We have just received the following letter from our comrades Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, who are now stranded in Stockholm. This letter gives us the truth about the terrible persecution of Anarchists in Russia. We ask all Anarchist and Syndicalist papers to republish this letter, and we hope comrades in this country will help us in pushing the sale of this issue, of which we have printed a much larger number than usual.

Dear Comrades, — The persecution of the revolutionary elements in Russia has not abated with the changed political and economic policies of the Bolsheviki. On the contrary, it has become more intense, more determined. The prisons of Russia, of Ukraina, of Siberia, are filled with men and women — aye, in some cases with mere children — who dare hold views that differ from those of the ruling Communist Party. We say “hold views” advisedly. For in the Russia of to-day it is not at all necessary to express your dissension in word or act to become subject to arrest; the mere holding of opposing views makes you the legitimate prey of the de facto supreme power of the land, the Tcheka, that almighty Bolshevik Okhrana, whose will knows neither law nor responsibility.

But of all the revolutionary elements in Russia it is the Anarchists who now suffer the most ruthless and systematic persecution. Their suppression by the Bolsheviki began already in 1918, when — in the month of April of that year — the Communist Government attacked, without provocation or warning, the Anarchist Club of Moscow and by the use of machine guns and artillery “liquidated” the whole organisation. It was the beginning of Anarchist hounding, but it was sporadic in character, breaking out now and then, quite planless, and frequently self-contradictory. Thus, Anarchist publications would now be permitted, now suppressed; Anarchists arrested here only to be liberated there; sometimes shot and then again importuned to accept most responsible positions. But this chaotic situation was terminated by the Tenth Congress of the Russian Communist Party, in April, 1921, at which Lenin declared open and merciless war not only against Anarchists but against “all petty bourgeois Anarchist and Anarcho-Syndicalist tendencies wherever found. It was then and there that began the systematic, organised, and most ruthless extermination of Anarchists in Bolshevik-ruled Russia. On the very day of the Lenin speech scores of Anarchists, Anarcho-Syndicalists, and their sympathisers were arrested in Moscow and Petrograd, and on the following day wholesale arrests of our comrades took place all over the country. Since then the persecution has continued with increasing violence, and it
has become quite apparent that the greater the compromises the Communist regime makes with
the capitalist world, the more intense its persecution of Anarchism.

It has become the settled policy of the Bolshevik Government to mask its barbaric procedure
against our comrades by the uniform charge of banditism. This accusation is now made practically
against all arrested Anarchists, and frequently even against mere sympathisers with our move-
ment. A mighty convenient method, for by it any one may be secretly executed by the Tcheka,
without hearing, trial, or investigation.

Lenin’s warfare against Anarchist tendencies has assumed the most revolting Asiatic form of
extermination. Last September numerous comrades were arrested in Moscow, and on the 30th
of that month the Izvestia published the official statement that ten of the arrested Anarchists
had been shot “as bandits.” None of them had received a trial or even a hearing, nor were they
permitted to be represented by counsel or be visited by friends or relatives. Among the executed
were two of the best-known Russian Anarchists, whose idealism and lifelong devotion to the
cause of humanity had stood the test of Tsarist dungeons and exile, and persecution and suffering
in various other countries. They were Fanny Baron, who had escaped from prison in Ryazan
several months previously, and Lev Tchorny, the popular lecturer and writer, who had spent
many years of his life in the Siberian katorga for his revolutionary activities under the Tsars. The
Bolshevik did not have the courage to say that they had shot Lev Tchorny; in the list of the
executed he appeared as “Turchaninoff,” which — though his real name — was unknown even to
some of his closest friends.

The policy of extermination is continuing. Several weeks ago more arrests of Anarchists took
place in Moscow. This time it was the Universalist Anarchists who were the victims — the group
which even the Bolsheviki had always considered most friendly to themselves. Amongst the
arrested were also Askaroff, Shapiro, 1 and Stitzenko, members of the Secretariat of the Moscow
section of the Universalists, and well known throughout Russia. These arrests, outrageous as they
were, were at first considered by the comrades as due to the unauthorised action of some over-
zealous Tchekist agent. But information has since been received that our Universalist comrades
are officially accused of being bandits, counterfeiters, Makhnovtsy, and members of the “ Lev
Tchorny underground group.” What such an accusation means is known only too well to those
familiar with Bolshevik methods. It means razstrel, execution by shooting, without hearing or
warning.

The fiendishness of the purpose of these arrests and accusations is almost beyond belief. By
charging Askaroff, Shapiro, Stitzenko, and others with “membership in the Lev Tchorny under-
ground group,” the Bolsheviki seek to justify their foul murder of Lev Tchorny, Fanny Baron, and
the other comrades executed in September; and, on the other hand, to create a convenient pretext
for shooting more Anarchists. We can assure the readers unreservedly and absolutely that there
was no Lev Tchorny underground group. The claim to the contrary is an atrocious lie, one of the
many similar ones spread by the Bolsheviki against the Anarchists with impunity.

It is high time that the revolutionary Labour movement of the world took cognizance of the
blood and murder regime practised by the Bolshevik Government upon all politically differently
minded. And it is for the Anarchists and AnarchoSyndicalists, in particular, imperative to take
immediate action toward putting a stop to such Asiatic barbarism, and to save, if still possible, our
imprisoned Moscow comrades threatened with death. Some of the arrested Anarchists are about

1 Not our London comrade, A. Shapiro, of Golos Truda.
to declare a hunger strike to the death, as their only means of protest against the Bolshevik
attempt to outrage the memory of the martyred Lev Tchorny after they had foully done him
to death. They demand the moral support of their comrades at large. They have the right to
demand this, and more. Their sublime self-sacrifice, their lifelong devotion to the great cause,
their unswerving steadfastness, all entitle them to it. Comrades, friends, everywhere! It is for
you to help vindicate the memory of Lev Tchorny and at the same time save the precious lives
of Askaroff, Shapiro, Stitzenko, and others. Do not delay or it may be too late. Demand from the
Bolshevik Government the alleged Lev Tchorny documents they pretend to have, which "involve
Askaroff, etc., in the Lev Tchorny group of bandits and counterfeitors." Such documents do not
exist, unless they be forgeries. Challenge the Bolsheviki to produce them, and let the voice of
every honest revolutionist and decent human being be raised in world-wide protest against the
continuance of the Bolshevik system of foul assassination of its political opponents. Make haste,
for the blood of our comrades is flowing in Russia.

(Signed) Alexander Berkman.
Emma Goldman.
Stockholm, January 7, 1922.
Emma Goldman, Alexander Berkman
Bolsheviks Shooting Anarchists
January 7, 1922

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