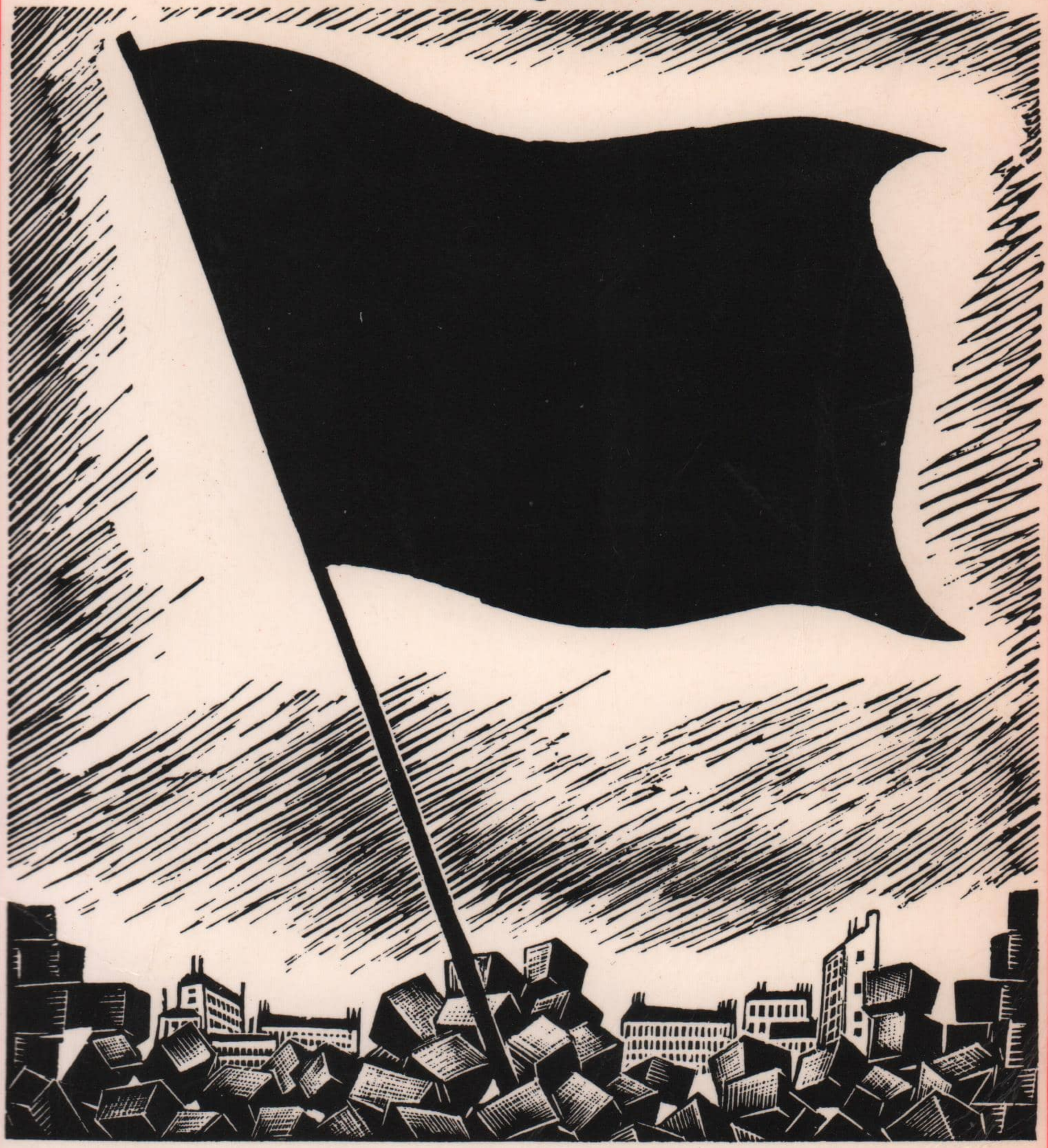
THE RAVEN 8

ANARCHIST QUARTERLY



On Revolution

The RAVEN *ANARCHIST QUARTERLY* 8

Volume 2 No. 4 OCTOBER 1989

Subscriptions

Four issues of **THE RAVEN**
Inland: Regular £10, Institutions £12, Claimants £8
Abroad: Surface £11, Airmail £15, Institutions (surface) £13 (airmail) £17

Joint subscriptions
THE RAVEN (four issues) and **FREEDOM** (12 issues)
Inland: Regular £14, Institutions £20, Claimants £11
Abroad: Surface £16.50, Airmail £23, Institutions (surface) £22.50 (airmail) £30

Cover illustration: woodcut by Falké from *Crapouillot* (Paris) special number on "l'anarchie" January 1938.

Editorial

To spend £50 million as did President Mitterand and his 'socialist' government on a week of carnival to commemorate the bi-centenary of the French Revolution was obviously good for business: for the souvenir shops, the makers of tee-shirts, the fancy dress and not least the Tourist Industry. An estimated £100 million poured into the Capital that week. Who can still accuse only the British of being 'a nation of shopkeepers'?

This issue of *The Raven* had been hurriedly put together in the event that *Raven 7* starved of food had died or was too weak to fly. As so often happens, the challenge worked wonders on the patient's keepers and this issue was delayed to allow *Raven 7* to take off, and with at least one contribution by Heiner Becker on *Kropotkin as Historian of the French Revolution*.

In compiling this issue of *The Raven* we felt we could not compete with the commercial publishers. We understand that in this country alone some 48 books have appeared but that in France the grand total of publications, books and magazines exceeded a thousand titles! (All good business for about three months and then watch out for them on the remainder shelves, assuming they haven't already been pulped, with the souvenirs and the tee shirts and the fancy dresses and hats.) All this hypocrisy and razzmatazz was brilliantly summed up by Daniel Singer in, of all places, the September issue of *Sanity*

> Long live the Revolution, as long as it is dead and buried with no prospect of resurrection. That thought sprang to mind as the French celebrated the bicentennial of their Great French Revolution.

The programme was most impressive with books and documents, and in Paris alone some 56 conferences devoted to the subject, as well as exhibitions large and small. But, writes Daniel Singer

> the climax came on July 14, when French President François Mitterand was accompanied by such iconoclastic *sans-culottes* as George Bush, Maggie Thatcher and Helmut Kohl — a party more suited to honour Marie Antoinette than commemorate the storming of the Bastille.

We anarchists commemorate centenaries and bi-centenaries neither for business nor romantic reasons, but to take advantage of a certain climate created by the media to put over our interpretation of these events. Thus for the 50th anniversary of the declaration of World War II we have published a 400-page volume plus four supplementary volumes of Selections from the journals we published during those eventful years (see inside back cover).

This issue of *The Raven* 'On Revolution' far from being a recital of the revolutions that failed is, if anything, a reminder to those who only cash-in on their revolutions every hundred years (the French built the Eiffel Tower in 1889 and the Opera House near the Bastille in 1989) that however hopeless Revolution may appear at any moment in history, so long as power and privilege are secure in the hands of a minority only revolution can rid society of the whole apparatus of power (which today means the financial institutions, the

multinationals, and the large property owners). More than 120 years ago Bakunin was reminding the bourgeoisie that it was in the name of equality that

> they overthrew and massacred the nobility. And it is in the name of equality that we now demand either the violent death or the voluntary suicide of the bourgeoisie, only with this difference — that being less bloodthirsty than the bourgeoisie of the revolutionary period, we do not want the death of men but the abolition of positions and things (*The Lullers 1868-69*)

So far as the selection of articles for this issue On Revolution is concerned we have concentrated on those of the 20th Century and the approach has been to learn the lessons rather than present an historical resumé which is available anyway in great detail in F.P. and other publications (see page 112). *The Wilhelmshaven Revolt* and *Three Years of Struggle in Spain* are, to our minds, important documents. The former is the account by an individual revolutionary, neither a follower nor a leader; he didn't let somebody else tell him what he should do. His *Author's Note* is a gem which ends: 'After all, I have kept my head, I am, therefore, able to make further use of it'. The former is a colourless document by a group of syndicalists and anarchists, some with a long history, who have enjoyed more than two years in situations of authority, and are rationalising all the compromises they made by seeking scapegoats: the danger that the foreign powers would intervene if their property interests were threatened, and the communists. They don't explain how that tiny minority (the CP membership was no more than 30,000 in 1936) could become so important within months!

The Skira article (specially translated for this issue by Colin Ward) it goes without saying is of tremendous importance. That the present regime in USSR is prepared to 'rehabilitate' Nestor Makhno's army of the Ukraine is more than significant. We are awaiting reactions from the Communist Party in this country and from their coffee table monthly *Marxism Today* but without much hope. After all they did not respond to a similar invitation from FREEDOM PRESS when we published *The May Days — Barcelona 1937* in 1987.

So far as THE Revolution is concerned we are happy to limit ourselves to publishing Kropotkin's concluding chapter to his monumental work on *The Great French Revolution*. In the September issue of *Freedom* Nicolas Walter asserts that Kropotkin was 'neither a reliable historian nor a reliable scientist'. Malatesta pointed this out, not as brutally, a long time ago when he wrote

> His normal procedure was to start with a hypothesis and then look for the facts that would confirm it — which may be a good method for discovering new things; but what happened and quite unintentionally, was that he did not see the ones which invalidated his hypothesis.

And if anyone thinks his conclusions too optimistic one could point out that as a good historian Kropotkin was seeking to assess the positive gains of the Revolution not from the point of view of someone living a century later but from that of a peasant for whom 'liberation' meant the end of serfdom and the introduction of the wage system. What Kropotkin thought of the wage system in his own time was already in print in 1888 (included in *Why Work? Arguments for the Leisure Society* FREEDOM PRESS 1987).

We should really be celebrating two hundred years of the wage system by a Revolution for its abolition!

Errico Malatesta

The Anarchist Revolution

The revolution is the creation of new living institutions, new groupings, new social relationships; it is the destruction of privileges and monopolies; it is the new spirit of justice, of brotherhood, of freedom which must renew the whole of social life, raise the moral level and the material conditions of the masses by calling on them to provide, through their direct action, for their own futures. Revolution is the organisation of all public services by those who work in them in their own interest as well as the public's. Revolution is the destruction of all coercive ties; it is the autonomy of groups, of communes, of regions. Revolution is the free federation brought about by a desire for brotherhood, by individual and collective interests, by the needs of production and defence. Revolution is the constitution of innumerable free groupings based on ideas, wishes and tastes of all kinds that exist among the people. Revolution is the forming and disbanding of thousands of representative district, communal, regional, national bodies which, without having any legislative powers, serve to make known and to co-ordinate the desires and interests of people near and far and which act through information, advice and example. Revolution is freedom proved in the crucible of facts — and lasts so long as freedom lasts, that is until others, taking advantage of the weariness that overtakes the masses, of the inevitable disappointments that follow exaggerated hopes, of the probable errors and human faults, succeed in constituting a power, which supported by an army of conscripts or mercenaries, lays down the law, arrests the movement at the point it has reached, and then begins the reaction.[1]

1. Pensiero e Volontà, 15 June 1924. See also *Malatesta: Life and Ideas* (Freedom Press 1965)

Herbert Read

The Method of Revolution

Anarchism is a word of many meanings, many interpretations. Because of its vagueness, because of its associations with terrorism and with the pathetic actions of deluded individuals, it often seems advisable to abandon it. But no other word will do. Anarchy — *anarchia* — absence of government: it is an exact symbol of our meaning and is sanctioned by long historical usage. For these reasons I think we must retain the words anarchy and anarchism, infuse them with new thought and definite policies, so that reanimated and redeemed they will stand for a new way of living, a whole philosophy of life.

From its very earliest days the socialist movement included two opposed elements, which were philosophical rather than political in their essence. They perhaps derived, in the long history of European thought, from the old scholastic distinction between realism and nominalism. It is the distinction between those who believe in the real existence of universal qualities or ideas, and those who believe that all such ideas are abstractions derived from the world of experience. When Hegel raised the State to the level of an abstract entity, there was a part of humanity ready to follow him and to subordinate all variety and individualism to this conception. For if the State is given an absolute existence, it becomes the supreme end of all worldly activity: it is conceived as the perfect organisation of all our social activities, and no activities can be tolerated which interfere with its unity and order. But Hegel's conception of the State did not command general assent: another part of humanity refused to believe in the real existence of such an entity. The only reality, they said, is the individual: the individual with his sensations and desires, his weaknesses and grandeur, his folly and heroism. The State, they held, is only valuable in so far as it secures and promotes the happiness of the individual.

This debate was first published in three issues of *Spain and the World* for September 16, October 28 and November 12th 1938. Herbert Read (1893-1968) needs no introduction. T Mitchelson was the *nom de plume* of a Bulgarian anarchist, Theodore Michalsceeff, who first came to this country in the early 1930's to avoid military service and spent some time at the Whiteway Colony with Tom Keell and his family. He then apparently went to Hamburg University to do a thesis on Anarchism! This writer met him in London in 1938 but lost touch when World War II was declared in 1939. Perhaps there are readers of this note who can shed light on this comrade *and* his thesis.

That statement already gives a relative value to the State: the State *is* valuable in so far as it promotes the well-being of the individual. The extreme egotism of Max Stirner, which asserts that only the individual and his desires have any validity, is not in question. That particular philosophy, which is not without its historical interest and importance, was effectively demolished by Karl Marx, and has only a remote connection with modern anarchism. What we have still to distinguish is, on the one hand, an attitude which values communal effort only in so far as it promotes the happiness of the individual; and, on the other hand, an attitude which is prepared to sacrifice that happiness to the wholeness, or perfection, or power of this abstraction called the State.

Naturally every politician and reformer will protest that his ultimate aim is the greatest happiness of the greatest number of individuals, and *rationally* it is difficult to see how any other doctrine can be held. But very few of the doctrines for which men organise themselves can be described as rational. The history of religion, the history of politics, the history of civilisation itself, is merely the passage from one form of obsession to another; and in the name of such an obsession — which is always called an ideal or a principle or simply 'the truth' or 'the faith' — men are enslaved, deprived of their freedom, and compelled by force to act against their individual interests.

Socialism has always been in this same danger. Properly regarded, socialism is the rational organisation of society to the end that men shall live together in freedom, security and plenty. There is nothing idealistic about such an aim. It is a question of the practical ordering of production and distribution, and though certain principles are involved, such as equality and justice, these are not so much abstract ideals as economic quantities. To equalise the burdens and benefits of production is a simple sum in division: it does not depend on the invocation of any article of faith.

If we examine the principles of socialism as expressed, for example, in the Communist Manifesto, we do not find any arguments in favour of an idealistic conception of the State. Far from it. The State is everywhere recognised by the founders of modern socialism — by Marx, Engels, and Lenin no less than by Proudhon, Bakunin and Kropotkin — as the product of social distinctions and an instrument of oppression. I could quote scores of texts to that effect, but let this summary from Engels's book on *The Origin of the Family*, quoted with approval by Lenin in his book, *The State and Revolution*, suffice:

> The State is therefore by no means a power imposed on society from the outside; just as little is it 'the reality of the moral idea', 'the image and reality of reason', as Hegel asserted. Rather, it is a product of a society at a certain stage

of development; it is the admission that this society has become entangled in an insoluble contradiction with itself, that it is cleft into irreconcilable antagonisms, classes with conflicting economic interests, may not consume themselves and society in sterile struggle, a power apparently standing above society becomes necessary, whose purpose is to moderate the conflict and keep it within the bounds of 'order'; and this power arising out of society, but placing itself above it, and increasingly separating itself from it, is the State.

Modern anarchism — the consciousness that is growing up within the socialist movement and which cannot be stifled by any accusations of Trotskyism, liberalism, idealism, etc., is merely a reaffirmation of this view of the State. It expresses the conviction that, in the actual process of revolution, society has once more become entangled in an insoluble contradiction, has been cleft into irreconcilable antagonisms; and it asserts that these antagonisms have produced a form of State more absolute than ever.

Though I maintain that all the necessary principles of anarchism are to be found in the works of Marx, Engels and Lenin, nevertheless in examining the historical development of socialism during the last hundred years in search of the cause of this sad deviation, I think we are bound to discover that in certain questions of revolutionary tactics, Bakunin and not Marx was right.

The difference between Marx and Bakunin (apart from a difference of temperament) was really a difference in their conception of revolution. Marx conceived revolution as an historical process — a violent change, no doubt, but a change brought about by a trained and disciplined class-conscious proletariat.

Bakunin, on the other hand, conceived revolution as a spontaneous act — an explosion of forces that could no longer be repressed. Marx thought out a plan of campaign, with every step consolidated on an economic basis. Bakunin saw elemental passions directed to the immediate destruction of evil and to the equally immediate establishment of justice. This aspect of Bakunin's creed has since his time received a powerful reinforcement in Sorel's theory of direct action and the general strike.

But there is also this difference: Marx regarded the process of revolution as a process of inevitable evolution, comparable to the evolution of organic life. Capitalism contains within itself the seeds of its own destruction, and so revolution was held to be only possible in societies which had undergone a complete capitalist development, and were ripe, as it were, for the change — ready for the fruit to fall. But Sorel saw nothing inevitable or organic about the process of revolution; according to him, the proletariat must hold itself completely aloof from all such gradualist concepts; it must 'build up institutions without any

parallel in the history of the middle class'; it must 'form ideas which depend solely on its position as producer in industry'; and finally it must 'acquire *habits of liberty* with which the middle class nowadays are no longer acquainted'. The whole success of a revolution will depend on the proletariat having developed a new spirit, a new ethics, a new philosophy of life which breaks completely with all existing conceptions of society, and which is established with catastrophic violence.

It is obvious — more obvious now than it was in 1906 when Sorel published his 'Reflections on Violence' — that a doctrine of violence can be used in more than one direction. Sorel's most effective disciple, in actual fact, has been Mussolini. But it is equally obvious that a doctrine of discipline and training and organic continuity with capitalism can be used in more than one direction, and the National-Socialist party of Germany is there to prove it. But if we keep close to what we have regarded as the essential test of socialism — the disappearance of the State — then we shall be able to make the necessary distinctions.

The practical difference between the two methods of revolution is a difference in the time element. The Marxian revolution can only be achieved over a period of many years: the anarchist revolution is a question of hours. But this is too abstract a way of looking at the question: what is actually involved is human psychology. A revolutionary policy which needs a period of years for its accomplishment must work through the intellectual faculties — the passions are subordinated, or excluded altogether. But a violent revolution is achieved by passion, and the intellect is dormant. What is destroyed is destroyed in anger: what is created is created by instinct.

The word 'instinct' will be seized on as evidence of an underlying mysticism, but I do not refuse that term, or rather what it implies. I am not a mystic, but my whole reading of history convinces me that nothing worth while is ever done that is not done in a spirit of fervour, of exaltation, of glory. In that spirit the Bastille fell, and the Commune was established; in that spirit the Russian Revolution triumphed and in that spirit the unarmed workers of the Spanish Republic threw themselves against the guns of the insurgent army and rendered the revolt abortive. But having achieved your end in righteous anger, there comes the task of consolidation. It is then that the calculators come forward, the men of craft and cunning, the doctrinaire economists and the dogmatic politicians. Men who are brave in battle are often humble in affairs, and easily surrender the position to these agents of efficiency. The position is then lost again.

'Politicians', says Sorel, 'argue about social conflicts in exactly the same manner as diplomats argue about international affairs; all the actual fighting apparatus

interests them very little; they see in the combatants nothing but instruments. The proletariat is their army, which they love in the same way that a colonial administrator loves the troops which enable him to bring large numbers of negroes under his authority; they apply themselves to the task of training the proletariat, because they are in a hurry to win quickly the great battles which will deliver the State into their hands; they keep up the ardour of their men, as the ardour of troops of mercenaries has always been kept up, by promises of pillage, by appeals to hatred, and also by the small favours which their occupancy of a few political places enables them to distribute already. But the proletariat for them is so much cannon-fodder . . .

The reinforcement of the power of the State is at the basis of all their conceptions; in the organisations which they at present control, the politicians are already preparing the framework of a strong, centralised and disciplined authority, which will not be hampered by the criticism of an opposition, which will be able to enforce silence, and which will give currency to its lies.'

These prophetic words, let me again remind you, were written more than thirty years ago.

The great necessity to-day is to study the causes of revolutionary failure. There is scarcely an honest socialist anywhere in the world who is not perturbed by this problem. Those who are orthodox attempt to explain it away on economic grounds: the survival of capitalist elements, the lack of adequate machinery for production, the necessity for evolving in logical historical phases, and so on. But these are precisely the reasons which do not convince the anarchist. In the course of history revolution has failed too often, and always we are given these same excuses. But look at the objective features of these failures, these reactions, these relapses, and what do you find? Always the same features! The establishment of a central governing body, the acquisition of privileges by this governing body, the creation of a new governing class, the re-division of society into rich and poor, master and servant, the powerful and the oppressed.

This process does not need an economic explanation. There is an explanation nearer home, nearer the truth, an explanation based on the limitations and weaknesses of the average human being. In short, the explanation is to be found in psychology rather than in economics.

Marx and Lenin repudiated one abstraction — the State. But in its place they put another — the dictatorship of the proletariat. They defined the proletariat as 'the class of modern wage-labourers who, having no means of production of their own, are reduced to selling their labour power in order to live' — a very clear and just definition. And we have seen that the revolution is to be effected by this class becoming conscious of itself, organising itself and forcibly overthrowing all existing social conditions. Having secured power, this class is to maintain a dictatorship until all injustices have been abolished and all

class distinctions have disappeared. The nation will then be one vast community of producers organised for mutual benefit, and the proletariat as such will disappear and the State itself will wither away.

What actually happened in Russia, and what is now happening in Spain, is something very different. The proletariat in a sudden fervour committed its act of revolt; and out of the resulting chaos a minority emerged consisting mainly of intellectuals and professional politicians. This minority constituted a dictatorship *in the name of the proletariat*; but then almost their first act was to disarm the proletariat, to close the ranks of the party, establish a state army and a state police, and finally reduce the workers to a state of dependence far more absolute than before. There then ensues a series of intrigues among the politicians themselves whose sole purpose is to maintain a particular group in power and finally there emerges a single power within the group, a dictator or leader.

Socialism is in retreat. Everywhere in Europe it is being compelled to adopt the methods of its adversaries, to establish tyranny to resist tyranny; and in the process it is corrupted, defeated spiritually and materially. Socialism must retreat still further — to its first principles. It must recognise that a revolution will never be effected or maintained unless it is based on a complete and independent philosophy of life. The proletariat must have its own ethics and its own culture — something other than a watered version of bourgeois morality or a respectful imitation of academic learning. It must establish its ethics on the basis of its life and labour, and a new culture on fresh perceptions. Perhaps there are certain eternal verities in morality and art; but there is no reason to suppose that they are embodied in the manners and taste of a decadent civilisation. In any case, it is for the proletariat to choose, and not to be intimidated by the values established by the capitalist epoch. It is for the proletariat to discover its own values; and this it can only do in isolation. It must suspect every voice that addresses it from outside its own ranks (including the one that is addressing it now); it must reject every idea which it does not instinctively recognise as native to its own modes of feeling and perception. It must close its ranks and create its own clerisy. If it cannot achieve its own destiny, it has no destiny to achieve. Its dictators are projections of its own weakness: the shadows of its own death. Its only life is in the first principle of its faith: an organic community of free and equal individuals.

T. Michelson

Some Remarks on Herbert Read's Article

I was at once very pleased and a little disappointed to read Herbert Read's article on 'The Method of Revolution'. Very pleased because his article is one of the few contributions to the theoretical side of anarchism to be found in the columns of *Spain and the World*. Disappointed, because it contained some statements which are rather confusing.

First of all, Herbert Read makes the old mistake of dealing superficially with the individualist aspect of anarchism. Like Kropotkin he seems to usurp the term anarchism only for the revolutionary communist anarchism and forgets that there are many other currents of anarchist philosophy which are no less entitled to the use of the denomination anarchism than the revolutionary anarcho-communist one. I need only mention the pacifist-communist, the pacifist-individualist, the ego-individualist, the mutu-individualist, the mutualist, the religious, the syndicalist, etc., tendencies of anarchism which are just as important constituent parts of the integral anarchist philosophy, as revolutionary communist anarchism itself.

From an unprejudiced general anarchist point of view, it is utterly wrong to aver that Stirner's ego-individualism 'has only a remote connection with modern anarchism'. This may hold true only in respect of the communalistic tendencies of anarchism, but is absolutely absurd if related to the several individualistic currents of it. As a matter of fact, Stirner's sturdy and vigorous anarchism is cherished nowadays not only by the individualists of different denominations, but also by many communist anarchists who are not always in sympathy with some of the aspects of the Stirnerian philosophy.

And again, I don't understand how Karl Marx's criticism may be used by an anarchist as a criticism in judging of the anarchisity (if I may use this term) of Stirner's philosophy. For, if Karl Marx, according to Read, has 'effectively demolished' Stirner's conception, has he not done (sic!) the same with those of Bakunin, Proudhon and of anarchism in general? Any Marxist will tell us, with Lenin and Preobrajensky, that anarchism is but a subtle petty-bourgeois philosophy, invented in the cabinet of idle philanthropists, but having no relations to hard facts and therefore being detrimental to the cause of liberty.

Herbert Read seems, however, to have fed too much on Marxian philosophy, otherwise he would never have maintained that 'all the necessary principles of anarchism are to be found in the works of Marx, Engels and Lenin'. Nor would he have maintained that 'modern anarchism is *merely* a reaffirmation of this view of the State', i.e. that the State is a 'power arising out of society, but placing itself above it, and increasingly separating itself from it'. If anarchism was nothing more than this, we may just as well pack up and surrender the field to some current better entitled to lead the struggle for liberty.

Fortunately anarchism is much more than this mere point — it is an entire science of politics, economics, and society, it is moreover a new moral conception which has little in common with Marxian philosophy. Anarchism and Marxism differ from their very starting points. For, whereas the anarchists, from Godwin to Malatesta and from Stirner to Sebastian Faure, take as their starting point the individual, and hold that society is made for the individual and justifies its existence only then and in so far as it fulfils this destination; the Marxists, on the contrary, take Society for their starting point and, by making the individual subservient to it, sacrifice lightheartedly its happiness to the entity — society.

But this, of course, is only the beginning of the differences. Anarchism and Marxism differ on almost every important issue. Even when they seem to agree, as for instance in regard of the repudiation of the State, they do part company sooner or later. For, whereas the anarchists defy the State and strive at a society without either State or Government, the Marxists would use the State as a means of the realisation of their political and economic ideals, and then, by setting up their dictatorship of the proletariat, they bring back, under another form and name, the old order of things. Bolshevik Russia is a sufficient illustration of the workings of the Marxian anti-Statian philosophy. Or would Herbert Read maintain that there is even the shadow of anarchism, or of the anarchist ideal of society, in the immense territory of the Soviet Union? Of course not, for he himself says respecting Russia and Spain: 'the proletariat in a sudden fervour committed its act of revolt, and out of the resulting chaos a minority emerged consisting mainly of intellectuals and professional politicians. This minority constituted a dictatorship in the name of the proletariat, to close the ranks of the party, establish a State army, and a State police, and finally reduce the workers to a state of dependence far more absolute than before.' Thus has happened in Russia, thus happens in Spain, and thus will happen everywhere where it is acted upon Marxian principles. It is queer then that Herbert Read puts Marx's, Engels' and Lenin's conception of the State ('as the product of social distinctions and an

instrument of oppression') on the same level with those of Proudhon, Bakunin and Kropotkin. Or must I tell him that Marx, Engels and Lenin attack only the State of others, the bourgeois State, and believe that the State in their own hands, may become an instrument of the general weal, whereas Kropotkin, Bakunin and Proudhon repudiate every and each form of State?

It is not true either that 'the difference between Marx and Bakunin (apart from a difference of temperament) was *really* a difference in their conception of revolution'. Neither is it true that 'the Marxian revolution can only be achieved over a period of many years: the anarchist revolution is a question of hours'. The difference between Marx and Bakunin was a fundamental one, and its scope is as wide as the difference between Marxism and anarchism in general. As to the 'anarchist revolution', it is most absurd to maintain that it 'is a question of hours', for revolution, in the anarchist sense of the word, means not only an abolition of the existing order of society, which alone can by no means be achieved in a few hours or days, but also a reconstruction, a re-organisation of society on anarchist bases. Can this tremendous task be 'a question of hours'?

Last of all, I don't see what Read means by: 'it is for the proletariat to discover its own values; and this it can only do in isolation. It must suspect every voice that addresses it from outside its own ranks; it must reject every idea which it does not instinctively recognise as native to its own modes of feeling and perception. It must close its ranks and create its own clerisy.' Where did the proletariat get these special qualifications and this exceptional wisdom from? Since when has anarchism turned into a merely proletarian conception, teaching the proletariat to distrust and keep aloof from the rest of humanity? Does not such a conception open ajar the door to dictatorships 'of the proletariat' and such like mischiefs? No, this is not the way towards 'an organic community of free and equal individuals'.

In closing up the argument I should like to beg Herbert Read not to take in bad turn my criticism of his article, for, my intention was far less to criticise him than to throw some light on the questions at issue, which I considered necessary.

Herbert Read replies

I welcome T. Michelson's very acute criticism of my article, and on some points I willingly accept his correction. In particular I admit that my contrast between a Marxian revolution which can only be achieved over a period of years and an anarchist revolution which is a question of hours is a metaphorical exaggeration. My main motive was to argue against 'the inevitability of gradualism'. A policy of revolution by planned stages leads to apathy in the revolutionary classes; the direction is left to leaders, whose only thought is to organise their followers in a well-disciplined army. We call it trade-union organisation, but what it becomes in effect is an industrial hierarchy which can be taken over by whatever power happens to direct the State. My point is that the control of the State must be seized violently, catastrophically; the re-organisation of society can then proceed according to programme. The alternative, for the anarchist, is not any other kind of revolution (there is no other kind), but rather a passive philosophical attitude which strives to direct all social movements towards the anarchist ideal.

Proletarian 'values'. I do not imply that the proletariat possesses any exceptional wisdom, or any special perceptions or sensibility. The true values are human values, or absolute values in relation to humanity. But it is the proletariat's special function to realise these values. It can only do so by remaining a coherent, independent force, and it can only maintain its coherence and independence by refusing to have anything to do with bourgeois culture and bourgeois 'society'. I grant that bourgeois culture contains many of the human values which we all desire to see established; and these will eventually be taken over by a new order of society. But to take them over on bourgeois terms (a seat in the stalls) — that is the beginning of the betrayal.

But much more important is the question of principle involved in the discussion of Stirner and Marx. On this point I must defend myself without reservation, for I believe the whole future of anarchism is bound up with this question. There is a type of anarchist, just as there is a type of Marxist, who is simply incapable of any progressive development of thought. They have their prophet and their dogmas, and no event in history, no advance in thought, can prevail against them.

When Stirner published his great book, he gave perfect expression to a logical thesis — the thesis of individualism. Marx, in his turn, gave perfect expression to a contrary thesis — the thesis of communism. That contradiction must be resolved, and by the very method of dialectics which Marx used to such good effect. I believe that to a great extent Marx resolved this fundamental contradiction, and that it is the Marxists, and not Marx, who, in Michelson's words, 'take Society for their starting point and, by making the individual subservient to it, sacrifice light-heartedly its happiness to the entity — society'. Marx, I would still maintain, 'effectively demolished' Stirner (in the German Ideology), but he also profited by Stirner. He took the advice of Engels, which was: 'But what is true in his (Stirner's) principle, we,too, must accept. And what is true is that before we can be active in any cause we must make it our own egoistic cause — and that in this sense, quite aside from any material expectations, we are communists in virtue of our egoism, and that out of egoism we want to be human beings and not merely individuals.' (Letter of November 19, 1844. Trans. Sidney Hook.) But if Marx could learn from Stirner, we can learn from Marx. I venture to think that I have passed through Marx to something nearer the truth; but in the process I have gained a tremendous respect for the genius of Marx, and until we anarchists have produced an economist and philosopher approaching his stature, it is simply futile to ignore his work. We have to build on the basis of that work; we have to conceive socialist thought as a dialectical development which includes Marx, Engels and Lenin no less than Stirner, Proudhon and Kropotkin. A practical anarchism for today must be Kropotkin. A practical anarchism for today must be directed towards the solution of immediate social and economic problems — that is to say, it must be revolutionary and communist. To insist upon individualistic anarchism is merely, in the circumstances, to condemn the whole doctrine to ineffectiveness.

PeterKropotkin

Reflections on the French Revolution

When one sees that terrible and powerful Convention wrecking itself in 1794-1795, that proud and strong Republic disappearing, and France, after the demoralising *régime* of the Directory, falling under the military yoke of a Bonaparte, one is impelled to ask: 'What was the good of the Revolution if the nation had to fall back again under despotism?' In the course of the nineteenth century, this question has been constantly put, and the timid and conservative have worn it threadbare as an argument against revolutions in general.

Those who have seen in the Revolution only a change in the Government, those who are ignorant of its economic as well as its educational work, those alone could put such a question.

The France we see during the last days of the eighteenth century, at the moment of the *coup d'état* on the 18th Brumaire, is not the France that existed before 1789. Would it have been possible for the old France, wretchedly poor and with a third of her population suffering yearly from dearth, to have maintained the Napoleonic Wars, coming so soon after the terrible wars of the Republic between 1792 and 1799, when all Europe was attacking her?

The fact is, that a new France had been constituted since 1792-1793. Scarcity still prevailed in many of the departments, and its full horrors were felt especially after the *coup d'état* of Thermidor, when the maximum price for all foodstuffs was abolished. There were still some departments which did not produce enough wheat to feed themselves, and as the war went on, and all means of transport were requisitioned for its supplies, there was scarcity in those departments. But everything tends to prove that France was even then producing much more of the necessaries of life of every kind than in 1789.

Never was there in France such energetic ploughing, Michelet tells

---

This is the concluding chapter to which we have given a more descriptive title than the original CONCLUSIONS, and using the Vanguard Press edition which is based on the Heinemann 1909 edition. The attention of the reader is drawn to Heiner Becker's Essay in Raven 7 on *Kropotkin as Historian of the French Revolution*. Two editions of *The Great French Revolution* by Peter Kropotkin are available from FREEDOM PRESS (see page 400).

us, as in 1792, when the peasant was ploughing the lands he had taken back from the lords, the convents, the churches, and was goading his oxen to the cry of '*Allons Prusse! Allons Autriche!*' Never had there been so much clearing of lands — even royalist writers admit this — as during those years of revolution. The first good harvest, in 1794, brought relief to two-thirds of France — at least in the villages, for all this time the towns were threatened with scarcity of food. Not that it was scarce in France as a whole, or that the *sans-culotte* municipalities neglected to take measures to feed those who could not find employment, but from the fact that all beasts of burden not actually used in tillage were requisitioned to carry food and ammunition to the fourteen armies of the Republic. In those days there were no railways, and all but the main roads were in the state they are to this day in Russia — well-nigh impassable.

A new France was born during those four years of revolution. For the first time in centuries the peasant ate his fill, straightened his back and dared to speak out. Read the detailed reports concerning the return of Louis XVI to Paris, when he was brought back a prisoner from Varennes, in June 1791, by the peasants, and say: 'Could such a thing, such an interest in the public welfare, such a devotion to it, and such an independence of judgment and action have been possible before 1789?' A new nation had been born in the meantime, just as we see to-day a new nation coming into life in Russia and in Turkey.

It was owing to this new birth that France was able to maintain her wars under the Republic and Napoleon, and to carry the principles of the Great Revolution into Switzerland, Italy, Spain, Belgium, Holland, Germany, and even to the borders of Russia. And when, after all those wars, after having mentally followed the French armies as far as Egypt and Moscow, we expect to find France in 1815 reduced to an appalling misery and her lands laid waste, we find, instead, that even in its eastern portions and in the Jura, the country is much more prosperous than it was at the time when Pétion, pointing out to Louis XVI the luxuriant banks of the Marne, asked him if there was anywhere in the world a kingdom more beautiful than the one the King had not wished to keep.

The self-contained energy was such in villages regenerated by the Revolution, that in a few years France became a country of well-to-do peasants, and her enemies soon discovered that in spite of all the blood she had shed and the losses she had sustained, France, in respect of her *productivity*, was the richest country in Europe. Her wealth, indeed, is not drawn from the Indies or from her foreign commerce: it comes from her own soil, from her love of the soil, from her own skill and industry. She is the richest country, because of the subdivision of her wealth, and

she is still richer because of the possibilities she offers for the future.

Such was the effect of the Revolution. And if the casual observer sees in Napoleonic France only a love of glory, the historian realises that even the wars France waged at that period were undertaken to secure the fruits of the Revolution — to keep the lands that had been retaken from the lords, the priests and the rich, and the liberties that had been won from despotism and the Court. If France was willing in those years to bleed herself to death, merely to prevent the Germans, the English, and the Russians from forcing a Louis XVIII upon her, it was because she did not want the return of the emigrant nobles to mean that the *ci-devants* would take back the lands which had been watered already with the peasant's sweat, and the liberties which had been sanctified with the patriot's blood. And France fought so well for twenty-three years, that when she was compelled at last to admit the Bourbons, it was she who imposed conditions on them. The Bourbons might reign, but the lands were to be kept by those who had taken them from the feudal lords, so that even during the White Terror of the Bourbons they dared not touch those lands. The old *régime* could not be re-established.

This is what is gained by making a Revolution.

There are other things to be pointed out. In the history of all nations a time comes when fundamental changes are bound to take place in the whole of the national life. Royal despotism and feudalism were dying in 1789; it was impossible to keep them alive; they had to go.

But then, two ways were opened out before France: reform or revolution.

At such times there is always a moment when reform is still possible; but if advantage has not been taken of that moment, if an obstinate resistance has been opposed to the requirements of the new life, up to the point when blood has flowed in the streets, as it flowed on July 14, 1789, then there must be a Revolution. And once the Revolution has begun, it must necessarily develop to its last conclusions — that is to say, to the highest point it is capable of attaining — were it only temporarily, being given a certain condition of the public mind at this particular moment.

If we represent the slow progress of a period of evolution by a line drawn on paper, we shall see this line gradually though slowly rising. Then there comes a Revolution, and the line makes a sudden leap upwards. In England the line would be represented as rising to the Puritan Republic of Cromwell; in France it rises to the *Sans-culotte* Republic of 1793. However, at this height progress cannot be maintained; all the hostile forces league together against it, and the

Republic goes down. Our line, after having reached that height, drops. Reaction follows. For the political life of France the line drops very low indeed, but by degrees it rises again, and when peace is restored in 1815 in France, and in 1688 in England — both countries are found to have attained a level much higher than they were on prior to their Revolutions.

After that, evolution is resumed: our line again begins to rise slowly: but, besides taking place on a very much higher level, the rising of the line will in nearly every case be also much more rapid than before the period of disturbance.

This is a law of human progress, and also a law of individual progress. The more recent history of France confirms this very law by showing how it was necessary to pass through the Commune to arrive at the Third Republic.

The work of the French Revolution is not confined merely to what it obtained and what was retained of it in France. It is to be found also in the principles bequeathed by it to the succeeding century — in the line of direction it marked out for the future.

A reform is always a compromise with the past, but the progress accomplished by revolution is always a promise of future progress. If the Great French Revolution was the summing up of a century's evolution, it also marked out in its turn the programme of evolution to be accomplished in the course of the nineteenth century.

It is a law in the world's history that the period of a hundred or a hundred and thirty years, more or less, which passes between two great revolutions, receives its character from the revolution in which this period began. The nations endeavour to realise in their institutions the inheritance bequeathed by the last revolution. All that this last could not yet put into practice, all the great thoughts which were thrown into circulation during the turmoil, and which the revolution either could not or did not know how to apply, all the attempts at sociological reconstruction, which were born during the revolution, will go to make up the substance of evolution during the epoch that follows the revolution, with the addition of those new ideas to which this evolution will give birth, when trying to put into practice the programme marked out by the last upheaval. Then, a new revolution will be brought about in some other nation, and this nation in its turn will set the problems for the following century. Such has hitherto been the trend of history.

Two great conquests, in fact, characterise the century which has passed since 1789-1793. Both owe their origin to the French Revolution, which had carried on the work of the English Revolution while enlarging and invigorating it with all the progress that had been made since the English middle classes beheaded their King and

transferred his power to the Parliament. These two great triumphs are: the abolition of serfdom and the abolition of absolutism, by which personal liberties have been conferred upon the individual, undreamt of by the serf of the lord and the subject of the absolute king, while at the same time they have brought about the development of the middle classes and the capitalist *régime*.

These two achievements represent the principal work of the nineteenth century, begun in France in 1789 and slowly spread over Europe in the course of that century.

The work of the enfranchisement, begun by the French peasants in 1789, was continued in Spain, Italy, Switzerland, Germany and Austria by the armies of the *sans-culottes*. Unfortunately, this work hardly penetrated into Poland and did not reach Russia at all.

The abolition of serfdom in Europe would have been already completed in the first half of the nineteenth century if the French *bourgeoisie*, coming into power in 1794 over the dead bodies of Anarchists, Cordeliers, and Jacobins, had not checked the revolutionary impulse, restored monarchy, and handed over France to the imperial juggler, the first Napoleon. This ex-*sans-culotte*, now a general of the *sans-culottes*, speedily began to prop up aristocracy; but the impulsion had been given, the institution of serfdom had already received a mortal blow. It was abolished in Spain and Italy in spite of the temporary triumph of reaction. It was closely pressed in Germany after 1811, and disappeared in that country definitively in 1848. In 1861, Russia was compelled to emancipate her serfs, and the war of 1878 put an end to serfdom in the Balkan peninsula.

The cycle is now complete. The right of the lord over the person of the peasant no longer exists in Europe, even in those countries where the feudal dues have still to be redeemed.

This fact is not sufficiently appreciated by historians. Absorbed as they are in political questions, they do not perceive the importance of the abolition of serfdom, which is, however, the essential feature of the nineteenth century. The rivalries between nations and the wars resulting from them, the policies of the Great Powers which occupy so much of the historian's attention, have all sprung from that one great fact — the abolition of serfdom and the development of the wage-system which has taken its place.

The French peasant, in revolting a hundred and twenty years ago against the lord who made him beat the ponds lest croaking frogs should disturb his master's sleep, has thus freed the peasants of all Europe. In four years, by burning the documents which registered his subjection, by setting fire to the châteaux, and by executing the owners of them who refused to recognise his rights as a human being, the

French peasant so stirred up all Europe that it is to-day altogether free from the degradation of serfdom.

On the other hand, the abolition of absolute power has also taken a little over a hundred years to make the tour of Europe. Attacked in England in 1648, and vanquished in France in 1789, royal authority based on divine right is no longer exercised save in Russia, but there, too it is at its last gasp. Even the little Balkan States and Turkey have now their representative assemblies, and Russia is entering the same cycle.

In this respect the Revolution of 1789-1793 has also accomplished its work. Equality before the law and representative government have now their place in almost all the codes of Europe. In theory, at least, the law makes no distinctions between men, and every one has the right to participate, more or less, in the government.

The absolute monarch — master of his subjects — and the lord — master of the soil and the peasants, by right of birth — have both disappeared. The middle classes now govern Europe.

But at the same time the Great Revolution has bequeathed to us some other principles of an infinitely higher import; the principles of communism. We have seen how all through the Great Revolution the communist idea kept coming to the front, and how after the fall of the Girondins numerous attempts and sometimes great attempts were made in this direction. Fourierism descends in a direct line from L'Ange on one side and from Chalier on the other. Babeuf is the direct descendant of ideas which stirred the masses to enthusiasm in 1793; he, Buonarotti, and Sylvain Maréchal have only systematised them a little or even merely put them into literary form. But the secret societies organised by Babeuf and Buonarotti were the origin of the *communistes matérialistes* secret societies through which Blanqui and Barbés conspired under the *bourgeois* monarchy of Louis-Philippe. Later on, in 1866, the International Working Men's Association appeared in the direct line of descent from these societies. As to 'socialism' we know now that this term came into vogue to avoid the term 'communism', which at one time was dangerous because the secret communist societies became societies for action, and were rigorously suppressed by the *bourgeoisie* then in power.

There is, therefore, a direct filiation from the *Enragés* of 1793 and the Babeuf conspiracy of 1795 to the International Working Men's Association of 1866-1878.

There is also a direct descent of ideas. Up till now, modern socialism has added absolutely nothing to the ideas which were circulating among the French people between 1789 and 1794, and which it was attempted

to put into practice in the Year II of the Republic. Modern socialism has only systematised those ideas and found arguments in their favour, either by turning against the middle-class economists certain of their own definitions, or by generalising certain facts noticed in the development of industrial capitalism, in the course of the nineteenth century.

But I permit myself to maintain also that, however vague it may have been, however little support it endeavoured to draw from arguments dressed in scientific garb, and however little use it made of the pseudo-scientific slang of the middle-class economists, the popular communism of the first two years of the Republic saw clearer, and went much deeper in its analyses, than modern socialism.

First of all, it was communism in the consumption of the necessaries of life — not in production only; it was the communalisation and the nationalisation of what economists know as consumption — to which the stern republicans of 1793 turned, above all, their attention, when they tried to establish their stores of grain and provisions in every commune, when they set on foot a gigantic enquiry to find and fix the true value of the objects of prime and secondary necessity, and when they inspired Robespierre to declare that *only the superfluity of foodstuffs should become articles of commerce, and that what was necessary belonged to all.*

Born out of the pressing necessities of those troublous years, the communism of 1793, with its affirmation of the right of all to sustenance and to the land for its production, its denial of the right of any one to hold more land than he and his family could cultivate — that is, more than a farm of 120 acres — and its attempt to communalise all trade and industry — this communism went straighter to the heart of things than all the minimum programmes of our own time, or even all the maximum preambles of such programmes.

In any case, what we learn to-day from the study of the Great Revolution is, that it was the source and origin of all the present communist, anarchist and socialist conceptions. We have but badly understood our common mother, but now we have found her again in the midst of the *sans-culottes*, and we see what we have to learn from her.

Humanity advances by stages and these stages have been marked for several hundred years by great revolutions. After the Netherlands came England with her revolution in 1648-1657, and then it was the turn of France. Each great revolution has in it, besides, something special and original. England and France both abolished royal absolutism. But in doing so England was chiefly interested in the personal rights of the individual, particularly in matters of religion, as well as the local rights

of every parish and every community. As to France, she turned her chief attention to the land question, and in striking a mortal blow at the feudal system she struck also at the great fortunes, and sent forth into the world the idea of nationalising the soil, and of socialising commerce and the chief industries.

Which of the nations will take upon herself the terrible but glorious task of the next great revolution? One may have thought for a time that it would be Russia. But if she should push her revolution further than the mere limitation of the imperial power; if she touches the land question in a revolutionary spirit — how far will she go? Will she know how to avoid the mistake made by the French Assemblies, and will she socialise the land and give it only to those who want to cultivate it with their own hands? We know not: any answer to this question would belong to the domain of prophecy.

The one thing certain is, that whatsoever nation enters on the path of revolution in our own day, it will be heir to all our forefathers have done in France. The blood they shed was shed for humanity — the sufferings they endured were borne for the entire human race; their struggles, the ideas they gave to the world, the shock of those ideas, are all included in the heritage of mankind. All have borne fruit and will bear more, still finer, as we advance towards those wide horizons opening out before us, where, like some great beacon to point the way, flame the words — LIBERTY, EQUALITY, FRATERNITY.

John Hewetson

Dormant Seeds of 1848

'As for the greater number of revolutionists, they unhappily know only of the theatrical side of former revolutions as related with forced effect by historians, and they scarcely suspected the immense work accomplished in France during the years 1789-93 by millions of obscure persons — work which caused France to be in 1793 quite a different nation from what she was four years previously.'

Peter Kropotkin
Revolutionary Studies

Revolutions in the past have resulted from the accumulation of tendencies in social evolution. It has not been difficult for historians to disentangle the various factors and analyse them — to show where they reinforce one another, and where their clashes brought suddenly into the open long dormant antagonisms. At such moment the old structures of society fall away and the new society thus born seems to take steps forward more rapidly in a few years — or even months — than the whole preceding century has achieved.

Revolutions are thus occasions of progress, and its opportunity. It is therefore natural that the revolutions of the past should be anatomised more and more closely today when dissatisfaction with existing social forms is almost universal. It is for their *lessons* that we chiefly study such movements of the past, and 1848 provides a focus for many trends

---

John Hewetson (1912-) was active in the anti-war movement and an editor of *War Commentary* and *Freedom* from 1940 to 1951. Imprisoned three times, the third time in 1945 for sedition (under war time regulations) for 7 months. Author of *Ill Health, Poverty and the State* (1946), *Sexual Freedom for the Young* (1951). The present essay was a contribution to a volume on *A Hundred Years of Revolution: 1848 and After* edited by George Woodcock (also an editor of *Freedom* at the time) in 1948. He wrote on a wide range of subjects but as a practising medical doctor his articles on health and poverty are specially important — (see *World War-Cold War: Selections from War Commentary and Freedom 1939-1950* just published) and his *Essay on Mutual Aid and Social Evolution* in the FREEDOM PRESS edition of Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid*.

which have by no means exhausted their interest or relevance for the present age.

We live in a pre-eminently political epoch. For years now we have grown accustomed to the spectacle of masses of humanity groaning under conditions of misery, and often enough of horror, resulting from no action of their own, but from some political decision taken by people they have never seen, in Capitals they have never visited. They are completely divorced from responsibility for their own lives. The Treaty of Versailles produced a mass of miserable and dissatisfied minority populations; the 'settlements' of today are repeating the process on an even grander scale.[1] While between the two trudge the columns of refugees, of displaced persons, fleeing from France, from Spain; from Chiang Kai-shek, from Japanese or German or Russian invaders; from hostile Sikh or Moslem majorities; always from some manoeuvres which may have reality in the dim world of politics but which are hideously alien from the warm world of human contact and human kinship.

These helpless and hopeless columns of dehumanised humanity are almost the distinguishing feature of recent history. The callousness, the inhuman indifference which sets these weary symptoms afoot is scarcely unexpected, however. They spring from *political* actions, from the domain of leaders, of men in morning suits or other uniform signing documents in the dreary splendour of state apartments. The pre-eminent engines of such contemporary misery are the determined and disciplined groups who constitute the political parties, more especially the totalitarian, monolithic political parties which have been increasingly dominant since 1918.

The manifest misery of the refugees is only the open symptom of our age and our politics-ridden lives.Where human relations should be warm and touched with sympathy, they are in fact sterilised by the distrust and stiffness which is implied in the word 'bureaucracy'. Its increasing pervasion of human life and its effects on human character are responsible for the almost universal dissatisfaction with existing social forms; but the massive misery which forms the background to the weary journeyings, and the frustration and defeat of human hopes and aspirations has at the same time removed the optimism which used to inform the conception of Progress. Hence social change is not now greeted as an opportunity for a new life, but rather feared as the probable precursor of yet more misery. Horrible as these are, men today prefer the ills they know to flying to others that they know not of. Disillusionment, and disillusionment that extends to the revolutionary periods of our own day, has made cowards of us all.

A hundred years ago men of vision awaited the Revolution expectantly, with determination and hopes high. It is quite otherwise today.

Yet the revolutions of the future must still provide the opportunities for renewed life. They will offer the disintegration of social forms; and hopes can be reposed still less in conservatism, in maintaining the existing social structures than was ever the case in the nineteenth century or even the early twentieth century. More than ever, therefore, we are thrown back on the study of the revolutions of the past, in the search for solutions to problems of the present and future. Nevertheless, the accent has shifted: instead of deriving hope and consolation from revolutionary successes, we have to consider chiefly the failures and omissions which opened the door to defeat.

The history of 1848 is appropriate for us to study, since it was chiefly a political revolution. Yet, although the influence of mass movements was less evident than in the Great Revolution or the Commune of 1871, it was nevertheless present, and the most important factor. No attempt will be made here, however, to study political issues in detail; instead certain broader issues — one might almost call them philosophical questions — will be emphasised.

In its general outlines, 1848 followed the historical lines of all revolutions. As early as 1842, Heine had reported the conscious misery of the workers: 'Everything is as quiet as a winter's night after a new fall of snow. But in the silence you hear continually dripping, dripping, the profits of the capitalist, as they steadily increase. You can actually hear them piling up — the riches of the rich. Sometimes there is the smothered cry of poverty, and often, too, a scraping sound, like a knife being sharpened.' And, as always, it was the sudden action of the anonymous mass which toppled over the bourgeois monarchy of Louis-Philippe. In January 1848, a spokesman of the government had declared in the Chamber that 'the Ministry will not yield one step', and it only needed the trivial occasion of the forbidding of the reform banquet arranged in Paris for February 22nd to start the demonstrations which led to the barricades going up in the Paris working class districts.

The fallen ministry and monarchy were succeeded by the Republic and a government of Republican leaders like Ledru-Rollin, and Socialists like Louis Blanc. Such political figures were provided with their opportunity by the mass uprising; but they were not the cause of it. Kropotkin has described the process which leads up to revolutionary situations. Revolutionists of vision, who have a clear view of what human life could be like, are always in a minority. But events gather to their ranks many more who are merely dissatisfied with the existing régime.

This affluence to the ranks of the revolutionaries of a mass of malcontents of all shades create the force of revolution and renders them inevitable. A simple conspiracy in the palace, or of Parliament, more or less supported by what is called public opinion, suffices to change the men in power, and sometimes the

form of government. But a revolution, to effect any change whatever in the economic order, requires the agreement of an immense number of wills. Without the agreement, more or less active, of millions, no revolution is possible. It is necessary that everywhere, in each hamlet even, there should be men to act in the destruction of the past; also that other millions remain inactive in the hope of seeing something arise to improve their future conditions. And it is just this vague, undecided discontent — very often unconscious — surging in the minds of men at the eve of great events, and that loss of confidence in the existing order, which permits true revolutionists to accomplish their immense task — the Titanic task of reconstructing in a few years institutions venerated for centuries. (Kropotkin, *Revolutionary Studies*.)

The revolutionists of 1848, however, were not equal to the task, for in general they had neither the vision to provide the ideas necessary for a new society, nor the courage to break with and destroy the past. One of them, at least, recognised this from the outset, for on the day after the events of February 24th, Proudhon wrote that the revolution had no plan: 'It must be given direction, and already I see it perishing in a flood of speeches.' As D.W. Brogan says, 'to have written this diagnosis of the Revolution of February 24th, on February 25th, was an astonishing feat of penetration for it was Proudhon who was right — and the naîve enthusiasts who were wrong'.[2]

Proudhon was an intensely practical thinker, despite his many paradoxes, and it is worth following some of his ideas further. In this country he suffers under the rival reputation of Marx, whose answer, entitled *The Poverty of Philosophy*, to Proudhon's *The Philosophy of Poverty* is uncritically accepted by thousands of socialists who have read neither the original nor the reply. In France, Proudhon's influence powerfully affected the uprising of 1871 and the development of the French Labour Movement. His outlook and his attitude affect the social activity of the French workers even today.

Proudhon was elected to the Assembly by a substantial majority at a by-election in Paris in June, but by that time the initiative had already passed from the hands of the workers into those of timid political leaders. Hence Proudhon's contribution to the ideas of the Revolution was received with hostility. Alone among the revolutionists of the time, he saw the necessity to destroy the social basis of the past by expropriating the bourgeois class and by the equalisation of incomes. This was no mere socialistic flourish. Proudhon knew from practical experience of life that the obedience of the ruled is chiefly exacted by economic pressures and he saw that the power of the reaction and the social order over which it ruled could only be broken by radical economic adjustments. Expropriation was not merely an act of social justice, it was a severely practical safeguard for the revolution.

Of course, such economic measures against the possessing class had been recognised as necessary by the socialist schools of Saint Simon and Fourier long before Proudhon. Such ideas were part of the accepted ideas of socialism. Yet the Ledru-Rollins and Louis Blancs, far from acclaiming Proudhon's proposition, voted with the majority that 'the proposition of Citizen Proudhon is an odious attack on the principles of public morals'. Proudhon's resolution, which he put before the Assembly on July 31st, 1848, received only two votes in favour — his own and that of a Socialist named Greppo.

The interesting point is not that such a resolution should have been put forward, but that none of the prominent Socialists except Proudhon should have supported it. The process is one which has been repeated in succeeding revolutions: in Kropotkin's words about the day after revolutionary uprisings, 'when the immense majority of those who yesterday gloried in the name of revolutionaries hasten to pass into the ranks of the defenders of order'. It was in defence of order that the military laid siege to the working class districts and overcame the working-men's army in June, 1848. It was in the name of order that Thiers massacred in 1871 the Communards, whose very appellation of 'Federals' was a tribute to Proudhon's federalist conceptions.

This matter of the economic timidity of revolutionary leaders is of immense practical importance, for it has contributed to the failure of the great revolutions of our own time, in 1917 and 1936.

At the Fourth Congress of the First International at Basle in September, 1869, the followers of Bakunin advanced a resolution condemning the principle of hereditary succession to property, and then went on to demand the abolition of private property altogether. Although such a step would seem to be an essential prerequisite for the social ownership of production by the community at large (I do not say by the State), it was fiercely contested by the Marxist section of the International. The resolution was nevertheless accepted by a majority vote, and it was this victory for the ideas of Bakunin that determined Marx on the manoeuvrings which ended with the removal of the General Council to New York and the virtual destruction of the International. That Marx's hostility to the complete abolition of private property on this occasion was not merely a tactical question is shown by his assertion that in the *Communist Manifesto* of 1847 he only sought the expropriation of capitalists' property.[3]

Despite the success of Bakunin's resolution in the Fourth Congress of the International, the Paris Commune of 1871 merely advocated a limited collectivism making only large-scale industry socially owned. Where Proudhon had put expropriation of the Banks as the first act which the revolution must accomplish and the only one which could in

no circumstances be allowed to wait, the Communards failed to see the need to cut away the economic basis of the bourgeois power by expropriating the Bank of France and all economic undertakings. Hence with his economic powers virtually unimpaired, Thiers was able to exact his brutal revenge.

And the revolutions in Russia and Spain also left intact a money and wages system which permitted the new rulers to impose the same economic fetters on the workers which they imagined they had destroyed in the uprisings that brought down the old régime. Proudhon's lesson has yet to be learned.

So far the events of 1848 have been treated only as they relate to France. But the significant thing about the revolutions of that year was just the fact that they were not confined to one country; the whole of Europe was affected by the revolutionary unrest. Beginning in Italy, the revolution spread to France and then to Germany, Austria and the Slav countries, while in England the Chartist movement flickered before going out altogether. It is not, however, true that the movement 'spread' from one country to another, certainly not in the sense that it was consciously carried by revolutionists across national frontiers. For, as other writers have pointed out, 1848 was notable for the nationalist character of its uprisings. For the most part, the active revolutionists had not internationalist conceptions, and the armies of one republic were used to crush the republican aspirations of another revolution.

Subsequent revolutions have made fully clear the lesson that radical social changes cannot be made *and maintained* by a revolutionary people in isolation. But in 1848 this lesson appears to have been grasped by one man only. In other directions Bakunin's social ideas were to mature considerably in the years that followed. But he was already an internationalist when he wrote in 1848:

> Two great questions were posed from the first days of the spring: the social question and that of the independence of all nations, the emancipation at once of people at home and abroad. It was not a few individuals, nor was it a party; it was the admirable instinct of the masses which had raised these two questions above all others and which demanded a prompt solution to them. Everybody had understood that liberty is only a lie where the great majority of the population is reduced to leading a poverty-stricken existence, where, deprived of education, leisure, and bread, they find themselves more or less destined to serve as stepping-stones for the powerful and the rich. The social revolution then appears as a natural and necessary consequence of the political revolution. In the same way it was felt that while there was in Europe a single nation persecuted, the decisive and complete triumph of democracy would not be possible anywhere. The oppression of a people, even of a single individual, is the oppression of all, and it is impossible to violate the liberty of one without

violating the liberty of all . . . The social question, a very difficult question, bristling with dangers and big with tempests, cannot be resolved either by a pre-conceived theory or by any isolated system. To solve it, there must be the faith of all in the right of everybody to an equal liberty. It is necessary to overthrow the material and moral conditions of our present existence, break into ruins from below this decaying social world, which has become impotent and sterile and which will be unable to contain or allow such a great mass of liberty. It will be necessary beforehand to purify our atmosphere and transform completely the surroundings in which we live, which corrupt our instincts and our wills, in limiting our hearts and our intelligences. The social question thus appeared from the first as the overthrowing of society.

I have quoted this passage at length because it contains so many points of interest — to some of which I shall return later. But for the moment what concerns us is the breadth of Bakunin's revolutionary conceptions which extend far beyond the boundaries of mere political frontiers. The factors which made 1848 the year of European revolutions were doubtless mainly the economic ones which underlay them all. But the nationalist revolutionists did not recognise this fundamental community of interests. Marx had addressed his peroration in the *Communist Manifesto* to the workers of the world, but twenty odd years later in 1870 he still thought in nationalist terms, for he looked to the victory of Prussia over France as a step forward for Socialism. For the internationalists of that time he had nothing but scorn. French workers in a manifesto to the German workers had declared in 1870: 'Brothers, we protest against the war, we who wish for peace, labour, and liberty. Brothers, do not listen to the hirelings who seek to deceive you as to the real wishes of France.' And German internationalists replied: 'We too wish for peace, labour and liberty. We know that on both sides of the Rhine there are brothers with whom we are ready to die for the Universal Republic.' These men — anonymous workers — had a vision of the human race undivided by war-making frontiers. But Marx and Engels wrote to one another of the 'imbeciles of Paris and their ridiculous manifesto'.

Nor were internationalist conceptions fully grasped by the Russian and Spanish revolutionaries. It is only too clear that even advanced theoreticians in these countries thought primarily of their national problems and considered revolutionary trends in other countries only as possible adjuncts to their own struggle. Absorbed in the local upheaval, they could not see it as a symptom of world unrest which must either spread universally or be engulfed by the reaction. It is a sobering reflection that Bakunin had grasped the universal position as long as a hundred years ago, for internationalism can hardly ever have been at such a low ebb as now.

A radical view of the economic problem of the social revolution, and universalism: Proudhon and Bakunin had understood these questions in 1848 and revolutionary theorists have conceded the correctness of their views. But more important still, because almost unrecognised even today were certain views about the motive force and the directing power behind revolutionary events. Once again the anarchists Proudhon and Bakunin had reached conclusions far in advance of contemporary social thinkers, in the course of those all-night sessions in which they argued about Hegel and listened to the symphonies of Beethoven.

Even today it is regarded almost as axiomatic that revolutions are *led*. Led by intellectuals, men who have pondered the social questions and in their wisdom instruct the 'blind masses' as to what is best for them. Intellectual leaders or military adventurers: these are still the revolutionists of romantic history and propaganda build-ups. And inevitably the ambitious men who seek such roles make use of an instrument suitable for imposing their views on the 'blind mass'. That instrument is the political party, and its power, its malign power over the lives of millions has already been referred to. Can the ideas of 1848 shed any light for us on these dark places?

The most outstanding characteristic of revolutions is their tremendous energy. As Kropotkin pointed out, this overbounding energy sweeps away old institutions and in a few years transforms the social structure in directions which cannot be reversed.

Such changes cannot be the work solely of parties, for no such changes occur at non-revolutionary moments when initiative rests much more securely in the hands of the political grouping which forms the government. Revolutions emerge from the initiative of masses of anonymous people, from 'the agreement', in Kropotkin's words, 'of immense numbers of wills'. The dominance of the party requires the exact opposite; initiative must rest in the hands of a comparatively small number of party functionaries and their will must prevail over a more or less docile population. It is to be noted that such docile submission, if not vouchsafed voluntarily, is secured by practical politicians by means of police, secret or otherwise, wielding an immense system of punitive laws and penal institutions. Such structures most certainly do not exist to give free play to the revolutionary energy and aspirations of masses of a population.

It is not perhaps surprising that the power for social change possessed by a mere party is trivial compared to that which a revolutionary population achieves in a few months. Such a conception of the motive force of revolutionary events is not widely current today. Yet Proudhon had grasped it well enough when he wrote: 'Philosophic reason . . . does

not admit, with the Jacobins and the doctrinaires, that one can proceed to . . . reform by legislative authority. *It only gives its confidence to reforms which come out of the free will of societies; the only revolutions which it acknowledges are those which proceed from the initiative of the masses; it denies, in the most absolute manner, the revolutionary competence of governments.*'[4]

In the passage quoted already Bakunin is seen to have reached the same conception. Regarding the social question and internationalism, he declared: 'It was not a few individuals, nor was it a party; it was the admirable instinct of the masses which raised these two questions above all others, and which demanded a prompt solution of them.'

With such a conception, it is clear that any move which tends to remove initiative from the revolutionary mass by placing it in the hands of a few individuals or a party will undermine the source of energy for revolutionary change. Such a transference of initiative will bring the revolution to a standstill.

And so it proves in history. In 1848, as in 1789, the revolution came to a standstill when the period of revolutionary motivation gave place to the formation of a strong government. In Russia, the revolution of workers and peasants was overwhelmed by the emergence of a strongly centralised party with its discipline and its secret police. And the outstanding achievements of the Spanish revolution were the work of the anonymous peasants and workers in the collective farms and factories which they organised and controlled independent of the shadow government of Largo Caballero. The function of the party government of Negrin was to dismantle these achievements and inevitably (though apparently incidentally) the anti-Fascist struggle as well.

The reliance on political parties and political leaders is in no small part due to the influence of Marx. He and Engels were capable of regarding even international wars from the point of view of whether or not they advanced their particular theories within the Socialist movement. The following letter from Marx to his collaborator shows this with brutal clarity, and at the same time exhibits the contempt which these leaders evinced for the revolutionary workers, and also their underlying nationalism:

> The French need a thrashing. If the Prussians are victorious the centralisation of state power will be helpful for the centralisation of the German working class; furthermore, German predominance will shift the centre of gravity of West European labour movements from France to Germany. And one had but to compare the movement from 1866 till today to see that the German working class is in theory and organisations superior to the French. Its dominance over

the French on the world stage would mean likewise the dominance of our theory over that of Proudhon . . .

The leadership conception is clearly expressed in this passage. It leads directly on not only to Lenin's outspoken opinion that the workers could only achieve a trade-union mentality and therefore require intellectuals to do their thinking for them, but also to the more polite dictatorship of the intellectuals expressed by the Labour Party.

With such a conception it is not surprising that Marx and Engels deplored the initiative of the French workers in 1870. 'If one could have any influence at Paris,' wrote Engels to his friend, 'it would be necessary to prevent the working folk from budging until the peace'.[5] No doubt it was the same fear of the energy of the revolutionary masses which made Marx continually exclaim: 'Tell the working men of Marseilles to put their heads in a bucket!'

There is no need to idealise or to idolise the 'masses': it is enough to regard the political fiascos of 1848 with a clear eye and to reflect that in this, as in preceding and succeeding revolutions, the revolutionary achievements derived from the spontaneous uprisings of the mass. The leadership conception is the antithesis of this, and its corollary, the emergence of the political party as the would-be controlling force, signifies the end of the revolution, the beginning of the counter-revolution. With all its imperfections, futilities and failures, 1848 contains the seeds whose germination could fructify the social revolutions of the future.

1 This essay was written in 1948 — Editors.
2 Proudhon, page 48.
3 F. R. Salter, *Karl Marx and Modern Socialism*, page 52.
4 P. J. Proudhon, *Confessions of a Revolutionary* (1849).
5 F. R. Salter, *op. cit.*, page 61.

Voline

Opposing Conceptions of the Social Revolution in 1917

In the course of the crises and failures which followed one another up to the revolution of 1917, *Bolshevism was not the only conception of how the social revolution should be accomplished*. Without speaking of the left social revolutionary doctrine, resembling Bolshevism in its political, authoritarian, statist and centralist character, nor of several other small similar currents, *a second fundamental idea, likewise envisaging a full and integral social revolution, took shape and spread among the revolutionary circles and also among the working masses: this was the anarchist idea*.

Its influence, very weak at first, increased as events widened in scope. By the end of 1918 this influence had become such that the Bolsheviks — who did not allow any criticism, nor any contradiction nor opposition — were seriously disturbed. *From 1919 until the end of 1921, they had to engage in a severe struggle with the progress of this idea: a struggle at least as long and as bitter as that against reaction*.

We underline at this point a further fact which also is not sufficiently known: *Bolshevism in power combated the anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist ideas and movements not on the grounds of ideological or concrete experience, nor by means of an open and honest struggle, but with the same methods of repression that it had employed against reaction*: methods of

---

Voline was the *nom de plume* of Vsevolod M Eichenbaum born in 1882 in the district of Voronezh in Great Russia and who died in Paris in 1945. His parents were medical doctors and he was sent to St Petersburg to study jurisprudence, but made himself very useful in the labour movement when he was only nineteen, and in 1905 when the first revolutionary rumblings shook the Russian Empire he joined the Social Revolutionary Party and took an active part in the uprising. In 1907 he was arrested and banished to some remote exile but managed to escape and make his way to Paris where he met Sebastien Faure and other French anarchists as well as the small circle of Russian anarchists. In 1911 he abandoned the SRP and joined the anarchist movement. In 1917 he was back in Russia as one of the editors of the daily anarchist paper *Golos Truda*. In the Spring of 1919 Voline joined the revolutionary army of Nestor Makhno, but he in fact was made head of a department within the Makhno army which had the task of preparing people for a new social order, based on common ownership of the land, home rule of communities and federative solidarity. This important chapter comes from his large scale work *The Unknown Revolution* first published in France in 1947 and in English translation in two volumes (1954 and 1955) by FREEDOM PRESS and the Libertarian Book Club (New York).

pure violence. It began by brutally closing the centres of the libertarian organisations, by prohibiting all anarchist activity or propaganda. It condemned the masses to not hearing the voices of the anarchists, and to misunderstanding their programme. And when, despite this constraint, the anarchist idea gained ground, *the Bolsheviks passed rapidly to more violent methods — imprisonment, outlawing, killing. The then unequal struggle between these two tendencies — one in power, the other confronted by power — increased and became, in certain regions, an actual civil war*. In the Ukraine, notably, this state of war lasted more than two years, compelling the Bolsheviki to mobilise all their forces to stifle the anarchist idea and to wipe out the popular movements inspired by it.

Thus the conflict between the two conceptions of the social revolution and, at the same time, between the Bolshevik power and certain movements of the labouring masses, held a highly important place in the events of the period embracing 1919-1921. However, all authors without exception, from the extreme right to the extreme left — we are not speaking of libertarian literature — have passed over this fact in silence. Therefore we are obliged to establish it, to supply all the details, and to draw the reader's attention to it.

Here two pertinent questions arise:

1. When, on the eve of the October Revolution, the Bolsheviki rallied an overwhelming majority of popular votes, what was the cause of the important and rapid rise of the anarchist idea?
2. What, exactly, was the position of the anarchists in relation to the Bolsheviks, and why were the latter impelled to fight — and fight violently — this libertarian idea and movement?

In replying to these questions it will be found easy to reveal to the reader the true visage of Bolshevism.

And by comparing the two opposing ideas in action one can understand them better, evaluate their respective worth, discover the reasons for this state of war between the two camps, and finally, 'feel the pulse' of the revolution after the Bolshevik seizure of power in October 1917.

Accordingly we will compare, in a rough manner, the two concepts:
The Bolshevik idea was to build, on the ruins of the bourgeois state, *a new 'workers' state' to constitute a 'workers' and peasants' government' and to establish a 'dictatorship of the proletariat'*.
The anarchist idea [was and] is to transform the economic and social bases of society *without having recourse to a political state*, to a government, or to a dictatorship of any sort. That is, to achieve the revolution and resolve its problems not by political or statist means, but by means of natural and free activity, *economic and social, of the*

associations of the workers themselves, after having overthrown the last capitalist government.

To co-ordinate action, the first conception envisaged a certain political power, organising the life of the state with the help of the government and its agents and according to formal directives from the 'centre'.

The other conception conjectured the complete abandonment of political and statist organisation; and the utilisation of a *direct and federative* alliance and collaboration of the economic, social, technical and other agencies (unions, co-operatives, various associations, etc.) locally, regionally, nationally, internationally; therefore a centralisation, *not political or statist*, going from the central government or the periphery *commanded* by it, but economic and technical, following needs and real interests, going from the periphery to the centres, and established in a logical and natural way, according to concrete necessity, without domination or command.

It should be noted how absurd — or biased — is the reproach aimed at the anarchists that they know only how 'to destroy', and they have no 'positive' constructive ideas, especially when this charge is hurled by those of the 'Left'. Discussions between the political parties of the extreme Left and the anarchists have always been about the positive and constructive tasks which are to be accomplished after the destruction of the bourgeois state (on which subject everybody is in agreement). What would be the way of building the new society then: statist, centralist, and political, or federalist, a-political, and simply social? Such was always the theme of the controversies between them; an irrefutable proof that the essential preoccupation of the anarchists was always future construction.

To the thesis of the parties, a political and centralised 'transitional' state, the anarchists opposed theirs: progressive but *immediate* passage to the economic and federative community. The political parties based their arguments on the social structure left by the centuries and past régimes, and they pretended that this model was compatible with constructive ideas. The anarchists believed that new construction required *from the beginning* new methods, *and they recommended those methods*. Whether their thesis was true or false, it proved in any case that they knew clearly what they wanted, and that they had strictly constructive ideas.

As a general rule, an erroneous interpretation — or more often one that was deliberately inaccurate — pretended that the libertarian conception implied the absence of all organisation. Nothing is farther from the truth. It is a question not of 'organisation or non-organisation' but of *two different principles of organisation*.

All revolutions necessarily begin in a more or less spontaneous

manner, therefore in a confused, chaotic way. It goes without saying — and the libertarians understood this as well as the others — that if a revolution remains in that primitive stage, it will fail. Immediately after the spontaneous impetus, the principle of organisation has to intervene in a revolution as in all other human activity. And it is then that the grave question arises: what should be the manner and basis of this organisation?

One school maintains that a central directing group — an 'élite' group — ought to be formed to take in hand the whole work, lead it according to its conception, impose the latter on the whole collectivity, establish a government and organise a state, dictate its will to the populace, impose its 'laws' by force and violence, combat, suppress, and even eliminate, those who are not in agreement with it.

Their opponents [the anarchists] consider that such a conception is absurd, contrary to the fundamental principles of human evolution, and, in the last analysis, more than sterile — and harmful to the work undertaken. Naturally, the anarchists say, it is necessary that society be organised. But this new organisation should be done freely, socially, and, certainly, from below. The principle of organisation should arise, not from a centre created in advance to monopolise the whole and impose itself on it, but — what is exactly the opposite — from all quarters, to lead to points of co-ordination, natural centres designed to serve all these quarters.

Of course it is necessary that the organising spirit, that men capable of carrying on organisation — the 'élite' — should intervene. But, in every place and under all circumstances, all those valuable humans should freely participate in the common work, *as true collaborators, and not as dictators*. It is necessary that they especially create an example, and employ themselves in grouping, co-ordinating, organising, using good will, initiative and knowledge, and all capacities and aptitudes without dominating, subjugating or oppressing anyone. Such individuals would be *true organisers* and theirs would constitute *a true organisation*, fertile and solid, because it would be natural, human and effectively progressive. Whereas the other 'organisation' *imitating that of the old society of oppression and exploitation, and therefore adapted to those two goals* — would be sterile and unstable because it would not conform to the new purposes, and therefore would not be at all progressive.

In fact, it would not contain any element of a new society, inasmuch as *it would only alter the appearance of the old*. Belonging to an outdated sociey, obsolete in all respects, and thus impossible as a naturally free and truly human institution, it could only maintain itself by means of new artifices, new deceptions, new violence, new oppression and

exploitation. Which inevitably would lead astray, falsify, and endanger the whole revolution. So it is obvious that such an organisation will remain unproductive *as a motor for the social revolution*. It can no more serve as a 'transitional society' (as the 'communists' pretend), for such a society must necessarily possess at least some of the seeds of that toward which it purports to evolve. And all authoritarian and statist societies possess only residues of the fallen social order.

According to the libertarian thesis, it is the labouring masses themselves who, by means of the various class organisations, factory committees, industrial and agricultural unions, co-operatives, etc., federated and centralised *on a basis of real needs*, should apply themselves everywhere, to solving the problems of waging the revolution. By their powerful and fertile action, because they are free and conscious, they should co-ordinate their efforts throughout the whole country. As for the 'élite', their rôle, according to the libertarians, is to *help* the masses, enlighten them, teach them, give them the necessary advice, impel them to take the initiative, provide them with an example, and support them in their action — *but not direct them governmentally*.

The libertarians hold that a favourable solution to the problems of the revolution can result only from the freely and consciously collective and united work of millions of men and women who bring to it and harmonise in it all the variety of their needs and interests, their strength and capacities, their gifts, aptitudes, inclinations, professional knowledge, and understanding. By the natural interplay of their economic, technical and social organisations, with the help of the 'élite' and, in case of need, under the protection of their freely organised armed forces, the labouring masses should, in the view of the libertarians, be able to carry the revolution effectively forward and progressively arrive at the practical achievement of all of its tasks.

The Bolshevik thesis was diametrically opposed to this. In the contention of the Bolsheviki it was the élite — their élite — which, forming a 'workers' government' and establishing a so-called 'dictatorship of the proletariat', should carry out the social transformation and solve its prodigious problems. The masses should aid this élite (the opposite of the libertarian belief that the élite should aid the masses) by faithfully, blindly, mechanically carrying out its plans, decisions, orders and 'laws'. And the armed forces, also in imitation of those of the capitalist countries, likewise should blindly obey the 'élite'.

Such is, and remains, the essential difference between the two ideas. Such also were the two opposed conceptions of the social revolution at the moment of the Russian upheaval in 1917.

The Bolsheviks, as we have said, didn't even want to listen to the anarchists, still less to let them expound their thesis to the masses. Believing themselves in possession of an absolute, indisputable, 'scientific' truth, and pretending to have to impose it immediately, they fought and eliminated the libertarian movement *by violence* from the time the anarchist idea began to interest the masses — the usual procedure of all dominators, exploiters and inquisitors.

In October 1917, the two conceptions entered into conflict, which became increasingly acute, with no compromise possible. Then, for four years, this conflict kept the Bolshevik power on the alert, and played a more and more significant part in the vicissitudes of the revolution, until the libertarian movement in Russia was completely destroyed by military force at the end of 1921.

Despite this fact, or perhaps because of it, and the lessons that it teaches, it has been carefully killed by the whole political press.

From *1917 — The Russian Revolution Betrayed* pp 5-11
(Freedom Press 1954)

The Kronstadt Revolt

Editors' Introduction

The crushing of the Kronstadt 'rebellion' in the early part of 1921 is, as Ciliga remarks, of decisive importance. It marks the triumph of the counter-revolution in Russia. The aspirations of the revolutionary workers and peasants found expression in the demands of the Kronstadt sailors which are quoted in the following pages; and the annihilation of the men of Kronstadt marked the final stabilisation of the power of the Bolshevik government, the final hardening of that regime of totalitarian absolutism which Lenin set up, and which has been carried on by Stalin.

By 1921 the civil war and the wars of intervention were over, and the Russian workers and peasants were expecting to be released from the rigours to which they had submitted for the sake of internal unity in the face of the enemy without. Meanwhile, as a result of 'War Communism', i.e. State control of industry and land, the Russian economy was completely disorganised. When therefore Lenin showed no inclination at all towards restoring workers' liberties and control over industry unrest became very widespread.

On the political field, this unrest and dissatisfaction showed itself in

the programme of the Workers' Opposition. In Petrograd, the workers' protest meetings were dispersed by the Government so that they were forced to resort to strike action in order to get their demands heard. Like Kronstadt, like the Makhnovist movement in the Ukraine, the actions of these workers have been misrepresented and subjected to the grossest of calumnies by Leninists of all shades. The strikers' demands are, however, well expressed in the following proclamation which appeared on the walls of buildings in Petrograd on February 27th:

> A complete change is necessary in the policies of the Government. First of all, the workers and peasants need freedom. They don't want to live by the decrees of the Bolsheviki: they want to control their own destinies.
>
> Comrades, preserve revolutionary order! Determinedly and in an organised manner demand:
> Liberation of all arrested socialists and non-partisan working-men;
> Abolition of martial law; freedom of speech, press and assembly for all those who labour;
> Free election of shop and factory committees (Zahvkomi), of labour unions and soviet representatives.
>
> Call meetings, pass resolutions send your delegates to the authorities and work for the realization of your demands![1]

Arrests and suppression were Lenin's only answers to these demands. The Government Committee of Defence of Petrograd issued an order: 'In case crowds congregate in the streets, the troops are ordered to fire; those that resist are to be shot on the spot.'

The Kronstadt sailors were disturbed by the events in Petrograd. Sympathy with the strikers was first expressed by the crews of the warships *Petropavlovsk* and *Sevastopol*, which in 1917 had been in the forefront of the revolutionary struggle. The movement spread throughout the fleet and then to the Red Army in Kronstadt. The Kronstadt sailors and workers had sent delegates to Petrograd to report on the events there, and it was on hearing the very unfavourable report of this delegation that they presented the Petropavlovsk resolution to a mass meeting of 16,000 sailors, Red Army men and workers. The resolution was accepted unanimously except for three votes.[2]

Lenin's reply to the Kronstadt resolution was to send Trotsky who gave the famous orders to the Red Army to 'shoot them down like partridges'. It was only then that the men of Kronstadt prepared to resist by force of arms; only then that the peaceful resolution became a 'rebellion against the Soviet Power'. Throughout, however, they abstained from taking the offensive, as they could easily have done.

But in addition to the brutal suppression by the Red Army, and subsequently by the Cheka, during which 18,000 workers were killed, Lenin also instituted a campaign of calumny against the Kronstadt

workers. The delegates to the Tenth Party Congress which was going on at the same time were assured that 'the White Generals played a big role', that 'it was the work of the Social Revolutionarists and the White Guardists from abroad'. The Kronstadt workers had asked that delegates of the workers and soldiers be sent to inquire into these charges. The Petrograd Soviet, under the chairmanship of the Bolshevik leader Zinovieff, refused.

Doing their utmost to deceive the mass of the workers and peasants as to the events at Kronstadt, the Bolshevik leaders knew very well what was going on. In the *Krasny Archiv* (*Red Archive*), a monthly magazine published by the Editorial Board of the Supreme Military Council, and intended for circulation only among the upper reaches of the Communist Party — it was marked 'Not for Publication' — there appeared in December, 1921, an article on 'The Rebellion of the Kronstadt Sailors', which makes this quite clear. While carrying on the most virulent campaign of vilification, the Bolsheviks were quite cynically aware of the true state of affairs, and were only the more determined to maintain their stranglehold over the Russian workers at any cost, and regardless of the bloodshed involved.

> The Political Department of the Baltic Fleet found itself isolated not only from the masses but also from local party workers, having become a bureaucratic organ lacking any prestige and standing . . . The Baltic Fleet destroyed all local initiative and brought the work down to the level of clerical routine . . . From July to November, 1920, 20 per cent of the members left the Party . . . The Chief of the Organisation Department of the Baltic Fleet pointed out in the middle of February, 1921, that 'if the work goes on as it has been going on until now, a mutiny is likely to break out two or three months from now . . .' The lack of Party work told heavily upon the organisation. At a mass meeting, numbering 15,000 people, which, of course, was also attended by Communists, no one, save Comrades Kalinin, Kuzmin and Vassiliev, voted against the resolution. And this also had its effect in the grievous incidents taking place in the Kronstadt organisation; the resignation of 381 members who did not grasp the true meaning of the rebellion and its consequences. Nor did the responsible workers heading the work in Kronstadt understand what was going on, and that is why they failed to take the right measures necessary at the very beginning.[3]

This passage makes it clear that the resolution was a protest against conditions in the fleet for which even the writer lays the blame partly at the door of the Party. There is no mention here of 'White Guardist generals', 'Social Revolutionists' and so on. It is the clearest denial of the calumnies and lies circulated by the Bolsheviks themselves. The subsequent history of Lenin's regime shows that the Kronstadt workers saw clearly the future — or rather, the death — of the revolution. Their

'rebellion' was a spirited and heroic fight against the totalitarian dictatorship of the Party. In the perspective of the Moscow trials and the Stalinist Terror, Kronstadt is clearly seen, as Ciliga points out, as a turning point in the history of the Russian revolution. A turning point, moreover, which was to be almost exactly paralleled, and with the same dire result, in the crushing of the Spanish workers during the May Days in Barcelona in 1937.[4] On both these occasions power passed definitely from the hands of the workers into those of the government, and the revolution was ended.

The revolutionary workers must not only destroy the bourgeois state: they must also guard against the growth of a new apparatus which may wrest power from them. Any political party seeking to centralise control in its own hands, has to set up instruments to ensure that its plans are carried out; to control not only the defeated bourgeoisie, but also the revolutionary workers themselves. Inevitably, conflicts will arise between it and the economic and social organisations set up by the workers. They can only end in the suppression of one power by the other.

Such a conflict may however be masked by certain aims which both the workers and the 'revolutionary government' have in common. Both aim to overthrow the bourgeoisie at home and abroad. In withstanding the counter-revolutionary attacks of the bourgeoisie, the conflict between the workers and the new state is concealed in their common struggle; under cover of which the new state power seeks continuously to entrench itself at the expense of the workers' organisations, until it finally overthrows them altogether.

This consolidation of the power of the governing minority inevitably involves ruthless suppression, and the workers, their liberty lost and deprived of responsibility in the ordering of their lives and economy, sink back into their pre-revolutionary apathy. The revolutionary opportunity has once more been missed. Meanwhile the new state is forced to go further and further down the road to a bleak totalitarianism. To prevent the initial setting up of such a new governing power is the lesson which must be learnt from the Kronstadt tragedy.

1 Quoted by Alexander Berkman: *The Kronstadt Rebellion* (1922)
2 Those of Kuzmin, the Commissar of the Baltic Fleet; Vassiliev, the chairman of the Kronstadt Soviet, and Kalinin, now [1942] President of the USSR.
3 *Krasny Archiv* ('The Red Archives') No 9 December 1921 p.44. Quoted by G. P. Maximoff in *The Guillotine at Work* p.169
4 See *The May Days Barcelona 1937* (Freedom Press 1987 126pp) — Editor

Anton Ciliga

The Kronstadt Revolt

The correspondence between Trotsky and Wendelin Thomas (one of the leaders of the revolt in the German Navy in 1918, and a member of the American Committee of Enquiry into the Moscow Trials) regarding the historical significance of the events in Kronstadt in 1921, has given rise to widespread international discussion. That in itself indicates the importance of the problem. On the other hand, it is no accident that special interest should be shown in the Kronstadt revolt to-day; that there is an analogy, a direct link even between what happened at Kronstadt 17 years ago, and the recent trials at Moscow, is only too apparent.[1] To-day we witness the murder of the leaders of the Russian revolution; in 1921 it was the masses who formed the basis of the revolution who were massacred. Would it be possible today to disgrace and suppress the leaders of October without the slightest protest from the people, if these leaders had not already by armed force silenced the Kronstadt sailors and the workers all over Russia?

Trotsky's reply to Wendelin Thomas shows that unfortunately Trotsky — who is, together with Stalin, the only one of the leaders of the October revolution concerned in the suppression of Kronstadt who remains alive — still refuses to look at the past objectively. Furthermore, in his article 'Too Much Noise About Kronstadt', he increases the gulf which he created at that time between the working masses and himself; he does not hesitate, after having ordered their bombardment in 1921 to describe these men today as 'completely demoralised elements, men who wore elegant wide trousers and did their hair like pimps'.

No! It is not with accusations of this kind, which reek of bureaucratic

---

The Kronstadt Revolt was first published in French in 1938 and only in 1942 in an English translation in *War Commentary* (January) and a month later as a pamphlet with the Editors' introduction. However in 1940 with the support of Herbert Read we were able to persuade the publishers Routledge to bring out Ciliga's book *The Russian Enigma. Ten Years in the Country of the Great Lie*. We recently learned with much pleasure that Ciliga celebrated his 90th birthday last year; lives in Italy (he was born in a part of Yugoslavia which was handed over to Italy at the end of WW1); and judging by the interview published in the magazine *Iztok* (Paris No 15 March 1988) social problems are still uppermost in his mind. We hope to publish extracts in a future issue of *The Raven*.

arrogance, that a useful contribution can be made to the lessons of the great Russian revolution.

In order to assess the influence that Kronstadt has had on the outcome of the revolution, it is necessary to avoid all personal issues, and direct attention to three fundamental questions: (1) In what general circumstances the Kronstadt revolt arose? (2) What were the aims of the movement? (3) By what means did the insurgents attempt to achieve these aims?

The masses and the bureaucracy in 1920-21

Everyone now agrees that during the winter of 1920 to 1921 the Russian revolution was passing through an extremely critical phase. The offensive against Poland had ended in defeat at Warsaw, the social revolution had not broken out in the West, the Russian revolution had become isolated, famine and disorganisation had seized the entire country. The peril of bourgeois restoration knocked at the door of the revolution. At this moment of crisis the different classes and parties which existed within the revolutionary camp each presented their solution for its resolution.

The Soviet Government and the higher circles in the Communist Party applied their own solution of *increasing the power of the bureaucracy*. The attribution of powers to the 'Executive Committees' which had hitherto been vested in the soviets, the replacement of the dictatorship of the class by the dictatorship of the party, the shift of authority even within the party from its members to its cadres, the replacement of the double power of the bureaucracy and the workers in the factory by the sole power of the former — to do all this was to 'save the Revolution!' It was at this moment that Bukharin put forward his plea for a 'proletarian Bonapartism'. 'By placing restrictions on itself' the proletariat would, according to him, facilitate the struggle against the bourgeois counter-revolution. Here was manifested already the enormous quasi-messianic self-importance of the Communist Bureaucracy.

The Ninth and Tenth Congresses of the Communist Party, as well as the intervening year passed beneath the auspices of this new policy. Lenin rigidly carried it through, Trotsky sang its praises. The Bureaucracy prevented the bourgeois restoration . . . by eliminating the proletarian character of the revolution.

The formation of the Workers' Opposition within the party, which was supported not only by the proletarian faction in the party itself but also by the great mass of unorganised workers, the general strike of the Petrograd workers a short time before the Kronstadt revolt and finally

the insurrection itself, all expressed the aspirations of the masses who felt, more or less clearly, that a 'third party' was about to destroy their conquests. The movement of poor peasants led by Makhno in the Ukraine was the outcome of similar resistance in similar circumstances. If the struggles of 1920-1921 are examined in the light of the historical material now available, one is struck by the way that these scattered masses, starved and enfeebled by economic disorganisation, nevertheless had the strength to formulate for themselves with such precision their social and political position, and at the same time to defend themselves against the bureaucracy and against the bourgeoisie.

The Kronstadt Programme

We shall not content ourselves, like Trotsky, with simple declarations, so we submit to readers the resolution which served as a programme for the Kronstadt movement. We reproduce it in full, because of its immense historical importance. It was adopted on February 28th by the sailors of the battleship 'Petropavlovsk', and was subsequently accepted by all the sailors, soldiers and workers of Kronstadt.

After having heard the representatives delegated by the general meeting of ships' crew to report on the situation in Petrograd this assembly takes the following decisions:

1. Seeing that the present soviets do not express the wishes of the workers and peasants, to organise immediately re-elections to the soviets with secret vote, and with care to organise free electoral propaganda for all workers and peasants.
2. To grant liberty of speech and of press to the workers and peasants, to the anarchists and the left socialist parties.
3. To secure freedom of assembly for labour unions and peasant organisations.
4. To call a non-partisan Conference of the workers, Red Army soldiers and sailors of Petrograd, Kronstadt, and of Petrograd province, no later than March 10th, 1921.
5. To liberate all political prisoners of Socialist parties as well as all workers, peasants, soldiers and sailors imprisoned in connection with the labour and peasant movements.
6. To elect a Commission to review the cases of those held in prisons and concentration camps.
7. To abolish all 'politodeli'[2] because no party should be given special privileges in the propagation of its ideas or receive financial support from the government for such purposes. Instead there should be established educational and cultural commissions, locally elected and financed by the government.
8. To abolish immediately all 'zagryaditelniye otryadi'.[3]
9. To equalize all the rations of all who work with the exception of those employed in trades detrimental to health.
10. To abolish the communist fighting detachments in all branches of the

army, as well as the communist guards kept on duty in mills and factories. Should such guards or military detachments be found necessary they are to be appointed in the army from the ranks, and in the factories according to the judgement of the workers.
11. To give the peasants full freedom of action in regard to their land and also the right to keep cattle on condition that the peasants manage with their own means; that is, without employing hired labour.
12. To request all branches of the Army, as well as our comrades the military 'kursanti'[4] to concur in our resolutions.
13. To demand that the press give the fullest publicity to our resolutions.
14. To appoint a travelling commission of control.
15. To permit free artisan production which does not employ hired labour.

These are primitive formulations, insufficient no doubt, but all of them impregnated with the spirit of October; and no calumny in the world can cast a doubt on the intimate connection existing between this resolution and the sentiments which guided the expropriations of 1917.

The depth of principle which animates this resolution is shown by the fact that it is still to a great extent applicable. One can, in fact, oppose it as well to the Stalin regime of 1938, as to that of Lenin in 1921. More even than that: the accusations of Trotsky himself against Stalin's regime are only reproductions, timid ones, it is true, of the Kronstadt claims. Besides, what other programme which is at all socialist could be set up against the bureaucratic oligarchy except that of Kronstadt and the Workers' Opposition?

The appearance of this resolution demonstrates the close connections which existed between the movements of Petrograd and Kronstadt. Trotsky's attempt to set the workers of Petrograd against those of Kronstadt in order to confirm the legend of the counter-revolutionary nature of the Kronstadt movement, comes back on Trotsky himself: in 1921, Trotsky pleaded the necessity under which Lenin was situated in justification of the suppression of democracy in the Soviets and in the party, and accused the masses inside and outside the party of *sympathising with Kronstadt*. He admitted therefore that at that time the Petrograd workers and the opposition although they had not resisted by force of arms, none the less extended their sympathy to Kronstadt.

Trotsky's subsequent assertion that 'the insurrection was inspired by the desire to obtain a privileged ration' is still more wild. Thus, it is one of these privileged people of the Kremlin, the rations for whom were very much better than those of others, who dares to hurl a similar reproach, and that at the very men who in paragraph 9 of their resolution, explicitly demanded equalisation of rations! This detail shows the desperate extent of Trotsky's bureaucratic blindness.

Trotsky's articles do not depart in the slightest degree from the

legend created long ago by the Central Committee of the Party. Trotsky certainly deserves credit from the international working class for having refused since 1923 to continue to participate in the bureaucratic degeneration and in the new 'purges' which were destined to deprive the Revolution of all its left-wing elements. He deserves still more to be defended against Stalin's calumny and assassins. But all this does not give Trotsky the right to insult the working masses of 1921. On the contrary! More than anyone else, Trotsky should furnish a new appreciation of the initiative taken at Kronstadt. An initiative of great historic value, an initiative taken by rank-and-file militants in the struggle against the first bloodstained 'purge' undertaken by the bureaucracy.

The attitude of the Russian workers during the tragic winter of 1920-1921 shows a profound social instinct; and a noble heroism inspired the working classes of Russia not only at the height of the Revolution but also at the crisis which placed it in mortal danger.

Neither the Kronstadt fighters, nor the Petrograd workers, nor the ranks of the Communists could summon, it is true, in that winter the same revolutionary energy as in 1917 to 1919, but what there was of socialism and revolutionary feeling in the Russia of 1921 was possessed by the rank-and-file. In their opposition to this, Lenin and Trotsky, in line with Stalin, with Zinoviev, Kaganovitch, and others responded to the wishes and served the interests of the bureaucratic cadres. The workers struggled for the socialism which the bureaucracy were already in the process of liquidating. That is the fundamental point of the whole problem.

Kronstadt and the NEP

People often believe that Kronstadt forced the introduction of the New Economic Policy (NEP) — a profound error. The Kronstadt resolution pronounced in favour of the defence of the workers, not only against the bureaucratic capitalism of the State, but also against the restoration of private capitalism. This restoration was demanded — in opposition to Kronstadt — by the social democrats, who combined it with a regime of political democracy. And it was Lenin and Trotsky who to a great extent realised it (but without political democracy) in the form of the NEP. The Kronstadt resolution declared for the opposite since it declared itself against the employment of wage labour in agriculture and small industry. This resolution, and the movement underlying, sought for a revolutionary alliance of the proletarian and peasant workers with the poorest sections of the country labourers, in order that

the revolution might develop towards socialism. The NEP, on the other hand, was a union of bureaucrats with the upper layers of the village against the proletariat; it was the alliance of State capitalism and private capitalism against socialism. The NEP is as much opposed to the Kronstadt demands as, for example, the revolutionary socialist programme of the vanguard of the European workers for the abolition of the Versailles system, is opposed to the abrogation of the Treaty of Versailles achieved by Hitler.

Let us consider, finally, one last accusation which is commonly circulated: that action such as that at Kronstadt could have *indirectly* let loose the forces of the counter-revolution. It is *possible* indeed that even by placing itself on a footing of workers' democracy the revolution might have been overthrown; but what is *certain* is that it has perished, and that it has perished on account of the policy of its leaders. The repression of Kronstadt, the suppression of the democracy of workers and soviets by the Russian Communist party, the elimination of the proletariat from the management of industry, and the introduction of the NEP, already signified the death of the Revolution.

It was precisely the end of the civil war which produced the splitting of the post-revolutionary society into two fundamental groupings: the working masses and the bureaucracy. As far as its socialist and internationalist aspirations were concerned, the Russian Revolution was stifled: in its nationalist, bureaucratic, and state capitalist tendencies, it developed and consolidated itself.

It was from this point onwards, and on this basis, each year more and more clearly, that the Bolshevik repudiation of morality, so frequently evoked, took on a development which had to lead to the Moscow Trials. The implacable logic of things has manifested itself. While the revolutionaries, remaining such only in words, accomplished in fact the task of the reaction and counter-revolution, they were compelled, inevitably, to have recourse to lies, to calumny and falsification. This system of generalised lying is the result, not the cause, of the separation of the Bolshevik party from socialism and from the proletariat.

In order to corroborate this statement, I shall quote the testimony regarding Kronstadt of men I have met in Soviet Russia.

'The men of Kronstadt! They were absolutely right; they intervened in order to defend the Petrograd workers: it was a tragic misunderstanding on the part of Lenin and Trotsky, that instead of agreeing with them, they gave them battle,' said Dch. to me in 1932. He was a non-party worker in Petrograd in 1921, whom I knew in the political isolator at Verkhne-Uralsk as a Trotskyist.

'It is a myth that, from the social point of view, Kronstadt of 1921 had a wholly different population from that of 1917,' another man from

Petrograd, Dv., said to me in prison. In 1921 he was a member of the Communist youth, and was imprisoned in 1932 as a 'decist' (a member of Sapronov's group of 'Democratic Centralists').

I also had the opportunity of knowing one of the most effective participants in the Kronstadt rebellion. He was an old marine engineer, a communist since 1917, who had, during the civil war, taken an active part, directing at one time a Tcheka in a province somewhere on the Volga, and found himself in 1921 at Kronstadt as a political commissar on the warship 'Marat' (ex 'Petropavlovsk'). When I saw him, in 1930, in the Leningrad prison, he had just spent the previous eight years in the Solovietski islands.

The Methods of Struggle

The Kronstadt workers pursued revolutionary aims in struggling against the reactionary tendencies of the bureaucracy, and they used clean and honest methods. In contrast, the bureaucracy slandered their movement odiously, pretending that it was led by General Kozlovski.[5] Actually, the men of Kronstadt honestly desired, as comrades, to discuss the questions at issue with the representatives of the government. Their action, had at first, a defensive character — that is the reason why they did not occupy Oranienbaum in time, situated on the coast opposite Kronstadt.

Right from the start, the Petrograd bureaucrats made use of the system of hostages by arresting the families of the sailors, Red Army soldiers and workers of Kronstadt who were living in Petrograd because several commissars in Kronstadt — not one of whom was shot — had been arrested. The news of the seizing of hostages was brought to the knowledge of Kronstadt by means of leaflets dropped from aeroplanes. In their reply by radio, Kronstadt declared on March 7th 'that they did not wish to imitate Petrograd as they considered that such an act, even when carried out in an excess of desperation and hate, is most shameful and most cowardly from every point of view. History has not yet known a similar procedure'[5]. The new governing clique understood much better than the Kronstadt 'rebels' the significance of the social struggle which was beginning, the depth of the class-antagonism which separated it from the workers. It is in this that lies the tragedy of revolutions in the period of their decline.

But while military conflict was forced upon Kronstadt, they still found the strength to formulate the programme for the 'third revolution', which remains since then the programme of the Russian socialism of the future.

Balance Sheet

There are reasons for thinking that granted the relation between the forces of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, of socialism and capitalism, which existed in Russia and Europe at the beginning of 1921, the struggle for the socialist development of the Russian Revolution was doomed to defeat. In those conditions the socialist programme of the masses could not conquer: it had to depend on the triumph of the counter-revolution whether openly declared or camouflaged under an aspect of degeneracy (as has been produced in fact).

But such a conception of the progress of the Russian Revolution does not diminish in the slightest, in the realms of principle, the historic importance of the programme and the efforts of the working masses. On the contrary, this programme constitutes the *point of departure* from which a new cycle in the revolutionary socialist development will begin. In fact, each new revolution begins not on the basis from which the preceding one started, but from the point at which the revolution before it had undergone a moral set-back.

The experience of the degeneration of the Russian Revolution places anew before the conscience of international socialism an extremely important sociological problem. In the Russian revolution, as in two other great revolutions, those of England and of France, why is it that it is from the inside that the counter-revolution has triumphed, at the moment when the revolutionary forces were exhausted, and by means of the revolutionary party itself ('purged', it is true of its left-wing elements)? Marxism believes that the socialist revolution, once begun, would either be assured of a gradual and continued development towards integral socialism, or would be defeated through the agency of bourgeois restoration.

Altogether, the Russian Revolution poses in an entirely new way the problem of the mechanism of the socialist revolution. This question must become paramount in international discussion. In such discussion the problem of Kronstadt can and must have a position worthy of it.

1. This article was written in 1938 (?), at the time of a new outbreak of purge trials in Moscow. — Eds
2. Political sections of the Communist party existing in the majority of State institutions.
3. Police detachments officially created to struggle against speculation, but which actually used to confiscate everything that the starving population, the workers included, brought from the country for their own personal consumption.
4. Cadet officers.
5. *Izvestia* of the Kronstadt Revolutionary Committee 7th March 1921.

Alexander Skirda

The Rehabilitation of Makhno

In accordance with Gorbachev's *perestroika* decree, Soviet historians have set about a profound revision of the regime's historical past. Until now they have had to confine themselves to the 1930s and the Stalinist nightmare. Western public opinion has been sensitive to the posthumous rehabilitation (juridically though not politically) of the principal opponents of Stalin *within* the party: Bukharin, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Radek and Trotsky, as well as tens of thousands of party members 'purged' by revolver shots in the back of the neck in 1936-1938, and 'reintegrated' posthumously into the bosom of the party.

Soviet opinion itself has been far more aroused by the rediscovery of the 'final solution' applied to the peasantry — nearly eleven million deaths from an artificial famine and from political repression between 1929 and 1934, — the 'holocaust of the century'. Inevitably this has provoked a demand for research into the roots of the evil. Until now the death of Lenin in 1924 has served as the crossroads after which everything went wrong. This has been found to be a totally insufficient explanation, and we must start much further back, if we can judge from a current article in the influential weekly published under the direction of the Writers' Union of the USSR, the *Literary Gazette*, of which several million copies are printed. Its issue of 8 February 1989 has this article on 'Batko Makhno or the "Werewolf" of the Civil War'.

A Russian joke asks 'who can tell what is going to happen yesterday'. It is more than a joke. Last year's secondary school leaving examination in history had to be cancelled because, with the arrival of *glasnost* and *perestroika*, and the message from above that the official version of the Soviet past consists of distortions, omissions and lies, new school histories have to be written. They can't be written yet because the amount of historical truth it is permissible to teach keeps on expanding.

This article appeared in the issues of the French anarchist weekly *Le Monde Libertaire* for 6 April, 13 April and 20 April 1989.

Alexander Skirda is the author of a biography *Nestor Makhno: Le cosaque de l'anarchie* (1982) and editor of a collection of Makhno's writings *La lutte contra l'état et autres écris* (1984).

The strange and provocative title has to be understood in the context of the article. Makhno, presented until now as a wolf, has now been rediscovered with a human face. The author, Vassily Golovanov, draws a portrait which is distinctly positive, even elegiac and idyllic in terms of revolutionary hagiography. Even though it is embellished with many factual or biographical errors, the article stresses equally the errors of the communist party leadership of that time both with regard to Makhno and towards the revolutionary peasantry in general.

Given the importance of this first historical revaluation, and indeed, rehabilitation, and considering all the rubbish published in the USSR on this subject right up to the present day, it seems important to make known to French, and Western readers generally, the overall tenor of this text and to translate the essential passages *in extenso*, and to follow them with some analysis and comment on the significance of this event.

Trotsky's responsibility in the rupture with Makhno

Golovanov's article, although it appears in the history section of the *Gazette*, is presented in a journalistic way, in that it has almost no bibliographical references. All the same, to give it official status, a guarantee of seriousness and some kind of undeniable historical certification, it is preceded by a foreword by N. Vasetsky, doctor of historical sciences, presented here in its entirety:

> The editors of the *Literary Gazette* have asked me to write some kind of preface to a text dedicated to a man most of us know under the name 'Batko Makhno'. When this name is mentioned what appears before our eyes is a half-comic, half-tragic figure we have all seen in films dealing with that period. But in spite of all this, Makhno, by now, deserves a more serious consideration. In fact, it is very important to be able to produce a reply to the question of why movements like those of the makhnovists found themselves on the other side of the barricades?
>
> This article rightly reveals that this was due to an under-evaluation of the peasantry — allies of the proletariat not only in the struggle against the great Russian land-owners, but equally in a society newly liberated from all exploitation. The author of the article sees in an absolutely factual way that the main cause of Makhno's tragedy was due to the anti-peasant attitude of Trotsky, president of the revolutionary military Soviet of the republic, and above all, in his direction of operations. The original character of Makhno seems to me to have been appropriately caught in this article: the conflicting programmes that obliged him to struggle against both the forces he faced in the revolution — the Whites and the Reds — are well illustrated.

We will see how far Golovanov's article justifies Vasetsky's opinion.

Anti-Makhnovist stereotypes

Golovanov begins by recalling the circumstances of Makhno's return to his native Ukraine, then occupied by Austrian and German armies, in July 1918, disguised as a teacher and supplied with false papers by the Kremlin, which is how, three months later, he was able to launch the formidable peasant insurrection, and on 22 September 1918, disguised this time as a captain of the *Varta* (the Ukrainian 'national guard' formed by the occupying forces), intercepted a punitive detachment aimed against the peasants. On this occasion Makhno revealed his true identity as 'the revolutionary Makhno'. Golovanov goes on to enumerate the many rumours and legends which have followed this 'figure, unique in the revolution because of his obscure and contradictory aspects'.

Among these are the story that when he was baptised, the priest's hood caught fire, a clear omen of his future as a bandit. Another tells how he was sent to prison for killing his own brother. Yet another explains that, having duped and robbed the peasants of his own locality in the first months of the 1917 revolution, he went to live a life of luxury in a private hotel in Moscow. Even though this last story emanated from the Austro-German authorities at the time when Makhno was mounting a partisan action against them, Golovanov writes that, alas, it is 'facts' of this kind which until now have dominated the Soviet view of this already mythological figure.

Moreover, and this may give the reader a certain pleasure, Golovanov declares that 'there has never been any serious historical study of the Makhnovist movement in the USSR'. Everything published until now has been nothing but empty lies. This reveals, Golovanov concludes, 'the bias and the methodological weakness of the Soviet school of history between the 1920s and the 1930s, retrospectively presenting history in black and white'. Only the review *The war and the revolution* which paid careful attention to 'the tactics of partisan war brought almost to perfection by Makhno' finds grace in the view of Golovanov. He goes on to say that no other work has seen the light of day in the Soviet Union which analyses the Makhnovist movement as a social phenomenon.

It is astonishing to read such a *mea culpa* in an official Soviet organ, the more so since Golovanov drives home the point even more forcibly in declaring that Soviet scholarship has been 'content to stick the label "bandit" on Makhno and to relegate him to the archives in the hope that time would efface from the memory of future generations the image of the storm-centre of the peasant war in the Ukraine'.

The author also cites the ambiguous or unfavourable presentation of Makhno in Soviet literature, like the work of the poet Bagritsky which attributes to him bestial traits. Alexis Tolstoy (the 'proletarian count' and one-time émigré who returned to place his pen at the service of Stalin) also distinguished himself in his Stalin Prize-winning novel *The Road to Calvary*, with its 'unflinching' depiction of Makhno which attributes to him the words, 'In the Tsar's prison they swung me, sometimes by the head and sometimes by the feet, before throwing me on to the concrete floor . . . That is the way that popular leaders are forged'.

After these specimens of the edifying and ridiculous stories on which the Soviet reader is fed, Golovanov moves to serious matters and traces the biography of Makhno, this time in conformity with the main historical outlines as already known in the West, even in the absence of serious documentation. (See below).

The real Makhno

Golovanov gives a brief account of Makhno's origins in the poor peasantry, his childhood of toil, his membership at the age of 16 of an anarchist group in Gulyai-Polye, his participation in 'expropriations' from the local rich in the name of 'the starving', his attack on a mail-coach, during which people were killed, his arrest in 1908, the accusations against him by four 'repentant' accomplices, his resistance to interrogation, and the sentence of 20 years in a convict settlement, commuted to detention in the Butyrki, the political prison in Moscow. In passing, Golovanov rectifies the legend of Makhno as a 'teacher'. We must correct him too: it was the death penalty which, in view of his youth, was commuted to 20 years of imprisonment, and it was his political convictions that made it desirable to send him to the Butyrki, where the three thousand prisoners considered the most dangerous in the country were concentrated.

Arshinov[1] is considered by Golovanov as Makhno's intellectual mentor, even though Makhno later rejected him, just as he sees Makhno wandering aimlessly around Moscow for a week after his liberation in February 1917 whereas the Ukrainian anarchist was delaying his return in spite of the pressing desire to do so, the better to breathe in the free air of revolutionary Moscow, and trying to seize the chance to be useful. Golovanov jumps too rapidly from these facts to the conclusion that Makhno 'neither liked nor understood urban life'. It is much more likely that he understood all too well the deleterious and sectarian atmosphere of the big cities he disliked, by comparison with the small

towns and villages of the Ukraine. (We shouldn't forget that at that time Gulyai-Polye was a town of between fifteen and twenty thousand inhabitants.)

Putting this aside, Golovanov is correct in writing that his years in prison had turned Makhno into 'a fanatical anarchist', something which, paradoxically, didn't stop him from being elected at Gulyai-Polye as president of the peasant union, or to the social committee, or from being the delegate to the soviet of peasant deputies. (Makhno himself writes in his *Memoirs* that this was to avoid these places being taken up by the representatives of authoritarian or political parties and organisations).

Briefly he describes Makhno's revolutionary activities in a way that has never, ever, been presented to Soviet readers:

> As an anarchist, a partisan of extreme revolution, Makhno took up a stance for radical and immediate transformation, well before the convocation of the Constituent Assembly. On the first of May 1917 an envoy was sent from Gulyai-Polye to demand the removal from the provisional government of the six capitalist ministers. In June, workers' control was installed in the factories of Gulyai-Polye, (Makhno proposed to the workers that they should discipline the bourgeoisie by expropriating the local bank, but this they refused to do for fear of attracting repression). Besides the soviet of workers' and peasants' deputies a committee of poor peasants was born, directed against the big landlords and local kulaks.
>
> In August, at the time of General Kornilov's march on Petrograd, Makhno organised a committee for the defence of the revolution which disarmed the bourgeoisie and the landlords in the region. At the regional congress of soviets the anarchist group from Gulyai-Polye called to the peasants to ignore the inclinations of the provisional government and of the Ukrainian central *Rada* and proposing 'the immediate seizure of the lands of the church and of the big proprietors, there to organise free communes, allowing the possibility of participation to these same big landlords and dispossessed kulaks'. By October this redivision of land had been accomplished, and the land was being worked, in spite of threats from government agencies.

Golovanov cites the intimidatory threats by an agent of the provisional government following the disarming of the local bourgeoisie. Makhno raised the matter before the committee for the defence of the revolution and 'gave him 20 minutes to get out of Gulyai-Polye and two hours to get out of the whole revolutionary territory'. It was thus that this '*foreign* soviet region' (in the language used by Golovanov) was able to live peacefully until the German invasion several months later.

He goes on to describe Makhno's journey to Moscow and his meeting with Lenin who was interested in his account of the agrarian transformations at Gulyai-Polye. Three times Lenin asked him to describe how the peasants had understood the slogan 'All Power to the Soviets!'

Makhno replied that the soviets elected by them had been entirely responsible to them for the path taken by local political events. 'In that case', Lenin told him, 'the peasantry in your region has been contaminated by anarchism'. 'What's so bad about that?' asked Makhno.

'That isn't what I want to say', Lenin replied. 'On the contrary, it is a matter for rejoicing, since it hastens the victory of communism over capitalism and its power', and he went on to say that he thought peasant anarchism to be a passing malady, quickly healed.

Here, in its entirety is the revealing commentary by Golovanov on the impressions Makhno brought back from Moscow:

> Makhno left Moscow with contradictory feelings. He had been a specifically 'soviet' anarchist (other anarchists were opposed, not only to the soviets, but to all other hierarchical structures), but his conception of the revolution was strongly distinct from that of the Bolsheviks, Makhno not recognising any political party, whatever it might be. For him the basic regional soviet was a self-sufficient organisation through which alone the will of the people could be expressed. The hierarchy of soviets was an absurdity; proletarian government a dangerous fiction, just as Arshinov wrote: 'The State is embodied by its functionaries: they become everything while the working class remains nothing'.

Golovanov goes on to describe Makhno's experience as a member of the Commission of Inquiry of the revolutionary commission of Alexandrovsk, charged with the task of examining the cases of people arrested at the end of 1917 (after the October coup). 'Meanwhile' Golovanov comments, 'this work was little to the taste of Makhno. More than this, when the Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries were arrested, Makhno decided to open the gates of the town jail.' He was

> equally irritated by all the fuss that surrounded the elections for the Constituent Assembly, which he described as a card game among the political parties. 'It is not parties which serve the people, but people who have to serve the parties. Already today . . . they don't talk about names any more, it is only parties that decide', he prophesied to his new comrades. But, not having been supported by them, he left the revolutionary committee of Alexandrovsk and returned to Gulyai-Polye, far from 'the temptations of big politics'.

Back in his own town he took part in a commune set up in a former landed estate taken over by landless peasants and workers. Golovanov is interested in the efforts of the Gulyai-Polye Soviet to establish a direct exchange with the town: they sent flour to the workers of the Prokhorov and Morozov factories with a request for textiles in return. The consignment from the factories was blocked by the organs of the Soviet state, as the 'authorities repudiated it as too "petite-bourgeoise" a solution to the problem of provisioning the towns'.

According to the author, the accumulation of experiences like this

contributed a heightening of the contradictions between the 'proletarian model of socialism and its peasant alternative, which could have been managed with some kind of compromise, a sort of advance version of the New Economic Policy. The German invasion allowed no one to see how this contradiction could have been resolved.'

The author thus reaches the question that seems to him to be essential: 'Why did Makhno separate from the Bolsheviks? To this "absurd" question there is no simple answer, since there was a time when his alliance with the Reds was not only openly declared, but seemed to be durable'. According to Golovanov, Makhno returned from Moscow in July 1918 extremely disenchanted with those groups of his ideological comrades who had slept through the revolution. Lev Cherny, a well-known anarchist, had been given the task by the Bolsheviks of maintaining the furniture and halls of their palace, and had become for Makhno a symbol of the decline of anarchism. While not sympathising with Bolshevism which had 'monopolised' the revolution, Makhno understood that 'none of the opposition parties, including the left Social Revolutionaries had leaders of the calibre of Lenin' nor sufficient strength to 'reorganise the direction of the revolution'. Taking this into account he concluded an agreement with the Bolsheviks when they arrived in the Ukraine, where he had organised an insurrectionary army and liberated most of eastern Ukraine. Meanwhile it was 'details' which were to render this alliance precarious: for example the 'famous partisan spirit which was dominant among the insurgents (election of commanders, a not very certain "self-discipline" and a not very coherent anarchism'.

We must, at once, correct these false and hasty conclusions. In the first place it was not Makhno personally who took decisions on his own, but the general assembly of the rebels, and the revolutionary military soviet of the movement in the case of military decisions. Political decisions had been taken by the council of workers and peasants in the region. The military accord reached with the Bolsheviks was not a 'political alliance' as Golovanov presents it, it was undertaken for urgent reasons: the lack of weapons and ammunition. (There was one rifle and six cartridges for one in four of the rebels, consequently they had to refuse to accept thousands of volunteers.) This agreement did not envisage any political dependency: the front held by the Makhnovists extended over 150 kilometres. Finally, that 'famous partisan spirit' belonged to local Cossack traditions: the selection of regimental commanders (corresponding to the places of origin of particular insurgent groups) in the light of their ability and of the confidence that they inspired.

Furthermore, the insurrectionary army depended upon its voluntary

nature and had nothing in common with the Red Army, composed of soldiers who were forcibly 'mobilised' and run by former Tsarist officers doubled with Bolshevik political commissars. There lies the whole difference from the 'coherence' of Makhno and his comrades.

Golovanov is nearer the truth when he specifies how, with the agreement of the Red Army command in March 1919, the Makhnovist forces retained their name, their black flags and their own principles of internal organisation. All the same, they had to accept political commissars and were provided with arms (very few in fact), and were obliged to operate under the directives of the Red Army command in the struggle against Deniken. 'After four months" the author writes, "this idyll came to an end: according to the generally accepted version, Makhno opened the front to the Whites'.

Here Golovanov is depending on the testimony of an ex-anarchist, Teper, who wrote a denigratory work against Makhno (to be precise, he may have had a revolver in his back) which attributed responsibility for the break between Makhno and the Reds, to the 'common law' elements mixed up with the anarchists, when, after October 1917, it seemed that the whole of Russia had joined Makhno. It is said that they flattered Makhno endlessly, calling him 'the second Bakunin', and that this turned his head, enabling him to cover up his own misconduct, drunkenness and plundering. Golovanov thinks that here are the reasons, never precisely explained, why Makhno, turning against the Bolsheviks, hadn't 'rejoined' the Whites. And he asks why Makhno was thus obliged to fight on two fronts.

The anti-peasant policy of the Bolsheviks

To explain this sudden antagonism, Golovanov reminds us that the Makhnovist movement was essentially a peasant uprising. From this point of view the Bolsheviks had brought them nothing that they hadn't already conquered for themselves in 1917. In spite of this the Bolsheviks issued their land nationalisation decree, set up 'committees of poor peasants', sent out forced requisitioning detachments, and tried to found *Sovkhozhes* or State Farms. The peasants responded by cultivating all the land, leaving no space for these Sovkhozhes. 'Conflict became latent between the capital, Kharkov and the countryside.'

The attempt to inaugurate a new society from the Marxist point of view led to the necessity of applying state control to every sphere of economic activity, right down to the exploitation of individuals. For this reason many communists in 1919 saw the peasantry as a 'bourgeois class', raw material expendable as the proletariat realised its historic

mission. Alexandra Kollontai realised at that time that the 'petit bourgeois peasantry was entirely hostile to the new principles of the national economy preached by the communists'.

Thus Golovanov explains the 'severity' of the policy of agrarian confiscations, and the tendency for all peasants who opposed them to be called 'kulaks'. A whole series of peasant insurrections followed right across the country, and it was only after three years that the Bolsheviks began at last to understand that they had to take into account the interests of the 'petit bourgeois class' of peasant farmers. Above all they were chastened by the Kronstadt Revolt with its slogans of 'Free Soviets and Freedom of Commerce', coming no longer from 'poorly armed regiments of peasants but from regular units of the Red Army'.

In consequence Makhno sabotaged the government's agrarian measures, not allowing the requisitioning detachments into the region and not permitting the 'committees of poor peasants' to be set up. Three congresses of several dozen Makhnovist districts, representing the 'liberated region' were held between January and April 1919, with Bolsheviks and Left Social Revolutionaries present. But, Golovanov notes, there was an overwhelming majority of anarchists and non-party people. These congresses confirmed the mobilisation of the insurrectionary army, and expressed a lack of confidence in the soviet government of the Ukraine 'which had in no way been chosen by the people'. The position the congresses took up was of 'equal exploitation of the land, on the basis of personal labour'.

All this was obviously not to the liking of the Bolsheviks. Eminent party figures were despatched to visit Makhno, among them Bela Kun, Antonov-Ovseenko and Lev Kamenev. They expressed to him their dissatisfaction with the way the insurgent revolutionary military soviets were 'elected as the executive organ of the local congress' and 'did not subordinate themselves to the central Soviet power'.

Having set the scene for everything that could separate Makhno from the Bolsheviks, Golovanov discusses the responsibility of the latter. To this end he cites an astonishing report from the commander of the 2nd Red Army, Skatchco:

> Little local Chekas are undertaking a relentless campaign against the Makhnovists, even when they are shedding their blood at the front. They are hunting them down from the rear and persecuting them solely for belonging to the Makhnovist movement . . . It cannot continue like this: the activity of the local Chekas is deliberately ruining the front, reducing all military successes to nothing, and contributing to the creation of a counter-revolution that neither Deniken nor Krasnov (Hetman of the Don Cossacks) could have achieved . . .

Note that this indictment supports everything that the Makhnovists themselves denounced at the time about the crimes of the Cheka. Golovanov does not stop there: he recounts that for Antonov-Ovseenko, commander of the front,

> a fragile alliance would have been far preferable to a rupture with Makhno. His standpoint justified itself amply when the Hetman Grigoriev, until then an ally of the Reds, turned against them and abandoned the front, while on the contrary, Makhno not only gave his troops orders to regain those positions, but also published a denunciation of Grigoriev, holding him responsible for an anti-Jewish pogrom at Elisavetgrad.

And he adds, after this weighty affirmation that 'Makhno ordered that anyone involved in a pogrom was to be shot'. This contradicts the most precise among all the diffuse accusations against Makhno in the regime's official records until now. This revision of history goes still further concerning the personal responsibility of Trotsky, at that time the top man responsible for the Red Army.

Trotsky's disastrous role

To go back to Golovanov's words:

> In the evolution of relations with Makhno it was Trotsky who played a disastrous role. Being an enemy of the 'soft line' of coalitions with 'fellow-travellers', and holding colossal power in his hands as president of the republic's military soviet, Trotsky was a supporter of extreme measures against those who were hesitant or unruly. Arriving in the Ukraine and learning that Makhno had summoned a fourth congress of various peasant soviets which were independent of the Bolsheviks, Trotsky saw in this an open appeal for rebellion. External events showed that neither Makhno who had convened the congress, nor Trotsky who had decided to 'finish off' this 'anarcho-kulak debauch', were able to envisage the vast force of troops that Deniken was, at that moment, concentrating at the front.

Not content just to show Trotsky's hostility to Makhno, to the peasants and to their independent congress, Golovanov enumerates the 'extreme measures' Trotsky adopted with these hesitants and malcontents, and the catastrophic results that followed.

> On the 4th of June 1919, the 2nd Ukrainian army, of which Makhno's two brigades were a part was disbanded. The same day the Kharkov *Isvestia* published a violent article by Trotsky attacking the 'Makhnovchina'. On the 5th of June there was an editorial 'Once more down with the Makhnovchina!' with an appeal for the use of the 'Red Fire'. At that moment the red front was already being driven back, Makhno's troops were bled white and half encircled.

Communications with Makhno himself were broken. Trotsky's order of the 6th of June on the liquidation of the Makhnovists, the interdiction of the congress, its delegates arraigned before field courts-martial, turned Makhno into an outlaw. The White cossacks over-ran the liberated region and, not far from Gulyai-Polye pinned down the peasant regiment hastily formed by B. Veretelnikov, a worker from the Putilov Works (in Petrograd, who was a native of the area). On the 7th of June the Reds sent Makhno a message via an armoured train, urging him to hold out to the last. On the 8th of June Trotsky issued his order number 133, 'Whoever rejoins Makhno can expect execution!' On the 9th of June, finally hearing of Trotsky, Makhno sent a telegram to him, and also to Moscow, indicating his wish to leave his post as brigade commander, 'in the light of the insupportable and absurd situation that has been created'. He explained, 'I believe in the inalienable right of workers and peasants to organise their own congresses to make their own decisions both in general and in particular'.

That same day several Bolshevik regiments invaded the 'liberated region', attacking and sacking the Makhnovist soviets and communes. On the 11th or 12th of June, in the armoured train in which the general staff of the Makhnovists and that of Voroshilov, commander of the 14th army had once collaborated, the members of the Makhnovist staff were arrested, and on the 17th June were charged as traitors at Kharkov. It was precisely in these days that the papers published a communiqué about Makhno's 'opening' of the front, and even of his agreement with Chkouro (Cossack general from Kuban allied with the Whites). It was thus easy to attribute the lack of military success to this 'treason'.

In support of this astonishing denunciation of Trotsky and the Bolsheviks, Golovanov cites the opinion of Antonov-Ovseenko, master-mind of the seizure of the Winter Palace in October 1917, who had become the commander of the Southern front before being demoted by Trotsky for his 'indulgence' towards the partisans. Analysing, in July 1919, the reasons for the lack of military success, Antonov-Ovseenko wrote:

> Above all, the facts witness that the affirmations about the weakness of the most contaminated region — that from Gulyai-Polye to Berdiansk — are without foundation . . . It is not because we ourselves have been better organised militarily, but because those troops were directly defending their native place . . . Makhno stayed at the front, in spite of the flight of the neighbouring 9th division, followed by the whole of the 13th army . . . The reasons for the defeat on the southern front do not rest at all in the existence of 'Ukrainian partisans' . . . above all it must be attributed to the machinery of the southern front, in not having kept its fighting spirit and reinforced its revolutionary discipline.

The indictment concludes with an accusation: it was Trotsky and his 'machine' who deliberately provoked the collapse of the Southern front against the Whites! To complete the tale it is necessary to recall that

Trotsky declared at the time that he preferred to hand over the region to Denikin and the Whites rather than to Makhno and the 'independent' soviets, because he thought it would be possible to eliminate the first later on, while the second seemed to him more dangerous and difficult to push out of the way. Golovanov goes no further than this, certainly for lack of information, but all the same this is the first time that an official Soviet journal has underlined the 'disastrous' responsibility of the man whom the Kronstadt sailors were later to nickname *The Field-Marshal*.

Between the Reds and the Whites

The author assumes that Makhno's subsequent 'anti-Soviet' period is more or less well-known. Indeed, he writes, 'many details are omitted'. For example the 'role of Makhno in the struggle against Deniken has not yet been clarified', even though the Makhnovists had been alone in confronting him after the Red Army's evacuation of the Ukraine, when their numbers rose considerably — from fifty to eighty thousand — as well as the residue of the 2nd Red Army and the Red Army of the Crimea, at the same time as soldiers of the Hetman Grigoriev, himself unmasked before an insurgent congress on the 27th of July, and shot because he had betrayed the revolution.

Golovanov goes on to describe the long retreat of the Makhnovists, followed by the White elite troops, as far as their victorious turning-point at Peregonovka and their deadly raid on Denikin's rear. These are 'omitted details' even though Lenin and the Bolshevik power structure were ready to evacuate Moscow because of the advance of the Whites.

Finally he discusses the encounter between the Makhnovists and the Reds towards the end of 1919. He cites, in particular, a telegram from Ordjonikidze to the central committee of the communist party, where Stalin's compatriot and friend foresaw that 'the popularisation (in the press) of the name of Makhno, still hostile to Soviet power, attracts undesirable sympathy towards him in the ranks of the Red Army . . .'

When the revolutionary military soviet of the 14th Red Army ordered Makhno to go back to the Polish front, the similarly named Makhnovist soviet refused, since their ranks were ravaged by typhus, and Makhno himself was a victim. Beyond this, Makhno feared being 'cut off from his own region' and preferred to 'help' somewhere 'closer'. The Makhnovists were thus declared 'outlaws'. Makhno demobilised his army and disappeared.

In the spring of 1920 the reorganised Makhnovists, numbering six to

eight thousand, submitting to a 'hard' discipline, mounted some audacious attacks against the Red troops, annihilating their supply lines (and their Chekas, another omitted detail). The Reds devoted great efforts to repulsing him. Makhno had the advantage of being able to move rapidly throughout the region, changing horses. (An interesting 'detail' here: the Makhnovists changed three weary horses for one fresh horse among the peasants.) In spite of everything, the peasantry was grimly determined to continue fighting on two fronts, and this was why an agreement was concluded between Frunze, the Red Army commander on that front as well as Jacovlev, representing the Ukrainian Soviet government, and the Makhnovists.

According to Golovanov this agreement had many advantages from Makhno's point of view, sustaining the autonomy of his 'liberated region' in which Makhno 'believed fanatically'. But, according to the author once more, this was nothing more than a 'political ruse' by the Reds, aiming at making use of Makhno in the capture of the Crimea. (There is an inexactitude here: the author affirms that the Makhnovists entered the Crimea following the Red Army troops across the Sivash Strait, while it is well-known that it was they who forced this passage against powerful White opposition). Having served this purpose 'they were surrounded and disarmed under some pretext or other'. To sustain this hypothesis, Golovanov recounts how after the capture of Simferopol by the Crimean Makhnovist army, in violation of the 'autonomy' offer, they were 'ordered to disperse and disarm'. The 'commanders who had been at their head were arrested and shot', with the exception of Martchenko and two hundred horsemen who were able to force their way across the Perekop isthmus, eventually rejoining Makhno. He, encircled in Gulyai-Polye, and knowing nothing about the order by Frunze which provoked this 'massacre' succeeded 'as much through a miracle as through his own fury' in escaping the 'trap'.

The treachery of the Bolsheviks in their relationship with the Makhnovists is already well-known to us, but it is here spelt out in detail by Golovanov, for the very first time in an official publication. It all casts a dark shadow on the Soviet leaders of the period, but Golovanov leaves this issue to his readers. In an inconsequential way he characterises Makhno's subsequent actions against the Bolsheviks as 'political banditry', even though this term, according to his own analysis is more applicable to the Bolsheviks!

Makhno pursued his struggle against the Reds with 'the sang-froid of a madman: with neither fear nor hope'. He threatened Poltava (an important town in the northern Ukraine) with a detachment of 600 cavalry in January 1921, until Frunze's command succeeding in 'unravelling the logic, at first sight chaotic, of his strategy' and attacked

on a broad front. Pursued relentlessly for three months, wounded for the twelfth time, he and a small group escaped across the frontier and took refuge in Romania.

Free soviets: totalitarian party

The author believes that 'one day the historians will reconstruct the details of the episodes in the civil war connected with Makhno'. But the whole affair cannot be limited to 'details'. It brings to light far more important questions like the 'degeneration' of popular power, because Makhno had acted, from the beginning, as a convinced anarchist, adopting the position of 'self-management', of 'free soviets', and for political liberty. He cites here the case of the occupation of the town of Ekatarinoslav in the autumn of 1919, where the Makhnovists, as well as their own organs, allowed the publication of those of the social revolutionaries, of the left social revolutionaries and even those of the Bolsheviks. According to him this expression of 'popular power' later changed to a 'military dictatorship', which moreover was 'all the more clumsy since the Makhnovists recognised no law limiting the exercise of power', since they 'considered nothing to be an exercise of power, but simply as the execution of the will of the people'.

This is absolutely true, historically, but it applies to the Bolsheviks rather than to the Makhnovists! There is nothing wrong about his observation, but we have to add in deploring Golovanov's lack of comprehension, that it must be the result of seventy years of Lenino-Stalinist brainwashing! The 'degeneration' seen everywhere in the exercise of so-called 'soviet' power, was the result of the totalitarian dictatorship of a party convinced that it was 'following the path of history'.

The author concludes his study by attributing the situation created by the Bolsheviks to the 'intoxication' of society after the violence of the civil war period. This situation consisted of 'the almost complete suppression of previously proclaimed revolutionary political liberties, the creation of an unseen but powerful repressive apparatus, the institution of total controls in the interests of solving economic problems, the creation of a gigantic State machine (four million civil servants in 1921), the marginalisation of any democratic institutions'.

Soviet society was obliged to forget 'for a long time the priority of generally accepted human values' . . . 'replacing them by the concept of *class*. This generated a whole stratum of *mutants*, people who used ideology as a justification of their own moral misconduct.' These were the mutants upon whom 'Stalin later depended'.

An advance towards historical truth

After taking careful note of this long and exhaustive study of Makhno, let us repeat the main points. First that everything said about Makhno in the Soviet Union until now has been fantasy or plain lies. Secondly that his real personality was that of a revolutionary anarchist; as such his activities began in 1905, culminating in 1917 and 1918.

Thirdly that in 1919 and 1920, he was allied with the Reds, who every time treacherously broke the agreement that had been concluded. On the first occasion it was Trotsky who took on the role of betraying and destroying the 'independent soviets'. On the second occasion the responsibility lies collectively with the Bolsheviks. Finally, and overwhelmingly, Makhno was a 'fanatical' partisan of free and autonomous soviets, direct organs of popular wishes.

Despite this, we now have a clear and precise rehabilitation of the Ukrainian anarchist. Foreseeably this first study is only a prelude to other analytical revisions of the history of the founding years, 1917-1921 of the regime. It must be stressed once more that this sensational article appeared in a journal with millions of readers — a sign of its importance — not in a local paper or a confidential historical review. Despite important reservations and disagreements on many points, we must, none the less, welcome this important advance towards historical truth.

1 *Editorial note:* On the jacket of the first English edition of Peter Arshinov's *History of the Makhnovist Movement 1918-1921* (Freedom Press 1987, £5.00), the publishers comment that 'Until the Russian archives are available to historians, Arshinov's history of the Makhnovists is undoubtedly the most important source work available'. The article above indicates that the archives are beginning to open.

Malatesta

The Occupation of the Factories in Italy in 1920

General strikes of protest no longer upset anybody; neither those who take part in them nor those against whom they are directed. If only the police had the intelligence to avoid being provocative, they would pass off as any public holiday.

One must seek something else. We put forward an idea: the take-over of factories. For the first attempt probably only a few will take part and the effect will be slight; but the method certainly has a future, because it corresponds to the ultimate ends of the workers' movement and constitutes an exercise preparing one for the ultimate general act of expropriation.[1]

The metal workers started the movement over wage rates. It was a strike of a new kind. Instead of abandoning the factories, the idea was to remain inside without working, and maintain a night and day guard to ensure that the bosses could not operate the night shift. But this was in 1920. Throughout Italy there was revolutionary fervour among the workers and soon the demands changed their character. Workers thought that the moment was ripe to take possession once for all of the means of production. They armed themselves for defence, they transformed many factories into veritable fortresses, and began to organise production on their own. Bosses were either thrown out or held in a state of arrest . . . It was the right of property abolished in fact, and the law violated in so far as it served to defend capitalist exploitation; it was a new regime, a new form of social life which was being ushered in. And the government stood by because it felt impotent to offer opposition: it admitted it later when apologising to Parliament for its failure to take repressive action.

The movement grew and showed signs of drawing in other categories of workers; here and there peasants occupied the land. It was the beginning of a revolution which was developing, I would say, almost in an ideal way.

The reformists naturally frowned on the movement, and sought to bring it down. The socialist daily *Avanti!* not knowing which way to turn, tried to make out that we were pacifists, because in *Umanità Nova* we had said that if the movement spread to all sectors of industry, that

if workers and peasants had followed the example of the metallurgists, of getting rid of the bosses and taking over the means of production, the revolution would succeed without shedding a single drop of blood.

But this was of no avail. The masses were with us; we were called to the factories to speak, to encourage and to advise the workers, and would have needed to be in a thousand places at once to satisfy all their requests. Wherever we went it was the anarchists' speeches which were applauded while the reformists had to withdraw or make themselves scarce.

The masses were with us because we were the best interpreters of their instincts, their needs and interests.

Yet, the underhand work of the CGL[2] and the agreements entered into with the Giolitti government to create the impression of a kind of victory through the sham of *workers control* was sufficient to induce the workers to abandon the factories, at the very moment when their chances of success were greatest.[3]

The occupation of the factories and the land suited perfectly our programme of action.

We did all we could, through our paper (*Umanità Nova* daily, and the various anarchist and syndicalist weeklies) and by personal action in the factories, for the movement to grow and spread. We warned the workers of what would happen to them if they abandoned the factories; we helped in the preparation of armed resistance, and explored the possibilities of making the revolution with hardly a shot being fired if only the decision had been taken to use the arms that had been accumulated.

We did not succeed, and the movement collapsed because there were too few of us and the masses were insufficiently prepared.

When D'Aragona (the secretary of the CGL) and Giolitti (the Prime Minister) concocted the farce of workers control with the acquiescence of the socialist party, which was at the time under communist leadership, we put the workers on their guard against the wicked betrayal. But as soon as the order to leave the factories was issued by the CGL, the workers, who though they had always received us and called for us with enthusiasm and who had applauded our incitement to all-out resistance, docilely obeyed the order, though they disposed of powerful military means for resistance.

The fear in each factory of remaining alone in the struggle, as well as the difficulty of laying-in food supplies for the various strong points induced everybody to give in, in spite of the opposition of individual anarchists dispersed among the factories.

The movement could not last and triumph without growing and

spreading, and in the circumstances it could not grow without the support of the leaders of the CGL and the Socialist Party which disposed of the large majority of organised workers. Both Confederation and Socialist Party (including the communists) lined up against the movement and it all had to end in a victory for the bosses.[4]

1. *Umanità Nova*, the Italian anarchist daily, March 17, 1920
2. Confederazione Generale del Lavoro (the reformist Trade Union organisation).
3. *Umanità Nova*, June 28, 1922
4. *Pensiero e Volontà, April 1, 1924*

Ernst Schneider

The Wilhelmshaven Revolt

Author's Note

The history of the toilers of the sea has yet to be written, but when it is, it will form part of the history of the forward storming vanguard of the proletariat.

I, who had a full and active share in those events, consider it my duty, in the interests of the working class, to record the following account, even at the risk of not avoiding inaccuracies, so that whosoever wishes, may understand.

Until the year 1935, I had in my possession the complete archive, but it had to be burned for reasons of safety for my comrades and myself. Those documents are, of course, lost, but it is better to lose documents than to lose one's life.

After all, I have kept my head, I am, therefore, able to make further use of it.

Introduction

With the rapid industrialisation of Germany, there grew up what was then, numerically the strongest workers' movement in the world. Contrary to Britain, the socialist workers' party came into being first, then, later on came the Trade Unions with their thousands of members.

The anti-socialist laws of Bismarck of the last century, did not hinder, but rather furthered the social revolutionary development, though the fact remains, that the ideological development of the oppressed masses has always been far behind the revolutionary technical development.

Nevertheless, during this process, the capitalist class was able, out of their immense profits, to throw a bone now and again to the oppressed. This, and ideological factors has opened the door to labour reformism.

Because he was a German and living in London during the war against Germany FREEDOM PRESS published this vivid first hand account with his *nom de plume* of *Icarus*. Three editors of *War Commentary* who actually knew Ernst can only recall that he was very reserved (for obvious reasons) but one can only surmise that at the end of the war he returned to Germany. The Amsterdam Institute were unable to help. Can any German reader of *The Raven*?

The majority of the professional leaders who dreamt of 'growing gradually into socialism' became, forced by circumstances, associates of the capitalist system.

The rise of industrial Germany to the position of a great power came only after other countries had already developed independent manufacturing industries. There was hardly a territory left where traders and financiers could establish themselves, and to compensate for this the German State supported the banks and cartels in their fight against foreign competitors. Because their home market was too small for the highly developed economy which they controlled, the German monopolists needed territory and markets, which could be only obtained by national monopolies and State-capitalist expansion.

In Germany, contrary to Britain where international banking was the rule, national finance capital was predominant, which means banking capital, utilised for big industrial concerns and trusts which have a monopolist position inside the country.

As a matter of fact, Germany's drive for expansion abroad, proved to be a most dangerous competitor and rival of the older Imperialisms, in particular, Great Britain.

Around the 90's of the last century, Britain lost the greatest part of its trade on the Pacific coast to Germany, to say nothing of its losses to Germany in other parts of the world.

The mode of production and the current ideologies which determine the social-economic formations, the territorial division of the world by the great capitalist-military powers, the domination of the big monopolist combines make a series of imperialist World Wars inevitable, it could only be a question of time.

Even the Conference of the Social-Democrats in 1907, which was held in Stuttgart — even the wholly opportunistic — could not help but come to the conclusion that 'Capitalism means War'.

But these were words, mere words. The International Socialist movement with its declared Leader-organisations proved itself to be in practice a capitalist institution. Instead of their Utopia of 'growing into socialism' they grew, in accord with natural laws, into inseparable cohesion with the capitalist system.

This is certainly nothing new, but it is necessary to bear it in mind.

In publications of the Left Radicals in Germany before the first World-War, it was pointed out that successful mass actions occur almost spontaneously. This is very true, and history proves it. In this manner, for instance, the sailors, through their spontaneous strike in Hamburg (1855) gained, besides the biggest wage increase ever known before, a general improvement in their working conditions and accommodation.

The same could be pointed out in the case of the spontaneous action of the crew of the giant S.S 'Vaterland' at Cuxhaven in the Spring of 1914. Here, the seamen, about 1,300, acted as a self-asserting fighting unit of the working class. There was then no time for needless collaboration between the seamen and the millionaires of the Hamburg-Amerika Line (Hapag), but there was solidarity and self-consciousness of the seamen. In short, the proud lords of the Hapag were forced to give in to the demands of the seamen unconditionally.

Moreover, the example given in this action of the proletarian vanguard spread over all the ocean-going ships of the German Merchant Fleet. Welcomed by the broad masses of the dock and riverside proletariat, again and again, they had emphasised their intention to fight their cause out. They knew that this could not be done by supporting the capitalist forces, but only against them.

The German social-democratic Press at the same time — it is characteristic — had, besides sneering at the seamen, little courage to report the matter impartially. The big Dailies in New York, however, made less secrecy out of it. Their front pages were full of the bold, but illegal strike action of the seamen on board the 'Vaterland'.

It is essential to note that service in the Imperial Navy was compulsory for every German seaman. The crews of the merchant fleet were almost identical with the sailors on board the warships. The rest of the men of the war fleet were recruited from other sections of the industrial proletariat. Thus, they had not only the same interest, but also the same insubordinate spirit. Nevertheless, although their continuous struggle for freedom has been far less successful, the mutiny on board the warship 'Oldenburg' in the previous century opened an epoch of physical resistance and prolonged unrest of the war fleet.

Without a doubt, the die was cast for revolutionary mass action. This then, was the spiritual attitude amongst the maritime proletariat in Germany in 1914.

1. Masses and Leaders

The war clouds gathered over Germany. The rank and file of the German Labour Movement, at that time, in numbers, the mightiest movement in the Second International, urged for measures against the approaching war. Crowded mass meetings were held, and the slogan was given: 'Mass action against the war'.

But words, mere words. The mass of the workers under the influence of their organisations, strongly organised and disciplined in Party and

Trade Unions were waiting for the call to action from their trusted leaders, but the call never came! Instead of action came complete political collapse. In contradiction of their previous teaching, the spokesman of the Social Democratic Party in the German Parliament on August 4, 1914, declared, 'In the hour of danger we shall stand by our Fatherland'. The majority of the Social Democratic leaders had found their Fatherland. The workers were still without one!

The problem of masses and leaders remained practically unsolved, despite the prolonged struggle of revolutionary socialists such as Rosa Luxemburg, Anton Pannekoek, Heinrich Laufenberg, Johann Knief and others, whose devotion to the cause was unquestioned, against the then already flourishing policy of class betrayal. The overwhelming majority of the Social Democratic leaders rejected the idea of self-determination of the working-class, and worked secretly through their revisionist apparatus 'Verein Arbeiterpresse' for the subordination of the proletariat to the bureaucratic organisations. The catastrophe was unavoidable. Many workers felt that their sacrifices had been in vain. They had not understood the dynamics of their own organisation, so they felt betrayed, and they were. That brought disillusionment on the one hand, irritated nerves and indifference on the other. But still things went on.

2. The Grouping of the German Labour Movement After August 4th, 1914

The split of the Social Democratic Party developed the following various groups:

1. Majority Social Democrats — controllers of the old Party apparatus, supported the imperialist war in every way, and captured the bulk of the Party members.
2. Social Democratic Labour Partnership — (Soc. Arb. Gemeinschaft), later called Independent Social Democratic Party — in opposition to No. 1, but undetermined. Supported, for instance, financially, the Left Radicals in Hamburg, but declined to share further activity with them.
3. Revolutionary Confidential men[1] (Revolutionäre Obleute), in factories and workshops in Berlin. Their policy was class-struggle, not imperialist war.

1. Since the old terms 'Leader', 'Official', 'President', etc. have become in the minds of class conscious workers synonymous with another class, the German term 'Obmann' (confidential man) is the concept for trustworthy fellow workers — respected class comrades.

4. International Socialists Berlin — published a journal, *Lichtstrahlen* ('Light-rays') anti-war, criticised Nos. 1 and 2 on Marxian lines.
5. Rhineland and Westphalia Group — around the propaganda periodical *Kampf* ('Combat'), advocated mass action, and fought Nos. 1 and 2 on revolutionary socialist lines.
6. International Group, Berlin — published excellent revolutionary socialist pamphlets and the well-known *Spartakus* letters — distributed by groups 3, 4, 5 and 7. The first *Spartakus Brief* (Letter) addressed to the working class commenced with the words 'You are asleep, Spartakus, instead of acting in a revolutionary manner'.
7. Left Radicals — later they changed their name to International Communists of Germany — had groups in Bremen, Hamburg, Wilhelmshaven, Braunschweig, Hanover, Saxony, East Prussia and Stettin. Published from 1916 to the end of 1918, the weekly paper *Arbeiter Politik* (Organ for scientific socialism). Advocated the programme of the revolutionary working-class on dynamic Marxian lines. Developed the Workers' Councils movement. Their call to action in the war industries was promptly followed by the workers. The Left Radicals saw in the blind belief in the efficacy of Parties, one of the main reasons for the impotence of the working class.
8. There were also small groups of Anarchist Syndicalists — revolutionary pacifists, bold comrades-in-arms — who almost joined the Left Radicals.

It cannot be queried, history is made by all, and time forced to follow suit. In 1916, the spokesman of the Social Democrats, announced in the German Parliament, 'The peace which seems possible to-day will leave Germany and her allies in the eyes of Europe, as a group of powers, whose spheres of economic control extend from the marshes of the Elbe, to the waters of the Persian Gulf. Thus, Germany will have won by her arms, the kernel of a great sphere of economic control, worthy to be set as a closed economic territory by the side of those of other world empires'.

This patriotic announcement was answered by the revolutionary socialist, Karl Liebknecht — at that time a conscripted soldier — at an illegal, but quite open demonstration in Berlin on the May Day of 1916 with the slogan, 'Down with the War! The principal enemy is in your own country'. ('Der Feind steht im eigenen land!') Karl Liebknecht — though an M.P. — was sentenced to 6 years penal servitude. But his voice was heard in the workshops of the war industries, as well as on the battlefronts and in the naval units at sea.

3. The Secret Committee of the North Sea Fleet and the Naval Base of Wilhelmshaven

Liebknecht's call was not in vain. It encouraged the opposition forces against the war. On board the cruisers, destroyers, torpedo-boats and other small fighting units, a whispering campaign went on among the sailors, and now and then acclamations; 'Es lebe Liebknecht' ('Long live Liebknecht').

Meanwhile, signals were given by a secret committee, later known as the Revolutionary Committee, or for short, RC.

The Committee issued definite instructions, warnings, information and slogans, and these signals were promptly transferred from mouth to mouth within a certain alliance. No member knew more than two comrades, one to the right, and one to the left like the links of a chain. The first link was known by only one comrade — the Committee.

Under cover of seamen's yarns in the lower decks, in the lockers, the munition rooms, crow's nests of the fighting masts, even in the lavatories, an underground organisation was built up which did its share towards stopping the imperialist war, and sweeping away the semi-feudal monarchy. The examples set by this underground organisation are of historical importance.

Besides the organisation of the RC, there appeared some instances of individual peace propagandists who were almost wiped out with the execution of two harmless conscientious objectors, the sailors Reichpietsch and Koebes. Whatever their motives, their struggle formed part of our own struggle, and therefore they died for us and our cause.

In this connection, it is a fact that a representative of one of these unfortunate sailors who consulted some prominent Social Democrat MPs, was shown the door. The Social Democrat MPs were not interested.

Meanwhile, the unrest grew amongst the seamen in the Fleet. A purge of the crews of certain ships was ordered by commanders of the Fleet, but the growth of the movement was far ahead of the measures taken by the Naval authorities, and the purging was, no doubt, more of a nuisance than a wholesome cure! Suspects — always the wrong ones, of course — were promptly ordered off to their Stammkompanie's (Naval barracks). From there, thousands of seamen were ordered off to the Marine Division on the coast of Flanders.

In March 1917, leaflets written in block letters, signed by the Committee were distributed by the sailors of the 3rd Sailors Regiment. Later on, meetings of the seamen were held at the East End Park. These meetings were of course, illegal, but they were well protected.

Without doubt, the underground movement in the Navy did not stop on the gangways and accommodation ladders of the warships!

A Left Radical member of the movement whilst on leave in Hamburg in April 1917, was one of the 18 participants of a secret meeting arranged by a Hamburg woman comrade held in the woods near Gross Borstel, 'Zum gruenen Jaeger'. The result of the meeting was a broadsheet addressed to the women workers in the war industries, and to the soldiers.

Two days later, after 5,000 of the leaflets had been spread among the people and placarded on walls and buildings, spontaneous strikes in the war industries followed. Dozens of strikers and leaflet distributors were arrested and imprisoned. It must be noted that our active friends in Hamburg were all women war workers, shorthand typists, etc., who placarded the broadsheets. Many of these heroines and comrades, as well as the printer, a business man who was not a member of the movement, were sentenced to penal servitude. Our sacrifices were heavy. To mention one's own personal sacrifices would be invidious. A fighter is bound to fight and suffer. To do so for the cause is comparatively light. 'True enough we must fight for the peace, if not, then it is the peace of the graveyard, the peace that will press down Europe and other parts of the world in a new era of darkest reaction.' (Rosa Luxemburg).

Our task could only be to redouble our activities in the movement on board the warships, and on shore.

In July 1917, an example was given by the seamen of a (Commando) squadron headed by the battle cruiser 'Prinzregent' which lay anchored in the lower Elbe, at the order 'weigh anchor, all hands to action stations' some signs and gestures were made by the seamen, but no move was made to obey the order. Their own order 'fires out' proved mightier than the orders of the chiefs of the Fleet. Hundreds of sailors were sentenced to penal servitude from one to fifteen years. This event, and the attitude of the Admiralty showed the situation in general, clearly. Flurry and excitement amongst the authorities, but a staunch determination in the lower ranks.

Again the seamen had shown that they did not shrink from armed resistance. They knew that they could only succeed by concerted action by the seamen of the Fleet as a whole in close collaboration with their comrades in the Army and in the industries. Theoreticians who exaggerate the difference between theory and the living reality, may go astray, but seldom the practical fighters. The outlook of the latter was right. In January 1918, occurred the spontaneous strikes in the armament industries, followed by plunderings of bakeries in the Reich.

Then followed months of remarkable silence. It was the silence before the storm.

Towards summer, a meeting was held in the 'Edelweiss', the biggest dance hall in Wilhelmshaven. The meeting was protected by columns of the underground movement of the Fleet. It was late in the evening. The dance hall was filled with sailors, girls, and a few civilians. The orchestra had left the stage during the interval when suddenly, the great curtain of the stage fell, and shouts were heard: 'Stay where you are, do not move!' Then, from behind the curtain was heard a loud voice, impressive and convincing; 'we are on the eve of decisive occurrences. There will be at last, no more war, no more oppression of the toiling and bleeding masses . . . but we must fight on, hard, long and bitterly. For the sake of the cause, no imprudence. Our day is coming.'

It came.

In September, a secret Conference of the various groups of the workers opposition took place in Berlin. Representatives of a number of industrial workshops, from North, East, Central and West Germany were assembled.

Summarising the reports of the assemblies that the independent worker-activities were constantly increasing all over the Reich, it was urged that the revolutionary class must violently explain its programme to the broad masses, regardless of expense and, that this was to be carried out without delay . . . Instead of the term 'Socialism', the term 'Communism', i.e., the association of free and equal producers into free Communes, was adopted.

A Manifesto — written by the late Comrade Frenken — in order to enlighten the social-democratic duped masses — to untie them from their careerist leadership, was issued in many thousands of copies, and some days later distributed within reach.

4. The Socialist Republic, Wilhelmshaven

At the end of October 1918, there was a spate of cases of insubordination and disobedience among the sailors at the base of the North Sea Fleet, and an outburst appeared inevitable.

Warships of all classes and types were alongside the docks and quays of Wilhelmshaven. Major ships including the battleship 'Baden' and the battle cruiser 'Hindenburg", were ready for action and awaiting orders from the chief of the Fleet. Ships anchored outside the docks and in the river Jade — the cruiser squadron, torpedo boat and destroyer flotillas — were also ready for action.

Rumours circulated to the effect that it had been decided to engage the enemy in a final encounter, in which the German Fleet would triumph or die for the glory of the 'Kaiser and the Fatherland'.

The sailors of the Fleet had their own views on the 'Glory of the Fatherland', when they met they saluted one another with a 'Long live Liebknecht'. The crews of the ships moored at the quayside were to be found most of the time, not on board, but in the workshops and large lavatories ashore. Officers, contrary to custom, carried revolvers, and ordered the men to return to their ships. The men obeyed, but meanwhile, others had left their ships and swelled the number ashore. The situation was favourable, the Committee passed the message: 'Guarded meeting after dark at the New Soldiers' Cemetery. Send delegate from every unit.'

According to the rules of the secret organisation, delegates had to proceed to the meeting alone, or at most, in pairs, and at suitable distances so as not to attract attention. The meeting took place, and showed how general was the response to the call of the Committee. The meeting place was guarded by sailors. Those present, stood, knelt, or sat between the graves. There was no time for discussion or speeches. The names of the ships moored in the harbour and river were called, and out of the dark the almost invisible delegates just answered 'Here'. One comrade spoke, briefly but firmly. 'The time has come. It is now or never. Act carefully but resolutely. Seize officers and occupants. Occupy the signalling stations first. When control has been gained, hoist the red flag in the maintop or gaff. Up for the red dawn of a new day!'

In accordance with the rules of the organisation, all had to stay in their places for ten minutes after the speaker had left.

Fortunately, it was a dark night. On their return to their ships and barracks some of the comrades heard the heavy tramp of marching troops. Shots were fired, and the cry went up, 'Down with the war'. The sound of marching came from sailors — some 300 in number — under arrest, who were being taken under escort to the train to the prison Oslebshausen near Bremen. They were warmly cheered by the passing sailors. When a dozen or so sailors were passing the building of the Admiralty, they noticed that the guard house was occupied by soldiers from a town, Marksen, in East Friesland. It was a machine-gun detachment. The sailors without hesitation carried out an attack, and in a moment had captured fifteen machine-guns. The commander of the detachment, an old sergeant-major, after a short palaver, declared himself in solidarity with the sailors. The sailors then marched to Door A of the Imperial shipyard, and upon reaching the watch, found it already in the hands of the revolutionaries. Continuing towards the

battleship 'Baden' they elected a new commander. He was a member of the Committee.

By this time the dawn had come. Shots were heard on board a small light cruiser lying in dry dock, and the white ensign was seen to be still flying in the maintop. After a struggle of about an hour, every ship except the 'Hindenburg' was in the hands of the revolutionaries. From the 'Hindenburg' the white ensign still flew. The commander of the 'Baden' signalled 'Surrender or we shoot'. A struggle was observed on board the 'Hindenburg' and a detachment of stokers and firemen of the 'Baden' prepared to board the 'Hindenburg' and give a hand. But before they reached their destination, the white eagle ensign was hauled down and the red flag hoisted. At the same time, a signal was received from the cruiser squadron that there too, the revolutionaries had gained the upper hand.

At the orders of the Committee, a mass meeting was held outside the building of the Admiralty. A great crowd of 20,000 attended and later marched round the naval base, headed by the 15th Torpedo Half-Flotilla. A comrade announced that all the commanders and admirals of the North Sea Fleet had been deposed, and as long as they kept to their quarters, they would suffer no harm, but if they moved, they would be dealt with.

Three or four comrades entered the Admiralty building and informed the Admiral what had happened. His Excellency answered regretfully, that he could not do anything for the moment. He was informed that for the moment nothing would happen to him if he remained quiet and stayed at home.

By this time the crowds of war workers were streaming into the streets. It is regretted to have to state the fact that sections of the workers were still waiting for a call from their anti-revolutionary leaders, and had to be forced to be free. Their behaviour, as also was their leaders' and the bulk of 'the white collar proletarians' was consciously — or unconsciously — reactionary during this period.

Events moved quickly. Big demonstrations took place, and processions converged at the training ground. After speeches and reports on the events, elections of workers' and sailors' councils were held. Every ship had its council and delegate. The same was done for each factory and town district.

That evening a meeting of the delegates took place, which constituted itself as the Revolutionary Government. A council of twenty-one sailors was elected, which was, so to speak, the Administrative Government. This, in its turn, elected a body of five members with executive powers. But when the first meeting of this council of five took place, it transpired that four of the members were

not revolutionary socialists. The fifth member told the others that the revolution could not be made by namby-pamby revolutionaries, and that he could not successfully work with them. Circumstances however, allowed them to carry on for some time. In fact, there was from the beginning, two governments in Wilhelmshaven, the Council of Five, with headquarters in the Officers Casino, and the Revolutionary Committee, backed by the revolutionary socialist seamen with headquarters on board the 'Baden' and in the 'Thousand Man Barracks'.

The following anecdotes about two of the members of the Council of Five will serve as an indication of the calibre of the majority of the Council.

A naval stoker, who spoke like a lay preacher, but was of questionable character, and was associated in some way or another with the Admiralty and other authorities of the Imperial régime, and also in close connection with Ebert, Noske, Scheidemann, etc., who, on November 4, 1918, when the revolutionary sailors stormed the shipyard barracks, begged his fellow stokers to barricade the main gates. They told him — with a kick — to behave himself. When the gates were then smashed in, he straightened himself, jumped to the entrance, and shouted with a theatrical gesture: 'Der Freiheit eine Gasse' ('A path for freedom'; a quotation from a poem on the death of Arnold Winkelried.) This man styled himself — under instruction from his imperial masters — President of Oldenburg, East Friesland and Wilhelmshaven, but in practice he kept very much in the background.

Another actor, an even more pitiable member of the Council of Five — whose surname was unfortunately the same as the author's — tried to make friends with the reactionary army of officers who were then approaching to attack Wilhelmshaven, and had for this purpose large posters printed, and put up during the street fighting, which read: 'I am not the Spartacist Ernst Schneider who is the leader of the Revolutionary Committee, and I have nothing to do with his communistic arrangements. My name is Joseph Schneider, and I am a Social Democrat.'

This Joseph was punished on the spot by working-class women, who drove him out of Wilhelmshaven with broomsticks. And like the Joseph of the Bible, he fled to another land — in this instance, Russia — and became a wealthy merchant.

5. The Critical Point

By this time, power was practically in the hands of the workers', soldiers', and sailors' councils; if not all over the Reich, at least in Wilhelm-

shaven, Bremen and Brunswick. The revolutionary proletariat pressed for a clear decision. Street and barricade fighting in towns and villages was the order of the day. Shock columns of revolutionary sailors were sent to all parts of Germany. For the purpose of ensuring permanent communications with Kronstadt, several hundred fully armed sailors were sent by the Revolutionary Committee to occupy the wireless station at Nauen, near Berlin, at that time still in the hands of the Ebert Government. They never returned. After fruitless attempts to capture the station, many of them went on to Berlin, and formed, under the leadership of an Imperial army officer, the revolutionary socialist, Lieutenant Dorenbach — a friend of Karl Liebknecht — the Peoples' Marine Division, (*Volks-Marine Division*). Our own attempts to get in touch with the revolutionaries in Kronstadt from the Wilhelmshaven wireless station were unsuccessful, our messages were jammed, first by a station somewhere in Finland, and later by Nauen.

In this situation — by now it was November 18 — the leaders of the trade unions joined the big industrialists in the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft*. In this connection Hugo Stinnes writes in his memoirs (I quote from memory): 'We were completely beaten. In this hopeless situation there came the great man Legien, Chairman of the General Committee of Trade Unions in Germany, as our saviour. He did, in fact, save us; and this shall not be forgotten.'

Stinnes did not forget. A millionaire industrialist, and one of the biggest shipowners in Germany, he named one of his biggest ships 'Karl Legien'. If ever a working class in any country in the world was treacherously betrayed, it was the German working-class. Were not the workers 'ripe' for social revolution? In Lunen, in the Ruhr district, the miners took possession of the coal mines and kept them running for more than five months; the administrative work being done by their wives and daughters. During that time, the output was greater than ever before. Similarly with the farm workers on an estate at Golnow in Pomerania, who took it over and worked it for more than a year as an armed community. Every member of the community kept arms in his house, but no case of violence, or even rudeness, occurred. They had their Workers' Council, and lived and worked their estate in peace until Noske's[2] troops forced them back to wage slavery again. These are only two examples out of the many that could be quoted.

Let us lift the curtain! It was Karl Radek — the (1919) then Russian

2. Gustave Noske (1868-1946) member of the Reichstag who at the end of World War I was Governor of Kiel. He sided with the majority socialists against the Spartacists and was responsible for using the troops against them. — Editor

plenipotentiary in Germany — who declared openly 'a victorious workers' revolution in Germany now, means a lost revolution in Russia'.

Stalin, discussing the situation in Germany (1923), urged 'In my estimation, the German workers must be restrained, not spurred on'.[3]

Indeed, as time has shown, the Comintern has not only bloodily liquidated the genuine revolutionaries in Kronstadt and the Ukraine, but also has purposely prevented the Workers' Revolution in Germany.

The seamen supporting the Revolutionary Committee felt that it was their duty to carry forward their activities and assist their class comrades at all costs. To do so, they were determined even to make use, in case of necessity, of the units of the battle fleet, which though bound by the clauses of the armistice, were still armed and fit for use.

But there were other difficulties to be faced. Hundreds of thousands of workers were still held in the bonds of obsolete systems of organisation, dominated by conservative leaders. This was glaringly illustrated on the occasion of the first All Workers' and Soldiers' Council Convention in Berlin, December 1918. It sounds unbelievable, but out of this 'revolutionary' Parliament it was found necessary to form a revolutionary group! And when Karl Liebknecht, as the chief speaker, very rightly pointed out: 'The counter-revolution is in the midst of us', some of the delegates raised their rifles against him.

The very same day, a counter-revolutionary attempt was made to capture the battleship 'Baden'. Some blood was spilled, but the attempt was dealt with effectively, and the confidential man of the 'Baden' was enthusiastically cheered by his victorious comrades, on returning from the Convention in Berlin. A few days later, a motor-lorry packed with seamen from the Thousand Man Barracks, smashed a counter-revolutionary rising led by landlords of East Friesland, and helped their fellow-workers on the farms to set up an effective Farm Workers' Council. When the detachment returned to the Barracks, it left behind a revolutionary community.

At about the same time, the 'People's Government' in Berlin sent a delegate to Wilhelmshaven in an endeavour to induce the Sailors' and Workers' Councils to obey its orders. He was received by some of the members of the Council of Five, but was unsuccessful, and everything went on as before. In January 1919, when the Berlin Government sent one of its ministers to Wilhelmshaven on the same mission, he was arrested by a detachment of the 15th Torpedo Half-Flotilla.

3. In 1923, the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) pursued a united front policy with the German nationalists. The Nazi Graf von Reventlow wrote articles in the 'communist' central organ *Rote Fahne*.

   At the same time Clara Zetkin, communist deputy, declared in the Reichstag, that a collaboration is quite possible between the Reichswar and the Red Army.

In the meantime, the Berlin Government had printed large posters which were plastered on the walls and buildings of towns throughout the Reich — though not in Wilhelmshaven, Brunswick and other places where the revolutionaries were in control — with the inscriptions in big reading: 'Socialism all over Germany', 'Socialism is marching on', etc. What in fact marched on, however, were the old reactionary forces led by the people 'emancipating Social Democracy'. Their chief newspaper, *Vorwaerts* — twice captured and run by the revolutionary workers in Berlin — but later recaptured by the Social Democrats — published, at a time when hundreds of workers were being killed in street fighting in Berlin, the following incitement:

> Karl und Rosa,
> Viel Hundert Tote in einer Reih'
> Rosa und Karl
> Sind nicht darbei

('Many hundreds of dead in a row, but Rosa and Karl are not amongst them.' Rosa and Karl were, of course, Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht.)

To the Social Democratic propaganda in favour of a National Convention, the revolutionary communists replied with: 'No National Convention! Arm the workers in the factories! Establish revolutionary tribunals to try the war criminals and counter-revolutionaries!'

At this time, the civil war was far from its climax. The decisive battles came later. New formations of the industrial workers were just marching up to the front line. They fought their battles, not as party men or trade unionists, but as independent revolutionary factory units.

In this very critical atmosphere, December 28, 1918, a party was born, which after long and vehement discussion was called the 'Kommunistische Partei Deutschland — Spartakus Bund' (Communist Party of Germany — Spartacus League). It included only parts of the revolutionary groups mentioned in the previous chapters. Groups such as the International Communists in Bremen, Wilhelmshaven, Brunswick, etc., never joined it officially. It is important to note that the Communist Party of Germany (Spartacus League) was strongly anti-Parliamentarian when it started out. In so far as the trade unions were concerned, the slogan at first was 'Destroy the Trade Unions'; this was later changed to 'Capture the Trade Unions'.

Meanwhile, a new independent industrial union movement, known as the 'Allgemeine Arbeiter Union, Revolutionäre Betriebsorganisation' (General Workers' Union, Revolutionary Shop Organisation), sprang up and spread all over Germany, its membership reaching in a comparatively short time several hundred thousand. This movement bitterly

fought the Reichswehr in Central Germany, at the Leuna Works for instance, and seized, as fighting units of the working class, shipyards and factories in Northern Germany.

In January 1919, I was commissioned by the Conference of the International Communists of North-West Germany to negotiate with Karl Radek — the then general bolshevik plenipotentiary in Berlin — and discuss with him ways and means for establishing wireless communications between Wilhelmshaven and Kronstadt.

I rushed by a special loco-engine to Berlin to conduct my mission immediately. Searching for Radek in vain throughout that day, I accidentally met Karl Liebknecht at midnight, who told me that Radek was hiding in the suburbs in a certain flat of the Workers' Co-operative Society.

Mass strikes raged in the City and its surrounding districts. No buses or street-cars were running. When I, after a strenuous journey, arrived at Radek's 'secret' flat, the latter was occupied with some exciting lady visitors.

At last, a political debate took place and it became clear to me, that the bolshevik party dictatorship did not concern itself with the task of developing the world revolution.

6. Prospects and Possibilities

Early in January 1919, the situation in general was fully understood by the class-conscious seamen in Wilhelmshaven, who were mostly quartered in the Thousand Man Barracks, on the submarine training ship 'Deutschland', and in smaller vessels such as destroyers and torpedo-boats. To make sure that nothing should go amiss, the seamen set about educating and training themselves. Lectures were given on Marxian socialism, communism and strategy, on board ships and ashore. Instead of the discredited — as a result of Social Democracy — term 'socialism', the term 'communism' was adopted. In close co-operation with the revolutionary socialist workers' groups in north-western Germany and the industrial centres of Westphalia (Ruhr District), a strategic plan was drawn up to drive the reactionary forces from the waterside and south-western Germany towards Berlin. Such a plan it was thought, was better than to allow the reactionaries to fight on ground of their own choice. It was hoped also, to relieve the revolutionary forces locally, and conquer Berlin for the oppressed class.

The revolutionary seamen of the North Sea Station were determined to fight, to win or to die, for the cause. They swore that the old class-society should be ended, never to arise again, that there should be

no more slavery, no more capitalist war — they had had enough. To describe in words, the spirit of these seamen, is impossible. In their minds they saw a new world-wide society of workers, free and without fear of want, a society based on worker-democracy developing into a single unit of mankind.

In the meantime, it became evident that the reactionary forces were encircling north-western Germany. Little by little, their troops occupied certain strategical points, not as a marching army, but as 'visitors' and 'sympathisers' with the revolutionaries. In the meantime however, between January 10 and 15, the Weser Sailors' Council sent a small torpedo-boat to Wilhelmshaven packed with sailors who wished to fight again, shoulder to shoulder with their old comrades. Together with these sailors, a certain Flight-Lieutenant A. was shown into the headquarters of the Committee. He offered his services to the cause, saying: 'I am a proletarian by birth, and at times like these, I come back to the class to which I rightly belong'. A., who was an officer in the former Imperial naval air force, proved to be a brilliant instructor and advisor, as well as a brave fighter, and last but not least, a true comrade at heart. In a very short time he trained some fifteen young sailors, if not as pilots, at least as able observers. His skill as a military teacher saved many lives. Other comrades, able in command, arose from out of the crews of the fleet, as well as the rank and file of the workers, B., for instance, a former stoker of the 'Baden'; C., a sailor of the destroyer flotilla; and D., a docker, elected by the revolutionary seamen, who proved to be a bold comrade and able harbour commander.[4]

The effect of the efforts made by orders of the Committee, and the readiness and willingness of its electors, was evident when it became known that an envoy — the third — of the Ebert Government had arrived by aeroplane in Wilhelmshaven to have a last talk with members of the Council of Five, asking them to surrender Wilhelmshaven to the Ebert Government. The confidential man of the Committee was at that time busy studying charts in the Thousand Man Barracks. From the comrade in command of the torpedo and destroyer flotillas he received by secret telephone — a cable leading from the far-off torpedo-boat harbour direct to the Thousand Man Barracks — the following message:

'Comrade. The crews of Flotilla B are at action stations. Our 8.8 centimetre guns are well laid covering the Officers' casino. At your order we will fire at once and destroy the house of traitors and its present occupiers. Please give the word.'

4. As many of the persons referred to still have relations in Germany, and for other reasons, they have been referred to by initial letters only.

There was a moment of hesitation; terrible thoughts whirled through the brain of the confidential man. But it only lasted a few seconds; then the order sounded back, clear and decided:

'Thank you comrade, the hour to do so is near, but it has not yet arrived.'

Meanwhile, a special messenger arrived from the same flotilla and he received the same order verbally.

It may be said, that no comrade was better informed than the confidential man of the Committee, and he loved his comrades as he loved the cause. He understood them too well, he knew they were right, but it could not be done, for in some situations it is not enough to be go-ahead.

On January 15 [1919], Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht were murdered in Berlin by officers of Ebert's soldiery. In Wilhelmshaven a general strike was proclaimed by the International Communist group, which had at that time, apart from several hundreds of industrial workers, more than 500 members of the seamen of the fleet. Mass meetings and armed demonstrations were held. On the flagstaffs of the warships and the flagmast of the Thousand Man Barracks, the red flags fluttered in the wind at half-mast. The proletarians of the sea were mourning two beloved comrades, while the murder-provoking writer of *Vorwaerts* had his bloody prize.

Later, *agents provocateurs* sneaked into Wilhelmshaven. They passed themselves off as 'comrades' and one of them, in the service of a certain military camarilla was unmasked and two years later was executed by the revolutionaries in Central Germany.

Nothing could better illustrate the spirit of the seamen than the fact that when on the following day, January 16, an attempt was made by the reactionary 'Bund der Deckoffiziere' (Officers League) to free Wilhelmshaven from 'Spartacist domination', the revolutionaries taught them a lesson in fighting that few of the White Guards could have expected. After six hours of street fighting, during which several persons were killed, the Bund surrendered unconditionally. The street leading to the Jachmann Bridge was littered with abandoned rifles and machine-guns. Some of the officers gave a promise not to take up arms again against socialist revolutionaries, and it was later proved that they had kept their word. Whether or not this rising was inspired by the Ebert Government, the result was a defeat for the old militarist forces. The seamen supporting the Committee fought their opponents openly, and smashed them several times, but none of the officers were executed.

At about the same time, another reactionary *coup de main* was attempted at Jever in Oldenburg, which was also smashed by the

commandos of the Thousand Man Barracks. Once more, when the sailors returned to Wilhelmshaven, they left behind them in the Jever district a socialist Workers' community. But this time they did not return alone. They brought back with them, to put under arrest until things cooled down, a provincial Captain-General who did not believe in revolution. Unfortunately, this man was forgotten at the Heppens military prison in Wilhelmshaven, and when later his brother-officers of the Gerstenberg army opened his cell, and he told them he was the Captain-General of the Jever District, they would not believe him, and instead beat him soundly!

Towards the end of January, the tension grew among the seamen. Berlin fell, Kiel also.[5] Bremen was attacked from the rear by a large army. Although a system of sailors' and workers' guard posts had been organised in Wilhelmshaven and the surrounding districts, and an Emergency Tribunal was sitting to deal with counter-revolutionaries, this was far from being enough. What Wilhelmshaven needed — and still needs, and not Wilhelmshaven alone! — was a full scale revolution from the ground up.

It was clear that this would not be achieved in collaboration with the old personnel of the Sailors' and Workers' Councils, but only by bringing in fresh blood from among the ranks of the socialist revolutionaries of the Committee and its active fighting units on land and sea.

In the economic sphere, the Committee envisaged an association of free and equal producers, based on a system of workers' democracy, utilising — since they would probably be isolated — the gold of the Reichsbank as a means of exchange with capitalist countries, and of course, that the gold could not be used against the revolutionary workers.

The great hope seemed to be Russia. In any case, there was no time for talking; the final moment had arrived for acting — if unsuccessfully, then, as an example.

They acted.

5. The Kiel Revolt flared up, but as many of the sailors went home it quickly died down. Thousands went to Hamburg where they formed a so-called Navy High Council of the Lower Elbe (Oberster Marine Rat der Niederelbe).

   The activities of this council were confined to requisitioning — by arms — of victuals in the surrounding districts. Unable to lay hands upon the gold of the banks, they seized — though temporarily — the funds of the Trade Unions in Hamburg.

   Through the exodus of the rebels from Kiel, the Kiel Council was nearly emptied of revolutionary elements. And, it was mainly due to this that reactionaries such as the social democrat Gustav Noske, served more or less as a facade for the military force of the organised reaction. It was from here that the counter revolutionary Ehrhard Brigade started out.

The Revolutionary Wilhemshaven Commune

The struggle along the whole waterfront in north-western Germany increased in ferocity, and the revolutionary groups, fighting under extremely difficult conditions around Bremen, were wiped out after a stubborn resistance.

In this situation, the Revolutionary Committee in Wilhelmshaven ordered ashore all available sailors of the fleet, supported by some of the torpedo boats that were at anchor, but ready for action in the Judebusen, to fight the approaching White army. The advanced squads of sailors marched 15 to 20 kilometres from Wilhelmshaven to the front line, taking up their positions in trenches dug long before. These squads, each of from 10 to 30 sailors, with an elected Obmann, or confidential man, undertook to hold their ground against the advancing army of Ebert's troops. The seamen fully understood that their 3,000 men, with little experience of fighting ashore, would hardly be a match for an army of 40,000 experienced officers, but they understood that the fight had to go on at all costs, and that in the interests of themselves and the cause, there must be discipline — voluntary discipline based on affection and trust. They treated their own delegates, as well as the comrades in command, with brotherly love and respect.

Meanwhile, the Thousand Man Barracks was put into a state of defence. Machine guns, rifles, ammunition and hand grenades were distributed and stored on all floors, machine guns were mounted on the roof of this mighty and massive building.

On January 26, at 12 pm, the Revolutionary Committee proclaimed a state of siege throughout Wilhelmshaven. The Old Soldiers' and Workers' Councils were removed from office. At the same time the Reichsbank with 21 millions in gold was seized, and the bank building guarded by a special troop of 50 sailors and 15 machine guns. Besides the Reichsbank, all other financial institutions were seized and occupied by armed sailors; as were all statistical bureaux, postal telegraph, and telephone offices, water and electricity works, all means of transport and traffic, railway stations, food and raw material depots, printing shops, and all government buildings.

Trains were stopped, they could come in but not go out. In five different broadsheets printed in huge letters, placarded all over the town, were given the essentials of the things to come.

Workers, old age pensioners, all toilers in distress, particularly those who lived in huts and wooden barracks, were told to seize the almost empty houses of the rich and occupy them immediately. This was done without delay. There were also many previous prisoners of war, who

were freed without any discussion of 'different races' and nationalities. Class-consciousness had solved these 'problems' on the spot, '. . . it is the social existence of man that determines his consciousness'.

On January 27, in the forenoon, one of the stockhouses which was crammed full with provisions of the Navy was opened by order of the Revolutionary Committee and many thousand kilogrammes of salt meat, salt pork, bacon, peas, beans, rice and tinned foods were distributed gratis amongst the Wilhemshaven inhabitants according to their needs.

Meanwhile, information was received from the observers, who were following the movements of the approaching army, that Wilhelmshaven was cut off on all sides except the waterfront, and that some sailor units, supported by a small boat gun, had already opened the battle with the advancing Ebert troops. In fact, these comrades were in contact with the officer troops, who rushed at them and lost ground.

At the same time, it was obvious that the hope of assistance from the fortress Heppens, would have to be abandoned entirely because of large scale sabotage. In such a situation, to make use of torpedo boats in the Jadebusen, would have been disastrous. This then, and the situation in general, was earnestly discussed by the delegates at a meeting in the Thousand Man Barracks. As a result, word was given to the fighting sailor squads to concentrate rearwards to the starting point. This was carried out in an orderly manner. During the next few hours the revolutionaries intensified their activities; making some local advances, and destroying some hostile positions in the vicinity of Mariensiel.

Even in these circumstances, the Social Democrat leaders of Oldenburg, east Friesland, were allowed to hold a meeting in the Wilhelmshaven canteen. They had asked to see the Revolutionary Committee, and two delegates of the Fleet, together with a comrade of the Revolutionary Committee, went to meet them. One of these Social Democrats, known as the 'pontifex maximum of Oldenburg', had just begun to speak, when his own party men told him roughly that he had better 'shut up' when he tried to persuade them not to mingle with the seamen, but just wait and see; though some applauded him, seeing in his waiting policy the lesser evil and believing that there would still be time to jump on the victor's bandwagon if a victory should emerge. To them the situation appeared unstable. They were, without a doubt, capitalistically inclined, and therefore tried to weaken the socialist cause in every possible way. They feared their own shadows, and acted throughout in an underhand manner. This became evident when the rumour was spread that the Spartacists had robbed the Reichsbank of their own personal interests, and that some millions of gold had already been shipped away. Some months later, however, in July 1919, Ebert's

'Extraordinary Peoples' Court' in Wilhelmshaven, acknowledged that the Revolutionary Committee, although composed of 'fanatical communists', had always kept its hands clean.

On the afternoon of January 28, the first shells of a field howitzer, evidently aimed at the Thousand Man Barracks, crashed into the harbour district. At about this time, a small warship which, as it afterwards transpired, had been in Scandanavian waters for over three months, signalled to ask if it might put in for the Wilhelmshaven docks. Comrade D., the acting Harbour Commander, being suspicious of the latecomer, insisted on questioning the captain before he allowed the locks to be opened. The commander of the vessel, an Imperial corvette captain, was asked to meet Comrade D. on the pier, where he had to answer many questions, being finally told by D. that he would have to keep an eye on him, and that if he — the Herr Offizier — behaved himself, he, Comrade D., would see to it that he got another cigar band on his sleeve.

Elsewhere, more serious things were happening. At the main railway station in the town a battle was raging, many of the sailors were mortally wounded. A motorised column of officers had run past an outpost of seamen and workers, and made its way to the station, with the obvious intention of seizing the station, and the guards defending it were forced, in the face of heavy machine gun fire, to give way at one point. Suddenly, the car of the Revolutionary Committee made its way at full speed into the officers' column, and threw among them a number of hand grenades. Eighteen officers were taken prisoner, and four machine guns, some automatic pistols and a number of naval daggers were captured. The loss of life was fortunately small.

The Obmann of the guard of the station, a tough young stoker of the 'Baden', ashamed at having nearly let the reactionaries get past him, stood with tears in his eyes as he faced his comrades. But they understood; a hearty handshake and everything was alright.

As to the seamen as a whole, unlike Ebert's soldiery, they had no desire for revenge. It was war, but their captives were not molested more than was absolutely necessary.

On the afternoon of January 29, a message came addressed to the workers and sailors, informing them that some thousands of well-armed workers, commanded by a well-known young socialist, P., were on their way to give all possible help to the fighters for liberty at Wilhelmshaven.

Who could stand up to the revolutionary socialists now? Many of them thought they could already hear the gunfire of their brothers smashing the reactionary battalions from the east. But it was not the gunfire of the revolutionary army recruited in Hamburg, Marburg and

Bremen, as they joyfully suggested, but that of the reactionary Gerstenberg army. The army commanded by comrade P. never reached Wilhelmshaven. It advanced as far as Delmenhorst, engaged the reactionary forces, suffered heavy losses, and retreated.

By this time fighting was going on in the streets and at the barricades throughout Wilhelmshaven. Heavy losses were inflicted on the reactionaries, who fought in close column. A hail of hand grenades descended upon them from the roofs and windows of the houses, and their shouts of 'Ebert! Scheidemann!' were drowned by those of the revolutionaries 'Liebknecht! Luxemburg!' Again and again, the followers of Ebert were driven back, but ever again new officer columns appeared, mostly to suffer the same fate. Sometimes the firing died down, and only single explosions were heard; but then it would break out again, a roaring hurricane in a sea of splinters and wreckage.

In these circumstances 34 fatally wounded comrades, amongst them comrade A., were moved to a torpedo boat which shipped them to a small town on the lower Elbe.

Meanwhile, as the night drew on, the fourteen-hour battle for the Thousand Man Barracks began. Among the 588 defenders, mostly sailors from the battle fleet, were a dozen or so workers, some of them women, and, dressed in sailors' uniform, an eighteen-year-old girl, the daughter of a naval officer of high rank.

In a very short time, a shell of medium calibre crashed into the gymnasium, followed by others which fell around the barracks. A disagreeable odour, something like gas, filled the air. Then shells began to burst, at short intervals, in the western part of the building. But the sailors had their turn too. Volunteers were called for, Comrade C. took the lead, and within half an hour, he had smashed up a column of officers, taken three prisoners, and captured two heavy machine-guns and a 5.3 centimetre gun.

The battle went on throughout the night, reaching its climax in the early hours of the morning, when mine after mine was hurled into the Barracks. Fire-balls and star-shells were let off, and the darkness changed to fire and light. But there was no thought of surrender. Several attempts were made to storm the Barracks, but each time the white guard troops were repulsed by the machine-gun and rifle fire of the defenders. While the fighting was in progress, two meetings were held in the basement dining-room of the Barracks, and at both meetings it was resolved to fight on to the last, and in no circumstances to give in.

But while it is true that the Ebert soldiery had suffered terrible casualties, so too, had the revolutionary sailors and workers. There is no purpose in describing the harrowing scenes witnessed during the struggle, one only, shall be mentioned here. Comrade H., mortally

wounded, breathed 'Communism or death!' as he clasped the hand of the man next to him, and his fellow combatant knelt down and kissed the forehead of a brother-in-arms he had never known before.

It was day-break, two comrades were still firing the only machine-gun left undamaged . . . And from the mast-head of the Thousand Man Barracks was torn down the tattered red flag of the Wilhelmshaven Commune, riddled with gun-fire.

Here ends a chapter — but a chapter only — of the history of the revolutionary proletariat of the sea.

Conclusions and the Issues at Stake

To draw conclusions merely from visible surface facts and general experiences, has only limited value and does not permit us to see clearly the character of future developments. History does not move in a straight line, the zig-zags are not determined by one trend, but are a composite of many undercurrents which must be taken into serious consideration.

In each country the interests of the ruling class are closely bound up with the country's previous history, existing relations, and its particular position within the frame of a given world situation. Any activities, alliances, losses, and opportunities are power and property relations. All external shifts, changes, and struggles are thus irrevocably connected with internal shifts and struggles between the classes, and within the ruling class or group.

No doubt, all previous existing ruling groups have hindered the development of a truly social production and distribution. The key to the understanding of history lies in the historical development of labour.

The class struggle alone will be the decisive and determining factor, with its highest point — the revolution. The latter is a matter of tactics.

All we have seen, in the practical field of revolutionary and social activities, the political parties are no better informed than the masses. This has been proved in all actual revolutionary struggles. As long as parties operate as separate groups within the mass, the mass is not revolutionary, but neither are the parties. They can only function as capitalist appendages.

The fact remains, the liberation of the working class can only be carried out by the working class itself.

Since the teachings of Marx, Bakunin, and others, many shifts and changes have taken place in the political, economic and social spheres. There are no such things as eternal values.

It is therefore, not enough to merely repeat the teachings and timely

truths of our pioneers and advisors, we must develop them and carry them out.

The period when capitalism was advancing is past, and with it the basis of the old forms of organisation. Every epoch has its own forms of organisation, which are significant for the onward movement of that same period, in the course of development, however, with the beginnings of a new period, the old organisational forms hamper more and more the new development. The older forms which were used as a means of progress in the beginning of a particular period, become at the end of that same period a hampering factor, and their effect is highly reactionary.

The time of the still — in some parts of the world — existing capitalistic labour organisations is obviously past. New conditions must be met with new forms of organisation and methods with the least possible delay. The workers themselves, organised as a revolutionary class, must act. The workers must be the masters, not the servants, of their own organisations.

The working class is in need of a movement which will closely trace the paths of the laws of motion. An entirely new movement based on working class solidarity, unification on the job, free and independent workers' councils in cadres of self-asserting fighting units, based on ships, rail, aircraft, workshops, pits, factories and agricultural communities.

The workers do not require professional leaders, our confidential men shall be class conscious comrades and teachers only, dismissible at any time by a vote of their direct electors.

We have no ready made blueprints for the near future, but we will dare to predict that the present world war will inevitably end with a deeper economic and social crisis with revolutionary consequences. The self-acting workers of Europe, freed from the ties of outmoded organisational forms, will not wait for the call of professional party leaders. There will not be at any rate a true revolutionary working class movement on the European Continent.

Epilogue

I cannot end my story without regarding the present state of affairs in the ranks of the German workers, which is of the greatest interest to the anti-nationalist working class as a whole.

It is quite true, the German labouring masses tied to an outmoded system and under the pressure of a careerist leader dictatorship have

lost its long and bloody revolutionary battles. But so have until now the great masses in all countries. In fact, the German working class in general, though tortured with terrible suffering, is — contrary to the nationalistic idiocy — free from any kind of race hatred, nationalism, and so-called patriotism.

Nevertheless, they knew that they had — under conditions which often were the logical outcome of their own activities — failed to defeat 'fascism' and that they therefore strive to value the arguments of their class conscious fellow workers abroad. But they cannot be expected to change their present nationalistic hangman for another nationalistic hangman.

Equipped with an empirically organised underground network, using continually changing methods, the German revolutionary workers are trying their utmost to inform the masses as to just what is going on, so that they will more readily understand the true situation. These fellow workers cannot be fooled by any nationalistic propaganda. They are aware that to destroy 'fascism' — which is more or less the ruling form of the capitalist powers today — the workers of all lands must destroy capitalism, and that this can be achieved only on the basis of true working class solidarity. The time is not far away when it cannot be ignored any longer, that considerable parts of the German working class have resolutely fought for the great cause, and are even in the time of the darkest reaction still fighting in the forefront of the revolutionary proletariat.

Let the nationalists, who are surely the last to be entitled to throw stones at anyone, shout, spreading their lies and mockery at the *real* fighters for freedom, this will only strengthen and raise the spirits of the anti-nationalist forces and, in the process of time, remove the scum of human community.

Three years of struggle in Spain

The Spanish Revolutionary Unions speak

The greatest revolutionary event of recent times has come to an end, and it is right that the workers of the world should now be told the truth about it, both in order to put an end to misguided ideas about its real meaning and to stop the campaign of party falsification which merely serves to misinterpret the activities and fling mud at the names of those who were conspicuous for their spirit of self-sacrifice and renunciation.

In speaking of the Spanish war and the revolution, we are not impelled by a wish to argue or refute slanders, but simply to put the real meaning of what has happened before all those workers of goodwill and true revolutionaries; irrespective of their particular ideology.

On 18 July 1936, a revolt broke out in our country by virtue of which the power-state, composed of the agrarian and industrial bourgeoisie, the aristocracy and the Church, hoped to annul the electoral triumph

---

This is an important document which has not been reprinted since it was first published in 1939 as a penny pamphlet by FREEDOM PRESS in an edition of 10,000 copies, only a matter of a month or two after the final defeat in Central Spain. The group around the fortnightly journal *Spain and the World* were hosts to some 50 comrades from Madrid who had resisted until the last minute and only then made their way to the coast where they and the Casado Junta were picked up by a British warship, *The Hunter*, and brought to our shores. This is an important document because it was discussed in heated meetings by these comrades who were, with one or two exceptions people who had held down important 'encargos' (posts) in government. There was an ex-Minister (Juan Lopez) and a number of 'ministers' in the Casado Defence Junta (Marin, Val). Manuel Salgado was a prison director in the civil war; Falomir and Gonzalez were important officials of the Railways section of the CNT; there were CNT military men; top secretaries of the Anarchist Youth which included a Hungarian ex-Communist by the name of Polgare (who produced with A Souchy a small volume on *Colectivizaciones* (Barcelona 1937). And there were a number of journalists notably Garcia Pradas who edited the Madrid daily and a mysterious Russian who edited the Valencia CNT daily *Fragua Social*. One appreciates that they were smarting from the propaganda attacks by the Communists and were therefore concentrating theirs on the counter-revolutionary role played by the CP. But three years in government or official jobs had had its effect in their not seeing or admitting that they had contributed to power passing from the people in the street to the politicians. We have added a short piece from Jose Peirats' critical work as an antidote to this *historically* important, but from an anarchist point of view *lamentable* document.

achieved by popular vote in February of that year, and block the proletarian revolutionary advance. The revolt of the class-power state left the legal state unprotected and helpless, represented as it was by authorities without real power, and brainwashed by the poison of a false bourgeois democracy.

These authorities were unable to defend themselves or the people, who had to do duty for both. The state as such disappeared, leaving the fight against the rebels to be carried on by the spontaneous efforts of the people. The result was magnificent, thanks to the great organisational experience and keen revolutionary sense possessed by the two million workers of the CNT and UGT. Under the guidance of the FAI, Spanish anarchism immediately set to work to rout out obvious weaknesses maintaining throughout a steady anti-fascist drive. At the outset this organisation sent its most militant workers to the front, where their ability, heroism and abnegation were soon conspicuous and continued to be of outstanding value amongst other popular parties.

The part played by the young people in the Spanish struggle was splendidly upheld by the Libertarian Youth organisation. They attracted the finest and bravest young Spaniards who offered their lives and shed their blood as a matter of course, infusing into the struggle the elements of drive and calm responsibility which the circumstances required. In short, the libertarian forces constituted the pivot on which anti-fascist resistance depended, serving, moreover, in large measure, as a barrier to both weakness and treachery.

Now let us see what the two bands into which Spain was divided, represented. Fascism was lawlessness in arms: anti-fascism the popular defence of the constitution; fascism was the reactionary and feudal movements of the powerful: anti-fascism an advance towards some kind of dignity of life for the people; fascism was dictatorial in purpose: anti-fascism made for liberty. Fascism was a mortgage on national independence: anti-fascism a bold defence of it. The rebellion could not have taken place if the Spanish fascist had not already come to an arrangement with Hitler and Mussolini, who agreed to a mutual aid arrangement against Spain, in furtherance of their imperialist ambitions.

If the struggle had been purely a Spanish affair, the anti-fascist struggle would pretty quickly have settled it. But in a few days it was evident that the Germans and Italians were intervening, not only with

CNT — National Confederation of Labour (anarcho-syndicalist).
FAI — Anarchist Federation of Iberia.
FIJL — Iberian Federation of Libertarian Youth.
UGT — General Workers Union (socialist-communist).
POUM — Workers' Party of Marxist Unification.

the provision of war material to the fascists, but with the establishment of a political and military organisation around the figure of the traitor Franco, utilising the fascist Falange for the purpose.

The German-Italian intervention extended the scope of the war to the point of swamping the revolution. During the first months we fought against long-established privilege and corruption; and at the same time set up the proletarian elements of a new social life, political and economic; the war was then in fact, of a civil and revolutionary nature. Foreign intervention compelled us to turn the popular revolutionary militias into a regular army; to muster, hurriedly and as fast as we could, the state, which had not then been superseded by a better political and social organisation; to open our zone to the international brigades, whose control was not in our hands; and most of all, to ask the international proletariat for the help which they did not give us, which the bourgeois democratic states refused us and which finally Russia sold to us, not only at the price of gold; but also at the cost of our political independence. To get the arms of which we were in need we both gave away our national wealth, and had to tolerate the control of our political and military activities by the foreign and Spanish agents of the USSR. This nobody wanted, but in view of the indifference of the world to our wretched situation, all anti-fascist parties acquiesced in it, in order that the people should not be crushed.

It was then that the real danger of the Communist Party became evident. Forestalling the bourgeoisie, it set up the cry that it was not the revolution for which we were fighting, but for a new kind of democratic republic: that our politics should circulate in the orbit of the western democratic tradition of England and France; that the small proprietor should be respected — that free commercial activities should be permitted — that is to say that the people should be at the mercy of speculators — that the churches should be opened — as if we had never been fired at from them, or we could allow centres of treason in the rearguard, etc., etc., etc. The slogans of the Communist Party during the first two years of the war can be summed up quite accurately in one: 'Better to lose the war than allow the revolution'.

Neither in war nor revolution has anti-fascist Spain had a worse enemy than Stalinism. Persistently, following orders from above, it expressed itself in terms which alarmed even the bourgeoisie. Its ranks have been largely recruited from those who, thanks to its oft-repeated reactionary slogans, ended up by having no idea what they were fighting for, and in spite of its endless talk about 'unity', its behaviour was such that it was impossible for anti-fascists to get on with it.

What unity did the Communist party respect, or attempt to establish? None whatever — agents of the USSR murdered thousands

of non-Stalinist comrades who had come to Spain and joined the International brigades to fight for the proletarian revolution; in Barcelona they got rid of, among others, Ilse Wolff and Mark Rein, son of Abramowich, member of the Executive Commission of the IOS: the 'Checkas' of the Communist Party witnessed the crimes committed against numberless revolutionary workers: splits arose in the army. For instance that of El Campesino in which the soldiers who did not admit the red ticket were threatened with death, and in many others, despair and the loss of their best men were brought about by Stalinist intrigues. The press of the third International covered other anti-fascists with the grossest abuse, concentrating on those who most firmly upheld the Spanish people in their revolutionary aspirations.

The Spanish bourgeoisie, who were in subjugation, though still in existence, quite clearly grasped the importance of the Communist Party's role so far as they themselves were concerned, loudly praising the systematic attacks by the Stalinists on the revolution, as an 'eminently sensible' policy. They backed the Communists when they uttered their stupidest and most reactionary slogans; when they slandered the finest among the proletariat; when they engineered differences between the central syndicates; when they organised the political extermination of POUM and the murder of its leading militants; when they brought down the popular left government of Largo Caballero in order to get the CNT out of power; when they set the Lister Division against our Aragon collectives; when they provoked the events of May 1937 in Barcelona where, unable to break up the libertarian movement, they resorted to such criminal acts as the murder of Camillo Berneri.

The charges against the Communist Party during the war in Spain could easily fill volumes and backed by unchallengeable proofs from the communist dailies of Madrid, Barcelona and Valencia. But it would be a lengthy task which we cannot undertake now, though we must make it plain that we assert nothing that cannot be proved.

Our own movement, both during the war and before it, has been entirely faithful to its three distinguishing characteristics, working class, libertarian and Spanish. As working class, and organised on a syndical basis, it has always responded promptly to the general needs of the proletariat. Since May 1936, it has striven unceasingly to bring about an alliance between the CNT and the UGT with the end in view that the syndical organisation of the proletariat should repulse the state, no matter what political and economic parties stood in the way. None have more tenaciously opposed this purpose than the Communist Party, who backed a false popular front, in which the working class,

badly and half-heartedly represented, remained under the thumb of the bourgeoisie.

As proletarian, our movement has borne the brunt and been in the forefront of the Spanish revolution, and has in fact come to be the only political and social force upon which the revolution could reckon. In proof of which we can point to our propaganda and our action: through our propaganda we ensured that the workers were aware at all times of their class interests, and through our action we brought about socialisation both of land and industry, and provided millions of the proletariat, in the midst of an extraordinarily difficult war situation, with conditions of living which they had never had before, and which they will always remember.

As libertarian, our movement has always maintained, in accordance with existing circumstances, a firm opposition to all authoritarian tendencies. It has therefore been at once anti-bolshevik and anti-fascist, at the same time hostile to all political parties, every one of which is created in the image of the state, which they attempt to control and administer. In the syndical organisation, on the other hand, are to be found social production through labour, freedom of thought and assured means of livelihood.

Being Spanish, our movement has always had the independence of our country before it, and has struggled to defend it against fascism throughout the war. So also, it has energetically opposed the Stalinist influence which in the events of March 1939, when the communists made a sudden attempt to seize power, was once and for all silenced.

We have referred exclusively to the libertarian movements and the Communist Party. And this for two reasons — within anti-fascist Spain they have been the parties of outstanding dynamic energy and they have upheld such opposing positions as to make them the two points of attraction towards which lukewarm and indeterminate opinions gravitated. Those, that is to say, of the republican bourgeoisie and the social democrats. There was a certain timidity in the republican political manifestoes, which were always drawn up to suit the Stalinist slogans, and accompanied by sly and secretive action, with a flavour of intrigue in high places. The political schemes of the socialists — PSOE — depended upon the syndicalist body of the UGT whose positon was being rivalled by the communists. The socialists can hardly be said to have had a policy of their own. They are an old established party, much given to governmental methods, and though there were many well-known leaders among them, they had no organic power. Their principal leaders during the war served the republican bourgeoisie and communist parties, and sometimes both at once. But they kept away from class politics, which was in the hands of the UGT. Largo

Caballero wanted to make a class appeal during the last months in which he was in power, but could achieve nothing, as inside the UGT itself, the communists had prepared the ground for his downfall. Indalecio Prieto is a socialist of the same brand as Caballero, and when he was Prime Minister did nothing but vie between indignation that the USSR tried to impose upon us and the humble proposals which he vainly made to England and France. Negrin and del Vayo are also both socialists but both of them have acted as Moscow lackeys. As a result of this indecisive behaviour on the part of its leaders, Spanish social democracy has been navigating without a compass and has allowed itself to be dominated by the Communist Party. Whenever it has felt impelled to act on its own, it has been irresistibly drawn into the political current of the libertarian movement, which was firm in its loyalty towards other anti-fascist parties and in that it never forgot for one moment its fundamental principles.

Of course, the libertarian movement has had to make compromises. No one knows it better or regrets it more keenly than we do. We compromised so far as to take part in the government; to help to form a regular army, to allow the USSR to control the decisions of our general staff . . . but what could we do? We could not do what we wanted, how much less have the groups and talking circles who blindly criticised us, done. We have been abandoned by everybody and finding ourselves, in our isolation, between the Scylla of surrender and the Charybdis of compromise, we gave way. This is the long and short of the whole business, and now that the war has come to an end, we find ourselves as rich in experience, in the enlightenment of reality, as we are faithful to the purity of our anarchist ideals and our syndical tactics.

How did the war end? Certainly not as we would have wanted, but as we could. The truth is, and it is as well that attention should be drawn to it, *that the Spanish war came to an end in Catalonia*.

Once the army corps commanded by the communist Etelvino Vega had collapsed and the forces of Lister and Modesto had fallen back on Tarragona from the Ebro; once the fascists were advancing over easily defendable country with a loss of no more than one per thousand; once Barcelona had been evacuated and the Negrin Government at the peak of its misunderstanding of the situation, gave every indication of assuming that the way to win a war was by stopping gunfire and letting off a lot of idiotic manifestoes;[1] once the Cortes met in Figueras, with each member of it with one foot in Spain and the other in France, thousands upon thousands of Spaniards crossed the frontier without any intention of returning to Spain — an intention which they shared with the government — who could really and truly say that the war, the real war in arms not the illusionary war of words, had come to an end.

England and France recognised Franco's government. Other powers followed suit. Nobody, not even Russia, any longer sold us war material. What we already had bought remained in France, where was also a great part of our gold in various foreign banks. The funds which Negrin had personally deposited in them to ensure a bright future for himself were blocked; and in the republican zone of the Centre, Levant and the South, orders came from Negrin for the immediate evacuation of militant elements, etc.

When Negrin went to Madrid, where he remained but a few hours speaking with utter irresponsibility both of continuing the war and of establishing peace on the basis of his famous thirteen points, the last three in Figueras and the last manifesto of his government 'to all Spaniards' — one thing stood out with absolute clarity: that the war had been treasonably lost for us in Catalonia, while Negrin, and this is something more than mere supposition, had taken advantage of the situation to fill his purse again and get away abroad.

While the government was in the central-south zone, it had no fixed residence, hid its whereabouts, disguised its intentions, and, in spite of everything that it had no intention of doing, issued passports by the thousand knowing all the time that they would be valueless — and plundered what was left of our wealth. How could the people be expected to tolerate a situation which was not only inconsistent with its dignity, but also endangered the lives of thousands. It was obvious to all real anti-fascists that between the peace and the war about which Negrin was gaily chattering, without the slightest chance of either achieving the one or going on with the other, a disaster was arising in which even the honour of Spanish anti-fascism would perish. This produced such indignation that Negrin strengthened the bodyguard of gangsters with which he was always surrounded by the addition of a battalion of communist irregulars, and went even further by preparing a coup d'etat with no other end in view — the Catalan disaster proving clearly that he could not think of going on with the war — than that of crushing the will of the people, when about to betray them, robbing them for the last time and preventing them from obtaining definite proof of his tricky behaviour as a pawn of the communists.

In the early days of March [1939], the libertarian movement, which was alone in refusing to permit its supporters to ask for passports with which to escape abroad, after inviting all parties, including the communists, to form a new popular front government and make some military resistance which might obtain honourable conditions of peace from the enemy, suddenly found itself faced with two conflicting dangers, out of which the feared catastrophe might come. On the one hand a communist rising led by Negrin, on the other a revolt of the

regular military forces against him. Both of these dangers were on the point of coming to a head when the libertarian movement intervened, with the rest of the popular front apart from the communist party, and managed to set on foot an intermediate policy, both honourable and sincere, and stave off disaster and betrayal of the people.

The coup d'etat of 5 March, prepared in haste but with boldness and loyalty, was warmly welcomed in the republican zone. The National Council of Defence was set up in Madrid, and Negrin himself wanted to hand over governmental power to it. This proposal was rejected by the Council, which was supported by the military leaders, and the former government fled abroad by air. The civil and military leaders of the Communist Party did likewise, deserting their followers at the moment when these were compelled, under military discipline to take up arms against the people. The result of the struggle was that the Communist Party was overthrown and those responsible for its treacherous uprising were imprisoned.

But this struggle, which lasted for eight days in Madrid, once again brought out the utter villainy of the Communist Party. Entire brigades headed by communist leaders, left their posts at the front at the mercy of the enemy to spill the blood about the streets and environs of Madrid. In Levant, Extremadura, etc. The communists made similar attempts, and it was only the self-control of the libertarian movement that avoided an unimaginable catastrophe. Events in Cartagena give one an idea of what might have happened. Demoralisation had taken over there, following the suspicious fall of Minorca under the Negrin government. The attempt to hand over the command of the naval base at Cartagena to a communist, whose criminal behaviour was only too well known to all anti-fascists, brought about disruption among the sailors whose anti-fascist action had been beyond reproach since 19 July 1936. The resulting confusion was taken advantage of by the fascists to organise a rising, which, though it was suppressed by setting up a National Defence Council, resulted in the total loss of the fleet, which was obliged to put out to sea under threat of being sunk and with enough fuel for only a few hours.

Barcelõ, a non-communist rebel who betrayed Negrin and the Council, was shot. Conesa, who was responsible for the murder of four army chiefs, suffered the same fate. In consideration of their anti-fascist activities before the fall of Madrid, the rest were left at liberty.

What was the object of the National Defence Council, apart from the above episode which gravely endangered it? It was that of avoiding the disaster to which we were being driven by Negrin, and of securing an honourable peace. To this end it spoke to the people with absolute directness, and swore that not one member of the Council, nor any of

the anti-fascist leaders, would leave his post, adding that the *sauve-qui-peut* watchword of the former government would have to be changed into the better and nobler one of *sauve-qui-veut*. It spoke to the enemy face to face, without a foreign intermediary, with the object of exchanging a state of mutual murder for one of peace, which while recognising the military victory of the enemy, would leave our political dignity untouched.

Franco, vassal of Italy, did not accept the proposals of the National Defence Council, and as soon as the peace negotiations were concluded, he let loose an offensive on a number of fronts. Whereupon a strange thing happened: several military units of communist complexion — the 40th and 42nd Brigades (precisely those which were responsible for the heaviest fighting in Madrid in March 1939), sundry cavalry squadrons, and the division guarding the Ocana sector, went over to the enemy or laid down their arms with shouts for peace. In Extremadura, the communist forces also refused to fight, and in a single day the enemy advanced just as far as he chose. As this also occurred with other communist groups on all fronts, desertion spread, and, from one day to the next, Madrid, which for more than two years had held out with unconquerable heroism, found itself so utterly unprotected that the fascist forces could have entered it as easily as if they had been on parade.

It then became necessary to organise the evacuation of militant anti-fascists, calmly but with all possible speed. All those of our movement were still in the city, and the National Defence Council was the last to leave Madrid. The evacuated militants were transferred to Valencia, where events happened thick and fast, as all fronts were collapsing and the fascists were thirsting for blood. Leaders of all anti-fascist sections were warned that the port of Alicante alone offered means of escape, as it was farthest from the devastated fronts, and to it accordingly the flight proceeded. A day later the National Defence Council and this National Committee of the Libertarian Movement left Valencia for Alicante. It was impossible to get there as fascist risings had broken out in various towns on the way, and we were obliged to make for the port of Gandia, where we embarked on a British boat. For this we owe no thanks to any particular government, but to the Committee of International Co-ordination for helping Spain. This, and this alone, enabled us to get out of Spain — from Gandia, as other Spaniards got away from Alicante — to the extent of about two hundred anti-fascists of different political colours, among them sundry communist military leaders. The latter have fared in precisely the same way as the National Defence Council and this National Committee of the Libertarian Movement, which is proud to have remained at its post

while duty demanded it and so long as it was possible for it to see to the needs of the workers whom it represented.

Such, in broad outline, cleared of debatable issues and slanders, are the facts about the happenings in Spain during the war. If all anti-fascists, Spanish and foreign, had done their duty as we have, the Spanish people would have been victorious or, in the most unfavourable circumstances, would so have organised their defeat that the lives and dignity of all those militants who took part in the struggle would have come through it unharmed.

London, April 1939

The Libertarian Movement
CNT, FAI, FIJL National Committee

1. A reference to Negrin's Thirteen-Point programme enunciated on May 1st 1938 — Editor

José Peirats
A Postscript

Pity the revolution that devours itself in order to obtain victory. Pity the revolution that waits for a final triumph to put its ideals into practice. In spite of all the difficulties and deceptions, the Spanish revolution had the good fortune to come to full fruition. The revolutionary work of the collectives will be an indelible mark in time and space.

The rest will pass into history like a bad dream. So too will pass into oblivion those who, remembering with pleasure their positions as ministers and their military commands, are still thinking, twenty years later, about an impossible kind of libertarian political party. The real Spanish libertarian movement has historical, psychological, and popular roots that go deep. When uprooted, the movement dies.

From a distance of more than 20 years, I believe that those of us who consistently opposed collaboration with the government had as our only alternative principled, heroic defeat. I believe there was an unavowed complicity among many militants who were enemies of participation and who were self-righteously angry while they permitted the participation to take place. And yet they were sincere in their own way, sincere in their powerlessness. They could offer no solution that would simultaneously preserve so many precious things: victory in the war against fascism, progress in the revolution, complete loyalty to their ideas, and the preservation of their own lives. Lacking the power to perform miracles, these men consoled themselves by clinging to their principles.*

* This powerful defence of the Revolution is extracted from *The Anarchists in the Spanish Revolution* (1977) shortly to be reissued by Freedom Press. As we go to press we learn with deep sorrow of José Peirats death in his 81st year.

The Peasant Revolt in Italy

In the issue of *Freedom* for 26th November* we reported the seizures of land by the peasants of Sicily and Southern Italy which have since spread, even as far as the Po valley in the north. The Italian peasants have invaded the land after every war since the days of the Punic Wars of 264-146 BC, and the present occupations are the culmination of a continuous series of sporadic and isolated seizures which have taken place since the last war. In fact, as Prime Minister de Gasperi admitted last week, by the end of 1947 375,000 acres had already been occupied, and for the period 1946-1949 the total is 600,000 acres.

Basil Davidson writing in the *New Statesman* from Catanzaro in Calabria, says: "It began in Calabria on a small scale in 1945, and grew in the next two years, only to meet, in 1948, with strengthened resistance by the landowners who, with the Government firmly behind them after Demochristian victory last year, proceeded to evict the peasants again. These evictions began to be applied, a few weeks ago, to land which the Government had previously decreed should pass to the peasants (but which the peasants, in fact, had had to take). The evictions might have continued. Instead, they have given rise to a new and vaster wave of peasant agitation."

Murder at Messina

Mr Davidson goes on to describe the events at Messina where

***Peasants seize land in Southern Italy: Direct Action forces Government to move**

Large numbers of peasants in Sicily and Southern Italy are squatting on uncultivated big estates. It is, for instance, reported that on the fifteenth of this month, 1,000 peasants headed by a mayor, marched singing to take over 10,250 acres of uncultivated land in Palermo province. The police did nothing to stop them.

The Observer (20th November 1949) reports that this month's direct action has "forced the Government into speedier rhythm than its political prudence hitherto allowed. Special land distributions to peasants in Calabria have been promised by the Government without waiting for passage of the national reform, while in Sicily landlords are reduced to attempting to buy off invaders.

"The Sicilian regional Government has voted the earliest transference of some tens of thousands of hectares of big landowners' property to peasant families — without awaiting the passage of the land reform acts in the national and regional parliaments."

26th November 1949
Freedom

thirteen peasants due to be evicted were shot down by the police, three of them fatally. "A group was working at Fragala on Sunday afternoon, 30th October, when they saw police approaching from above. They were about 150 men and women, some of the latter with their babies and smaller children. They told me that they clapped the police because they thought that anyone must be pleased to see this land, barren for more than ten years, fresh and clean again beneath the plough. The police, they said, came down towards them shouting for them to 'put down their arms'. As they had no arms, they merely stood still. Late that night, long after dark, they were still gathering their dead and wounded."

He made an exhaustive investigation and found that the official version which described the peasants as armed and declares that they threw grenades, entirely untrue, and visiting the casualties in hospital he saw that they were wounded by bullets fired from behind — fired, that is, while they were running away. Meanwhile, "six peasants arrested by this posse of police at Fragala are still in jail 'pending inquiry', while no sanctions of any kind appear to have been taken against the police."

In the last week of November, Caltigirone in South East Sicily became the centre of further land seizures. This is the birthplace of the infamous Mario Scelba, the Italian Minister of the Interior, who had ordered the police to shoot if necessary to clear peasants from the land they have occupied. The first violent incident reported was between 250 police and as many peasants who had staked their claims and were settling in and building huts.

The peasants were finally evicted — a few of them to hospital — and motorised and armed police cleared another estate at San Pietro.

Near Catania, the peasants have been playing 'hide and seek' with the police, hiding when they arrive and taking possession when they go.

On to Rome

On 6th December, peasants around Rome seized land and began sowing at once. A peasant on Rome's outskirts told a correspondent: "This is not politics as far as I am concerned. It is much simpler — a matter of bread for our bellies". Another also expressed the mood of thousands. "I have planted my seed and intend to reap the harvest", he said. "If the police want to move me they will have to carry me off — dead". The princes, following

the example of the Calabrian and Sicilian barons, started cultivating all available land.

At Ceveteri, ruled by Prince Ruspoli, all available tractors came out to plough up fields and prevent further occupation, and the *News Chronicle* reported that the big owners are trying to stem this land rush by cultivating more acres. It is their only protection.

They have spent vast sums (which they said they did not possess) to plough and sow land which would otherwise be seized. In Lucania and Calabria thousands more acres have been cultivated.

Two days later, peasants were occupying scrubland around Rome and several hundred farm labourers, men and women, seized more idle acres in Sicily. Police fired into the air in an effort to drive them off.

Though it was reported that on the 7th, the peasants "were still holding about 6,000 acres of the 80,000 originally seized, but they were expected to withdraw after establishing a symbolic claim to the land", the seizures continued on the following days. Resentment against the Government and police was still running high, and armed police riot squads were patrolling country roads in case of clashes. And the *Daily Telegraph* reports with scandalised emphasis that "estates of some of the greatest Italian families have been invaded".

At Laterza, near Taranto, 3,000 peasants occupied seven farms, but left after pegging out 'claims'. They carried placards with the words 'We have fought and the land should be ours'.

In some areas the columns were so numerous and strong that the local police were not in sufficient numbers either to turn them back or prevent them from occupying land.

Most of the zones affected by the agitation lie within a 15 to 20 mile area around the capital, and include Bracciano, Cerveteri and Monterotondo in the north and north west, Aprilia, Ariccia and Cisterna in the south, Maccarese in the west, and Rocca di Papa and other hill towns in the south east. Part of the land occupied belongs to big estates owned by the Roman aristocracy, the Torlonia and Ruspoli families among them.

On 14th December police fired on a crowd of several thousand farm workers near Bari and wounded eight of them.

The Government

When Signor de Gasperi, the Italian Christian Democrat Prime Minister, recently visited Calabria, the southernmost province of Italy, he was, the press reports, "genuinely moved by the sight of

the wretched misery he found" and in his speech at Camignatello, he said, "If we proceed with outmoded, obsolete ideas of private property, we shall never make progress", and his speech culminated in this warning to the big landowners: "Beware, if you have not realised that your hour has come — beware!"

Now, de Gasperi's remarks are very true, but the fact remains, the *Tribune* says, that "he happens to be the leader of a party which counts among its members and supporters many important representatives of the big land-owning interests who do everything in their power to prevent or sabotage any serious kind of land reform."

And it is curious to learn that members of the Italian cabinet discovered with surprise and horror of conditions in the south, when the ordinary book reader in this country has learnt vividly of these conditions from the novels of Ignazio Silone and from Carlo Levi's book *Christ Stopped at Eboli*.

We showed, in our issue of 26th November 1949, how the direct action of the peasants was forcing the authorities into making belated special land distributions to the peasants. The Government, as the *News Chronicle* points out: "is trying to stem the revolt by tokens", and the *New Statesmen* says that the authorities "are trying partly to forestall and partly to appease the peasants". And this is correct. De Gasperi in his press conference last week asked correspondents not to confuse the Land Improvement Bill with the new confiscation bills. They were quite separate. The Land Improvement Bill had, he said, "in some cases caused the sudden dismissal of peasants after improvements had been made. This", said de Gasperi, "was a point at which the local prefect could usefully intervene to effect a compromise".

The manner in which the local prefect "usefully intervenes" can be seen in the police murders at Messina. The Bill for expropriation (with generous compensation) of 112,000 acres in Calabria — the Government's appeasement measure, is merely a cynical tinkering with the question. Especially when we learn that the land "is to be handed gradually to peasants *who can pay for it*". The speech quoted above that de Gasperi made at Camignatello, was evidently meant for local consumption only, for in his press conference he warned that: "The peasants had stated their needs and these had gone before a commission. At present small co-operatives were marching, and when one marched another would march, and even some Christian Democrat co-operatives would march. The idea might get round that private property no

longer existed, and at that point the Ministry would have to intervene and a halt be called."

As for the Christian Democratic programme of land reforms, the *Tribune* (9th December 1949) points out that it will not give land to landless peasants. "For the reform is based not on the size of properties, but on their profits and thus exempts most of the big Southern landowners whose *latifondi* are startlingly unproductive — to say nothing of the fact that this much advertised measure provides for the free sale within the next two years of land assigned for distribution."

The Mafia

It is reported that the Mafia rallied to the support of the Sicilian landowners "in considerable force", and a dispatch from Palermo says that "the agrarians refuse to disband the Mafia. The peasants want to negotiate directly with the landlords in accordance with the law on the assignment of uncultivated lands, but, as the bailiffs and rent collectors are usually members of the Mafia and would lose their jobs after the assignment, they are fiercely resisting and rallying round the landlords. The landlords themselves show no signs of wishing to break with these vampires of our Sicilian countryside."

One of Basil Davidson's informative articles in the *New Statesman* discusses the role played by the sinister secret society in Sicily. He says that banners and signboards carried in procession through Palermo carried an ancient war-cry: 'The land to the peasants!' They also carried a new one, a sign that the peasant unions have come to maturity and have learnt to look beyond the immediate need for land — 'Down with the Mafia!'

Mr Davidson explains that "survival of the Mafia is the consequence of the customs of land tenure peculiar to this island. *Latifondi* in Sicily are leased, in the general way, not to the peasants who work the land, but *gabelloti*, intermediaries or sub-contractors (originally, perhaps, mere bailiffs) who lease in their turn to smaller intermediaries and so on down the scale until, at third or fourth remove from the actual owner, the land is leased eventually to the man who works it. This method of tenure explains not only the Mafia, but also the appalling abandonment of the *lantifondi* of Sicily — whole ranges of hills and plateaux where one may go for miles without seeing sign of life or human habitation. Few or none of the intermediaries invest in the land they rent; their object seems exclusively to extort from the peasant

more than they must pay the landlord. having leased his land by agreements which are usually for many years, the landlord does not invest either; he merely takes his rent.

"The terror of the Mafia works both ways. The *gabelloti mafiosi* terrorise the peasant into giving them unduly much payment in produce for the land they sub-lease; and they terrorise the landowners into continued agreement with their terms. While they tend to murder the peasants, they usually let the landowners off with a fat ransom.

"But why should the landlowners not rid themselves of this terror by calling in the State, by refusing once and for all to pay blackmail, by siding with the peasants? The answer lies in the last part of the question. However much a nuisance it may be from time to time, the Mafia can always be relied upon to act against the peasants."

The Communists

The Communists have played their usual role of attempting to cash in on popular discontents, and both the authorities and the press have been attributing the peasant rising to Communist agitation. Certainly, just as in the 'squatters' movement in Britain a few years ago, and in many other popular movements, the Communists have provided the authorities with the excuse and opportunity for taking counter-measures which would not have been possible otherwise. Mr Davidson points out in the *New Statesman* that the peasants are on the march "not as the authorities in Rome would have one believe, because they are 'incited by the agents of the Kremlin', but because hunger and despair drive hard, and because the alternative is lingering death", and as an Italian right-wing daily, quoted in our issue of 26th November 1949, emphasised, "it is false to call these people Communists. They feel they have reached the limits of endurance".

Footnote

At Potenza, the capital city of Lucania, perched 2,500 feet up, these words are scrawled in tar on the main building — 'Long Live Hope'.

Freedom *24th December 1949*

1989 Protestors Storm Bastille

Leftwing opponents of the opulent bicentenary celebrations stormed the Place de la Bastille at the weekend for a pop concert that has upset President François Mitterand.

The concert, attended by about 250,000 people, was organised by the anarchist singer, Renaud.

Supported by the leftwing Communist Revolutionary League, the Communist Party, churchmen and intellectuals, Renaud condemned the decision to hold the G7 economic summit of the world's richest countries here during the festivities.

His demands that the bicentenary should attack privilege and concentrate on helping the Third World — the new Third Estate — brought a counter protest from the Elysée.

When Renaud refused to abandon his idea, Mr Mitterand's closest adviser, Mr Jacques Attali, invited him to lunch and pointed out that many Third World leaders were among the 30 heads of state of government invited to Paris.

The concert was preceded by a protest march in which the bicentenary logo of three blue, white and red birds had been transformed into vultures. Protestors shouted slogans in favour of concentrating the celebrations on attacking apartheid, colonialism and Third World debt.

Renaud wore the traditional *sans culottes* outfit to address a crowd which included trade unionists, anti-racists and representatives of leftwing movements.

The protest concert, which included several African groups, went on until late yesterday morninga and will precede a week of campaigning against the economic summit.

from *The Guardian* 10th July 1989

Reginald Reynolds

No more illusions

Weighing heavily on my mind are those terrible realities of 1939 — those that stare at us from the headlines and those, even more appalling, which are more terrible because so few have realised them. Fascism over Europe, the imminence of war, the paralysis of democracy — these are the things that all have seen, the causes of fear and deep anxiety in millions of homes. Once more we hear the beat of the wings of the Angel of Death. The conquests of the past hundred years, wrested by working men and women in a continuous struggle from the ruling class, are doomed or already lost. The hopes of post-war Europe, begotten in an age that saw the fall of dynasties and the upheaval of nations, have withered and died.

Would that the story ended there. Its dark sequel brings it to an even more sinister conclusion. The Russian Revolution betrayed, and a totalitarian state masquerading as a socialist soviet republic. Social Democracy in full flight, indecent in its spiritual nakedness, its last disguises abandoned, preparing the way for national unity. The Stalinists, still successfully exploiting the memory of a revolution they long since betrayed, heading off militants, sabotaging the harassed forces of revolt. What fascism has done for Germany and Italy, fear, panic and treachery have done for England and France. Divided by the frontiers of nationalism, the masses prepare to defend their chains once more.

On one side they will fight for 'justice' and 'national socialism' and against 'encirclement'. On the other side, they will fight for 'democracy' and they too, like Hitler, will pollute the name of socialism. The ghost of Pilsudski will laugh among the marshes of the Vistula, where men will die for what they have never possessed. The African conscripts of France will perish for liberty, equality and fraternity, the supposed privileges of a white skin, but certainly not a black one. Desperate efforts will be made to obtain the 'loyalty' of the Arabs, today victims of systematic loot, plunder, torture and murder. And India? There, if resistance shows its head, the jackboots of democracy will give Goering a lesson in ruthlessness . . .

Here, in a street in Soho, a remnant of heroes is gathered together.[1] They are symbolic of our scattered forces all over the world, the defeated ones, those who since 1918 have seen the failure of one hope

after another and have not lost faith or courage. Thermopylæ was not more hopeless in its odds than the fight we are now facing — those few who still hold to that Good Old Cause which unites the toilers and the oppressed across the frontiers. Facing a situation incomparably brighter in its prospects (as history proved) of unqualified success, Tom Paine once wrote of the American Revolution: 'There are times that trv men's souls, into such times have we been born.' The words bite harder today. They come as the challenge of our own past, of generations who have wrought for freedom, to those who have seen the bastions of progress retaken one by one and stand today before their last stronghold.

Let us take courage from the undaunted spirit of those men and women who, having lost everything in Spain, are still ready to fight, and to fight on while life is in them. Let us not this May Day be overcome with despair or take refuge in illusions. If the houses of hope which we built were built upon the sand, there is no reason why we should, like ostriches, hide our heads in it. Realities must be faced, new plans made and carried out. It is not enough in this world to be right or even to be courageous. Virtuous circles are no less sterile than vicious ones. We can and must get our message to the masses.

Let us say to those who have not lost faith and turned back to the sophistries of reformism, the specious arguments of the Popular Front, let us say to all those who would join us but are waiting for someone else to do so first:

Comrades, real progress does not consist in accepting given alternatives but in creating some new ones. No movement ever *began* as a mass movement: the great movements that have made history, whether progressive or reactionary, became what they were because those who were tired of the choices that society offered them decided or were persuaded to reject them *all*.

Had such people considered only what was immediately 'practicable' no new movements could ever have come into being; for practicality depends on support, and if support is to depend in turn upon practicability, there can be no development.

The dynamic force in politics is the human will, which having determined its objective creates its own possibilities. In the game of politics we may often find that our opponents have cunningly devised the rules in such a way that, however we play our cards, we are bound to lose. In that case we must learn to devise new rules of play.

You have the aces and you have the trumps. Comrades what is wrong with the rules that you always lose? *And what makes you keep to them when the game is yours if you will it?*

Revolt! (incorporating Spain and the World) *1st May 1939*

1 A reference to the Spanish CNT-FAI refugees who were being cared for by the Freedom Press Group — Editor.

Selected Reading List of titles available from

FREEDOM PRESS DISTRIBUTORS

French Revolution

P. Kropotkin:	The Great French Revolution 1789-93 (2 vols) Intro. Bonanno	£7.95
	ditto 1 vol Intro. Woodcock	£11.50

Russian Revolution

Voline:	The Unknown Revolution O/P Reprinting		
P. Arshinov:	History of the Makhnovist Movement (Preface by Voline)		£5.00
A. Berkman:	The Russian Tragedy		£2.50
Mett:	The Kronstadt Uprising	p/b	£1.50
		h/b	£6.50

Italy: Occupation of the Factories

E. Malatesta:	Life and Ideas	£4.00

Spanish Revolution 1936-1939

S. Dolgoff:	The Anarchist Collectives		£7.95
J. Gomez Casas:	Anarchist Organisation. The History of the FAI		£10.95
G. Leval:	Collectives in the Spanish Revolution	h/b	£8.00
A. Paz:	Durruti: The People Armed		£8.95
V. Richards:	Lessons of the Spanish Revolution		£4.00
A. Souchy & others:	The May Days, Barcelona 1937		£2.50

Forthcoming

J. Peirats:	Anarchists in the Spanish Revolution	400 pages	£6.95	c January 1990

Volume 2 Freedom Press Centenary Series *Selections from Spain and the World* 1936-1939 300 pages £5.95 c January 1990

All these titles available through your bookseller or in case of difficulty direct from the publisher/distributor

FREEDOM PRESS 84b Whitechapel High Street London E1 7QX

(Cash with order please. Inland post free. Abroad please add 20% for postage.)

THE RAVEN 8

On Revolution

It was in the name of equality that the bourgeoisie overthrew and massacred the nobility. And it is in the name of equality that we now demand either the violent death or the voluntary suicide of the bourgeoisie, only with this difference — that being less bloodthirsty than the bourgeoisie of the revolutionary period, we do not want the death of men but the abolition of positions and things.

MICHAEL BAKUNIN, *The Lullers*, 1868-69

We will conquer, not so that we may follow the example of past years and hand over our fate to some new master, but to take it in our hands and conduct our lives according to our own will and our own conceptions of truth.

NESTOR MAKHNO, proclamation to the Ukranian peasants, 1918

When a revolutionary situation arises in a country, before the spirit of revolt is sufficiently awakened in the masses to express itself in violent demonstrations in the streets or by rebellions and uprisings, it is through *action* that minorities succeed in awakening that feeling of independence and that spirit of audacity without which no revolution can come to a head.

PETER KROPOTKIN, *The Spirit of Revolt*, 1880

£2.50 FREEDOM PRESS 112 pages