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The Anarchist International

Max Baginski

November, 1907

The old International awakens diverse feelings. It was no doubt a powerful attempt to call into life the idea of the revolutionary proletariat in solidaric and international relationship. Unfortunately, however, it served as a centre of intrigue and gossip.

Karl Marx was essentially centralistic. Possibly he imagined that himself, Engels and their immediate friends embodied the only true conception as to the lines that Socialism and the movement of the proletariat should follow. The faith in his own infallibility inevitably resulted in Marx becoming autocratic and authoritarian.

Michael Bakunin was temperamentally unfitted for dogmatic and orthodox ideas. He hated the zigzag path of diplomacy with its intrigues and speculations. Revolution to Bakunin did not mean a scientific doctrine, nor was it a cold, automatic result of evolution, to assert itself without the efforts and assistance of men. Rather did he see in Revolution the direct result of the conscious emotions and aspirations of those who suffer most under the yoke of our social crimes and errors.

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The Marxian slogan was to seize the governmental machinery through the ballot. Bakunin, on the other hand, waged war on all government, including that of workingmen, perceiving in any governmental and political regime the very source of oppression and tyranny.

The present syndicalist movement, consisting of direct action, the General Strike, etc., originated with Bakunin, and was fought tooth and nail by the Marxian clique. Thus, centralized authority — as conceived by Marx — and anti-authoritarian federalism — as embodied by Bakunin — were doomed to clash and war with each other.

The weapons employed by Marx and his disciples in this contest were full of poison and venom. But it is not the object of this article to discuss them, nor the mass of insinuation and malicious slander circulated against Bakunin.

The object I have in view is to acquaint the readers of Mother Earth with the nature and purpose of the Anarchist International, formed at the Amsterdam Congress. The new International will continue to wave the flag which Bakunin was prevented from doing by its old namesake.

The main *raison d'être* of the International Bureau at London is to gather Anarchist groups and federations now scattered all over the world and to bring them into harmonious and solidaric relations with each other.

The desire to combine our forces grew out of the lack of concerted action among the comrades of various countries, as well as the comrades of different nationalities. We know so little of each other; we carry on a singlehanded, desperate battle with the powers that be, — a battle which would prove much more effective and less trying were we united.

We may remain perfectly indifferent to the sensational gust of the capitalist press that Anarchist organizations are synonymous with blood-curdling conspiracies. But we cannot afford to have the minds of the workers poisoned by these misrepresentations.

The Anarchists, more than any other set of thinkers, have ever emphasized the dangers of sectarianism, yet many of us have failed to apply our ideas to the everyday life, and to enter the broad, wide field of the economic struggle. As Anarchists, we cannot remain mere preachers and prophets; we must be practical builders of the foundation that is to support the future. It is a lamentable fact that so few comrades are actively engaged in the trade union movement, yet is there anyone so eminently equipped to participate in the daily economic struggle between capital and labor than the well-informed Anarchist? He knows that the proletariat furnishes the source of revolt against the present social conditions. It therefore behooves him to direct that source into such channels which will pave the way for a new social arrangement.

I do not contend that the International Bureau will represent the force that is to reconstruct the labor movement; what I do insist upon is that the Bureau can become instrumental in bringing about a more thorough understanding between Anarchists and the organized labor forces.

To achieve this the Bureau needs the individual and collective co-operation of all comrades.

A circular letter just received from the secretary of the Bureau puts several questions to the readers of Mother Earth. I recommend that those questions be thoroughly discussed, and whatever conclusions the comrades will arrive at should be sent to the secretary without fail.

In conclusion, just a few more words. Some people, either out of ignorance or for personal reasons, charge that the Congress, in forming the International, was arbitrary and inconsistent with Anarchism. These good people seem to have forgotten that the proposition of an International was submitted to the comrades six months prior to the Congress; that it was discussed and decided upon by many groups and individual comrades, and that several of the delegates were sent with the express purpose to urge the formation

of the International. But aside of all this, I wish to state that the International is not to be imposed upon any group or individual.

The Bureau has no statute books, nor is there the slightest danger that it will devise any catechism which every Anarchist will be compelled to accept. As a medium for creating closer International comradeship, greater unity of action and more lasting results, the Bureau is to be heartily welcomed.

Let every comrade assist, and the Anarchist International will become a tremendous factor.