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**ANARCHIST ARGUMENTS**

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A newly formed Czech group asked me to write a pamphlet to mark the 80th anniversary of the Russian February Revolution & assess it & the October Revolution from the viewpoint of an anarchist.

This pamphlet is therefore the English text submitted to the Czech Solidarity Group, & will be simultaneously published by them as also by the Red Lion Press of Montréal.

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*Anarchist Arguments, (7)*  
*College Farm House,*  
*Mill Lane, Wellington,*  
*Salop. TF1 1PR*

*February 1997*

*Price: £1.25*

## *Introduction ~ 1917*

The Russian Revolution of 1917, like the 1789 French one before it, brought a wave of hope to the mass of the world's population; it was believed that at last the world was beginning to see a social system that was not based on exploitation and oppression.

That hope for a time was very real. There were of course people who benefited from class rule who opposed it. There were of course victims who believed the lies of their oppressors, and so never supported it. There were those who, as Erich Fromm showed, fear Freedom, feel better with their servitude, than with the prospect of a just society. There were pessimists who predicted that everything would go wrong. But, amongst those who heard anything of what happened, these were the exceptions.

The bulk of the world's population may not have allowed itself to hope too much; after all freedom has powerful enemies, and these were by no means disarmed. But, Nevertheless, deep down, it hoped; then, as time went on, it became more and more obvious that what had been built was not a society of equals but a new exploitative system, with a new ruling class filling its own bellies on what it denied the masses.

The old ruling class would of course like us to believe that this was the inevitable; that the hope of a classless society flies in the face of science, of an understanding of human nature; (or alternatively that it is presumptuous and irreligious).

The new ruling class, on the other hand, (until the recent collapse of stalinism in Russia,) was busily denying that it existed, and trying to persuade everyone that despite the enormous powers and privileges of the Nomenklatura, that stalinist societies were nevertheless classless; and that society in the Soviet Union conformed to the aims and objectives of the pioneers of the socialist movement.

We need therefore to consider whether it would have been possible for the revolution to have gone further than it did. It was in the Thirties a well-known truism amongst leftist opponents of stalinism, that confining the revolution to one country meant killing it. However this was frequently a self-serving argument put forward by Trotskyists and other Left Leninists, who ignored the extent to which, during Lenin's life-time the bolsheviks failed to aid socialist revolutionary upsurges in the West; and, perhaps more to the point, ignored the extent to which the revolution had already degenerated during the years 1918-23.

However, be that as it may, and we will certainly be coming back to that point, later, in the main body of this work; we need to look first to what preceded the revolutions, especially since, in the case of the Russian one it was accompanied by all sorts of theories, claimed to be scientific and to deal with economic and historical determinism; which it was argued allowed socialists to predict the future, and to choose the precisely correct policies to help the movement along.

For therein lies one obvious evil: if revolution is seen not as the voluntary act of the oppressed masses, but as the almost inevitable consequences of inanimate economic forces;



then the masses are apt to be seen as bodies to be manipulated, and if that is all they are, it is certain that they cannot control society, in which case the classless society cannot be built.

But we go too far ahead: let us look back at the circumstances that these "scientific socialist" theories are supposed to explain; let us see just what was common to those three named revolutions, (indeed - though we have enough to study at the moment without looking further afield, - those who wish to take the case deeper may perhaps care to look also at the 16th Century Dutch one, or to the various earlier shifts in class power within the Lombard City states.

It is notable that before both of these revolutions, as with the English one in the 17th Century, the countries had been ruled by absolute monarchs, that not so long before a prolonged dynastic dispute had been ended by the accession to power of a new ruling family, which had greatly modernised the institutions of monarchical power. Moreover it had brought in a thorough-going modernization of the finance and economic processes of society, purged much of the older nobility, reducing the powers of the remainder, but nevertheless, while making many economic and social changes, preserving the structure of an economic class order which was by that time disappearing in neighbouring countries.

This meant that though in each case the economy was relatively advanced, the social relationships were backward. A considerable number of leading figures in the economy, (factory managers in Russia, Mercantilists in France, [Mercantilism is an imperial economic system where everything throughout an empire is planned, whole islands being ordered to specialise in single cash crops, and sometimes to change cash-crops on the orders of the planners in the imperial country,] pre-mercantilist merchants in England,) felt excluded from the political process, and were bitter. But because of the autocratic nature of society those who in the normal event would have led their class to political power were either bribed or kept their heads down.

Other less important figures in the economy however were more discontent, and they sided with the mass of the population in wanting to change society, and in turning to violent and conspiratorial means in so doing.

But because the classes were not fully formed, lacked consciousness, because those who in the normal course of events would have been the new ruling class had been divided between those who slavishly upheld the autocracy and those who secretly sided with the underclasses, they were not conscious of being a single class. The revolution therefore went further, than pure economic and historical determinism might suggest. It looked as if not merely the old class order, but also any new one, would be swept away.

Naturally this concentrated the minds of the new elites who deciding that they had been better off under the old autocracy than they would be under a classless society fought hard to restore something of the old system. However the old order was crippled, it could only be

restored if it was prepared to change in a way that was outside the comprehension of the then heirs of the Monarchy. So there was a longish phase of time in a period which certainly didn't conform would the old Monarchical order, didn't conform either to that society then dominant in neighbouring countries, which had been expected to emerge after a revolution, (capitalism in 1917, Mercantilism in 1789, pre-Mercantilist Merchant society in the 17th Century,) in which there was a constant battle for power.

Thus the French Revolution did not immediately make an industrial capitalist revolution for the simple reason that there were very few industrial capitalists around at the time. Even in England, the 18th Century Industrial Revolution was in its infancy, and the entrepreneurial capitalist class was not sufficiently developed that it could possibly have taken power as a class until after the Napoleonic Wars. The French Capitalist class rose both into being and to power as a result of the revolution and the wars that followed; (when the Monarchy was restored, it happened on the basis that it had to accept the new reality and make an alliance with the capitalists).

The revolution could have spread, given the conditions under which the emergent British working class laboured, it is amazing that the revolution did not spread to Britain. Though much has been written since E.P. Thompson's "The Making of the English Working Class," and though its author was far from being an anarchist, that book remains an essential source to understand why it was (a) reasonable to believe that revolution would reach Britain, and (b) how it was that it did not.

In the same way the Russian Revolution did not lead directly to a new ruling class, the economic basis for such a new class had not been then, in 1917, been laid. The leading revolutionaries, guided as they were by Marxist theories, intended to make a capitalist revolution which they supposed would prepare the way for socialism. It didn't. Just as with the French Revolution, it failed to spread, and so failing, it had to survive against frequent attempts by Western powers to overthrow it. That may not be the only reason the revolution was corrupted - indeed, anarchists are certain it is not - but it was certainly a reason. It led instead to a stalemate between classes, out of which and after considerable economic development hastened by ideological wars, a new class society arose.

Naturally if the mass of the people make the heroic sacrifices necessary for a revolution, they do so because they want to be relieved of very evil conditions; they expect to see concrete gains. They may be prepared to wait for the full benefits their leaders have promised, but they are not prepared to see the old privileged classes given back their powers, while they themselves are ground back to the previous penury.

So any revolution which fails to ameliorate the conditions of the masses, which either restores the powers of the old order, or builds a new class-divided society is going to have its rules resisted by the people who made the revolution.



It follows that any revolutionary elite, (however admirable its motives,) which thinks it knows what is good for the masses better than the masses do themselves, will be resisted, and restricted by people who yesteryear made a revolution. The elite survives only if it is prepared to suppress all dissent, and, if necessary, does this bloodily.

Years later, mainly when arguing with his own more zealous disciples, Trotsky used to deny furiously the allegation that the seeds of Stalinism were planted in the life of Lenin. He used to say - reasonably enough - that "a river of blood separates the party of Lenin from the party of Stalin," no-one can deny that that is true. What Trotsky, (and those who quote him,) forget (and which this pamphlet tries to show) is that there was an earlier "river of blood" separating the Soviets of 1917 from those of 1923.

We will see (Appendix Two) that though he frequently revised the form of his analysis on this, that Trotsky, until he died, insisted that there was no basis for a new class society in Russia; until 1929 he fought against earlier opposition currents and his own more enthusiastic followers, when they talked of Stalin's acquisition of power as being the Russian Thermidor. (*Thermidor was when Robespierre was overthrown in the French Convention, and the revolution was consequently halted, the way being paved for the rise of the new class society.*)

He in the works that he wrote after Hitler came to power, and before "The Revolution Betrayed" accepted that he'd been wrong at this point, but said that until then he had seen Thermidor as the restoration of a previously existing class society. He rightly pointed out that it was not, but it only ushered in the stalemate out of which a new class division arose. We will also show - on the basis of his political testament "The USSR in War," that unlike those who call themselves his followers, it is unlikely that Trotsky would have allowed himself to be stuck with this position had he lived to the end of the war. That he would have accepted that a new class society had arisen in the Soviet Union as in the satellites.

We perhaps need - at this stage - to say something in explanation of why the nature of the Russian Revolution matters to anarchists, what exactly was our role and interest in the matter. We must point out that you don't need to be an anarchist, (certainly not an anarcho-syndicalist,) to say that society can only be changed for the better by the direct intervention of the workers themselves. (Marx after all said as much, - "the liberation of the working class is the task of the workers themselves," - whether he meant it or not is debatable).

We do not claim that syndicalists/anarchists are alone in holding the belief that; - whether it be industrial action for partial demands, Newbury-type action on the environment, the NVDA of the peace movement, street demos against the Prevention of Terrorism or the Criminal Justice Acts, or against the cruel despatch of animals, in the short term; something like the Indian independence movement under Gandhi, or the overthrow of Apartheid regime, of the East European dictatorships in the mid-term; or something on the lines of the social general strike in the final term; - it is always direct action and eventually mass involvement, that matters.

What distinguishes a syndicalist from others is the consistency with which we think this applies. There can never be a time when an anarchist (true to his/her beliefs) will advocate that the workers surrender their newly gained power to a self-selected Central Committee which will then run the revolution on behalf of the workers, (as the Bolsheviks did in 1918;) never be a time when syndicalists will say that group X because of their revolutionary-past understands the workers' interests better than the workers themselves, (as Lenin said when he imposed one-man-management on Russian industries against the wishes of the Soviets;) never be a time when anarcho-syndicalists say (as did Trotsky in "Terror") that but for the dictatorship of a revolutionary party over the workers' councils, workers' council power would be an impossibility.

By definition if you believe in direct action, you will want to work with others who so do; (there may of course be occasions when this or that action is thought to be counter-productive, and so the direct actionist will want to disown what she/he feels to be false direct action; - that sort of division is found amongst anarcho-syndicalists just as it is found elsewhere). So by definition direct actionist movements are always wider than any one label would imply, they are all essentially united fronts, and the syndicalist seeks only to be the most determined advocate of direct action.

This is why historically all examples of mass syndicalist movements (the IWW, the early French CGT, the Spanish CNT, the British syndicalist upsurge of 1909-1913 - the shop stewards' movements etc., - the Swedish SAC,) have had members who did not regard themselves as anarchist or syndicalist; and why there have been over the years, a variety of socialist parties or the organizations which have had syndicalist members. There has never been a case where a socialist movement has inspired the workers to act, in vast numbers, in a revolutionary way, where there has not been significant anarchist involvement in that action; there has never been a case when a revolution has halted and turned back on itself but the impact of a minority usurping the revolution, and imposing its will, without that usurpation being restricted by anarcho-syndicalists.



## *The Year 1917 and its Immediate Aftermath.*

History knows of the October (old calendar) 1917 Revolution in Russia as the Bolshevik Revolution, but when at the time the Manchester Guardian printed Morgan Phillips Price's eyewitness account, he and the paper described it as the Maximalist Revolution. The Guardian, when it reproduced that front page to commemorate the 70th anniversary, said apologetically, that everyone was confused and it was not a great fault that Price had not known the word Bolshevik and had called their party Maximalist.

In this, they wronged the best Western contemporary account of the rising. Price had noted what they did not recall that the majority of the Executive of the Bolshevik Party actually opposed the Revolution. Kamenev, Zinoviev, Stalin and Molotov (not Helphand-Parvus, but the later user of that pseudonym,) had the very day before the rising published a denunciation of it, in a paper edited by Gorki (thus giving the Tsar's Secret Police full warning,) on behalf of the Bolshevik Central Committee.

The Revolution was organized by the Petrograd/Petersburg Soviet; this by definition was an ad hoc assembly of workers with delegates coming from all the factories, from mutinying barracks, local workers residential committees; with people from a variety of political currents, it was not answerable to any one of them. The largest single political organization which supported the Revolution was indeed the Maximalist (Social Revolutionary) Party. (c.f. Appendix One for an explanation of the various parties existing in Russia before 1917).

The basic story is fairly commonly known; the February (old calendar) Revolution led to the creation of peasant and workers soviets; whether this was sparked off by reaction to Prince Michael's attempted coup, or (whether it started before the coup, and the latter was the right-wing's response is still a matter of historical debate). That the residue of the Duma (which was left after the Tsar had purged earlier ones,) took measures to restore the Tsar to power, and when the Tsar refused to stand up to his brother, it was forced to declare a republic. A whole series of Provisional Governments came and went, each trying to continue the war with Germany and maintain a semblance of Government.

However, the Soviets maintained their position as centres of dual power, frequently nullifying the decrees of central government; even though at first, none of the established parties supported them in this. Things came to a head in July when there was an attempt at Revolution, but the attempt was left too late and the Provisional Government was able to move to prevent the upsurge, then reform and change its own membership. Victorious then, the Provisional Government was able to clamp down on the Left, and for a short time it looked as if the whole course of the revolution had been halted, and that a stable coalition of Bourgeois parties had triumphed.

Discontent amongst the troops continued, more and more of them deserting, some of the more right-wing generals started openly plotting to restore the Tsar and/or Prince Michael, and the upsurge resumed; so that, with the beginning of Winter there was once again a crisis with everything to play for.

## *The Year 1917 and its Immediate Aftermath.*

The Provisional Government ordered troops, who had come to endorse the Soviets, from Petrograd, to the front, and the Petrograd Soviet nullified the order, telling the troops to remain where they were; it then set up a Military Committee, with the task of ensuring that this was done. (This was accompanied by a revolt in the Navy, whose headquarters were in Kronstadt, just near Petrograd; the sailors there had twice before that year [as also in 1905] acted to defend the revolution;) the Petrograd soviet decreed that none of the troops in the Capital, or the sailors in Kronstadt, were under any circumstances to be posted away from the Capital; until the Soviet itself countermanded that order.

Whole regiments of the Tsarist Army had deserted either to the Provisional Government or to their local Soviets, though we always think of the soldiers shooting their officers as they left, (as in the Pasternak film,) in fact many of the officers deserted too; both the Provisional Government's Army and the various soviet forces which Trotsky was busily welding into the Red Army were - for the most part - commanded by former Tsarist officers, right up to the rank of General.

The Provisional Government obviously could not accept this challenge to its authority, and it ordered the suppression of the soviets; and especially the suppression of the Soviet Military committee. The troops the Provisional Committee ordered to enforce this, deserted, and moved over to the Soviets, as did most of the rest of the troops still under the orders of the Provisional Government; workers in Petrograd rallied in thousands to the Soviet hall to defend it, and soviets all over the country declared their support for the Petrograd soviet. The Provisional Government power collapsed. It was the Soviet's turn to suppress its rival, it called its supporters out to besiege the Winter Palace where the Provisional Government debated, and these carried the day.

But we go ahead too fast, the well known account leaves out too many important facts, and we need to look at these. Let us return to the time of the February Revolution, still at first dealing with what is well-known. Both Trotsky and Lenin (and countless other revolutionaries, who though less well known nevertheless played significant roles,) having gone into exile a long time earlier, publishing from abroad socialist journals that had been smuggled across the borders into the Tsarist empire were at the time abroad. Both came back to be greeted by enthusiastic crowds of revolutionaries. Both were then hunted by the Provisional Government, and had to hide, or (briefly) move to Finland outside the direct control of the provisional authorities.

What is not normally so well known is that Lenin, when still in exile, had in a series of articles attacked the Internal Bolshevik leadership, because the latter supported the Provisional Government calling for a break with that Government. These articles were suppressed. When Lenin returned and the Bolshevik Executive met him, he turned away from it, to speak to the mass of party (and non-party) revolutionaries present, calling for a break with the Provisional Government. The Internal Executive accused him of abandoning Marxism, and tried to expel him from the Bolshevik Party, (well, constitutionally



speaking, they did expel him, but the mass of party members refused to acknowledge the expulsion).

It was at this time - in the earlier articles from abroad, in his speech on arrival, and in writings immediately thereafter, - that Lenin said: "The party masses are ten thousand times more revolutionary than the party leadership, and the non-party masses, ten thousand times more so, than the party masses." This as he attacked the internal-Russian Bolshevik Executive for not supporting the masses in their desire to force an end to the War.

Leninists referring back to this, since, say "well of course there was pardonable rhetorical exaggeration," and "anyway this was only just for this short period." It all helps them avoid thinking about the implication of Lenin's words; implication which, certainly Lenin, himself, was subsequently to fail to examine. Think about it, the whole argument for a Leninist type party depends on the thesis that a revolution cannot be made (in the original version, could not so be in the conditions of Tsarist Russia,) without the pre-existence of an highly disciplined, Marxist party; a party wherein power lay with the leadership, and each lower rank was trained by that leadership, and was expected to submit totally to leadership dictates.

Well such a party existed at a moment of crisis, a party, moreover, built directly to Lenin's prescription, under the leadership of people he had appointed. In his eyes this party, and particularly its leadership, totally failed to respond to a revolutionary opportunity. The leadership, indeed, acted as a brake on the membership, who showed a desire to act in a revolutionary way, but because of their enforced obedience to that leadership, did not so act; and the party as a whole, similarly acted as a brake on the wider workers' movement.

When it came to revolutionary conditions the workers acted spontaneously; and this revolutionary spontaneity was hamstrung by the habit of obeying the party leadership.

Lenin at this stage, between the two revolutions, was far more a libertarian revolutionary than before or since. His Philosophical Notebooks carried the realization (which after gaining power he lost) that the state road to socialism owed more to Lassalle than to Marx. His "State and the Revolution" makes clear that if a workers' state was established it would nevertheless be necessary for workers to fight against and overthrow the state.

Nor is the argument (put forward by later left Leninists) valid, that the Leninist Party went wrong solely because at that time it did not have Lenin at the helm; (though the implications of that defence have never been fully considered;) for even after Lenin returned there is evidence that workers outside the party wanted to act in a more militant way than did the party. So much so that in the July Days, when at first the Bolsheviks did not support mass strike action, there were spontaneous protest pickets outside the Bolshevik headquarters complaining of the conservatism of the party; - a conservatism, and delay in acting that caused the failure of the attempted July Revolution.

Eighty (almost) years later, ask any Leninist about the revolution and he/she will claim that the Bolsheviks came to power as the majority of the soviets, because they were the only group (or perhaps the first group) advocating "all power to the soviets." But none of that is true.

1. The Left Essars were the largest single faction within the Congress of Soviets, it was only when representation was altered to give extra weight to the urban soviets that the Bolsheviks became the largest single faction;

2. Even so, as the largest single faction, they were far from being a majority of the Soviets;

3. Whether the slogan "all power to the Soviets" was first raised by the Maximalists or one of the smaller anarchist groups is a matter of debate, but there can be no doubt that initially it was an anarchist slogan;

4. In July, first the Mezhrailonti, and then Gorki's International Social Democrats took up what had previously been an anarchist slogan, - "All Power to the Soviets," - and, in the upsurge; in that month, posed the issue of soviet power, they were not followed by the Bolsheviks, - not even by the minority faction of the Bolshevik leadership round Lenin, which only took up the slogan a month or two later, while the Stalin-Kamenev-Zinoviev faction only endorsed the slogan, after the soviets had already taken power.

Subsequent Bolshevik polemicists have derided the fact that the Martov "International Mensheviks," only supported soviet power, after the soviets had already taken power, that they then demanded that as a soviet party they be allowed to share in that power. The Bolsheviks justify their exclusion of Martov from power by his belatedness in supporting the demand for "All Power to the Soviets." As however the majority of the Bolshevik Central Committee, (and all its supporters, in the party,) equally only endorsed the revolution after the event; this is a remarkably dishonest example of special pleading.

For once the Soviets had made the Revolution, the right-wing majority of the Central Committee, promptly saw the prospect of power and reversed its position, demanding and achieving a monopoly of that power. The Congress of Soviets was persuaded to delegate authority for six months to the Bolshevik Central Committee, this, naturally, never gave up the powers so won. Disgracefully Lenin and Trotsky co-operated in this.

Only a month after the Revolution, Trotsky led a detachment of the new Red Army, to crush a workers' soviet. The Vyborg Quarter of Petersburg, had been the most militant of all workers' areas, in every major advance of the revolution its residents had been the most courageous, going regularly to the barricades. The workers there had long term grievances and it had been these that made them so militant; when the revolution came, they naturally expected that their conditions would at last be mitigated, and they dared say so in their soviets. (In retrospect they would have been wiser to have retained their arms, and to have made the demand more forcibly).



Trotsky took in the Red Army to close down the Soviet, (also closing down the Petrograd Anarchists, who had their office there). Six months later it was the Moscow headquarters of the anarchists that were suppressed, and the Soviet emasculated.

In the weeks immediately before the Soviet Revolution, workers in coal, in petroleum, and on the railways had taken their industries into workers' control and ownership. The Bolsheviks, once in power, declared these industries nationalised, thus taking them away from workers' direct ownership and control and vesting them in the state.

In almost all other industries the factory soviets, (i.e. either the general assembly of the workers or - in larger concerns - a council with mandated delegates from workers in all factory shops and departments,) - while not taking full ownership and control - had nevertheless taken considerable measures of power. Lenin imposed one-man management, erected Tripartite control councils, where the workers' soviets were only one of three forces, the other two being (a) representatives of the state, and (b) the old capitalist bosses, now redesignated managers.

Lenin made it clear, in several articles at this time, that he was not attempting to build socialism but "workers' dominated state capitalism in transition to socialism." (Later in a controversy within the Communist Party, he extended this to "a workers' dominated state capitalism, in transition to socialism, but with severe bureaucratic deformations").

One can understand the theory, but just as the limitations the Provisional Government put on the possibilities of transition, forced its members, (many against their will,) to support the continuation of the war with Germany, and to attempt to enforce martial discipline against mutinous troops; so the Bolshevik analysis forced the Communist Government, [in trying to maintain capitalism, until revolution in the West was ready,] to continue exploitation, to shoot striking workers, while restoring privileges to capitalists (albeit capitalists renamed workers).

No doubt this stemmed from the earlier Bolshevik and Menshevik theory that revolution in Russia could only lead to capitalism; that until the West had its revolution, the transition of Russia to Socialism was impossible. Though Lenin had, in calling for a break with the Provisional Government, partially adapted to Trotsky's "Permanent Revolution:" theory, he (and Trotsky himself) still believed that the basis for Socialism could only be built in Russia as part of a world revolutionary movement which could transform the Western advanced economies.

Though Lenin in a well-known aphorism said: "Soviet Power+Electricity=Socialism," modern Communist apologists will claim the assumption of power by the Soviets was not sufficient to bring Socialism. That without the conscious Socialism and Marxist theory of the Bolshevik party, Soviet power was inadequate. The argument depends on the Hegel-Marx distinction between subjective and objective. Soviet power was certainly the vehicle whereby the workers obtained objective power, but the Leninist will tell you that without the theoretical analysis of Marx-Leninism there is no subjective power.

This is an argument that goes right back to a time immediately after the Revolution; as early as 1919 in "Terror", Trotsky asserted "You say that what exists in Russia is not a dictatorship of the proletariat through the Soviets, but a dictatorship of the Bolsheviks over the Soviets and Workers, I say that without the dictatorship of the Bolsheviks over the Soviets, the power of the working class would be impossible." (Trotsky and the Mezhrailonti, together with Gorki and the International Social Democrats, joined the Bolshevik Party en bloc, a little before the Soviet revolution).

Direct power was not, after the first month or so, in the hands of the Soviets; so if direct Soviet power was (as Lenin said) one of the two essential elements of Socialism; the Bolshevik party had consciously deprived the Soviets of power. They did this on the grounds that they claimed that the Bolshevik Party represented the Socialist consciousness of the masses, and therefore its (subjective) power was more important than the (objective) power of the Soviets.

For anarchists, and indeed for some small Marxist factions, the counter-revolution started then. Our comrades, active there at the time, argued that whatever the intentions of the Bolsheviks, for a small minority of the Proletariat to arrogate itself all power, however much they might believe it was on behalf of the proletariat as a whole, meant inevitably that that minority would develop interests at variance with the class as a whole. That they believing they knew better than the workers, what was in the workers own interests, would soon start to hold that anything that suited their position was in the workers' interest.

Inevitably this minority began to demand special privileges and powers for itself, began to believe that anyone who opposed them was a secret agent of the Capitalists. No doubt some were more corruptible than others; no doubt some more honest would sooner or later want to cry halt to the degeneration of the revolution. Indeed in that division lay the seed of the later splits between Stalin and others. But the cancer that would kill the revolution had taken hold by the middle of 1918, at the latest.

Perhaps sub-consciously the left Leninist Oppositionists of the late 1920's (while they were denying that anything went wrong in Lenin's lifetime,) knew this. They called Stalin the gravedigger of the revolution. But who calls a gravedigger before they have a corpse?



Marx who did not often speak approvingly of Ferdinand Lassalle regarded the latter's essay "Qu'est ce que c'est qu'une Constitution?" as a major contribution to Socialist theory. It was to be fundamental to Bolshevik thinking, which may be regarded as paradoxical in view of the fact that it is also the clue to understanding the post-revolutionary behaviour of the Bolsheviks.

Lassalle rightly showed that since it is part of the every day work of rulers to rule, administrators to administer, managers to manage; the most democratic political system is always going to be biased in favour of these rulers. The ordinary people - whether artisans, workers, peasants or small businessmen, - can only participate in government in their spare time. The rulers working time is spent in work that has an essentially political impact. The working time of the ruled is spent on work whose political impact is that it enriches those who exploit and rule him/her.

In moments of revolutionary upsurge the masses find the energy, (or neglect their other work,) to intervene in a way that overrules the administrators, but as soon as they delegate governmental functions to a minority, they restore the previous position whereby that minority is in a better position to influence events.

To Marxists it is fundamental that the class nature of the state is determined by the economic relations within society; that if Capitalism is the dominant economic form, then it is impossible that the government and state can be anything other than Capitalist. Even when Lenin died 85% or more of the industry and agriculture in the Soviet Union was in private (therefore indisputably Capitalist) hands.

Only by arguing from Lassalle's theory were the Bolsheviks able to say that the Soviet Union was anything other than a simple Capitalist society; indeed, to the extent that he did say it was anything other than that, Lenin always qualified his words very carefully.

But the essence of Lassalle's theory was that, (if only for a very short time) it was possible for the exploited classes - through their mass mobilization - to overawe their rulers and create a political state of a different class complexion than the underlying dominant economic class.

So, for Lenin, at least, the formulation "workers' dominated state Capitalism" described something that could exist for the brief period that workers spontaneously mobilized, and forced the bosses to accept their domination. But it could not last. Either the workers could go on to expropriate the Capitalists and create a Socialist society, or, inevitably, the Capitalists in a short time would be able to re-assert their control over the political state.

Given that, as Marxists, the Bolsheviks at that time insisted that it would be impossible to create a Socialist society until the workers had made a revolution in the advanced Capitalist West; this meant that the option of expropriating the capitalists, and moving on to Socialism, was not open to them.

For them, either the West would have a revolution, soon, or the restoration of capitalism in the Soviet Union was inevitable.

We have seen that at the beginning of 1918, the Congress of Soviets was persuaded to delegate its powers to the Bolshevik Party; this meant that the revolutionary masses delegated their power, to what was seen as a revolutionary elite. However, Lenin, intending as he did to build a Capitalist Russia, then delegated the job of running factories and other industrial enterprises, to managers drawn from the old Capitalist class. In the armed forces Trotsky pursued a parallel course, and began to restore military ranks; (because saluting was only later restored, some Trotskyists deny that this had major importance). When it came to governmental administration, Lenin himself said: "We took over - almost intact - the whole apparatus of Tsarist autocratic administration." So the masses were removed from power, not just one stage but three.

At about the same time the Bolshevik Party at a Congress voted to ban internal factions (though at first, as is shown by two Democratic Centralist and one Workers' Oppositions, this was not fully enforced,) but nevertheless it was a rule which if enforced would have had the effect of preventing the discussion of grievances within the party; and it later provided the excuse for Stalin's clamp down.

(It may be thought ironic for all the years when the party operated in conditions of illegality, it was still believed possible and desirable - if not essential - that there should be freedom for such factions; but that when the party becomes dominant, this was no longer thought necessary. One of the consequences that still survives is that most of the various parties claiming to be Bolshevik-Leninist take as their role-model not the relative freedom of debate that operated within the pre-1917 Bolshevik party, but the authoritarian one that prevailed after the Revolution).

It is hardly surprising that in such conditions that a bureaucracy arose, whether recruited from former Capitalists, Senior Officers, Managers or former members of the Bolshevik Party. Hardly surprising that it was soon introducing draconian measures against strikers, or protesting peasants.

Again, there is no doubt, that the Bolshevik regime was having to fight a variety of foreign-supported, armies led by former Tsarists. That this fact should never be forgotten when one assesses what happened. But it is also a fact that Bolshevik determination to have a monopoly of power meant that all sorts of groups that originated as their allies were attacked in the back by the Bolsheviks, anxious to eliminate rivals. From the anarchist point of view, Makhno is of course the obvious example of this. He drove the Tsarist General Denikin out of the Ukraine, but while he was fighting Denikin, - he thought in alliance with the Bolsheviks, - Trotsky attacked him in the rear.

This caused a quite unnecessary extra war, and so great was the Bolshevik insistence on dealing with all potential rivals, that during the war, Trotsky liquidated the Democratic



Centralist Opposition within the Party and the Red Army, even though its members were largely drawn from his former exile associates. (c.f. The Trotsky Archives for 1919, Brill). (The 1919 Democratic Centralist Opposition should not be confused with the later (1924) one, though they probably shared many ideas, they stemmed from different origins).

But this was not the only instance of the Bolsheviks unnecessarily seeking additional enemies. The Left Social Revolutionaries were the party closest to the Bolsheviks within the Congress of Soviets, (and before differential representation was brought to give the industrial towns equality with the country, these Left Essars were the majority of the Bolshevik dominated coalition,) there had been a long tradition of peasant revolt in Russia, and in the conditions of the Civil War, in several regions, peasant armies, broadly supporting the Essars formed under the illusion that they were allied to the Bolsheviks. (Described in Dr. Zhivago as "Greens," and as Pasternak said there, even an irregular military leader who had rallied to the Bolsheviks, and - as their ally - was fighting Greens as well as Whites, feared that at any moment the Bolsheviks might decide he'd fulfilled his usefulness and attack him in the rear).

Throughout the country more and more Soviets, workers and peasants, registered their discontent, and finally this culminated in the Kronstadt rising. The sailors who had been in 1905 and in 1917, the advance guard of the revolution, adopted the slogan, "the Soviets free of the Bolsheviks," and revolted. Many sailors were, of course, themselves, Bolsheviks, but almost all resigned from the party to support the rising; none of those who remained in the party was imprisoned.

The Bolsheviks of course pretended that these were not the same sailors, on whose support they had relied in coming to power, claiming that the original sailors had been posted elsewhere, and replaced by callow and previously non-political young peasants. However since the Bolsheviks, themselves had decreed (and never rescinded the decree,) that on no account were sailors to be moved from Kronstadt, since they were essential to the Capital's defence, they prove themselves to be in the wrong.

The Bolsheviks also claimed that the Kronstadt sailors were led by a Tsarist General' - there was it is true a Tsarist General on the spot, leading Trotsky's forces against the Kronstadters.

With the bloody suppression of Kronstadt the Bolsheviks finally severed the links the party had had to the conception of free Soviets. From then on any political debate had to take place within the Bolshevik Party, and the ban on factions was by then beginning to bite. (When, after Lenin's death, Trotsky moved into opposition, he still supported the ban on internal party factions, a belief that prevented him and his supporters from engaging in any real struggle).

In casting the blame for all of this on foreign intervention, Bolshevik-Leninists again indulge in special pleading. They were so anxious to win support against Left Reformists

in the West, (the same sort of Left reformists that Lenin had denounced during the war, demanding that the Zimmerwald, Kienthal and Stockholm Conferences that real Socialists break from all organizations that contained them,) that they starved Western Revolutionaries of support.

The revolutionary upsurge that came at the end of the war did after all lead not just to the fall of the Tsar, but also of the Kaiser. Germany, too, had a republic, in which the Social Democrats, from having been in the past nothing more than a fringe party, were set to be the largest single body. In point of fact, in terms of administration, in terms of police, in terms of the armed forces, there was a more thorough-going change in Germany than in Russia. Whereas Lenin took over almost intact the whole apparatus of Tsarist tyranny, the German Social democrats had for instance a ready-made militia recruited from the trade unions, and from this, both the new army and the new police were recruited. Similarly the German Social Democrat trade unions, which were firmly subordinate to the control of the party, could find amongst their party officials executives capable of running industries.

But, rightly, Lenin viewed the Social Democrat-dominated German government as being to all intents and purposes bourgeois. He nevertheless set about courting its support. When the sailors of Willelmshaven rose in revolt, Radek, the emissary from the international, ignored the revolting sailors and allowed himself to be wined and dined by governmental Social Democrats. When later the German workers revolted forming a number of workers' councils, with whole towns and states in Soviet-type revolt, the Bolsheviks had already denounced the most active German Communists as ultra-left, took the line that the German revolt was merely an ultra-left deviation.

The dissident Communists formed the Communist Workers' Party, some of whose members went on to form various Council Communist factions; (Council Communism being basically a spontaneous form of syndicalism, - though stressing area organization rather than industrial as the first federation of basic factory councils; - its adherents argued that as all revolutionary organizations are bound to degenerate, whether into reformism or vanguardist-elitism, during times of political quiet, that it is never possible for subsequent generations of radicals to build on the organizations of the past and so no effort should be made to preserve these when a wave of militancy ends; - in practise both the syndicalist and the councillist movements vary in the degree to which they put emphasis on spontaneity, so there is a large overlap).

In North Italy, the workers rose in 1919; but even Bordiga, himself to be excluded soon from the Third International as an ultra ("Infantillist") leftist, stood placid on the side lines denouncing undisciplined anarchist activity. (Bordiga was the main theorist of what came to be called "The Italian Left," when Trotsky moved into exile he tried to attract the Bordigists into his "International Left Opposition," indeed succeeded in attracting a small faction from the less revolutionary wing, but the majority of them regarded him as irredeemably Centrist and insisted on maintaining their separation).



In Britain in 1919 there were more workers out on strike than there were to be in the General Strike of 1926; more than twice as many as in any subsequent year; this was at a time when those troops that had been released from the army were finding difficulty getting jobs and were protesting; while those that were not released, could not understand why, and were threatening mutiny, sufficiently loudly that the War Office had taken on a large number of informers, who were sent round to barracks to make contacts with Bolsheviks in the forces; the working class - which at the beginning of the war - was told by recruiting officers that they would come home to a land fit for heroes, was in fact coming home to the same old land in which only heroes could survive. Tom Mann, a former syndicalist now turned communist was sent by his party to break the strike wave and quieten the workers.

Ireland which was anyway in the middle of its independence struggle now makes the boast that it beat Russia to the Soviets, since they were risings predominantly of workers and peasants in Dublin, Cork and Limerick in 1916. In fact with Connolly dead, Larkin and Sean White side-lined, the socialist constituent of the Irish Nationalist Movement was in decline; but what is certain is that the Bolsheviks made no serious attempt to use the fame of Connolly's name, in order to re-instill a socialist element into the Sinn Fein struggle.

Basically the Bolsheviks were only interested in solidarity when - as with the Jolly George strike in England or André Marty's mutiny in the Black Sea fleet, - the Western workers were refusing to co-operate in sending troops to the intervention forces in Russia. But as soon as Western workers took up their own grievances, the Bolsheviks lost interest. It was not just with the coming of Stalin, the Bolshevik interest was solely in the prospects of socialism in one country.

No doubt things got worse with the coming of Stalin. It is possible to believe that for all his and its faults (for all the fact that he and they suppressed the Soviets,) Lenin and the party under Lenin sincerely wished to guide Russia eventually to socialism. That they were subjectively socialist.

Yes, Stalin's accession did mark what Marxists call Hegelian (dialectical) Leap ("from quantity to quality" - the equivalent of latent heat in physics, the kettle heats gradually to a certain point, then the heat stays constant, while water changes to steam,) in the progressive degeneration of Bolshevik society. That we can concede. But anarchists cannot concede that this degeneration came from nowhere and didn't have its roots earlier.

But for Trotskyists and others, who, while perhaps prepared to concede (if only because Lenin himself said it,) that there was something basically wrong with the Soviet Union before Lenin died, nevertheless argue that counter-revolution only set in after Stalin took power; and who used to argue that stalinism had to be supported to the extent that it preserved state ownership of industry; there is a deep theoretical problem inherent in this and their other theories. A theoretical difficulty that doesn't pose any questions for the anarchists.

When Lenin died, 84% of all industry and agriculture in the Soviet Union was still in private hands. No doubt private industry controlled by a state which was prepared to intervene, in order to direct industry to do what planners wanted, and which was dominated by the Bolsheviks; but private industry no less for that.

Indeed Lenin's formulation that the Soviet Union was a workers' dominated state capitalist state sprang from this private ownership of the industry. (Trotsky somewhat transformed this formulation saying that it was a "workers' state" as a non-capitalist state which had not achieved socialism).

Stalin, in what is known as the Third Period, adopted Trotsky's programme of expropriating private owners, and rapidly industrializing; implementing this with a barbarous cruelty that was all Stalin's own. The policy was however (Trotskyists always insist) initially Trotsky's. In the five years from 1929 to '34 more than 50% of Soviet industry was taken into state or other collectivised control. It was then that, for the first time, communists began claiming that the Soviet Union had achieved socialism, (a distinction was made between socialism, and the higher stage of communism,) so that when the Stalinists claimed to be building socialism in one country, they were not merely novel in suggesting that that was a possibility, but also in saying that the Soviet Union had reached socialism.

If it is believed that state control, (however undemocratic and lacking in workers' power,) constitutes socialism, or something progressive towards socialism, then it has to be accepted that Stalin instituted an economic revolution. If that is the case, the Stalinists' allegations that Trotsky was "objectively a counter-revolutionary" are well founded. Trotsky did oppose Stalin at a time when Stalin was making dramatic changes; changes, which, if the theories of modern Trotskyists are correct, amounted to revolution, the fulfillment of Lassalle's idea that the insurgent masses would first overawe the capitalists, and would then, in their own time, expropriate them; so, in that case, he was objectively counter-revolutionary.

The problem with the Stalinist claim is that precisely at the time that Stalin was expropriating capitalists, massacring kulacs, he was also bloodily suppressing the last vestiges of free trade unions, or of any other autonomous workers' organizations. When Western fellow travellers in the Thirties and thereafter visited the Soviet Union reporting that they had attended meetings of Soviets, what they had attended were committees, whose members were all appointed by the local Communist Party secretary, which purported to represent the workers but were in no way answerable to them.

This was all accompanied by a massacre of former revolutionaries, as Krushchev was to admit at the 20th Congress of the CPUSSR, something like 20,000,000 died in the Gulags. (A figure previously suggested by Maxim Gorki before he died and reported back to the West by Beale). Was this the actions of a revolutionary government?

While this happened the Stalinists delivered up the Shanghai working class movement to



be slaughtered by Chang Kai Shek; the Bavarian C.P. for six months, in 1928, had an alliance and reciprocal membership with the Nazi Party; the Italian C.P. the year later informed Mussolini of the names and addresses of all Socialists and Dissident Communists known to the C.P.; in Prussia, in 1931, the C.P. and the Nazis co-operated in the Red-Brown Referendum, which brought down the Social Democrat Government and paved the way for Hitler's victory. Were these the actions of parties responding to a governmental body in the midst of making a revolution.

No, of course not, these were all the symptoms of the Stalinist counter-revolution. But if we accept that, we also have to accept that a counter revolutionary movement could expropriate the holders of 84% of a country's capital. It shouldn't be difficult, as Marx himself said, "if state seizure of property is the same as Socialism, then Bismark must be regarded as a Socialist and a revolutionary one at that."

Taking industry into governmental ownership did not constitute Social Revolution; in those expropriated industries surplus value was still extracted from the workers' labour, and the period was marked by the Stakhonovites and the forced increase of productivity, while workers' conditions declined. It would be tedious to recount the full list of Stalinist betrayals; tedious to show how Maoism merely repeated the history of Stalinism. What we need to insist was that a new form of class society had arisen, whether this be called Bureaucratic Collectivism or State Capitalism is probably of little moment, except that for Marx the essence of Capitalism was the existence of free labour, and it is doubtful if the victims of Stalinism regarded themselves as free labourers.

## No.1: Who were the various parties? ~ 1917 Appendices

It is an old saying that anything of which it is said that "everybody knows that" is almost invariably inaccurate. There can be hardly any subject where this is more true than study of the 1917 Revolution. Anything written has to carry the warning that it and everything else said about the Revolution is going to be debated and disputed by someone else.

Probably the thing most widely known about the history of Russian socialism is that whereas Bakunin and the anarchists believed that it might be possible for the mir (the traditional Russian peasant communes) to develop as the basis of a socialist society, Marx and his followers insisted that Russia - like the West - had to develop Capitalism before Socialism could be a possibility. That in consequence Plekhanov founded the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (from which both the Bolsheviki and the Mensheviki sprang) as a break away from the Bakunian influenced Social Revolutionary Party; initially called the Narodniks.

But that too is debatable. Whereas Marx in his early years (particularly in his 1850's articles in the New York Herald Tribune) was not only adamant that Russia had to go through a Capitalist stage, but also worried that Russia's history and its connections with "Asiatic despotism" (hydraulic society) meant a danger that any Russian Capitalist society would be State Capitalist, Pan-Slav and Great Russian Imperialist; a considerable number of his later letters to Russian Socialists have been discovered, which suggest that Marx too believed it might be possible for Russia to miss the Capitalist stage.

However, the exact meaning of the letters is also a matter of debate; did Marx only mean that Socialism could be built on the Mir, if this happened in the context of a world revolution which mainly happened in the industrial countries, or did he really come to think that Russia might have a road to Socialism quite unlike those that elsewhere he laid down as being the only road to Socialism. Certainly far from the Social Revolutionaries being Bakunian, they asked Marx to represent them at the First International. (The small "Maximalist Social Revolutionary Party" - not to be confused with the later "Left Social Revolutionary Party" broke from the rest of the "Essars" and was largely Bakunian).

Besides the Maximalists there were a number of small, independent, Bakunian or Kropotkinist anarchist currents, and at that time the word Communist (and the whole heritage of the Paris Commune) with the suggestion of immediate non-constitutional action designed to seize power directly for workers was more or less a term of abuse used to describe anarchists. It was a member of one of these small anarchist groups who was first elected as Chair of the St. Petersburg Soviet in 1905, but who refused to hold what he felt to be a position of semi-governmental power and so, resigning, made room for Trotsky to take that position.

A number of others were brought to an interest in Agrarian-Communal Anarchism by the influence of Tolstoi, (who of course was in touch with Dhoukabours, who had long preached a religious Anarchism). Also some returned to émigrés brought back Herzen's



ideas, which carried some semi-Anarchist thinking into establishment political circles. Later there emerged an Anarcho-Syndicalist current within the Social Revolutionary Party, (the Essars - not the Maximalists).

Plekhanov certainly broke away from the Social Revolutionaries to launch first the Labour Emancipation League and then the RSDLP; whether this meant that he was being more Marxist than Marx, whether he had consulted Engels, (we know from the Grundrisse, that Marx - writing his own notes - was often far less dogmatic than he has since appeared, on the strength of Engels' work,) or whether it had been decided that the growing industrialisation of European Russia, (after all by 1917 European Russia was more heavily industrialised than France had been in 1871,) was destroying the conditions wherein the Mir could have been the basis of a change of society is also a matter of debate.

Marx had described Tsarism as the Gendarme of Capitalism, a military force standing ever-ready to aid Capitalism in suppressing workers' movements; (it is understandable that those early days of Capitalism it may have been thought that Capitalism could only do this task with the aid of a non-Capitalist force, history has since changed thing somewhat;) and so it was an integral part of Russian Social Democratic thinking, that Revolution in Russia would permit workers' revolutions in the West, and that the Proletarian movement would then spread back into Russia.

So the primary division amongst Russian socialists is between the Social Democrats, founded by Plekhanov as strict Marxists; that is as insistent that a stage of capitalist development had to take place before there could be a Socialist Revolution in Russia; and the Social Revolutionaries, who also regarded themselves as Marxists, but who were regarded by Western Socialists as Bakunin-influenced. (With the far smaller Maximalist Party which was initially a Bakunian faction of the Essars).

Peter Struve was a co-founder (with Plekhanov) of the Social Democrats but he went further than did Plekhanov in insisting that only a Capitalist Revolution was on the cards, and that therefore all effort should be put into bringing such a victory of capitalism about. So he broke away to found the Constitutional Democrats as the party of Russian capitalism (assuming that as Russia further industrialised that the balance of power would change, and hoping to persuade the Tsar to grant a Liberal Constitution, which coupled with the growing rush of foreigners to invest in Russia and build up its industrial sector, would, he believed, eventually mean a Capitalist Russia.

However, some of Struve's followers decided that he had not sufficiently adapted to the Tsar, and so even more constitutionally reformist than the Constitutional Democrats were the Octobrist Party; (led in 1917 by Miliukov). Yet to the right of these were constitutional-liberal-minded aristocrats led by Colonel Rodzianko and Prince Lvov.

Though no secessions from the Social Revolutionary Party equivalent to the Struve current have made a similar impact on history, there were various groupings which like the

Essars derived from the earlier Narodniks, and whose members, having reintegrated themselves into the ranks of the orthodox aristocracy, can be said to have held an equivalent position.

There were of course other non-reform minded aristocrats in the Duma, on the Far Right of which sat the ultra-militarist and anti-Semitic Black Hundreds.

The Social Democrats - indeed most parties - believed in a disciplined Party, where every member, in order to be allowed to vote in party matters, would have to earn that right by so much work for the party each week. The organizational form sought was described as Democratic Centralist, and insofar as the definition and original description of this was designed to prevent party leaders voicing their own opinions rather than the motions passed by party conferences, the concept was, indeed, a democratic one. The issue which caused the split between the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks was what constituted work for the party.

If, say, your social democrat was active within his Trade Union did this count? Both Mensheviks and Bolsheviks would say "no". It had to be work for the party. The Mensheviks said well if there's a caucus, i.e. a front or faction generally dominated, but not controlled in detail, by the party that is sufficient. The Bolsheviks said "no", only the work done by committees of party members in the Unions counts as party work.

This was to have the effect in 1905, and again early in 1917, that the Bolshevik faction expelled those of its members who were active in the soviets, as the soviets were not party committees, and their work in the soviets left them insufficient time to fulfill their strict party obligations.

Though it was the original reason for the split, it was soon displaced by the more pressing question of just who was to make the capitalist revolution. Central to the Russian Social Democratic theory was the belief, that since, in Russia, most capitalists were foreigners, Russian capitalism was essentially an imperialist manifestation; but an imperialist manifestation that held its influence in alliance with the Tsar, benefiting from special licences from him, and, in return, politically supporting him; that the most important native Russian capitalists, (the "comprador" capitalists,) ran businesses that served primarily as junior partners to imperial business.

Given this analysis, it was understandable, that foreign capitalists, benefiting as they did from the particular protection of the Tsar, and in no position to demand direct political power for themselves, were more than content to see Tsarist autocracy unchallenged. The comprador capitalists, though they might have dreams of becoming major capitalists in their own interests, and so- sub rosa - give some encouragement to democratic parties; could not afford to alienate the foreign capitalists, and so did not risk intervening in politics publicly.



Plekhanov had therefore said that the working class and peasantry must make the capitalist revolution for (and despite) the capitalists. But though before the "freeing of the serfs" there had been an united peasantry, more or less enslaved by an united nobility; by the turn of the century there were divisions amongst the peasantry, many of whom had become quite significant land-owners, or small capitalist business-(wo)men, while larger numbers were landless or subsistence small holders.

The Mensheviks stuck with Plekhanov's formulation that the Revolution would be made by the workers and peasants who would place the capitalists in power. The Bolsheviks replied that those peasants who had become landowners or petit bourgeois, would like the other capitalists, have gained interests in the preservation of the Tsarist system that would at least prevent them taking the risks involved in fighting for a capitalist change in society; so it must be the workers and poor peasants.

Then, near the end of the 19th Century, a Russian Jewish exile in Germany, (variously called Helphand, Molotov - not the Molotov who so slavishly worked for Stalin - or Parvus,) in the quite different conditions of Germany, worked out a theory on the basis of which he was able to reject the constitutionalism of Karl Kautsky. He noted that Marx had talked of revolution in permanence, and had said that from the day of the success of the Bourgeois revolution, the proletariat launches its own struggle for power. From which he deduced that while it is right for workers in pre-Capitalist society to support the Capitalists in their struggle for power, that support lasts just up to the Revolution and no longer; from then on the workers seek their own ends.

In the split between the Bolsheviks and the Mensheviks, Trotsky had tried to bridge the factions and so had ended by alienating everyone. Shunned by both factions he went to Munich to see Parvus; and to work together on the theory. Then Trotsky reapplied that theory in the Russian conditions, writing "Permanent Revolution;" both Bolsheviks and Mensheviks were equally shocked. He argued that as the workers would have to take power to bring about capitalism, they should immediately go on to posing workers' demands against the capitalists.

This did not mean that he totally rejected the previous social democrat thesis that capitalist revolution would bring about workers' revolutions in the West which in turn would bring about a workers' rising in Russia, but that he held that Russian workers would participate, together with the western workers, in a world-wide workers' rising. Trotsky was advocating a struggle for workers' power, before the workers would have evolved into a fully conscious class, and at a time when the industrial Proletariat would be smaller than the peasantry.

Both factions denounced Trotsky, as a "communist" (i.e. they argued he had moved over to anarchism, which was unfortunately not true). Lenin rather confusing the issue by saying that Trotsky's idea would result in a bizarre tyranny. Trotsky however personally

gained a lot of credit for his role in the 1905 Revolution, and though - curiously - he did not immediately see the extent to which that rising confirmed his Permanent Revolution theories, (paradoxically it was Lenin who saw the significance of the first flowering of the soviets,) people did look at his ideas with more respect; even though they were still rejected by both the Bolshevik and Menshevik factions.

However, neither the bolsheviks nor the mensheviks were in fact united factions, there were Left, Right and Centre bolsheviks and ditto mensheviks; all this before the 1905 Revolution. The parties evolved in parallel, and evolving frequently had comparable internal divisions, secessions. Trotsky at various times lead unity groupings recruited from both mensheviks and bolsheviks, (often from the left rather than the right bolsheviks). This was particularly so at the time of the 1905 Revolution, when Trotsky displayed a revolutionary activity that went beyond the Mensheviks.

At the beginning of 1917, Trotsky's closest associates in Russia were the Mezhraili (the Inter-Borough Group,) a loose coalition of local semi-autonomous groups whose members were recruited from dissidents from either Bolsheviks or Mensheviks. Trotsky joined them when he returned to Russia. He and they were oriented towards the soviets, and so had developed a socialist strategy distinct from that of both the bolsheviks and mensheviks, consciously or not, that had abandoned Trotsky's earlier position of trying to reunite the two main currents. However, such an unity faction - at least wanting unity between the anti-war sections of both factions - had formed round Maxim Gorki. This was called the International social democrats not to be confused with Martov's International Menshevik faction of the SDLP.

Victor Serge in his "Year One of the Revolution" mentions (but does not describe) a number of smaller Marxist parties which were active within the soviets, but unless these appear in the full (7 volume) version of Sukhanov, I know of no account which gives details on these.

The splits got more and more complex, only to be complicated still further at the time of World War One when all factions were divided as to support or opposition to the War; (one of the most militant pro-war factions was a group of left bolsheviks round Alexhinski).

Some social democrats found not merely the bolshevik definition of the party too tightly disciplined, but also that of the mensheviks; and as these generally worked mainly within the Trade Unions, there arose a distinct Trudovik ("labourist") current between the mensheviks and the cadets.

Balancing the Trudoviks, a section of the Social Revolutionaries are known in English translation as Populists, (it is not clear to an anglophone whether they had reverted to the older term, Narodnik, or whether they used another,) and it was from their ranks that Kerenski rose to power.



### *No.1: Who were the various parties? ~ 1917 Appendices*

The soviets were not of course a single political current, but as they were the most important constituent of the Revolution, and as there are not exact parallels elsewhere, they perhaps need to be treated as such here.

They were councils of all workers, soldiers or peasants in towns, suburbs, or country regional districts; face to face councils of workers in factories, or councils of families in working class urban area, sent delegates to federal soviets and these were a source of dual power, in many cases over-ruling the "constitutionally-elected" (generally on a limited suffrage) official governmental bodies.

Some would say the soviets were a purely Russian phenomenon; but it is worth pointing out that such councils had previously been advocated not only by anarchists but by some left-wing Marxist thinkers in the west, and that there had been some known contacts.

First it has been shown that seamen organized in the American Labour Union - which was to be one of the founding constituents of the Industrial Workers of the World (also founded in 1905) - regularly worked on ships that visited Archangel, Murmansk and St. Petersburg; and that they co-operated with Russian dockers in producing leaflets and a short-lived paper, which advocated workers' councils on the lines of the later Soviets.

Second Singers' Sewing Machine Factory in Glasgow had been organized by people influenced by Daniel De Leon, (also a founder of the IWW, although he broke with it in 1908,) these had been sacked and had been forced to find work elsewhere; each of them carried the message with him, and it was to be discovered after the Revolt on the Clyde in 1916, that every factory in Glasgow had learnt about workers' councils from ex-Singer workers; but some of the better known of these workers had not been able to find work in Glasgow and of these some had gone to Russia.

Third, and perhaps the most important, a lot of workers from what is now Soviet Azerbaijan, had at the end of the 19th century, moved south across the border into Iranian Azerbaijan, to find work in British controlled oil fields there.

These Iranian workers had also come into contact with people influenced by French syndicalism and by the industrial unionist ideas that were later manifest in the IWW and a few years before the 1905 Revolution there had been a revolutionary industrial struggle, which had briefly thrown up workers' councils, and something very like a soviet. This was suppressed by the Iranian Monarchy, (the historic Iranian Monarchy was collapsing at this time, but was replaced, with imperialist support, by a new line,) with the backing of British force, and - as at this time the Russian Empire started to exploit its own Caucasian oil reserves, - the "Russian" Azerbaijanis returned to Baku to work there bringing back the ideas of socialist industrial unionism, and conscious developed by involvement in the creation of a Soviet-type revolutionary movement.

In terms of Government the "February Revolution" began when the Tsar's more militarist

and autocratic brother, Prince Michael, with Black Hundred support, tried to stage a coup. Rodzianko (as Chair of the Tsar's skeletal Duma) and Lvov resisted the coup; creating the conditions for restoring the Tsar, but the Tsar refused to resist his brother. Rodzianko and Lvov - to safeguard their own necks - could not allow Prince Michael to retake power; and so had to take power for the Duma, and to declare a provisional republic; this could only be done by widening the Duma's base and so calling elections on a wider suffrage for a more powerful Duma. They brought Miliukov into their government, he replaced them in power, he then again widened the suffrage and the powers of the Duma; he then brought Kerenski into his government, and it was in turn replaced by Kerenski.

### *No.2: Trotsky's analysis of the class nature of the Stalin Regime ~ 1917 Appendices*

Trotsky had opposed the split between Lenin and Martov, which meant he had broken with Lenin over the creation of the tighter rule for party membership; his first major work of theory was a biting satirical analysis of Lenin's conception of the party for which Trotsky took Marx's description of how the capitalist takes the surplus value of the workers' labour, and uses it to build his own monopoly of capital.

Trotsky showed that Lenin's conception of the party, similarly appropriated the work of socialists to build up his party. He predicted that the victory of a party on Leninist lines would start as a dictatorship of the party over the class, go on to be a dictatorship of the central committee over the party, and become eventually a dictatorship of one man (he evidently did not consider it could have been a woman,) over the central committee the party and the class.

Needless to say this was a prediction with quite remarkable prescience, the only trouble being, that when it was originally fulfilled, Trotsky, was, almost to a greater extent than anyone else, responsible for introducing the party and central committee dictatorship.

Trotsky had then with the "Permanent Revolution" produced a major theory setting him apart from the Bolsheviks. He chaired the 1905 Petersburg Soviet. He formed a multitude of alliances publishing distinctive work, he had his own followers and admirers, frequently recruited from dissident members of the Bolsheviks; he returned to Chair the Petersburg Soviet in 1917.

He was an outsider therefore from the viewpoint of the old Bolshevik party stalwarts. He was younger than they, and of middle class origins; very conscious of his own intellectual brilliance, and no doubt at times showed that he knew he was cleverer than the party old guard; and above all he committed the supreme indignity of being right about the prospects of Revolution in 1917. It is hardly surprising that the Old Bolsheviks hated him, that they always stressed that he had been the opponent of Lenin, and that they had been Lenin's faithful followers. That when Lenin died they supported Stalin against him.



Trotsky after the revolution was - as several authoritative commentators have noted - always very conscious of this and anxious to play down the differences between himself and Lenin. A number of commentators have noted that Trotsky in his autobiography - *Moya Zhizn* - played down his own role in the Revolution in order to build up Lenin's and that always, from 1917 onwards, his articles not only play down his past role, but also the importance of his theories. All the time he attempted to play the role of the most loyal disciple of Lenin. His post-1917 theories are consequently distorted. He deliberately refrained from the speculative brilliance that characterised his earlier writings, and he was at pains to avoid saying anything that his rivals in the party could say derived from his pre-1917 theories.

He was forced therefore to avoid saying anything about the Stalin regime that he could not say in precise Leninist terms. Indeed it went further than that, since the one thing of his own that he could use, since Lenin in 1917 had acknowledged its value, was what derived from his "Permanent Revolution" theory, and since the term "Workers' State" stemmed from there, Trotsky used this where - for his purposes - he would have been better to use Lenin's own formulation: "a workers' dominated state Capitalism, in transition to Socialism, but with severe bureaucratic deformations."

For Trotsky, not Lenin, a workers' state was a post-Capitalist state which had not yet achieved Socialism. A formulation which in large measure played into the hands of Stalin's apologists.

But despite the limitations imposed by wishing to conform to Lenin's theoretical methods, there are, after Lenin's death, quite remarkable changes in Trotsky's position. These came as imperceptible gradual shifts, as circumstances developed, but as periodic major rethinks.

In 1923/4, Trotsky was opposed to permitting factions within the communist party and repudiated those of his followers, who wanted to put the Left Opposition on a formally constituted basis as a faction within the Party; he insisted (some might say he maintained the fiction,) that though he was in opposition on certain issues, this was a temporary phenomenon, and not the product of any deep-seated theoretical difference.

Then, after Stalin's supporters in Britain had led workers into supporting a group of careerist union leaders, who ducked for cover when the General Strike came; after the International had bound the Chinese Communist Party, to first the Kuo Min Tang, as an whole, then its "left-wing," under Chang Kai Shek, only to see the two forces successively turn against the workers and crush them; after an host of similar betrayals; he changed.

In 1928/9, (when, indeed, he had, in fact, been expelled from the party and sent into exile,) he accepted that factions were necessary inside the party, but he still denied that

there could be more than one party within the Soviet system, or that there could be rival communist parties outside the Soviet Union; now he insisted that though the International Left Opposition was formed from people expelled from the Third International Parties, that it should operate as if it were an internal faction. He denied, emphatically, that the Soviet Union needed more than a few reforms, to set it back on the road to Socialism. When some of his followers argued that the Soviet Union had had its Thermidor - Thermidor was when Robespierre was overthrown in the Convention, and the French Revolution was halted - these were mercilessly denounced, and driven out of the Opposition.

Then came the "Third Period" incredible brutality at home, crushing all workers' organizations; abroad the communists called the Social democrats - particularly their left-wings - and all dissident communists "Social Fascists," but the party, while it shunned all alliances with these, was quite willing to co-operate with real fascists; in this way, the tactics of the German communist party at the very least opened the door to Hitler. The German communist leaders proclaimed "after Hitler, us," in a way that suggests that they welcomed Hitler's victory, and may, quite consciously, have wanted to put Hitler in power.

In 1933/4, therefore, Trotsky came to the view, that "Stalinism would never again play a progressive role outside the Soviet Union," that it was progressive within the Soviet Union, in so far as it protected the state monopoly of economic power; but that the stalinist bureaucracy, - though it did not constitute a class, - was sufficiently entrenched that it would need a political (not social) revolution to dislodge it. He therefore came out for a multiplicity of Soviet-parties within the Soviet Union and for the formation of rival communist parties (with a different international) in the capitalist world. Nevertheless he remained adamant that the stalinist bureaucracy was not a new class, that it could not therefore last for more than a generation, and that therefore revolutionaries should always defend the Soviet Union, while opposing its rulers. He again denounced his more enthusiastic followers, because the latter argued that there was a new ruling class.

The world saw Stalin swing from the ultra-leftism of the "Third Period" to the right-reformism of the Popular Fronts, where (at a time of increasing mobilization by the working class, the Communist parties tried to tie workers to the coat-tails of bourgeois-liberal parties;) where the fascists could have been halted by determined workers' action, those workers were told not to oppose the bosses and to behave in a constitutional way; any workers who did fight were alleged to be objectively fascist; the whole policy being coupled with the gross obscenity of the Moscow Trials. Anyone and everyone who advocated socialist activity other than under the direction of the Communists was alleged to be a fascist in disguise, a succession of purges in the party, caused numerous people who had been slavish followers of Stalin to find themselves, slung out, denounced, in Russia sent to prison camps, in the west occasionally murdered in back streets. After wholesale denunciations of dissidents as fascist came the Stalin-Hitler Pact.



In 1938/9, for the first time, Trotsky accepted the theoretical possibility, (though he still argued against it as an actual reality,) that the working class would fail - in the immediate future - to make a world revolution, that this would mean that stalinism would not be overthrown, that, whether or not, it was already an embryonic ruling class, it would so become. He speculated on the sort of movement that would be necessary to defend workers against this.

It seems fair to interpret these major re-examinations as Hegelian (dialectical) leaps in Trotsky's thinking. The pressure of events made the retention of original theories impossible, but the need to be seen to be pure Leninist, made a gradual evolution of his thought equally impossible. So Trotsky must have spent more time retesting his theories than can be seen purely from his writings, only when he had a more completely revised theory, which he was prepared to defend in major intellectual battles, would he give an inch of ground.

On each occasion, 1928/9, 1933/4, 1938/9 Trotsky, having previously argued against his more zealous supporters, then accepted that in a major way they had been right, but then argued that they had been right by accident, because both Trotsky and they had misunderstood parallels. Thus, Thermidor had always been assumed to be a counter-revolutionary return to an older class society. Trotsky pointed out that France never returned to the absolute Monarchy with a Mercantilist economy that had existed before 1789. What evolved was capitalism, it took time because there were few capitalists in France in 1789, and it was not until after the Napoleonic War that the economic basis for capitalism existed. Thermidor therefore did not usher a past society back in, but was the opening for an evolving ruling class to come to power.

Similarly, though Trotsky, right back in 1933, declared that there would be a need to create a new Communist International, he expelled from the ranks of the Left Opposition those who tried to set one up in 1934, instead ordering his followers to enter the Social Democrat parties for a time. It was not until 1938 that he gave the go-ahead for the creation of the Fourth International.

On each occasion, Trotsky in the first essays he wrote, when he changed his mind, was somewhat more speculative, than he was to be in the major theoretical work that followed. The more far reaching earlier conclusions, later giving rise to the new speculations of his more enthusiastic followers, with whom he would be set to argue until the next major departure in his thinking.

So it is not surprising that when he wrote "The USSR in War" in 1938, he almost immediately started to qualify it, and to do battle with those of his followers who interpreted it literally. He had done that before, and no doubt if he had lived to expand "The USSR in War" into a book, it would not have made the unqualified statement of the possibility of a new ruling class that appears in the essay.

One of the major battles Trotsky had waged with people who had started out as his followers, had been with those who said Stalin was becoming a fascist, that his regime resembled fascism, that it was on the cards that an alliance between Stalin and Hitler might come about.

So certain was Trotsky that this was merely fanciful that the whole of Trotskyist policy in Spain ignored the possibility of a Stalinist-Fascist reconciliation and pact; not merely ignored it, but the major Trotskyist history of Spain, that of Bortenstein ("Casanova") talks about the farcical anarchist fears of such an alliance.

(The anarchists in Spain undoubtedly made compromises with the Stalinist dominated government, for which they can be blamed, but they did this, because they believed that if they pushed too far, the Stalinists would go over to Franco. Bortenstein derided these fears in a pamphlet which was published, just before the Stalin-Hitler Pact was announced. Trotskyists still re-publish this essay and rely on its arguments, without mentioning that Bortenstein wrote it while the negotiations for the Stalin-Hitler Pact were in progress. They repeat the arguments without mentioning that they were, at the very time, being disproved. One is entitled to ask, are they too stupid or too dishonest to note this).

No doubt the reality of the Stalin-Hitler Pact was one of the factors that made Trotsky re-examine his theories. Nevertheless part of the debate that followed, which caused him to qualify his statement lay in this. Many of Trotsky's followers seized on the Stalin-Hitler Pact as a justification for disclaiming the need to defend the Soviet Union, arguing in a way that Trotsky felt that they would not have argued had Stalin, instead of allying with Hitler, allied with the West.

He quickly argued that however extra unpleasant, the Nazi regime was just a bourgeois regime, and the people had no right to greet an alliance with Hitler with horror, unless they would equally have greeted an alliance with the Western "Democracies." A fair argument, though earlier he had argued against anarchists and against Bordiga, insisting that there was a distinction between fascism and capitalism; the distinction that under democracy workers had freedom to organize, and that freedom - since it brought with it the freedom to work for socialism - was one that should be defended.

He did not, however, live to see Stalin turn round and ally himself with the western capitalists. He did not live to see Stalin wind up the Third International, at the request of the rulers of the Western states. He did not live to see the communist party in Britain publish posters and pamphlets calling for the death penalty for strikers. To see the same party order its members in the armed forces to inform against all troops expressing subversive ideas, or even mere discontent.

The communists during the war made it plain that they were prepared to work with either capitalist force; that they were prepared to subordinate workers struggles totally to the national aims of the Soviet Union.



When at the end of the war the Soviet Union moved into Eastern Europe it was a purely military conquest. Where (Yugoslavia, Albania, China, Vietnam,) Communist parties did launch struggles for power, it was because in war time conditions they had lost contact with the Soviet Union, they had misread signs, and thinking they would be praised by Stalin, had started new local struggles, which Stalin had in fact opposed. Having started they were not in a position to call the struggles off without risking their own necks, and so they launched struggles for power.

When the locally formed Red Armies were to reach power (China, Cuba, Vietnam,) in each case behind the military lines of the old regimes there were major industrial struggles; several cities in China saw Kuo Min Tang power broken by such strikes allowing the Red Army to advance; in Cuba Batista and Castro had reached stalemate in the sierra, and as the USA had started to send more weapons and munitions it is probable that Batista would eventually have won if it had not been for the General Strike in Havana; in Vietnam struggles in Hue & Saigon crippled the Southern regime.

Yet in each such case, instead of the workers' organizations that launched these strikes being incorporated into the revolutionary regime, the communists on taking power liquidated the strikers' leaders and suppressed the workers' organizations.

But in all of these, the struggle took place in countries that were not economically advanced, countries which were pre-capitalist in economy. In those countries, (Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary,) where the Red Army took over in advanced economies there was nothing approximating to a socialist reconstruction of society.

In two countries in the West, (in Italy in 1944 and in France in 1946,) there were actual workers' risings; and in both cases the communists acted vigorously to prevent these risings coming to anything.

Not merely is there no sense that there was a world workers' revolution at the end of World War II, but the conquest of power by the communists was achieved against the workers, rather than on their behalf. The Cold War that followed can only be seen as a power struggle between rival capitalist powers. Certainly socialists in the West had the normal duty of Socialists, to oppose the capitalists in their own country, to oppose their own country's militarism. But in no way were the Stalinist countries allies of the workers' and there was never a duty for Western socialists to cover up the crimes of Stalinism, or the fundamental fact that Stalinism was the ideology of a new and ultra-exploitative ruling class.

Mao, in books written at the time of the communist seizure of power in China, books which in translation were on sale in the West during the early Fifties, disclaimed any suggestion that the communist regimes first in the Red Army areas of China, and then in China as a whole, were strictly proletarian states. He stressed that they were built on alliances of five classes, which involved the nationalist bourgeoisie, a petit bourgeoisie, an agrarian bourgeoisie, the peasantry as well as the workers.

Curiously, whereas Trotsky always denounced Popular fronts, and always was at pains to analyse the class nature of governments; there was - in the early Fifties, - no Trotskyist analysis of Mao's China.

During the Sixties, the world saw Maoism repeat the horrors of Stalinism, the Cultural Revolution revived all the characteristics of the Third Period, differing only that dissidents were lynched by Red Guard mobs, rather than condemned by phoney show trials; but again there was the sectarianism where all rival leftists were branded as agents of the States, but the very Maoist regime, pretending to be so left, took as allies such countries as Saudi Arabia, the successive Pakistani military dictatorships.

The Vietnamese NLF, like Mao, was at pains to deny that his was a purely proletarian movement, again it was a coalition of nationalist classes. Most of the various national liberation movements round the world that stalinists sponsored and Trotskyists supported at the time were equally cross-class alliances.

Through this period under the guise of National Liberation movements there was an enormous extension of stalinist power in economically backward regions, but little or no serious Maoist attempts to spread revolutionary action to Western industrial workers. What was the reaction of the various Trotskyist groups? Did one see a serious Marxist programme? Did one see an analysis of the internal Chinese regime. Did one see any serious attempt to analyse the class nature of the Chinese regime?

No. There were constant attempts to form solidarity movements with this or that Third World movement. Constant attempts to outflank the stalinists by being more militant. Constant calls for the governments of the "Socialist World" to unite behind this or that liberation movement, and "forget their petty squabbles." But all this added up to an attempt to substitute Third World liberation for workers' struggles in advanced Capitalist countries.

Stuck with an out-dated theory the Trotskyists, until the recent collapse of stalinism, converted themselves into apologists for stalinism, praising it forever with feint damns. Even with those solidarity movements, particularly in the case of Vietnam, the emphasis was placed on the loudly proclaimed solidarity, while attempts to reach troops and persuade them to refuse to go and fight were by and large neglected.

The U.K. exported poison gases, radar and other military equipment to the American forces in Vietnam; a lot of American troops were stationed in Britain, and the two countries were allied in Nato; there were therefore several ways in which it was possible to oppose the war, and at the same time raise issues that were important in Britain. To have done this, would have had a far more revolutionary effect than the loudly proclaimed solidarity; but the Maoists and the Trotskyists played down such struggles, denouncing those of us who concentrated on these issues as "neutered pacifists".

Moreover though, Ho Chi Minh's forces had in 1946 slaughtered thousands of Trotskyists,



(and thousands more of other socialists,) it was not until 1968 that British Trotskyist groups were prepared to allow any word of criticism. Until then those of us, who mentioned those murdered Trots were alleged to be American agents, by the alleged comrades of the victims. A similar veil was pulled over Castro's liquidation of Cuban revolutionaries.

All of what goes for Orthodox Trotskyist theory, (i.e. the policies that underly all the various international bodies claiming to be the Fourth International, or committees to re-unite/re-form/re-create the FI, - in the early 80's there were 13 such at least, I don't know if all have survived, or if any more have been born,) comes from what Trotsky wrote between 1933 and 1940.

There is no understanding of the way his theory was evolving, and all the Internationals apparently think it unimportant that his widow regarded them as having betrayed Trotsky, in that they took a theoretical position he held in the conditions of 1938, (but said, even then, that it was a theory that had to stand the test of time, and laid down what developments should be taken as disproving it,) and continued to apply this in post-war conditions; when by Trotsky's own clear statement it could not be applied.

Even now they haven't learnt. Whereas in the past they denied that Stalinism was a new ruling class, (on the basis of Trotsky's pre-1938 theories,) arguing that the success of the Soviet Union in surviving in the face of an hostile capitalist West proved this; they now say that the fact that Stalinism collapsed and was overthrown by workers, proves that it cannot have been progressive and therefore it wasn't a new ruling class. The two arguments are mutually in conflict, and once again an anarchist is entitled to ask is this self-contradiction the product of stupidity or dishonesty?

The 'free' world is not free; the 'communist' world was never communist. Anarchists always rejected both.

'Communism' excused its totalitarianism by the pretence that it had created a more equitable society; the 'free' world excuses its grossly unjust distribution of wealth & claiming that all have equal influence on government

Neither are true. Privileged elites existed under 'Communism' & those with sufficient wealth are able to buy power in the 'Democracies'. It was not only in the 'communist' world that 'phones were tapped, houses bugged, letters opened; This was after all done to Miss Hilda Murrell in Shrewsbury, In March 1984, but before she was abducted & murdered, - a murder that has never been satisfactorily explained by the police.

The power struggle that the two systems waged not only threatened the world with nuclear conflict, but also was used to justify reckless waste of resources & destruction of the environment.

Anarchists argue that though many evils can be put down to war, to sexual or racial discrimination, to economic inequality, that these ills cannot be cured unless the monopoly of power which is the state is eliminated.

That Government itself, besides such underlying institutions, perpetuates war, oppression, corruption, exploitation & misery.

We advocate a world-wide society of communities & councils based on co-operation & free agreement from the bottom, (federalism,) instead of coercion & domination from the top, (centralism,) Regimentation of people must be replaced by the regulation of things.

'Freedom' without socialism is spurious. "socialism" without freedom is despotic. Anarchism is free socialism.