

# “Attentats” and Anarchist Practice

**Resolution adopted at the Anarchist Communist Congress, October 1906, London**

*“We believe that terrorist acts are the result of decisions made by individuals or by the circles that support them; so centralised terror, in which an individual plays the role of executor of the decisions of others, clashes with our concepts.”*

In our literature, it has often been said that individual or collective acts of protest against the present social organisation - of the sort described as acts of terrorism - are inevitable. In non-revolutionary periods, they often indicate an acquisition of social consciousness and stimulate the desire for independence among the masses. They provide an example of individual heroism in the service of the general cause and serve to awaken the majority of people who are indifferent. At the same time, they undermine confidence in the exploiters' abilities, on the political and economic level. In periods that are already revolutionary, they form part of a general situation and these acts are no longer those of committed individuals of exceptional heroism, who are responding to oppression with armed resistance. Neither need they necessarily be carried out primarily by revolutionaries in order to sympathise with such acts. But while recognizing the general situation, **it is essential; however, that we do not forget that the value of every terrorist act is measured by its results and the impression it produces.**

**This observation may serve as a way to distinguish the kind of acts that contribute to the revolution from those that may be a waste of life and forces. The first condition, which is vital, is that this terrorist act be clear to everyone without the need for long explanations and complex motivations. In every place there are certain personalities who are so well known for their actions (be it throughout the whole country or only among the population of the area concerned) that the news of an attack on them will at once, without the aid of revolutionary propaganda, remind people of the past history of this individual, and the motives for the terrorist act are thus quite clear. If, however, the man on the street who is not a revolutionary, has to rack his brains in order to understand the act, then the influence of this act is nought, or even negative. The act of protest in the eyes of the masses becomes an incomprehensible murder.**

We find acts of terror in the political and economic fields to be completely artificial, be they centralised or “spontaneous”. We fight equally against economic and political oppression, oppression by the central government, and oppression by local authorities.

Regarding the question of terror, there is another aspect - organisation. We believe that terrorist acts are the result of decisions made by individuals or by the circles that support them; so centralized terror, in which an individual plays the role of executor of the decisions of others, clashes with our concepts. Just as we do not consider it possible to stop comrades from engaging in revolutionary acts in the name of party discipline, neither do we believe it possible to ask them to give up their lives for something which was not thought up and decided by them.

The main difference on the issue of terror between us and the political parties is that we do not think that terrorism can serve as a means to change the existing order, but see it only as a completely natural manifestation of an indignant consciousness or as an act of self-defence, which for this very reason has an agitational effect, contributing to the development of a similar feeling of indignation among the people.

## **Kropotkin**

(Ob aktakh lichnogo i kolektivnogo protesta, *resolution adopted at the Anarchist Communist Congress, October 1906, London; in Russkaya Revolyutsiya Anarkhizm, pp. 8-9, London 1907.*)

English translation by Nestor McNab

