the way the Russian Revolution did. There is another way. Rather than seeking state power, we can open up spaces of autonomy, stripping legitimacy from the state and building the capacity to meet our needs directly. Instead of dictatorships and armies, we can create grassroots networks to defend ourselves against anyone who wants to wield power over us. Rather than looking to new representatives, we can create horizontal networks of cooperation and mutual aid. This is the anarchist alternative, which would have succeeded in Spain in the 1930s had it not been stomped out by Franco on one side

and Stalin on the other. From Chiapas and Kabylia to Athens and Rojava, all of the inspiring movements and uprisings of the past three decades have incorporated elements of the anarchist model.

As the crises of our era intensify, more revolutions are bound to break out. Anarchism is the only proposition for revolutionary change that has not sullied itself in a sea of blood. It's up to us to update it for the new millennium, lest we be condemned to repeat the past.

This book brings together two texts published on the 100-year anniversary of the October Revolution.

The first part, "The Bolshevik Counterrevolution," originally appeared in Catalunya,[1] where outrage about the Stalinist betrayal of the 1936 revolution still simmers. An admittedly partisan and cursory overview, it has the virtue of summarizing a vast subject.[2]

The second part, "Restless Specters of the Anarchist Dead," is our own collection, though we owe the scholarship to our predecessors. We kneel, as the saying goes, on the shoulders of giants.

Together, they offer a brief survey of a century-old catastrophe that is still impacting our struggles today.

[1] It was published at segadores.alscarrers.org as "A cent anys de la contrarevolució Bolxevic: memòria històrica a prop de la destrucció de les nostres lluites."

[2] It leaves off at the opening of the Second World War, when most of the anarchists had been exterminated. For the rest of the story, we are forced to rely on conservatives like Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn—himself a twice-decorated war veteran and adherent of Marxism before his stint in the gulags embittered him. To those who celebrate Stalin for his part in defeating Hitler, we answer that the struggle against fascism would surely have gone better if all the anarchists and other anti-fascists Stalin and his cronies killed, incarcerated, or undermined had been able to participate. The fact that fascism was defeated by superpowers rather than by grassroots social movements took revolutionary social change off the table for several decades.

Leon Trotsky

Leon Trotsky himself deserves no tears from those who love freedom and egalitarianism, as he personally oversaw the butchery of count-less thousands of anarchists and other reb-els during the Bolshevik conquest of power. But early in his career, before he joined the Bolsheviks, he foresaw presciently exactly how Stalinism would arise from Lenin's approach—how the party would substitute its own conquest of power for the proletariat, and a ruthless dictator then substitute himself for the party. The All-Russian Congress of Food Industry Workers later confirmed this in March 1920, on the basis of experience: "The so-called dictatorship of the proletariat is really the dictatorship over the proletariat by the party and even by individual persons."

Despite this foresight, Trotsky still joined the Bolsheviks as a consequence of their appar-ent success in the revolution. When Stalin's lackeys butchered Trotsky with an icepick, it was poetic justice. Trotsky died because he failed to heed his own insights and above all because he broke solidarity with other foes of capitalism. He died because, like so many after him, he substituted pragmatism for principles, believing it would be more expedient to go rapidly in the wrong direction than to proceed slowly towards genuine liberation.

We can hardly remember him as a tragic figure, as millions suffered at his hands—but we can take his example as a cautionary tale.

> "In the internal politics of the Party these methods lead, as we shall see, to the Party organization 'sub-

wards, by means of any kind of authority whatsoever."

–Mikhail Bakunin, addressing the League of Peace and Freedom, September 1868

Part One: The Bolshevik Counterrevolution

A Predictable Disaster

The counterrevolutionary drift of the USSR was predictable. Bakunin foresaw just how a "dictatorship of the proletariat" would quickly turn into yet another dictatorship over the proletariat, 50 years before it occurred. In the following years, many other anti-capitalists arrived at the same conclusion. It was a pretty safe bet, considering how the leaders of the new dictatorship found their inspiration in another counterrevolutionary figure, Karl Marx.

We don't make this assertion lightly, denouncing as "counterrevolutionary" a person who, beyond any doubt, was important in anti-capitalist struggles. We wouldn't ever take such a step over simple disagreements in theoretical matters. It is only after a painstaking survey of the consequences of Marx'sactionsthat we arrive at this conclusion.

Marx implanted colonial and white supremacist attitudes in the heart of the anti-capitalist movement, and he broke the autonomy of this movement so completely that 150 years later we still haven't recovered.

To name a single example, Marx celebrated the US conquest of Mexico, using openly racist terms to contrast the "energetic" Yankees with the lazy and "primitive" Mexicans. His idea of dialectical progress shared the element of white supremacy with the liberalism of the day. He was convinced that the Western nations were the most advanced in the world and that all the other peoples would have to emulate Europe and follow the same path to liberate themselves. As such, he was an unapologetic defender of colonialism, which he recognized as an exer-

imprisoned or in exile, rigged majorities at the congresses, and finally attempted to kill off the organization entirely by moving its headquarters to New York when it became clear he could not control it. Afterwards, from the safety of his study in London, Marx con-tinued to mock Bakunin and others who risked their lives in uprisings while emphasizing that workers should join political parties and subject themselves to party leadership. Marx was no enemy of state oppression.

With the 20th century behind us, Bakunin appears to us as the Cassandra of the 19th century, warning us against the butcheries, betrayals, and gulags to come. Whatever his own shortcomings, he remains a voice from the grave, urging us to beware of anyone who proposes that the state could render us equal or give us freedom.

> "Liberty without socialism is privilege, injustice; socialism without liberty is slavery and brutality."
>
> –Mikhail Bakunin, addressing the League of Peace and Freedom, September 1867

> "I hate Communism because it is the negation of liberty and because humanity is for me unthinkable without liberty. I am not a Communist, because Communism concentrates and swallows up in itself for the benefit of the State all the forces of society, because it inevitably leads to the concentration of property in the hands of the State, whereas I want the abolition of the State, the final eradication of the principle of authority and the patronage proper to the State, which under the pretext of moralizing and civilizing men has hitherto only enslaved, persecuted, exploited and corrupted them. I want to see society and collective or social property organized from below upwards, by way of free association, not from above down-

Mikhail Bakunin

Although Bakunin passed away more than 40 years before the Russian Revolution, he predicted exactly what would come of Marx's authoritarian prescriptions for socialism. Those who attempt to excuse Marx, suggesting that Lenin failed to apply his instructions correctly, should take note that Bakunin saw the trage-dies of 1917 coming a half century in advance.

Scrutinizing Marx's conduct in the revolutionary struggles of the 19th century, rather than the books he wrote, we can see today what Bakunin saw then. Marx began his career in the 1840s by attempting to form revolutionary cabals, then purging everyone who did not toe his ideological line—especially working class thinkers like Wilhelm Weitling and Pierre-Joseph Proudhon who were more suspicious of the state than he was. Marx mocked Bakunin for attempting to foment an uprising in Lyons in 1870, though it was precisely the absence of other revolutionary footholds in France that doomed the Paris Commune in 1871. During the Paris Commune, Marx sent Elisabeth Dmitrieff, a twenty-year-old with no experience, to assume control of women's organizing in Paris, intending to supplant organizers like Louise Michel who had been active for decades. (After the Commune, Dmitrieff disappeared from radical politics, a casualty of authoritarian burnout.) After the Commune fell, Marx took advantage of the fact that the participants—most of whom did not subscribe to his politics—were slaughtered or in hiding to speak on their behalf, announcing that the Commune confirmed all of his theories. In the First International, Marx passed unpopular resolutions in closed-door meetings while the opposition were

cise of capitalist violence, but which he also believed was vital to the progress of "primitive" peoples.

Apart from his racism, Marx was an authoritarian complicit with bourgeois institutions. One of the strongest features of the workers' movement in the 19th century was its autonomy. It was a movement built by the workers themselves and within it the institutions of the class enemy had no place. Marx ruined all that with his obstinate insistence that in order to win, according to his theory—a theory which history has torn to shreds, a theory that predicted the anti-capitalist revolutions would occur in Germany and the UK, definitely not in Russia or Spain—the working class had to adopt the political forms of its enemy, organizing itself in political parties and entering the bourgeois institutions, the parliaments where monarchists and capitalists struggled for control of a power based solely in the subordination of the peasants and workers, a power that could not even exist without the continued domination of these classes.

Marx was accustomed to being sur-rounded by lackeys. When he realized that there were independent minds and contrary opinions within the International Workingmen's Association, that it was no longer his personal fan club, he conspired and made use of all the dirty tricks that have since become well-known methods of manipulating assem-blies in order to kick out all those who differed with him and who opposed the obviously erroneous tactic of creating political parties. This was not merely a conflict between two positions, Marxist and anarchist, nor was it a duel between Marx and Bakunin. Marx excluded not only anarchists but anyone who disagreed with him, including feminists like André Leó, participant in the Paris Commune.

As a result of the split, the majority of the International broke with the Marxist faction. Many people who are only familiar with oversimplified accounts centered on Marx assume that as soon as the headquarters of the International

were moved to New York, the organization was effectively finished, but in fact it was only the smaller Marxist splinter group that immediately became moribund. The majority of the International continued organizing together according to anarchist principles for half a decade more, as the Marxist historian Steklov was forced to recount in his *History of The First International*. It took five more years of continuous state repression to destroy the organization, and that only succeeded because Marxists and other statist elements of the labor movement refused to act in solidarity with genuinely revolutionary labor organizing.

Marx's controversial strategy—to convert the International into a tool for entry into bourgeois institutions via social-democratic parties—was an embarrassing failure, just as his critics predicted. The new parties wasted no time in selling out the working class to their new professional colleagues, the bourgeoisie. What's more, Marx's chief heirs, such as the Socialist Workers' Party of Germany, sent the working class off to the counterrevolutionary slaughterhouse that was World War I.

In the wake of the failure of authoritarian socialism, we should remember the undead of 1917, the anarchists who strove to warn humanity that statist paths towards social change will never bring us to freedom. Some of them, like Fanya and Aron Baron, were murdered in cold blood by au-thoritarian com-munists in the so-called Soviet Union. Others managed to survive, betrayed by their sup-posed comrades, to witness the totalitarian results of the Bolshevik coup.

Their voices cry out to us today from the grave. Let's listen.

Part Two: Restless Specters of the Anarchist Dead

Lenin: Butcher of the Working Class

From early on, Lenin was a leader of the Bolshevik ("majority") faction of the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party, which would later become the Communist Party.[1]

He was an intellectual from a bourgeois family who never stopped playing the role of manager. We can't deny that a person doesn't choose where they are born, and can decide to renounce their privilege and fight alongside the oppressed. But Lenin was the architect of a pseudo-revolutionary state that would be directed by his class. From the beginning, the USSR was a dictatorship of intellectuals and bureaucrats oppressing the exploited classes.

Lenin never abandoned his class interests. He called on the workers and peasants to rise up for the same reason that during the Revolution he appropriated anarchist discourses (in *The State and Revolution*, which scandalized the members of his own party who didn't understand that the text was simply a manipulative attempt to win the support of the masses and an alliance with the anarchists, who constituted a key force in the October insurrection). All of this was calculated to motivate the masses to serve as cannon fodder for his ambitions.

[1] Even the name, Bolshevik, is derived from a historical misrepresentation. It derives from a vote that took place in 1903 at the second congress of the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party. Lenin's faction of the party was calling for a more exclusive membership policy; they lost the vote 28 to 23, but later, after the Jewish Labor Bund and other participants walked out, Lenin described his faction as "the majority."

Lenin was even more authoritarian than Marx. As the leader of the Bolsheviks, he maneuvered to expel the Mensheviks, Bogdanovists, and other currents from the Party. He differed with the former because they favored freedom of opinion, whereas he believed that the entire Party must adhere to their leaders' dogmas and decisions. He differed with the latter simply because they represented a threat to his control of the Party. He alleged that Bogdanov wasn't an orthodox Marxist, but neither was Lenin; for years, he had appropriated the idea of the anarchists and the *esery* (Socialist Revolutionaries or SRs) that a revolution could be made in Russia without passing through a constitutional period.

On the eve of the Russian Revolution, Lenin was in contact with the secret police of the German Empire. It was only thanks to them that he was able to return to Russia amid the tumult of the World War. They also gave financial aid to his Party. In exchange, they expected Lenin to pull Russia out of the war, freeing up the Germans' eastern front.

In the end, Lenin was more faithful to the German imperialists than to the workers and peasants. Even though many other Bolsheviks were horrified by his proposed collaboration with Germany, the dictatorship that Lenin had already established within his Party prevailed. Without consulting the Polish and Ukrainian peoples, historically occupied by Tsarist Russia, Lenin ceded those territories to the German imperialists along with a huge bounty in money and raw materials that contributed to the slaughter of the working class on the Western front.

Contrary to the Leninist or Trotskyist version, which attributes all the brutality of the USSR to Joseph Stalin, the bloody repression of the worker and peasant classes and the effort to rebuild capitalism began in the first year of the dictatorship when Lenin was still in charge.

use them to monopolize the struggle. If they win a partial victory, they impose their monopoly by capturing state institutions that can serve to buy out or repress all the other sectors of the struggle. And if they fail, by having created a spectacular struggle in which they are the tragic protagonists, they can turn everyone else into spectators watching a mediatized combat between two hierarchical poles.

Liberation must be carried out by the oppressed. Revolution, by definition, must be self-organized, and above all the popular classes need to maintain the autonomy of their struggles with respect to the institutions of power.

We hold close all the revolutionaries and fighters who sacrificed everything in the struggles that came before us. We spit on the memory of those who took advantage of those struggles to rise to power, and those who tried to impose their unquestionable truth on everyone else, obstructing the self-activity of the very class that, hypocritically, they pretended to liberate.

Long live the Revolution of 1917! Down with all dictators, representatives, and politicians!

The Relevance of the Communist Counterrevolution

Recovering this historical memory is important for a variety of reasons. To begin with, it is important to remember our dead, to carry them with us, and to cast down the thrones their murderers have built atop their graves—to stop honoring as heroes those who betrayed revolutions and served as executioner to the oppressed.

This is important because historical memory is our library of revolutionary lessons, the communal apprenticeship that brings us closer to freedom. And if we store falsified volumes within this library, histories of lies, victories that never occurred, we will repeat the same mistakes time after time. By turning the people and the parties who strangled revolutions into heroes, we preserve completely unrealistic ideas about what revolution is and how to achieve it. If we think the state could be—or has ever been—a tool of the people capable of defeating capitalism, we create the perfect recipe for defeat: a revolutionary movement in which it is impossible to distinguish between the naïve and enthusiastic and the opportunists who are trying to climb the rungs of power.

A worrisome pattern exists on the Left. They sell off the future of the revolution by signing deals with the devil. Time after time, the authoritarian Left obstructs revolution-ary movements by implementing strategies that are predictable failures. The advantage of these strategies is that they permit those who

Timeline: A Revolution Derailed

The February Revolution of 1917 resulted in a parliamentary government immobilized by the unrealistic attempt to reform the old regime while protecting dominant interests. The October Revolution (which began on November 7, according to the modern calendar), was supposed to put an end to the power of the bourgeoisie and aristocrats and allow the self-organization of society via the *soviets* , assemblies of workers, peasants, and soldiers, which had appeared spontaneously in the 1905 Revolution and reemerged with the February Revolution.

On November 7, 1917,the Bolsheviks and their allies rose up in Petrograd, beginning the second revolution. On November 8, a detachment of anarchist sailors from Kronstadt, led by the anarchist Zhelezniakov and in coordination with the Bolsheviks, captured the Winter Palace, abolishing the Provisional Government.

The same Zhelezniakov was also chosen to lead a detachment that seized and abolished the Constituent Assembly in January of the following year. He led a flotilla and then an armored train battalion against the White Army during the Civil War. Although he protested the Bolsheviks' imposition of hierarchical measures and the restoration of tsarist officers within the Red Army, he was too valu-able as a military strategist to cast aside. The Bolsheviks invited him to rejoin them—he had gone to Crimea to fight against the Whites in an autonomous formation—and they assigned him the command of

the armored train campaign to halt the advance of the White General, Denikin. He died in combat in 1919.

Subsequently, it became clear that the Bolsheviks did not coordinate with anarchists out of a spirit of solidarity. On the contrary, they systematically assigned anarchists the most dangerous roles so that they would assume the physical and political consequences if things went poorly.

In November 1917, the Bolsheviks took advantage of a temporary majority they had in the Second Pan-Russian Congress of Soviets, thanks to the disorganization of the other parties after the coup against the Provisional Government, the Bolsheviks' able propaganda, and their political and intellectual profile (they didn't represent a majority within the working class, but they did get a majority of chosen delegates). At the Congress, they converted the Central Executive Committee into a largely independent government organ standing over the soviets. Previously, the Committee had been an organ devoid of state power that was only supposed to give continuity to the tasks of the Congress of Soviets. The Bolsheviks' maneuver turned it into the executive power of a new state. And this Committee, formed by delegates elected by delegates elected by delegates (the three layers of representation were the local soviets, the Congress of Soviets, and the Central Executive Committee) was controlled—inevitably—not by the people but by the most Machiavellian and opportunistic bureaucrats, which is to say: the Bolsheviks. Subsequently, the Party under Lenin's intransigent dictatorship had the new Central Executive Committee form the Council of People's Commissars, or Sovnarkom, which quickly became the supreme authority of the new state, in charge of reorganizing the economy and administering state affairs. And its chairman was—what a surprise—Lenin!

The Bolsheviks did not honor any of the other decisions of the Second Pan-Russian Congress of Soviets. They abandoned the entire opportunistic program they had used to attain a

because they knew they couldn't control a guerrilla war and such a conflict would have given the anarchists an important advantage, and they blocked the second to avoid upsetting the French government, which also had interests in Northern Africa. In both cases, Communist interests were not defeating fascism nor carry-ing out the revolution, but maintaining power and sabotaging their adversaries.

After winning the counterrevolution and installing a leader who would be faithful to them, Negrín, in May 1937, the USSR no longer had significant interests in Spain.

For that reason, starting in June 1937, they began drawing down their military assistance to the Republic. The tragic truth is that Stalin didn't want the Republic to win the war. On the one hand, he didn't want to trouble relations with France and Britain, who promoted a "non-intervention" policy designed to favor the fascists. And on the other hand, he wanted to prolong the conflict in order to convince Hitler of the need for a non-aggression pact.

The negotiations for the Molotov-Ribben-trop Pact began in April of 1939, just at the end of the Spanish Civil War. It was what Stalin needed to protect the USSR from a Nazi attack, and what Hitler needed to be able to attack France and avoid a two-front war. The Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact was an important prerequisite for World War II and another example of Nazi-Stalinist collaboration.

what was then the strongest anarchist movement in the world (they and the Japanese imperialists had already destroyed the movement in Korea), and also to liquidate dissident communist currents, above all the Trotskyists. Given that fascism had already arrived in Germany and Italy, Spain was an important refuge and a field of action for communists who had fled those countries.

For that reason, the NKVD—the Soviet secret police—began a feverish activity in Spain, liquidating thousands of Trotskyists, other dissident communists, and anarchists. Far from the romantic legends, the International Brigades were in large part a machine for attracting these dissidents and killing them in the most discreet context possible: on the battlefield. The Brigades were also used to repress peasant collectives in Aragón.

What's more, the Communists directly sabotaged anarchist and Trotskyist militias with the purpose of reducing their influence and feeding their propaganda campaigns in favor of "militarization": the imposition of elitist and counterrevolutionary hierarchies in one of the most important spheres of the social revolution. The obstruction and withholding of weapons carried out by all the forces on the Left were responsible for the militias get-ting bogged down on the Huesca and Teruel fronts. If those cities had been taken—a reasonable accomplishment given sufficient weap-ons—then Zaragoza probably also would have fallen to the antifascists, potentially turning the tide of the war. Dirty tricks and lack of solidarity on the part of the Communists also played a part in the fall of Mallorca, another decisive moment in the Republican defeat.

We can also add to the list the Commu-nists' arrest of Maroto, an effective guerrilla leader operating around Granada, and the Communists' blocking of the anarchist proposals to launch a large scale guerrilla war in the fascists' rear and to create an alliance with the anticolonial resistance in the Rif (Morocco), which would have undermined Franco's most important base. The Communists rejected the first proposal

majority of delegates—the agrarian program, the proposal for seeking a dignified withdrawal from the war, the decision to create a Constituent Assembly. Now that they had created the bureaucratic layers capable of legitimating their dictatorship, they no longer had to fight for the interests of the workers and peasants. Subsequently, the Congress of Soviets would do little more than rubber stamp the decisions of the Sovnarkom.

On December 5, 1917, the Bolsheviks established the Cheka, the secret police, who directed their activity against other revolutionary currents from the very beginning. The Cheka were led by Dzerzhinsky, a Polish aristocrat.

On December 22, 1917, the Bolsheviks began to negotiate with Germany and the other Central Powers, arrogating the authority to speak in the name of the whole of Russian society, as well as the peoples occupied by the Russian Empire.

On December 30, 1917, the Bolsheviks carried out their first operation of political repression. The Cheka arrested a small group of SRs, ostensible allies, including a delegate of the Constituent Assembly, who formed a part of the opposition.

In January 1918, the Bolsheviks abandoned the Constituent Assembly and orchestrated its suppression, together with the anarchists. Whereas the anarchists opposed the Assembly as a bourgeois organ that counter-acted the power of the soviets, the Bolsheviks had demanded the creation of the Assembly after the February Revolution and they had stood in the elections. They only turned against the Assembly once they were unable to win a majority.

In March 1918, the Bolsheviks signed a humiliating peace treaty with Germany that went against all the working class proposals for ending the war. They paid a massive war compensation and ceded control over various nations previously under tsarist domination (in effect, the Baltic countries, Poland, and Ukraine). In Ukraine, the peasants organized a guerrilla war and won many battles against the German imperialists, proving the viability of the proposal of anarchists and others for

"neither war nor peace," by which they meant ending the imperialist war but resisting any military occupation through revolutionary guerrilla tactics. Lenin imposed his rejection of this option, probably because he knew his elitist Party would be incapable of controlling a decentralized guerrilla campaign. He preferred the defeat and occupation of Ukraine over an uncontrolled revolution.

As a consequence, the SRs, an import-ant ally of the Bolsheviks, declared that the latter were German proxies and left the government.

In April 1918, the Cheka began its first extra-judicial executions in an operation against anarchists in Petrograd and Moscow. By the end of the operation, they had executed 800 without trials. Their rhetoric was to attack "class enemies," but their secret orders were to liquidate all anarchist organizations in the two principal cities.

On April 12, 1918, the Bolsheviks attacked 26 anarchist centers in Moscow, killing dozens and arresting 500. Threatened by the dramatic growth of the anarchist movement in Moscow, Trotsky and the Bolshevik press had carried out a media campaign in collaboration with the local bourgeoisie, accusing veteran revolutionaries of being "bandits" and "criminals" for expropriating bourgeois properties, even though these were put to the use of the revolution.

In June 1918, Trotsky abolished any kind of worker control over the Red Army, destroying the proletarian tradition that allowed soldiers to elect their officers and enjoy real equality. He restored the old hierarchies in the army—of aristocratic origin—and complemented them with a new ideological hierarchy upheld through the sinister presence of the Cheka at every level, destroying the capacity of the Red Army to function as a bastion of revolutionary ideas and turning it into a mere tool of the Party.

Contrary to the slogan denouncing "social fascism," it wasn't the Socialists who had much in common with the Nazis, but the Communists themselves. The Nazis' racial ideology was an import from the US, as is widely known. But not so many people remember that the organizational model of the Nazi dictatorship came from the Soviet Union itself. In order to set up their Gestapo—the secret police charged with political repression and counter-espionage—the Nazis studied the Cheka and the NKVD (successor to the Cheka estab-lished by Stalin). The Soviet secret police, which inherited many techniques from the tsarist Okhrana, were the most advanced in the world, with the possible exception of the British intelligence agencies. But these used techniques that were much too soft for Nazi needs. Many times, the Nazis arrested and tortured Soviet agents in order to learn how their counterespionage apparatus functioned, with the purpose of copying the model.

In 1935, when the KPD had been almost completely destroyed, suffering thousands of arrests and executions, the Comintern inau-gurated their next strategy without ever accepting responsibility for the Nazis' rise to power. The new strategy was the "Popular Front." But this was just as disastrous for revolutionary movements.

The prime example is the Soviet interven-tion in the Spanish Civil War. The USSR was slow to begin sending aid to the anti-fascist side. This was due in part to the fact that the Communist Party in Spain was tiny, even smaller than the non-Stalinist Workers' Party for Marxist Unification, or POUM.They weren't attentive to the fascist threat in Spain because they had few interests in Spain. Before sending aid, they wanted to make sure they could control the situation and profit from it in some way. To be precise, they didn't give military aid to the Republic; rather, they sold it, appropriating the entirety of the Spanish gold reserves, the fourth largest in the world at the time. And to a large extent, they sabotaged the war efforts. For the Stalinists, the Spanish Civil War was an opportunity to destroy

creased the cynicism of the German working class, cost the Communist Party a good deal of support, and gave more legitimacy to the Nazi argument that all the "reds" were agents of Moscow.

The German Communist Party aided the Nazi Party in much more direct ways, as well. Between 1928 and 1935—the critical era in the rise of the Nazi movement, when it grew from a small party into one capable of taking power—the Comintern, following Stalin's directives, declared that social democracy was equal to fascism, but that communists had to ignore fascism in order to dedicate all their efforts to combating other left-wing currents. The KPD followed this line with enthusiasm. On many occasions, Communist militants joined with Nazi stormtroopers to smash up the events of Socialists.

It is true that the Socialists used state power wherever they were in the government to repress the Communists, just as the SRs in the Russian Revolution also maneuvered to try and gain power, just as leftist statists across the planet seek to dominate others. The state is essentially a tool of domination and repression. But, on the one hand, collaboration with the Nazis represented an extreme of reprehensible practices, surpassing the dirty tricks used by the Socialists. And, on the other hand, the currents that didn't seek to conquer state power—anarchists and others—rejected such tactics.

In Prussia, the largest state in Germany, the Communists openly collaborated with the Nazis in 1931 to try to revoke the Socialist government. They said the Nazis were "work-ing class comrades." In 1933, the year the Nazis rose to power, the Communists effec-tively let them win. If they had joined forces with other left-wing forces, the Nazis would not have achieved a majority. But they were obsessed with destroying the Left in order to monopolize it, believing that they would rise to power after a Nazi government. Thälmann, leader of the KPD, coined the slogan, "After Hitler, it's our turn!"

As before, officers received status and high pay while the common soldiers became thralls, and anyone—officer or soldier—who spoke out against the regime would be shot.

Simultaneously, Trotsky carried out a mass recruitment of officers from the old Tsarist army. Under Bolshevik dominion, the Red Army became an aristocratic army. As a result of this initiative, in 1918 75% of the officers were former tsarists, and by the end of the Civil War that figure had climbed to 83%. Rather than fomenting leadership among the masses, the Bolsheviks returned authority to an elite.

On the contrary, all the prominent leaders of the anarchist formations in the Civil War—Maria Nikiforova, Nestor Makhno, Fyodor Shchuss, Olga Taratuta, Anatoli Zheleznia-kov, Novoselov, Lubkov—were chosen by their comrades according to their abilities, and they were workers or peasants, in contrast to the bourgeoisie, aristocrats, and intelligentsia who dominated in the Bolshevik camp. And they were among the most effective on the battlefield. While Trotsky suffered one defeat after another, Zhelezniakov and Makhno played decisive roles in the defeat of the White Army General Denikin. Subsequently, it was Makhno and his guerrillas who seized the Perekop Isthmus, the key stronghold of the Crimean Peninsula, the loss of which spelled defeat for White Army General Pyotr Wrangel. And in wide swaths of Siberia, anarchist guerrilla detachments, like those of Lubkov and Novoselov, played a key role in stopping the advance of the White Army in 1918 and 1919, even though it was the Red Army that shot them in the end.

In the same month, June 1918, the Party implemented their policy of "war communism." There was nothing communist about it; rather, it constituted the Party's monopolization of the entire economy. It wasn't workers and peasants who controlled the factories and the land, but bureaucrats ruling from faraway offices. This policy, aside from the nationalization of all industry, imposed a strict discipline on the work-

ers, a worsening of labor conditions and a lengthening of the workday; it turned striking into an offense punishable by firing squad; it established state control over international commerce; it legalized the forcible appropriation of all the peasants' goods and properties, thus inaugurating an agrarian policy even harsher and more exploitative than that of tsarist serfdom. This, of course, led to millions of deaths among the peasants and provoked constant rural rebellions against Bolshevik power.

It would be the new aristocratic Red Army that would crush these revolts, just as during the tsarist dictatorship. Another important factor in the evolution of the bureaucratic dictatorship: starting in the same month, the Party arrogated to itself the right to veto the decisions of any soviet.

In July 1918, the left SRs initiated an insurrection against Bolshevik power. They were defeated, illegalized, and expelled from the soviet government. As a consequence, the Bolsheviks ended up with an absolute monopoly on state power and prohibited the participation of other parties in the soviets.

At some point in 1918, acting under orders from Lenin, the Bolsheviks established their first concentration camps, which would give rise to the gulag system that claimed millions of lives during Stalin's reign.

In August 1918, Lenin ordered the use of "mass terror" against a rebellion in the city of Nizhny Novgorod and against a peas-ant revolt in the Penza region. The rebellions were protests against the new policy of "war communism." Lenin founded a long Communist tradition of accusing any critic or dissident of being a secret right-wing agent (rather hypocritical of him, considering he had worked as an agent of imperialist interests, and just that summer had personally apologized to the German government after revolutionaries had assassinated the German ambassador). He ordered mass executions of those suspected of disloyalty, the execution of prostitutes, whom he blamed for the lack of discipline in his

ary processes in other countries, and in the second, because the USSR continued encouraging unviable insurrections in other countries when it might weaken an enemy power.

For the first phase, we have the example of the Hamburg Uprising of 1923. Soviet leaders like Trotsky were pressuring the KPD—the German Communist Party, the strongest in the world outside of the USSR—to stage an insurrection, but the German leaders thought it was too early. Due to poor organization, the plan was initiated only in one district of Hamburg. The failed attempt unleashed a strong repression and worsened relations between Communists and Socialists in Germany.

There's also the example of the failed revolution in Indonesia. In 1925, the Comintern ordered the Indonesian Communist Party to join with anti-colonial but not anti-capitalist forces (they imposed the same strategy in China and elsewhere). In 1926, the Communist unions were ordered to spark a revolution, but the plan was green and the coordination with other sectors of the united front failed. The repression claimed many lives.

Of the second phase, we have the example of the mutiny on the Dutch warship, *Die Zeven Provinciën*, provoked by a Communist cell, while the ship was sailing near the Indonesian colonies. The intention was to destabilize the colonial power. There is also the similar example of the mutiny and failed revolution in Chile in 1931.

A German Comintern agent described how his bosses ordered him to organize a dockworkers' and sailors' strike in the major German port cities like Bremen and Hamburg. Once all the port workers were on strike, the Comintern instructed trusted agents to scab, sabotaging the strike. Many workers who demonstrated solidarity lost their jobs, but the Comintern got their agents in key positions on many boats and ports, increasing the efficiency of their smuggling network (which they used to supply the USSR, transport agents, and smuggle materials to countries across the world). Maneuvers like that in-

ment they no longer depended on Soviet aid, as was the case with China and in certain periods with Cuba. Soviet intervention in the Spanish Civil War demon-strates how badly Soviet "aid" could destroy a struggle.

The international policy of the Comintern can be divided into two phases. In the first phase, they aimed to export revolution, but only if they could monopolize it. Between 1919 and around 1926, Comintern agents were charged with imposing Bolshevik control over all worker and anti-colonial organizations. They did this with funding, "entryism" (implanting charismatic agents who climbed the ranks in a particular organization without revealing their affiliation with the Communist Party), attacks against non-Bolshevik currents, and other tactics. One preferred method was to organize apparently neutral international conferences, with fake delegates (they sometimes paid people to act as delegates from supposedly massive organizations that didn't actually exist), a script and a choreography in order to approve decisions that had already been made.

In the case of organizations that refused to accept Communist domination, Comintern agents were dedicated to neutralizing them via false rumors, the provocation of internal conflicts, turning the authorities against them through snitching, and even murder. In this way they destroyed a number of workers' movements.

In the second phase, representing the triumph of the line promoted by Stalin and Bukharin, the Communist Party abandoned the pretense of exporting revolution and adopted the watchword "Socialism in One Country." Subsequently, all anti-capitalist movements worldwide served only to pro-tect the geopolitical interests of the Soviet Union.

In effect, there wasn't that much difference between the two phases. Both of them resulted in failed insurrections and revolutions—in the first phase, because the Communists' lack of solidarity and obsession with power obstructed revolution-

army, and the execution of a hundred random peasants in order to send a message so that "all the people in many miles see it, understand, and tremble."

On September 5, 1918, the Cheka were assigned the policy of the "Red Terror." They claimed that this was directed against the Whites and counterrevolutionaries, but it was an immediate response to two assassina-tion attempts (one successful) carried out by left-wing revolutionaries—Fanya Kaplan and Leonid Kannegisser—against Bolshevik leaders to avenge their repressive policies. The "Red Terror" was clearly a policy of liquidation aimed at any enemy or critic of Bolshevik power; they themselves declared in their newspaper on September 3, "We must crush the counterrevo-lutionary hydra through mass terror [...] anyone who dares spread the slightest rumor against the Soviet regime will be immediately arrested and sent to the concentration camps." In the first two months, they killed between 10,000 and 15,000 people, many of them members of other revolutionary currents. By 1922, they had killed as many as 1.5 million, some of them Whites and tsarists, but the great majority peasants, workers, dissidents, and revolutionaries.

It must be said that the White Army was the first to practice mass executions—against Red Army prisoners—but the Bolsheviks took advantage of the situation to organize an unprecedented repression against all the other currents of the Revolution.

In November 1918, throughout a large ter-ritory in south Ukraine comprising 7 million inhabitants, primarily peasants, locals founded the Volnaya Territoriya or "Free Territory," an anarchist society based on communes, free and decentralized militias, land collectiviza-tion without intermediaries and direct worker control of industry, universal education based on the modern pedagogy of Francesc Ferrer i Guardia, and soviets free from party control but open to participation from any current of the worker and peasant classes and federated in a decentralized way.

The movement was rooted in the anarchist militias that had fought against the German occupiers to whom Lenin had handed over the entire country. The peasant militias immediately began holding the line against General Denikin of the White Army, but Lenin and Trotsky kept them from receiving munitions and functioning weapons, effectively sabotag-ing the front and causing many deaths. In the rearguard, the peasants prevented the Bolshe-viks from taking over the revolution.

Throughout the whole of 1919, the Cheka continued and expanded a policy initiated the year before to execute Red Army deserters. As an authoritarian, involuntary army, the Red Army was plagued with desertions, of which there were more than a million in a year. Many conscripted soldiers tried to go home, and many others joined up with "Green Armies" of peasants who were trying to defend their lands from plundering by the Whites or the Communists. In Ukraine, tens of thousands joined up with the Revolutionary Insurgent Army of the anarchists.

In cases of mass desertion, the Cheka fell back on the tactic of holding family members hostage and executing them one by one until the soldiers returned (and then executing an exemplary number of the deserters).

In February 1919, the Bolsheviks granted an amnesty to the SRs. The White Army was advancing on all fronts, and the Communists desperately needed allies (the previous November, they had re-legalized the Mensheviks after these declared their support for the government). When the SRs came out of clandestinity and set up offices in Moscow, the Cheka began arresting successive waves of SR leadership, accusing them of conspiracy, in order to bring about the fracturing and then destruction of the Socialist Revolutionary Party.

Between March 12 and 14, 1919, in the city of Astrakhan, the Cheka executed between 2000 and 4000 striking workers and Red Army soldiers who had joined them. Many were

The USSR: Force for Global Counterrevolution, Accomplice of Fascism

The outcome of other putatively communist states demonstrates that, while Lenin's party was especially bloodthirsty, the problem was the model itself. Far from achieving communism through state power, each attempt at authoritarian communism managed to implant capitalism in a country where the bourgeoisie hadn't been able to. China, today, is the largest capitalist market in the world and may soon be the leading capitalist economy on the planet, an evolution aided in large part thanks to the industrialization and bureaucratization carried out under Mao's leadership. Vietnam is following the same path on a smaller scale. As for Cuba, in the first years of the revolution (after executing the anarcho-syndicalists and dissident socialists), Che and Fidel abandoned the plan of creating true communism in order to construct a sort of export colony with a more equitable distribution of resources (like a Costa Rica with a Swedish government). They maintained the island's old role as a producer and exporter of sugar for the international market.

As the first of these capitalist revolutions, the USSR stands out for the harm it caused to anti-capitalist movements worldwide. It's true that they supported many revolutionary movements, but always prioritizing their interests above the interests of the revolution itself. It's significant that most communist movements distanced themselves from the USSR the mo-

The Communist Party at no point installed communism. Their first era consti-tuted a bureaucratic monopoly based on the hyper-exploitation of workers and peasants, whereas the era of the NEP constituted a capitalist system with a higher degree of planning and centralization than the Western capitalist systems. That is, the Communists unleashed an insane level of repression against all the other revolutionary currents, drowning worker and peasant struggles in blood and lead, and in the end, all that sacrifice didn't serve for anything more than establishing capitalism. In a country where the capitalists themselves had been unable to implant capitalism, the Communists did, thanks to their obsession with holding power at any price.

And contrary to later leftist revisionism, all this brutality and exploitation wasn't Stalin's fault; it started earlier, from their very first weeks in power and always under the direction of Lenin and Trotsky. From the beginning, the Bolsheviks operated as an intellectual vanguard independent of the soviets and the workers' and peasants' struggles. They used the soviets as a tool to conquer power, and when the soviets were no longer convenient, they suppressed them, just as they had repressed any expression of popular struggles. The Bolsheviks—a current of the Social Democratic Russian Workers' Party, who went on to become the Communist Party—were the principal incarnation of the counterrevolution within the Russian Revolution.

thrown into the river with stones tied to their necks, while the rest were killed by firing squad. To give an idea of the primarily anti-worker and counterrevolutionary scope of the Communists' activities, during the same repressive campaign they killed a significantly smaller number of the bourgeoisie, between 600 and 1000. The primary victims of the Bolsheviks were from the popular classes.

On March 16, 1919, in Petrograd, the Cheka assaulted the Putilov factory, where starving workers had begun a strike demanding larger food rations, freedom of the press, the end of the Red Terror, and the elimination of the privileges held by Communist Party members. 900 were arrested and 200 executed without trial.

The Cheka also repressed strikes in the cities of Orel, Tver, Tula, and Ivanovo. In the course of the repression, the Cheka developed methods of torture surpassing those of the Inquisition. They slowly fed prisoners into ovens or vats of boiling water, they flayed prisoners, they buried peasants alive, they put rats in metal tubes against prisoners' bodies and put flames under the tubes so that the rats would eat their way through the prisoners to escape.

In June 1919, the Bolsheviks began their first attempt to illegalize and liquidate the peasant anarchists of Ukraine fighting alongside Makhno. Already in May, they had made a failed attempt to assassinate Makhno. Trotsky stated that he preferred for all of Ukraine to fall to the White Army than to leave the anarchists to carry out their activity. The campaign intensified after the defeat of Denikin, the White leader, in the fall. The anarchist fighters played a key role in his defeat and afterwards the Bolsheviks didn't have as much need for an alliance with the anarchists… until Communist incompetence produced a new threat to the Soviet regime just one year later.

Between May 1 and 3, 1920, a peasant and anarchist insurrection broke out in the regions of Altai and Tomsk, with the eventual participation of 10,000 combatants. It was principally

directed against the White Army, but their support for decentralized, local control ran them afoul of the Communists, who sought to crush the rebellion, illegalizing and destroying the Altai Anarchist Federation. The resistance continued until the end of 1921.

In June 1920, women workers in Tula went on strike for the right to have a day off on Sundays. They were sent to the concentration camps.

On August 19, 1920, the Tambov peasant rebellion began when a "requisitioning" squad of the Red Army beat the old men of a small village to force the inhabitants to surrender more grain to the government. By October, the peasants had fielded 50,000 combatants to fight the Communist authority. They functioned as an autonomous, self-organized force fighting the Whites and the Bolsheviks. There were also several veteran revolutionaries from the left SRs who rose to leadership positions in the rebellion. By January 1921, the uprising had extended to include Samara, Astrakhan, Saratov, and parts of Siberia. With 70,000 combatants, they defended their territory from the Communists until victories on other fronts enabled the deployment of 100,000 Red Army soldiers. To crush the revolt, the Communists used chemical weapons for approximately three months in 1921, killing many civilians. They sent 50,000 peasants—mostly women and the elderly—to concentration camps as hostages. The majority died. Between the war, the concentration camps, and the executions, the region lost some 240,000 inhabitants, the great majority peas-ants and non-combatants.

In November 1920, the Bolsheviks initiated a major campaign against Makhno's Revolutionary Insurgent Army in Ukraine, mobilizing tens of thousands of troops, many of which deserted to join the anarchists. The campaign began as a surprise attack. The day after anarchist forces managed to seize the Perekop Isthmus, the fortified pass into the Crimean Peninsula where Wrangel was based, and which the Red Army

had been unable to take, the Bolsheviks began arresting and executing their supposed allies, the anarchists. Their treachery began ten months of intense guerrilla warfare before the Communists finally crushed the insurgent peasants.

On February 28, 1921, delegates of the revolutionary sailors and workers from the Kronstadt naval base published a declaration in solidarity with the workers of Petrograd, recently repressed after going on strike against the starvation conditions. The Bolsheviks responded with more repression, provoking a rebellion on Kronstadt. The Kronstadt rebels, long recognized as the heart of the revolution, demanded free soviets, an end to the Bolshevik dictatorship, and the recovery of the Revolution's principles. Trotsky, "the butcher of Kronstadt," led a military expedition that ended with the total suppression of the soviet on March 19, the day after the 50-year anniversary of the Paris Commune. The Red Army played the role of the Versailles troops, executing more than 2000 people. They sent several thousand more to the gulag, where the majority died. Afterwards, the Bolshevik repression only increased. At the Party congress in April of that same year, as Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman related in a letter, Lenin promoted the total liquidation of the anarchist movement, including those participating in the soviet government who had allied with the Bolsheviks.

In March 1921, the Bolsheviks adopted the "New Economic Policy," putting an end to "War Communism." As Lenin himself recognized, the NEP represented "state capitalism," a "free market and capitalism, both subject to state control." The NEP gave rise to a new social class, the *nepmani*—men of the NEP or *nouveaux riches* —who enriched themselves thanks to the new conditions and at the expense of the working classes. It goes without saying that all of them were Communist Party bureaucrats. The NEP also resulted in treaties and trade relations with the main capitalist countries, starting with Great Britain (1921) followed by Germany (1922), and then the US and France.

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Nestor Makhno

After seven years in the Tsar's prisons, Makhno was released from prison by the upheavals of 1917. He eventually became a leader in the anarchist forces that fought in turn against Ukrainian Nationalists, German and Austro-German occupiers, the reactionary Russian White Army, the Soviet Red Army, and various Ukrainian warlords in order to open a space in which anarchist collective experiments could take place. Makhno and his comrades repeatedly bore the brunt of the White Army attacks, while Trotsky alternated between attacking them with the Red Army and signing treaties with them when the Soviets needed them to keep the reactionary White Army at bay. On November 26, 1920, a few days after Makhno had helped to definitively defeat the White Army, the Red Army summoned him and his comrades to a conference. Makhno did not go; the Bolsheviks summarily murdered all of his comrades who went.

Authoritarian socialists have expendedriv-ers of ink attempting to discredit Makhno and those who fought at his side in order to excuse this cold-blooded betrayal. They accuse Makhno of authoritarianism in hopes of justifying a far more authoritarian state. They accuse him of appropriating resources—when the Bolsheviks intended to appropriate all the resources of Ukraine for themselves. They suggest that his struggle contributed nothing to the liberation of the proletariat—yet Makhno continued fighting against capitalism in the Ukraine even when the Soviet author-ities sold it away to the reactionary German government in return for a

peace treaty.[1] Makhno was a thoroughgoing and persistent revolutionary, while the Bolsheviks were treacherous and opportunistic.

In fighting against the Bolshevik attempt to impose their dictatorship on Ukraine, Makhno was struggling against those who ultimately discredited the notion of revolution itself. He was fighting against those who ensured that Russian and Ukrainian workers would remain in subjugation for at least another century.

Makhno and his comrades surely were not perfect; Emma Goldman records that some Russian anarchists questioned whether the Ukrainian uprising was properly anarchist. But history is written by the victors: there is so little information about Makhno's achievements precisely because the Bolsheviks and other reactionaries sought to erase them from the historical record, just as Ukrainian nationalists have recently sought to appropriate and distort them. Fortunately, we can still readstatements from the Makhnovist rebels in their own wordsdescribing their values and goals, and historical accounts from participants such as Peter Arshinov.

> "State-socialists of all denominations, including Bolsheviks, are busy swapping the names of bourgeois rule with those of their own invention, while leaving its structure essentially unchanged. They are therefore trying to salvage the Master/Slave relationship with all its contradictions…
>
> "While a bourgeois government strings a revolutionary up on the gallows, socialist or Bolshevik-communist governments will creep up and stran-

[1] Throughout 1918, Makhno and his comrades fought alone against the capitalist class and the German occupation, after the Bolsheviks had abandoned the revolution in the Ukraine for the sake of statecraft. In the end, the Bolsheviks only reentered Ukraine in order to seize it from anarchists and other Ukrainian revolutionaries.

gle him in his sleep or kill him by trickery. Both acts are depraved. But the socialists are more depraved because of their methods.

"Government power will never let workers tread the road to freedom; it is the instrument of the lazy who want to dominate others, and it does not matter if the power is in the hand of the bourgeois, the socialists, or the Bolsheviks, it is degrading. There is no government without teeth, teeth to tear any man who longs for a free and just life."

–The Anarchist Revolution, Nestor Makhno

"What do we mean by emancipation?The overthrow of the monarchist, coalition, republican, and Social-Democratic Communist-Bolshevik party governments, which must give place to a free and independent soviet order of toilers, without rulers and their arbitrary laws. For the true soviet order is not the rule of the Social-Democratic Communist-Bolsheviks which now calls itself the soviet power, but a higher form of anti-authoritarian and anti-statist socialism, manifesting itself in the organisation of a free, happy and independent structure for the social life of the toilers, in which all individual toilers as well as society as a whole can build by themselves their happiness and well-being according to the principles of solidarity, friendship and equality.

"How do the Makhnovists understand the soviet system?The toilers themselves must freely choose their soviets, which will carry out the will and desires of the toilers — that is,administrativesoviets, not state soviets. The land, factories, mills, mines, railways and other popular riches must belong to

the toilers who work in them, that is, they must be socialized.

"By what road can the aims of the Makhnovists be realized?An uncompromising revolution and a direct struggle with all arbitrariness, lies, and oppression, whatever their source; a struggle to the death, a struggle for free speech and for the righteous cause, a struggle with weapons in hand. Only through the abolition of all rulers, through the destruction of the whole foundation of their lies, in state as we as political and economic affairs, only through the destruction of the state by means of a social revolution can we attain a genuine worker-peasant soviet order and arrive atsocialism."

–"Who Are the Makhnovists and What Are They Fighting for?" Cultural-Educational Section of the Insurgent Army (Makhnovists), April 27, 1920

Lev Chernyi

After serving a decade in prison under the Tsar, Lev Chernyi was released in 1917 and participated passionately in anarchist organizing. On March 5, 1918, foreseeing that the Bolsheviks were about to launch a wave of attacks against anarchist organizing in Moscow, Chernyi denounced the Bolshevik government, arguing that it was essential to paralyze the mechanisms of government itself. In April 1918, the Soviet secret police raided anarchist social centers around Moscow, gunning down at least forty people and arresting many more. The Bolsheviks claimed that the anarchists were engaged in "banditry" on account of their efforts to redistribute wealth and set up social centers around the city—accusing them of precisely the same activities that the Soviet government was carrying out on a much larger scale.

Chernyi was later captured and charged with counterfeiting in order to discredit him and take him off the streets. In August 1921, an official report announced that Chernyi and nine other "anarchist bandits" had been shot without hearing or trial. The authorities refused to release his body, leading many to conclude that Chernyi had actually been tortured to death.

Fanya Baron

After seven years in exile from Tsarist Russia, Fanya Baron returned to her homeland in 1917. She was part of the Ukrainian group that published the anarchist paper *Nabat*. In late 1920, during another crackdown on anarchists, she was arrested by the *Cheka*, the Soviet secret police, along with her husband Aron Baron. She managed to escape in early July 1921, but was recaptured.

Fanya Baron was among thirteen anarchists held at Taganka prison without charges. They organized a hunger strike that attracted the attention of visiting French, Spanish, and Russiansyndicalists. Leon Trotsky dismissed the visitors' concerns: "We do not imprison the real anarchists, but criminals and bandits who cover themselves by claiming to be anarchists." On September 29, 1921, the Cheka shot Fanya Baron without a trial.

> "This big-hearted woman, who had served the Social Revolution all her life, was done to, death by the people who pretended to be the advance guard of revolution. Not content with the crime of killing Fanya Baron, the Soviet Government put the stigma of banditism on the memory of their dead victim."
>
> –*My Further Disillusionment in Russia*, Emma Goldman

Kropotkin dying of hunger,
Berkman by his own hand,

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For light reading, Bakunin’s Critique of State Socialism is available in our online archivesas a charming comic book reviewing how the history of authoritarian communism throughout the 20th century bore out his analysis: crimethinc.com

For obscure archival material, we also recommend: gulaganarchists.wordpress.com

Fanny Baron biting her executioners,
Makhno in the odor of calumny,
Trotsky, too, I suppose, passionately, after his fashion.
Do you remember?
What is it all for, this poetry,
This bundle of accomplishment
Put together with so much pain?

–“August 22, 1939,”Kenneth Rexroth

Aron Baron

A Jewish exile from the Ukraine, Aron Baron organized with the Industrial Workers of the World and worked with Lucy Parsons in the United States before returning to revolutionary Russia. He fought alongside Nestor Makhno and edited the anarchist paperNabat.After two decades of harassment, arrests, imprisonment, and internal exile,he was shot on August 12, 1937in Tobolsk along with many other anarchists, including Prokop Evdokimovich Budakov, Zinaida Alekseevna Budakova, Avram Venetsky, Ivan Golovchanskii, Vsevolod Grigorievich Denisov, Nikolai Desyatkov, Ivan Dudarin, Andrei Zolotarev, Andrei Pavlovich Kislitsin, Alexander Pastukhov, Anna Aronovna Sangorodetskaya, Mikhail G. Tvelnev, Vladimir Khudolei-Gradin, Yuri I. Hometovsky-Izgodin, and Nahum Aaronovch Eppelbaum.

> "Aron Baron, arrested in the Ukraine, due to return that evening to a prison from which he would never again emerge, lifted his emaciated, bearded, gold-spectacled profile to cry relentless protests against the new despotism; the butchers at work in their cellars, the dishonor shed upon socialism, the official violence that was trampling the Revolution underfoot. Fearless and impetuous, he seemed to be sowing the seeds of new tempests."
>
> –Victor Serge recalling Baron's speech at Kropotkin's funeral in *Memoirs of a Revolutionary*

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The Kronstadt Rebels

In February 1921, in response to Soviet crackdowns on labor organizing and peasants' autonomy, the crews of two Russian battleships stationed at the island naval fortress of Kronstadt held an emergency meeting. Many of these were the same sailors who had been on the front lines of the revolution of 1917. They agreed on fifteen demands.

On the first day of March, 15,000 seamen, soldiers and workers assembled for an appearance by Kalinin, the President of the Soviet Republic. The crowd shouted Kalinin down and seized the rostrum, from which ordinary workers and sailors proclaimed their grievances. In the end, the participants overwhelmingly endorsed the fifteen demands, including the majority of rank-and-file Communist Party members; only a few Bolshevik officials objected. A conference of delegates from ships, military units, workshops and trade unions met the next day, and Kronstadt rose in revolt against the Soviet authorities.

The Bolsheviks attempted to portray the rising as the work of foreign reactionaries. Read their demands for yourself and decide whether this was the work of counter-revolutionary capitalists:

1. Immediate new elections to the Soviets; the present Soviets no longer express the wishes of the workers and peasants. The new elections should be held by secret ballot, and should be preceded by free electoral

propaganda for all workers and peasants before the elections.

2. Freedom of speech and of the press for workers and peasants, for the Anarchists, and for the Left Socialist parties.
3. The right of assembly, and freedom for trade union and peasant associations.4. The organization, at the latest on March 10, 1921, of a Conference of non-Party workers, soldiers, and sailors of Petrograd, Kronstadt, and the Petrograd District.
5. The liberation of all political prisoners of the Socialist parties, and of all imprisoned workers and peasants, soldiers and sailors belonging to working class and peasant organizations.
6. The election of a commission to look into the dossiers of all those detained in prisons and concentration camps.
7. The abolition of all political sections in the armed forces; no political party should have privileges for the propagation of its ideas, or receive State subsidies to this end. In place of the political section, various cultural groups should be set up, deriving resources from the State.
8. The immediate abolition of the militia detachments set up between towns and countryside.
9. The equalization of rations for all workers, except those engaged in dangerous or unhealthy jobs.

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10. The abolition of Party combat detachments in all military groups; the abolition of Party guards in factories and enterprises. If guards are required, they should be nominated, taking into account the views of the workers.
11. The granting to the peasants of freedom of action on their own soil, and of the right to own cattle, provided they look after them themselves and do not employ hired labor.
12. We request that all military units and officer trainee groups associate themselves with this resolution.
13. We demand that the Press give proper publicity to this resolution.
14. We demand the institution of mobile workers' control groups.
15. We demand that handicraft production be authorized, provided it does not utilize wage labor.

Two weeks later, on the 50-year anniversary of the Paris Commune, 60,000 Red Army troops captured Kronstadt, murdering and imprisoning thousands. Just as the bourgeois republic that came to power in France in 1870 stabilized its reign by slaughtering the rebels of the Paris Commune, the Bolsheviks stabilized their reactionary seizure of the Russian revolution with the bloodbath at Kronstadt.

Apologists for the Bolsheviks have argued that it was necessary to slaughter the Kronstadt rebels to consolidate power for the Soviet state. Perhaps so, but that is no argument in favor of any state! If it was admirable and appropriate for the Kronstadt sailors to rise against the Tsar, it was equally admirable and appropriate for them to rise against the new tyrants.

The failure of the Kronstadt upris-ing is above all a lesson in solidarity: if the Kronstadt rebels had asserted themselves in April 1918 when the Bolsheviks were carrying out their first attacks against anarchists in Moscow, the entire story might have ended differently. What is done to the least of us will be done to the rest of us sooner or later. This is why solidarity is such an important value to anarchists.

> "Since you are from Kronstadt with which they frighten us all the time, and you want to know the truth, here it is: we are starving. We have no shoes and no clothes. We are physically and morally terrorized. Each and every one of our requests and demands is met by the authorities with terror, terror, endless terror. Look at the prisons of Petrograd and you will see how many of our comrades sit there after being arrested in the last three days. No, comrades, the time has come to tell the Communists openly—you have spoken enough on our behalf. Down with your dictatorship, which has landed us in this blind alley. Make way for non-party men. Long live freely elected Soviets! They alone can take us out of this mess!"
>
> —A worker in a factory in St. Petersburg addressing a delegation of 32 sailors from Kronstadt on February 27, 1921, as recorded by Stepan Petrichenko in *O prichinakh Kronshtadtskogo vosstaniia.* Revelations like these motivated the rebels of Kronstadt to rise up and call for a "third revolution."

> "Today is a worldwide holiday, the Day of Working Women. We the people of Kronstadt, under the thunder of cannons, under the explosions of shells sent at us by the enemies of the laboring people,

When proponents of state socialism accuse anarchists of being sectarian for not desiring to work together for common ends, we have to ask:dowe share the same goals, really? What can we have in common with those who believe that guillotines, courts, judges, prisons, gulags, and firing squads can do the work of liberation?

If history is any guide, partisans of the state will not hesitate to use those against any-one who hinders their pursuit of centralized power. Tens of millions murdered by the state cry out to us from the 20th century, urging us to heed their warnings so their deaths might not be in vain.

In Conclusion

the Communists, send our fraternal greetings to you, the working women of the world. We send greetings from Red Kronstadt, from the Kingdom of Liberty. Let our enemies try to destroy us. We are strong; we are undefeatable."

—From a statement commemorating International Women's Day on March 8, 1921. This appeared in issue 6 of *Kronstadt Izvestia*, a paper published by the Provisional Revolutionary Committee, the day after the bombardment of Kronstadt began under the orders of Leon Trotsky.

The all-Russian commune
Razed us to the ground,
The Communist dictatorship
Brought us to ruin.

We drove the landowners out,
And waited for freedom, land,
We shook off all the Romanovs,
And were blessed with Communists.

Instead of freedom and land
They gave us the Cheka
And planted Soviet farms
Hither and yon.

They take away bread and beast,
The peasant bloats from hunger,
They took a gray horse from Erema,
And a ploughshare from Makar.

There are no matches, nor kerosene,
Everyone sits with a torch,
Under the Bolshevist commune,
They only eat potatoes.

They sent to the village
Fivearshinsof red calico,
The commissars took it all away,
Not an inch for the middle peasant.

And throughout Russia
The peasant rose for land,
But everyone writes in Izvestiia,[1]
"The kulaks have rebelled."

The chekist rides out
Like a tsarist general,
Floods the land with blood,
He's fleeced everything to the bone.

They're bringing serfdom for us anew,
Hey, wake up peasants!
Only the Bolsheviks alone,
Eat and drink like the barons before.

Arise peasant folk!
A new dawn is rising—
We'll throw off Trotsky's fetters,
We'll throw off Lenin the tsar.
We'll overthrow the dictatorship,
We'll give freedom to labor,
We'll allot for labor
The land, factories, and plants.
Labor will establish equality,
And with labor free forever
Fraternity of all people will come,
And otherwise never.

—A song printed in the final issue of *Kronstadt Izvestia* on Wednesday, March 16, 1921.

[1] Official newspaper of the Soviet government.

armed, deprived of their papers, and forbidden to go out into the street. On May 5, 1937, Stalinists murdered Bernerialong with another Italian anarchist, Francisco Barbieri.

> What evil the Communists are doing here too! It is almost 2 o'clock and I am going to bed. The house is on its guard tonight. I offered to stay awake to let the others go to sleep, and everyone laughed, saying that I would not even hear the cannon! But afterwards, one by one, they fell asleep, and I am watchful over all of them, while working for those who are to come. It is the only completely beautiful thing."
>
> —Berneri's last letter to his family, May 3–4, 1937; translation published in *The Cienfuegos* Press Anarchist Review #4, 1978

Luigi Camillo Berneri

The tragedies brought about by the Bolshevik seizure of power in 1917 did not end in Russia. Once there was a state that supposedly represented the revolutionary socialist agenda, revolutions and revolutionaries all around the world were sacrificed in cold blood to advance the imperatives that drive all states. As his temporary pact with Hitler illustrates, "Stalinism" was not a coherent ideology but a mishmash of all the things Stalin had to do to continuously pursue power for himself and the Soviet Union.

Not wishing any revolutionary movement to triumph that did not answer to his Comintern, Stalin made sure to undermine the anarchist and Republican forces in the Spanish Civil War. The Stalinist faction within the struggle against Franco was small, but because they controlled access to resources from outside Spain and did not shrink from open betrayal, they were able to centralize control of the defense in their hands. In the end, many Spanish anarchists were murdered by Stalinists rather than by the fascists they were supposedly fighting together.

An associate of Malatesta and fierce critic of Trotsky as well as Stalin, Luigi Berneri was a well-known Italian anarchist organizer who traveled to Spain to fight in the Spanish Civil War. He was offered a position in the Council of the Economy, but refused to participate in the government on principle.

When clashes between anarchists and the Stalin-controlled Communist Party broke out in Republican Spain, the house Bern-eri shared with several other anarchists was attacked. He and his comrades were labeled "counter-revolutionaries," dis-

Alexander Berkman

Alexander Berkman, an anar-chist who served 14 years in prison in the US for an act of vengeance against the union-busting industrialist Henry Clay Frick, set out enthusiastically for Russia after the Bolshevik revolution, only to discover that the state was just as authoritarian under Lenin as it had been under the Tsar. He was fortunate to escape alive. He summarized his experiences in *The Bolshevik Myth*, and also assisted with *Letters from Russian Prisons*, documenting Bolshevik oppression.

> "Grey are the passing days. One by one the embers of hope have died out. Terror and despotism have crushed the life born in October. The slogans of the Revolution are forsworn, its ideals stifled in the blood of the people. The breath of yesterday is dooming millions to death; the shadow of today hangs like a black pall over the country. Dictatorship is trampling the masses under foot. The Revolution is dead; its spirit cries in the wilderness… I have decided to leave Russia."
>
> – *The Bolshevik Myth* (Diary 1920–22), Alexander Berkman

Emma Goldman

Emma Goldman shared Alexander Berkman's enthusiasm for the initial apparent triumph of the October Revolution and his dismay at its dismal results. She traveled with him to Russia, witnessed the first years of the revolution firsthand, and afterwards shared his conviction that Bolshevik authoritarianism was responsible for the results.

> "Lenin had very little concern in the Revolution… Communism to him was a very remote thing. The centralized political State was Lenin's deity, to which everything else was to be sacrificed. Someone said that Lenin would sacrifice the Revolution to save Russia. Lenin's policies, however, have proven that he was willing to sacrifice both the Revolution and the country, or at least part of the latter, in order to realize his political scheme with what was left of Russia."
>
> – *My Disillusionment in Russia*, Emma Goldman

> authoritarianism, the Fascists and their followers. There was, in spite of their personal enmity, some monstrous 'inter-breeding' between the two most fatal men of the 19th century, Marx and Mazzini,[2] and their issue are Mussolini and all the others who disgrace this poor 20th century."
>
> –correspondence with a comrade, c. 1936.

[2] Before "Italy" existed as a single nation, Mazzini founded Young Italy, a group demanding the uni-fication of all Italian-speaking countries under a Republican government, and Young Europe, a coalition of analogous groups around Europe. (The expression "Young Turk" is derived from the equivalent Turkish group.) Revolutionary republicans like Giuseppe Garibaldi bore the brunt of the bloody work of bringing about Italian unification, but King Victor Emmanuel took control of the new nation of Italy: Mazzinian nationalism did not pro-duce a democratic republic but a monarchy. Victor Emmanuel's successor put Mussolini in power.

As so often occurs, nationalism was initially associated with Left movements for "liberation," yet ultimately became a reactionary phenomenon. This explains the outcome of "national liberation" movements throughout the 20th century that op-posed European colonialism in order to establish nation-states according to the European model, of-ten producing bloody ethnic conflicts like the ones in India and Pakistan.

From its origins as a social movement, anarchism distinguished itself from authoritarian socialism, as represented by Marx, and from nationalism, as rep-resented by Mazzini. Marx and Mazzini were the most influential figures associated with the forma-tion of the International, though Marx swiftly forced Mazzini out. Early Italian anarchists like Malatesta started their careers as disciples of Mazzini, then rejected his thinking after the Paris Commune.

correspond to his feeling of being somehow the economic dictator of the universe, as Hegel had been its spiritual dictator. His grasping went further. He hated instinctively libertarian thought and tried to destroy the free thinkers wherever he met them, from Feuerbach and Max Stirner to Proudhon, Bakunin and others. But he wished to add the essence of their teaching as spoils to his other borrowed feathers, and so he relegated at the end of days, after all dictatorship, the prospect of a Stateless, an Anarchist world. The Economic Cagliostro hunted thus with all hounds and ran with all hares, and imposed thus—and his followers after him—an incredible confusion on socialism which, almost a century after 1844, has not yet ended. The social-democrats pray by him; the dictatorial socialists swear by him; the evolutionary socialists sit still and listen to hear evolution evolve, as others listen to the growing of the grass; and some very frugal people drink weak tea and are glad, that at the end of days by Marx's ipse dixit Anarchy will at last be permitted to unfold. Marx has been like a blight that creeps in and kills everything it touches to European socialism, an immense power for evil, numbing self-thought, insinuating false confidence, stirring up animosity, hatred, absolute intolerance, beginning with his own arrogant literary squabbles and leading to inter-murdering socialism as in Russia, since 1917, which has so very soon permitted reaction to galvanize the undeveloped strata and to cultivate the 'Reinkulturen' of such

torial groups, but asserted that the only proper activity for such groups is to seek to render government impossible, not to institute a new one.

Errico Malatesta

Malatesta began his career as a revolutionary in Italy in the 1870s, working with Bakunin within the famously insurrectionist Italian section of the First International—arguably the first properly anarchist movement on record. From the start, he opposed statist models for social change, having seen how republican nationalism had only brought a new regime to power in Italy and reinforced existing social inequalities. He went to jail and prison again and again in the course of his efforts to open the way to freedom.

In the 1880s, when Malatesta's former comrade Andrea Costa renounced anarchism, entered the Italian Parliament, and set out to convince the movement that electoral politics were the best way to seek social change, Malatesta sneaked back into Italy, despite facing a variety of unresolved criminal charges in his homeland, and challenged Costa to a public debate. Costa attempted to weasel his way out of it, but was ultimately compelled to meet with Malatesta, then fled the city after being trounced in the discussion. Having won the argument, Malatesta went directly to jail.

Later, after escaping Italy concealed in a box of sewing machines, surviving an assassin's bullet in New Jersey, and organizing one clandestine newspaper and uprising after another, Malatesta witnessed the 1917 revolution and the mass defection of anarchists to the Communist Party when the state communist model suddenly appeared more "effective" and "pragmatic." If not for these wrongheaded conversions, there might still have been hope for emancipatory revolutions in the 20th century.

"It seems unbelievable that even today, after everything that has happened & is happening in Russia, there are people who still imagine that the difference between socialists & anarchists is only that of wanting revolution gradually or quickly."

–Errico Malatesta in *Umanita Nova*, September 3, 1921

Max Nettlau

Near the end of his life, Max Nettlau, one of the greatest historians of the classical anarchist movement, having witnessed the Bolshevik victory and the subsequent nightmares of Leninism and Stalinism, summarized the essence of Marx's political incoherence in a letter to a friend. This little-known excerpt casts considerable light on the contradictions within Marx's thought, which have been the cause of so much misfortune:

> "I call Marx 'triple-faced,' because with his particularly grasping spirit he laid a claim on exactly three tactics and his originality no doubt resides in these pan-grasping gests. He encouraged electoral socialism, the conquest of parliaments, social democracy and, though he often sneered at it, the People's State and State Socialism. He encouraged revolutionary dictatorship. He encouraged simple confidence and abiding, letting 'evolution' do the work, self-reduction, almost self-evaporation of the capitalists until the pyramid tumbled over by mathematical laws of his own growth, as if triangular bodies automatically turned somersaults. He copied the first tactics from Louis Blanc, the second from Blanqui,[1] whilst the third

[1] Throughout half a century, Louis-Auguste Blanqui was imprisoned by one government after another for his efforts to overthrow the French government and institute communism by means of revolutionary dictatorship. Bakunin borrowed some of Blanqui's framework of organizing in conspira-

forced to acknowledge:instead of leading to the emancipation of the working class, the victorious revolution actually and despite all the theorizing of the dictator-liberators, brought forth the most comprehensive, ghastliest enslavement and exploitation of that working class at the hands of a privileged ruling class."

— *"Red Fascism,"* Voline, 1934

Mollie Steimer

Born in 1897, in a Russian village, Mollie Steimer immigrated to the United States in 1913 with her parents and siblings. At fifteen, she went to work in a garment factory to support her family. In 1917, while still a teenager, she became an anarchist, and soon joined a collective that published a clandestine journal called Frayhayt (Freedom).

In 1918, when US troops were landed on Russian soil to intervene in the Russian Civil War, their collective published a leaflet calling for workers to launch a general strike in protest. After a violent police raid, Steimer and five of her colleagues were arrested and indicted on charges of conspiracy to violate the Sedition Act; one of her codefendants died during the trial, most likely as a consequence of the brutal beating inflicted by the police.

Steimer was convicted and sentenced to fifteen years in prison, but lawyers appealed the conviction to the Supreme Court. Released on bail while awaiting the ruling, she was arrested eight more times over the next eleven months and ultimately deported to Russia. She arrived in December 1921, when anarchist organizing in Russia had been all but destroyed.

She met Semya Fleshin, who had been active in the Golos Truda group in St. Petersburg and the Nabat Confederation in the Ukraine and had been incarcerated under the Bolsheviks alongside Voline and Aron and Fanny Baron. The two organized a Society to Help Anarchist Prisoners. On November 1, 1922, they were themselves arrested on charges of aiding criminal elements in Russia and maintaining ties with anarchists

abroad—they had been corresponding with Alexander Berkman and Emma Goldman, who had already left Russia. Sentenced to two years' exile in Siberia, they declared a hunger strike and were released the next day, on the condition that they check in with the authorities every 48 hours.

On July 9, 1923, they were arrested again, and declared a hunger strike once more. This time, they were expelled from the Soviet Union, departing for Berlin on September 27, 1923. For the next 25 years, they lived without citizenship in any country, utilizing the passports that the Norwegian arctic explorer Fridtjof Nansen arranged for stateless people.

> "On March 5, 1923, the Central Government Clothing Factory in Petrograd reduced the wages of its employees 30 per cent, without giving notice or making any explanation to any of them. When the salaries were handed out, each of the workers was under the impression that it was a clerical mistake, and went for an explanation to the office, with the result that 1200 employees went simultaneously to ask why so much of their pay was missing. To this the factory director replied that the people ought to be satisfied with what they get and ought to thank them (the directors and the government) for supplying them with work at all. Amazed at such an answer and boiling with indignation, they decided not to resume work until they got a satisfactory explanation. Union representatives were thereupon called, but those officials refused to come until the workers went back to their machines. The factory manager told them also that if they dared to strike, all of them would be considered counter-revolutionists and dealt with accordingly. Immediately the workers called a meeting. While they were discussing their

to offer permission for it, then interrupted it and arrested the participants. They languished in the Taganka prison in Moscow until an international labor congress furnished them the opportunity to go on hunger strike. In the end, they were deported to Germany.

Voline spent the rest of his life in France, where he worked with anarchists in the CNT during the Spanish Civil War and published his exhaustive work, *The Unknown Revolution, 1917–1921.*

> "Any school of thought that countenances dictatorship—be it of all-out or kid-glove, 'right wing' or 'left wing' variety—is, deep down, objectively and essentially fascist. In my eyes, fascism is primarily the notion of the masses being led by some 'minority,' some political party, some dictator. In terms of psychology and ideology, fascism is the idea of dictatorship. That idea articulated, spread or implemented by the propertied classes is readily understood. But when that same idea is taken up and implemented by ideologues from the working class as the road to emancipation, that should be deemed a poisonous aberration, a shortsighted, silly nonsense, a dangerous deviation. For, being essentially fascist, that idea, if put into effect, leads inevitably to a profoundly fascist social organization."This truth has been comprehensibly—and incontrovertibly—borne out by the 'Russian experience.' The notion of dictatorship as a means of emancipating the working class has been put into practice there. Well, its implementation has inevitably brought forth an effect which these days is becoming plainer and plainer and which soon even the most ignorant, short-sighted and pig-headed will be

Voline

Born in Russia, Voline dropped out of the university in 1904. He participated in the uprising of 1905 as a member of the Socialist-Revolutionary Party and an organizer of the Soviet of Workers and Peasants; sentenced to internal exile afterwards, he escaped from Russia and joined the anarchist movement in France. When the First World War began, the French government intended to put him in a concentration camp, but he escaped to New York, where he joined the staff of *Golos Truda*. After the Revolution, he returned to St. Petersburg with the rest of the staff.

In fall 1918, following the Bolshevik crackdown on *Golos Truda*, he traveled the Ukraine, where he helped to organize the Anarchist Federation of the Ukraine and the editorial group *Nabat (Tocsin). Nabat* published several papers throughout the region. *Nabat* entrusted him with the responsibility of drafting a *Synthetic Declaration of Principles* that would enable anarchists and libertarian socialists of all stripes to work together throughout the Soviet Union. Later on, along with Mollie Steimer and Senya Fleshin and several other longtime anarchists, he published a critical response to Arshinov's "Organizational Platform of the Libertarian Communists," arguing that it had too much in common with Bolshevism.

Organizing alongside Makhno's insurgents in the Ukraine, he was captured by Bolsheviks; Trotsky had already ordered his execution, but Makhno was eventually able to broker his release as part of a treaty with the Bolsheviks—which they violated almost immediately afterwards. Voline organized a Congress of Russian Anarchists; the Bolsheviks pretended

grievances, the union representatives entered. But instead of sympathizing with the workers, one of these 'defenders of labor' pounded on the table with his fist and called in a thundering voice: 'I order you back towork.'

"Naturally, such behavior only aroused all present to the highest pitch of excitement. The order was bitterly resented and the meeting continued. An old workingman got up and related the conditions under which he and his family were forced to live, and asked how on earth he could keep from starvation with the miserable wages he received. The description of his own life being the very mirror of the life they all led, resulted in the most pitiful scene. Everybody suddenly burst into tears. Young and old, men and women, all were crying, and several in the audiencefainted.

"A few hours after this came several chiefs representing the GPU, the Union and together with the head director of the Petrograd Clothing factories, announced that the wages would be reduced only 18 per cent instead of 30 per cent. The workers, thereupon decided to resume work and quietude prevailed in the factory. But at the end of the next week 120 workers, who were considered to be more outspoken and determined than the others, were discharged from the factory, thrown out of the Union, and put on the blacklist; that is, on their passports were written: 'Citizen… discharged from the Central Government Clothing Factory for mutiny against the Workers and Peasants Government, with the purpose of taking over thefactory.'[…] "No, I am NOT happy to be out of Russia. I would rather be there helping the work-

ers combat the tyrannical deeds of the hypocritical Communists."

—Mollie Steimer, in a letter written from Berlin in 1923, published in *Freedom*, January 1924

anarchists. They shut down their presses and their literature. They shut down anarchist clubs and bookshops. They resorted to all sorts of means in order to undo the organization of their congresses and they arrested the anarchists. And when the opportunity presented itself, they shot them down on one pretext or another."

–Speech of the anarchist Fedor Mochanovsky before the Petrograd Revolutionary Court on December 13, 1922, published in *La Antorcha* (Argentina), September 23, 1923. Translated by Paul Sharkey.

Fedor Mochanovsky

Once the Bolshevik Terror was underway, it became increasingly difficult to get information about what was happening to anarchists and other rebels behind the borders of the Soviet Union. Fedor Mochanovsky was one of countless anarchists who vanished in the course of this repression. By 1928, the Soviet authorities had moved Mochanovsky from the Butyrka prison in order to cut off international support, effectively disappearing him. He almost certainly died in the hands of the Stalinist state.

> "The real antagonism between the anarchists and the Bolshevists is nothing new as far as anarchists are concerned. That antagonism has existed since the days when Karl Marx and Mikhail Bakunin set out their ideas. The former embraced the State and government whereas the latter rejected them, even in embryo. That antagonism became very clear at the congress of Marxists chaired by Engels and Liebknecht and held in The Hague [September 2–7, 1872], at which they pledged to string up anarchists as soon as they camepower.
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> "In which all they were doing was talking in the same terms as the Bolshevists talk in Russiatoday.
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> "In 1918, the Bolshevists organized an anti-anarchist front to seek the destruction of the anarchists in Russia. Throughout the land and in every sphere of life across the territory of the soviet republic, they took up arms against the

Victor Serge

Victor Serge started adulthood as an anarchist. However, after the Bolshevik seizure of power, he joined the Party and served them as a journalist, dutifully excusing the imprisonment of honest anarchists, the butchery of the Kronstadt rebels,[1] and many other steps in the Bolshevik counterrevolution. In this regard, he is an example of the millions of rebels and common laborers shifted their allegiance from anarchists to statists after the apparent victory of the Bolsheviks in Russia. Once more, so much for pragmatism.

How did it work out for Serge? A few years later, he was expelled from the Communist Party, thrown in jail, sentenced to internal exile, and in the end barely managed to escape the Soviet Union with his life. Had he remained faithful to his anarchist politics, he might have saved himself a lot of grief—and above all, he would not have been complicit in setting the stage for the slaughter and imprisonment of millions.

> "When [Victor Serge] was asked why he, as a party member, did not raise his voice in protest [against the attack on Kronstadt] in the party session, his reply was that that would not help the sailors and would mark him for the Cheka and even for silent disappearance. The only excuse for Victor Serge at

[1] Two decades afterwards, in his memoirs, Serge acknowledged that at the time of the Kronstadt uprising, he had written, "In spite of its faults, in spite of its abuses, in spite of everything, the Bolshevik party, because of its size, its insight, its stability, is the organized force to which we must pin our faith. The Revolution has at its disposal no other weapon, and it is no longer capable of genuine renewal from within."

the time was a young wife and a small baby. But for him to state now, after seventeen years, that 'the Bolsheviki once confronted with the mutiny had no other recourse except to crush it,' is, to say the least, inexcusable. Victor Serge knows as well as I do that there was no mutiny in Kronstadt, that the sailors actually did not use their arms in any shape or form until the bombardment of Kronstadt began."

—*"Trotsky Protests Too Much,"* Emma Goldman, 1938

"On one of these black days [during the Kronstadt uprising], Lenin said to a friend of mine (I use his exact words): 'This is Thermidor. But we shall not let ourselves be guillotined. We'll be our own Thermidor.'"

— *Memoirs of a Revolutionary*, Victor Serge. Thermidor was the11th month ofthe calendar introduced under the French Revolution in 1793. In 1794, during Thermidor, a reactionary backlash overthrew the radical Jacobins and guillotined their leader, Robespierre.

Peter Arshinov

Peter Arshinov participated in the anarchist uprising in the Ukraine alongside Nestor Makhno between 1919 and 1921, at which point he narrowly escaped the Bolshevik counterrevolution with his life. Fleeing west into Germany, he authored the *History of the Makhnovist Movement (1918–1921)* and co-authored the "Organizational Platform of the Libertarian Communists." Eventually, he renounced anarchism and returned to the Soviet Union to join the Communist Party, only to be purged and executed. If not even the original Bolsheviks were safe from Stalin's Terror, it was foolish to imagine a former anarchist might be.

> "Prisons are the symbol of the servitude of the people. They are always built only to subjugate the people, the workers and peasants. Throughout the centuries, the bourgeoisie in all countries crushed the spirit of rebellion or resistance of the masses by means of execution and imprisonment. And in our time, in the Communist and Socialist State, prisons devour mainly the proletariat of the city and the countryside. Free people have no use for prisons. Wherever prisons exist, the people are not free."
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> — *History of the Makhnovist Movement (1918–1921)* , Peter Arshinov.