

# Constructive Anarchism

G. P. MAXIMOFF



- THE DEBATE ON THE PLATFORM -

# CONSTRUCTIVE anarchism

G. P. MAXIMOFF

The development of anarcho-syndicalist ideas on working class organisation and the revolutionary struggle for the libertarian reconstruction of society, from the 1st International to the 1930's.

A defence of Anarcho-syndicalism against 'Platformism' and 'Synthetical' anarchism.

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Being in the main a critique of 'Platformism', also included are the following documents:

**ORGANISATIONAL PLATFORM OF A GENERAL UNION OF ANARCHISTS**

by 'The Dielo Trouda Group'

**THE REPLY**

by 'several Russian Anarchists'

**THE MALATESTA/MAKHNO EXCHANGE  
OF LETTERS ON THE 'PLATFORM'**

INTRODUCTION -  
REBEL WORKER - MONTY MILLER PRESS

CONSTRUCTIVE ANARCHISM - G. P. MAXIMOFF

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First published in Russian in 1930, compiled from articles written for the Russian language organ of the IWW in Chicago Golos Truzhenika (Voice of the Toiler), edited by Maximoff. Translated into English by Ada Siegel and published by the 'Maximoff Memorial Publishing Committee', Chicago 1952. This Edition of collected documents is a reprint of Rebel Worker Pamphlet #8 published in 1988 by Monty Miller Press - Sydney (including the Introduction; Note on the Text and Publications by G.P. Maximoff) Printed by Black Cat Printers. Distributed by Jura Books (Australia).

Documents:

1. ORGANISATIONAL PLATFORM OF A  
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First published in Russian & French in 1926 by the Dielo Truda (Worker's cause) group in Paris. First English translation published by 'Organisation of Revolutionary Anarchists' (ORA), London 1971. Later revised editions issued by 'Anarchist Workers Association' (AWA), 1975 & 1977.

2. 'REPLY' BY SEVERAL RUSSIAN  
ANARCHISTS TO THE 'PLATFORM' - VOLINE,  
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- Reasons for the Weakness of the Anarchist Movement
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- Form of Anarchist Organisation

First issued in French, Paris 1927. First English translation by Abe Bluestein, included in his *Fighters for Anarchism* (Libertarian Publishing Group), Minneapolis 1983 - a memorial volume on two of the authors, Mollie Steimer and Senya Fleshin.

3. THE MALATESTA / MAKHNO EXCHANGE

- Malatesta - A Plan for Anarchist Organisation
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  - The Organisation of Labour and Specific Organisation.
  - One or Several Organisations?
  - Anarchism and Collective Responsibility.
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The original review 'A Plan for Anarchist Organisation' by Malatesta was published in the bilingual French & Italian paper *Il Risveglio* (The Reawakening), Geneva act 1927. First full English translation appeared in 'Freedom', London, and an abridged version in 'Cienfuegos Press Anarchist Review' #5, Orkney 1980. The letter of Makhno and Malatesta's reply were published in *Il Risveglio*, Geneva Dec 1929. The English translations appear here for the first time.

# INTRODUCTION

Contrary to what one might have expected from the key role of Russians in the early history of the doctrine of revolutionary anarchism, Russian anarchism disappeared from the scene soon after the death of Bakunin and did not reappear until the 1905 revolution. Thus when anarchism did reappear in Russia there were formidable competitors already on the scene: the social democrats of Bolshevik, Menshevik and intermediate tendencies and the socialist revolutionaries. Both of these parties had consolidated themselves some years earlier, out of movements and tendencies which themselves had roots in the revolutionary movement of the 1870's and 1880's. Both of them had natural constituencies - the workers in the one case and the peasants in the other (although these were not completely separate groups) - into which revolutionary anarchism would have to make inroads to succeed. Thus anarchism had an even more unfavourable outlook than that other unsuccessful late starter, Russian liberalism, which at least could look to an influential, if narrow, natural support base amongst the better-off intelligentsia, commercial and industrial middle classes and enlightened nobility. It is no accident then that the two best known anarchist chroniclers of the Russian revolution came to anarchism from other movements after the 1905 revolution - Arshinoff from bolshevism - and Voline from the Socialist Revolutionaries - and it is also no accident that both of them conceived revolution in the most extreme terms possible. With its natural terrain already occupied by other movements, extremism was really all Russian anarchism had to offer. At times of revolutionary excitement this could lead to a rapid growth in the movement but if, as in 1917, the larger and more established revolutionary groups adapted their own agitation to the mood of the masses their rapid growth would swamp the anarchists.

By themselves these factors would have ensured that the anarchist movement remained small - in 1917/18 it numbered perhaps 10,000 with Syndicalist delegates representing perhaps 75,000 workers at trade union and factory committee conferences - but other factors were also at work to make it weaker yet. From the start there was a division between individualists and communists within anarchism but this division had a rather different meaning under Russian conditions from what it would have today or elsewhere then. The individualists tended towards "terror without motive" whilst the left-wing of the Anarcho-communists endorsed expropriation by armed detachments but the difference was not great and in anti-state insurrectionary propaganda the two could easily run together. The difference between the two was over the organisation (or lack of it) of future society but not necessarily in the understanding of revolution or at least its destructive phase. Since also the Russian anarcho-communists remained at the level of agitation and propaganda amongst the masses rather than rising to the level of organisation of the masses (Russia could only acquire a Syndicalist movement after the February revolution) the organisational forms of Russian anarchism - small groups and circles - did not make for

differentiation between individualism and Anarcho-communism.

In this situation the impact of the revolution could only be to further disintegrate a movement that was never integrated or coherent. Once the revolution was underway propaganda for construction would have to take over from demands for destruction if anarchism was to have any influence at all. This necessitated clearly distinguishing between individualism and communism. However at the same time there arose - for non-individualists the question of tactics and strategies in an ongoing revolution. This led to a clear separation between the anarcho-communists with their focus on the problem of organising the consumption of the "masses", and the Syndicalists with their focus on the problems of the revolutionary fighting and post-revolutionary productive organisation of the "workers". Anarcho-communism, lacking any clear tactical or strategic bases, then split between simple armed opposition to everything "statist" and collaboration with (and subordination to) the bolshevik party. Anarcho-syndicalism, more coherent in its organisational, tactical and post-revolutionary ideas than the other variants, also faced problems with the emergence of the factory committees which had no place in the original syndicalist scheme of things, but these problems were at least surmountable within its own universe of ideas. Despite this syndicalism was born and fated to remain a minority tendency in a trade union movement dominated by Mensheviks and a factory committee movement with strong links to the bolsheviks.

Within the sad chronicle of Russian anarchism only one episode stands out: that of the Makhnovist movement in the Ukraine (1918-1921). The anarchist-led partisans achieved brilliant military successes against the Germans, Ukrainian nationalists and White armies and for a long period withstood the attacks of the Red Army when the latter turned on them. Behind the partisan lines the anarchists tried to spark off an independent social and political organisation of the liberated areas and to re-organise the anarchist movement. (ultimately both these attempts were to fail: the war of movement prevented the consolidation of base areas and the Anarcho-syndicalists remained aloof from the projected unification of the anarchist movement. The insurrectionary army remained the dominant factor in the situation.)

It is hardly surprising that reflection on the complete political failure of Russian anarchism in general and the relative military success of its Ukrainian wing in particular should have led some anarchists towards a demand for tighter and more disciplined organisation. Nor is it surprising that amongst the protagonists of such organisation should be the leader and the chronicler of the Ukrainian movement. The unfortunate thing was that faced with two successful examples - the bolshevik party and the anarchist army - Arshinoff, Makhno and their group produced an organisational platform and politics incorporating the main features of both. This alienated the anarcho-syndicalists, who were

organisationally serious but with totally different organisational and political conceptions, and who in any case had their own international organisation, the I.W.A. (International Workers Association) and it failed to attract the anarcho-communists who could not fail to perceive the bolshevism implicit in the organisational and political prescriptions. The drafters of the platform had fallen into the error of believing that organisational forms were merely a technical matter and that the politics of an organisation were governed by its explicit aims, often their opponents fell into the obverse error of believing that all organisational forms (i.e. all formal organisation) were politically statist.

The major focus of criticism of the "Platform" was directed against what was labeled "Syntheticism". The "Synthesis" or "Synthetical Declaration of Principles" was commissioned from Voline by the Nabat (Tocsin) Anarchist Confederation of the Ukraine (1918-1920). It was an attempt to provide a framework within which the different types of anarchist (syndicalists, communists, individualists) could co-operate.

In answer to the publication of the "Platform", Voline, along with other "Nabat" militants who survived the Bolshevik terror, by going into exile, published in 1927 what became known as "The Reply". This document remains as the major attack on "Platformism" by the "Synthesis" anarchists.

Meanwhile the anarcho-syndicalists who went into exile, did not remain aloof from this "debate". The most detailed criticism of the "Platform" as well as the deficiencies in the "Reply" were made by G. P. Maximoff in the pages of 'Golos Truzhenika'. It was later collectively published with the title "Constructive Anarchism". This thorough analysis by Maximoff (besides clearly stating the clear differences between anarcho-syndicalism and platformism is of value also for its elaboration of the development of the constructive program of anarcho-syndicalism from within the 1st International up till the reformation of the I.W.A. in 1922.

The main purpose of this pamphlet is to republish the ideas expressed in Maximoff's long article. However, so that a new generation can examine all sides of this critical debate in the history of revolutionary anarchism, we have decided to include the other primary documents: "The Platform" itself and "The Reply". To indicate how the debate extended beyond the Russian exiles, also included is Malatesta's important analysis of anarchist organisation and his subsequent exchange of views with Makhno.

The debate on the Platform was not restricted to these primary documents published together here for the first time in English. Other writings of importance were:-

1. The subsequent theoretical writings of Arshinoff "La Réponse aux Confusionnistes de l'Anarchisme" (Paris, 1927), "Anarklizm i Diktatura Proletariata" (Paris, 1931)
2. The series of articles published in the organ of the Spanish CNT "Solidaridad Obrera" in 1932 by Alexander Schapiro, the then general secretary of the IWA, his position against the Platform was very similar to that of Maximoff.
3. Other writings of Voline: "Le sens de La Destruction", "De La Synthese" and "Le Vertable Revolution Sociale".
4. Besides Malatesta, others outside the circles of exiled Russian anarchists wrote important and influential articles. Particularly worthy of republishing would be those of Luigi Fabbri, Camillo Berneri, Max Nettlau and Sebastien Faure.

In France, Faure became after Voline the most important theoretician of "Synthetical" anarchism.

A useful follow up volume to the documents published here would contain the best of the above. Regrettably none have as yet been translated into English. Also useful would be a history of organisations founded on "Platformist" principles.



# Constructive Anarchism

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## 1. Introduction

Before we examine the principles of Anarcho-syndicalism, it is necessary to summarise briefly the development of international Anarchism since the war [1], and to consider its present situation.

The Imperialist war, the rise and decline of the Great Russian revolution, the uprisings in Central European countries, and the intensification of the class struggle in other lands, obliged Anarchists to investigate more thoroughly the true character of social revolution and the practical means needed for its realisation. In the pages of Anarchist and Revolutionary Syndicalist publications in all countries the problems of construction, tactics and organisation were discussed with increasing frequency. Unfortunately, these problems were only stated; they were not resolved. And only relatively few of the fundamental questions were actually answered.

The first practical attempt to deal with the question of organisational forms in the social revolution must be found in the formation of the International Workingmen's Association of 1921 - the International of Revolutionary Syndicalist Trade Unions. From that moment, Anarcho-syndicalism became an organised international factor. The International Workingmen's Association adopted the philosophy of Anarchist Communism, and, in addition to devoting itself to day-to-day efforts in the interests of the world proletariat, it strove, from the first day of its existence, to find solutions to all those questions which face, both now and in the future, the exploited masses in their struggle for full liberation.

Nevertheless, despite these considerations and despite the fact that the International Workingmen's Association was a direct heir of the First International, continuing the work of the Jura Federation and of Michael Bakunin, its emergence was not welcomed unanimously in Anarchist circles. A group of Russian anarchist emigres, for instance, decided to establish, along similar lines to the International Workingmen's Association, a new organisation called the General Association of Anarchists. And three years ago, in 1927, the "Group of Russian Anarchists Abroad" submitted to the international Anarchist movement a "Project for an Organisational Platform of a General Association of Anarchists", which attempted to resolve the various problems on a different level from the International Workingmen's Association. This attempt aroused natural interest in Anarchist circles, and it is still being propagated in the publications of that group.

Before reviewing the fundamental principles of our own program, it is necessary to discuss this "Platform" in greater detail, as well as the "Reply" which was made to it by "several Russian Anarchists". We shall scrutinise these two pronouncements of Anarchist thought, not from love of controversy, but only in order to render

[1] The First World War of 1914-18.

more precise our attitude towards those positive organisational and tactical issues which today or any day might arise in their full magnitude in Russia itself and in other countries as well. In addition, the "Platform" and the "Reply" to it are both filled with every kind of distortion of Anarchist concepts, and to ignore these distortions would amount to moral transgression against the Anarchist movement. It is hoped that the considerable space which will be devoted in this study to a criticism of these matters will be found justified by the above considerations.

## 2. Positive and Negative Aspects of Anarchism

It is not within the scope of this study to examine the development of Anarchist thought. My task is practical. After analysing the living and concrete Anarchist movement from the moment of its inception to the present day, I shall attempt to determine its shortcomings, errors and ambiguities in theory and tactics. And further, on the basis of historical experience, I shall propose for consideration methods which, in my view, could help our movement in the struggle towards the realisation of its program.

Thought precedes movement. Every act and every movement of the individual, unless it is either mechanical or instinctive, is the result of premeditation, of thought. Before he acts, man thinks about the act - no matter whether the period of thought is brief or long - and only after this labour of the mind does he take steps to transform thought into reality. The same process can be observed in the intricate organism of human society.

In this complex social organisation, as well, the idea precedes the action. And for that reason the history of ideas does not coincide in time with the history of the movements which serve these ideas. Thus, the history of Anarchist and Socialist ideas can be traced back to antiquity, but the history of the Anarchist and Socialist movements begins only in the sixties of the last century, with the organisation of the International Association of Workers, or, as it is now commonly called, the First International. To that time I ascribe the beginning of the mass movement of Anarchist workers, and with it I begin the examination and analysis of the movement which we all serve according to our understanding and ability.

A study of the mistakes of the past will help us to avoid repeating them in the present and the future. The courage to admit mistakes, and the ability to discover their real causes are signs of a living spirit and a clear, open mind. If a movement shows evidence of these vital qualities, it is indeed healthy and strong, and it has a role to play in the future. Let us try then, within the limits of our ability, to serve the movement in this way. Inspired by this purpose, let us begin the examination of our movement which grew, as already indicated, out of the International Association of Working Men (First International).

What manner of Association was that? When, how and why did it emerge? The First International itself is not my subject, and I shall sketch its history only to the extent needed for the consideration of the Anarchist movement, whose early development was inextricably linked with it. For this reason I shall limit my examination to one fraction of the International, the group known as the "Federalists" or the "Bakuninists".

The cornerstone of the International was laid during the International Exhibition of 1862 in London, and the Association itself was actually founded at the famous meeting in St. Martin's Hall in London on September 23, 1864. That meeting elected a provisional committee of organisation, which in time became the General Council of the International. The Committee elaborated the Declaration of the International and its provisional statutes. These statutes were edited by Karl Marx who, though a member of the committee, played a very passive part in the formation of the International.

Under the influence of propaganda, sections of the International were formed in several Western European countries. Many of their members had only the vaguest and most confused notions of the aims and purposes of the Association. And, because they included considerable numbers of the radical intelligentsia, these sections frequently cooperated with the radical political parties. Thus, the first adherent of the International in Switzerland, Dr. Coullery, pursued a program of neo-Christianity and his newspaper had a fairly extensive readership. A similar situation arose in France. In short, the sections of the International were, ideologically speaking, a motley and mutually contradictory collection, and only in time were they moulded into a conscious and active social force.

The First Congress of the International was scheduled to take place during 1865, in Brussels, but it was called off because of a new Belgian law which discriminated against foreigners. In its place, a conference was called in London for the 25th to 29th of September of the same year. At this conference the delegates from France were all Proudhonists - Tolain, Fribourg, Limousin and Varlin - later a member of the Paris Commune. Caesar de Paepe came from Belgium, Dupleix and J. P. Becker, one-time participant in the Dresden uprising, from the French and German speaking parts of Switzerland respectively. Among the emigrants, who represented no specific sections, there were Dupont, Le Lubez, Herman Jung and Karl Marx. This conference considered labour problems primarily, but it also touched on questions concerning international politics, and it decided to call the first Congress of the International in Geneva for the fall of 1866.

This Congress took place from September 3rd to the 8th, and was attended by 65 delegates - sixty of them representing national sections and five from the General Council. Most of these delegates were Swiss and French. Since this Congress is of the greatest importance in the history of the Anarchist and Socialist movements, I shall review its agenda and resolutions.

The agenda is most interesting, and to this day the issues placed before the consideration of the Congress have not lost their concrete significance, not only for the modern labour movement in general, but for the Anarchist movement in particular, whose attitudes on these issues were responsible for the division of the

International into divergent factions. This agenda consisted of the following items:

1. Unification of the workingmen's efforts in their struggle against Capitalism by the organisation of unions.
2. The shortening of the working day.
3. Female and child labour in industry.
4. Labour unions, their past, present and future.
5. Co-operatives.
6. Direct and indirect taxation.
7. Organisation of international credit.
8. The need for the destruction of the reactionary influence of Russia in Europe by means of the establishment of a series of separate states based on self-determination. (The reconstruction of Poland on democratic foundations).
9. The existence of standing armies.
10. Religion and its influence on the social, political and intellectual evolution of nations.
11. Mutual Aid societies.

The most important achievement of the Congress was, of course, the final ratification of the statutes of the International, which will be examined below. First, however, I shall examine the resolutions on several issues which, in my opinion, continue to be vital for the Anarchist movement as a whole.

There is no unanimity among Anarchists on the question of labour's struggle against capital. They differ in particular on the issue of unifying the efforts of the working men and their fight against the exploiters. And this variation in attitudes towards labour unions is the main issue dividing the Anarcho-communist camp into two major fractions - the Anarcho-communists pure and simple and the Anarcho-syndicalists. Those present-day Anarchists who are Syndicalist do not believe that labour associations could be the nucleus of a future society by developing into federations of producers and stateless communes. The Anarcho-syndicalists, on the other hand, hold that only rank-and-file labour organisations are capable of providing the initial element in the structure of new society, in which a federal International of producers' associations will take the place of government.

Further, many Anarchists consider the Trade Union fight for everyday interests to be petty, worthless and even harmful; they call it a negligible, penny-wise policy which only serves to deflect the attention of the workers from their main task, the destruction of capital and the state. The Anarcho-syndicalists, on the other hand, view the everyday struggle of the working classes as of tremendous importance. They believe that the reduction of hours of work is a great blessing since, after a long working day, the worker is so weary that he has no time or energy for social problems or communal issues; he knows only one need - physical rest. A long working day, indeed, transforms him into a toiling animal. The same importance is attached by the Anarcho-syndicalists to the increase of wages. Wherever wages are low, there is destitution; where there is destitution, there is ignorance, and an ignorant pauperised worker cannot be a Revolutionist, because he has no opportunity to realise or appreciate his human dignity, and because he cannot understand the structure of exploitation that oppresses him.

How did the Anarchists of the First International react to these issues? The First Congress of the International passed a resolution saying that "at the present stage of production workers must be supported in their fight for pay increases." Further, the Congress noted that the ultimate aim of the labour movement is "destruction of the system of hired labour" and it therefore recommended a serious "study of economic ways and means to achieve this goal, founded on justice and mutual aid."

The second Congress of the International, held in Lausanne in 1867; accepted the same resolution. The third Congress, meeting in Brussels, from September 6th to 13th, 1868, debated the question of strikes, of federation between labour associations and of the establishment of special Coordination Councils whose task it would be to determine whether a given strike was either legal or useful. The Congress then passed a resolution saying:

"This Congress declares that the strike is not a weapon for the full liberation of the worker, but that it is frequently rendered necessary in the struggle between labour and capital in modern society; it is essential therefore to subject strikes to certain rules so that they be called at propitious times only, and with the assurance of competent organisation.

"As to the organisation of strikes, it is essential that labour unions of resistance exist in all trades, and that these unions be federated with all other labour unions in all countries ...

"To determine the timeliness and legality of strikes, a special commission composed of Trade Union delegates should be established in every locality."

On the issue of the reduction of working hours, the Congress declared that "the reduction of working hours is a primary condition for every improvement in the position of the workers, and for that reason this Congress has decided to begin agitation in all countries for the realisation of this aim by constitutional means."

At the fourth Congress of the International in Basel during September 1869 - it was the penultimate Congress - the French delegate, the carpenter Pindy, read a paper on the issue of labour unions of resistance (as Trade Unions were called in those days) in which he incidentally expressed thoughts which later became basic to French Revolutionary Syndicalism, and which have since been stressed continually by those Anarchists who now call themselves Anarcho-syndicalists. Pindy said that, in his view, labour unions must join with each other in local, national and, finally, international federations. In the future society, too, the Trade Unions would have to unite in free communes, headed by Councils of deputies from the Unions. These Councils would regulate relations between the various trades and would take the place of contemporary political institutions. The Congress carried a resolution proposed by Pindy, which stated that the unions must, "in the interests of their branch of industry, gather all essential information, consider common problems, conduct strikes and concern themselves with their successful conclusion until such time as the system of hired labour is replaced by the association of free producers." Such, according to the records of all the Congresses, was the ideological viewpoint on the labour issue of the Anarchists who

participated in the First International.

But the International was not an organisation dominated by Anarchists. It included Marxists, Blanquists and Proudhonist-mutualists, plain Socialists and even radical Democrats. How then can one ascribe the program of the International to the Anarchists of those days? The mere fact of their membership in the International is not sufficient, since they could have been in the minority and have dissented from the viewpoint of the resolutions which were adopted. The question is justified, although not completely so, since, had the Anarchists not agreed with resolutions, there would have been some evidence of their protest at the Congresses themselves and later in their press, a method used by them whenever they differed from the opinion of the General Council in London. However, there exists a great deal of additional material which shows that, until the Hague Congress, the Anarchists accepted the program of the International in full.

One has only to refer to the works and letters of Bakunin. His pamphlets, "The Policy of the International," "The Organisation of the International," "Universal Revolutionary Union", as well as a number of others, prove this contention clearly and convincingly. But, to make the matter more certain, one should not rely on Bakunin's pamphlets alone, but should also consider the following quotations from the documents of the Jura Federation, which then headed the theoretical and practical Anarchist movement, as well as several quotations from the program which Bakunin drew up for the "Social-Democratic Alliance."

How is the program of the Alliance related to the issue of the labour movement under discussion here? Paragraph 11 states that land, like all other capital, is a tool of production which must become the collective property of society as a whole, to be utilised only by the working people, i.e. the industrial and agricultural associations of the workers." Paragraph V contains a thesis which is still a part of the fundamental principles of modern Anarcho-syndicalism, but which is denied by many Anarcho-communists. It takes up the question - what is to replace the existing State? - and makes the following declaration: "The Alliance recognises that all modern political and authoritarian states, limited increasingly to the simple administrative functions essential to society, must dissolve into an international union of free agricultural and industrial associations."

The Congress of the Romance Federation at Chaux-Le-Fonds in 1870 passed a resolution which has remained valid to this day, at least for the Syndicalist fraction of Anarchist Communists, and which deserves to be quoted in full:

"Considering the fact that the full liberation of labour is possible only in conditions of the transformation of the existing political structure, which is sustained by privilege and power, into an economic society founded in equality and freedom, and that every government or political state represents only the organisation of bourgeois exploitation whose expression is juridical law, and that any participation of the working class in bourgeois governmental politics can result only in the strengthening of the existing structure which in turn would paralyse the revolutionary activities of the proletariat, the Congress of the Romance

Federation recommends to every section of the International the repudiation of all activities seeking social reorganisation by means of political reforms. It suggests instead the concentration of all efforts on the creation of federated trade unions as the only weapon capable of assuring the success of the social revolution. Such a federation would be labour's true representative, its parliament, but it would be independent and completely outside the influence of political government."

As to the forms of a future society, the Jura sections of the International visualized them in the same light as did Bakunin and as the present-day Anarcho-syndicalists still do. In the newspaper, "Solidarity" of August 20, 1870, in an article entitled "Geographical Unification", we read: "In the future Europe will not consist of a federation of different nations, politically organised in republics, but of a simple federation of labour union without any distinction according to nationality."

This, then, was the labour program of the Anarchist movement from the formation of the International until the disintegration of the Jura Federation in 1880 when, at its last Congress, its sections accepted the title of Anarchist-Communism.

An analysis of the labour program of the International and its practical application leads inevitably to one fundamental flaw which fatally affected the development of the Labour movement. This flaw was the discrepancy between theory and practice. We have seen that the International had declared the economic liberation of the workers to be the goal of the labour movement, and the labour unions to be its basis. The natural and logical conclusion would have been for the International to be constituted on the principle of the federation of Labour Unions organised according to trades. Instead, it was founded on the association of sections composed of all kinds of different elements. The entire blame for this cannot of course be placed on the International; the absence of historical experience, and the specific conditions in which the association was forced to exist and develop, are clearly understandable reasons. Yet the fact remains that the sectional organisation of the International was undoubtedly one of the main reasons for the downfall and disintegration of that magnificent organisation. The modern Anarchist movement has benefited from its historic experience, and the second International Workingmen's Association, founded in Berlin in 1922, was built on the principle of the unification, not of sections, but of the industrial associations in various countries.

The sectional structure of the International and of its federations fatally reacted on the Anarchist movement in its pure form. What happened was that, when the Anarchists, after the split in the International, organised themselves into a Federalist International, they exchanged the sections for groups, and, because of the decline of the organisation, they did not realise that in this way they exchanged a mass labour movement, permeated with the Anarchist spirit, for a simple movement of Anarchist groups which had little organic contact with the labour movement.

In time the estrangement became increasingly more evident. Anarchism began to lose its practical foothold and turned more and more towards theory. As a result the movement was joined by people who were little, or

not at all, connected with the working classes. They were idealists who sincerely sought the liberation of the proletariat but, not having been seasoned in the revolutionary struggle, and seeing the desired liberation unfulfilled during the expected period, they became disillusioned with group efforts, using weapons which might more effectively hasten the desired results. It is in this psychology that we must seek the roots of the Syndicalist attitudes which, I am deeply convinced, have done Anarchism a great deal of harm and have hindered its progressive growth as a mass labour movement.

I will continue now the discussion of other problems which were under constant consideration in the International in general, and its federalist sections in particular. I have not available the resolutions of the first Congress on all the items of its agenda. But, since the majority of these issues were also discussed during subsequent Congresses, it is possible, by reference to their records, to outline the program of the International concerning these questions.

Before, however, beginning our exposition of the program, one very important question on the agenda of the second Congress should be dealt with, particularly since it amplifies and clarifies the Labour program already discussed. It is the question which has not only retained its urgency for our own days, but which also forms the basic obstacle to unity in the Anarcho-communist movement, as well as a target for socialist attacks in the dispute over the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The question was formulated in this manner:

"Would not the efforts of the Labour associations for the liberation of the fourth estate (the proletariat) lead to the creation of a new class - the fifth estate - whose position under Socialism might be even more terrible than the position of the proletariat under Capitalism?"

The fact that such a question was raised at all is in itself significant. It shows, firstly, the great maturity in socialist thought of the members of the International and, secondly, it points to their sense of responsibility and caution concerning the solution of complex social problems. This question, I believe, arose within the International partly because some members were propagating the idea of the dictatorship of the proletariat, with which a majority did not agree. The prophets of dictatorship thus made the Internationalists aware of the possibility that the new society, constructed on the thesis of the replacement of the State by Labour Unions, might create conditions in which the proletariat would become the ruling class suppressing other classes - for instance, the peasantry. The Congress did not deny such a possibility; it seemed actually to admit it, but, having no alternative, it could only recommend methods which might more or less counteract the possibility of results so undesirable from the viewpoint of true socialism. The Congress passed a resolution in which it stated that, to avoid the formation of a new exploiting hierarchy, it would be necessary for labour unions to be permeated with the ideals of mutual aid and solidarity and for the proletariat to be convinced that a social upheaval must lead to justice and not the creation of new privileges, even for their own class.

At a time when Anarchist thought was being moulded

by living experience as a movement of the working masses, such doubts were normal and fully justified, and the decision of the Congress was perfectly natural. When Capitalism had not yet entirely matured and the labour organisations had only begun to function on a revolutionary basis, the members of the Congress could have come to no other decision than to attempt to raise the level of consciousness in the working masses. The need for this remains, today, as strong as ever. But it is no longer the only need.

Now Anarchist thought has become mature and it must, moreover, operate in conditions utterly different from the economic circumstances of those days. Today the question outlined above can arise only for the State Socialists, who strive to establish a class dictatorship in the form of a class State. For Anarchists, who aim at the destruction of the State and its replacement by the federations of productive associations, the question is ridiculous. It is ridiculous because Anarchism, organising society in this manner, involves the entire adult working population in the productive associations, independent of their former social positions, i.e. the classes are destroyed at once and hence there can be no question of class rule. However, a different problem could be raised now: would not the Communist organisation of society result in the suppression of the individual in a more severe form than under Capitalist individualism?

The question is justified and we cannot deny such a possibility entirely. But society will discover, I believe, sufficiently effective means to prevent the materialization of this possibility. As to the problem of class rule, the Anarcho-communists and the Anarcho-syndicalists differ sharply on this issue. The former insist, obviously in error, that syndicalization would lead to class rule, i.e. to dictatorship. Yet they themselves have nothing to offer in place of the danger they foresee.

To turn to the remaining issues, apart from the labour unions, co-operation in all its forms was a burning issue in the days of the First International, and at the various Congresses a good deal of attention was paid to this movement. The agenda of every Congress contained items either on co-operatives in general or on specific aspects of the movement. At the first Congress, for instance, the following items were discussed: co-operatives, organisation of international credit, mutual aid societies. At the second Congress: how the working classes could utilise, for the purpose of their liberation, the savings deposited in bourgeois and governmental financial institutions. At the third Congress - credit.

Such insistence shows the extent to which the international proletariat of those days was interested in the issue of co-operatives. In our times because of Anarchist efforts to develop positive and practical programs, this question is once again on the agenda. For that reason it is important to learn how it was resolved by our illustrious predecessors.

The decisions of the first Congress concerning this question are not available. At the second Congress, on the question of workers' savings, Charles Longuet reported in favour of organising a Proudhonian-Mutualist system of credit with national labour banks which would provide interest-free loans to the workers. Eccarius suggested that the working co-operatives of artisans and the labour unions should use their capital for the organisation of productive associations. The third

Congress accepted these proposals in resolutions recommending the establishment of people's banks which would provide the labour organisations with capital.

The English section reported on co-operatives. Without denying the usefulness of co-operative organisations, it indicated a dangerous tendency noticeable in a majority of such bodies in England, which were beginning to develop into purely commercial and capitalist institutions, thus creating the opportunity for the birth of a new class - the working bourgeoisie. Following this report the Congress passed a resolution recommending that the main purpose of the co-operatives should be kept constantly alive - "to wrench from the hands of private capitalists the means of production and to return them to their lawful owners, the productive workers". [1] This, then, was the viewpoint of the International. It paid due respect in this matter to the Proudhonian and Owenite utopias, which to this day are advocated by the social-cooperators and by some Anarchists.

There is no doubt, of course, that co-operatives are most useful institutions. For Anarchists to work in mass co-operatives is as necessary and as useful as to work in trade unions. But this does not mean that co-operation is the magic wand by which the Capitalist structure can be changed into Anarchist Communism. Many Internationalists actually believed that, and hence arose their enthusiastic attitude towards co-operation. Others, like Bakunin, were more far-sighted, realising the great positive part that co-operatives would play in the future structure of the new society, but looking upon them at the present stage with indifference, "The experience of the past twenty years," Bakunin wrote, "a unique experience which reached its widest scope in England, Germany and France, has proved conclusively that the co-operative system, while undoubtedly containing the essence of the future economic structure, cannot, at the present time under present conditions, liberate or even improve to any considerable extent the living standards of the working people". The latter part of Bakunin's statement has been verified by experience, while the first is just beginning to be confirmed.

Many Anarchists in Spain to this day, if not the majority here, take an uncompromisingly hostile attitude towards co-operatives, and they thus commit the same unpardonable error as did the Russian Anarchists in the period of 1905-6. It is not possible to propose some kind of Anarcho-Cooperativism, but one cannot deny the usefulness of co-operatives to the working population. And apart from all this, one must not forget that co-operatives, e.g. the Christian or workers' co-operatives, are mass organisations, and hence provide a tremendous field for Anarchist propaganda and cultural activity. We should also remember the viewpoint of Bakunin, quoted above, that co-operatives contain the essence of the future economic structure. That is undoubtedly so and, in view of that fact alone, it is not advisable to repeat the errors of the past.

The problem of education, too, was often on the agenda of the Congresses of the First International. The third Congress adopted a resolution on this issue, while the fourth left the discussion of the problem to the

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[1] The Fourth Congress, because of a lack of time, did not consider the question of credit

following session. Recognising that at the present time the organisation of rational education was impossible, the Congress "invited its sections to organise public courses with a program of scientific, professional and integral education, so as to complement at least partially the totally inadequate education available to workers at present." The Congress considered the reduction of working hours a preliminary and essential condition. In one of his later articles, "Comprehensive Education", Bakunin agreed fully with this resolution. This article, as well as various other papers on this subject, and particularly the works of Robin, laid the foundation for the theory of free labour education which is today accepted by all cultured people. And for that the International deserves much credit. A resolution of the second Congress excluded the State from the sphere of education and assured full freedom to education, and instruction. The interference of the State was to be permitted only when the father of the child could not provide the funds needed for its education.

As to Statehood itself, the International began to repudiate it definitively only after the seceding sections had organised themselves into the Federalist International. Until that secession, it could not decide finally to dissociate itself from this pernicious concept; this irresolution, of course, would not have been maintained without the influence of Marx, although the Anarchists themselves were at first none too clear on the subject, if not in principle, at least in form.

As for the political struggle, the International - right up to the split at the Hague Congress in 1872 - stood against activity on parliamentary and political party lines. At the Lausanne Congress it adopted a resolution which said that "since the absence of political freedom in a country presents an obstacle to the social enlightenment of the people and the liberation of the proletariat, the Congress declares: (1) that the social liberation of the workers is indivisible from their political liberation and (2) that the establishment of political freedom is the first, and unconditional necessity in each country".

While it carried such a resolution, the Congress nevertheless reacted negatively to participation in the political struggle; instead it continued to function on an economic plane alone. And when Marx and his followers at the Hague Congress decided to add to the statutes a resolution concerning the political activities of the working classes, the split occurred. The Anarchists and their followers preferred to stand on their old position, and to advocate gaining political freedom by means of the economic struggle.

One further question remains to be discussed - that of land ownership. Thereafter, we shall be able to turn to an analysis of the fundamental theses of the International and its statements of principle as expressed in the Preamble to the Statutes, as well as to an examination of its organisational concepts. The question of land ownership was considered at the Basel Congress in 1869, the fourth Congress - the only one at which Bakunin was present. In face of opposition by the Marxists, this Congress carried a resolution on the socialisation of land and the abolition of the right of inheritance. As to the first question, the International voted for the abolition of private ownership and the establishment of collective ownership in land. When, however, it came to considering the methods of

organising agriculture, the Congress had no unified views. On this second question a majority of thirty-two, against twenty-three Marxists, voted for Bakunin's resolution whose concluding sentence read: "The Congress votes for the complete and radical abolition of the right of inheritance, considering this to be one of the essential conditions for the liberation of labour." This was the first collision of the two trends in the International, which were represented by the personalities of Bakunin and Marx.

Now let us examine the statutes of the International. Its entire philosophy and all its fundamental principles, accepted as articles of faith by all convinced Socialists of the world to this day, are expressed in the Preamble to these Statutes. The declarations are indisputable and their formulation is concise, admirable and expressive. They are:

1. The liberation of the working classes must be the task of the working classes themselves.
2. The struggle for the liberation of the workers must in no case be a struggle for class privileges and monopolies but for the establishment of equal rights and obligations for all and for the abolition of all class rule
3. The economic subjugation of workers to the owners of the means of production, which are the source of life, is the cause of serfdom in all its forms, of social misery, spiritual degeneration and political dependency.
4. The economic liberation of the workers is the great goal to which all political movements must be subordinated.
5. All efforts up to the present to realise this great task have remained unsuccessful because of a lack of solidarity among the workers of various trades in each country, and because of the absence of brotherly unity and organisation among the working classes of different countries.
6. The liberation of labour is not a local or national task, but a social problem involving all countries where the modern structure exists, and its solution depends on practical and theoretical co-operation among the more progressive countries.
7. The working class, which is arousing new hopes in its true regeneration in the more industrialised countries of Europe, issues a solemn warning against a falling back into the old errors and calls immediately for the unification of all movements which, so far, have been divided.
8. All organisations and individuals, who are members of the International, recognise truth, justice and morality as the basic principles for their behaviour towards each other and towards all peoples without difference of race, creed or nationality.
9. They consider it their duty to demand the rights of man and citizen not only for themselves but for all who fulfil their obligations. There are no rights without obligations; there are no obligations without rights.

Such was the program of the International - the philosophy of the mass labour movement which has not been rejected to this day by a single Anarchist, and which lies at the root of the teachings of Bakunin, of the Jura Federation and of Kropotkin. The same is not true

of the Marxists, who soon departed from certain concepts of the International. The first to do so was Marx himself, and in that way he was responsible for the split in the International.

What were the organisational principles of the International? Their examination will conclude this outline of its program, and of the program of the Anarchist-Collectivists, i.e. the Bakuninists. The statutes of the International, accepted at the first Congress, assigned no administrative rights to the General Council. The only right assigned to it was that to change the location of the following Congress, but not its schedule. The Council, therefore, was not the central administrative organ but only a liaison and correspondence bureau and its members were elected by the Congress. The individual sections were independent of the Council and had the right to their own programs and constitutions, as long as these were not in contradiction with the general principles of the adopted statutes. Each section had the right to elect, from among its members, correspondents to the General Council of the organisation, and it paid dues according to its membership to cover the expenses of the Council. Finally, each section had the right to send one delegate to the Congress, irrespective of the number of its members, but sections counting more than 500 had the right to send additional delegates for each 500 members. Each delegate to the Congress, however many sections he might represent, had one vote.

It is interesting to note that, at the fourth Congress, there was evidence, on the one hand, of a tendency to adapt the structure of the International to the imagined structure of the future society, while, on the other hand, the Congress, under Bakunin's leadership, assigned administrative authority to the General Council. Ironically, it was by using this new authority at the following Congress that Marx managed to settle accounts with Bakunin himself and his friends.

On the question of permitting the existence of chairmen in labour institutions and organisations, the Congress adopted the following resolution:

"Whereas it is unworthy for a labour organisation to retain in its midst a monarchist and authoritarian principle by permitting the existence of a chairman (even if the latter has no powers), the Congress invites all sections and labour organisations who are members of the International to abolish the concept of chairmanship in their midst."

At the same time another resolution, for which Bakunin and his friends voted, assigned to the General Council great administrative powers. The illogicality of the Anarchists on this point can be explained by the fact that Bakunin believed the Council to be more revolutionary than many of the sections. The powers granted by this resolution were as follows:

"The General Council has the right to accept sections into the International, or to refuse acceptance until the next general Congress. The General Council has also the right to close down or to dissolve old sections.

"In case of conflict between individual sections of whatever country, the General Council is appointed arbiter until the next Congress which alone has

authority to make a final decision."

In the course of three years, the Council abused these rights to such an extent that it aroused strong protest on the part of many sections which were prepared to abolish the General Council altogether. Some of them went even further; they denied the need for any statutes in the organisation as a whole. Bakunin's reaction to this tendency is rather interesting. In a letter to Albert Richard, he remarked:

"You write, my dear friend, that you are an enemy of all constitutions and you maintain that they are good for nothing but the diversion of children. I do not fully share your views on this point. Superfluous regimentation is loathsome indeed, and I believe, as you do, that 'responsible people' must themselves mark out a course for their behaviour and must not deviate from it.

"However, let us agree on one thing. To assure some unity of action, in my view essential even among the most responsible of men who strive for one and the same goal, certain conditions and certain specific rules, equally binding on all, are required. There must be agreements and understandings, frequently renewed. Otherwise, if everyone were to act only according to his own judgment, even the most earnest men could, and surely would, come to a point when, with the best of intentions, they would actually hinder and paralyze each other. The result would be disharmony instead of the harmony and calm to which we all aspire. We must know how, when and where to find each other, and to whom to turn so that we may get the co-operation of all. A small unit, well organised, has greater value than one that is larger, but disorganised and ill-adapted."

Thus, on the issue of organisation, Bakunin and the Anarchists committed, and tolerated, an unforgivable mistake - a retreat from fundamental federalist principles. And the sad results were not slow in making their appearance. This experience proves that one must not sacrifice fundamental principles even in the interests of realising the best intentions.

If we add to the exposition already given the declaration adopted by the Bakuninists when they established the Federalist International at the Congress of St. Imier, a full account will have been given of the Anarchist movement in the days of the First International, both before and after the cleavage in that organisation.

The text of this declaration will be quoted below. First, however, we should discuss the resolutions of the Congress. This is essential because the resolutions and declaration together form the program on which the Anarchists conducted their activities after the rift in the International and until the decline of its Federalist section, i.e. until 1879 and a little beyond.

The first resolution was concerned with organisational principles. It stated that the autonomy and independence of labour federations and sections was a fundamental condition for the liberation of the workers. Further, the resolution granted the Congress no lawgiving and executive rights, conceding an advisory role only. The resolution also rejected the idea that a minority must submit to the views of the majority.

The second resolution maintained that, in case of an attempt upon the freedom of a federation or section by the majority of any Congress, or by a General Council established by that majority, all other federations and sections must declare themselves in solidarity with the attacked organisation.

The fourth resolution dealt with the framework for "the resistance of labour," i.e. the economic struggle of the proletariat. This resolution postulated the impossibility of achieving any substantial improvement in the living standards of the workers under Capitalism; it considered strikes important weapons in the struggle, but had no illusions about their economic results.

Strikes, to the Federalists, were a means of intensifying the cleavage between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. The third resolution, which I regard as the Declaration, really represents the program of the organisation, and for that reason it will be quoted in full.

"Whereas the attempt to force on the proletariat a uniform political program and tactic, a single way to full social liberation, is as absurd as the claims of reaction; whereas no one has the authority to deny the autonomous federations and sections their unquestionable right to decide independently and to employ the political tactics they consider most suitable, and believing that any such attempts at denial would lead tragically to the most outrageous dogmatism; whereas the aspirations of the proletariat can have no purpose but the construction of unconditionally free economic organisations and federations, based on equality and the labour of all and entirely independent of all political government; whereas these organisations and federations can be the result only of the unflinching action of the proletariat itself, the trade unions of artisans and the autonomous communes; whereas every political organisation can be the organ of domination for the benefit of one class only, rather than for the masses as a whole, and whereas the proletariat, if it decided to seize power, might itself become the ruling and exploiting class, the Congress, meeting at St. Imier, declares:

1. That the destruction of all political power is the first obligation of the proletariat;
2. That the creation of ostensibly temporary, revolutionary political power for the realisation of such destruction can be only a new betrayal and would prove as dangerous for the proletariat as all other governments existing at the present time;
3. That, rejecting all compromise in the realisation of the social revolution, proletarians of all lands must establish the solidarity of revolutionary action free from all bourgeois politics."

With this resolution I am concluding my examination and analysis of the Anarchist movement in its first period. I trust that I have succeeded in emphasizing, not all, but the most significant positive and negative features, achievements and failures of the movement in the days of the First International. It is apparent that the general character of the movement is very similar to that current in contemporary Anarchism which has developed under the name of Anarcho-syndicalism. Many of its basic principles lay at the root of the so-

called Romance Syndicalism, which is undoubtedly the immediate heir of the First International, although, of course, it grew in different historic and economic conditions, which resulted in some inevitable differences between these two tendencies in the labour movement.

Almost simultaneously with the development in the West of the International, an analogous movement emerged and unfolded at the opposite end of Europe, in Russia. It differed from the International in the same way as the historical and economic conditions varied. In Europe, owing to the evolution of Capitalism, the proletariat was already an established fact. In Russia, however, the proletariat was then only in its infancy, and many observers doubted whether Russia would develop a proletarian class at all, since they saw the path of economic development there as entirely different from that of Western Europe.

Russia in those days was an enormous peasant ocean, and for that reason the revolutionary elements based their activities primarily on the peasantry. They gave the proletariat little thought. Similarly, political conditions differed sharply from those of Western Europe. There political liberties already existed. Whereas in Russia, after the short lived "liberalism" of Alexander II had come a dark, oppressive era of Asiatic despotism. In addition, the peasants themselves had only a few years previously ceased to be actual serfs.

In such circumstances, a revolutionary organisation emerged among young people who had originally banded together in small cultural groups, and it was they who were responsible for the most magnificent and heroic epoch of the Russian revolutionary movement. This movement is known by the name of "Populism" (Narodichestvo - the movement of "going to the people" or "Zemlovolchistvo" - combining the words "Zemlya" (Land) and "Volya" (Liberty), the name of their organisation and publication, Land and Liberty. Later, the movement was also called "Narodnovolchistvo" (Populist Socialism).

The history of this movement is complex and colourful, but we unfortunately cannot dwell on it, since it would take us too far afield from the main theme. For that reason we shall restrict ourselves only to an examination of the program and the tactical bases of the movement. In the beginning, two tendencies fought each other within this movement - the Lavrovists and the Bakuninists. But the struggle did not last long. The Bakuninists soon became the dominant element, and Anarchism became the program. It is this Anarchism that we shall examine. This is not an easy task since, so far, there exist no general reviews, no historical researches or summaries on this question. It is therefore necessary to utilise scattered and fragmentary facts, memoirs and newspapers of that period.

The first Anarchist organ in the Russian language was published in 1868, not in Russia, but abroad. Its name was "Dielo Truda", and its editor was Bakunin. From its second issue, however, it fell into the hands of Nicholas Utin, and ceased henceforth to be Anarchist. Since this publication was not particularly important for the Russian movement, which began its development several years later, we shall not discuss it. The first Russian anarchist organ on Russian territory was the magazine "Natchalo" (Beginning) which ceased publication with its fourth issue. It was followed by the publication "Zemlya i Volya" (Land and Liberty), which

played a tremendously important part in the Russian revolutionary movement, and this we shall discuss.

All revolutionary activity in the seventies of the last century was based on one - in my view - mistaken view of the Russian people - an idea still held to this day by many Anarchists. This idea was that Anarchist tendencies were natural to the Russian people. In the first issue of "Natchalo" we read: "The Russian people, because of specific historic conditions, are Anarchist-minded, they have not yet, as have other nations, adopted statist ideas and bourgeois instincts. Despite the principle of private property, which is sanctified by law, they demand a general redistribution of land and, notwithstanding their age old Tartar yoke of state and feudalism, they still dream of a life free and unfettered. Their philosophy of life is expressed and represented by the formula 'Land and Liberty' - a formula that is fundamentally socialist."

It was on this premise that the movement based its entire program and its tactical efforts. Since the people could expect nothing from the government, "they had only one escape from their serf-like destitute existence, violent overthrow of the existing order in the form of a social revolution." The struggle of the Russian people would expand into a whole series of revolts, both now and in the future, and the Revolutionaries would decide their own attitude towards the revolts. There could, of course, be no other attitude than, that of approval. And the logical conclusion was - to go among the people and arouse and prepare them for rebellion. Local outbreaks, multiplying and spreading, would grow into one tremendous rebellion - the social revolution which would make possible the realisation of the following program:

1. The State based on privilege would be replaced by federations established by means of the free association of autonomous communes without any coercion by a central authority.
2. Land and the means of production are the property of the entire people.
3. The workman is the only owner of the fruits of his labour.
4. The exchange of the latter to ensure equal distribution is the duty of the federated village communes and the Trade Unions.
5. Complete social and political equality, unconditional freedom of conscience, speech, scientific research, association and meetings.

The Revolutionaries believed that the realisation of this program was within sight; events were moving quickly and Socialists must prepare themselves for the future. Like the Internationalist in Europe, which considered the Trade Unions to be the economic organisations which would take the place of government, the Russian populists put forward the village commune, the 'Obshtchina'. "The village commune," they said, "which, is a form of economic association evolved in the process of Russian history, contains within itself the seeds of the destruction of the State and the bourgeois world." Hence the demand for a federation of village communes.

Revolutionary reality soon led to armed resistance to the government, to terrorism; and the going to the people to disillusionment with the economic struggle

and the peasantry. Some revolutionaries, indeed, began to push the social revolution into the background, while they emphasized constitutional demands.

The same thing that had happened in the International was happening in Russia. The proposition of a political program and a tactic of political struggle led to a cleavage, which destroyed the entire movement despite the brilliant and fascinating political fireworks to which the party of "Narodnaya Volya" (The People's Will) gave expression in its titanic terrorist struggle. The split occurred in the middle of 1879, and by 1882 the movement was already crushed and strangled.

### 3. The Constructive Period of Anarchism

The first two periods in the development of Socialism and Anarchism - periods of "utopian" and "scientific" Socialism - were followed at the end of the Nineteenth Century by the era of constructive Socialism. Until that time all attempts to consider the form of the future society, and all questions related to its structure, had been branded sarcastically as premature and Utopian.

It is, however, worth noting that Bakunin himself had been concerned with the problem of construction, in the belief that one must not destroy the Old without having at least a basic plan for the New. The principal factors in the process of construction, in Bakunin's view, would be the International of industrial communes, supplemented by agricultural associations.

The advent of the Paris Commune forced people to pay even more attention to the constructive aspects of Socialism. And, during the entire period of its existence, the first International was at work clarifying the tasks of the future society. At its Brussels Congress in 1874, the delegates discussed reports by the Jura Federation and by César De Paepe on "public services in the future society". The report of César De Paepe embraced not only all the issues formulated in the "Platform" - fifty years later - but also a number of others which are missing in the "Platform", yet which should not be ignored.

Revolutionary Syndicalism was born at the end of the Nineteenth Century. Its appearance in the arena of history marks a great victory for the constructive tendencies of Anarchism. A number of Anarchists, who had been active in the Syndicalist movement, welded together the futures of the two movements, and under their influence Syndicalism absorbed increasingly the ideas of Anarchist Communism and Federalism, so that it could no longer be called anything but Anarcho-syndicalism. For instance, the book by Pataud and Pouget, "How to Achieve the Social Revolution", was written from the Anarchist viewpoint - an opinion, incidentally, verified by Peter Kropotkin's account of book. [1]

From the beginning of the twentieth century, most Russian Anarchist publications issued abroad - like "Bread and Freedom" (Khlieb i Volya) and the pamphlets connected with it; like "The Stormy Petrel" (Burevestnik), "The World of Labour" (Rabotchi Mir), "The Voice of Labour" (Golos Truda), paid a good deal of attention to constructive Anarchism.

With the Russian Revolution of 1917, problems of construction began to dominate thought in Anarchist circles not only in Russia, but everywhere else in the world. The first among them to pursue the line of

constructive Anarchism were the Anarcho-syndicalists. The pages of their publications ("Voice of Labour", "Free Voice of Labour", "World of Labour" and others) were filled with articles on this subject. They carried a bold campaign against the chaotic, formless, disorganised and indifferent attitude then rampant among the Anarchists - a standpoint which aroused a great deal of hostility towards them.

The first two conferences of the Anarcho-syndicalists in 1918 set forth clearly and in considerable detail the political and economic characteristics of the first stages of the new social structure. [2] The "Northern Regional Congress of Anarchists which met soon after the first conference of the Anarcho-syndicalists, formulated its own program on that subject. [3] And, the first conference of "Anarchist Organisations in the Ukraine" (NABAT), which met in the interval between the first and second conferences of the Anarcho-syndicalists, considered all the points postulated almost ten years later in the "Platform" of 1927. [4] And in the same year of 1918, "The First Central Soviet Technical School" issued a declaration covering the ground of the question's which are now still under discussion. The conference of NABAT in 1919 again undertook the elaboration of organisational and structural questions. [5] And a proclamation of the "Anarcho-universalists" in 1921 suggested answers to all fundamental problems of construction and activities in the first structural period. [6]

Apart from these collective efforts to solve the problems of construction, individuals like Peter Kropotkin attempted to visualize the future society. During 1918, in "Bread and freedom". Kropotkin described the character of a future city Commune, and, as a result of the experiences of the Russian Revolution, he raised a number of vital questions and theses new to Anarchists. [7] His statement "We are not so rich as we thought" takes Anarchism into the field of a "complementary idea", since the issue is no longer that "in destroying I shall create", but "in creating I shall destroy". Moreover, Kropotkin's "Modern Anarchism" [8], was of equally great importance and provided a stimulus to thought in the direction of constructive planning.

This work of constructive planning, begun in Russia, soon spread over the frontiers and flooded the entire Anarchist world. The German Anarcho-syndicalists paid and continue to pay a great deal of attention to the problems of construction. Their publication "Der Syndikalist" carried many articles discussing the creative tasks of the Revolutionary proletariat. [9] The conferences and meetings of the International Workingmen's Association concerned themselves particularly with organisational and structural problems. And at almost all the national conferences of the Anarcho-syndicalists, or Revolutionary Syndicalist organisations in Western Europe, these questions were continually on the agenda. For instance, at the Berne conference called on September 16, 1922, to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Congress at St. Imier, the following questions were debated:

1. How to defeat and destroy the old order.
2. How to prevent the downfall of the Revolution as a result of the creation of new authority.
3. How to assure the continuance and reconstruction

of economic life. Berton, Malatesta, Fabbri and many other comrades participated in this discussion.

Then there were the efforts of the Russian Anarcho-syndicalists and Anarchists abroad. The "Rabotchi Put", published in Berlin, was devoted almost exclusively to the issues of construction. In the pages of "Golos Truzhenika" (Voice of the Working Man), publication of the IRM, these issues were discussed both editorially and by contributing Anarchist comrades. The same is true of the "Arbeiterfreund" (Friend of Labour), published in Paris.

Many other publications were almost entirely concerned with finding solutions to the problems of building a new society after the social revolution. There were the journal "La Voix du Travail" (The Voice of Labour) in Paris [10], "Syndicalisme", organ of the Syndicalist organisation of Sweden, under the editorship of the Anarchist Albert Jensen, "Die Internationale", publication of the German Anarcho-syndicalists, edited by Augustin Souchy, the weekly, "La Protesta", of the Argentine Anarchists, and others, while it is of course impossible to enumerate the many individual articles covering these problems.

Such, then, was the temper of the times. The very air was filled with ideas of an organisational and constructive nature. And the "Platform" issued by "A Group of Russian Anarchists Abroad" in 1927 was therefore not a cause, but a result of the agitated state of Anarchist minds. It is thus all the more surprising that this "Platform" should have been credited with all kinds of achievements for which it was not responsible. [11]

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Notes:

- [1] Foreword to "Bread and Freedom" by Peter Kropotkin.
- [2] See "Instead of a Program", 1922, Berlin, Publications of the Foreign Bureau.
- [3] See "Resolutions", 1918, Publications of the Secretariat.
- [4] See "Declaration and Resolutions", 1922; Argentina. "Resolutions of the first Congress 1919. publications NABAT.
- [5] See Declaration, 1918, publication of First Central Sovtech School.
- [6] See Declaration of the Moscow organisation of Anarcho-universalists, to the 8th Session of the Soviets, Moscow, 1921.
- [7] See Kropotkin's foreword to "Bread and Freedom", 1919, Moscow, Publication "Golos truda".
- [8] See Labour's Path (Rabotchi Put).
- [9] See also the pamphlet by Rudolph Rocker and Barvota.
- [10] Organ of the MIR, later organ of the Revolutionary Syndicalist Confederation of labour in France.
- [11] Particularly interesting in this connection is an article by M. Korn in "Dielo Truda" (No. 29, 1928) extravagantly praising the achievements of the "Platform". In the opinion of Comrade Korn, "the program has inspired our groups ..." In reality, of course, it was the inspiration in our groups which called forth the "Platform". Further, Comrade Korn believes that the "Platform": "raised a number of fundamental questions..." Yet it was obvious that all the questions - as well as many others - had been formulated long before the "Platform's" proclamation. Continuing his extraordinary series of discoveries, Comrade Korn considers that the "Platform": "placed squarely before every Anarchist the issue of responsibility for the fate of the movement in the sense of its practical influence on the future path of events ..." It is not, of

course, very difficult to raise questions without answering them. And even these questions had already been raised by Anarcho-syndicalists in Russia and abroad at a time when the most imminent authors of the "Platform" were either indifferent to the issues involved or had only begun to learn, after their arrival abroad, the first lessons of personal and collective responsibility to the movement.

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#### 4. The General Situation

The "Platform" was thus one of many products in the Anarchist world of the process of intellectual fermentation after the first World War, and in particular after the Russian Revolution. It is, however, possible to state at once that the crystallization of this process into a "Platform" was of a rather formless kind. Both by its manner of stating the questions, and by its method of solving them, the "Platform" was incapable of providing a unifying leadership either for the Anarchist movement in general or for the Anarcho-communist groups in particular. Even if one were to admit that the Anarcho-communists could have become united on such a program, the unity would have been broken on the very first attempt to deal with the omissions in which the "Platform" abounds. For its constructive part is so primitive that it attacks only such problems as production, food supply, land and the protection of the Revolution, and it ignores the problems of transportation (particularly the free movement of people), statistics, living conditions, religion, education, family, marriage, sanitary and hygienic services, forestry, roads and highways, shipping, crime and punishment, labour and health insurance, and many others, including questions arising out of the general situation of a revolutionary country encircled by international capitalism.

The "Platform" suffered from yet another important failing: confusion. To take one instance, the authors, realising the impossibility of the simultaneous communications of industry and agriculture, and the retardedness of the latter in comparison with the former, drew no conclusions from this realisation and made no attempt to determine the relationship which must, of necessity arise between socialised industry and private-capitalist land management. Yet a good many problems concerning trade, finance, banks, etc. would develop from this admitted co-existence.

This confusion becomes even more apparent when the authors of the "Platform" declare: "It is significant that, despite the power, logic and irrefutability of the Anarchist idea, despite the solidity and integrity of Anarchist positions in the social revolution ... despite all this the Anarchist movement has remained weak, and in the history of the working class struggle it has been but a trivial fact, an incident, never a dominant factor."

It is interesting to note that the incredible confusion and absurdity of this collection of principles and arguments went unnoticed by those Anarchist publications which were primarily concerned with the problems and arguments presented by the "Platform". Yet, even on first reading, the "truths" proclaimed by the "Platform" are transparent in their folly and their almost comical inconsistencies. Let us classify these "truths" under their most important headings.

1. The Power of Anarchism. The symbol of power of a socio-political idea is the number of its adherents, the depth and extent of sympathy it commands. Accordingly, the power of an idea is indissolubly bound with the strength of the movement serving this idea. Where there is strength - there can be no weakness. If Anarchism is strong, then it is not weak. The authors of the "Platform". however, managed to maintain that Anarchism is both strong and weak, that water can at once be hot and cold! They confused vitality with power.
2. The Irrefutability of Anarchism. No-one will deny that two and two make four. It is an accepted truth. Hence, the acceptance of an axiom implies general agreement. Since, in the opinion of the "Platform", Anarchism is irrefutable, it is thus automatically generally accepted. If so, it could never have been just a "trivial fact", as the "Platform" insists, but a powerful factor!
3. Solidity of Anarchism. If the truth of Anarchism has been demonstrated, its concepts must perforce be definitive and clear. Is it not then time to stop chastising Anarchism for "incessant vacillations in the sphere of the most elementary questions of theory and tactics"? If, however, these vacillations are a fact, then Anarchism is as yet ambiguous and not distinguished either by logic or clarity. Logic and vacillations are not consistent with each other.
4. Integrity of Anarchist Positions in the Social Revolution. Again this would contradict the supposedly existing vacillations. If Anarchist positions in the social Revolution are marked by both integrity and solidity, then why all this hue and cry? And, on the other hand. how could "solidity and integrity" call forth not one, but several programs in which the Anarchist theses of social Revolution are not identical and, in fact, often differ sharply? But if the authors of the "Platform" express such deep anxiety over the need for an organisation which might "determine a political and tactical course for Anarchism", it shows, indeed, their conviction that there does not yet exist full "solidarity and integrity" in the Anarchist program. Why, then, do they state the opposite?

The repudiation of logic and common sense in the "Platform" is no less significant than the pseudo truths proclaimed by its authors. But all, contradictions and repudiations have one common origin: ignorance of the history of our movement, or, more correctly, the notion that the history of our movement was ushered in by the "Platform" ... and that chaos and ignorance reigned before its proclamation. To these self-proclaimed "pioneers", Anarchism in the days of the First International, when it had captured the labour movements in a number of countries, was only a "trivial fact", an accidental episode. Anarchism in the Latin countries, where for long years the Anarchist viewpoint prevailed, was but an incident, without any significance. Anarchism in those countries where the revolutionary Syndicalist organisations are well developed, directly or indirectly under the influence of Anarchist ideas, is not considered by the authors of the "Platform" a worthwhile factor in the growth of the labour movement ... again, it is only a "trivial fact, an episode".

This type of evaluation of all pre-"Platform"

Anarchism is too narrow and ludicrous to be discussed at length. However painful it may be for the authors of the "Platform", the Anarchist movement existed long before they had made their appearance.

## 5. Diagnosis and Treatment

The "Group of Russian Anarchists Abroad" emerged in the role of physician to the ailing Anarchist movement. None would dispute the fact that the movement was indeed suffering from "general chronic disorganisation". All were agreed on the symptoms; but there were considerable disagreements as to the fundamental causes of the ailment, as well as the cures which would logically follow a determination of these causes.

The authors of "Platform", for instance, considered a number of causes, the most important of which was the "absence in the Anarchist world of organisational principles and organisational relationships". Yet, in the introduction to the "Platform", they pointed out that this absence was not itself a cause, but merely the result of another cause! They maintained that "disorganisation itself is rooted in distortions of an ideological nature, in the falsified concept of the personal element in Anarchism and its identification [whose - Anarchism's or that of the concept of the personal element?] with irresponsibility." When one attempts to unravel the unruly mass of syllogisms on cause and effect, the conclusion is inevitable, deriving as it does from the position of the "Platform" itself, that the most important reasons for the disorganisation in the Anarchist movement are the "distortions of an ideological nature".

This conclusion, however, turns out to be quite inconclusive, for the "Platform" also maintains that in Anarchism there are "incessant vacillations in the most important questions of theory and tactics." If that is true, how then can any kind of "organisation" or "organisational relationship" be expected? They only become possible when the vacillations have ceased or, at least, when they have ceased to act on a large (or even "incessant") scale.

Unraveling further the theses of the "Platform", we come to the logical conclusion that the real cause of "the general chronic disorganisation" is indeed the "vacillations in the most important questions of theory and tactics", and that all other failings are no more than consequences of this cause. It may be that the authors of the "Platform" had intended somewhat different results. But, having been caught in the labyrinth of contradictions where cause and effect become confused, they concluded with a hotchpotch of words that can inspire little serious attention.

And if, in turn, the "several Russian Anarchists" had attempted in their "Reply" to conduct a really serious analysis of the causes of the deficiencies in the Anarchist movement, then they would not have rushed in with their declaration of "disagreement" with the conclusions of the "Platform". For, in the final analysis, we find that the fundamental failing indicated by the "Platform", namely "the incessant vacillations in the most important questions of theory and tactics", is also brought forward by the "Reply", "Obscurity in a number of our fundamental ideas," is the way the authors of the "Reply" express it. The difference is in formulation, not

in essence. For, if in Anarchism there are indeed "vacillations" or "obscurity", then surely neither program, tactics nor organisation can be erected on such insecure foundations. Yet, while the "Platform" simply ignores the vacillations and attempts to build on the shaky foundations, the "Reply" believes more logically that the "establishment of a serious program and organisation is impossible without first achieving the liquidation of theoretical vacillations." (Page 5).

In addition to the "obscurity of our fundamental ideas", the "Reply" lists a number of other reasons for the deficiencies in the Anarchist movement, "Difficulty of gaining acceptance for Anarchist ideas in contemporary society", "the intellectual level of the present-day masses", "cruelty and total repression", "conscious Anarchist rejection of demagoguery", "refusal by Anarchists to use artificially-erected organisations and to impose artificial discipline".

We agree that the deficiencies in the Anarchist movement may be caused by the above-mentioned "fundamental" causes. The first three, however, are external factors; they function outside the movement and can only temporarily retard its growth. But it seems hardly possible that there are greater difficulties today in the path of disseminating our ideas than, say, fifty years ago. It is equally difficult to believe that the "intellectual level of the present-day masses" can be lower than in "pre-war" time; on the contrary, it seems certain that the intellectual level of the masses has risen considerably in comparison with the past. Or can it be that the authors of the "Reply" believe Anarchism to be more easily acceptable by the backward masses? Generally speaking, in any case, all these factors react equally on other Socialist ideologies, and yet among them the picture is different from that in our movement.

The same can be said about "repression". There were repressions in earlier days as well, and they were used not only against the Anarchists. The German Anarcho-syndicalists always walked a path of thorns, particularly during the war, yet today they are incomparably stronger than they were before the war. It is strange to maintain that a struggle fought by a conscious revolutionary movement and necessarily evoking repression should now be considered a reason for the weakness of the movement.

To consider the "rejection of demagoguery" a cause of weakness is to admit indirectly, that demagoguery is a real source of power. And if the "Reply" considers the "conscious rejection of demagoguery" a source of weakness, then indeed there can be only one conclusion: to turn to demagoguery and thus become strong. It is now however known generally that, though demagoguery may assure temporary successes, it has never yet assured permanent power for those who use it. On the contrary, the final result has always been tragic. The Bolshevik experience on this score should be conclusive enough. And even in the Anarchist movement itself, the "conscious rejection of demagoguery" has not always been predominant. The Gordin manifestoes in the years 1917-18 are an interesting example of demagoguery. The article "Social Democracy in the Viennese Events" (Dielo Truda No. 28) also confutes the statement of the "Reply".

And as for the last cause of the weakness of the movement suggested by the "Reply", namely, the "refusal by Anarchists to use artificially erected

organisations and to impose artificial discipline," surely the authors of the "Reply" could not have realised what they were saying. Did they not themselves maintain that all artificial methods resulted only "in the temporary strength of political parties", a force "futile in substance?" Should the Anarchist movement, then, deny its own rejection, based on principle, and try to become strong in this manner? But if such artificial means are only "temporary" and "futile in substance", then their rejection should not be considered a source of weakness. Whence all this confusion?

Thus the conclusion is inevitable that, of all the causes advanced by the "Reply", only one remains intact - the same as that suggested by the "Platform" - "obscurity in a number of our fundamental ideas".

## 6. On the Weakness of the Movement

To maintain, after Bakunin and Kropotkin, that Anarchist ideas are obscure is, to say the least, naive. If the authors of the "Platform" and the "Reply" had chastised the vacillations of individual Anarchists or individual obscure Anarchist minds, one could have agreed with them. But it is impossible - by the expedient process of shifting the burden from sick on to healthy shoulders - to claim obscurity for fundamental Anarchist ideas.

What ideas does the "Reply" consider obscure?

Firstly there is the Conception of Social Revolution. Yet we need only turn to Bakunin to find in his writings a perfectly clear and definitive exposition of the meaning of Social Revolution, its manifestations and the road it must travel. Whoever has read his formulations, can no longer speak of obscurity in the Anarchist "conception of the Social Revolution". Similarly, Bakunin provided us with a terse interpretation of the problem of violence, the forms it can take, its use and its limitations.

Even more conclusive is the existing evidence that there was no obscurity in the Anarchist conception of Dictatorship, as claimed by the "Reply". In fact this issue was clarified particularly by the debates between Bakunin and Marx: and the reader might do well to take up the works of Bakunin, particularly his essays on "The State and Anarchy", as well as "The Knouto-Germanic Empire and the Social Revolution". Bakunin also wrote at great length on the question of "The Creativity of Masses and of Organisations". [1]

The only aspect of the problem that remained unclarified was how to proceed during the "Transition Period". It is true that this question has not yet been settled in Anarchist thought, even though Bakunin himself had recognised its importance. But it is not part of the theoretical program of Anarchism. It is, rather, a technical, methodological question connected with the practical procedures to be utilised in the establishment of Anarchist Communism.

Thus, we are forced to conclude that the reasons for the weakness of the Anarchist movement and for its disorganised condition are neither the "obscurity in a number of our fundamental ideas" on which the "Reply" insists, nor the "incessant vacillations in the most important questions of theory and tactics", nor the "distortions of an ideological nature" as the "Platform" maintains.

The weakness of the movement, in short, is not the result of the theoretical ambiguity of Anarchism as a

socio-political and philosophical theory. The causes have to be sought on another level altogether; they have nothing in common with the fundamental concepts of Anarchism.

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Socialism, like Anarchism, passed through a phase of uncertainty, division and formlessness. That was during a period when its protagonists strove, as the authors of the "Platform" now do, for complete unity and uniformity in program and tactics. When such general uniformity proved impossible and even dangerous, there began a process of disintegration and a breakup of Socialism into different factions. Separate parties emerged, with divergent theories, tactics and activities. And that moment ushered in the evolution of Socialism as a real force in the practical realisation of its ideals.

It is our deep conviction that Anarchism, too, must undergo a similar evolution. The uniformity for which both the "Platform" and the "Reply" strive, each in its own way, is not possible. The result would not be Anarchism, but Anachronism.

The process of the division of Anarchism into factions has been slow. Sufficient time has not yet elapsed for the various sections to crystallize into large and well-defined collective units. Such is the case with Anarcho-communism, which has already split into Anarcho-communism and Anarcho-syndicalism. We exclude discussion here of Anarcho-individualism, which is a typically bourgeois philosophy and is therefore beyond our purview.

An example of logical unification is the International Workingmen's Association - the Anarcho-syndicalist International which became possible after the formation in individual countries of homogenous national organisations based on the fundamental theoretical and tactical concepts of Anarchism. All organisations, on joining the International Working Men's Association, accepted the program and the principles of the Anarcho-Syndicalist International, but at the same time its federalist concept gave each individual organisation the opportunity to develop its own program, in conformity with the situation in the country concerned. For the Anarchist movement to live and grow this must remain the guiding principle of organisation.

One of the reasons for the weakness of the Anarchist movement is to be found, therefore, in the still uncompleted process of the division of Anarchism into clearly defined fractions, groups or "parties". If this seems paradoxical, it is nevertheless a reality.

The second reason for the weakness of the Anarchist movement is its inability to adapt itself to the realities of life, which limits its activities exclusively to propaganda. Such an activity can occupy only a few people, for the majority, particularly the rank-and-file members, soon lose interest in pure propaganda. It degenerates into dialectics, into the constant repetition of formulae, or else into apathy, disillusionment and, finally, defection.

Man requires contact with reality; he cannot exist long in mid air. This natural need for activity drives dynamic men to all kinds of deformed "practical" activities; to bomb-throwing in France or unmotivated terror and expropriation in Russia. And how does the rank-and-file Anarchist keep active? He rejects the Parliamentary struggle; he rejects participation in municipal affairs. For many comrades the Trade Unions are not sufficiently revolutionary since they concern

themselves with petty fights, and are therefore a danger to Anarchist "purity", while in the Co-operatives these comrades see a bourgeois institution with exploitative tendencies. And all the time the Anarchist groups remain small. The Anarchist must perforce act within a "Torricellian vacuum"; he must be satisfied with voluble debates, with the distribution of pamphlets, newspapers and leaflets; he must keep silent on daily issues - and keep his eyes, while rejecting the world about him, on the final goal towards which the path is still only an abstract concept. Indeed, wherever the larger masses think in concrete terms, Anarchists seem bent on instilling abstractions into them.

What is missing in our movement is a basis of realism, the ability to adjust theory to the practical needs of the workers. That lack, however, is being met by the Syndicalist fractions of Anarchism. Anarcho-syndicalism has expanded the sphere of activity of its members; it has established institutions concerned with the material struggle and with everyday activities. That is the explanation for its success in comparison with Anarcho-communism, in all the countries where it has taken root. And if Anarcho-syndicalism will continue to extend the horizons of public activity for its members, to create more of its own institutions, then its success will grow in the same measure.

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[1] Collection of essays by Bakunin published by the Anarcho-syndicalist Publishing House, "Golos Truda", Moscow (five volumes).  
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## 7. The Theory

The theoretical section of the "Platform" contains nothing original. Despite the "incessant vacillations" and the "distortions of an ideological nature", the authors of the "Platform" present the same theory of Anarchism with the single difference that a number of "distortions of an ideological nature" are introduced by the authors themselves.

Thus, under the heading The Class Struggle, its Role and Significance, they say that "in the history of human societies the class struggle has always proved the main factor in determining their form and structure." (page 7). This is a generally accepted truth - only the other way round! It is not the class struggle which determines the form of a society, but the economic structure of a society which determines the form of its class struggle. Society is not the result of a class struggle, but the opposite: the class struggle is the result of the economic structure of society. Accordingly, the other assertion by the authors of the "Platform" that the "socio-political structure of every country is first of all the product of the class struggle" (page 8) sounds rather ridiculous, since - even though the class struggle influences the structure of society - it certainly does not determine it. This theoretical folly, besides misrepresenting Anarchist philosophy, brings the authors of the "Platform" to a new absurdity when they talk of the "universal significance of the class struggle in the life of class societies" (page 8) - a statement doubtless motivated by a desire to define their opposition to those tendencies in Anarchism which reject or minimize the class struggle.

If, in actual fact, the class struggle were universal,

then it would undoubtedly have been not merely the most vital, but the only factor in the evolution of society. Anarchism does not admit such a monistic principle. The class struggle influences many aspects of life in contemporary society, but this does not mean that it has the universal significance ascribed to it by the "Platform".

The authors of the "Platform", indeed, juggle rather foolishly with this phrase, "the class struggle". Thus, on page 9, they declare triumphantly that "the class struggle, springing out of serfdom and the age-old desire of the working people for liberty, imbued the ranks of the oppressed with the ideal of Anarchism". Previously it had always been understood that the class struggle was the result of the unequal distribution of material wealth which arose from the capitalist economic system; serfdom and the desire for liberty are certainly not responsible for a phenomenon of such comparatively recent appearance as the class struggle. But the authors of the "Platform" do not take into consideration either the historical facts of social evolution or the anarchist theory as stated by Bakunin, Kropotkin and their followers.

Furthermore, the "revisions" which the Platform proposes are difficult to reconcile with logic. Thus, under the heading "The necessity for Violent Revolution", we find the following statement: "Progress in modern society, namely, the technical development of capital and the perfection of its political system, strengthens the position of the ruling classes and makes the struggle against them more difficult. Thus progress postpones the decisive moment for the liberation of labour" (page 8). Such an obviously foolish statement should logically have forced the authors of these original thoughts to change the heading of this chapter to: "The Necessity for the Violent Halt of Progress in Modern Society." For their contention is that, if progress continues, the time for the liberation of labour is automatically pushed farther and farther away. And since the liberation of labour is our goal, we must do away with progress.

Kropotkin viewed the connection between progress and the struggle for liberation in an entirely different light. Analysing the life of society, he found that, with progress-technical, spiritual and otherwise - communistic habits arise among men and liberty is therefore brought nearer. But it would apparently be wrong to seek in Kropotkin an explanation of the contradictions and absurdities of the "Platformists", who appear to believe that the realisation of Anarchism is closely bound with a return to the most primitive social economy. We should like to suggest to these authors that they write off the technically developed countries and move - with their "Platform" as baggage - to Abyssinia and Baluchistan.

The theoretical lapses of these half-baked philosophers of Anarchism are not absent from their other chapters. When they define Anarchism itself (chapter entitled "Anarchism and Anarchist Communism"), the authors of the "Platform" see in it the aspiration to "transform the present bourgeois capitalist society into one which would assure to the working people their freedom, independence, social and political equality and the fruits of their labour" (page 9). Here the authors introduce another "revision" into the fundamental concepts of Anarchist Communism,

replacing the principle "to each according to his needs" by a new slogan - "to each according to his labour." Why this substitution? For, if society assures the working man only the fruits of his labour and not the satisfaction of his needs, then inequality will remain. One man may produce more than he needs and hoard his surplus, while another may not be capable of producing enough for his maintenance. Once again there would be the rich, owning capital, and the poor who have less than the minimum required for life. The result would be the same economic inequality as we know today. And, wherever there is inequality, there can be no talk of freedom, of independence, of social and political equality. Indeed, none of these can possibly result from the slogan "to each according to his labour". And even though the authors of the "Platform" call Anarcho-communist the society they would erect on the principles they propose, it would in reality be neither Anarchist nor Communist.

To be sure, they conclude the above-mentioned chapter with the elementary truth that the goal of Anarchist Communism is actually "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs." But they interpret this truth "in their own way", meaning, assurance to the working man of "the fruits of his labour." To equate these two propositions - that again is proof of ignorance of the fundamental tenets of Anarchism.

But to continue. The chapter "Rejection of Democracy" opens with the following categorical imperative: "Democracy is one of the forms of bourgeois capitalist society" (page 11). It is obvious that the authors of the "Platform" have lumped together contemporary parliamentary democracy and democracy as such. Anarchism is, in the final analysis, nothing but democracy in its purest and most extreme form. Yet the Platformists categorically reject democracy, without understanding either its nature or its substance. They state, for instance, that "democracy leaves untouched the principle of private property". Present day democracy? Yes. Anarchist democracy? Of course not. It is essential to determine the true character of democracy in contrast to its perversions - a process which is completely ignored by the authors of the "Platform", as a result, once again, of their chronic ignorance.

We shall not dwell on the less important "revisions" of these confused "theoreticians". There are too many, and it would be boring to list them all. Let us turn instead to the process by which the authors of the "Platform" claim to put into practice their fundamental theoretical principles. But, before doing so, it might be useful to point out that the comrades who wrote and signed the "Reply of some Russian Anarchists to the Organisational Platform" believed that their own attitude towards Social Revolution "does not differ from the brief expression of viewpoint in the "Platform", and that such chapters of the "Platform" as "Anarchism and Anarchist Communism", "Rejection of Democracy", "Rejection of State and Authority", "which are no more than extremely concise summaries of Anarchist concepts that have long been established and clarified, do not arouse any substantial objections on our part".

We take cognizance of this frank admission by the authors of the "Reply". The level of ignorance in our ranks is evidently lower than we had assumed!

## 8. The Party, The Individual and the Masses

The "General Association of Anarchists," the "Ideological Collective" whose need is stressed by the "Platform", appears in the final analysis, and particularly in view of supplementary explanations which were published in the pages of "Dielo Truda", to be nothing else than an Anarchist Party - and quite a centralized Party at that. The role of this Anarchist Party, which incidentally does not differ greatly in the question of leadership from the Bolshevik Party, is disguised in the "Platform" under the concept of "ideological leadership."

There is nothing anti-Anarchist in a "Party" organisation as such. Both Bakunin and Kropotkin spoke frequently of the need for organising an Anarchist Party, and to this day the organisation of the Scandinavian Anarchists is known as a Party. Party does not necessarily mean power, or the ambition to run the State. The issue is not in the name, but in its content, in the organisational structure of the Party, in the principles on which it is founded.

What goal does the "Platform" place before the Russian Anarcho-communist Party? The realisation of an Anarcho-communist society. And that, without a doubt, is Anarchism to the full. But what organisational principles are laid down to determine the relationship between individual members and the Party as a whole, between the Party and the masses, and mass organisations in particular?

The "Platform" declares unequivocally that the main principle is that of Federalism (page 30). But, as the "Reply" correctly points out, "the authors of the 'Platform' too frequently resort to Parliamentary interpretations for a number of fundamental Anarchist principles which, as a result of these interpretations, retain only the external shell, hiding an entirely different content". And these parliamentary interpretations emphasize the centralized character of the "Platform's" Federalism. Nothing, indeed, remains of Federalism but the title in this democratic centralism which would be characteristic of any other political Party. [1]

The "Platform" states the generally known fact that "Anarchism has always advanced and defended Federalism, which combines the independence of persons and organisations with their initiative and service in the common cause" (page 30). However, when the "Platform" is obliged to determine the "federalist character of the Anarchist organisation", it transpires that it is demonstrated not by the autonomy of groups and group associations, but only by an "assurance for each member of the organisation ... of independence, the right to vote, personal freedom and initiative" (page 31).

It seems, then, that the Anarcho-communist Party would desist from jailing anyone who joined it! The prerogatives, obviously, are very enticing. And, in fact, the members of the Organisation are given a chance at initiative - but apparently only members, not groups or associations. Yet even this initiative has a special character - the "Platformist" character. Each organisation (i.e. association of members with the right to individual initiative) has its secretariat which fulfils and directs the ideological, political and technical activities of the organisation ("Platform", page 31). In what, then, consist the self-reliant activities of the rank-and-file members? Apparently in one thing: initiative to

obey the Secretariat and to carry out its directives. Moving up the hierarchical ladder, "for the co-ordination of the activities of all organisations," (i.e. all the secretariats), "a special organ known as the Executive Committee of the Organisation," is to be established.

What is the task of this Committee? "The ideological and organisational guidance of the activities of the associations in accordance with the common ideology and common tactics of the Association" (page 31). Where, in this plan, does autonomy appear? Many Western European patriotic Parties are based on a far greater freedom for their component sections than the projected Anarcho-communist Party, which seems to rely exclusively on the activities of a bureaucratic secretariat.

In his oppositionist program, the Bolshevik Saprnov, while speaking of the structure of the Communist Party, described it as follows: "The cell is subordinate to the secretary; the secretaries of the cells are subordinate to the secretary of the Party Committee, in whose hands is the control of the Committee. The secretaries of local Committees are subordinated to the General Secretary to whom, in fact, the Central Committee is responsible."

The reader will have little difficulty in perceiving that the Party structure of the Russian Bolsheviks and that of the small handful of Russian Anarchist-communists abroad are in fact the same. There is no doubt that the results would also be the same. If, according to the statements of the "Saprnovites", the Russian Communist Party "is at present more than ever divided into the 'leaders' who are intimately linked with the apparatus, and the 'ranks' who have been deprived of all Party rights", then the same development would inevitably take place in any other Party, including the Russian Anarcho-communist Party, if it were constructed on the principle of the "apparatus".

What, then, will be the relationship of this Anarcho-communist Party, which grants personal freedom to its members, to mass manifestations? The authors of the "Platform" believe, firstly, that the masses are incapable of "maintaining the direction of the Revolution", despite the fact that they have "joined in social movements and live by profoundly Anarchist tendencies and slogans," because "these tendencies and slogans are fragmentary, unassembled into a specific system and lacking in an organised directive force ... This directive force can be found only in an ideological collective, specifically identified as such by the masses [too much emphasis, it seems, is put on ideology and organisation!]. Such a collective will be the organised Anarchist groups [why not the groups of the masses themselves who, according to this theory, live by 'profoundly Anarchist tendencies and slogans?'] and the organised Anarchist movement [i.e. the Party]." The Anarcho-communist Association (i.e. the Party) "will have to provide initiative and participate fully in every phase of the social revolution ..."

The Anarchists (i.e. Party) will have to give precise answers to all questions, to link the solution of these questions to the general ideas of Anarchism, and to use all their energy in realising them. In this way, the General Association of Anarchists (i.e. the Party) and the Anarchist movement "would be fulfilling their complete ideological guiding role in the Social Revolution" (page 16).

It is inevitable that he who accepts the principle of full participation in all phases of the social Revolution, and who is bent on the fulfillment of this ideal, cannot - and will not - limit himself to ideological guidance. By the force of circumstances he will be obliged to administer every kind of practical activity as well. It is useless to blind oneself or other people to this fact: the "Platform" places its Party on the same height as the Bolsheviks do, i.e. it places the interests of the Party above the interests of the masses, since the Party has the monopoly of understanding these interests. This Bolshevik-type attitude is revealed even more clearly in the relationship of the "Platform" to Syndicalism.

Notes:

- [1] See, concerning these "Interpretations", the answers of the "Platformists" to the questions put them by M. Korn ("Dielo Truda" No. 18). the article by G. Graf ("Dielo Truda, No's 22-24) and the "Reply" ("Dielo Truda") No. 28) professing amazement on the part of the authors of the "Platform" that no-one understands them.

## 9. The Party and the Trade Unions

The new Anarchist evangelists begin history with themselves. Until they appeared in the arena, there was only chaos and no solid ground. "We consider the entire period previous to our own day, when Anarchists joined in the movement of revolutionary Syndicalism as individual workers and preachers, as a time of primitive attitudes to the Trade Union Movement" (page 19). This is seriously stated when the second International Working Men's Association is already in existence, uniting hundreds of thousands of revolutionary and Anarcho-syndicalist workers in all the countries of Europe and America.

But how does the "Platform" itself express its non-primitive relationship to the Trade Union movement? The answer is simple; it is a typically Bolshevik attitude, of the kind which has been fought by the entire international Syndicalist and Anarcho-syndicalist movement ever since the establishment of the Comintern.

The Bolsheviks strive for the Bolshevization of the Trade Union movement. The "Platformists" strive for its Anarchization. Both consider this possible through the inevitable connection between the Trade Union movement and the organisation of the Anarchist (for the Bolsheviks - the Bolshevik) forces outside that movement, i.e. the Party. Both are convinced that "only by the existence of this connection is it possible to prevent in it [i.e. in revolutionary Syndicalism] a development of tendencies towards opportunism." They thus believe that the Trade Unions must be under the guardianship of the Party, which itself can apparently never become opportunistic, but will always remain revolutionary. The "Platformists" have evidently not yet learned that the fate of all political parties is to become opportunistic.

The Bolsheviks and the "Platformists" both advocate identical methods for conquering the Trade Unions; i.e. cells within the Trade Unions, whose activities are subordinated to an outside organisation of the party. "Anarchist groups in industrial plants, attempting the

creation of Anarchist syndicates, struggling in the revolutionary syndicates for the preponderance and ideological [only ideological?] guidance of Anarchist thought, directed in their activities by the general Anarchist Association [read Party] to which they belong - that is the real meaning and form of Anarchist relations with revolutionary syndicalism and the Trade Union movement" (page 20). It is not clear why this meaning and "form" should be called Anarchist, when every worker, even today, knows full well that they are really Bolshevik! In confirmation, one has only to add the following extract:

"We must come into the Trade Union movement as an organized force [i.e. Party], be responsible to the general Anarchist organisation [i.e. to the Party, NOT THE TRADE UNION] for the work done in the syndicates, and be controlled by this organisation" (page 20).

The reader will have little difficulty in perceiving that all this was copied from the Bolshevik program. And in raising the question of the relationship between the Anarchist Association and the Syndicates [1], the authors of the "Platform" replied in no less Bolshevik strains: "To join the Unions in an organised way means to join them with a definite ideology, with a definite plan of action, which all Anarchists, working in the Syndicates, must strictly conform to."

In other words, Anarchists are to join the Trade Unions with readymade recipes and are to carry out their plans, if necessary, against the will of the Unions themselves. Once again, this is a faithful copy of Bolshevik tactics; the Party is a hegemony, the Trade Union is subordinated to the organisation. As for the contention that the future Anarcho-syndicalist Party would limit itself to ideological guidance, we must never forget that behind ideas there stands a living reality - the men who represent these ideas. Thus, ideological guidance will always develop a physical and concrete form. There are several such forms; we will point out the main ones. The Party form, which can vary, like states, from monarchy and unlimited dictatorship to a broad representative democracy. The Federative Form, adopted fully by the second International Working Men's Association, i.e. the International of revolutionary Anarcho-syndicalists: this form is the sketch of the future society which, from the first day of the social Revolution, would be filled in with solid detail. The "Platformists" chose the first form. They went in a direction which, after our experience of the Bolshevik Party, should have been rejected by all.

The authors of the "Reply", on the other hand, went to the opposite extreme: they ignored completely the question of guidance and thus put themselves in an unnatural position, in which no-one can remain for any length of time. "Anarchists everywhere must be fellow workers and comrades to the masses and the Revolution, but nothing more." (Reply, page 16). This, in its turn, is too naive and childish an interpretation of the role of Anarchism. If one shies away from all guidance in action and struggle, for fear of standing out from the general mass of the people, and is satisfied always with equality on the level of mediocrity, then logically it would be better not to mingle with the masses at all, but to wait until these masses - all together, as a "mass" - ask for help. And nothing less than the "all together" will do, for, according to the authors of the "Reply", an

impassable gulf exists between the masses and the individual; the relations between the masses, which seem to be regarded as some kind of monolithic body, and the individual are established in such a way that he who stands out, whoever he may be, commits a crime.

"We do not charge the Anarchists with the mission of guiding the masses, but believe that their calling is to help the masses, insofar as the latter are in need of such help," say the authors of the "Reply" (page 13). These are empty words, pleasing to all those who have never been able to show any sign of initiative. For it is clear, after all, that the "masses" will never ask anyone for help. One must go into the masses oneself, work with them, struggle for their soul, and attempt to win it ideologically and give it guidance.

Indeed, the authors of the "Reply" themselves involuntarily reach the conclusion of the necessity for Anarchist work among the masses without waiting for their call to help. "In mass organisations of a socio-economic character, the Anarchists - as part of the masses - will work, build and create together with the latter. A tremendous field of direct ideological and social creative activity opens up for them here and they must do this work in comradely fashion, without placing themselves into positions above other members of the free masses."

All this is said so kindly that one must search with tenderness for the unknown and non-existent "masses" painted by the authors of the "Reply". Obviously accustomed to viewing Anarchism in an abstract manner, they continue to look at everything else in the same way. To them the "masses" are of some uniform, chemically pure and benevolent substance. Such masses are nowhere to be found. The "masses" are too varied and different to be assessed according to some easy and superficial formula. While working in their midst, it is inevitable that some men will rise above them; in fact, the "masses" themselves elevate their leaders, and not because of their passivity. The Anarchists, however, must limit themselves to "free and natural ideological and moral influence on their environment." But if they did that, they would inevitably - if they were successful in their work - become the leaders of the "surrounding environment", i.e. the "masses", in free, natural, ideological and moral leadership.

The question is not the rejection of leadership, but making certain that it is free and natural. Even in an Anarchist society, the "masses" will always be led by "one or other political ideological group". But this does not mean, as the authors of the "Reply" believe, that the masses might be unable to act freely and creatively under favourable conditions.

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[1] See article by M. Korn, "Dielo Truda", No. 18.  
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## 10. The Transition Period

One of the painful questions among Anarchists is that of the "Transition Period". The authors of the "Platform" also considered it and declared that it is a "definite phase in the life of a people characterized by the breakup of the old structure and the establishment of a new economic and political system which, however, does not yet involve the full liberation of the working people"

(p. 17). In view of this attitude, the "Platform" passes over this Transition Period as a non-Anarchist phenomenon. It is non-Anarchist because it is "not the Anarchist society which will emerge as a result of the social Revolution, but some 'X', still containing elements and remnants of the old Capitalist system". (page 17). What elements are these? "The principle of State enforcement; private property in tools and means of production, the hiring of labour, etc." Instead of all these evils, the "Platform" insists on a perfect social Revolution which would establish with one blow a social order containing no sign of the survival of elements from the old society.

Are there actually people in our ranks who regard such a vision as practical? We, for one, consider it entirely impossible. The authors of the "Platform" themselves continue, with their habit of saying one thing and meaning another, that "the Anarcho-communist society in its final stage will not be established by the force of a social upheaval alone" (page 21). The logical assumption from this statement would be that, for the final formation of the Anarcho-communist society, a certain period of time is needed, i.e. a Transition Period. And the "Platform" declares this directly: "Its realisation (society's) will present a more or less lengthy social-revolutionary process, directed by the organised forces of victorious labour along definite lines." (page 21).

A process is a function of time, and the time during which this process continues "is a transitional time", characterized by a series of concrete tasks designed to help the new society approach its ideal architectural perfection, and to imbue it with Anarchist life. These concrete tasks - even those proposed by the "Platform" - again assert the inevitability of a transitional period, which was proposed by the Russian Anarcho-syndicalists as far back as 1918.

"Only the workshop of producers," the "Platform" says, "belonging in its entirety to all working people and to none individually ... The products form a common food fund for the workers, from which each participant in the new industry will receive all his necessities on the basis of full equality. The new system of production will destroy completely the concepts of hiring and exploitation ... There will be no bosses ... This is the first practical step towards the realisation of Anarchist Communism" (pages 22-23). And they call that the "first step"! The authors of the "Platform" evidently confuse the ninth month of pregnancy with the first. They themselves had already stated that the principle "to each according to his needs" would be preceded by a concept of expediency - once again a transitional measure.

The "Platform" failed completely in the question of solving the agrarian problem. In industry it proposed Communism, and in agriculture an individual economy with rights of ownership to the products of the economy; in other words, the need for an exchange of goods with the city would continue until the great masses of the peasantry embraced Communism in production and distribution.

Again, this process is perforce lengthy; a number of measures will have to be taken to speed the process. The objections of the "Platform" and other Anarchists to the Transitional period are a tribute which our comrades pay to the relics of those days when Anarchists thought little, if at all, about the nature, meaning and process of

social upheavals. But as soon as Anarchists descended from the cloudy heights to the sinful, practical, materialistic earth, they had, willy nilly, to be in favour of the Transitional period. And those who continue to speak and write against it do this only to clear their hardened consciences.

## 11. The Constructive Program of the "Platform"

The constructive section of the "Platform" is distinguished by its primitiveness. The construction of the new Anarchist society is limited to production and consumption, as if social organisation could be reduced to these functions alone. Such a backward conception, borrowed from the infancy of revolutionary Syndicalism, is an evidence of the inability of the authors of the "Platform" to come to grips with a truly constructive program.

Revolutionary Syndicalism, known today as Anarcho-syndicalism, has long since advanced - primarily under the influence of the experiences in Russia - from such a simplified outlook on the construction of the future society. Yet the Group of Russian Anarchists Abroad, who conceived the "Platform", now expound this primitivism as something new. However, let us see how the "Platform" attempted to solve the main issues arising out of the new structure.

**Production:** The "Platform" is concerned primarily with the administration of production, rather than its functioning. And even the form of administration is sketched rather childishly: factory and plant Committees as the local subordinate form of administration; unification of these committees on city, provincial and national levels. And that is all.

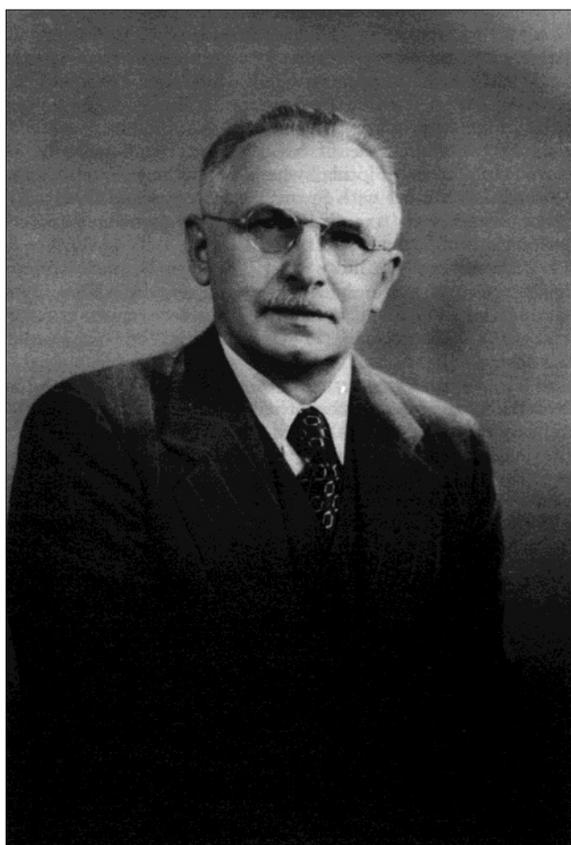
Such a scheme of administering production in no way resembles the "one workshop" (administration by industry); instead it throws together all the factories, plants and workshops in various branches of production. According to the "Platform" all factory and plant Committees of innumerable branches of production in any city must unite and establish the machinery for administering the production process in the given city. But let them try to get production into working order, when the industrial undertakings are united in the territorial principle and are thrown together without any connection between them on the industrial level! It will be nothing less than chaos and destruction! And that is the only concrete proposal made by the authors of the "Platform" in the sphere of the organisation of production. Everything else comes down to the usual loud phrases which are meaningless in reality.

At the same time the "Platform" is silent on many concrete issues resulting from the practical organisation of labour and production. Thus, for instance, they declare that the middle classes and the bourgeoisie will have to perform physical labour, but they ignore the question of whether the social Revolution can afford to entrust jobs to the middle classes, and to the proletariat in those institutions and branches of production which will be destroyed by the social Revolution. The Russian Revolution was unable to cope with this problem. How could the kind of Revolution postulated by the authors of the "Platform" cope with it? On that point the "Platform" is silent.

Provisions. Here too there is nothing new or fresh. The "Platform" repeats the old Anarchist and Anarcho-syndicalist views. The only novelty is the principle of expediency in the distribution of food, a principle taken over from the Bolsheviks. Physical labourers are many; those doing highly qualified intellectual work (administrators, organisers, scientists, poets, etc.) are few. In times of need the former can be limited to the necessary minimum of food, and even less; and the latter - get higher rations! This principle is not only immoral, but in practice it is far from being expedient, since it establishes inequality in the most fundamental aspect of life and thus creates discontent and hostility.

As to the organisational aspect of the distribution of food, it has been pointed out repeatedly by the Anarcho-syndicalists of Russia that, both during the Revolution and the Transition Period, the cooperatives provide the most suitable means.

Land. Here the "Platform" is completely bankrupt and satisfied with general phraseology. It rejects the immediate communisation of the agricultural economy and retains the present peasant structure without any changes. It notes correctly that a "private agrarian economy, like private industrial enterprise, leads to trade, to the accumulation of private property and the creation of capital" Well said! But to say this and then consciously leave private farming intact is tantamount to destroying all Anarchist concepts. The "Platformists" state that in this manner they are creating some "X", some "unknown quantity", and the identity of this "X" is not difficult to envisage: it will mean the creation of an Anarcho-communist "NEP". Such a transitory structure is a far cry from the Transition Period envisaged by the Russian Anarcho-syndicalists, and is very close to the structure of Capitalism. And still they claim that they are opposed to a Transition Period!



Protection of the Revolution: All are agreed that the social Revolution will be forced to defend itself. The question is: how should one organise this defence? The authors of the "Platform" pick out their answer from the precepts of the Bolsheviks. The latter organised, in the early days of the Revolution, partisan (Red Guard) detachments, later a volunteer Army, and they finally ended up with a standing army and compulsory military service for the entire population. The "Platform" goes through the same stages.

Anarchist principles bind the authors of the "Platform" to voluntary formations, i.e. Partisan detachments. But, they say, civil war would demand the "unification of plans of operations and unification of the general command." And thus, in the first period of the Revolution, as with the Bolsheviks, there are to be Partisans. In the second period, "when the Bourgeoisie will attack the Revolution with their reorganised forces", there is to be an Army, again as with the Bolsheviks. Apparently it will have all the colours of the Bolshevik rainbow: both its class character and its voluntary service, its revolutionary discipline (which in practice is always straight military discipline), finally subordination of the Army to a unified organisation for the entire country, all of which have already been demonstrated by the Bolsheviks. The issue of the Protection of the Revolution is resolved by the "Platform" in a typically Statist manner; to have a free hand towards the people whose guardians they are, maintained with the help of the Army, subordinated to the highest authorities only.

The solution to the problem of the protection of the Revolution lies only in the principle of the general mobilization of the working people, as proposed by the Russian Anarcho-syndicalists.

We have come to the end of our criticism of the "Platform". No conclusions will be drawn. Let the readers, who have studied the "Platform", the "Reply" and the program of the Russian Anarcho-syndicalists propounded here, draw their own conclusions.

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#### Note on the text

The program of the Russian Anarcho-syndicalists referred to at the very end of text was published as Part II in the original english edition. This 'Program of Anarcho-syndicalism' has already been published separately as Rebel Worker Pamphlet #4 by Monty Miller Press.

#### Other Publications by G. P. Maximoff

- The Guillotine at Work Vol 1. 1979.
- The Political Philosophy of Bakunin. 1953.
- My Social Credo - Sydney (MMP). 1983,
- Syndicalists in the Russian Revolution. 1985.
- Program of Anarcho-syndicalism. (MMP). 1985.
- Bolshevism: Promises & Realities
- Instead of a Program (1923)
- Peter Kropotkin and his Teachings (1931)

# Organisational Platform of a General Union of Anarchists

BY "THE DIELO TROUDA GROUP":  
NESTOR MAKHNO, PIOTR ARSHINOV,  
IDA METT, VALEVSKY, LINSKY.

## Introduction

It is very significant that, in spite of the strength and incontestably positive character of libertarian ideas, and in spite of the forthrightness and integrity of anarchist positions in the facing up to the social revolution, and finally the heroism and innumerable sacrifices borne by the anarchists in the struggle for libertarian communism, the anarchist movement remains weak despite everything, and has appeared, very often, in the history of working class struggles as a small event, an episode, and not an important factor.

This contradiction between the positive and incontestable substance of libertarian ideas, and the miserable state in which the anarchist movement vegetates, has its explanation in a number of causes, of which the most important, the principle, is the absence of organisational principles and practices in the anarchist movement.

In all countries, the anarchist movement is represented by several local organisations advocating contradictory theories and practices, having no perspectives for the future, nor of a continuity in militant work, and habitually disappearing, hardly leaving the slightest trace behind them.

Taken as a whole, such a state of revolutionary anarchism can only be described as 'chronic disorganisation'.

Like yellow fever, this disease of disorganisation introduced itself into the organism of the anarchist movement., and has shaken it for dozens of years.

It is nevertheless beyond doubt that this disorganisation derives from some defects of theory: notably from a false interpretation of the principle of individuality in anarchism; this theory being too often confused with the absence of all responsibility. The lovers of assertion of 'self', solely with a view to personal pleasure, obstinately cling to the chaotic state of the anarchist movement, and refer in its defence to the immutable principles of anarchism and its teachers.

But the immutable principles and the teachers have shown exactly the opposite.

Dispersion and scattering are ruinous; a close-knit union is a sign of life and development. This law of social struggle applies as much to classes as to organisations.

Anarchism is not a beautiful utopia, nor an abstract philosophical idea, it is a social movement of the labouring masses. For this reason it must gather its forces in one organisation, constantly agitating, as

demanding by reality and the strategy of class struggle. "We are persuaded", said Kropotkin, "that the formation of an anarchist organisation in Russia far from being prejudicial to the common revolutionary task, it is desirable and useful to the very greatest degree." (Preface to 'The Paris Commune' by Bakunin, 1892 edition.)

Nor did Bakunin ever oppose himself to the concept of a general anarchist organisation. On the contrary, his aspirations concerning organisations, as well as his activity in the 1st IWMA, give us every right to view him as an active partisan of just such an organisation.

In general, practically all active anarchist militants fought against all dispersed activity, and desired an anarchist movement welded by unity of ends and means.

It was during the Russian revolution of 1917 that the need for a general organisation was felt most deeply and most urgently. It was during this revolution that the libertarian movement showed the greatest degree of sectionalism and confusion. The absence of a general organisation led many active anarchist militants into the ranks of the bolsheviks. This absence is also the cause of many other present day militants remaining passive, impeding all use of their strength, which is often quite considerable. We have an immense need for an organisation which, having gathered the majority of the participants of the anarchist movement, establishes in anarchism a general and tactical and political line which would serve as a guide to the whole movement.

It is time for anarchism to leave the swamp of disorganisation, to put an end to endless vacillations on the most important tactical and theoretical questions, to resolutely move towards a clearly recognised goal, and to operate an organised collective practice.

It is not enough, however, to establish the vital need of such an organisation: It is also necessary to establish the method of its creation. We reject as theoretically and practically inept the Idea of creating an organisation after the recipe of the 'synthesis', that is to say reuniting the representatives of different tendencies of anarchism. Such an organisation, having incorporated heterogeneous, theoretical and practical elements, would "only be a mechanical assembly of individuals each having a different conception of all questions of the anarchist movement, an assembly which would inevitably disintegrate on encountering reality.

The anarcho-syndicalist method does not resolve the problem of anarchist organisation, for it does not give priority to this problem, interesting itself solely in

penetrating and gaining strength in the industrial proletariat.

However, a great deal cannot be achieved in this area, even in gaining a footing, unless there is a general anarchist organisation.

The only method leading to the solution of the problem of general organisation is, in our view, to rally active anarchist militants to a base of precise positions: theoretical, tactical and organisational, i.e. the more or less perfect base of a homogeneous programme.

The elaboration of such a programme is one of the principle tasks imposed on anarchists by the social struggle of recent years. It is this task that the group of Russian anarchists in exile dedicates an important part of its efforts.

The "Organisational Platform" published below represents the outlines, the skeleton of such a programme. It must serve as the first step towards rallying libertarian forces into a single, active, revolutionary collective capable of struggle: the General Union of Anarchists.

We have no doubts that there are gaps in the present platform. It has such gaps, as do all new, practical steps of any importance. It is possible that certain important positions have been missed, or that others are inadequately treated, or that still others are too detailed or repetitive. All this is possible, but not of vital importance. What is important is to lay the foundations of a general organisation, and it is this end which is attained, to a necessary degree, by the present platform. It is up to the entire collective, the General Union of Anarchists, to enlarge it, to later give it depth, to make of it a definite platform for the whole anarchist movement.

On another level also we have no doubts. We foresee that several representatives of self-styled individualism and chaotic anarchism will attack us, foaming at the mouth, and accuse us of breaking anarchist principles. However, we know that the individualist and chaotic elements understand by the title 'anarchist principles' political indifference, negligence and absence of all responsibility, which have caused our movement almost incurable splits, and against which we are struggling with all our energy and passion. This is why we can calmly ignore the attacks from this camp.

We base our hopes on other militants: on those who remain faithful to anarchism, having experienced and suffered the tragedy of the anarchist movement, and are painfully searching for a solution.

Further, we place great hopes on the young anarchists who, born in the breath of the Russian revolution, and placed from the start in the midst of constructive problems, will certainly demand the realisation of positive and organisational principles in anarchism.

We invite all the Russian anarchist organisations dispersed in various countries of the world, and also isolated anarchist militants, to unite on the basis of a common organisational platform. Let this platform serve as the revolutionary backbone, the rallying point of all the militants of the Russian anarchist movement!

Let it form the foundations for the General Union of Anarchists! Long live the Social Revolution of the Workers of the World!

The Dielo Trouda Group \*\*  
Paris 20.6.1926

.....  
\*\* Dielo Trouda means Workers' Cause

## GENERAL SECTION:

### 1. Class Struggle, Its Role and Meaning

There is no one single humanity  
There is a humanity of classes  
Slaves and Masters

Like all those which have preceded it, the bourgeois capitalist society of our times is not 'one humanity'. It is divided into two distinct camps, differentiated socially by their situations and their functions, the proletariat (in the wider sense of the world), and the bourgeoisie.

The lot of the proletariat is, and has been for centuries, to carry the burden of physical, painful work from which the fruits come, not to them however, but to another, privileged class which owns property, authority, and the products of culture (science, education, art): the bourgeoisie. The social enslavement and exploitation of the working masses form the base on which modern society stands, without which this society could not exist.

This generated a secular class struggle, at one point taking on an open, violent character, at others a semblance of slow and intangible progress, which reflects needs, necessities, and the concept of the justice of workers.

In the social domain all human history represents an uninterrupted chain of struggles by the working masses for their rights, liberty, and a better life. In the history of human society this class struggle has always been the primary factor which determined the form and structure of these societies.

The social and political regime of all states is above all the product of class struggle. The fundamental structure of any society shows us the stage at which the class struggle has gravitated and is to be found. The slightest change in the course of the battle of classes, in the relative locations of the forces of the class struggle, produces continuous modifications in the fabric and structure of society.

Such is the general, universal scope and meaning of class struggle in the life of class societies.

Without restricting ourselves to the creation of anarchist unions, we must seek to exercise our theoretical influence on all trade unions, and in all its forms (the IWW, Russian TU's). We can only achieve this end by working in rigorously organised anarchist collectives; but never in small empirical groups, having between them neither organisational liaison nor theoretical agreement.

Groups of anarchists in companies, factories and workshops, preoccupied in creating anarchist unions, leading the struggle in revolutionary unions for the domination of libertarian ideas in unionism, groups organised in their action by a general anarchist organisation: these are the ways and means of anarchists' attitudes vis a vis trade unionism.

At the same time the system of this society deliberately maintains the working masses in a state of ignorance and mental stagnation; it prevents by force the raising of their moral and intellectual level, in order

to more easily get the better of them.

The progress of modern society; the technical evolution of capital and the perfection of its political system, fortifies the power of the ruling classes, and makes the struggle against them more and more difficult, thus postponing the decisive moment of the emancipation of labour.

Analysis of modern society leads us to the conclusion that the only way to transform capitalist society into a society of free workers is a the way of violent social revolution.

### 3. Anarchism and Libertarian Communism

The class struggle created by the enslavement of workers and their aspirations to liberty gave birth, in the oppression, to the idea of anarchism: the idea of the total negation of a social system based on the principles of classes and the State, and its replacement by a free non-statist society of workers under self-management.

So anarchism does not derive from the abstract reflections of an intellectual or a philosopher, but from the direct struggle of workers against capitalism, from the needs and necessities of the workers, from their aspirations to liberty and equality, aspirations which become particularly alive in the best heroic period of the life and struggle of the working masses.

The outstanding anarchist thinkers. Bakunin, Kropotkin and others, did not invent the Idea of anarchism, but, having discovered it in the masses. simply helped by the strength of their thought and knowledge to specify and spread it.

Anarchism is not the result of personal efforts nor the object of individual researches.

Similarly, anarchism is not the product of humanitarian aspirations. A single humanity does not exist. Any attempt to make of anarchism an attribute of all present-day humanity, to attribute to it a general humanitarian character would be a historical and social lie which would lead inevitably to the justification of the status quo and of a new exploitation.

Anarchism is generally humanitarian only in the sense that the ideas of the masses tend to improve the lives of all men, and that the fate of today's or tomorrow's humanity is inseparable from that of exploited labour. If the working masses are victorious, all humanity will be reborn; if they are not, violence, exploitation, slavery and oppression will reign as before in the world.

The birth, the blossoming, and the realisation of anarchist ideas have their roots in the life and the struggle of working masses and are inseparably bound to their fate.

Anarchism wants to transform the present bourgeois capitalist society to a society which assures the workers the products of their labours, their liberty, independence, and social and political equality. This other society will be libertarian communism, in which social solidarity and free individuality find their full expression, and in which these two ideas develop in perfect harmony.

Libertarian communism believes that the only creator of social value is labour, physical or intellectual, and consequently only labour has the right to manage social and economic life. Because of this, it neither defends nor allows, in any measure, the existence of

non-working classes.

Insofar as these classes exist at the same time as libertarian communism, the latter will recognise no duty towards them. This will cease when the non-working classes decide to become productive and want to live in a communist society under the same conditions as everyone else, then they will have the same position as anyone else, which is that of free members of the society, enjoying the same rights and duties as all other productive members.

Libertarian communism wants to end all exploitation and violence, whether it be against individuals or the masses of the people. To this end, it will establish an economic and social base which will unite all sections of the community, assuring each individual an equal place among the rest, and allowing each the maximum well being. This base is the common ownership of all the means and instruments of production (industry, transport, land, raw materials, etc) and the building of economic organisations on the principles of equality and self-management of the working classes.

Within the limits of this self-managing society of workers, libertarian communism establishes the principle of the equality of value and rights of each individual (not individuality 'in general', nor of 'mystical individuality', nor the concept of individuality, but each real, living, individual).

It is from this principle of equality, as also from the principle that the value of an individual's labour can neither be estimated nor measured, that the fundamental economic, social and juridical principle of libertarian communism flows: "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs."

### 4. The Negation of Democracy

Democracy is one of the forms of bourgeois capitalist society.

The basis of democracy is the maintenance of the two antagonistic classes of modern society: the working class, and the capitalist class and their collaboration on the basis of private capitalist property. The expression of this collaboration is parliament and the national representative government.

Formally, democracy proclaims freedom of speech, of the press, of association, and the equality of all before the law.

In reality all these liberties are of a very relative character: they are tolerated only as long as they do not contest the interests of the dominant class i.e. the bourgeoisie.

Democracy preserves intact the principle of private capitalist property. Thus it (democracy) gives the bourgeoisie the right to control the whole economy of the country, the entire press, education, science, art - which in fact make the bourgeoisie absolute master of the whole country. Having a monopoly in the sphere of economic life, the bourgeoisie can also establish its unlimited power in the political sphere. In effect parliament and representative government in the democracies are but the executive organs of the bourgeoisie.

Consequently democracy is but one of the aspects of bourgeois dictatorship, veiled behind deceptive formulae of political liberties and fictitious democratic guarantees.

## 5. The Negation of the State and Authority

The ideologies of the bourgeoisie define the State as the organ which regularise the complex political, civil and social relations between men in modern society, and protecting the order and laws of the latter. Anarchists are in perfect agreement with this definition, but they complete it by affirming that the basis of this order and these laws is the enslavement of the vast majority of the people by an insignificant minority, and that it is precisely this purpose which is served by the State.

The State is simultaneously the organised violence of the bourgeoisie against the workers and the system of its executive organs.

The left socialists, and in particular the bolsheviks, also consider the bourgeois State and Authority to be the servants of capital. But they hold that Authority and the State can become, in the hands of socialist parties, a powerful weapon in the struggle for emancipation of the proletariat. For this reason these parties are for a socialist Authority and a proletarian State. Some want to conquer power by peaceful, parliamentary means (the social democratic), others by revolutionary means (the bolsheviks, the left social revolutionaries).

Anarchism considers these two to be fundamentally wrong, disastrous in the work of the emancipation of labour.

Authority is always dependent on the exploitation and enslavement of the mass of the people. It is born of this exploitation, or it is created in the interests of this exploitation. Authority without violence and without exploitation loses all *raison d'être*.

The State and Authority take from the masses all initiative, kill the spirit of creation and free activity, cultivates in them the servile psychology of submission, of expectation, of the hope of climbing the social ladder, of blind confidence in their leaders, of the illusion of sharing in authority. Thus the emancipation of labour is only possible in the direct revolutionary struggle of the vast working masses and of their class organisations against the capitalist system.

The conquest of power by the social democratic parties by peaceful means under the conditions of the present order will not advance by one single step the task of emancipation of labour, for the simple reason that real power, consequently real authority, will remain with the bourgeoisie which controls all the economy and politics of the country. The role of socialist authority is reduced in this case of reforms: to the amelioration of this same regime. (Examples: Ramsay MacDonald, the social democratic parties of Germany, Sweden, Belgium, which have come to power in a capitalist society.)

Further, seizing power by means of a social upheaval and organising a so called 'proletarian State' cannot serve the cause of the authentic emancipation of labour. The State, immediately and supposedly constructed for the defence of the revolution, invariably ends up distorted by needs and characteristics peculiar to itself, itself becoming the goal, produces specific, privileged castes, and consequently re-establishes the basis of capitalist Authority and State; the usual enslavement and exploitation of the masses by violence. (Example: the 'worker-peasant State of the bolsheviks.')

## 6. The Role of the Masses and the Role of the Anarchists in the Social Struggle and the Social Revolution

The principle forces of the social revolution are the urban working class, the peasant masses and a section of the working intelligentsia.

Note: While being an exploited and oppressed class in the same way as the urban and rural proletariats, the working intelligentsia is relatively disunited compared with the workers and peasants, thanks to the economic privileges conceded by the bourgeoisie to certain of its elements. That is why, during the early days of the social revolution, only the less comfortable strata of the intelligentsia take an active part in it.

The anarchist conception of the role of the masses in the social revolution and the construction of socialism differs, in a typical way, from that of the statist parties. While bolshevism and its related tendencies consider that the masses possess only destructionary revolutionary instincts, being incapable of creative and constructive activity - the principle reason why the latter activity should be concentrated in the hands of the men forming the government of the State of the Central Committee of the party - anarchists on the contrary think that the labouring masses have inherent creative and constructive possibilities which are enormous, and anarchists aspire to suppress the obstacles impeding the manifestation of these possibilities.

Anarchists consider the State to be the principle obstacle, usurping the rights of the masses and taking from them all the functions of economic and social life. The State must perish, not 'one day' in the future society, but immediately. It must be destroyed by the workers on the first day of their victory, and must not be re-constituted under any guise whatsoever. It will be replaced by a federalist system of workers organisations for production and consumption, united federatively and self-administrating. This system excludes just as much authoritarian organisations as the dictatorship of the party, whichever it might be.

The Russian revolution of 1917 displays precisely this orientation of the process of social emancipation in the creation of the system of worker and peasant soviets and factory committees. Its sad error was not to have liquidated, at an opportune moment, the organisation of state power: initially of the provisional government, and subsequently of bolshevik power. The bolsheviks, profiting from the trust of the workers and peasants, reorganised the bourgeois state according to the circumstances of the moment and consequently killed the creative activity of the masses, in supporting and maintaining the State: choking the free regime of soviets and factory committees which represented the first step towards building a non-statist socialist society.

Action by anarchists can be divided into periods, that before the revolution, and that during the revolution. In both, anarchists can only fulfil their role as an organised force if they have a clear conception of the objectives of their struggle and the roads leading to the realisation of these objectives.

The fundamental task of the General Union of Anarchists in the pre-revolutionary period must be the preparation of the workers and peasants for the social revolution.

In denying formal (bourgeois) democracy, authority

and State, in proclaiming the complete emancipation of labour, anarchism emphasises to the full the rigorous principles of class struggle. It alerts and develops in the masses class consciousness and the revolutionary intransigence of the class.

It is precisely towards the class intransigence, anti-democratism, anti-statism of the ideas of anarcho-communism, that the libertarian education of the masses must be directed, but education alone is not sufficient. What is also necessary is a certain mass anarchist organisation. To realise this, it is necessary to work in two directions: on the one hand towards the selection and grouping of revolutionary worker and peasant forces on a libertarian communist basis (a specifically libertarian communist organisation): on the other hand, towards regrouping revolutionary workers and peasants on an economic base of production and consumption (revolutionary workers and peasants organised around production; workers and free peasants co-operatives). The worker and peasant class, organised on the basis of production and consumption, penetrated by revolutionary anarchist positions, will be the first strong point of the social revolution.

The more these organisations are conscious and organised in an anarchist way, as from the present, the more they will manifest an intransigent and creative libertarian will at the moment of the revolution.

As for the working class in Russia: it is clear that after eight years of bolshevik dictatorship, which enchains the natural needs of the masses for free activity, the true nature of all power is demonstrated better than ever; this class conceals within itself enormous possibilities for the formation of a mass anarchist movement. Organised anarchist militants should go immediately with all the force at their disposal to meet these needs and possibilities, in order that they do not degenerate into reformism (menshevism).

With the same urgency, anarchists should apply themselves to the organisation of the poor peasantry, who are crushed by state power, seeking a way out and concealing enormous revolutionary potential.

The role of anarchist in the revolutionary period cannot be restricted solely to the propagation of the keynotes of libertarian ideas.

Life is not only an arena for the propagation of this or that conception, but also, to the same degree, as the arena of the struggle, the strategy, and the aspirations of these conceptions in the management of economic and social life.

More than any other concept, anarchism should become the leading concept of revolution, for it is only on the theoretical base of anarchism that the social revolution can succeed in the complete emancipation of labour.

The leading position of anarchist ideas in the revolution suggests an orientation of events after anarchist theory. However, this theoretical driving force should not be confused with the political leadership of the statist parties which leads finally to State Power.

Anarchism aspires neither to political power nor to dictatorship. Its principal aspiration is to help the masses to take the authentic road to the social revolution and the construction of socialism. But it is not sufficient that the masses take up the way of the social revolution. It is also necessary to maintain this orientation of the revolution and its objectives: the

suppression of capitalist society in the name of free workers. As the experience of the Russian revolution in 1917 has shown us, this last task is far from being easy, above all because of the numerous parties which try to orientate the movement in a direction opposed to the social revolution.

Although the masses express themselves profoundly in the social movement in terms of anarchist tendencies and tenets, these tendencies and tenets do however remain dispersed, being uncoordinated, and consequently do not lead to the organisation of the driving power of libertarian ideas which is necessary for preserving the anarchist orientation and objectives in the social revolution. This theoretical driving force can only be expressed by a collective especially created by the masses for this purpose. The organised anarchist elements constitute exactly this collective.

The theoretical and practical duties of this collective are considerable at the time of the revolution. It must manifest its initiative and display total participation in all the domains of the social revolution: in the orientation and general character of the revolution; in civil war and the defence of the revolution; in the positive tasks of the revolution, in new production, consumption, the agrarian question etc.

On all these questions, and on numbers of others, the masses demand a clear and precise response from the anarchists. And from the moment when anarchists declare a conception of the revolution and the structure of society, they are obliged to give all these questions a clear response, to relate the solution of these problems to the general conception of libertarian communism, and to devote all their forces to the realisation of these.

Only in this way do the General Union of Anarchists and the anarchist movement completely assure their function as a theoretical driving force in the social revolution.

## 7. The Transition Period

By the expression 'transition period' the socialist parties understand a definite phase in the life of a people, of which the characteristic traits are: a rupture with the old order of things and the installation of a new economic and social system: a system which however does not yet represent the complete emancipation of workers.

In this sense, all the minimum programs of the socialist political parties, for example, the democratic programme of the socialist opportunists or the communists' programme for the 'dictatorship of the proletariat', are programs of the transition period.

The essential trait of all these is that they regard as impossible, for the moment, the complete realisation of the workers' ideals: their independence, their liberty and equality - and consequently preserve a whole series of the institutions of the capitalist system: the principle of statist compulsion, private ownership of the means and instruments of production, the bureaucracy, and several others, according to the goals of the particular party programme.

On principle, anarchists have always been the enemies of such programs, considering that the construction of transitional systems which maintain the principles of exploitation and compulsion of the masses leads inevitably to a new growth of slavery.

Instead of establishing political minimum programs, anarchists have always defended the idea of an immediate social revolution, which deprives the capitalist class of its economic and social privileges, and place the means and instruments of production and all the functions of economic and social life in the hands of the workers.

Up to now, it has been the anarchists who have preserved this position.

The idea of the transition period, according to which the social revolution should lead not to a communist society, but to a system retaining elements of the old system, is anti-social in essence. It threatens to result in the reinforcement and development of these elements to their previous dimensions, and to run events backwards.

A flagrant example of this is the regime of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat' established by the bolsheviks in Russia. According to them, the regime should be but a transitory step towards total communism. In reality, this step has resulted in the restoration of class society, at the bottom of which are, as before, the workers and peasants.

The centre of gravity of the construction of a communist society does not consist in the possibility of assuring each individual unlimited liberty to satisfy his needs from the first day of the revolution; but consists in the conquest of the social base of this society, and establishes the principles of egalitarian relationships between individuals. As for the question of the abundance, greater or lesser, of assets, this is not posed at the level of principle, but is a technical problem.

The fundamental principle upon which the new society will be erected and rest, and which must in no way be restricted, is that of the equality of relationships, of the liberty and independence of the workers. This principle represents the first fundamental demand of the masses, for which they rise up in social revolution.

Either the social revolution will terminate in the defeat of the workers, in which case we must start again to prepare the struggle, a new offensive against the capitalist system; or it will lead to the victory of the workers, and in this case, having seized the means which permit self-administration: the land, production, and social functions, the workers will commence the construction of a free society.

This is what characterises the beginning of the building of a communist society which, once begun, then follows the course of its development without interruption, strengthening itself and perfecting itself continuously.

In this way the take-over of the productive and social functions by the workers will trace an exact demarcation line between the statist and non-statist eras.

If it wishes to become the mouthpiece of the struggling masses, the banner of a whole era of social revolution, anarchism must not assimilate in its programme traces of the old order, the opportunist tendencies of transitional systems and periods, nor hide its fundamental principles, but on the contrary develop and apply them to the utmost.

## 8. Anarchism and Syndicalism

We consider the tendency to oppose libertarian communism to syndicalism and vice versa to be artificial, and devoid of all foundation and meaning. The

ideas of anarchism and syndicalism belong on two different planes. Whereas, communism, that is to say a society of free workers, is the goal of the anarchist struggle - syndicalism, that is the movement of revolutionary workers in their occupations, is only one of the forms of revolutionary class struggle. In uniting workers on a basis of production, revolutionary syndicalism, like all groups based on professions, has no determining theory, it does not have a conception of the world which answers all the complicated social and political questions of contemporary reality. It always reflects the ideologies of diverse political groupings, notably of those who work most intensely in its ranks.

Our attitude to revolutionary syndicalism derives from what is about to be said. Without trying here to resolve in advance the question of the role of revolutionary syndicates after the revolution, whether they will be the organisers of all new production, or whether they will leave this role to, workers' soviets or factory committees - we judge that anarchists take part in revolutionary syndicalism as one of the forms of the revolutionary workers' movement.

However, the question which is posed today is not whether anarchists should not participate in revolutionary syndicalism, but rather how and to what end they must take part.

We consider the period up to the present day, when anarchists entered the syndicalist movement as individuals and propagandists, as a period of artisan relationships towards the professional workers movement.

Anarcho-syndicalism, trying to forcefully introduce libertarian ideas into the left wing of revolutionary syndicalism as a means of creating anarchist-type unions, represents a step forward, but it does not, as yet, go beyond the empirical method, for anarcho-syndicalism does not necessarily interweave the 'anarchization' of the trade union movement with that of the anarchists organised outside the movement. For it is only on this basis, of such liaison, that revolutionary trade unionism could be 'anarchized' and prevented from moving towards opportunism and reformism.

In regarding syndicalism only as a professional body of workers without coherent social and political theory, and consequently, being powerless to resolve the social question on its own, we consider that the tasks of the anarchists in the ranks of the movement consists of developing libertarian theory, and point it in a libertarian direction, in order to transform it into an active arm of the social revolution. It is necessary to never forget that if trade unionism does not find in anarchist theory a support in opportune times it will turn.. whether we like it or not, to the ideology of a political statist party.

The task of anarchists in the ranks of the revolutionary workers' movement could only be fulfilled on conditions that their work was closely interwoven and linked with the activity of the anarchist organisation outside the union. In other words, we must enter into revolutionary trade unions as an organised force, responsible to accomplish work in the union before the general anarchist organisation, and orientated by the latter.

Without restricting ourselves to the creation of anarchist unions, we must seek to exercise our theoretical influence on all trade unions, and in all its

forms (the IWW, Russian TU's). We can only achieve this end by working in rigorously organised anarchist collectives; but never in small empirical groups, having between them neither organisational liaison nor theoretical agreement. Groups of anarchists in companies, factories and workshops, preoccupied in creating anarchist unions, leading the struggle in revolutionary unions for the domination of libertarian ideas in unionism, groups organised in their action by a general anarchist organisation: these are the ways and means of anarchists' attitudes vis a vis trade unionism.

## **CONSTRUCTIVE SECTION:**

### **THE PROBLEM OF THE FIRST DAY OF THE SOCIAL REVOLUTION**

The fundamental aim of the world of labour in struggle is the foundation, by means of revolution, of a free and equal communist society founded on the principle 'from each according to his ability to each according to his needs.'

However, this society will not come about of its own, only by the power of social upheaval. Its realisation will come about by a social revolutionary process, more or less drawn out, orientated by the organised forces of victorious labour in a determined path.

It is our task to indicate this path from this moment on, and to formulate positive, concrete problems that will occur to workers from the first day of the social revolution, the outcome of which depends upon their correct solution.

It is self evident that the building of the new society will only be possible after the victory of the workers over the bourgeois-capitalist system and over its representatives. It is impossible to begin the building of a new economy and new social relations while the power of the state defending the regime of enslavement has not been smashed, while workers and peasants have not ceased, as the object of the revolution, the industrial and agricultural economy.

Consequently, the very first social revolutionary task is to smash the statist edifice of the capitalist system, to expropriate the bourgeoisie and in general all privileged elements of the means of power, and establish overall the will of the workers in revolt, as expressed by fundamental principles of the social revolution. This aggressive and destructive aspect of the revolution can only serve to clear the road for the positive tasks which form the meaning and essence of the social revolution. These tasks are as follows:

1. The solution, in the libertarian communist sense, of the problem of industrial production of the country.
2. The solution similarly of the agrarian problem.
3. The solution of the problem of consumption.

## **PRODUCTION:**

Taking note of the fact that the country's industry is the result of the efforts of several generations of workers, and that the diverse branches of industry are tightly bound together, we consider all actual production as a single workshop of producers, belonging totally to all workers together, and to no one in particular.

The productive mechanism of the country is global

and belongs to the whole working class. This thesis determines the character and the forms of the new production. It will also be global, common in the sense that the products produced by the workers will belong to all. These products, of whatever category, the general fund of provisions for the workers, where each who participates in production will receive that which he needs, on an equal basis for everybody.

The new system of production will totally supplant the bureaucracy and exploitation in all their forms and establish in their place the principle of brotherly co-operation and workers' solidarity.

The middle class which in a modern capitalist society exercises intermediary functions - commerce etc., as well as the bourgeoisie, must take part in the new mode of production on the same conditions as all other workers. If not, these classes place themselves outside the society of labour.

There will be no bosses, neither entrepreneur, owner or state-appointed owner (as in the case today in the bolshevik state). Management will pass on this new production to the administration especially created by the workers: workers' soviets, factory committees or workers' management of works and factories. These organs, interlinked at the level of the commune, district and finally general and federal management of production. Built by the masses and always under their control and influence, all these organs constantly renewed will realise the idea of self-management, real self-management, by the masses of the people.

Unified production, in which the means and products belong to all, having replaced bureaucracy by the principle of brotherly co-operation and having established equal rights for all work, production managed by the organs of workers' control, elected by the masses, that is the first practical step in the road to the realisation of libertarian communism.

## **CONSUMPTION:**

This problem will appear during the revolution in two ways:

1. The principle of the search for products for consumption.
2. The principle of their distribution.

In that which concerns the distribution of consumer goods, the solution depends over all on the quantity of products available and on the principle of the agreement of targets.

The social revolution concerning itself with the reconstruction of the whole social order, takes on itself as well, the obligation to satisfy everyone's necessities of life. The sole exception is the group of non-workers - those who refuse to take part in the new production for counter-revolutionary reasons. But in general, excepting the last category of people, the satisfaction of the needs of everyone in the area of the revolution is assured by the general reserve of consumer products. In the case of insufficient goods, they are divided according to the principle of the greatest urgency, that is to say in the first case to children, invalids and working families.

A far more difficult problem is that of organising the basis of consumption itself.

Without doubt, from the first day of the revolution,

the farms will not provide all the products vital to the life of the population. At the same time, peasants have an abundance which the towns lack.

The libertarian communists have no doubt about the mutualist relationship which exists between the workers of the town and countryside. They judge that the social revolution can only be realised by the common efforts of workers and peasants. In consequence, the solution to the problem of consumption in the revolution can only be possible by means of close revolutionary collaboration between these two categories of workers.

To establish this collaboration, the urban working class having seized production, must immediately supply the living needs of the country and strive to furnish the everyday products, the means and implements for collective agriculture. The measures of solidarity manifested by the workers as regards the needs of the peasants, will provoke from them in return the same gesture, to provide the produce of their collective labour for the towns.

Worker and peasant co-operatives will be the primary organs assuring the towns and countryside their requirements in food and economic materials. Later, responsible for more important and permanent functions, notably for supplying everything necessary for guaranteeing and developing the economic and social life of the workers and peasants; these cooperatives will be transformed into permanent organs for provisioning towns and countryside.

This solution to the problem of provisioning permits the proletariat to create a permanent stock of provision, which will have a favourable and decisive effect on the outcome of all new production.

## **THE LAND:**

In the solution of the agrarian question, we regard the principle revolutionary and creative forces to be the working peasants who do not exploit the labour of others - and the wage earning proletariat of the countryside. Their tasks will be to accomplish the redistribution of land in order to establish the use and exploitation of the land on communist principles.

Like industry, the land, exploited and cultivated by successive generations of labourers, is the product of their common effort. It also belongs to all working people and to none in particular. In as much as it is the inalienable and common property of the labourers, the land can never again be bought, nor sold, nor rented; it can therefore not serve as a means of the exploitation of others' labour.

The land is also a sort of popular and communal workshop, where the common people produce the means by which they live. But it is the kind of workshop where each labourer (peasant) has, thanks to certain historical conditions, become accustomed to carrying out his work alone, independent of other producers. Where as, in industry the collective method of work is essential and the only possible way in our times. The majority of peasants cultivate the land on their own account.

Consequently, when the land and the means of its exploitation are taken over by the peasants, with no possibility of selling or renting, the question of the forms of the utilisation of it and the methods of its exploitation (communal or by family) will not immediately find a

complete and definite solution, as it will in the industrial sector. Initially both of these methods will probably be used.

It will be the revolutionary peasants who themselves will establish the definitive term of exploitation and utilisation of the land. No outside pressure is possible in this question.

However, since we consider that only a communist society, in whose name after all the social revolution will be made, delivers labourers from their position of slavery and exploitation and gives them complete liberty and equality; since the peasants constitute the vast majority of the population (almost 85% in Russia in the period under discussion) and consequently the agrarian regime which they establish will be the decisive factor in the destiny of the revolution; and since, lastly, a private economy in agriculture leads, as in private industry, to commerce, accumulation, private property and the restoration of capital - our duty will be to do everything necessary, as from now, to facilitate the solution of the agrarian question in a collective way.

To this end, we must, as from now, engage in strenuous propaganda among the peasants in favour of collective agrarian economy.

The founding of a specifically libertarian peasant union will considerably facilitate this task.

In this respect, technical progress will be of enormous importance, facilitating the evolution of agriculture and also the realisation of communism in the towns, above all in industry. If, in their relations with the peasants, the industrial workers act, not individually or in separate groups, but as an immense communist collective embracing all the branches of industry; if, in addition, they bear in mind the vital needs of the countryside and if at the same time they supply each village with things for everyday use, tools and machines for the collective exploitation of the lands, this will impel the peasants towards communism in agriculture.

## **THE DEFENCE OF THE REVOLUTION:**

The question of the defence of the revolution is also linked to the problem of 'the first day'. Basically, the most powerful means for the defence of, the revolution is the happy solution of its positive problems: production, consumption and the land. Once these problems are correctly solved, no counter revolutionary will be able to alter or unbalance the free society of workers. Nevertheless the workers will have to sustain a severe struggle against the enemies of the revolution, in order to maintain its concrete existence.

The social revolution, which threatens the privileges and the very existence of the non-working classes of society, will inevitably provoke a desperate resistance on behalf of these classes, which will take the form of a fierce civil war.

As the Russian experience showed, such a civil war will not be a matter of a few months, but of several years.

However joyful the first steps of the labourers at the beginning of the revolution, the ruling classes will retain an enormous capacity to resist for a long time. For several years they will launch offensives against the revolution, trying to reconquer the power and privileges of which they were deprived.

A large army, military techniques and strategy,

capital - will all be thrown against the victorious labourers. In order to preserve the conquests of the revolution, the labourers should create organs for the defence of the revolution, so as to oppose the reactionary offensive with a fighting force corresponding to the magnitude of the task. In the first days of the revolution, this fighting force will be formed by all armed workers and peasants. But this spontaneous armed force will only be valuable during the first days, before the civil war reaches its highest point and the two parties in struggle have created regularly constituted military organisations.

In the social revolution the most critical moment is not during the suppression of Authority, but following, that is, when the forces of the defeated regime launch a general offensive against the labourers, and when its a question of safeguarding the conquests under attack.

The very character of this offensive, just as the technique and development of the civil war, will oblige the labourers to create determined revolutionary military contingents. The essence and fundamental principles of these formations must be decided in advance. Denying the statist and authoritarian methods of government, we also deny the statist method of organising the military forces of the labourers, in other words the principles of a statist army based on obligatory military service. Consistent with the fundamental positions of libertarian communism, the principle of voluntary service must be the basis of the military formations of labourers. The detachments of insurgent partisans, workers and peasants, which led the military action in the Russian revolution, can be cited as examples of such formations.

However, 'voluntary service' and the action of partisans should not be understood in the narrow sense of the word, that is as a struggle of worker and peasant detachments against the local enemy, uncoordinated by a general plan of operation and each acting on its own responsibility, at its own risk. The action and tactics of the partisans in the period of their complete development should be guided by a common revolutionary strategy.

As in all wars, the civil war cannot be waged by the labourers with success unless they apply the two fundamental principles of all military action: unity in the plan of operations and unity of common command. The most critical moment of the revolution will come when the bourgeoisie march against the revolution in an organised force. This critical moment obliges the labourers to adopt these principles of military strategy.

Thus, in view of the necessities imposed by military strategy and also the strategy of the counter revolution, the armed forces of the revolution should inevitably be based on a general revolutionary army with a common command and plan of operations.

The following principles form the basis of this army:

- (a) the class character of the army;
- (b) voluntary service (all coercion will be completely excluded from the work of defending the revolution);
- (c) free revolutionary discipline (self discipline) (voluntary service and revolutionary self-discipline are perfectly compatible, and give the revolutionary army greater morale than any army of the state);

- (d) the total submission of the revolutionary army to the masses of the workers and peasants as represented by the worker and peasant organisations common throughout the country, established by the masses in the controlling sectors of economic and social life.

In other words, the organ of the defence of the revolution, responsible for combating the counter-revolution, on major military fronts as well as on an internal front (bourgeois plots, preparations for counter-revolutionary action), will be entirely under the jurisdiction of the productive organisations of workers and peasants, to which it will submit, and by which it will receive its political direction.

Note: while it should be conducted in conformity with definite libertarian communist principles, the army itself should not be considered a point of principle. It is but the consequence of military strategy in the revolution, a strategic measure to which labourers are fatally forced by the very process of the civil war. But this measure must attract attention as from now. It must be carefully studied in order to avoid any irreparable set-backs in the work of protecting and defending the revolution, for setbacks in the civil war could prove disastrous to the outcome of the whole social revolution.

## **ORGANISATIONAL SECTION:**

### **THE PRINCIPLES OF ANARCHIST ORGANISATION**

The general, constructive positions expressed above constitute the organisational platform of the revolutionary forces of anarchism.

This platform, containing a definite tactical and theoretical orientation, appears to be the minimum to which it is necessary and urgent to rally all the militants of the organised anarchist movement.

Its task is to group around itself all the healthy elements of the anarchist movement into one general organisation, active, and agitating on a permanent basis: the General Union of Anarchists. The forces of all anarchist militants should be orientated towards the creation of this organisation. The fundamental principles of organisation of a General Union of Anarchists should be as follows:

#### 1. Theoretical Unity:

Theory represents the force which directs the activity of persons and organisations along a defined path towards a determined goal. Naturally it should be common to all the persons and organisations adhering to the General Union, both overall and in its details, should be in perfect concord with the theoretical principles professed by the Union.

## 2. Tactical Unity or the Collective Method of Action:

In the same way the tactical methods employed by separate members and groups within the Union should be unitary, that is, be in rigorous concord both with each other and with the general theory and tactic of the Union. A common tactical line in the movement is of decisive importance for the existence of the organisation and the whole movement: it removes the disastrous effect of several tactics in opposition to one another, it concentrates all the forces of the movement, gives them a common direction leading to a fixed objective.

## 3. Collective Responsibility:

The practice of acting on one's personal responsibility should be decisively condemned and rejected in the ranks of the anarchist movement. The areas of revolutionary life, social and political, are above all profoundly collective by nature. Social revolutionary activity in these areas cannot be based on the personal responsibility of individual militants. The executive organ of the general anarchist movement, the Anarchist Union, taking a firm line against the tactic of irresponsible individualism, introduces in its ranks the principle of collective responsibility: the entire Union will be responsible for the political and revolutionary activity of each member; in the same way, each member will be responsible for the political and revolutionary activity of the Union as a whole.

## 4. Federalism:

Anarchism has always denied centralised organisation, both in the area of the social life of the masses and in its political action. The centralised system relies on the diminution of the critical spirit, initiative and independence of each individual and on the blind submission of the masses to the 'centre'. The natural and inevitable consequences of this system are the enslavement and mechanisation of social life and the life of the organisation. Against centralism, anarchism has always professed and defended the principle of federalism, which reconciles the independence and initiative of individuals and the organisation with service to the common cause.

In reconciling the idea of the independence and the high degree of rights of each individual with the service of social needs and necessities, federalism opens the doors to every healthy manifestation of the faculties of every individual. But quite often the federalist principle has been deformed in anarchist ranks: it has too often been understood as the right, above all, to manifest ones 'ego', without obligation to account for duties as regards the organisation.

This false interpretation disorganised our movement in the past. It is time to put an end to it in a firm and irreversible manner. Federation signifies the free agreement of individuals and organisations to work collectively towards a common objective.

However, such an agreement and the federal union based on it, will only become reality, rather than fiction or illusion, only on the condition sine qua non that all the participants in the agreement and the Union fulfil most completely the duties undertaken, and conform to

communal decisions. In a social project, however vast the federalist basis on which it is built, there can be no decisions without their execution. It is even less admissible in an anarchist organisation, which exclusively takes on obligations with regard to the workers and their social revolution. Consequently, the federalist type of anarchist organisation, while recognising each member's rights to independence, free opinion, individual liberty and initiative, requires each member to undertake fixed organisational duties, and demands execution of communal decisions.

On this condition alone will the federalist principle find life, and the anarchist organisation function correctly, and steer itself towards the defined objective.

The idea of the General Union of Anarchists poses the problem of the co-ordination and concurrence of the activities of all the forces of the anarchist movement.

Every organisation adhering to the Union represents a vital cell of the common organism. Every cell should have its secretariat, executing and guiding theoretically the political and technical work of the organisation.

With a view to the co-ordination of the activity of all the Union's adherent organisation, a special organ will be created: the executive committee of the Union. The committee will be in charge of the following functions: the executive of decisions taken by the Union with which it is entrusted the theoretical and organisational orientation of the activity of isolated organisations consistent with the theoretical positions and the general tactical line of the Union; the maintenance of working and organisational links between all the organisations in the Union; and with other organisations.

The rights, responsibilities and practical tasks of the executive committee are fixed by the congress of the Union.

The General Union of Anarchists has a concrete and determined goal. In the name of the success of the social revolution it must above all attract and absorb the most revolutionary and strongly critical elements among the workers and peasants.

Extolling the social revolution, and further, being an anti-authoritarian organisation which aspires to the abolition of class society, the General Union of Anarchist depends equally on the two fundamental classes of society: the workers and peasants. It lays equal stress on the work of emancipating these two classes.

As regards the workers' trade unions and revolutionary organisations in the towns, the General Union of Anarchists will have to devote all its efforts to becoming their pioneer and theoretical guide.

It adopts the same tasks with regard to the exploited peasant masses. As bases playing the same role as the revolutionary workers' trade unions, the Union strives to realise a network of revolutionary peasant economic organisations, furthermore, a specific peasants' union, founded on anti-authoritarian principles.

Born out of the heart of the mass of the labour people, the General Union must take part in all the manifestations of their life, bringing to them on every occasion the spirit of organisation - perseverance, action and offensive. Only in this way can it fulfil its tasks, its theoretical and historical mission in the social revolution of labour, and become the organised vanguard of their emancipating process.

# The Reply

BY "SEVERAL RUSSIAN ANARCHISTS":  
SOBOL, SCHWARTZ, STEIMER, VOLINE,  
LIA, ROMAN, ERVANTIAN, FLESHIN.

## REASONS FOR THE WEAKNESS OF THE ANARCHIST MOVEMENT

We do not agree with the position of the Platform 'that the most important reason for the weakness of the anarchist movement is the absence of organisational principles'. We believe that this issue is very important because the Platform seeks to establish a centralised organisation (a party) that would create 'a political and tactical line for the anarchist movement'. This over emphasises the importance and role of organisation.

We are not against an anarchist organisation; we understand the harmful consequences of a lack of organisation in the anarchist movement; we consider the creation of an anarchist organisation to be one of our most urgent tasks . . . But we do not believe that organisation, as such, can be a cure-all. We do not exaggerate its importance, and we see no benefit or need to sacrifice anarchist principles and ideas for the sake of organisation. We see the following reasons for the weakness of the anarchist movement:

1. The confusion in our ideas about a series of fundamental issues, such as the conception of the social revolution, of violence, of the period of transition, of organisation.
2. The difficulty of getting a large part of the population to accept our ideas. We must take into account existing prejudices, customs, education, the fact that the great mass of people will look for an accommodation rather than radical change.
3. Repression.

## THE ANARCHIST SYNTHESIS

We also disagree with the idea of a 'synthesis', as stated in the Platform. The authors proclaim that anarchist-communism is the only valid theory, and they take a critical, more or less, negative position toward individualist anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists.

We repeat what we declared when we organised NABAT (Organisation of Ukrainian anarchists in 1917-1921): 'There is validity in all anarchist schools of thought. We must consider all diverse tendencies and accept them.' To unite all militants we must seek a common base for all, seeing what is just in each concept. This should be included in a Platform for the entire movement. There are several examples of such a Platform, such as the declaration of the Nabat Conference in Kursk, as well as the resolutions of other anarchist conferences of that period. Here are some extracts of the resolution adopted at the First Congress of the Confederation of Anarchist Organisations in the

Ukraine, 'NABAT', that took place April 2, 1919, in Elizabethgrad, Ukraine:

' . . . our organisation does not represent a mechanical alliance of different tendencies, each holding only to its own point of view and, therefore, unable to offer ideological guidance to the working population; it is a union of comrades joined together on a number of basic positions and with an awareness of the need for planned, organised collective effort on the basis of federation.'

## ANARCHISM AS A THEORY OF CLASSES

Synthesis is needed in this area also. We cannot affirm that anarchism is a theory of classes and reject those who try to give it a human character. And we cannot declare like some do that anarchism is a humanitarian ideal for all people and accuse those who hold to a class base of marxist deviation. Nor, finally, can we maintain that anarchism is solely an individualist conception having nothing to do with humanity as a whole or with a 'class'. We must create a synthesis and state that anarchism contains class elements as well as humanism and individualist principles.

We must try to determine in a theoretical and practical manner the role and importance of each of these elements in the conception of anarchism. To maintain that anarchism is only a theory of classes is to limit it to a single viewpoint. Anarchism is more complex and pluralistic, like life itself. Its class element is above all its means of fighting for liberation; its humanitarian character is its ethical aspect, the foundation of society; its individualism is the goal of mankind.

## THE ROLE OF THE MASSES AND ANARCHISM IN THE SOCIAL STRUGGLE AND THE SOCIAL REVOLUTION

The thesis of the Platform on this question can be summarised as follows: the masses must be directed. The contrary viewpoint was the prevailing one in our movement until now: individuals and conscious minority, including their ideological organisations, cannot 'direct the masses'. We must learn from the masses constantly if we do not want to lead them into a blind alley.

This is how the problem should be seen. Their solution is very superficial and false because the central problem is not resolved: the revolutionary masses and the conscious minority or their ideological organisations. The political parties have an advantage in this area: it is not a problem for them. Their solution is:

- \* the masses and developments must be directed;
- \* the conscious minority, separated from the masses, must take the initiative;
- \* this 'collective' must be organised into a party;
- \* the party takes the initiative in all areas, including the social revolution.

The authors of the Platform take a similar position. However they choose to begin with some precaution: 'The ideological direction of revolutionary activities and revolutionary movements should not be understood as a tendency of the anarchists to take control of the building of the new society.'

The Platform expresses the idea that the need to direct the masses is linked directly to a party, a well defined political line, a predetermined program, control of the labour movement, political direction of the organisations created to fight the counter-revolution. The Platform states: 'The anarchist union as an organisation of the social revolution rests on the two main classes of society: the workers and the peasants . . . all their energies must be concentrated on the ideological guidance of the labour organisations.'

The concrete form of organisation needed to achieve such political and social direction of the masses and their actions will be: at the highest level, the leading party (General Union); a little below: the higher levels of the workers and peasants organisations led by the Union; still lower: the organisations at the base set up to fight the counter-revolution, the army, etc.

We do not believe that the anarchists should lead the masses; we believe that our role is to assist the masses only when they need such assistance. This is how we see our position: the anarchists are part of the membership in the economic and social mass organisations. They act and build as part of the whole. An immense field of action is opened to them for ideological, social and creative activity without assuming a position of superiority over the masses. Above all they must fulfill their ideological and ethical influence in a free and natural manner.

The anarchists and specific organisations (groups, federations, confederations) can only offer ideological assistance, but not in the role of leaders. The slightest suggestion of direction, of superiority, of leadership of the masses and developments inevitably implies that the masses must accept direction, must submit to It; this, in turn, gives the leaders a sense of being privileged like dictators, of becoming separated from the masses.

In other words, the principles of power come into play - This is in contradiction not only with the central ideas of anarchism, but also our conception of the social revolution. The revolution must be the free creation of the masses, not controlled by ideological or political groups.

## THE TRANSITION PERIOD

The Platform denies the principle of the transition period in words yet accepts it as a fact. If the Platform contains an original idea it is precisely on this point, on the detailed description of the idea of the transition period. Everything else is only an attempt to justify this idea.

Some Russian anarcho-syndicalists openly defended this idea a few years ago. The authors of that Platform

do not defend the idea of a transition clearly and openly. This vacillation, this conditional acceptance and rejection, makes frank and logical discussion of the issue difficult. For instance, they declare on the issue of majority and minority in the anarchist movement: In principle (the classical conception follows) . . . however, at certain moments it could be that (the compromise follows). . .'

We know that life does not happen in 'moments'. Another example: 'We believe that decisions of the soviets will be carried out in society without decrees of coercion. But such decisions must be obligatory for everyone who has accepted them, and sanctions must be applied against those who reject them' This is the start of coercion, violence, sanctions.

The Platform states:

'Because we are convinced that acceptance of a government will result in the defeat of the revolution and the enslavement of the masses, we must direct all our efforts to have the revolution take the anarchist road . . . But we also recognise that our organisation of labour on the basis of small groups of artisans cannot help us fulfil our goal. This must be recognised in advance by the specific organisations.'

The Anarchist Union will lead the discussion and will decide the question in case of disagreement. This is precisely the issue. We find the same contradiction with regard to the defence of the revolution:

'Politically, whom will the army obey? Since the workers are not represented by a single organisation, they will probably organise various economic organisations. Thus, if we accept the principle of an army, we must also accept the principle of obedience of the army to the economic organisations of the workers and peasants . . .'

This is the transition period!

The Platform states with respect to freedom of press and freedom of speech: 'There can be specific moments when the press, however well intentioned, will be controlled to an extent for the good of the revolution.' Who will judge when, these 'specific moments' occur? Who will judge what their 'limits' should be? There will be authority and power, even though it may be called by some other name.

The Platform writes regarding the anarchist principle 'From each according to his capacities, to each according to his needs':

'This principle is the touchstone of anarchist-communism. But it is a conception of principle: its realisation will depend on the practical steps taken during the early days of the revolution.' Here again the 'however's'. What, then, is the transition period?

It is clear and logical to us: the idea of the necessity to lead the masses to guide developments, therefore the need for elements of power and a transition period. We, on the other hand, regard the essential core of the social revolution to be the role of the mass of the workers who, thrust into the colossal process of social destruction by their historical experience, can achieve the free society in freedom, conscious of what they are doing.

## PRODUCTION

How will production be organised? Will it be centralised and planned the way the Bolsheviks are doing? Will it be too decentralised on a federalist basis?

This is the most important question. The authors of the Platform write: 'The organisation of production will be carried out by organisations created by the workers - soviets, factory committees which will direct and organise production in the cities, the regions and the nations. They will be linked closely with the masses who elect and control them, and have the power of recall at any time.

The Platform accepts a centralised, mechanical system, giving it the simple corrective of election. This is not enough. We think that changing names of an administrative body by means of an election is no great change. A mechanical, inanimate process can never come alive. So far as we are concerned, the participation of the masses cannot be limited only to 'electing'. There must be an immediate participation in the organisation of production. As a matter of principle we are not against committees (factory committees, workshop committees), nor against the need for a relationship and co-ordination between them. But these organisations can have a negative aspect: immobility, bureaucracy, a tendency to authoritarianism that will not be changed automatically by the principle of voting. It seems to us that there will be a better guarantee in the creation of a series of other, more mobile, even provisional organs, which arise and multiply according to needs that arise in the course of daily living and activities. Thus, in addition to organisations for distribution, for consumers, for housing, etc. All of these together offer a richer, more faithful reflection of the complexity of social life.

## **DEFENCE OF THE REVOLUTION**

This is the way the Platform sees the problem:

'In the first days of the social revolution, the armed forces are formed by all the armed workers and peasants, by the people in arms. But this is only in the first days when the civil war has not reached a climax, when the combatants have not yet coordinated their military organisation. After these early days, the armed forces of the revolution with its general command and general plan of operation. This organisation of struggle against the counter-revolution on battlefields in civil war is under the direction of the workers and peasants producers' organisations.'

We see two errors here, one technical, one political. The technical error: only a centralised army can defend the revolution. To avoid total confusion, we point out that the opposite is also incorrect, namely, that only isolated, local units with no contact with each other can guarantee the success of the revolution. A highly centralised command developing a general plan of action can lead to catastrophe. Actions without co-ordination are also inefficient. The defects of the first, which do not take local conditions into consideration, are self-evident. The discouragement of local and individual initiative, the weight of the apparatus, the tendency to regard the center as infallible, the priorities of the specialists are all the weaknesses of centralised command. The defects of the second system are self-evident.

How can these problems and defects be resolved? We

believe, especially in view of the Russian experience, that the armed participation of the working masses is essential, not only in the first days of revolutionary action, but during the entire period of struggle. Local formations of workers and peasants must be maintained with the understanding that their action is not isolated, but rather coordinated in a common campaign. And even when the situation requires larger armed formations, the command should not be centralised. There should be joint combat effectiveness when necessary, but they must be able to adapt easily to changing situations and take advantage of unforeseen conditions.

It must not be forgotten that the partisan units won the victories in the Russian Revolution against the forces of reaction, Denikin, Kolchak, Wrangel. The central army, with their central command and pre-established strategic planning was always taken by surprise and was unable to adapt to the unexpected. Most of the time, the centralised Red Army arrived late, almost always in to receive the laurels and glory of victory which belonged to the real victors, the partisans. One day history will report the truth about the bureaucracy of military centralisation.

We can be asked how is it possible to defend the social revolution against foreign intervention without a solid centralised army. We respond, first, that this danger should not be exaggerated. Most of the time such an expedition comes from far away with all the difficulties this entails; second, the Russian Revolution had a series of such interventions, and they were all defeated by partisan units, not by the centralised army, by the active resistance of the masses, by the intense revolutionary propaganda addressed to the soldiers and sailors of the invading forces.

Finally, we point out that a centralised army with its central command and 'political direction', has too much opportunity to stop being a revolutionary army; consciously or not it becomes an instrument to hold back, a tool of, reaction, of suffocation of the true revolution. We know because history has taught these lessons in the past. The latest example is the Russian Revolution with its Red Army.

The position of the Platform on the role of the army as a 'political defender', an 'arm against reaction', surprises us. We believe that such an apparatus can have only a negative role for the social revolution. Only the people in arms, with their enthusiasm, their positive solutions to the essential problems of the revolution (particularly in production) can offer sufficient defence against the plots of the 'bourgeoisie'. And if the people fall, no 'apparatus', no 'army', no 'tcheka' can save the revolution. To disagree with this viewpoint means that the problems of the revolution do not interest the masses except as a political cloak. This is the typically - Bolshevik conception.

This leads to the following conclusion: a leading organisation (the Union) that orients the mass organisations (workers and peasants) in their political direction and is supported as needed by a centralised army is nothing more than a new political power.

## **ANARCHIST ORGANISATION**

We return to the problem of organisation which is of concern to us. We believe that the disorganisation of the anarchist movement around the world does us great

harm. We are convinced that forces and movements must be organised. Three questions arise when we consider the creation of an organisation: the method of establishing an organisation, the aim and essence of an organisation, and its form.

## **METHOD OF CREATING AN ANARCHIST ORGANISATION**

Why and how should an anarchist organisation be created? We must start by trying to understand the most important causes of disorganisation among anarchists. It is clear and simple for the authors of the Platform: some anarchists have a 'disturbed' character, a sense of 'Irresponsibility', a 'lack of discipline'. We believe that among a number of causes of disorganisation in anarchist movements, the most important is the vague and imprecise character of some of our basic ideas.

The authors of the Platform agree with this. They speak of 'contradiction in theory and practice', of doubts without end'. There are two ways to resolve this question: Take one idea among 'contradictory ideas' as the basis, accept it as the common program. If necessary, organise with a certain discipline. At the same time, all who disagree with the program should be excluded and even driven out of the movement. The organisation thus created - the only organisation - will further clarify its ideas (there are comrades who believe that the anarchist ideas on this issue are sufficiently clear). As a serious organisation is created, we will have to devote our best energies to clarify, deepen and develop our ideas.

Above all we must try to reduce the 'contradictions' in the field of theory. Our efforts to create an organisation will help us in our ideological work. To put it another way, we will organise our forces as we develop and systematise our ideas.

The authors of the Platform forget that they are following an old road in seeking to create an organisation based on a single ideological and tactical conception. They are creating an organisation that will have more or less hostile relations with other organisations that do not have exactly the same conceptions. They do not understand that this old road will lead inevitably to the same old results; the existence not of a single organisation but of many organisations. They will not be in a co-operative, harmonious relationship, but rather in conflict with each other even though they are all anarchist: each organisation will claim the sole, the profound truth. These organisations will be concerned with polemics against each other rather than developing propaganda and activities to help the anarchist movement in general.

The authors of the Platform speak of the need for 'ideological and tactical unity'. But how is this unity to be achieved? This is the problem, and there is no satisfactory answer. The method outlined does not lead to unity. On the contrary, it will make the differences, the discussion, among us more acute leading even to hatred.

This approach must be treated as follows? the 'only', the 'true' theory and tactic of the authors of the Platform must be rejected without further discussion.

However this is not the anarchist way to act. We suggest another course of procedure. We believe that the first step toward achieving unity in the anarchist

movement which can lead to serious organisation is collective ideological work on a series of important problems that seek the clearest possible collective solution.

For those comrades who are afraid of philosophical and intellectual digressions and wanderings, we make it clear that we are not concerned with philosophical problems or abstract dissertations, but with concrete questions for which, unfortunately, we do not have clear answers. For example, the questions, among others, of the constructive task of anarchism, of the role of the masses and the conscious minority, of violence, the analysis of the process of social revolution and the problem of the period of transition, the way to the libertarian society, the role of workers and peasants organisations, of the armed groups, the relations with unions, the relationship between communism and individualism, the problem of the organisation of our forces.

How can this be realised?

We suggest that there be a publication for discussion in every country where the problems in our ideology and tactics can be fully discussed, regardless of how 'acute' or even 'taboo' it may be. The need for such a printed organ, as well as oral discussion, seems to us to be a 'must' because it is the practical way, to try to achieve 'ideological unity', 'tactical unity', and possibly organisation.

There are, however, comrades who refuse to use an organ of discussion. They prefer a series of publications, each defending a particular position. We prefer a single organ with the condition that representatives of all opinions and all tendencies in anarchism be permitted to express themselves and become accustomed to living together. A full and tolerant discussion of our problems in one organ will create a basis for understanding, not only among anarchists, but among the different conceptions of anarchism. This type of agreement to discuss our ideas together in an organised fashion can advance along parallel lines.

## **ROLE AND CHARACTER OF ANARCHIST ORGANISATIONS**

The role and aim of an organisation are fundamental. There cannot be a serious organisation without a clear definition of this question. The aims of an organisation are determined in a large part by its form. The authors of the Platform attribute the role of leading the masses, the unions and all other organisations, as well as all activities and developments to the anarchist organisation. We declare that juxtaposing the words 'to lead' with the adverb 'ideologically' does not change the position of the Platform's authors significantly because they conceive the organisation as a disciplined party. We reject any idea that the anarchists should lead the masses. We hope that their role will only be that of ideological collaboration, as participants and helpers fulfilling our social role in a modest manner. We have pointed out the nature of our work: the written and spoken word, revolutionary propaganda, cultural work, concrete living example, etc.

## **FORM OF ANARCHIST ORGANISATION**

The contradictions, the semi-confessions, the

vacillations in language of the Platform are characteristic on this point. However, in spite of many precautions, their conception appears to be that of any political party: the Executive Committee of the Universal Anarchist Union must, among other things, assume the ideological and organisational direction of every organisation according to the general ideological and tactical line of the Union. At the same time, the Platform affirms its faith in the federalist principle which is in absolute contradiction with the ideas cited above. Federalism means autonomy at the base, federation of local groups, regions, etc., and finally a union of federations and confederations.

A certain ideological and tactical unity among organisations is clearly necessary. But how? In what sense? We cite again the resolution adopted by the Ukrainian organisation, NABAT, at the Kursk conference: 'A harmonious anarchist organisation in which the union does not have a formal character but its members are joined together by common ideas of means and ends.'

The authors of the Platform begin by affirming: 'Anarchism has always been the negation of a centralised organisation.' Yet they then go on to outline a perfectly centralised organisation with an Executive Committee that has the responsibility to give ideological and organisational direction to the different anarchist organisations, which in turn will direct the professional organisations of the workers.

What has happened to federalism? They are only one

step away from bolshevism, a step that the authors of the Platform do not dare to take. The similarity between the bolsheviks and the 'Platform anarchists' is frightening to the Russian comrades. It makes no difference whether the supreme organ of the anarchist party is called Executive Committee, or if we call it Confederal Secretariat. The proper spirit of an anarchist organisation is that of a technical organ of relations, help and information among the different local groups and federations.

In conclusion, the only original points in the Platform are: its revisionism toward bolshevism hidden by the authors, and acceptance of the transition period. There is nothing original in the rest of the Platform. This cannot be clear to the comrades of other countries because not enough has been published yet in other languages on the Russian Revolution and anarchism in Russia. The comrades therefore do not know much about developments there. Some of them are therefore able to accept the Platform's interpretation.

However, we think that the 'acceptance' will not last long.

We are convinced that discussion of the Platform will help clear up some of the misunderstandings.

Sobol - Schwartz - Steimer - Voline - Lia - Roman  
Ervantian - Fleshin

Paris, 1927 (From the review *Noir Et Rouge Black and Red* - Paris, 1968) (Memorial Tribute)

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### DOCUMENT 3:

# The Malatesta / Makhno Exchange

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## A PLAN FOR ANARCHIST ORGANISATION MALATESTA

By chance (it is common knowledge that the non fascist press in Italy is suppressed) I have come across a French pamphlet entitled 'Platforme d'organisation de l'union generale des anarchistes (Projet)', which, translated means Project for the programme of organisation of the General Union of Anarchists.

This is a project for anarchist organisation, published in November 1926 by a 'Group of Russian anarchists abroad' that seems to be directed in particular at our Russian comrades. But it deals with Questions that equally concern all anarchists; and besides, it is clear, not least from the language in which it is written, that it seeks to recruit comrades from all countries. In any case it is worth examining, by the Russians as by everyone, whether the proposals put forward is in harmony with anarchist principles and thus, whether putting it into practice would really help the anarchist cause.

### ANARCHISM AND ORGANISATION

The motives of the comrades who are proposing this Platform are excellent. They complain, with reason, that the anarchists have not had and do not have an influence on politico-social events in proportion to the theoretical, and practical value of their doctrines, let alone their numbers, their courage and their spirit of sacrifice - and they believe that the main reason for this relative lack of success is due to the absence of a large, serious and effective organisation.

And up to this point, in general, I would agree.

Organisation, which really is no more than the practice of co-operation and solidarity, is a natural and necessary condition of social life: it is an inescapable fact which is bound to concern everyone, whether in human society in general or in any group of people with a common goal to achieve.

Since man has neither the desire nor the ability to live in isolation, since indeed he cannot become a real man and satisfy his material and moral needs without entering into society and co-operation with his fellows, it inevitably happens that those who lack the means or a sufficiently developed awareness to create a free

organisation with others who share their interests and feelings, must submit to the organisation of others, generally of a ruling class or group, which aims to exploit to its own advantage the labour of the rest. The age-old oppression of the masses by a small and privileged number has always been the consequence of the inability of the majority of people to agree among themselves and create organisations with other workers for production and enjoyment and, in the event, defence against their exploiters and oppressors.

Anarchism emerged as a remedy for this state of affairs. Its basic principle is free organisation, created and maintained by the free will of its components without any kind of authority, that is without anyone having the right to impose his own will on the others. And it is therefore natural that the anarchists should attempt to apply that same principle on which, in their view, all human society should be founded, to their own private and organisational life.

From certain arguments it might seem there are anarchists opposed to any kind of organisation; but in reality the many, too many discussions that take place among us on the subject, even if obscured by questions of terminology or poisoned by personal differences, are basically concerned with the form and not the principle of organisation. Thus it happens that when those comrades who, to judge from what they say, are the most adamant opponents of organisation, really want to get something done, they organise themselves just like the rest, and often better. The problem, I repeat, is entirely one of method.

That is why I can only be sympathetic towards the initiative taken by these Russian comrades; for I am convinced that a more general, more harmonious, more stable organisation than any so far attempted by anarchists would most certainly be an important factor of strength and success, a powerful vehicle for the diffusion of our ideas, even if it did not succeed in eliminating all the mistakes and weaknesses that are perhaps inevitable in a movement like ours which is so much in advance of its time and which has therefore to struggle against the incomprehension, indifference and often hostility, of the majority.

## **THE ORGANISATION OF LABOUR AND SPECIFIC ORGANISATION**

I think it above all urgent and essential that the anarchists reach agreement and organise themselves as much and as best as they can so as to be able to influence the direction the masses take in their struggle for improvements and emancipation.

Today the greatest force for social transformation is the labour movement (trade union movement) and on its direction largely depends the course events will take and the goal to be achieved by the next revolution. Through organisations founded for the defence of their interests, the workers become aware of the oppression they suffer and the antagonism that divides them from their masters, they begin to wish for a better life, they grow accustomed to fighting together and in solidarity, and can obtain those improvements that are compatible with the continuation of a capitalist and state regime. After, when the conflict has gone too far to be resolved, there is either revolution or reaction. The anarchists must be aware of the usefulness and importance of the

trade union movement, they must support its development and make of it a means of action, doing all they can to guarantee that, in co-operation with the other existing forces of progress, it will result in a social revolution involving the suppression of a class, total liberty, equality, peace and solidarity between human beings. But it would be a great and fatal illusion to believe, as many do, that the labour movement of itself can, and must, by its very nature lead to such a revolution. On the contrary, all movements founded on material and short term interests (and a vast labour movement cannot be founded on any others) but lacking energy, drive, the combined efforts of men of ideas, who fight and sacrifice themselves for an ideal future, tend inevitably to adapt to the circumstances; they foster the spirit of conservatism and the fear of change in those who manage to obtain better conditions for themselves, and often end by creating new privileged classes and by supporting and consolidating the system one wishes to demolish.

Hence the urgent need for purely anarchist organisations fighting both within and from outside the trade unions to achieve a fully anarchist society and to sterilise all the germs of degeneration and reaction.

But it is clear that to attain their ends the anarchist organisations must, in their constitution and operation, be in harmony with the principles of anarchism, that is, they must in no way be polluted by the spirit of authoritarianism; they must be able to reconcile the free action of individuals with the need and the pleasure of co-operation and help to develop the awareness and initiative of their members; they must be a means of education for the environment in which they are operating and a moral and material preparation for the future we desire.

Does the project in question provide an answer to these requisites?

I do not think it does. In my view, instead of creating among anarchists a greater desire for organisation, it seems to have been formulated with the express design of reinforcing the prejudice of those comrades who believe that organisation means submission to leaders and belonging to an authoritarian centralised institution that stifles all free initiative. And in fact, are expressed those very intentions which some, contrary to the evident truth, and despite our protestations, persist in attributing to all anarchists who are described as organisers.

## **ONE OR SEVERAL ORGANISATIONS?**

Let's see.

First of all it seems to be mistaken - and in any case impracticable - to wish to unite all anarchists in a 'General Union', i.e. as the Project states, in a single active revolutionary grouping. We anarchists can say we are all of the same party, if by the word party we mean all those who are on the same side, and that is, who share the same general aspirations and who, in one way or another, fight for the same goal against common enemies. But this does not mean it is possible or perhaps even desirable - to unite together in one specific association. There are too many differences of environment and conditions of struggle, too many possible means of action which one or the other prefers, too many differences of temperament and personal

problems of incompatibility for one General Union, if taken seriously, not to become, instead of a means of co-ordination and synthesis of everyone's contributions, an obstacle to individual activity and perhaps, too, a cause of the bitterest infighting. How, for example, could one organise in the same way and with the same people, an open association for propaganda and agitation among the masses, and a secret society, forced by political conditions of the country where it is operating, to conceal its intentions, its means and members from the enemy? How could the educationists and the revolutionaries adopt the same tactics, since the former believe that propaganda and example are sufficient for a gradual transformation of individuals, and thus society, while the latter are convinced that it is necessary to destroy with violence an order which is based on violence and to create, against the violence of the oppressors, the necessary conditions for the free dissemination of propaganda and the practical application of the ideological gains? And how to keep people together who, for reasons of their own, do not like or respect one another and in no way could be equally good and useful anarchist militants?

Moreover, the authors of the Project (Platform) declare 'unacceptable' the idea of creating an organisation that would reunite the representatives of the different currents of anarchism. Such an organisation, they say, 'incorporating theoretically and practically heterogeneous elements would be no more than a hotchpotch (assemblage) of individuals who see in different ways all questions concerning the anarchist movement and would inevitably disintegrate as soon as put to the test of life.'

All right. But then, if they recognise the existence of anarchists of other tendencies, they must also allow them the right to organise themselves in their turn and to work for anarchy in the way they think best. Or will they claim to expel from anarchism, to excommunicate all those who do not accept their programme? They say they 'want to regroup in a single organisation all the healthy elements of the libertarian movement'; and naturally they will tend to judge as healthy only those who think like them. But what will they do about the unhealthy elements?

Certainly there are among anarchists, as in every human community, elements of differing quality and what is worse, there are those who, in the name of anarchy, circulate ideas that have an extremely dubious affinity with anarchism. But how to avoid this? Anarchic truth cannot and must not become the monopoly of one individual or one committee, nor can it depend on the decisions of real or imaginary majorities. It is necessary only - and this is sufficient - that everyone be allowed the greatest freedom of criticism, and that each person be able to uphold their own ideas and choose their own comrades. In the last analysis time will tell who was right.

## **ANARCHISM AND COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY**

Let us therefore abandon the idea of gathering all anarchists together in one organisation and consider the General Union these Russians are proposing to us for what it really is, i.e. the Union of a fraction of anarchists; and let us see if the form of organisation

proposed conforms to anarchist principles and methods and whether it could therefore contribute to the triumph of anarchy.

Again it seems to me that it could not.

I do not doubt the sincerity of the anarchist propositions of these Russian comrades: they want to achieve anarchist communism and are searching for the quickest way to do so. But it is not enough to want something: it is also necessary to adopt the right means, just as when one wants to go somewhere it is necessary to take the right road, otherwise one ends up in a quite different place. Thus, far from making it easier to achieve anarchist communism, their organisation, being typically authoritarian, could only distort the spirit of anarchism and lead to consequences quite different from what they intended.

In fact, their General Union would consist of so many one-sided organisations with secretaries that would ideologically direct the political and technical activity; and to co-ordinate the activity of all the member organisations there would be an Executive Committee of the Union, charged with carrying out the decisions taken by the Union and with the 'Ideological and organisational conduct of the organisations in conformity with the ideology and the general tactical policy of the Union.'

Is this anarchic? In my opinion this is a government and a church. It is true there are no police and bayonets just as there are no faithful disciples ready to accept the ideology dictated, but this simply means that their government would be an impotent and impossible government, and their church would be a nursery of schisms and heresies. The spirit, the tendency remains authoritarian and the educative effect would be always anti-anarchist.

Judge whether this is not true. 'The executive organ of the general libertarian movement - the anarchist Union - introduces into its ranks the principle of collective responsibility; the whole Union will be responsible for the revolutionary and political activity of every member; and each member will be responsible for the revolutionary and political activity of the Union.'

And after this, which is the absolute negation of any individual independence and action, the proponents, remembering they are anarchists, describe themselves as federalists and thunder away against centralisation 'the inevitable results of which,' they say, 'are enslavement and the mechanisation of social life and the life of the organisation'.

But if the Union is responsible for what each member does, how can it grant individual members and different groups the freedom to apply the common programme in the way it thinks best? How can one be responsible for an act that one does not have the ability to prevent? Hence the Union, and through it, the Executive Committee, must supervise the activities of the individual members and order them what and what not to do; and since disapproval after the event cannot compensate for responsibility previously accepted, no-one would be able to do anything before obtaining approval and consent of the committee. And then, can an individual accept responsibility for the actions of an organisation before knowing what it is going to do and if he cannot prevent it doing something he is opposed to?

Moreover, the authors of the Platforme say that it is the 'Union' that wills and disposes. But when mention is

made of the will of the Union, does this perhaps mean the will of all its members? In that case, for the Union to be able to operate it would be necessary for everyone, always and on every subject, to have the same opinion. Now if it is natural that everyone should be agreed on general and basic principles, as otherwise they could not be united, or remain united, it is inconceivable that all thinking beings could, all the time, be of the same opinion on what should be done in all circumstances and on the choice of people to fill executive posts.

## **ANARCHISM AND THE MAJORITY PRINCIPLE**

In reality - as the text of the Plateforme shows - the will of the Union can only mean the will of the majority, expressed by means of congresses, which nominate and control the Executive Committee and decide on all important questions. Naturally the congresses would be composed of representatives elected by the majorities of the member groups, and these representatives would decide on what to do, again by majority votes. Thus, in the best hypotheses, the decisions would be taken by the majority of a majority, which could very well, especially when there are more than two diverging opinions, represent no more than a minority.

It should also be noted that, given the conditions in which anarchists live and operate, their congresses are even less properly representative than bourgeois parliaments, and their control over the executive, if this has authoritarian powers, could only with great difficulty be opportune and effective. In practice those who go to anarchist congresses are the ones who are able, those with money and who have not been detained by the police; the ones who only represent themselves or a small number of friends as well as those who are real representatives of the views and desires of a large community. And save for the precautions taken against traitors and spies, in fact because of these same necessary precautions, a serious examination of mandates and their value is impossible.

In any case this is a real majority system, a fully parliamentary one.

It is known that the anarchists do not accept majority government (democracy), just as they do not accept government by a few (aristocracy, oligarchy or class or party dictatorship), nor the government of one (autocracy, monarchy, or personal dictatorship).

The anarchists have made innumerable criticisms of so-called majority government, which moreover, in practice always leads to the domination of a small minority.

Is it necessary to do so again for the benefit of our Russian comrades?

Certainly anarchists recognise that in community life it is often essential for the minority to accept the view of the majority. When there is a need or clear usefulness in doing something, and in order to do it everyone's co-operation is necessary, then the few must realise they have to adapt themselves to the desire of the many. And in general, to be able to live peacefully together, and on an equal footing, it is necessary for everyone to be amenable, tolerant and flexible. But this adaptation by one side to the other must be reciprocal and voluntary and stem from an awareness of its necessity and from the readiness of each person, not to paralyse social life through hostility; and it must not be imposed as a

principle or statutory norm. And this is an ideal which, perhaps, in the practice of social life will be difficult to attain entirely, but it is certain that in every human grouping, the freer and more spontaneous the agreement between majority and minority, the freer it is from any formulation that does not derive from the nature of things, the closer one is to anarchy.

So, if anarchists deny the right of the majority to govern in human society generally, where the individual is forced to accept certain restrictions, because he cannot isolate himself without renouncing the conditions of human life, and if they want everything to be done through free agreement of everyone, how on earth could they adopt the idea of majority government in their essentially free and voluntary associations and begin declaring that the decisions of the majority must be accepted, even before they are known?

It is understandable that non-anarchists believe anarchy, that is free organisation without the domination of the majority and vice versa, to be a utopia which is or is not possible in a remote future; but it is conceivable that those who profess to anarchist ideas and would like to achieve anarchy, or at least begin seriously to head in that direction, now rather than tomorrow, repudiate the fundamental principles of anarchism through the very method they propose for assuring its success.

## **THE BASIS OF ANARCHIST ORGANISATION**

An anarchist organisation must be founded, in my opinion, on very different bases from those proposed by the Russian comrades.

Full autonomy, full independence and thus full responsibility of the individual and the group; free agreement between those who think it useful to unite and co-operate to achieve a common goal; moral duty to support the enterprises undertaken and to nothing that would go against the accepted programme. Upon these bases one then builds the practical framework, adapted to bring real life to the organisation. Hence the groups, the federations of groups, the federations of federations of federations, the meetings, the congresses, the committees charged with liaison, etc. But all this must be done freely so as not to obstruct the thought and initiative of individuals, and only so as to give more weight to enterprises which, if isolated, would be impossible or very ineffective.

In this way the congresses of an anarchist organisation, while suffering as representative bodies from all the imperfections which I have mentioned, are free from any hint of authoritarianism because they do not make laws, they do not impose their own decisions on others. They serve to sustain and increase personal contact between the most active comrades, to assess and stimulate programmatic studies on the ways and means of taking action, to inform on the situation in the different regions and the most urgent action to be taken in each area, to formulate the various opinions currently held by the anarchists and make a statistics of them - their decisions not being obligatory rules, but suggestions, advice, proposals to put to all those involved, and not commitments except for those who accept them. The administrative organs that they nominate - Liaison Commission, etc. - have no executive power, they only take initiatives on behalf of those who desire and approve of these initiatives, and have no right

to impose their views; they can certainly support them and spread them as a group of comrades but cannot present them as the official line of the organisation. They publish the congress resolutions and the views and proposals communicated to them by groups and individuals; and help, for those who want it, to facilitate relations between the groups and co-operation between everyone who is in agreement on various points: each person is free to make direct contact with anyone he wants, or to use other committees nominated by special groups.

In an anarchist organisation the individual members can express any opinion or adopt any tactic which does not contradict the accepted principles and which does not harm the activity of the other people. In each case a given organisation lasts as long as the reasons for union are greater than the reasons for dissent. Otherwise it is dissolved and substituted by other more homogeneous groupings.

Of course the duration, the permanence of an organisation is a condition of success in the long battle we must fight, but also it is natural for any institution to aspire instinctively to an indefinite life. But the duration of a libertarian organisation must be the consequence of the spiritual affinity of its members and of the adaptability of its constitution to the continual changes in circumstances. When it is no longer able to fulfil a useful mission, it is better that it should die.

## CONCLUSION

Those Russian comrades will perhaps find our organisations as I conceive it and as it is, ineffective.

I understand. These comrades are obsessed by the success the Bolsheviks have had in their own country, and they would like, in the Bolshevik way, to unite the anarchists in a kind of disciplined army which, under the ideological and practical direction of a few leaders, marches compactly to the assault of the present regimes and then, the material victory won, presides over the constitution of the new society. And perhaps it is true that under this system, given that the anarchists accepted it, and the leaders were men of genius, our material efficiency could become great. But with what results? Would it not happen with anarchism as it has happened in Russia with socialism and communism?

These comrades are anxious for success and we are too; but to live and to gain victory there is no need to renounce the very reasons for life and to distort the character of the eventual victory.

(Translated from the Italian by G.F.)

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## MAKHNO'S RESPONSE

Dear Comrade Malatesta,

I have read your reply to the draft of the 'Organisational Platform of a General Union of Anarchists' published by the group of Russian anarchists abroad.

I have the impression that either you have rather badly misunderstood the draft of the 'Platform' or that your refusal to recognise collective responsibility in revolutionary action and the directive function that anarchist forces should have proceeds from a deep conception of anarchism which leads you to neglect the principle of responsibility.

Yet it is a fundamental principle for each of us, because of its way of understanding the anarchist idea, because of its will, to make the anarchist idea penetrate among the masses, because of its spirit of sacrifice. It is owing to, it that a man can choose the revolutionary way and bring others to it. Without it; no revolutionary could have the strength, will or intelligence necessary to bear the spectacle of social misery, and still less combat it. It is by inspiring themselves with collective responsibility that the revolutionaries of all times and all schools have gathered their forces. It is upon it that they based their hope that partial revolts - those revolts of which the history of the oppressed is full - would not be in vain, that the exploited would understand their aspirations, would retain their application adapted to the times and would serve it in seeking for the new path to their emancipation.

You yourself, my dear Malatesta, recognise the individual responsibility of the revolutionary anarchist. Better still: you have advocated it throughout your militant life. It is thus at least that I understand it from your writings on anarchism. But you refuse the necessity and the utility of collective responsibility when it touches on the tendencies and actions of the anarchist movement as a whole. Collective responsibility frightens you, since you repel it.

As to me, who has assumed the habit of looking full in the face the reality of our movement, your refusal of collective responsibility seems not only without foundations but dangerous to the social revolution. You must take good account of experience to lead the decisive battle against all our enemies together. Well, experience of the revolutionary battles of the past leads me, whilst excluding all imitation, to believe that whatever will be the order of revolutionary events, one will have to give them a series of directives as much ideological as factual. Thus only a sane collective spirit devoted to anarchism can express the demands of the moment by means of a collectively responsible will. None among us has the right to shun that part of responsibility. On the contrary, if it has been ignored by the anarchists until the present, it is necessary that it now becomes for us, anarchist-communists, an article of our theoretical and practical programme.

Only the collective spirit of the militants and their collective responsibility will permit modern anarchism to eliminate from its midst the historically false idea according to which it would not be necessary to serve as a guide - neither ideological nor practical - to the working masses in the revolutionary moment, and would therefore not have any group responsibility. I will not here comment on the other parts of your writing against the draft of the 'Platform', such as the one in which you see in it 'a church and an authority without police'. However I must express my surprise at seeing you have recourse to such an argument in your criticism. I have reflected on it a lot and I can accept your opinion no more than your reason.

No, you are mistaken. And as I am not in agreement with your refutation by means of too easy arguments, I think I am entitled to ask you:

- (1) Should anarchism take a responsible part in the struggle of the workers against their oppressors, the capitalists and their servant the state? If it should not, exhibit the reasons. If you accept, then, should anarchists work in order to permit their movement to exercise its influence at the very base of the existing social order?
- (2) Can anarchism, in the state of disorganisation in which it finds itself today, exercise an ideological and practical influence on the social forms and the struggles of the working class?
- (3) What are the means by which anarchism should serve outside the revolution and what are those which it commands to demonstrate and affirm its constructive conceptions?
- (4) Does anarchism need specific, permanent organisations, intimately linked with a unity of purpose and action in order to realise their aspirations?
- (5) What should anarchists understand by institutions to be realised in order to guarantee society its free development?
- (6) Can anarchism, in the communist society conceived by you, dispense with social institutions? If yes, by what means? If not, what institutions should it recognise and utilise, and in the name of what should it apply them? Should the anarchists assume a leading and hence responsible function, or should they limit themselves to being irresponsible auxiliaries?

Your reply, dear comrade Malatesta, would be of great importance to me for two reasons. It would permit me firstly to better understand your point of view concerning the question of the organisation of anarchist forces and of the movement in general. Next, let us speak frankly, your opinion is accepted immediately by the majority of anarchists and sympathisers without any discussion because it is that of a militant of value, faithful throughout his life to its liberation position. It depends therefore in a certain measure on your attitude whether a complete study of the urgent problems that our times pose the movement is or is not undertaken and therefore whether its development slackens or takes new flight. Our movement will gain nothing by remaining in its past and present stagnation. On the contrary it is urgent in the face of events to make it capable of filling its role in its entirety.

I count a lot on your reply. With my revolutionary salutations,

Nestor Makhno.

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## MALATESTA'S REPLY

Dear Comrade,

I have finally managed to see the letter you addressed to me more than a year ago on the subject of the criticism that I made of the plan of organisation of a general association of anarchists published by the group of Russian anarchists abroad and known in our movement under the name of 'the Platform'.

Knowing my situation you have certainly understood why I did not answer you [1]. I cannot participate as I would wish in discussion of the questions that interest us in the highest degree because the censor does not let reach me either publications that are considered subversive nor letters treating socio-political topics. It is only at long intervals and almost by chance that I receive a weak echo of what comrades are writing or doing. It is thus that I learnt that the platform and the criticism that I made have been widely discussed, but I knew nearly nothing of what had actually been said and your letter is the first writing on the subject I have been able to read.

If we were able to correspond freely, before beginning the discussion I would have you to explain your conceptions, which, perhaps as much because of an imperfect translation from Russian to French, appeared in certain cases rather obscure to me. But things being as they are, I answer you according to what I have understood and I hope to be able to see your reply.

You are astonished that I don't admit the principle of collective responsibility, which you consider a fundamental principle which has guided and should guide past, present and future revolutionaries.

From my side I wonder exactly what can be meant by the expression collective responsibility from the mouth of an anarchist.

I know that the military are in the habit of decimating a corps of soldiers who have revolted or conducted themselves badly in the face of the enemy, shooting indiscriminately those selected by the draw I know that the chiefs of an army corps have no qualms about destroying a village or a town and massacring all the population, including children, because someone has tried to resist their incursion. I know that in all epochs governments have - several times threatened to apply or have applied the system of collective responsibility so as to contain riots, to exact taxes etc

And I am aware that it can be an effective means of intimidation and oppression. But how can one speak of collective responsibility between men who are struggling for freedom and justice. And if it were only a question of moral responsibility how could this not entail material sanctions?

For instance: if, in an encounter with the military my companion behaves in a cowardly fashion this would involve me and everyone of us in danger but the dishonour would only fall on the person who lacked the

courage to defend the position with which he was entrusted. Again, if one of the members of a conspiracy disclosed Information under interrogation thus sending comrades to prison will the others be held responsible for the betrayal?

The Platform stated: The whole Association will be responsible for the revolutionary and political activity of each member and each member will be responsible for the revolutionary and political activity of the association.

Can this principle be reconciled with the autonomy and free initiative which the anarchists uphold?

I have already given my answer:

If the Association is responsible for what each of its members does, how can each individual member and the different groups be allowed the freedom to apply the common program in the fashion which they judge the best. How can one be responsible for an act if one does not have the power to prevent it taking place? Therefore the Association and in its name the executive committee would have to supervise the activity of all the individual members and to lay down for them what they are to do and not do. And, since disowning or rejecting something that has been done does not lessen a responsibility formally undertaken in advance nobody could do anything without having first obtained the approval, indeed the permission of the Committee. Besides, can an individual accept responsibility for the acts of a collective before knowing what it is going to do? And how can he prevent it doing that of which he disapproves?

Of course I agree with and argue for the idea that every person who joins with others to work together for a common aim should feel under an obligation to co-ordinate his actions with those of his associates and to refrain from doing anything which might do harm to the work of the others and thereby to the common cause. And each member should respect all the agreements that have been concluded and decisions taken unless he quite properly leaves the association for the reason that co-operation has become impossible or very constricting due to the appearance of differences of opinion, or a change in the situation or some incompatibility between the means chosen. In the same way I hold that he who does not feel this duty and does not practice it ought to be excluded from the association.

It is possible that in speaking of collective responsibility you had in mind the harmony and solidarity which should exist between the members of the association. If that were the case then I would have to say that you expressed yourself in incorrect language but it would basically be only a slight question about the correct use of words.

The really important question which you raise in your letter is that of the role of the anarchists in the social movement and the way that they intend to fulfil it. This is a question bearing on the very foundation, the justification of anarchism, and we must explain our positions clearly.

You ask whether the anarchists should assume (in the revolutionary phase and in the communist organisation of society) a function of leadership and therefore a responsible one or instead limit themselves to being auxiliaries in the revolution without responsibility?

Your question perplexes me because it is lacking in precision. We could provide leadership by counsel and by example leaving it to the people themselves aware of

both the possibility and the necessity of providing for their own needs, to quite freely adopt our methods and our solutions if these are, or if they seem to them to be, better than those suggested or practiced by others.

But we can also lead by taking command, that is, by becoming the government and by imposing one's ideas and interests through the use of the forces of law and order.

In which manner do you wish to lead?

We are anarchists because we believe that government (all government) is evil and that freedom, brotherhood and justice can only be attained through freedom. We can not therefore aspire to govern and we must do our level best to prevent any others, whether classes or individuals from seizing power and forming governments.

The responsibility of the leaders by means of which I take it you mean to guarantee the people against abuses or excess of power on the part of the leaders in my opinion it is not worth a jot. Whoever has state power in his hands can only be held accountable in reality as long as he is confronted with the revolution and you can't make a revolution every day and as a rule you only make one when the government has done all the harm it can possibly do.

You will understand therefore that I am far from holding the view that the anarchists should be satisfied to be mere auxiliaries to other revolutionaries who, in so far as they are not anarchists, naturally aspire to enter into government.

Indeed, to the contrary, I believe that we anarchists in the conviction that our program is good should make strenuous efforts to acquire a preponderant influence so as to be able to guide the movement towards the application of our ideals. But this influence we will have to acquire by doing more and doing better than the others and it will not be an effective Influence unless it is acquired in this fashion.

Our duty, today, is to deepen, develop and spread our ideas and co-ordinate our forces for a collective effort. We should be active within the workers movement so as to prevent it from limiting itself to, and corrupting itself in, the exclusive pursuit of minor improvements compatible with the capitalist system. We should see to it that this struggle serves rather as a preparation for the complete transformation to socialism. We should be working in the midst of the unorganised and perhaps unorganisable masses so as to arouse the spirit of revolt and the hope of a free and happy life. We should be arousing, creating and supporting all possible movements whose tendency is to weaken the forces of the state and the capitalists. In short we should be preparing ourselves both materially and morally for the revolutionary act which must open the path to the future.

And tomorrow, in the revolution we must be energetically involved - if possible sooner and better than the others - in the necessary material struggle and we must push it to the limit, so as to destroy all the repressive forces of the state and urge on the workers to take possession of the means of production (farms, mines, factories, means of transport etc.) and of finished products - as well as to organise amongst themselves, on the spot on equal distribution of goods while at the same time seeing to exchange between the localities and the regions the continuation and the stepping-up of

production and of all the services useful to the public. Taking account of the circumstances and realities of the different areas we should support the activity of the workers organisations, the co-operatives and the groups of volunteers - in order to prevent new authoritarian powers arising or any new governments, fighting them if necessary with armed force rendering them ineffective. And if we do not find amongst the people sufficient supporters and if we are unable to prevent the reconstitution of a State with its authoritarian institutions and organs of coercion we should refuse to take part in it or to recognise it, we should rebel against its impositions and demand, for ourselves and for all the dissident minorities: complete autonomy. In sum, we should remain in a state of actual and potential rebellion and if unable to prevail in the present situation should prepare ourselves at least for the future. Is that the way you too conceive the role of the anarchist. In the preparation and in the course of events of the revolution itself?

From what I know of you and your work, I am led to believe so.

However when I see in the association which you are advocating there is an executive committee which is to lead the association ideologically and organisationally, I wonder if you do not want in the movement in general also a central organ which would authoritatively dictate the theoretical and practical program of the revolution.

In that case our positions would be rather far apart. This organ or organs of leadership albeit composed of anarchists could not but become, in the full sense of the term, a government. The members of it would, in all good faith, think themselves essential to the triumph of the revolution and would above all ensure the existence

of this directing body and would impose their will by force. In order to do this they would create armed forces to protect themselves physically and a bureaucracy to ensure a firm social foundation for their dogma. In so acting they would paralyse the popular movement and would kill the revolution.

Such I believe is what happened to the bolsheviks.

For my part I believe that the important thing is not the triumph of our plans, projects and utopias which in any case require the confirmation of experience and can be modified by it, developed and adapted to the actual cultural and material conditions of a period or a place. The most important thing is that the people i.e. every person, lose the sheep-like instincts and habits which thousands of years of slavery have inspired in them and that they learn to think and to act in freedom. It is this great task of liberating the spirit that anarchists ought particularly to devote themselves.

I thank you for the attention which you have been kind enough to give to what I have written and in the hope of reading something from you again I send my regards.

November 1928

E. Malatesta

(The letter of Makhno and Malatesta's reply were published in *Il Risveglio* (The Reawakening) in Geneva 4-12-1929).

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Malatesta was under house arrest in Rome from 1926 to his death in 1932. Ed.

