

from being as rich as we used to think, when, passing through the streets of our large towns, we saw the luxurious houses of the rich and their gleaming carriages, the crazy luxury of the big shop windows, and the expensively-dressed crowds of passers-by. England is the richest country in the world. But if one added up all that it gets from its fields, its coal-mines, and its numerous factories and mills, and if one divided this total among all the inhabitants in equal shares, one would get only three shillings a head a day, and in no circumstances more than four shillings. As for Russia, one would scarcely reach fifty kopeks (one shilling) a head a day.

It therefore follows that the social revolution, wherever it breaks out, will have to consider as its first priority and from the earliest days that of a considerable increase in production. The first months of emancipation will inevitably increase the consumption of provisions and of all goods and, at the same time, production will decrease; on the other hand, every country in social revolution will be surrounded by a circle of unfriendly or even hostile neighbours. 'How shall we be able to live then, if two-thirds of the bread England needs is imported from abroad?' English comrades asked me more than once. 'How will our factories be able to work to buy bread, when we do not have our own raw materials?' And they were right. When I drew up an account of the reserves which existed in England—of what could be called the reserve capital of a country in case of revolution—the conclusion I came to was rather disconcerting. Immediately after the harvest, there was a reserve of grain sufficient for three months; but from January, this reserve fell to six weeks. Of cotton there was never enough for more than three months, often enough for only six weeks. This was even more the case with all secondary products (like, for example, manganese for steel). In a word, industrial England, with its insignificant reserves, lived almost from day to day.

But England is not the only country to live like this; all peoples, in the present conditions of the capitalist economy, live in the same way. Not long ago Russia suffered a series of cruel famines during which tens of millions of the inhabitants were hit. And now still more than one-third of the population of Russia and Siberia is always in poverty and even lacks bread for three or four months a year—without mentioning the insufficiency of all other goods, the primitive rustic equipment, the half-starved livestock, the absence of fertiliser, and the lack of knowledge.

In a word, given that until now a good third of the population of all the countries of Europe has lived in poverty and has suffered from the lack of clothing and so on, revolution will lead inevitably to increased consumption. The demand for all goods will rise while production will fall, and in the end there will be famine—famine in everything, as is the case today in Russia. There is only one way of avoiding such a famine. We must all understand that as soon as a revolutionary movement begins in a country, the outcome will be successful only if the workers in the factories and mills, the peasants, and all the citizens themselves at the start of the movement take the whole economy of the nation into their own hands, if they organise themselves and direct their efforts towards a rapid increase in all production. But they will not be convinced of this necessity unless all general problems concerning the national economy, today reserved by long tradition to a whole multitude of ministries and committees, are put in a simple form before each village and each town, before each factory and mill, as being its own business when they are at last allowed to manage themselves.

It is in this way that the study of the real life of the peoples leads inevitably to the conclusion that all the peoples must endeavour in their own countries to produce a powerful expansion, to bring about an improvement in agriculture—by means of the intensified cultivation of the soil—and at the same time in manufacturing industry. It is in this way that a guarantee of progress and of success in the emancipation of labour from the yoke of capital will be found. There is no place for some peoples destined to serve others. It is in this, and also in the understanding of the fact that it is impossible to bring about a

social revolution by dictatorship, that we may find the cornerstone of the whole structure. To build without it is to build on sand.

The reformers gave too little attention to this side of life thirty or forty years ago. Today, however, after the cruel lesson of the last war, it should be clear to every serious person and above all to every worker that such wars, and even crueller ones still, are inevitable so long as certain countries consider themselves destined to enrich themselves by the production of finished goods and divide the backward countries up among themselves, so that these countries provide the raw materials while they accumulate wealth themselves on the basis of the labour of others.

More than that. We have the right to assert that the reconstruction of society on a socialist basis will be impossible so long as manufacturing industry and, in consequence, the prosperity of the workers in the factories, depend as they do today on the exploitation of the peasants of their own or of other countries.

We should not forget that at the moment it is not only the capitalists who exploit the labour of others and who are 'imperialists'. They are not the only ones who aspire to conquer cheap man-power to obtain raw materials in Europe, Asia, Africa and elsewhere. As the workers are beginning to take part in political power, the contagion of colonial imperialism is infecting them too. In the last war the German workers, as much as their masters, aspired to conquer cheaper man-power for themselves—even in Europe, that is in Russia and in the Balkan peninsula, as well as in Asia Minor and Egypt; and they too considered it necessary to crush England and France which prevented them from making these conquests; and on their side the French and English workers showed themselves to be full of indulgence for similar conquests on the part of their governments in Africa and Asia.

It is clear that in these conditions one may still predict a series of wars for the civilised countries—wars even more bloody and even more savage—if these countries do not bring about among themselves a social revolution, and do not reconstruct their lives on a new and more social basis. All Europe and the United States, with the exception of the exploiting minority, feels this necessity.

But it is impossible to achieve such a revolution by means of dictatorship and state power. Without a widespread reconstruction coming from below—put into practice by the workers and peasants themselves—the social revolution is condemned to bankruptcy. The Russian revolution has confirmed this again, and we must hope that this lesson will be understood: that everywhere in Europe and America serious efforts will be made to create within the working class—peasants, workers and intellectuals—the personnel of a future revolution which will not obey orders from above but will be capable of elaborating for itself the free forms of the whole new economic life.

December 5, 1919.

¹The success of the huge 'giant' farms in the prairies of Canada and the United States, precisely at that period, a disastrous economy formed with exactly the help of such industrial armies recruited twice a year—for the ploughing and sowing of the wheat, and for the reaping—drew the admiration of partisans of state socialism. But it was of short duration. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, when I crossed the Canadian province of Manitoba, no trace of these farms was visible; as for the prairies of Ohio, I saw them in 1901, covered with little farms, and one saw in the fields a whole forest of windmills which drew the water for the market-gardeners. After two or three bad crops of wheat, the large farms were abandoned and the land was sold to small farmers who now raise on their little farms considerably more foodstuffs of all kinds than the 'giant' farms could do.

²Before and up to the early 1880s, the trade unions existed only in a few branches; women, for example, had no union, though there were more than 700,000 of them in the textile industry alone; the woodworkers only admitted into their unions those who earned at least tenpence an hour; and so on.

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anarchist pamphlets Freedom

NO. 5

PETER KROPOTKIN Anarchism & Revolution

IF EACH MEMBER of society is to have the opportunity of earning his living by his own labour—without as a result enslaving himself to anyone else, either to a private individual, or to a company, or to a union—he must obviously always have the opportunity of acquiring that spade with which he wishes to dig, that cotton from which he wishes to spin thread or weave cloth, that bread, those clothes, that room to live in, that place to work in, before he can manufacture anything having an exchange value for society. It is apparent that in previous times production was so simple that all this did not require a vast accumulation of the initial products of personal labour, that anyone, though working only with the instruments of labour available in his family, only on those raw materials which he took free of charge from nature, could produce useful exchange values. But now—and the progress of society consists in this—the preliminary accumulation of the products of labour for the creation of instruments of labour and the storing of raw material must be so great that it can no longer be the business of a private individual or a group of individuals.

It is therefore clear that if it is desirable that a person setting to work should not enslave himself, should not give up part of his labour, his strength, his independence, either temporarily or permanently, to private individuals whose arbitrary power will always determine how great that part shall be, then it is necessary that private individuals should control neither the instruments of labour (tools, machines, factories), nor the places of cultivation of raw materials (the earth), nor the raw materials previously stored up, nor the means of storing and transporting them to particular places (the means of communication, warehouses, and so on), nor the means of existence during work (the supplies of the means of subsistence and housing).

So we arrive at the elimination in that future system whose realisation we desire, of any property of individuals, of any property of an incorporated company, a union, and so on.

Those writers of previous times who came to this conclusion saw no other way out than the transfer of all the capital of society to the state—that is, to a powerful organisation representing in itself the interests of society and managing all affairs which concern the whole of society.

It was left to it to guarantee each member of society the opportunity of obtaining the necessary instruments of labour, and so on; it was also left to it to distribute among the members of society those goods made by them. But precisely because of this, the brilliant dreams of the followers of these thinkers did not find enough adherents among those people who would have to put these dreams into practice. In the ideal of these thinkers only one aspect of life is considered—the economic. Those who were used to thinking in a concrete way understood very well that no matter what combination of conditions was worked out so that this government should express the views of the majority, that no matter how mobile, flexible and susceptible to change its composition might be, the group of individuals to whom society gives up its rights would always be a power separate from society, trying to widen its influence, its interference in the affairs of each separate individual. And the wider the sphere of activity of this government, the greater the danger of the enslavement of society, the greater the probability that the government would stop being the expression of the interests and desires of the majority.

So both the masses and many individual thinkers long ago realised that the transfer of this most essential element of the life of society into the hands of any elected government at all would be the source of the most crucial inconvenience, if not the actual suicide of society.



Peter Kropotkin in 1873

SOCIAL REVOLUTION

In our opinion the realisation of our ideal must be brought about through a social revolution. Here we do not flatter ourselves at all with the hope that the ideal will be put completely into effect in the first revolution; indeed we are convinced that for the realisation of the equality we have sketched, many years are still needed, and many limited—perhaps even general—outbursts. But we are also convinced that the more completely, the more widely the demands of the masses are set out from the very first revolution, the more clearly and concretely these demands are expressed—then the more the first step will destroy those cultural forms which hinder the realisation of the socialist system, the more disorganised those forces and attitudes which present social and state life cling to; then the successive upheavals will be more peaceful, and successively large-scale improvements in the attitude of the people will follow.

So our goal must be to apply our strength to hastening this outburst, so as to illuminate those hopes and aspirations which exist in the great majority in vague forms, so that in time we shall be able to take advantage of the circumstances in which an outburst may have the most favourable outcome, so that in the end the outburst itself will occur in the name of clearly expressed demands, and exactly in the name of those we have stated. . . .

PREPARE THE WAY

We are profoundly convinced that no revolution is possible if the need for it is not felt among the people themselves. No handful of individuals, however energetic and talented, can arouse a popular insurrection if the people themselves through their best representatives do not come to the realisation that they have no other way out of the situation they are dissatisfied with except insurrection. Therefore the task of any revolutionary party is not to call for insurrection but only to prepare the way for the success of the approaching insurrection—that is, to unite the dissatisfied elements, to increase the knowledge of individual units or groups about the aspirations and actions of other such groups, to help the people in defining more clearly the real causes of dissatisfaction, to help them in identifying more clearly their real enemies, stripping the mask from enemies who hide behind some respectable disguise, and, finally, to contribute to the illumination of both the immediate practical ends and the means of putting them into practice. . . .

PEASANTS AND WORKERS

Where should our activity be directed, where should we mainly spread our ideas and look for like-minded people—among the student youth and upper classes, or among the peasants and workers?

We can answer this question categorically, and we consider this answer to be the fundamental position in our practical programme: undoubtedly among the peasants and workers. Here we must spread our ideas, here we must look for comrades who will help in the further dissemination of these ideas; with these comrades we must enter into a friendly and closely united organisation. We do not wish to break off relations with the educated section of society, and especially not with the section of student youth; but, refusing to take on the permanent role of instructing this youth in a given direction, we shall enter into close relations only with those groups or individuals who immediately inspire the confidence or the almost certain hope that they will direct their future activity among the peasants and workers. For the mass of educated youth we are prepared to do only one thing: to disseminate, and—if the cause cannot be spread without our assistance, and also if we have enough energy to spare—to prepare those books which directly assist the explanation of our ideals and our ends, which make available those facts which show the complete inevitability of the social upheaval and the necessity to unite, to organise the awakened strength of the people. . . .

DEMANDS OF THE PEOPLE

The insurrection must take place among the peasants and workers themselves. Only then can it count on success. But no less necessary for the success of the insurrection is the existence among the insurrectionists themselves of a strong, friendly, active group of people who, acting as a link between the various areas, and having clearly worked out how to express the demands of the people, how to avoid various traps, how to bring about their victory, are agreed on the means of action. It is moreover clear that such a party must not stand outside the people, but among them, but act not as the champion of outside ideas elaborated

in isolation, but merely as a more distinct, more complete expression of the demands of the people themselves; in short, it is clear that such a party cannot be a group of people outside the peasants and workers, but must be the focus of the most conscious and decisive forces of the peasants and workers. Any party standing outside the people—especially one that comes from the upper class—however much it is inspired with a wish for the welfare of the people, however well it expresses the demands of the people, will inevitably be doomed to failure, like all the rest, as soon as the insurgent people with their first actions open up the gulf between the upper and lower classes. And we can see in this a completely deserved retribution for the fact that the members of this party were previously unable to become the comrades of the people, but instead remained superior leaders. Only those whose previous way of life and previous actions are entirely of a kind which deserves the faith of the peasants and workers will be listened to; and these will be only the activists among the peasants themselves, and those who wholeheartedly give themselves up to the people's cause, and prove themselves not with heroic deeds in a moment of enthusiasm but with the whole previous ordinary life; those who, discarding any tinge of the upper class, enter into close relations with the peasants and workers, linked by personal friendship and confidence. . . .

WORDS AND DEEDS

We consider it to be a crucial mistake to set up as an end the creation of agitators among the people who keep themselves at a distance from the people and move in the sphere of their colleagues of the intelligentsia. It is impossible suddenly to cross at a given moment from the sphere of the intelligentsia to the environment of the people, just as one pleases. The sphere of the intelligentsia permanently leaves a characteristic stamp on those who move in it, and it is necessary to renounce this first to have success among the people. It is impossible to become a populist agitator in a few days; it is necessary to be trained in this work. For this reason, we consider that the best means for the achievement of our aim is to proceed immediately to activity among the people, no matter how small the circle of individuals who have come to this conclusion. We are also convinced that it is impossible to rally the people in the name of future activity, or at least extremely difficult, and that it is much easier to rally the people in the name of an activity whose feasibility and appropriateness everyone can believe in now, and in which one can engage immediately. By showing results which have been achieved, and by acting on people not only through words, but through both words and deeds, it is considerably easier to convince them of the things one is oneself convinced of. . . .

Explanatory Notes

These are passages from a 20,000-word memorandum which Kropotkin drew up in November 1873 (at the age of 30) for his comrades in the Russian populist movement. In 1874 his group, the Chaikovsky Circle, was broken up by arrests (including his own), and his manuscript was seized by the police; it has remained in the Russian state archives ever since, being printed in Russia in 1921 and 1964. The first English translation, by Victor Ripp (from which the above extracts are adapted), is contained in a new American anthology of Kropotkin's works—*Selected Writings on Anarchism and Revolution*, edited by Martin A. Miller (374pp. Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press. \$12.50, paperback \$3.50)—which will soon be published in this country as well. Unfortunately the book is badly edited and over-priced, and largely consists of familiar material, but it is valuable for this important early work.

This book is just one example of the growing interest in Kropotkin, which will reach a climax next year with the fiftieth anniversary of his death in February, and the consequent release of his works from copyright. In the United States there have been several series of reprints of his books in English. More such reprints and more new translations and collections of his works may be expected; in the meantime this second Freedom Pamphlet on Kropotkin in the present series rescues some more of his lesser-known writings from oblivion—additional material written for English, Italian and Russian editions of his book *Paroles d'un Révolté* between 1894 and 1919. Editorial introductions and explanatory notes have been provided by Nicolas Walter.

Notes to additions to Words of a Rebel

CAESARISM WAS the tendency towards the establishment of another Empire in France, following those of Napoleon I and Napoleon III, especially at the time of the Dreyfus affair during the last few years of the nineteenth century (Kropotkin wrote a series of articles on the subject during that period—see FREEDOM, April-June 1899). Boulangerism was the tendency towards the establishment of a military dictatorship in France, especially in the case of Georges Boulanger (1837-1891), a professional soldier who became minister of war in 1886 and almost attempted a quasi-fascist coup d'état in 1889, but lost his nerve and fled to Belgium where he shot himself.

Tortures reminiscent of the Inquisition were used in Spain against left-wing prisoners, especially anarchists, during the 1890s, particularly by the political police (Brigada Social) in Montjuich prison, above all following the wave of workers' riots and bomb explosions in Barcelona in 1896; some of the facts came to light during a mass trial in December 1896, which led to an international outcry (see FREEDOM throughout 1897, and especially two special supplements in November 1897 and March 1898). It was partly in revenge for this repression that Michele Angiolillo assassinated the Spanish prime minister, Cánovas del Castillo, in August 1897. Demonstrators were machine-gunned in Milan on May 7, 1898, at the height of widespread disturbances culminating in near-insurrection in several parts of Italy; it was partly in revenge for this repression that Gaetano Bresci assassinated the Italian king, Umberto I, in July 1900.

Louis-Philippe (1773-1850) was the liberal king of France between the revolutions of 1830 and 1848. Louis Blanc (1811-1882) was the most important early state socialist in France, being for a time a member of the provisional government in 1848.

Constantin Pecqueur (1801-1887) and François Vidal (1814-1872) were leading theoreticians of state socialism in France during the 1848 republic. François Babeuf (1760-1797) was the main socialist in the Conspiracy of Equals, a radical putsch against the bourgeois Directory in 1796, for which he was guillotined but after which he became the symbol of authoritarian socialism. Etienne Cabet (1788-1856) was a French socialist whose *Voyage to Icaria* (1839) described an authoritarian communist utopia which he later tried to put into practice in the United States. Armand Barbès (1809-1870) and Auguste Blanqui (1805-1881) were leading French revolutionary conspirators during the 1830s, especially in the 1839 putsch, and both spent many years in prison; Blanqui remained the best-known revolutionary socialist in France until his death. Wilhelm Weitling (1808-1871) was a German religious communist who was well known as a writer of utopian tracts between 1838 and 1848; he was briefly associated with the German League of the Just, which in 1847 became Marxist and changed its name to the Communist League, for which Marx and Engels wrote the *Communist Manifesto* in 1848. *Comme nous ferons la révolution*, a syndicalist utopia by the anarchist journalists, Emile Pouget and Emile Pataud, was published in Paris in 1909 with an introduction by Kropotkin; an English translation—*Syndicalism and the Co-operative Commonwealth: How we shall bring about the Revolution*—was published in Oxford in 1913 with Kropotkin's introduction and a new foreword by Tom Mann. Robert Owen (1771-1858) was a successful business manager in Britain who became a utopian socialist in Britain and the United States, and who was for a time the main figure in the Grand National Consolidated Trades Union, the short-lived but enormous general union of the mid-1830s in England. N.W.

Paroles d'un Révolte

Introduction to Postscripts by N.W.

KROPOTKIN SOMETIMES WROTE new material to go with translations of *Paroles d'un Révolté* prepared during his lifetime. This usually added little fresh information or argument to the book, but in three cases he produced some significant new material: a note for a projected English edition in the 1890s; a preface for the first Italian edition in 1904; and a postscript for the last Russian edition in 1919. These three items have been brought together here to indicate how Kropotkin viewed his first political book at various times between its original publication in 1885 and his death in 1921; they also give an interesting impression of his changing preoccupations over this period.

An English translation of several chapters from *Paroles d'un Révolté* was serialised in the Sheffield *Anarchist* from March 1894 to March 1895 by David Nicoll.* An editorial note to the first item—'The Situation'—stated: 'These articles were written in 1882 [sic]. They are perhaps the best purely Educational matter on Anarchy that can be published' (18 March, 1894). The second instalment of 'The Spirit of Revolt' was followed by an undated note signed 'P.K.' (20 January, 1895). Three years later this note was reprinted at the end of the translation of the first half of *The Spirit of Revolt* which David Nicoll published—together with a translation of *La Carmagnole*—as a pamphlet (London, 1898). It was presumably intended to go with a complete English edition of *Paroles d'un Révolté*, but this never materialized.

Kropotkin's note is significant because of the time that it appeared. This was a few months after Emil Pouget's paper—newly revived in exile in London—published his call for anarchists to join the labour movement ('A rouble, rouble et demi', *Le Père Peinard*, first half of October 1894), and a few months before Jean Grave's paper—newly revived in Paris—published Fernand Pelloutier's similar call ('L'anarchisme et les syndicats ouvriers', *Les Temps Nouveaux*, 2/8 November, 1895). Kropotkin's contribution should therefore be seen as part of a campaign by the traditional anarchist leaders against the involvement of anarchists in individual propaganda by deed,

which had recently culminated in a series of bomb outrages (especially in France) and in favour of a return to the involvement of anarchists in mass direct action, which was beginning to emerge in the syndicalist movement (especially in France again). It is interesting that even in a note for English readers Kropotkin concentrated his attention on French affairs.

The first complete Italian edition of *Paroles d'un Révolté*—*Parole d'un ribelle* (Geneva, 1904)—was published by Luigi Bertoni, the Swiss-Italian anarchist who produced a bilingual paper—*Le Réveil* in French, *Il Risveglio* in Italian—in Geneva from 1900 to 1946.† Bertoni asked Kropotkin for a preface, which was first published in the original French (from which the present translation has been made) in *Le Réveil* on 4 June, 1904, and then in the book the following month; it later appeared in the Yiddish edition of *Paroles d'un Révolté* (London, 1906).

Bertoni had invited Kropotkin to explain why the imminent revolution had not in fact occurred, and the reply is one of the most revealing of Kropotkin's writings, displaying his growing obsession with French affairs and his nationalist tendencies which culminated in open support for the Allies in the First World War. It is worth mentioning that the revolution which Kropotkin still insisted on predicting did in fact begin to break out within a few months—in Russia in 1905, followed by Turkey in 1908, Spain in 1909, Mexico and Portugal in 1910, China in 1911, Italy in 1914—but these outbreaks remain abortive until the war he also continued to predict.

During the Russian revolution, the anarchist movement was active and fairly influential for a short period. Kropotkin returned to his native land in 1917 after forty years' exile, and his works were published in many editions, especially by the anarcho-syndicalist group which produced the paper *Golos Truda* (Voice of Labour). When anarchist papers were suppressed by the new Bolshevik government in 1918, the group continued to print and circulate pamphlets and books, and just after Kropotkin's death it published the last Russian edition of *Paroles d'un Révolté*—*Rechii buntovnika* (Petrograd and Moscow, 1921). Kropotkin had written a short preface and a long postscript for

the book two years earlier. The preface is of minor importance; but the postscript expanded the argument of the book's last chapter—"Expropriation"—in the light of the revolution which had at last occurred and was going on around him, not just in Russia but also in Austria, China, Egypt, Germany, Holland, Hungary, India, Italy, Mexico, Scotland, Spain and Turkey, with echoes in Australia, Canada, England, South Africa, the United States and so on. A French translation of the postscript appeared in *La Voix du Travail* in March 1927 and in *Le Réveil* on 1/17 May, 1930; a Spanish summary by Max Nettlau appeared in *La Revista Blanca* on 1 June, 1927; and an English extract appeared in Roger Baldwin's edition of *Kropotkin's Revolutionary Pamphlets* (New York, 1927, reprinted 1968 and 1970, pp. 76-78.); both the preface and the postscript later appeared in the Chinese edition of *Paroles d'un Révolté* (Shanghai, 1948).

The main intention of the postscript was to restate one of the basic principles of Kropotkin's thought during the half-century of his political career—that the social revolution must be carried out through the immediate expropriation of all property and raw materials and of all instruments of production and distribution, and through their direct management at a local level by the masses of the people. Kropotkin also stressed several related points—that this expropriation should not involve depriving the peasants of land they worked themselves; that there is no point making theoretical plans for future society without a sound practical knowledge of present society; that the division of the world into exploiting and exploited countries is just as bad as the division of society into exploiting and exploited classes, and will lead to further wars if it is not brought to

an end; that at the same time the industrial workers should take care not to exploit the agricultural workers (a sensitive point in early Bolshevik Russia); that because of the low level of reserves of food and of other essential goods, there will be a severe shortage after any revolution which can only be solved by a drastic increase in production under workers' control (a considerable revision of his earlier view that large reserves were available if only they were properly distributed); and, above all, that no government—let alone a party dictatorship—could succeed in the necessary work of carrying out the social revolution and of establishing the anarchist communism which he dreamt of to the end of his life. The whole is one of the most important of Kropotkin's last writings, and may be seen as his final thoughts on the subject of his first political book.

**David Nicoll (1859-1919) was an anarchist intellectual who was active in the Socialist League, editing the Commonweal in succession to William Morris from 1890 to 1892, when he was imprisoned for attacking the police and judge responsible for framing four anarchists in the Walsall Bomb Plot. After his release he campaigned for anarchists in jail and against police spies in the movement. He produced the Sheffield Anarchist from 1894 to 1896, and a revived Commonweal from 1896 to 1901, and also several pamphlets. His sense of injustice became unbalanced, and he died in extreme poverty.*

†There is a morbid interest in knowing that among those who helped with the translation was Benito Mussolini, at that time an obscure socialist of twenty living in Switzerland to avoid military service in Italy.

NOTE TO THE ENGLISH EDITION (1895)

THESE PAPERS WERE written in 1881, when, there being almost no traces of revival of the Socialist movement in France, the revolutionist who could not bear the present conditions, had nothing left to him but to rebel individually against the oppression he could not live under.

Since that time, the conditions have changed. A great movement has begun [sic] all over Europe in the labouring masses—infinately deeper than what we see of it on the surface in the so-called Labour Parties. The usual next step has been made, from individual rebellion to a mass movement of the workers towards their liberation—unconscious to a great extent, permeated yet to a great extent with superstitions about the State and the would-be Saviours, and very easily deviated from its final aims of emancipation of mankind from the clutches of Capital and Authority—but a mass movement of the workers themselves.

In such conditions, it becomes of first necessity to merge all

individual efforts in that movement, and to do the utmost to direct it to what we consider to be the real way to freedom. Never compromising in any way; always telling the truth—only the truth, and all the truth—to combat everywhere the old superstitions, to inspire the movement with the grand ideas which we share and the vigour borrowed from these ideas, which alone may cope with the immense obstacles accumulated in the way of liberation of the masses.

Individuals awaken human thought in times of general slumbering. But a Social Revolution can not [sic] be the work of individuals. It will be the work of the masses. And its results will entirely depend upon the amount of true conceptions permeating the masses.

These are the ideas which I have never ceased to develop in all my writings.

P.K.

PREFACE TO THE ITALIAN EDITION (1904)

THE FIRST CHAPTERS of this book, written in 1879, speak of the social revolution as an imminent fact. The awakening of the proletariat which was then taking place in France after the period of mourning for the Commune, the expansion which the labour movement was achieving in the Latin countries, the spirit of the Russian youth, the rapid spread of socialist ideas which was then being carried out in Germany (though the Germans had remained resistant for a very long time to French socialism), and finally the economic conditions of Europe—all this seemed to presage the approaching arrival of a great social European revolution. Revolutionaries and moderates agreed then in predicting that the bourgeois regime, shaken by the revolution of 1848 and the Commune of Paris, could not long resist the attack of the European proletariat. Before the end of the century the collapse would come. Even those who opposed our revolutionary tactic and put parliamentarianism in its place did not wish to get left behind, and calculated with the voting figures in their hands that well before the end of the century they would have won a majority in the German parliament, decreed the expropriation, and accomplished the social revolution, by ballot, well before the Latin peoples.

'And yet,' we are now told—by some with regret, and by others in triumph—'here we are already in the twentieth century, and the promised revolution still delays its arrival!' One might even believe—it has been said at least in the camp of the rich—that the triumph of the bourgeoisie is more assured today than ever before. The workers seem to have lost hope in a revolution.

Well, aren't all these gentlemen triumphing too soon? To begin with, we have scarcely entered the twentieth century; and if ten or twenty years count for a lot in the life of the individual, they

count for only very little or nothing in historical events. Doesn't an event of such immense importance as the social revolution deserve to be granted the latitude of a few years?

No, we were not deceived when, twenty-five years ago, we saw the social revolution coming. Today it is just as inevitable as it was a quarter of a century ago. Only we must recognize that we had not then plumbed the full depths of the reaction which would bring the defeat of France in 1870 and 1871, and the triumph of the German military empire. We had not measured the length of the delay which was going to be produced in the European revolutionary movement following that defeat and that victory.

If the war of 1870-1871 had simply displaced military power from France to Germany, that would have had no consequence for the development of the revolutionary socialist movement. But the war had gone infinitely farther: for thirty years it was to paralyse France. With Metz two or three days from Paris—not just a simple fortress, but a fortified camp from which half a million men, fully equipped to the last gun-sling, could be thrown against the capital twenty-four hours after (or rather, before) the declaration of war; with the Triple, and later the Quadruple, Alliance ready to tear France to pieces—and that danger has not stopped weighing on France until the very last few years; with the flower of French youth decimated, whether on the battlefield or in the streets of Paris: in these conditions, how could France not pass through a quarter-century of militarism, not submit to Rome for fear of a civil war, not be infatuated by the Russian alliance? It was inevitable, it was fatal. And when today we look back—we who have fought from day to day against clericalism and militarism, Caesarism and Boulangerism—we may confess that we are astonished at one thing: it is that France was able to pass through this dark period without surrendering to a new Caesar.

If the Boulangerist adventure, supported by all the power of the Anglo-American bankers, the clericals and royalists of all Europe, came despite everything to such a pitiful end; if France did not become clerical, when England is 'catholicising' itself so well and when Germany seems to be moving in the same direction; if we are at last seeing France at the end of these dark years finding itself again, taking a new lease of life and producing this fine new generation which is going to take the place which is its due in the movement for the renewal of the civilised world—it is because the strength of the revolutionary current was in fact much more powerful than it seemed to those who saw only the surface of events.

Let them deliver anathemas as long as they wish against the brave revolutionaries—above all against the anarchists who were able to raise high the red flag, to keep France on its guard, and sometimes to remove from the political arena those who were keeping a place warm for other reactionaries even more open in their reaction; let them curse them as much as they like! History will record that it is to their energy, to the agitation which they fed with their blood that we owe the fact that European reaction is being kept within bounds. The truth is that the revolutionary party, weak as it was in numbers, had to display an immense, fierce energy to put a curb on reaction both internal and external. We certainly had not exaggerated this strength; for without it what would have become of us now?

And the same thought may be applied word for word to Spain and Italy. Which of us would have risked predicting that in Spain they would have tried to reintroduce the tortures of the Inquisition against the rebellious workers? Who would have risked predicting the machine-gunnings in Milan? Well, they dared do it! Dared only: for the reply of the workers was soon able to bring these 'extremists' to reason.

Only today can we appreciate the extent of the check which was produced in Europe following the Franco-Prussian war. The worst of the defeats of 1870 and 1871 was that they led to the intellectual obliteration of France.

The necessity in which the French nation was placed, of dreaming before everything of preserving its existence, its popular genius, its civilising influence, its existence as a nation, paralysed revolutionary thought. The idea of an insurrection evoked that of a civil war, which would be brought to an end by foreign guns coming to the rescue of bourgeois order. And on the other hand everything in France that had been most energetic, most enthusiastic, most devoted—a whole generation had perished in the great struggle which began after the siege of Paris. A whole generation of revolutionaries, drawn to Paris under the Empire, had perished at the time of the massacres which followed the fall of the Commune. The whole intellectual life of France felt

the effect. It was lowered, diminished, and fell into the hands of the impotent, the sick, the fearful.

This collapse of France meant the collapse not only of a nation which had stood in the forefront of civilisation, but of the whole period Europe had lived through from 1848. Europe returned to 1849, to 1830. Victorious Germany was able to take the intellectual lead which until then had belonged to France and in great measure to Italy. But if Germany had indeed given to the world a certain number of thinkers, of poets, and of scholars, it had no revolutionary past. And in its political and social development it was in the position that France had been in under Louis-Philippe. Representative government, introduced in Germany in 1871, had the attraction of novelty; and if it had had, in Weitting and his successors, a few enthusiastic communists, mostly refugees, the socialist movement in Germany itself had just been recently imported, and for this reason it had to go through the same stages which it had passed through in France: the state socialism of Louis Blanc, and the state collectivism which Pecqueur and Vidal had formulated for the 1848 Republic.

In this way the spirit of Europe fell to the level which it had previously occupied under Louis-Philippe. Socialism itself, being turned back again, returned to the capitalist state of Louis Blanc, while losing the clearness and simplicity which the Latin spirit had given it. Further, it took a centralizing character, hostile to the Latin spirit, which was imposed on it by the German spirit, for which the union of the small German states into a single empire had been a dream for thirty years.

Several other causes could also be mentioned to explain the strength of the reaction. One of them is colonial expansion. Today the European bourgeoisie is enriching itself not only from the labour of the workers of its own countries. Profiting from the facility of international transport, it has slaves and serfs everywhere—in Asia Minor, in Africa, in the Indies, in China. The tributaries are all backward states. The bourgeoisies of England, France, Holland and Belgium are becoming more and more the moneylenders of the world, living on their dividends. Whole states are mortgaged by the bankers of London, Paris, New York, and Amsterdam. Examples are Greece, Egypt, Turkey, and China; and Japan is already being prepared for this role, a dear ally being lent to at 6 or rather 7 per cent, and all its customs revenues being mortgaged. In this way a few concessions can be gladly made to the European worker, the state can gladly maintain his children at school, it can even give him a few francs' pension at the age of sixty—provided he helps the bourgeoisie conquer serfs and make vassal states of the stock exchange in Asia and Africa.

And finally it would also be necessary to mention the counter-revolutionary effort which was made by all the Christian churches, but which came above all from Rome, in order to stem by all methods the revolution whose tide could be seen to be rising. The assault which was made against materialism, the campaign which was waged with so much skill against science in general, the putting on the Index of works and men, which was practised so assiduously by so many secular, political and religious organisations—all that would have to be mentioned to give an idea of the immense counter-revolutionary activity which was put in hand to combat the revolution. But all this is only secondary in the context of the dominant fact which we have just indicated: the collapse of France, its temporary exhaustion, and the intellectual domination of Germany which, despite all the admirable qualities of its genius and its people, was, by the very virtue of its geographical position and of its whole past, thirty to forty years behind France.

In this way, the revolution was delayed. But—is this a reason for saying that it is postponed indefinitely? Nothing would be more contrary to the truth, nothing would be more absurd than such an assertion.

A striking phenomenon has appeared in the development of the socialist movement. As was once said of inflammatory diseases, it has been 'driven in'. So many external remedies have been applied to kill it that it has been driven into the organism: it exists there in a latent form. The worker votes; he follows the banners in political processions; but his thoughts are elsewhere. 'All that isn't it,' he says to himself. 'That's the outside, only the show.' As for the inside, the substance—he is considering: he is waiting before giving his opinion. And in the meantime he is setting up his trade unions—international, crossing frontiers. 'Don't trust these unions,' said a member of a commission named by one of the Canadian states the other day. 'Don't trust them: what the workers are dreaming about in these federated unions is seizing an American state, a territory, one day and proclaiming the revolution there and expropriating—'

without any compensation—all they find necessary to live and work.'

'Yes, no doubt they vote, they obey you,' the German bourgeoisie says to the leaders of the Social Democratic Party. 'But don't rely on them too far! They will disown you yourselves on the day of the revolution if you don't become much more revolutionary than you are today. Let the smallest revolution come, and it is always the most advanced party which takes the lead and will force you to move. You are their leaders—you must follow them!'

And from all sides the same signs of the times force themselves on our attention. The worker votes, demonstrates, for lack of anything better—but all over the world another movement, much more serious, is being prepared and is maturing silently. Blanqui once said that in Paris there were 50,000 men, workers who never went to a single meeting, who belonged to no organisation—but when the day came they would come out into the streets, would fight, and would carry out the revolution. The same thing seems to be happening today among the workers of the whole world.

They have their idea, an idea of their own; and to make this idea become real one day they are working with enthusiasm. They don't even speak about it: they understand one another. They know that in one way or another they will one day have

to shoulder their rifles and give battle to the bourgeoisie. How? When? Following what event? Who knows! But that day will come. It is not far away. A few more years of effort, and the idea of the general strike will have gone round the world. It will have penetrated everywhere, found supporters everywhere, enthusiasts—and then?

Then, helped by some event or other, we shall see! And—*ça ira!*—it will come, and they will dance to bring in a new world. Our enemies believe that they have buried all these dreams so well. Even our friends wonder whether in fact the burial has not been successful. Yet see how the idea, still the same, the one which made our hearts beat thirty years ago, is reappearing, as alive, as young, as fine as ever: expropriation as an end, and the general strike as a means of paralysing the bourgeois world in all countries at once.

But then—is this the social revolution: coming now from the very inspiration of the people, from the 'lower depths', where all the great ideas have always germinated when a new idea became necessary to regenerate the world?

Yes, this is the social revolution. Get ready to make it succeed, to bear all its fruit, to sow all these great ideas which make your heart beat and which make the world go round.

May 1904.

POSTSCRIPT TO THE RUSSIAN EDITION (1921)

THE QUESTION of the reconstruction of life by the social revolution was only lightly touched on in general terms in the last chapter of this book. This chapter must serve, so to speak, as an introduction to the second part of the work in hand—the constructive part—which I was only able to occupy myself with three years later, when I came out of prison. But since this chapter contains within itself traces of a long discussion on the question of the extent of expropriation which had taken place within the Jurassien, Italian, and Spanish federations of the International, it is worth saying a little about it here.

We were in complete agreement that private ownership of land was finished and that the future belonged to communist possession of land. But we considered it unjust and unprofitable to drive from their plots the peasants who worked their land themselves without the help of hired workers, to demolish their houses and their fences, to cut down their gardens, and to rework their land with a steam-plough, as the centralist and statist revolutionaries imagined.

Such an idea was preached in France, after the fall of Robespierre and the Jacobins, by the communist Babeuf, who made it the basis of his Conspiracy of Equals, and this same idea was also developed later by Cabet in his *Voyage to Icarus*, and among his followers it is necessary to note during the period from 1830 to 1840 the members of the French secret societies founded by Barbès and Blanqui, as well as the League of the Just, a German society founded by Weitling, from which it passed into the *Communist Manifesto* of Marx and Engels.

In this manifesto, the end of social revolution was, as in the previous programmes of the Blanquists and Babeuf, the total abolition of private property and its transfer into the hands of the state. As for production, it would be necessary to introduce, as in Babeuf, labour which was obligatory, universal and equal for all and, to this end, 'the organisation of industrial armies, especially as regards agriculture'. The state socialists of France preached in favour of these same industrial armies in the 1880s.¹

We naturally could not accept such a programme of expropriation. Knowing the various forms of agriculture, on both large and small scales, forms which it necessarily takes in places of varying kinds (this is marked above all in France), we could not consider the destruction of small agricultural economies as progress. The formula of Babeuf is not only unjust with regard to small rural economies, but it would lead inevitably to the revolt of the villages against the towns, and would reduce the whole country to famine. For the rest, to destroy private initiative in agriculture now would be senseless, if only it is precisely to private initiative and individual attachment to the land that we owe the successes in agriculture so far and the development of the intensive cultivation of the land in certain parts of Europe and America.

It is for this reason that, without wishing to prejudge the forms which agriculture would take in the future, we decided that at that moment the efforts of the revolution should be directed not towards the abolition of the small rural economy but towards the union of the small economies in everything which requires

the union of their efforts.

Such an attitude with regard to the small rural economy brought us attacks from the state socialists. But they themselves, as they made contact with the real life of the countryside, soon saw—in France above all—that it was precisely this small rural economy and this possession of the land in plots which gave France its relative prosperity—without having to plunder its neighbours; the German socialists came to the same conclusion when they saw what the small rural economy yielded in Alsace and in various parts of West Germany.

After I came out of prison, at the beginning of 1886, I began in our paper a more detailed development of the question of the reconstruction of life by the social revolution. Knowing, moreover, how powerful the aspiration towards the establishment of independent communes was in the Latin countries, I had in view above all a large urban commune getting rid of the capitalist yoke, especially Paris, with its working population full of intelligence and independence and possessing, thanks to the lessons of the past, great organising capability.

These articles appeared later (in 1892) in a volume for which Elisée Reclus suggested the title *The Conquest of Bread*: this name was well chosen, for it expressed the basic idea of the whole work, notably that the principal object in a period of social revolution would be not the political organisation of the social order but the question of bread for all; the question of satisfying the most urgent needs of the population—feeding, housing, clothing, etc. I tried at the same time to prove that the workers of a large town would be able to organise themselves for a free life within the free commune, without waiting for this life to be organised for them by officials, however well endowed with all virtues.

Unfortunately it is necessary to say that socialists and workers in general, having lost hope in the imminent possibility of revolution, were no longer interested in the question: what character would it be desirable to give the revolution? It was only many years later, when the syndicalist movement began to take root in France, that another work appeared on the same subject. Our comrade Pouget described in his book, *How we shall make the revolution*, how a revolution could be carried out in France under the control of the workers' unions; how, not waiting at all for those who would not hesitate to take power, the workers' unions and congresses would be able to expropriate the capitalists and to organise production on a new basis without allowing the least interruption in production. It is clear that only the workers, through their organisations, will ever be able to reach this goal; and though I differ with Pouget over certain details, I recommend this book with confidence to all those who understand the inevitability and imminence of the social reconstruction which humanity will have to envisage.

A short time after I came out of prison, I was obliged to leave France. I settled in England, where I had the opportunity of studying the economic life of a great industrial country in prac-

tice, and not only from the books in which economists have repeated the same errors as their predecessors for more than a hundred years. Each time that I gave speeches in the various towns of England and Scotland, I took the opportunity to talk for a long time with the workers and to visit all kinds of factories and mills—large and small—of coal-mines and big naval docks, without overlooking the small workshops as well in important centres of small-scale production, such as Sheffield and Birmingham. I also visited the great co-operative distribution centres, such as the Wholesale Co-operative Society in Manchester, as well as the attempts at co-operative production which were already beginning to spread everywhere. Getting information in this way about what real life was like, I always kept in mind the following question: what form could a social revolution take so that one could pass without too many shocks from production by individuals or by limited companies with the goal of profit to production and exchange of goods organised by the producers and consumers themselves in such a manner as to satisfy all the needs of production in the best way?

The examination of these questions led to two conclusions.

The first of these was that the production of foodstuffs and of all goods, and then the exchange of these goods, represents such a complicated undertaking that the plans of the state socialists, which lead inevitably to the dictatorship of a party, will prove to be completely defective as soon as they begin to apply them to life.

No government, we assert, can be in a position to organise production if the workers themselves are not associated with it through the mediation of their unions, in every branch of industry, in every trade; for throughout production there arise and will arise every day thousands of problems which no government can resolve or foresee.

It is of course impossible to foresee everything; it is necessary that life itself, and the efforts of thousands of minds on the spot, should be able to co-operate in the development of the new social system and to find the best conditions capable of satisfying the thousand manifestations of local needs.

Theoretical plans for construction are not of course useless in the preparatory period. They keep thinking on the alert and force serious reflection on the complex organisations represented by civilised societies. But, on the other hand, these plans simplify rather too much the problems which mankind is called to resolve; and if it is thought necessary to begin by putting these programmes into practice, one will never get round to planning life. Such a collapse would follow that it could lead to the most ferocious reaction.

Many English workers—perhaps because they have been occupied for such a long time (that is to say, since the period of the Chartist Movement of 1836-1848) with social reorganisation—considered the problem in this way: first of all, they said, it is necessary to organise strong and powerful trade unions in all branches of work, including the unskilled labour in the docks and the peasants.² Afterwards, it is necessary to form links between them through national and international unions; and then, when they have become an effective force, to take all production under their complete control, to get rid of the domination of the capitalists, and to maintain order throughout production and consumption in the interests of the whole population of the country.

In other words, the English workers made their own the ideas which had already emerged in 1830 in Robert Owen when he tried to form the Labourers' Union; afterwards, the English trade unions together with the representatives of the French workers tried to put these ideas into practice when, after meeting in London in 1862, they formed the First International.

This organisation represented, as is known, an International Association of Workers' Unions which was entirely non-political and which pursued a double end: a daily struggle against capital, and the elaboration of the basis of a new socialist system. But, since 'mixed sections' were also admitted, it followed that some people joined who belonged to no trade unions but who simply aspired for the emancipation of labour from the yoke of capital. This International existed until the end of the 1870s, when it was destroyed by incessant government persecution and by the intrigues of the political parties. The Second International was no longer an association of workers' unions; it became an association of the social-democratic political parties of the various countries.

With the disappearance of the First International, there disappeared in England the force which in the thought of its founders would have maintained among the trade unions the idea of the imminence of the social revolution and the necessity of its pre-

paration among the workers themselves. The daily struggle of the local unions against the exploiters took the place of more distant ends; it is necessary to say that the majority of the active members of the workers' unions, occupied day after day with the organisation of these unions and their strikes, lost sight of the final end of the workers' organisation—the social revolution. It is only during the last five or six years before the war that one felt again a renewal of interest in favour of this basic problem—under the influence of a similar reawakening throughout the whole world.

Those influenced in this way were above all the syndicalist movement in France and Italy, and the awakening observed in the United States where, under the name of the Industrial Workers of the World, a movement developed which devotes itself directly to the end of the struggle against capital with a view to the transfer of all industry from the hands of the capitalists into the hands of the producers, organised in strong unions. Also influenced in this way were the first revolution in Russia, in 1905, and the general situation and upheaval of social life in Europe during the last years before the war. The horrors which the war has just made us pass through, and its consequences of poverty for the whole world, as well as the Russian revolution, will place without any doubt and in the forefront before the whole world the question of the necessity of a social revolution.

But it would be necessary to say much more of this movement than I can say here. I return therefore to the conclusions I had come to in finding out about economic life in England.

The second conclusion I came to is the following: present economic life in the civilised countries is constructed on a false basis. The theory which economic scholars put forward depends on the assumption that the peoples of the earth are divided into two categories. Some, thanks to their superior education, are called to occupy themselves above all with the production of all kinds of goods (textiles, machines of every type, motors, etc.). The others, because of their limited ability, are condemned to produce the food for the peoples of the first category and the raw materials for their factories. Every course of political economy states this theory; it is in this way that the English bourgeoisie enriches itself; it is in this way that other countries will enrich themselves by developing their industry at the expense of backward peoples.

But a more thorough study of the economic life and of the industrial crises of England and the other countries of Europe leads to a different conclusion. It is no longer possible to enrich oneself as England has done until now; no civilised country wants to remain or will remain in the position of the provider of raw materials. All the other countries aspire to develop their own manufacturing industry, and all are gradually reaching this goal. Technical education can never become the privilege of a single country, except by the armed subjugation of the neighbouring countries which aspire to develop their own education and industry. As for the tendency towards subjugation with this end, a tendency which has emerged during the last forty years, especially in Germany, it has led the whole world into a terrible war which has cost Europe and the United States more than six million dead and more than ten million dead, injured and mutilated, without mentioning the ravaging of Belgium and Northern France, or the unbelievable destruction of provisions, coal and metal which are lacked by all the peoples of the civilised world today.

In the meantime, a people has risen during the last fifty years, and has taken its place in the family of civilised peoples: the United States of North America. This people has shown that eighty million inhabitants can reach a state of enormous wealth and power without exploiting other peoples, but solely by developing industry and agriculture at home on parallel lines, with the help of machines, railways, free unions, and the spread of education.

France has also developed to some extent in the same direction, and this striking lesson given to the world has transformed current theories of political economy from top to bottom. The way towards the development of the prosperity of the peoples is to be found in the union of agriculture and industry and not in the subdivision of peoples into industrial and agricultural categories. Such a division would inevitably lead mankind into incessant wars for the seizure of markets and slaves for industry.

I had studied this vital and enormous question in a series of articles published between 1890 and 1893 and later in a book, *Fields, Factories and Workshops*. It was necessary to study many connected questions to do this work, and to learn many things. But the most important conclusion was this: we are very far