

ANARCHISM:

From Theory to Practice

Daniel Guérin

Part 2:

Anarchism in Revolutionary Practice

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ANARCHISM: From Theory to Practice

Daniel Guérin

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Contents:

3. Anarchism in Revolutionary Practice

1880–1914

- Anarchism Becomes Isolated from the Working-Class Movement 1
- Social-Democratic Condemnation of Anarchism 3
- Anarchists in the Trade Unions 5

Anarchism in the Russian Revolution 9

- A Libertarian Revolution 10
- An Authoritarian Revolution 12
- The Part Played by the Anarchists 19
- The Makhnovshchina 22
- Kronstadt 26
- Anarchism Living and Dead 29

Anarchism in the Italian Factory Councils 32

Anarchism in the Spanish Revolution

- The Soviet Mirage 36
- The Anarchist Tradition in Spain 39
- Theory 42
- An “Apolitical” Revolution 46
- Anarchists in Government 48

14. The International Workers’ Association to which the CNT was affiliated held a special congress in Paris, June 11–13, 1937, at which the anarcho-syndicalist trade-union centre was reproached for participating in government and for the concessions it had made in consequence. With this backing, Sebastien Faure decided to publish a series of articles in the July 8, 15, and 22 issues of *Le Libertaire*, entitled “The Fatal Slope.” These were severely critical of the decision of the Spanish anarchists to take part in government. The CNT was enraged and brought about the resignation of the secretary of the International Workers’ Association, Pierre Besnard.
15. “In theory,” because there was some litigation between villages on this subject.
16. This refers to the time when the POUM (*Partido Obrero Unido Marxista*) together with rank-and-file anarchists came into armed conflict with the police and were defeated and crushed. (Translator’s note.)
17. As of July 1969.
18. James Joll recently wrote to the author that after reading this book he had to some extent revised his views.
19. *Libertarian Socialist Youth*, Paris, 1969.
20. *Wretched Conditions of Student Life* - title of a pamphlet published in France in 1967 by students of the University of Strasbourg.
21. Cohn-Bendit, being a German citizen, though born in France, was expelled from the country by the Gaullist regime (May 1968) and has not since been allowed to return to France.

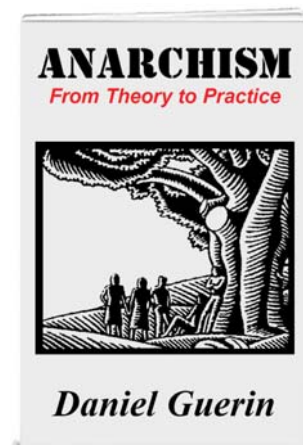
Footnotes:

1. *La Revolution Proletarienne* is a French monthly; Robert Louzon a veteran revolutionary syndicalist. (Translator's note.)
2. Robert Lonzon pointed out to the author that from a dialectic point of view this statement and that of Pelloutier are in no way mutually exclusive: terrorism had contradictory effects on the working-class movement.
3. A Bolshevik historian who later became a Stalinist.
4. See *Social-Democratic Condemnation of Anarchism*.
5. *Jacquerie* was the name given, to the French peasant revolt of 1358 (from *jacques*, the nickname of the French peasant). (Translator's note.)
6. Debate among anarcho-syndicalists on the relative merits of factory councils and trade unions was, moreover, nothing new; it had recently divided the anarchists in Russia and even caused a split in the ranks of the editorial team in charge of the libertarian paper *Golos Truda*, some members remaining faithful to classical syndicalism while others, including G. P. Maximoff, opted for the councils.
7. In April 1922, the KAPD set up a "Communist Workers International" with Dutch and Belgian opposition groups.
8. The Spanish National Confederation of Labour.
9. In France, for example, the trade unionists who followed Pierre Besnard were expelled from the *Confederation Generale du Travail Unitaire* (obedient to the Communists) and, in 1924, founded the *Confederation Genrlale du Travail Syndicaliste Revolutionnaire*.
10. Whereas in Castile and in the Asturias, etc., the social-democratic trade union centre, the General Union of Workers (UGT) was predominant.
11. The CNT only agreed to the creation of industrial federations in 1931. In 1919 this had been rejected by the "pure" anarchists as leading toward centralism and bureaucracy; but it had become essential to reply to the concentration of capitalism by the concentration of the unions in a single industry. The large industrial federations were only really stabilized in 1937.
12. See *Anarchists in the Trade Unions*.
13. Not to be confused with intermediate political forms, which the anarchists, unlike the Marxists, reject.

• Self-Management in Agriculture	49
• Self-Management in Industry	54
• Self-Management Undermined	57

By Way of Conclusion	62
-----------------------------------	-----------

Postscript: May 1968	71
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3. Anarchism in Revolutionary Practice

■ 1880–1914

Anarchism Becomes Isolated from the Working-Class Movement

It is now time to examine anarchism in action. Which brings us to the eve of the twentieth century. Libertarian ideas certainly played some part in the revolutions of the nineteenth century but not an independent one. Proudhon had taken a negative attitude to the 1848 Revolution even before its outbreak. He attacked it as a *political* revolution, a bourgeois booby trap, and, indeed, much of this was true. Moreover, according to Proudhon, it was inopportune and its use of barricades and street battles was outdated, for he himself dreamed of a quite different road to victory for his panacea: *mutuelliste* collectivism. As for the Paris Commune, while it is true that it spontaneously broke away from “traditional statist centralisation,” it was the product of a “compromise,” as Henri Lefebvre has noted, a sort of “united front” between the Proudhonists and Bakuninites on the one hand and the Jacobins and Blanquists on the other. It “boldly repudiated” the State, but Bakunin had to admit that the internationalist anarchists were a “tiny minority” in its ranks.

As a result of Bakunin’s impetus, anarchism had, however, succeeded in grafting itself onto the First International — a proletarian, internationalist, apolitical, mass movement. But sometime around 1880 the anarchists

aroused particularly keen interest. In the evening’s workers came to the Sorbonne to learn about this new solution to the problem of society. When they went back to the workshops, discussions on this subject went on around the silent machines. Of course, the revolution of May 1968 did not put self-management into practice, it stopped just short - one might even say: on the very brink. But the idea of self-management has become lodged in people’s minds, and it will emerge again sooner or later.

Finally, this revolution so profoundly libertarian in spirit had the good fortune of finding a spokesman: a young Franco-German Jewish anarchist, aged twenty-three, Daniel Cohn-Bendit, who, with a group of friends, acted as a detonator and, when he was expelled from France, as the living symbol of the revolution. “Dany” is no anarchist theoretician; in the field of ideas his brother Gaby, a teacher at the Saint-Nazaire Lycée probably excels him in maturity and in learning. But Dany has more striking gifts than book-learning: he has libertarian fire in the highest degree. He showed himself to be a born agitator, a speaker of unusual power, direct, realistic, concrete, provocative, impressing people without demagoguery or artificiality. Moreover, like a real libertarian, he refuses to play the leader and insists on remaining one militant among many. He was the moving spirit of the first student revolt in France, at the University of Nanterre and so, without premeditation, contributed to setting off the gigantic confrontation which shook the whole country. The bourgeoisie would not forgive him for it, still less the Stalinists, whom he regarded as “scoundrels.” They would both be wrong to think that they are rid of him: it does not matter whether he is absent or present,²¹ he will always be at their heels.

One last word. This short book which is now to be published in the United States, in English, became a best-seller in its country of origin during those weeks of regeneration, and has been, or is going to be, translated into ten languages. The author claims no credit for this; but is it not one of many signs of the renaissance of anarchism in France and the world, through a revolution which has only begun?

in university circles. It was stimulated by the denunciation expressed in *La Misère en Milieu Etudiant*²⁰ by a small group of "situationists," and it was inspired by the student rebellion in various countries, especially Germany.

It armed itself with direct action, purposeful illegality, the occupation of places of work: it was not afraid to meet the violence of the forces of repression by revolutionary violence; it put everything in question, all accepted ideas, all existing structures; it repudiated the professorial monologue as much as the authoritarianism of the employers; it rejected the cult of personality and insisted on anonymity and collectivity; in a few weeks it passed through a lightning apprenticeship in direct democracy, in the dialogue of a thousand voices, in the communication of all with all.

It drank greedily from the fountain of liberty. In all its meetings and forums of all kinds every individual was given the right to express himself fully. The public square was transformed into an amphitheatre, for the traffic was stopped and the debaters seated on the pavement, the strategy of the future war of the streets discussed openly, fully, and at length. Anyone could come into the revolutionary beehive in the court, the corridors, and landings of the Sorbonne. There, every revolutionary tendency without exception could display and sell its literature.

The libertarians took advantage of this situation of freedom to abandon their former insularity. They fought side by side with the revolutionary Marxists of authoritarian tendency, almost without animosity on either side, temporarily forgetting the frictions of the past. The black flag flew alongside the red flag, without competition or conflict, at least during the sharpest phase of the struggle when everything was subordinated to fraternal unity against the common enemy.

All authority was repudiated or even derided. The myth of the providential old man of the Elysée was not so much undermined by serious argument as blown sky high by caricature and satire. The parliamentary talk-shop was negated by the mortal weapon of indifference: one of the long marches of the students through the capital happened to pass in front of the Palais Bourbon without even condescending to notice its existence.

One magic word echoed through the glorious weeks of May 1968, in both factory and university. It was the theme of innumerable debates, explanations, references to historical precedent, detailed and enthusiastic examinations of relevant contemporary experiences: it was *self-management*. The example of the Spanish collectivisations of 1936

began to deride "the timid International of the first period," and sought to set up in its place what Malatesta in 1884 described as the "redoubtable International," which was to be anarchist, communist, anti-religious, anti-parliamentary, and revolutionary, all at the same time. This scarecrow was very flimsy: anarchism cut itself off from the working-class movement, with the result that it deteriorated and lost its way in sectarianism and minority activism.

What caused this decline? One reason was the swiftness of industrial development and the rapid conquest of political rights by workers who then became more receptive to parliamentary reformism. It followed that the international working-class movement was taken over by politically minded, electoralist, reformist social democrats whose purpose was not the social revolution but the legal conquest of the bourgeois State and the satisfaction of short-term demands.

When they found themselves a small minority, the anarchists abandoned the idea of militancy within large popular movements. Free rein was given to utopian doctrines, combining premature anticipations and nostalgic evocations of a golden age; Kropotkin, Malatesta, and their friends turned their backs on the road opened up by Bakunin on the pretext of keeping their doctrine pure. They accused Bakunin, and anarchist literature in general, of having been "too much coloured by Marxism." The anarchists turned in on themselves, organised themselves for direct action in small clandestine groups which were easily infiltrated by police informers.

Bakunin's retirement was soon followed by his death and, from 1876 on, anarchism caught the bug of adventurism and wild fantasy. The Berne Congress launched the slogan of "propaganda by the deed." Cafiero and Malatesta handed out the first lesson of action. On April 5, 1877, they directed a band of some thirty armed militants who suddenly appeared in the mountains of the Italian province of Benevento, burned the parish records of a small village, distributed the funds in the tax collector's safe to the poor, and tried to install libertarian communism on a miniature, rural, infantile scale. In the end they were tracked down, numb with cold, and yielded without resistance.

Three years later, on December 25, 1880, Kropotkin was declaiming in his journal *Le Révolté*: "Permanent revolt in speech, writing, by the dagger and the gun, or by dynamite... anything suits us that is alien to legality." Between "propaganda by the deed" and attacks on individuals, only a step remained. It was soon taken.

The defection of the mass of the working class had been one of the reasons for the recourse to terrorism, and “propaganda by the deed” did indeed make some contribution to awakening the workers from their apathy. Writing in *La Révolution Prolétarienne*, November 1937, Robert Lonzon ¹ maintained that “it was like the stroke of a gong bringing the French proletariat to its feet after the prostration into which it had been plunged by the massacres of the Commune [by the right]..., [and was] the prelude to the foundation of the CGT [Confédération Général du Travail] and the mass trade-union movement of the years 1900–1910.” This rather optimistic view is corrected or supplemented ² by the views of Fernand Pelloutier, a young anarchist who later went over to revolutionary syndicalism: he believed the use of dynamite had deterred the workers from professing libertarian socialism, however disillusioned they might have been with parliamentary socialism; none of them dared call himself an anarchist lest he seem to opt for isolated revolt as against collective action.

The social democrats were not slow to use the weapons against the anarchists furnished by the combination of bombs and Kropotkinist utopias.

Social-Democratic Condemnation of Anarchism

For many years the socialist working-class movement was divided into irreconcilable segments: while anarchism slid into terrorism combined with passive waiting for the millennium, the political movement, more or less dishonestly claiming to be Marxist, became bogged down in “parliamentary cretinism.” Pierre Monatte, an anarchist who turned syndicalist, later recalled: “The revolutionary spirit in France was dying out... year by year. The revolutionary ideas of Guesde were now only verbal or, worse, electoral and parliamentary; those of Jaures simply, and very frankly, ministerial and governmental.” In France, the divorce between anarchists and socialists was completed at the Le Havre Congress of 1880, when the new-born workers’ party threw itself into electoral politics.

In Paris in 1889 the social democrats from various countries decided to revive the long-neglected practice of holding international socialist

desirable because of the absolute subordination of the individual to a political idea, to the State.’

“You tell us that what puts you off about socialism is not the perspective of ending the oppression of man by man, it is ‘the bureaucrats and the purges.’

“In other words, you would desire socialism if it were authentic. The majority of you have a very strong feeling against social injustice and there are many among you who are aware that ‘capitalism is condemned.’ Moreover, you are passionately attached to liberty and one of your spokesmen writes that ‘French youth is more and more anarchist.’ You are libertarian socialists without knowing it. In contrast to the out-of-date, bankrupt, authoritarian, and totalitarian nature of Jacobin socialism, libertarian socialism bears the sign of youth. Not only because it is the secret of the future, the only possible rational and human substitute for an economic regime condemned by history, but also because it corresponds to the deepest, though often confused, aspirations of the youth of today. And without your agreement and participation it would be vain to try to reconstruct the world.

“One of these young people wrote ‘I think I shall see this civilization collapse in my lifetime.’ It is my modest wish to live long enough to witness and take part in this gigantic cleanup with you, youth. I hope that the case against false socialism presented in this work may suggest to you a few of the materials with which you will build a more just and free society with a new enthusiasm from which scepticism has disappeared.”

The revolution of May 1968 in France fully confirmed this prediction. It was a great sweeping out of cobwebs. It was carried out by youth, not only students, but with working-class youth through the solidarity of their age and their common alienation. At the university as well as in the factory and trade union, dictatorship of the adults was challenged: the masters in the universities, the employers in the factories, and the bosses in the trade unions. More, it was profoundly shaken. And this unexpected explosion burst like a thunderclap, contagious and devastating, and was very largely libertarian socialist in character.

It was based upon a critique not only of bourgeois society but of post-Stalinist communism which had been becoming more and more acute

Postscript: May 1968

It is some years since I first thought I had observed the beginning of a libertarian revolt among the youth of France. I was among those who watched with interest and, I must admit, with sympathy, the antics of young workers in conflict with society, at odds with the police and with all adults: the famous “black jackets,” the organised gangs of the working-class areas.

Apart from these antisocial young people, I observed that our youth, in general, had no allegiance to anyone. Its obvious scepticism was neither detachment nor dilettantism, still less nihilism, but a comprehensive rejection of the false values of all its elders, be they bourgeois enamoured of hierarchy and authority, or Stalinists, new Jesuits, obeying blindly the blindly obedient.

In 1958, in a debate on youth on the French radio I stated: “Socialism is still alive in the hearts of the young but, if it is to attract them, it must break with the tragic terrors of Stalinism, it must appear in libertarian guise.” The following year I published a collection of essays entitled *Jeunesse du Socialisme Libertaire*,¹⁹ and prefaced it with the following dedication to youth :

“I dedicate these essays to you, youth of today.

“I know that you turn your back on ideologies and ‘isms,’ which have been made hollow by the failures of your elders. I know that you are deeply suspicious (and alas with much justification) about everything connected with ‘politics.’ I know that the grand

old men who thought about the problem of society in the nineteenth century seem old bores to you. I know that you are justly sceptical of ‘socialism,’ which has been so often betrayed, so brazenly botched up by its supporters. In replies made to an inquiry by the magazine Nouvelle Vague you gave the answer: ‘A socialist future is not

congresses. This opened the way for the creation of the Second International and some anarchists thought it necessary to attend the meeting. Their presence gave rise to violent incidents, since the social democrats used their superior numbers to suppress all argument from their opponents. At the Brussels Congress of 1891 the libertarians were booed and expelled. However, many working-class delegates from England, Italy, and Holland, though they were indeed reformists, withdrew in protest. The next congress was held in Zurich in 1893, and the social democrats claimed that in the future they could exclude all non-trade union organisations which did not recognize the necessity for “political action,” that is to say, the conquest of bourgeois power by the ballot.

At the London Congress of 1896, a few French and Italian anarchists circumvented this exclusionary condition by getting trade unions to appoint them as delegates. This was not simply a subterfuge, for, as we shall see below, the anarchists had once more found the path of reality — they had entered the trade-union movement. But when one of them, Paul Delesalle, tried to mount the rostrum, he was thrown violently to the bottom of the steps and injured. Jaures accused the anarchists of having transformed the trade unions into revolutionary anarchist groups and of disrupting them, just as they had come to the congress only to disrupt it, “to the great benefit of bourgeois reaction.”

The German social-democratic leaders at the congress, the inveterate electoralists Wilhelm Liebknecht and August Bebel, showed themselves as savage to the anarchists as they had been in the First International. Supported by Marx’s daughter, Eleanor Aveling, who regarded the anarchists as “madmen,” they had their own way with the meeting and got it to pass a resolution excluding from future congresses all “anti-parliamentarians” in whatever guise they might appear.

Later, in *State and Revolution*, Lenin presented the anarchists with a bouquet which concealed some thorns. He stood up for them in relation to the social democrats, accusing the latter of having “left to the anarchists a monopoly of criticism of parliamentarianism” and of having “labelled” such criticism as “anarchist.” It was hardly surprising that the proletariat of the parliamentary countries became disgusted with such socialists and more and more sympathetic to the anarchists. The social democrats had termed any effort to destroy the bourgeois State as anarchist. The anarchists “correctly described the opportunist character of the ideas of most socialist parties on the State.”

According to Lenin, Marx and Proudhon were as one in desiring “the demolition of the existing machine of the State.” “The opportunists are unwilling to admit the similarity between Marxism and the anarchism of Proudhon and Bakunin.” The social democrats entered into debate with the anarchists in an “unMarxist” manner. Their critique of anarchism boiled down to pure bourgeois banality: “We recognize the State, the anarchists don’t.” The anarchists are in a strong position to retort that this kind of social democracy is failing in its duty of providing for the revolutionary education of the workers. Lenin castigated an anti-anarchist pamphlet by the Russian social democrat Plekhanov as “very unjust to the anarchists,” “sophistical,” “full of vulgar argument, insinuating that there is no difference between an anarchist and a bandit.”

Anarchists in the Trade Unions

In the 1890’s the anarchists had reached a dead end and they were cut off from the world of the workers which had become the monopoly of the social democrats. They snuggled into little sects, barricaded themselves into ivory towers where they polished up increasingly unrealistic dogmas; or else they performed and applauded acts of individual terrorism, and let themselves be caught in a net of repression and reprisal.

Kropotkin deserves credit for being one of the first to confess his errors and to recognize the sterility of “propaganda by the deed.” In a series of articles which appeared in 1890 he affirmed “that one must be with the people, who no longer want isolated acts, but want men of action inside their ranks.” He warned his readers against “the illusion that one can defeat the coalition of exploiters with a few pounds of explosives.” He proposed a return to mass trade unionism like that of which the First International had been the embryo and propagator: “Monster unions embracing millions of proletarians.”

It was the imperative duty of the anarchists to penetrate into the trade unions in order to detach the working masses from the false socialists who were deceiving them. In 1895 an anarchist weekly, *Les Temps Nouveaux*, published an article by Fernand Pelloutier entitled “Anarchism and the Trade Unions” which expounded the new tactic. Anarchism could do very well without dynamite and must approach the masses, both to propagate anarchist ideas as widely as possible and to save the trade-union movement from the narrow corporatism in which it had become

theory and in practice, the false interpretations to which it has so long been subject. As we saw, in 1924 Joaquin Maurin was impatient to finish with it in Spain, and suggested that it would never be able to maintain itself except in a few “backward countries” where the masses would “cling” to it because they are entirely without “socialist education,” and have been “left to their natural instincts.” He concluded: “Any anarchist who succeeds in improving himself, in learning, and in seeing clearly, automatically ceases to be an anarchist.”

The French historian of anarchism, Jean Maitron, simply confused “anarchy” and disorganisation. A few years ago, he imagined that anarchism had died with the nineteenth century, for our epoch is one of “plans, organisation, and discipline.” More recently the British writer George Woodcock saw fit to accuse the anarchists of being idealists swimming against the dominant current of history, feeding on an idyllic vision of the future while clinging to the most attractive features of a dying past. Another English specialist on the subject, James Joll, insists that the anarchists are out-of-date, for their ideas are opposed to the development of large-scale industry, to mass production and consumption, and depend on a retrograde romantic vision of an idealized society of artisans and peasants, and on a total rejection of the realities of the twentieth century and of economic organisation.¹⁸

In the preceding pages I have tried to show that this is not a true picture of anarchism. Bakunin’s works best express the nature of constructive anarchism, which depends on organisation, on selfdiscipline, on integration, on federalist and noncoercive centralisation. It rests upon large-scale modern industry, up-to-date techniques, the modern proletariat, and internationalism on a world scale. In this regard it is of our times, and belongs to the twentieth century. It may well be state communism, and not anarchism, which is out of step with the needs of the contemporary world.

In 1924 Joaquin Maurin reluctantly admitted that throughout the history of anarchism “symptoms of decline” had been “followed by sudden revival.” The future may show that only in this reluctant admission was the Spanish Marxist a good prophet.

bureaucratization. He particularly emphasized the “authoritarian” errors of a ministerial department which tries to manage the factories itself and ends up with exactly the opposite results: “By trying to bring about a strongly centralised organisation one ends up in practice... by letting any kind of thing be done, because one cannot maintain control over what is essential.” He makes the same criticism of the state monopoly of distribution: the paralysis which it produces could have been avoided “if each production unit had preserved the function of supplying itself directly.” “Cuba is beginning all over again the useless cycle of economic errors of the socialist countries,” a Polish colleague in a very good position to know confided to René Dumont. The author concludes by abjuring the Cuban regime to turn to autonomous production units and, in agriculture, to federations of small farm-production co-operatives. He is not afraid to give the remedy a name, self-management, which could perfectly well be reconciled with planning. Unfortunately, the voice of René Dumont has not yet been heard in Havana.

The libertarian idea has recently come out of the shadow to which its detractors had relegated it. In a large part of the world the man of today has been the guinea pig of state communism, and is only now emerging, reeling, from the experience. Suddenly he is turning, with lively curiosity and often with profit, to the rough drafts for a new self-management society which the pioneers of anarchism were putting forward in the last century. He is not swallowing them whole, of course, but drawing lessons from them, and inspiration to try to complete the task presented by the second half of this century: to break the fetters, both economic and political, of what has been too simply called “Stalinism”; and this, without renouncing the fundamental principles of socialism: on the contrary, thereby discovering — or rediscovering — the forms of a real, authentic socialism, that is to say, socialism combined with liberty.

Proudhon, in the midst of the 1848 Revolution, wisely thought that it would have been asking too much of his artisans to go, immediately, all the way to “anarchy.” In default of this maximum program, he sketched out a minimum libertarian program: progressive reduction in the power of the State, parallel development of the power of the people from below, through what he called clubs, and which the man of the twentieth century would call councils. It seems to be the more or less conscious purpose of many contemporary socialists to seek out such a program.

Although a possibility of revival is thus opened up for anarchism, it will not succeed in fully rehabilitating itself unless it is able to belie, both in

bogged down. The trade union must be a “practical school of anarchism.” As a laboratory of economic struggle, detached from electoral competition and administered on anarchist lines, was not the trade union the only libertarian and revolutionary organisation which could counterbalance and destroy the evil influence of the social-democratic politicians? Pelloutier linked the trade unions to the libertarian communist society which remained the ultimate objective of the anarchist: on the day when the revolution breaks out, he asked, “would they not be an almost libertarian organisation, ready to succeed the existing order, thus effectively abolishing all political authority; each of its parts controlling the means of production, managing its own affairs, sovereign over itself by the free consent of its members?”

Later, at the International Anarchist Congress of 1907, Pierre Monatte declared: “Trade unionism... opens up new perspectives for anarchism, too long fumed in on itself.” On the one hand, “trade unionism... has renewed anarchism’s awareness of its working-class roots; on the other, the anarchists have made no small contribution to setting the working-class movement on the road to revolution and to popularizing the idea of direct action.” After a lively debate, this congress adopted a compromise resolution which opened with the following statement of principle: “This International Anarchist Congress sees the trade unions both as combat units in the class struggle for better working conditions, and as associations of producers which can serve to transform capitalist society into an anarcho-communist society.”

The syndicalist anarchists met with some difficulties in their efforts to draw the whole libertarian movement onto the new road they had chosen. The “pure ones” of anarchism cherished insurmountable suspicions with regard to the trade-union movement. They resented it for having its feet too firmly on the ground. They accused it of a complacent attitude toward capitalist society, of being an integral part of it, of limiting itself to short-term demands. They disputed its claim to be able to resolve the social problem single-handed. At the 1907 congress Malatesta replied sharply to Monatte, maintaining that the industrial movement was for the anarchist a means and not an end: “Trade unionism is not, and never will be, anything but a legalistic and conservative movement, unable to aim beyond — if that far! — the improvement of working conditions.” The trade-union movement is made short-sighted by the pursuit of immediate gains and turns the workers away from the final struggle: “One should not ask workers to strike; but rather to continue working, for their

own advantage." Malatesta ended by warning his hearers against the conservatism of trade-union bureaucracies: "In the industrial movement the official is a danger comparable only to parliamentarianism. Any anarchist who has agreed to become a permanent and salaried official of a trade union is lost to anarchism."

To this Monatte replied that the trade-union movement was certainly no more perfect than any other human institution: "Far from hiding its faults, I think it is wise to have them always in mind so as to react against them." He recognized that trade union officialdom aroused sharp criticism, often justified. But he protested against the charge of wishing to sacrifice anarchism and the revolution to trade unionism: "As with everyone else here, anarchy is our final aim. However, because times have changed we have changed our conception of the movement and of the revolution.... If, instead of criticizing the past, present, or even future mistakes of trade unionism from above, the anarchists would concern themselves more intimately with its work, the dangers that lurk in trade unionism would be averted forever."

The anger of the sectarian anarchists was not entirely without cause. However, the kind of trade union of which they disapproved belonged to a past period: that which was at first purely and simply corporative, and later, the blind follower of those social democratic politicians who had multiplied in France during the long years following the repression of the Commune. The trade unionism of class struggle, on the other hand, had been regenerated by the anarcho-syndicalists who had entered it, and it gave the "pure" anarchists the opposite cause for complaint: it claimed to produce its own ideology, to "be sufficient unto itself." Its most effective spokesman, Emile Pouget, maintained: "The trade union is superior to any other form of cohesion between individuals because the task of partial amelioration and the more decisive one of social transformation can be carried on side by side within its framework. It is precisely because the trade union answers this twofold need,... no longer sacrificing the present to the future or the future to the present, that the trade union stands out as the best kind of group."

The concern of the new trade unionism to emphasize and preserve its "independence" was proclaimed in a famous charter adopted by the CGT congress in Amiens in 1906. The statement was not inspired so much by opposition to anarchism as by the desire to get rid of the tutelage of bourgeois democracy and its extension in the working-class movement, social democracy. It was also felt important to preserve the cohesion

The U.S.S.R. itself is re-evaluating its methods of economic management, and will continue to do so unless the present tendency to liberalization is cancelled by a regression to authoritarianism. Before he fell, on October 15, 1964, Khrushchev seemed to have understood, however timidly and belatedly, the need for industrial decentralisation. In December 1964 *Pravda* published a long article entitled "The State of the Whole People" which sought to define the changes of structure that differentiate the form of State "said to be of the whole people" from that of the "dictatorship of the proletariat"; namely, progress toward democratization, participation of the masses in the direction of society through self-management, and the revitalization of the soviets, the trade unions, etc.

The French daily *Le Monde* of February 16, 1965, published an article by Michel Tatu, entitled "A Major Problem: The Liberation of the Economy," exposing the most serious evils "affecting the whole Soviet bureaucratic machine, especially the economy." The high technical level this economy has attained makes the rule of bureaucracy over management even more unacceptable. As things are at present, directors of enterprises cannot make decisions on any subject without referring to at least one office, and more often to half a dozen. "No one disputes the remarkable technical, scientific, and economic progress which has been made in thirty years of Stalinist planning. The result, however, is precisely that this economy is now in the class of developed economies, and that the old structures which enabled it to reach this level are now totally, and ever more alarmingly, unsuitable." "Much more would be needed than detailed reforms; a spectacular change of thought and method, a sort of new de-Stalinization would be required to bring to an end the enormous inertia which permeates the machine at every level." As Ernest Mandel has pointed out, however, in an article in the French review *Les Temps Modernes*, decentralisation cannot stop at giving autonomy to the directors of enterprises, it must lead to real workers' self-management.

The late Georges Gurvitch, a left-wing sociologist, came to a similar conclusion. He considers that tendencies to decentralisation and workers' self-management have only just begun in the U.S.S.R., and that their success would show "that Proudhon was more right than one might have thought."

In Cuba the late state socialist Che Guevara had to quit the direction of industry, which he had run unsuccessfully owing to over-centralisation. In *Cuba: Socialism and Development*, René Dumont, a French specialist in the Castro economy, deplures its "hyper-centralisation" and

development is so clear that it is bringing Yugoslav theoreticians to use language which would not disgrace a libertarian. For example, one of them, Stane Kavcic, states: "In future the striking force of socialism in Yugoslavia cannot be a political party and the State acting from the top down, but the people, the citizens, with constitutional rights which enable them to act from the base up." He continues bravely that self-management is increasingly loosening up "the rigid discipline and subordination which are characteristic of all political parties."

The trend is not so clear in Algeria, for the experiment is of more recent origin and still in danger of being called into question. A clue may be found in the fact that at the end of 1964, Hocine Zahouane, then head of orientation of the National Liberation Front, publicly condemned the tendency of the "organs of guidance" to place themselves above the members of the self-management groups and to adopt an authoritarian attitude toward them. He went on: "When this happens, socialism no longer exists. There remains only a change in the form of exploitation of the workers." This official concluded by asking that the producers "should be truly masters of their production" and no longer be "manipulated for ends which are foreign to socialism." It must be admitted that Hocine Zahouane has since been removed from office by a military *coup d'état* and has become the leading spirit of a clandestine socialist opposition. He is for the time being¹⁷ in compulsory residence in a torrid area of the Sahara.

To sum up, self-management meets with all kinds of difficulties and contradictions, yet, even now, it appears in practice to have the merit of enabling the masses to pass through an apprenticeship in direct democracy acting from the bottom upward; the merit of developing, encouraging, and stimulating their free initiative, of imbuing them with a sense of responsibility instead of perpetuating age-old habits of passivity, submission, and the inferiority complex left to them by past oppression, as is the case under state communism. This apprenticeship is sometimes laborious, progresses rather slowly, loads society with extra burdens and may, possibly, be carried out only at the cost of some "disorder." Many observers think, however, that these difficulties, delays, extra burdens, and growing pains are less harmful than the false order, the false luster, the false "efficiency" of state communism which reduces man to nothing, kills the initiative of the people, paralyzes production, and, in spite of material advances obtained at a high price, discredits the very idea of socialism.

of the trade union movement when confronted with a proliferation of rival political sects, such as existed in France before "socialist unity" was established. Proudhon's work *De la Capacité Politique des Classes Ouvrières* (1865) was taken by the revolutionary syndicalists as their bible; from it they had selected for particular attention the idea of "separation": being a distinct class, the proletariat must refuse all support from the opposing class.

Some anarchists, however, were shocked by the claim of trade unionism to do without their patronage. Malatesta exclaimed that it was a radically false doctrine which threatened the very existence of anarchism. Jean Grave, his faithful follower, echoed: "Trade unionism can — and must — be self-sufficient in its struggle against exploitation by the employers, but it cannot pretend to be able to solve the social problem by itself." It "is so little sufficient unto itself that the very idea of what it is, of what it should be, and of what it should do, had to come to it from outside."

In spite of these recriminations, the revolutionary ferment brought with them by the anarchist converts to trade unionism made the trade-union movement in France and the other Latin countries a power to be reckoned with in the years before the Great War. This affected not only the bourgeoisie and government, but also the social-democratic politicians who thenceforth lost most of their control over the working-class movement. The philosopher Georges Sorel considered the entry of the anarchists into the trade unions as one of the major events of his time. Anarchist doctrine had been diluted in a mass movement, only to emerge renewed and freshly tempered.

The libertarian movement was to remain impregnated with this fusion between the anarchist idea and the trade-union idea. Until 1914 the French CGT was the ephemeral product of this synthesis, but its most complete and durable product was to be the Spanish CNT (Confederación Nacional del Trabajo). It was formed in 1910, taking advantage of the disintegration of the radical party of the politician Alexandre Lerroux. One of the spokesmen of Spanish anarcho-syndicalism, Diego Abad de Santillan, did not forget to give credit to Fernand Pelloutier, to Emile Pouget, and to the other anarchists who had understood how necessary it was to begin by implanting their ideas in the economic organisations of the proletariat.

■ Anarchism in the Russian Revolution

Anarchism had found its second wind in revolutionary syndicalism; the Russian Revolution gave it its third. This statement may at first surprise the reader, accustomed to think of the great revolutionary movement of October 1917 as the work and domain of the Bolsheviks alone. The Russian Revolution was, in fact, a great mass movement, a wave rising from the people which passed over and submerged ideological formations. It belonged to no one, unless to the people. In so far as it was an authentic revolution, taking its impulse from the bottom upward and spontaneously producing the organs of direct democracy, it presented all the characteristics of a social revolution with libertarian tendencies. However, the relative weakness of the Russian anarchists prevented them from exploiting situations which were exceptionally favourable to the triumph of their ideas.

The Revolution was ultimately confiscated and distorted by the mastery, according to some — the cunning, according to others — of the professional revolutionary team grouped around Lenin. But this defeat of both anarchism and the authentic popular revolution was not entirely sterile for the libertarian idea. In the first place, the collective appropriation of the means of production has not again been put in question, and this safeguards the ground upon which, one day perhaps, socialism from below may prevail over state regimentation; moreover, the Russian experience has provided the occasion for some Russian and some non-Russian anarchists to learn the complex lessons of a temporary defeat — lessons of which Lenin himself seemed to have become aware on the eve of his death. In this context they could rethink the whole problem of revolution and anarchism. According to Kropotkin, echoed by Voline, it taught them, should they ever need to know, how *not* to make a revolution. Far from proving that libertarian socialism is impracticable, the Soviet experience, on the contrary, broadly confirmed the prophetic correctness of the views of the founders of anarchism and, in particular, their critique of authoritarian socialism.

Yugoslavia and in Algeria, however, trade unionism is either subsidiary or supernumerary, or is subject to the State, to the single party. It cannot, therefore, adequately fulfil the task of conciliator between autonomy and centralisation which it should undertake, and could perform much better than totalitarian political organs. In fact, a trade unionism which genuinely issued from the workers, who saw in it their own reflection, would be the most effective organ for harmonizing the centrifugal and centripetal forces, for “creating an equilibrium” as Proudhon put it, between the contradictions of self-management.

The picture, however, must not be seen as entirely black. Self-management certainly has powerful and tenacious opponents, who have not given up hope of making it fail. But it has, in fact, shown itself quite dynamic in the countries where experiments are being carried on. It has opened up new perspectives for the workers and restored to them some pleasure in their work. It has opened their minds to the rudiments of authentic socialism, which involves the progressive disappearance of wages, the disalienation of the producer who will become a free and self-determining being. Self-management has in this way increased productivity and registered considerable positive results, even during the trials and errors of the initial period.

From rather too far away, small circles of anarchists follow the development of Yugoslav and Algerian self-management with a mixture of sympathy and disbelief. They feel that it is bringing some fragments of their ideal into reality, but the experiment is not developing along the idealistic lines foreseen by libertarian communism. On the contrary it is being tried in an authoritarian framework which is repugnant to anarchism. There is no doubt that this framework makes self-management fragile: there is always a danger that it will be devoured by the cancer of authoritarianism. However, a close and unprejudiced look at self-management seems to reveal rather encouraging signs.

In Yugoslavia self-management is a factor favouring the democratization of the regime. It has created a healthier basis for recruitment in working-class circles. The party is beginning to act as an inspiration rather than a director, its cadres are becoming better spokesmen for the masses, more sensitive to their problems and aspirations. As Albert Meister, a young Swiss sociologist who set himself the task of studying this phenomenon on the spot, comments, self-management contains a “democratic virus” which, in the long run, invades the single party itself. He regards it as a “tonic.” It welds the lower party echelons to the working masses. This

In general, the bureaucracy of the totalitarian State is unsympathetic to the claims of self-management to autonomy. As Proudhon foresaw, it finds it hard to tolerate any authority external to itself. It dislikes socialisation and longs for nationalization, that is to say, the direct management by officials of the State. Its object is to infringe upon self-management, reduce its powers, and in fact absorb it.

The single party is no less suspicious of self-management, and likewise finds it hard to tolerate a rival. If it embraces self-management, it does so to stifle it more effectively. The party has cells in most of the enterprises and is strongly tempted to take part in management, to duplicate the organs elected by the workers or reduce them to the role of docile instruments, by falsifying elections and setting out lists of candidates in advance. The party tries to induce the workers' councils to endorse decisions already taken in advance, and to manipulate and shape the national congresses of the workers.

Some enterprises under self-management react to authoritarian and centralising tendencies by becoming isolationist, behaving as though they were an association of small proprietors, and trying to operate for the sole benefit of the workers involved. They tend to reduce their manpower so as to divide the cake into larger portions. They also seek to produce as little of everything instead of specializing. They devote time and energy to getting around plans or regulations designed to serve the interests of the community as a whole. In Yugoslavia free competition between enterprises has been allowed, both as a stimulant and to protect the consumer, but in practice the tendency to autonomy has led to flagrant inequalities output and to economic irrationalities.

Thus, self-management itself incorporates a pendulum-like movement which makes it swing constantly between two extremes: excessive autonomy or excessive centralisation; authority or anarchy; control from below or control from above. Through the years Yugoslavia, in particular, has corrected centralisation by autonomy, then autonomy by centralisation, constantly remodelling its institutions without so far successfully attaining a "happy medium."

Most of the weaknesses of self-management could be avoided or corrected if there were an authentic trade-union movement, independent of authority and of the single party, springing from the workers themselves and at the same time organising them, and animated by the spirit characteristic of Spanish anarcho-sindicalism. In

A Libertarian Revolution

The point of departure of the Revolution of 1917 was that of 1905, during which a new kind of revolutionary organ had come into being: the soviets. They were born in the factories of St. Petersburg during a spontaneous general strike. In the almost complete absence of a trade-union movement and tradition, the soviets filled a vacuum by co-ordinating the struggle of the factories on strike. The anarchist Voline was one of the small group which had the idea of setting up the first soviet, in close liaison with the workers and at their suggestion. His evidence coincides with that of Trotsky, who became president of the soviet a few months later. In his account of 1905 he wrote, without any pejorative intent — quite the contrary: "The activity of the soviet represented the organisation of anarchy. Its existence and its subsequent development marked the consolidation of anarchy."

This experience had made a permanent mark upon working-class consciousness and, when the second Russian Revolution broke out in February 1917, its leaders did not have to invent anything. The workers took over the factories spontaneously. The soviets revived on their own initiative. Once again, they took the professional revolutionaries by surprise. On Lenin's own admission, the masses of peasants and workers were "a hundred times further to the left" than the Bolsheviks. The prestige of the soviets was such that it was only in their name and at their behest that the October insurrection could be launched.

In spite of their vigour, however, they were lacking in homogeneity, revolutionary experience, and ideological preparation. This made them easy prey to political parties with uncertain revolutionary ideas. Although it was a minority organisation, the Bolshevik Party was the only really organised revolutionary force which knew where it was going. It had no rivals on the extreme left in either the political or the trade-union field. It had first-class cadres at its disposal, and set in motion, as Voline admitted, "a feverish, overwhelming, fierce activity."

The party machine, however — of which Stalin was at that time an obscure ornament — had always regarded the soviets with suspicion as embarrassing competitors. Immediately after the seizure of power, the spontaneous and irresistible tendency toward the socialisation of production was, at first, channelled through workers' control. A decree of November 14, 1917, legalized the participation of workers in the

management of enterprises and the fixing of prices; it abolished trade secrets, and compelled the employers to publish their correspondence and their accounts. According to Victor Serge, "the leaders of the Revolution did not intend to go beyond this." In April 1918 they "still intended... to set up mixed companies with shares, in which the Soviet State and Russian and foreign capital would all participate." "The initiative for measures of expropriation came from the masses and not from authority."

As early as October 20, 1917, at the first Congress of Factory Councils, a motion inspired by anarchism was presented. It proposed "control over production, and that control commissions should not be simply investigative bodies, but... from this moment on cells of the future preparing to transfer production to the hands of the workers." "In the very early days of the October Revolution," Anna Pankratova ³ reported, "anarchist tendencies were the more easily and successfully manifested, because the capitalists put up the liveliest resistance to the enforcement of the decree on workers' control and actually refused workers' participation in production."

Workers' control in effect soon showed itself to be a half measure, halting and inefficient. The employers sabotaged it, concealed their stocks, removed tools, challenged or locked out the workers; sometimes they used the factory committees as simple agents or aides to management; they even thought it profitable to try to have their firms nationalized. The workers responded to these manoeuvres by seizing the factories and running them for their own benefit. "We ourselves will not send the owners away," the workers said in their resolutions, "but we will take charge of production if they will not insure that the factories function." Anna Pankratova adds that, in this first period of "chaotic" and "primitive" socialisation, the factory councils "frequently took over the management of factories whose owners had been dismissed or had fled."

Workers' control soon had to give place to socialisation. Lenin literally did violence to his more timorous lieutenants by throwing them into the "crucible of living popular creativity," by obliging them to speak in authentic libertarian language. The basis of revolutionary reconstruction was to be workers' self-management. It alone could arouse in the masses such revolutionary enthusiasm that the impossible would become possible. When the last manual worker, any unemployed person, any cook, could see the factories, the land, the administration in the hands of associations of workers, of employees, of officials, of peasants; rationing in the hands of democratic committees, etc.; all created spontaneously

Moreover, a certain degree of bureaucratization tends to show itself even within the enterprises, in spite of the precautions of the legislators. The majority of the workers are not yet mature enough to participate effectively in self-management. They lack education and technical knowledge, have not got rid of the old wage-earning mentality, and too willingly put all their powers into the hands of their delegates. This enables a small minority to be the real managers of the enterprise, to arrogate to themselves all sorts of privileges and do exactly as they like. They also perpetuate themselves in directorial positions, governing without control from below, losing contact with reality and cutting themselves off from the rank-and-file workers, whom they often treat with arrogance and contempt. All this demoralizes the workers and turns them against self-management. Finally, state control is often exercised so indiscreetly and so oppressively that the "self-managers" do not really manage at all. The state appoints directors to the organs of self-management without much caring whether the latter agree or not, although, according to the law, they should be consulted. These bureaucrats often interfere excessively in management, and sometimes behave in the same arbitrary way as the former employers. In very large Yugoslav enterprises directors are nominated entirely by the State; these posts are handed out to his old guard by Marshall Tito.

Moreover, Yugoslavian self-management is extremely dependent on the State for finance. It lives on credits accorded to it by the State and is free to dispose of only a small part of its profits, the rest being paid to the treasury in the form of a tax. Revenue derived from the self-management sector is used by the State not only to develop the backward sectors of the economy, which is no more than just, but also to pay for the heavily bureaucratized government apparatus, the army, the police forces, and for prestige expenditure, which is sometimes quite excessive. When the members of self-managed enterprises are inadequately paid, this blunts the enthusiasm for self-management and is in conflict with its principles.

The freedom of action of each enterprise, moreover, is fairly strictly limited, since it is subject to the economic plans of the central authority, which are drawn up arbitrarily without consultation of the rank and file. In Algeria the self-managed enterprises are also obliged to cede to the State the commercial handling of a considerable portion of their products. In addition, they are placed under the supervision of "organs to supply disinterested technical of tutelage," which are supposed and bookkeeping assistance but, in practice, tend to replace the organs of self-management and take over their functions.

gleaned a word which had been enunciated by the leaders of the October Revolution and then quickly forgotten: self-management. Attention was also fumed to the embryonic factory councils which had arisen at the same time, through revolutionary contagion, in Germany and Italy and, much later, Hungary. As reported in the French review *Arguments* by the Italian, Roberto Guiducci, the question arose whether “the idea of the councils, which had been suppressed by Stalinism for obvious reasons,” could not “be taken up again in modern terms.”

When Algeria was decolonized and became independent its new leaders sought to institutionalize the spontaneous occupations of abandoned European property by peasants and workers. They drew their inspiration from the Yugoslav precedent and took its legislation in this matter as a model.

If its wings are not clipped, self-management is undoubtedly an institution with democratic, even libertarian tendencies. Following the example of the Spanish collectives of 1936–1937, self-management seeks to place the economy under the management of the producers themselves. To this end a three-tier workers’ representation is set up in each enterprise, by means of elections: the sovereign general assembly; the workers’ council, a smaller deliberative body; and, finally, the management committee, which is the executive organ. The legislation provides certain safeguards against the threat of bureaucratization: representatives cannot stand for re-election too often, must be directly involved in production, etc. In Yugoslavia the workers can be consulted by referendum as an alternative to general assemblies, while in very large enterprises general assemblies take place in work sections.

Both in Yugoslavia and in Algeria’ at least in theory, or as a promise for the future, great importance is attributed to the commune, and much is made of the fact that self-managing workers will be represented there. In theory, again, the management of public affairs should tend to become decentralised, and to be carried out more and more at the local level.

These good intentions are far from being carried out in practice. In these countries self-management is coming into being in the framework of a dictatorial, military, police state whose skeleton is formed by a single party. At the helm there is an authoritarian and paternalistic authority which is beyond control and above criticism. The authoritarian principles of the political administration and the libertarian principles of the management of the economy are thus quite incompatible.

by the people — “when the poor see and feel that, there will be no force able to defeat the social revolution.” The future seemed to be opening up for a republic of the type of the Commune of 1871, a republic of soviets.

According to Voline’s account, “in order to catch the imagination of the masses, gain their confidence and their sympathy, the Bolshevik Party announced... slogans which had up till then been characteristic... of anarchism.” *All power to the soviets* was a slogan which the masses intuitively understood in the libertarian sense. Peter Arshinov reported that “the workers interpreted the idea of soviet power as that of their own right to dispose of themselves socially and economically.” At the Third Congress of Soviets, at the beginning of 1918, Lenin declared: “Anarchist ideas have now taken on living form.” Soon after, at the Seventh Party Congress, March 8, he proposed for adoption theses which dealt among other things with the socialisation of production administered by workers’ organisations (trade unions, factory committees, etc.); the abolition of officials in charge of manual trades, of the police and the army; the equality of salaries and remuneration; the participation of all members of the soviets in management and administration of the State; the complete elimination by stages of the said State and of the use of money. At the Trade-Union Congress (spring 1918), Lenin described the factories as “self-governing communes of producers and consumers.” The anarcho-sindicalist Maximoff goes so far as to maintain that “the Bolsheviks had not only abandoned the theory of the gradual withering away of the State, but Marxist ideology in general. They had become some kind of anarchists.”

An Authoritarian Revolution

This audacious alignment with the instinct of the masses and their revolutionary temper may have succeeded in giving the Bolsheviks command over the revolution, but had nothing to do with their traditional ideology or their real intentions. They had been authoritarians for a long time, and were imbued with ideas of the State, of dictatorship, of centralisation, of a ruling party, of management of the economy from above, of all things which were in flagrant contradiction with a really libertarian conception of soviet democracy.

State and Revolution was written on the eve of the October insurrection and mirrors the ambivalence of Lenin’s thoughts. Some pages might

have been written by a libertarian and, as we have seen above,⁴ some credit at least is given to the anarchists. However, this call for a revolution from below runs parallel to a statement of the case for a revolution from above. Concepts of a hierarchical, centralised state system are not half concealed afterthoughts but, on the contrary, are frankly expressed: the State will survive the conquest of power by the proletariat and will wither away only after a transitional period. How long is this purgatory to last? This is not concealed; we are told rather with relief than with regret that the process will be “slow,” and “of long duration.” Under the guise of soviet power, the revolution will bring forth the “proletarian State,” or “dictatorship of the proletariat”; the writer even let’s slip the expression “bourgeois State without the bourgeoisie,” just when he is revealing his inmost thoughts. This omnivorous State surely intends to take everything over.

Lenin took a lesson from contemporary German state capitalism, the *Kriegswirtschaft* (war economy). Another of his models was the organisation of modern large-scale industry by capitalism, with its “iron discipline.” He was particularly entranced by a state monopoly such as the posts and telegraphs and exclaimed: “What an admirably perfected mechanism! The whole of economic life organised like the postal services,... that is the State, that is the economic base which we need.” To seek to do without “authority” and “subordination” is an “anarchist dream,” he concluded. At one time he had waxed enthusiastic over the idea of entrusting production and exchange to workers’ associations and to self-management. But that was a misdeal. Now he did not hide his magic prescription: all citizens becoming “employees and workers of one universal single state trust,” the whole of society converted into “one great office and one great factory.” There would be soviets, to be sure, but under the control of the workers’ party, a party whose historic task it is to “direct” the proletariat. The most clear-minded Russian anarchists were not misled by this view. At the peak of Lenin’s libertarian period they were already warning the workers to be on their guard: in their journal, *Golos Truda* (The Voice of Labour), in the last months of 1917 and early in 1918 Voline wrote the following prophetic warning:

“Once they have consolidated and legalized their power, the Bolsheviks — who are socialists, politicians, and believers in the State, that is to say, centralist and authoritarian men of action — will begin to arrange the life of the country and the people by governmental and dictatorial means imposed from the centres....”

By Way of Conclusion

The defeat of the Spanish Revolution deprived anarchism of its only foothold in the world. It came out of this trial crushed, dispersed, and, to some extent, discredited. History condemned it severely and, in certain respects, unjustly. It was not in fact, or at any rate alone, responsible for the victory of the Franco forces. What remained from the experience of the rural and industrial collectives, set up in tragically unfavourable conditions, was on the whole to their credit. This experience was, however, underestimated, calumniated, and denied recognition. Authoritarian socialism had at last got rid of undesirable libertarian competition and, for years, remained master of the field. For a time, it seemed as though state socialism was to be justified by the military victory of the U.S.S.R. against Nazism in 1945 and by undeniable, and even imposing, successes in the technical field.

However, the very excesses of this system soon began to generate their own negation. They engendered the idea that paralyzing state centralisation should be loosened up, that production units should have more autonomy, that workers would do more and better work if they had some say in the management of enterprises. What medicine calls “antibodies” were generated in one of the countries brought into servitude by Stalin. Tito’s Yugoslavia freed itself from the too heavy yoke which was making it into a sort of colony. It then proceeded to re-evaluate the dogmas which could now so clearly be seen as anti-economic. It went back to school under the masters of the past, discovering and discreetly reading Proudhon. It bubbled in anticipation. It explored the too-little-known libertarian areas of thinking in the works of Marx and Lenin. Among other things it dug out the concept of the withering away of the State, which had not, it is true, been altogether eliminated from the political vocabulary, but had certainly become no more than a ritual formula quite empty of substance. Going back to the short period during which Bolshevism had identified itself with proletarian democracy from below, with the soviets, Yugoslavia

economy, of a form of social organisation which militarizes all men and converts the State into one huge employer, one huge entrepreneur; on the other hand, the operation of mines, fields, factories and workshops, by the working class itself, organised in trade-union federations." This was the dilemma of the Spanish Revolution, but in the near future it may become that of socialism the world over.

Your soviets... will gradually become simply executive organs of the will of the central government.... An authoritarian political state apparatus will be set up and, acting from above, it will seek to crush everything with its iron fist... Woe betide anyone who is not in agreement with the central authority.

"All power to the soviets will become in effect the authority of the party leaders."

It was Voline's view that it was the increasingly anarchist tendencies of the masses which obliged Lenin to turn away from his original path for a time. He would allow the State, authority, the dictatorship, to remain only for an hour, for a short moment. And then would come "anarchism." "But, good God, do you not foresee... what citizen Lenin will say when real power has been consolidated and it has become possible not to listen any more to the voice of the masses?" Then he will come back to the beaten path. He will create "a Marxist State," of the most complete type.

It would, of course, be risky to maintain that Lenin and his team consciously set a trap for the masses. There was more doctrinal dualism in them than deliberate duplicity. The contradiction between the two poles of their thought was so obvious, so flagrant, that it was to be foreseen that it would soon impinge upon events. Either the anarchist trend and the pressure of the masses would oblige the Bolsheviks to forget the authoritarian aspect of their concepts, or, on the contrary, the consolidation of their power, coinciding with the exhaustion of the people's revolutionary upsurge, would lead them to put aside their transitory anarchist thoughts.

A new factor then made its appearance, disturbing the balance of the issues in question: the terrible circumstances of the civil war and the foreign intervention, the disorganisation of transport, the shortage of technicians. These things drove the Bolshevik leaders to emergency measures, to dictatorship, to centralisation, and to recourse to the "iron fist." The anarchists, however, denied that these were the result simply of objective causes external to the Revolution. In their opinion they were due in part to the internal logic of the authoritarian ideas of Bolshevism, to the weakness of an overcentralised and excessively bureaucratic authority. According to Voline, it was, among other things, the incompetence of the State, and its desire to direct and control everything, that made it incapable of reorganising the economic life of the country and led to a real "breakdown"; that is, to the paralysis of

industry, the ruin of agriculture, and the destruction of all connections between the various branches of the economy.

As an example, Voline told the story of the former Nobel oil refinery at Petrograd. It had been abandoned by its owners and its 4,000 workers decided to operate it collectively. They addressed themselves to the Bolshevik government in vain. Then they tried to make the plant work on their own initiative. They divided themselves into mobile groups and tried to find fuel, raw materials, outlets, and means of transport. With regard to the latter they had actually begun discussions with their comrades among the railwaymen. The government became angry, feeling that its responsibility to the country prevented it from allowing each factory to act independently. The workers' council persisted and called a general assembly of the workers. The People's Commissar of Labour took the trouble to give a personal warning to the workers against a "serious act of insubordination." He castigated their attitude as "anarchistic and egotistical." He threatened them with dismissal without compensation. The workers retorted that they were not asking for any privileges: the government should let the workers and peasants all over the country act in the same way. All in vain, the government stuck to its point of view and the factory was closed.

One Communist confirms Voline's analysis: Alexandra Kollontai. In 1921 she complained that numerous examples of workers' initiative had come to grief amid endless paperwork and useless administrative discussions: "How much bitterness there is among the workers... when they see what they could have achieved if they had been given the right and the freedom to act.... Initiative becomes weak and the desire for action dies down."

In fact, the power of the soviets only lasted a few months, from October 1917 to the spring of 1918. The factory councils were very soon deprived of their power, on the pretext that self-management did not take account of the "rational" needs of the economy, that it involved an egoism of enterprises competing one with the other, grasping for scarce resources, wanting to survive at any price even if other factories were more important "for the State" and better equipped. In brief, according to Anna Pankratova, the situation was moving toward a fragmentation of the economy into "autonomous producers' federations of the kind dreamed of by the anarchists." No doubt the budding workers' self-management was not above reproach. It had tried, painfully and tentatively, to create new forms of production which had no precedent in world history. It had certainly made mistakes and taken wrong turns. That was the price of

The central government had a stranglehold over the collectives; the nationalization of transport made it possible for it to supply some and cut off all deliveries to others. Moreover, it imported Republican army uniforms instead of turning to the Catalonian textile collectives. On August 22, 1937, it passed a decree suspending the application of the Catalonian October 1936 socialisation decree to the metal and mining industries. This was done on the pretext of the necessities of national defence; and the Catalonian decree was said to be "contrary to the spirit of the Constitution." Foremen and managers who had been driven out by self-management, or rather, those who had been unwilling to accept technical posts in the self-managed enterprises, were brought back, full of a desire for revenge.

The end came with the decree of August 11, 1938, which militarized all war industries under the control of the Ministry of War Supplies. An overblown and ill-behaved bureaucracy invaded the factories — a swarm of inspectors and directors who owed their position solely to their political affiliations, in particular to their recent membership in the Stalinist Communist Party. The workers became demoralized as they saw themselves deprived of control over enterprises which they had created from scratch during the first critical months of the war, and production suffered in consequence.

In other branches, Catalan industrial self-management survived until the Spanish Republic was crushed. It was slowed down, however, for industry had lost its main outlets and there was a shortage of raw materials, the government having cut off the credit necessary to purchase them.

To sum up, the new-born Spanish collectives were immediately forced into the strait jacket of a war carried on by classic military methods, in the name of which the Republic clipped the wings of its own vanguard and compromised with reaction at home.

The lesson which the collectives have left behind them, however, is a stimulating one. In 1938 Emma Goldman was inspired to praise them thus: "The collectivization of land and industry shines out as the greatest achievement of any revolutionary period. Even if Franco were to win and the Spanish anarchists were to be exterminated, the idea they have launched will live on." On July 21, 1937, Federica Montseny made a speech in Barcelona in which she clearly posed the alternatives: "On the one hand, the supporters of authority and the totalitarian State, of a state-directed

Lister Division had gone, these were destroyed and the collectives rebuilt. As G. Munis, the Spanish Trotskyist, wrote: "This was one of the most inspiring episodes of the Spanish Revolution. The peasants reaffirmed their socialist beliefs in spite of governmental terror and the economic boycott to which they were subjected."

There was another, less heroic, reason for the restoration of the Aragon collectives: the Communist Party had realized, after the event, that it had injured the life force of the rural economy, endangered the crops from lack of manpower, demoralized the fighters on the Aragon front, and dangerously reinforced the middle class of landed proprietors. The Party, therefore, tried to repair the damage it had itself done, and to revive some of the collectives. The new collectives, however, never regained the extent or quality of land of their predecessors, nor the original manpower, since many militants had been imprisoned or had sought shelter from persecution in the anarchist divisions at the front.

Republicans carried out armed attacks of the same kind against agricultural self-management in the Levant, in Castile, and in the provinces of Huesca and Teruel. However, it survived, by hook or by crook, in many areas which had not yet fallen into the hands of the Franco troops, especially in the Levant.

The ambiguous attitude, to put it mildly, of the Valencia government to rural socialism contributed to the defeat of the Spanish Republic: the poor peasants were not always clearly aware that it was in their interests to fight for the Republic.

In spite of its successes, industrial self-management was sabotaged by the administrative bureaucracy and the authoritarian socialists. The radio and press launched a formidable preparatory campaign of denigration and calumny, questioning the honesty of the factory management councils. The Republican central government refused to grant any credit to Catalan self-management even when the libertarian minister of the Catalan economy, Fabregas, offered the billion pesetas of savings bank deposits as security. In June 1937, the Stalinist Comorera took over the portfolio of the economy, and deprived the self-managed factories of raw materials which he lavished on the private sector. He also failed to deliver to the socialist enterprises supplies which had been ordered for them by the Catalan administration.

apprenticeship. As Alexandra Kollontai maintained, communism could not be "born except by a process of practical research, with mistakes perhaps, but starting from the creative forces of the working class itself."

The leaders of the Party did not hold this view. They were only too pleased to take back from the factory committees the power which they had not in their heart of hearts been happy to hand over. As early as 1918, Lenin stated his preference for the "single will" in the management of enterprises. The workers must obey "unconditionally" the single will of the directors of the work process. All the Bolshevik leaders, Kollontai tells us, were "sceptical with regard to the creative abilities of workers' collectives." Moreover, the administration was invaded by large numbers of petty bourgeois, left over from old Russian capitalism, who had adapted themselves all too quickly to institutions of the soviet type, and had got themselves into responsible positions in the various commissariats, insisting that economic management should be entrusted to them and not to workers' organisations.

The state bureaucracy played an increasing role in the economy. From December 5, 1917, on, industry was put under a Supreme Economic Council, responsible for the authoritarian co-ordination of the activity of all organs of production. From May 26 to June 4, 1918, the Congress of Economic Councils met and decided that the directorate of each enterprise should be composed of members two-thirds of whom would be nominated by the regional councils or the Supreme Economic Council and only one third elected by workers on the spot. A decree of May 28, 1918, extended collectivization to industry as a whole but, by the same token, transformed the spontaneous socialisations of the first months of the revolution into nationalisations. The Supreme Economic Council was made responsible for the administration of the nationalized industries. The directors and technical staff were to remain at their posts as appointees of the State. At the Second Congress of the Supreme Economic Council at the end of 1918, the factory councils were roundly trounced by the committee reporter for trying to direct the factories in the place of the board of directors.

For the sake of appearances, elections to factory committees continued to take place, but a member of the Communist cell read out a list of candidates drawn up in advance and voting was by show of hands in the presence of the armed "Communist guards" of the enterprise. Anyone who declared his opposition to the proposed candidates became subject

to economic sanctions (wage cuts, etc.). As Peter Arshinov reported, there remained a single omnipresent master — the State. Relations between the workers and this new master became similar to those which had previously existed between labour and capital.

The functions of the soviets had become purely nominal. They were transformed into institutions of government power. "You must become basic cells of the State," Lenin told the Congress of Factory Councils on June 27, 1918. As Voline expressed it, they were reduced to the role of "purely administrative and executive organs responsible for small, unimportant local matters and entirely subject to 'directives' from the central authorities: government and the leading organs of the Party." They no longer had "even the shadow of power." At the Third Trades-Union Congress (April 1920), the committee reporter, Lozovosky, admitted: "We have abandoned the old methods of workers' control and we have preserved only the principle of state control." From now on this "control" was to be exercised by an organ of the State: the Workers' and Peasants' Inspectorate.

The industrial federations which were centralist in structure had, in the first place, helped the Bolsheviks to absorb and subjugate the factory councils which were federalist and libertarian in their nature. From April 1, 1918, the fusion between the two types of organisation was an accomplished fact. From then on, the trade unions played a disciplinary role under the supervision of the Party. The union of workers in the heavy metal industries of Petrograd forbade "disruptive initiatives" from the factory councils and objected to their "most dangerous" tendency to put this or that enterprise into the hands of the workers. This was said to be the worst way of imitating production co-operatives, "the idea of which had long since been bankrupt" and which would "not fail to transform themselves into capitalist undertakings." "Any enterprise abandoned or sabotaged by an industrialist, the product of which was necessary to the national economy, was to be placed under the control of the State." It was "not permissible" that the workers should take over such enterprises without the approval of the trade-union organisation.

After this preliminary take-over operation, the trade unions were, in their turn, tamed, deprived of any autonomy, purged; their congresses were postponed, their members arrested, their organisations disbanded or merged into larger units. At the end of this process any anarcho-

It was the Stalinist minister of agriculture, Vicente Uribe, who had established the decree of October 7, 1936, which legalized part of the rural collectivisations. Appearances to the contrary, he was imbued with an anti-collectivist spirit and hoped to demoralize the peasants living in socialised groups. The validation of collectivisations was subjected to very rigid and complicated juridical regulations. The collectives were obliged to adhere to an extremely strict time limit, and those which had not been legalized on the due date were automatically placed outside the law and their land made liable to being restored to the previous owners.

Uribe discouraged the peasants from joining the collectives and fomented discontent against them. In December 1936 he made a speech directed to the individualist small proprietors, declaring that the guns of the Communist Party and the government were at their disposal. He gave them imported fertilizer which he was refusing to the collectives. Together with his Stalinist colleague, Juan Comorera, in charge of the economy of Catalonia, he brought the small- and medium-scale landowners together into a reactionary union, subsequently adding the traders and even some owners of large estates disguised as smallholders. They took the organisation of food supplies for Barcelona away from the workers' unions and handed it over to private trade.

Finally, when the advance guard of the Revolution in Barcelona had been crushed in May 1937,¹⁶ the coalition government went so far as to liquidate agricultural self-management by military means. On the pretext that it had remained "outside the current of centralisation," the Aragon "regional defence council" was dissolved by a decree of August 10, 1937. Its founder, Joaquin Ascaso, was charged with "selling [...]" which was actually an attempt to get funds for the collectives. Soon after this, the 11th Mobile Division of Commander Lister (a Stalinist), supported by tanks, went into action against the collectives. Aragon was invaded like an enemy country, those in charge of socialised enterprises were arrested, their premises occupied, then closed; management committees were dissolved, communal shops emptied, furniture broken up, and flocks disbanded. The Communist press denounced "the crimes of forced collectivization." Thirty percent of the Aragon collectives were completely destroyed.

Even by this brutality, however, Stalinism was not generally successful in forcing the peasants of Aragon to become private owners. Peasants had been forced at pistol point to sign deeds of ownership, but as soon as the

managed in a remarkable fashion. Socialised industry made a major contribution to the war against fascism. The few arms factories built in Spain before 1936 had been set up outside Catalonia: the employers, in fact, were afraid of the Catalonian proletariat. In the Barcelona region, therefore, it was necessary to convert factories in great haste so that they might serve the defence of the Republic. Workers and technicians competed with each other in enthusiasm and initiative, and very soon war materiel made mainly in Catalonia was arriving at the front. No less effort was put into the manufacture of chemical products essential for war purposes. Socialised industry went ahead equally fast in the field of civilian requirements; for the first time the conversion of textile fibres was undertaken in Spain, and hemp, esparto, rice straw, and cellulose were processed.

Self-Management Undermined

In the meanwhile, credit and foreign trade had remained in the hands of the private sector because the bourgeois Republican government wished it so. It is true that the State controlled the banks, but it took care not to place them under self-management. Many collectives were short of working capital and had to live on the available funds taken over at the time of the July 1936 Revolution. Consequently, they had to meet their day-to-day needs by chance acquisitions such as the seizure of jewellery and precious objects belonging to churches, convents, or Franco supporters who had fled. The CNT had proposed the creation of a “confederal bank” to finance self-management. But it was utopian to try to compete with private finance capital which had not been socialised. The only solution would have been to put all finance capital into the hands of the organised proletariat; but the CNT was imprisoned in the Popular Front, and dared not go as far as that.

The major obstacle, however, was the increasingly open hostility to self-management manifested by the various political general staffs of Republican Spain. It was charged with breaking the “united front” between the working class and the small bourgeoisie, and hence “playing the game” of the fascist enemy. (Its detractors went so far as to refuse arms to the libertarian vanguard which, on the Aragon front, was reduced to facing the fascist machine guns with naked hands — and then being reproached for its “inactivity.”

syndicalist tendency had been wiped out, and the trade-union movement was completely subordinated to the State and the single party.

The same thing happened with regard to consumers’ co-operatives. In the early stages of the Revolution they had arisen everywhere, increased in numbers, and federated with each other. Their offense, however, was that they were outside the control of the Party and a certain number of social democrats (Mensheviks) had infiltrated them. First, local shops were deprived of their supplies and means of transport on the pretext of “private trade” and “speculation,” or even without any pretext at all. Then, all free co-operatives were closed at one stroke and state co-operatives set up bureaucratically in their place. The decree of March 20, 1919 absorbed the consumer co-operatives into the Commissariat of Food Supplies and the industrial producer co-operatives into the Supreme Economic Council. Many members of co-operatives were thrown into prison.

The working class did not react either quickly or vigorously enough. It was dispersed, isolated in an immense, backward, and for the most part rural country exhausted by privation and revolutionary struggle, and, still worse, demoralized. Finally, its best members had left for the fronts of the civil war or had been absorbed into the party and government apparatus. Nevertheless, quite a number of workers felt themselves more or less done out of the fruits of their revolutionary victories, deprived of their rights, subjected to tutelage, humiliated by the arrogance and arbitrary power of the new masters; and these became aware of the real nature of the supposed “proletarian State.” Thus, during the summer of 1918, dissatisfied workers in the Moscow and Petrograd factories elected delegates from among their number, trying in this way to oppose their authentic “delegate councils” to the soviets of enterprises already captured by authority. Kollontai bears witness that the worker felt sore and understood that he had been pushed aside. He could compare the life style of the soviet functionaries with the way in which he lived — he upon whom the “dictatorship of the proletariat” was based, at least in theory.

By the time the workers really saw the light it was too late. Power had had the time to organise itself solidly and had at its disposal repressive forces fully able to break any attempted autonomous action on the part of the masses. According to Voline, a bitter but unequal struggle lasted some three years, and was entirely unknown outside Russia. In this a working-class vanguard opposed a state apparatus determined to deny

the division which had developed between itself and the masses. From 1919 to 1921, strikes increased in the large cities, in Petrograd especially, and even in Moscow. They were severely repressed, as we shall see further on.

Within the directing Party itself a "Workers' Opposition" arose which demanded a return to the democracy of the soviets and self-management. At the Tenth Party Congress in March 1921, one of its spokesmen, Alexandra Kollontai, distributed a pamphlet asking for freedom of initiative and organisation for the trade unions and for a "congress of producers" to elect a central administrative organ for the national economy. The brochure was confiscated and banned. Lenin persuaded almost the whole congress to vote for a resolution identifying the theses of the Workers' Opposition with "petty-bourgeois and anarchist deviations": the "syndicalism," the "semi-anarchism" of the oppositionists was in his eyes a "direct danger" to the monopoly of power exercised by the Party in the name of the proletariat. From then on all opposition within the Party was forbidden and the way was open to "totalitarianism," as was admitted by Trotsky years later.

The struggle continued within the central leadership of the trade unions. Tomsky and Riazanov were excluded from the Presidium and sent into exile, because they had stood for trade unions independent of the Party. The leader of the workers' opposition, Shlyapaikov, met the same fate, and was soon followed by the prime mover of another opposition group: G. I. Miasnikov, a genuine worker who had put the Grand Duke Michael to death in 1917. He had been a party member for fifteen years and, before the revolution, spent more than seven years in prison and seventy-five days on a hunger strike. In November 1921, he dared to state in a pamphlet that the workers had lost confidence in the Communists, because the Party no longer had a common language with the rank and file and was now using against the working class the repressive measures brought in against the bourgeoisie between 1918 and 1920.

The Part Played by the Anarchists

What part did the Russian anarchists play in this drama in which a libertarian-style revolution was transmuted into its opposite? Russia had no libertarian traditions and it was in foreign lands that Bakunin and Kropotkin became anarchists. Neither played a militant anarchist role

It was drafted by a libertarian minister, and ratified by the CNT, because anarchist leaders were in the government. How could they object to the intervention of government in self-management when they themselves had their hands on the levers of power? Once the wolf is allowed into the sheepfold he always ends up by acting as its master.

In spite of the considerable powers which had been given to the general councils of branches of industry, it appeared in practice that workers' self-management tended to produce a sort of parochial egoism, a species of "bourgeois co-operativism," as Peirats called it, each production unit concerning itself only with its own interests. There were rich collectives and poor collectives. Some could pay relatively high wages while others could not even manage to maintain the wage level which had prevailed before the Revolution. Some had plenty of raw materials, others were very short, etc. This imbalance was fairly soon remedied by the creation of a central equalization fund, which made it possible to distribute resources fairly. In December 1936, a trade-union assembly was held in Valencia, where it was decided to co-ordinate the various sectors of production into a general organic plan, which would make it possible to avoid harmful competition and the dissipation of effort.

At this point the trade unions undertook the systematic reorganisation of whole trades, closing down hundreds of small enterprises and concentrating production in those that had the bat equipment. For instance: in Catalonia foundries were reduced from over 70 to 24, tanneries from 71 to 40, glass works from about 100 to about 30. However, industrial centralisation under trade-union control could not be developed as rapidly and completely as the anarcho-syndicalist planners would have wished. Why was this? Because the Stalinists and reformists opposed the appropriation of the property of the middle class and showed scrupulous respect for the private sector.

In the other industrial centres of Republican Spain the Catalanian socialisation decree was not in force and collectivisations were not so frequent as in Catalonia; however, private enterprises were often endowed with workers' control committees, as was the case in the Asturias.

Industrial self-management was, on the whole, as successful as agricultural self-management had been. Observers at first hand were full of praise, especially with regard to the excellent working of urban public services under self-management. Some factories, if not all, were

A trade-union conference representing 600,000 workers was held in Barcelona in October 1936, with the object of developing the socialisation of industry. The initiative of the workers was institutionalized by a decree of the Catalan government dated October 24, 1936. This ratified the *fait accompli*, but introduced an element of government control alongside self-management. Two sectors were created, one socialist, the other private. All factories with more than a hundred workers were to be socialised (and those with between fifty and a hundred could be, on the request of three-quarters of the workers), as were those whose proprietors either had been declared “subversive” by a people’s court or had stopped production, and those whose importance justified taking them out of the private sector. (In fact, many enterprises were socialised because they were heavily in debt.)

A factory under self-management was directed by a managerial committee of five to fifteen members representing the various trades and services. They were nominated by the workers in general assembly and served for two years, half being changed each year. The committee appointed a manager to whom it delegated all or part of its own powers. In very large factories the selection of a manager required the approval of the supervisory organisation. Moreover, a government controller was appointed to each management committee. In effect it was not complete self-management but a sort of joint management in very close liaison with the Catalonian government.

The management committee could be recalled, either by the general meeting of the workers or by the general council of the particular branch of the industry (composed of four representatives of management committees, eight of the trade unions, and four technicians appointed by the supervisory organisation). This general council planned the work and determined the division of the profits, and its decisions were mandatory. In those enterprises which remained in private hands an elected workers’ committee was to control the production process and conditions of work “in close collaboration with the employer.” The wage system was maintained intact in the socialised factories. Each worker continued to be paid a fixed wage. Profits were not divided on the factory level and wages rose very little after socialisation, in fact even less than in the sector which remained private.

The decree of October 24, 1936, was a compromise between aspirations to self-management and the tendency to tutelage by the leftist government, as well as a compromise between capitalism and socialism.

inside Russia at any time. Up to the time of the 1917 Revolution, only a few copies of short extracts from their writings had appeared in Russia, clandestinely and with great difficulty. There was nothing anarchist in the social, socialist, and revolutionary education of the Russians. On the contrary, as Voline told us, “advanced Russian youth were reading literature which always presented socialism in a statist form.” People’s minds were soaked in ideas of government, having been contaminated by German social democracy.

The anarchists “were a tiny handful of men without influence,” at the most a few thousand. Voline reported that their movement was “still far too small to have any immediate, concrete effect on events.” Moreover, most of them were individualist intellectuals not much involved in the working-class movement. Voline was an exception, as was Nestor Makhno, who could move the hearts of the masses in his native Ukraine. In Makhno’s memoirs he passed the severe judgment that “Russian anarchism lagged behind events or even functioned completely outside them.”

However, this judgment seems to be less than fair. The anarchists played a far from negligible part in events between the February and October revolutions. Trotsky admitted this more than once in his *History of the Russian Revolution*. “Brave” and “active,” though few in numbers, they were a principled opposition in the Constituent Assembly at a time when the Bolsheviks had not yet turned anti-parliamentary. They put out the call “all power to the soviets” long before Lenin’s party did so. They inspired the movement for the spontaneous socialisation of housing, often against the will of the Bolsheviks. Anarcho-syndicalist activists played a part in inducing workers to take over the factories, even before October.

During the revolutionary days that brought Kerensky’s bourgeois republic to an end, the anarchists were in the forefront of the military struggle, especially in the Dvinsk regiment commanded by old libertarians like Grachoff and Fedotoff. This force dislodged the counter-revolutionary “cadets.” Aided by his detachment, the anarchist Gelezniakov disbanded the Constituent Assembly: the Bolsheviks only ratified the accomplished fact. Many partisan detachments were formed or led by anarchists (Mokrousoff, Cherniak, and others), and fought unremittingly against the White armies between 1918 and 1920.

Scarcely a major city was without an anarchist or anarcho-syndicalist group, spreading a relatively large amount of printed matter — papers, periodicals, leaflets, pamphlets, and books. There were two weeklies

in Petrograd and a daily in Moscow, each appearing in 25,000 copies. Anarchist sympathizers increased as the Revolution deepened and then moved away from the masses. The French captain Jacques Sadoul, on a mission in Russia, wrote in a report dated April 6, 1918: "The anarchist party is the most active, the most militant of the opposition groups and probably the most popular.... The Bolsheviks are anxious." At the end of 1918, according to Voline, "this influence became so great that the Bolsheviks, who could not accept criticism, still less opposition, became seriously disturbed." Voline reports that for the Bolshevik authorities "it was equivalent... to suicide to tolerate anarchist propaganda. They did their best first to prevent, and then to forbid, any manifestation of libertarian ideas and finally suppressed them by brute force."

The Bolshevik government "began by forcibly closing the offices of libertarian organisations, and forbidding the anarchists from taking part in any propaganda or activity." In Moscow on the night of April 12, 1918, detachments of Red Guards, armed to the teeth, took over by surprise twenty-five houses occupied by the anarchists. The latter, thinking that they were being attacked by White Guards, replied with gunfire. According to Voline, the authorities soon went on to "more violent measures: imprisonment, outlawing, and execution." "For four years this conflict was to keep the Bolshevik authorities on their toes... until the libertarian trend was finally crushed by military measures (at the end of 1921)."

The liquidation of the anarchists was all the easier since they had divided into two factions, one of which refused to be tamed while the other allowed itself to be domesticated. The latter regarded "historical necessity" as justification for making a gesture of loyalty to the regime and, at last temporarily, approving its dictatorial actions. They considered a victorious end to the civil war and the crushing of the counter-revolution to be the first necessities.

The more intransigent anarchists regarded this as a short-sighted tactic. For the counter-revolutionary movements were being fed by the bureaucratic impotence of the government apparatus and the disillusionment and discontent of the people. Moreover, the authorities ended up by making no distinction between the active wing of the libertarian revolution which was disputing its methods of control, and the criminal activities of its right-wing adversaries. To accept dictatorship and terror was a suicidal policy for the anarchists who were themselves to become its victims. Finally, the conversion of the so-called soviet anarchists made the crushing of those other, irreconcilable, ones easier,

together by the respective cantonal committees and then by the regional committee which controlled the quantity and quality of production within its area. Trade outside the region was handled by a regional committee which collected the goods to be sold and in exchange for them bought the goods required by the region as a whole. Rural anarcho-syndicalism showed its organisational ability and capacity for co-ordination to best advantage in the Levant. The export of citrus required methodical modern commercial techniques; they were brilliantly put into play, in spite of a few lively disputes with rich producers.

Cultural development went hand in hand with material prosperity: a campaign was undertaken to bring literacy to adults; regional federations set up a program of lectures, films, and theatrical performances in all the villages. These successes were due not only to the strength of the trade-union organisation but, to a considerable degree, also to the intelligence and initiative of the people. Although the majority of them were illiterate, the peasants showed a degree of socialist consciousness, practical good sense, and spirit of solidarity and sacrifice which drew the admiration of foreign observers. Fenner Brockway, then of the British Independent Labour Party, now Lord Brockway, visited the collective of Segorbe and reported: "The spirit of the peasants' their enthusiasm, and the way they contribute to the common effort and the pride which they take in it, are all admirable."

Self-Management in Industry

Self-management was also tried out in industry, especially in Catalonia, the most industrialized area in Spain. Workers whose employers had fled spontaneously undertook to keep the factories going. For more than four months, the factories of Barcelona, over which waved the red and black flag of the CNT, were managed by revolutionary workers' committees without help or interference from the State, sometimes even without experienced managerial help. The proletariat had one piece of good fortune in being aided by technicians. In Russia in 1917-1918, and in Italy in 1920, during those brief experiments in the occupation of the factories, the engineers had refused to help the new experiment of socialisation; in Spain many of them collaborated closely with the workers from the very beginning.

collectives were created, with around 100,000 members. Socialisation also made headway in Estremadura and part of Andalusia, while a few early attempts were quickly repressed in the Asturias.

It should be remembered that grass-roots socialism was not the work of the anarcho-syndicalists alone, as many people have supposed. According to Gaston Leval, the supporters of self-management were often “libertarians without knowing it.” In Estremadura and Andalusia, the social-democratic, Catholic, and in the Asturias even communist, peasants took the initiative in collectivization. However, in the southern areas not controlled by the anarchists, where municipalities took over large estates in an authoritarian manner, the day labourers unfortunately did not feel this to be a revolutionary transformation: their wages and conditions were not changed; there was no self-management.

Agricultural self-management was an indisputable success except where it was sabotaged by its opponents or interrupted by the war. It was not difficult to beat the record of large-scale private ownership, for it had been deplorable. Some 10,000 feudal landowners had been in possession of half the territory of the Spanish Peninsula. It had suited them to let a large part of their land lie fallow rather than to permit the development of a stratum of independent farmers, or to give their day labourers decent wages; to do either of these would have undermined their medieval feudal authority. Thus, their existence had retarded the full development of the natural wealth of the Spanish land.

After the Revolution the land was brought together into rational units, cultivated on a large scale and according to the general plan and directives of agronomists. The studies of agricultural technicians brought about yields 30 to 50 percent higher than before. The cultivated areas increased, human, animal, and mechanical energy was used in a more rational way, and working methods perfected. Crops were diversified, irrigation extended, reforestation initiated, and tree nurseries started. Piggeries were constructed, rural technical schools built, and demonstration farms set up, selective cattle breeding was developed, and auxiliary agricultural industries put into operation. Socialised agriculture showed itself superior on the one hand to large-scale absentee ownership, which left part of the land fallow; and on the other to small farms cultivated by primitive techniques, with poor seed and no fertilizers.

A first attempt at agricultural planning was made, based on production and consumption statistics produced by the collectives, brought

for they were treated as “false” anarchists, irresponsible and unrealistic dreamers, stupid muddlers, madmen, sowers of division, and, finally, counter-revolutionary bandits.

Victor Serge was the most brilliant, and therefore considered the most authoritative, of the converted anarchists. He worked for the regime and published a pamphlet in French which attempted to defend it against anarchist criticism. The book he wrote later, *L'An I de la Révolution Russe*, is largely a justification of the liquidation of the soviets by Bolshevism. The Party — or rather its elite leadership — is presented as the brains of the working class. It is up to the duly selected leader of the vanguard to discover what the proletariat can and must do. Without them, the masses organised in soviets would be no more than “a sprinkling of men with confused aspirations shot through with gleams of intelligence.”

Victor Serge was certainly too clear-minded to have any illusions about the real nature of the central Soviet power. But this power was still haloed with the prestige of the first victorious proletarian revolution; it was loathed by world counter-revolution; and that was one of the reasons — the most honourable — why Serge and many other revolutionaries saw fit to put a padlock on their tongues. In the summer of 1921 the anarchist Gaston Leval came to Moscow in the Spanish delegation to the Third Congress of the Communist International. In private, Serge confided to him that “the Communist Party no longer practices the dictatorship of the proletariat but dictatorship over the proletariat.” Returning to France, Leval published articles in *Le Libertaire* using well documented facts, and placing side by side what Victor Serge had told him confidentially and his public statements, which he described as “conscious lies.” In *Living My Life*, the great American anarchist Emma Goldman was no kinder to Victor Serge, whom she had seen in action in Moscow.

The Makhnovshchina

It had been relatively easy to liquidate the small, weak nuclei of anarchists in the cities, but things were different in the Ukraine, where the peasant Nestor Makhno had built up a strong rural anarchist organisation, both economic and military. Makhno was born of poor Ukrainian peasants and was twenty years old in 1919. As a child, he had seen the 1905 Revolution and later became an anarchist. The Czarist regime sentenced him to death, commuted to eight years’ imprisonment, which was spent, more

often than not in irons, in Boutirki prison, the only school he was ever to attend. He filled at least some of the gaps in his education with the help of a fellow-prisoner, Peter Arshinov.

Immediately after the October Revolution, Makhno took the initiative in organising masses of peasants into an autonomous region, a roughly circular area 480 by 400 miles, with seven million inhabitants. Its southern end reached the Sea of Azov at the port of Berdiansk, and it was centred in Gulyai-Polyé, a large town of 20,000 to 30,000 people. This was a traditionally rebellious region which had seen violent disturbances in 1905.

The story began when the German and Austrian armies of occupation imposed a right-wing regime which hastened to return to their former owners the lands which had been seized by revolutionary peasants. The land workers put up an armed defence of their new conquests. They resisted reaction but also the untimely intrusion of Bolshevik commissars, and their excessive levies. This vast *Jacquerie*⁵ was inspired by a “lover of justice,” a sort of anarchist Robin Hood called “Father” Makhno by the peasants. His first feat of arms was the capture of Gulyai-Polyé in mid-September 1918. The armistice of November 11, however, led to the withdrawal of the Austro-German occupation forces, and gave Makhno a unique opportunity to build up reserves of arms and supplies.

For the first time in history, the principles of libertarian communism were applied in the liberated Ukraine, and self-management was put into force as far as possible in the circumstances of the civil war. Peasants united in “communes” or “free-work soviets,” and communally tilled the land for which they had fought with the former owners. These groups respected the principles of equality and fraternity. Each man, woman, or child had to work in proportion to his or her strength, and comrades elected to temporary managerial functions subsequently returned to their regular work alongside the other members of the communes.

Each soviet was simply the executive of the will of the peasants in the locality from which it had been elected. Production units were federated into districts, and districts into regions. The soviets were integrated into a general economic system based on social equality; they were to be independent of any political party. No politician was to dictate his will to them under cover of soviet power. Members had to be authentic workers at the service of the labouring masses.

forbidden only to take over more land than they could cultivate, and subject to only one restriction: that their presence or their property should not disturb the socialist order. In some places socialised areas were reconstituted into larger units by voluntary exchange of plots with individual peasants. In most villages, individualists, whether peasants or traders, decreased in number as time went on. They felt isolated and preferred to join the collectives.

It appears that the units which applied the collectivist principle of day wages were more solid than the comparatively few which tried to establish complete communism too quickly, taking no account of the egoism still deeply rooted in human nature, especially among the women. In some villages where currency had been suppressed and the population helped itself from the common pool, producing and consuming within the narrow limits of the collectives, the disadvantages of this paralyzing self-sufficiency made themselves felt, and individualism soon returned to the fore, causing the breakup of the community by the withdrawal of many former small farmers who had joined but did not have a really communist way of thinking.

The communes were united into cantonal federations, above which were regional federations. In theory all the lands belonging to a cantonal federation were treated as a single unit without intermediate boundaries.¹⁵ Solidarity between villages was pushed to the limit, and equalization funds made it possible to give assistance to the poorest collectives. Tools, raw materials, and surplus labour were all made available to communities in need.

The extent of rural socialisation was different in different provinces. As already said, Catalonia was an area of small- and medium sized farms, and the peasantry had a strong individualistic tradition, so that here there were no more than a few pilot collectives. In Aragon, on the other hand, more than three-quarters of the land was socialised. The creative initiative of the agricultural workers in this region had been stimulated by a libertarian militia unit, the Durruti Column, passing through on its way to the northern front to fight the Franco troops, and by the subsequent establishment of a revolutionary authority created at the base, which was unique of its kind in Republican Spain. About 450 collectives were set up, with some half a million members. In the Levant region (five provinces, capital Valencia), the richest in Spain, some 900 collectives were established, covering 43 percent of the geographical area, 50 percent of citrus production, and 70 percent of the citrus trade. In Castile, about 300

most cases, it was the trade unions which assumed them or controlled them. A general assembly of working peasants in each village elected a management committee which was to be responsible for economic administration. Apart from the secretary, all the members continued their manual labour. Work was obligatory for all healthy men between eighteen and sixty. The peasants were divided into groups of ten or more, each led by a delegate, and each being allocated an area to cultivate, or an operation to perform, appropriate to the age of its members and the nature of the work concerned. The management committee received the delegates from the groups every evening. With regard to local administration, the commune frequently called the inhabitants together in general assembly to receive reports of activities undertaken. Everything was put into the common pool with the exception of clothing, furniture, personal savings, small domestic animals, garden plots, and poultry kept for family use. Artisans, hairdressers, shoemakers, etc., were grouped in collectives; the sheep belonging to the community were divided into flocks of several hundreds, put in the charge of shepherds, and methodically distributed in the mountain pastures.

With regard to the distribution of products, various systems were tried out, some based on collectivism and others on more or less total communism, and still others resulting from a combination of the two. Most commonly, payment was based on family needs. Each head of a family received a daily wage of specially marked pesetas which could only be exchanged for consumer goods in the communal shops, which were often set up in the church or its buildings. Any balance not consumed was placed in a peseta credit account for the benefit of the individual. It was possible to draw a limited amount of pocket money from this balance. Rent, electricity, medical care, pharmaceuticals, old-age assistance, etc., were all free. Education was also free and often given in schools set up in former convents; it was compulsory for all children under fourteen, who were forbidden to perform manual labour.

Membership in the collective continued to be voluntary, as was required by the basic concern of the anarchist for freedom. No pressure was brought to bear on the small farmers. Choosing to remain outside the community, they could not expect to receive its services and benefits since they claimed to be sufficient unto themselves. However, they could opt to participate as they wished in communal work and they could bring their produce to the communal shops. They were admitted to general assemblies and the enjoyment of some collective benefits. They were

When the Makhnovist partisans moved into an area they put up posters reading: "The freedom of the workers and peasants is their own, and not subject to any restriction. It is up to the workers and peasants themselves to act, to organise themselves, to agree among themselves in all aspects of their lives, as they themselves see fit and desire.... The Makhnovists can do no more than give aid and counsel.... In no circumstances can they, nor do they wish to, govern."

When, in 1920, Makhno's men were brought to negotiate with the Bolsheviks, they did so as their equals, and concluded an ephemeral agreement with them, to which they insisted that the following appendix be added: "In the area where the Makhnovist army is operating the worker and peasant population shall create its own free institutions for economic and political self-administration; these institutions shall be autonomous and linked federally by agreements with the governing organs of the Soviet Republics." The Bolshevik negotiators were staggered and separated the appendix from the agreement in order to refer it to Moscow where of course, it was, considered "absolutely inadmissible."

One of the relative weaknesses of the Makhnovist movement was its lack of libertarian intellectuals, but it did receive some intermittent aid from outside. This came first from Kharkov and Kursk where the anarchists, inspired by Voline, had in 1918 formed a union called *Nabat* (the tocsin). In 1919 they held a congress at which they declared themselves "categorically and definitely opposed to any form of participation in the soviets, which have become purely political bodies, organised on an authoritarian, centralised, statist basis." The Bolshevik government regarded this statement as a declaration of war and the *Nabat* was forced to give up all its activities. Later, in July, Voline got through to Makhno's headquarters and joined with Peter Arshinov to take charge of the cultural and educational side of the movement. He presided at the congress held in October at Alexandrovsk, where the "General Theses" setting out the doctrine of the "free soviets" were adopted.

Peasant and partisan delegates took part in these congresses. In fact, the civil organisation was an extension of a peasant army of insurrection, practicing guerrilla tactics. This army was remarkably mobile, covering as much as 160 miles in a day, thanks not only to its cavalry but also to its infantry, which travelled in light horse-drawn carts with springs. This army was organised on a specifically libertarian, voluntary basis. The elective principle was applied at all levels and discipline freely agreed to:

the rules of the latter were drawn up by commissions of partisans, then validated by general assemblies, and were strictly observed by all.

Makhno's *franc-tireurs* gave the White armies of intervention plenty of trouble. The units of Bolshevik Red Guards, for their part, were not very effective. They fought only along the railways and never went far from their armoured trains, to which they withdrew at the first reverse, sometimes without taking on board all their own combatants. This did not give much confidence to the peasants who were short of arms and isolated in their villages and so would have been at the mercy of the counter-revolutionaries. Arshinov, the historian of the Makhnovshchina, wrote that "the honour of destroying Denikin's counter-revolution in the autumn of 1919 is principally due to the anarchist insurgents."

But after the units of Red Guards had been absorbed into the Red Army, Makhno persisted in refusing to place his army under the supreme command of the Red Army chief, Trotsky. That great revolutionary therefore believed it necessary to turn upon the insurrectionary movement. On June 4, 1919, he drafted an order banning the forthcoming Makhnovist congress, accusing them of standing out against Soviet power in the Ukraine. He characterized participation in the congress as an act of "high treason" and called for the arrest of the delegates. He refused to give arms to Makhno's partisans, failing in his duty of assisting them, and subsequently accused them of "betrayal" and of allowing themselves to be beaten by the White troupe. The same procedure was followed eighteen years later by the Spanish Stalinists against the anarchist brigades.

The two armies, however, came to an agreement again, on two occasions, when the extreme danger caused by the intervention required them to act together. This occurred first in March 1919, against Denikin, the second during the summer and autumn of 1920, before the menace of the White forces of Wrangel which were finally destroyed by Makhno. But as soon as the supreme danger was past the Red Army returned to military operations against the partisans of Makhno, who returned blow for blow.

At the end of November 1920 those in power went so far as to prepare an ambush. The Bolsheviks invited the officers of the Crimean Makhnovist army to take part in a military council. There they were immediately arrested by the Cheka, the political police, and shot while their partisans were disarmed. At the same time a regular offensive was launched against Gulyai-Polyé. The increasingly unequal struggle between

more attention, because relatively little is known about it. Even within the Republican ranks it was either passed over or under-rated. The civil war submerged it and even today overshadows it in human memory. For example, there is no reference to it in the film *To Die in Madrid*, and yet it is probably the most creative legacy of Spanish anarchism.

The Revolution of July 19, 1936, was a lightning defensive action by the people to counter the *pronunciamento* of Franco. The industrialists and large landowners immediately abandoned their property and took refuge abroad. The workers and peasants took over this abandoned property, the agricultural day labourers decided to continue cultivating the soil on their own. They associated together in "collectives" quite spontaneously. In Catalonia a regional congress of peasants was called together by the CNT on September 5 and agreed to the collectivization of land under trade union management and control. Large estates and the property of fascists were to be socialised, while small landowners would have free choice between individual property and collective property. Legal sanction came later: on October 7, 1936, the Republican central government confiscated without indemnity the property of "persons compromised in the fascist rebellion." This measure was incomplete from a legal point of view, since it only sanctioned a very small part of the take-overs already carried out spontaneously by the people; the peasants had carried out expropriation without distinguishing between those who had taken part in the military *putsch* and those who had not.

In underdeveloped countries where the technical resources necessary for large-scale agriculture are absent, the poor peasant is more attracted by private property, which he has not yet enjoyed, than by socialised agriculture. In Spain, however, libertarian education and a collectivist tradition compensated for technical underdevelopment, countered the individualistic tendencies of the peasants, and turned them directly toward socialism. The latter was the choice of the poorer peasants, while those who were slightly better off, as in Catalonia, clung to individualism. A great majority (90 percent) of land workers chose to join collectives from the very beginning. This decision created a close alliance between the peasants and the city workers, the latter being supporters of the socialisation of the means of production by the very nature of their function. It seems that social consciousness was even higher in the country than in the cities.

The agricultural collectives set themselves up with a twofold management, economic and geographical. The two functions were distinct, but in

military. They reasoned, falsely, that the victory of the Revolution could only be assured by first winning the war and, as Santillan was to admit, they “sacrificed everything” to the war. Berneri argued in vain against the priority of the war as such, and maintained that the defeat of Franco could only be insured by a *revolutionary* war. To put a brake on the Revolution was, in fact, to weaken the strongest arm of the Republic: the active participation of the masses. An even more serious aspect of the matter was that Republican Spain, blockaded by the Western democracies and in grave danger from the advancing fascist troupe, needed Russian military aid in order to survive. This aid was given on a two-fold condition: 1) the Communist Party must profit from it as much as possible, and the anarchists as little as possible; 2) Stalin wanted at any price to prevent the victory of a social revolution in Spain, not only because it would have been libertarian, but because it would have expropriated capital investments belonging to Britain which was presumed to be an ally of the U.S.S.R. in the “democratic alliance” against Hitler. The Spanish Communists went so far as to deny that a revolution had taken place: a legal government was simply trying to overcome a military mutiny. In May 1937, there was a bloody struggle in Barcelona and the workers were disarmed by the forces of order under Stalinist command. In the name of united action against the fascists the anarchists forbade the workers to retaliate. The sad persistence with which they threw themselves into the error of the Popular Front, until the final defeat of the Republic, cannot be dealt with in this short book.

Self-Management in Agriculture

Nevertheless, in the field to which they attached the greatest importance, the economic field, the Spanish anarchists showed themselves much more intransigent and compromised to a much lesser degree. Agricultural and industrial self-management was very largely self-propelled. But as the State grew stronger and the war more and more totalitarian, an increasingly sharp contradiction developed between a bourgeois republic at war and an experiment in communism or rather in libertarian collectivism. In the end, it was self-management which had to retreat, sacrificed on the altar of “antifascism.” According to Peirats, a methodical study of this experiment in self-management has yet to be made; it will be a difficult task, since self-management presented so many variants in different places and at different times. This matter deserves all the

libertarians and authoritarians continued for another nine months. In the end, however, overcome by more numerous and better equipped forces, Makhno had to give up the struggle. He managed to take refuge in Rumania in August 1921, and later reached Paris, where he died much later of disease and poverty. This was the end of the epic story of the Makhnovshchina. According to Peter Arshinov, it was the prototype of an independent movement of the working masses and hence a source of future inspiration for the workers of the world.

Kronstadt

In February-March 1921, the Petrograd workers and the sailors of the Kronstadt fortress were driven to revolt, the aspirations which inspired them being very similar to those of the Makhnovist revolutionary peasants.

The material conditions of urban workers had become intolerable through lack of foodstuffs, fuel, and transport, and any expression of discontent was being crushed by a more and more dictatorial and totalitarian regime. At the end of February strikes broke out in Petrograd, Moscow, and several other large industrial centres. The workers demanded bread and liberty; they marched from one factory to another, closing them down, attracting new contingents of workers into their demonstrations. The authorities replied with gunfire, and the Petrograd workers in turn by a protest meeting attended by 10,000 workers. Kronstadt was an island naval base forty-eight miles from Petrograd in the Gulf of Finland which was frozen during the winter. It was populated by sailors and several thousand workers employed in the naval arsenals. The Kronstadt sailors had been in the vanguard of the revolutionary events of 1905 and 1917. As Trotsky put it, they had been the “pride and glory of the Russian Revolution.” The civilian inhabitants of Kronstadt had formed a free commune, relatively independent of the authorities. In the centre of the fortress an enormous public square served as a popular forum holding as many as 30,000 persons.

In 1921 the sailors certainly did not have the same revolutionary makeup and the same personnel as in 1917; they had been drawn from the peasantry far more than their predecessors; but the militant spirit had remained and as a result of their earlier performance they retained the right to take an active part in workers’ meetings in Petrograd. When the

workers of the former capital went on strike they sent emissaries who were driven back by the forces of order. During two mass meetings held in the main square they took up as their own the demands of the strikers. Sixteen thousand sailors, workers, and soldiers attended the second meeting held on March 1, as did the head of state, Kalinin, president of the central executive. In spite of his presence they passed a resolution demanding that the workers, Red soldiers, and sailors of Petrograd, Kronstadt, and the Petrograd province be called together during the next ten days in a conference independent of the political parties. They also called for the abolition of "political officers," asked that no political party should have privileges, and that the Communist shock detachments in the army and "Communist guards" in the factories should be disbanded.

It was indeed the monopoly of power of the governing party which they were attacking. The Kronstadt rebels dared to call this monopoly an "usurpation." Let the angry sailors speak for themselves, as we skim through the pages of the official journal of this new commune, the *Izvestia* of Kronstadt. According to them, once it had seized power the Communist Party had only one concern: to keep it by fair means or foul. It had lost contact with the masses, and proved its inability to get the country out of a state of general collapse. It had become bureaucratic and lost the confidence of the workers. The soviets, having lost their real power, had been meddled with, taken over, and manipulated, the trade unions were being made instruments of the State. An omnipotent police apparatus weighed on the people, enforcing its laws by gunfire and the use of terror. Economic life had become not the promised socialism, based on free labour, but a harsh state capitalism. The workers were simply wage earners under this national trust, exploited just as before. The irreverent men of Kronstadt went so far as to express doubt about the infallibility of the supreme leaders of the revolution. They mocked Trotsky, and even Lenin, irreverently. Their immediate demands were the restoration of all freedoms and free elections to all the organs of soviet democracy, but beyond this they were looking to a more distant objective with a clearly anarchist content: a "third revolution."

The rebels did, however, intend to keep within the framework of the Revolution and undertook to watch over the achievements of the social revolution. They proclaimed that they had nothing in common with those who would have wished to "return to the knout of Czarism," and though they did not conceal their intention of depriving the "Communists" of power, this was not to be for the purpose of "returning the workers and

entitled "The Futility of Government," suggesting that the economic expropriation which was taking place would lead *ipso facto* to the "liquidation of the bourgeois State, which would die of asphyxiation."

Anarchists in Government

This underestimation of government, however, was very rapidly reversed and the Spanish anarchists suddenly became governmentalists. Soon after the Revolution of July 19 in Barcelona, an interview took place between the anarchist activist Garcia Oliver and the president of the Catalonian government, the bourgeois liberal Companys. He was ready to resign but was kept in office. The CNT and the FAI refused to exercise an anarchist "dictatorship," and declared their willingness to collaborate with other left groupings. By mid-September, the CNT was calling on the prime minister of the central government, Largo Caballero, to set up a fifteen-member "Defence Council" in which they would be satisfied with five places. This was as good as accepting the idea of participating in a cabinet under another name.

The anarchists ended up by accepting portfolios in two governments: first in Catalonia and subsequently in Madrid. The Italian anarchist, Camillo Berneri, was in Barcelona and, on April 14, 1937, wrote an open letter to his comrade, minister Federica Montseny, reproaching the anarchists with being in the government only as hostages and fronts "for politicians who flirt with the [class] enemy."¹⁴ It is true that the State with which the Spanish anarchists had agreed to become integrated remained a bourgeois State whose officials and political personnel often had but little loyalty to the republic. What was the reason for this change of heart?

The Spanish Revolution had taken place as the consequence of a proletarian counterattack against a counter-revolutionary *coup d'état*. From the beginning the Revolution took on the character of self-defence, a military character, because of the necessity to oppose the cohorts of Colonel Franco with anti-fascist militia. Faced by a common danger, the anarchists thought that they had no choice but to join with all the other trade-union forces, and even political parties, which were ready to stand against the Franco rebellion. As the fascist powers increased their support for Franco, the anti-fascist struggle degenerated into a real war, a total war of the classical type. The libertarians could only take part in it by abandoning more and more of their principles, both political and

in accelerating the progress of a revolution which had, in fact, already begun. In Madrid, in Barcelona, in Valencia particularly, in almost every big city but Seville, the people took the offensive, besieged barracks, set up barricades in the streets and occupied strategic positions. The workers rushed from all sides to answer the call of their trade unions. They assaulted the strongholds of the Franco forces, with no concern for their own lives, with naked hands and uncovered breasts. They succeeded in taking guns from the enemy and persuading soldiers to join their ranks.

Thanks to this popular fury the military *putsch* was checked within the first twenty-four hours; and then the social revolution began quite spontaneously. It went forward unevenly, of course, in different regions and cities, but with the greatest impetuosity in Catalonia and, especially, Barcelona. When the established authorities recovered from their astonishment, they found that they simply no longer existed. The State, the police, the army, the administration, all seemed to have lost their *raison d'être*. The Civil Guard had been driven off or liquidated and the victorious workers were maintaining order. The most urgent task was to organise food supplies: committees distributed foodstuffs from barricades transformed into canteens, and then opened communal restaurants. Local administration was organised by neighbourhood committees, and war committees saw to the departure of the workers' militia to the front. The trade-union centre had become the real town hall. This was no longer the "defence of the republic" against fascism, it was the Revolution — a Revolution which, unlike the Russian one, did not have to create all its organs of authority from scratch: the election of soviets was made unnecessary by the omnipresent anarcho-syndicalist organisation with its various committees at the base. In Catalonia the CNT and its conscious minority, the FAI, were more powerful than the authorities, which had become mere phantoms.

In Barcelona especially, there was nothing to prevent the workers' committees from seizing *de jure* the power which they were already exercising *de facto*. But they did not do so. For decades, Spanish anarchism had been warning the people against the deceptions of "politics" and emphasizing the primacy of the "economic." It had constantly sought to divert the people from a bourgeois democratic revolution in order to lead them to the social revolution through direct action. On the brink of the Revolution, the anarchists argued something like this: let the politicians do what they will; we, the "apolitical," will lay hands on the economy. On September 3, 1936, the *CNT-FAI Information Bulletin* published an article

peasants to slavery." Moreover, they did not cut off all possibility of co-operation with the regime, still hoping "to be able to find a common language." Finally, the freedom of expression they were demanding was not to be for just anybody, but only for sincere believers in the Revolution: anarchists and "left socialists" (a formula which would exclude social democrats or Mensheviks).

The audacity of Kronstadt was much more than a Lenin or a Trotsky could endure. The Bolshevik leaders had once and for all identified the Revolution with the Communist Party, and anything which went against this myth must, in their eyes, appear as "counter-revolutionary." They saw the whole of Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy in danger. Kronstadt frightened them the more, since they were governing in the name of the proletariat and, suddenly, their authority was being disputed by a movement which they knew to be authentically proletarian. Lenin, moreover, held the rather simplistic idea that a Czarist restoration was the only alternative to the dictatorship of his own party. The statesmen of the Kremlin in 1921 argued in the same way as those, much later, in the autumn of 1956: Kronstadt was the forerunner of Budapest.

Trotsky, the man with the "iron fist," undertook to be personally responsible for the repression. "If you persist, you will be shot down from cover like partridges," he announced to the "mutineers." The sailors were treated as "White Guardists," accomplices of the interventionist Western powers, and of the "Paris Bourse." They were to be reduced to submission by force of arms. It was in vain that the anarchists Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, who had found asylum in the fatherland of the workers after being deported from the United States, sent a pathetic letter to Zinoviev, insisting that the use of force would do "incalculable damage to the social revolution" and adjuring the "Bolshevik comrades" to settle the conflict through fraternal negotiation. The Petrograd workers could not come to the aid of Kronstadt because they were already terrorized, and subject to martial law.

An expeditionary force was set up composed of carefully hand-picked troops, for many Red soldiers were unwilling to fire on their class brothers. This force was put under the command of a former Czarist officer, the future Marshall Tukachevsky. The bombardment of the fortress began on March 7. Under the heading "Let the world know!" the besieged inhabitants launched a last appeal: "May the blood of the innocent be on the head of the Communists, mad, drunk and enraged with power. Long live the power of the soviets!" The attacking force moved across the

frozen Gulf of Finland on March 18 and quelled the “rebellion” in an orgy of killing.

The anarchists had played no part in this affair. However, the revolutionary committee of Kronstadt had invited two libertarians to join it: Yarchouk (the founder of the Kronstadt soviet of 1917) and Voline; in vain, for they were at the time imprisoned by the Bolsheviks. Ida Mett, historian of the Kronstadt revolt (in *La Commune de Cronstadt*), commented that “the anarchist influence was brought to bear only to the extent to which anarchism itself propagated the idea of workers’ democracy.” The anarchists did not play any direct part in events, but they associated themselves with them. Voline later wrote: “Kronstadt was the first entirely independent attempt of the people to free themselves of all control and carry out the social revolution: this attempt was made directly,... by the working masses themselves, without ‘political shepherds,’ without ‘leaders,’ or ‘tutors.’ Alexander Berkman added: “Kronstadt blew sky high the myth of the proletarian State; it proved that the dictatorship of the Communist Party and the Revolution were really incompatible.”

Anarchism Living and Dead

Although the anarchists played no direct part in the Kronstadt rising, the regime took advantage of crushing it to make an end of an ideology which continued to frighten them. A few weeks earlier, on February 8, the aged Kropotkin had died on Russian soil, and his remains had been given an imposing funeral, which was followed by an immense convoy of about 100,000 people. Over the heads of the crowd, among the red flags, one could see the black banners of the anarchist groups inscribed in letters of fire: “Where there is authority there is no freedom.” According to Kropotkin’s biographers, this was “the last great demonstration against Bolshevik tyranny, and many took part more to demand freedom than to praise the great anarchist.”

Hundreds of anarchists were arrested after Kronstadt, and only a few months later, the libertarian Fanny Baron and eight of her comrades were shot in the cellars of the Cheka prison in Moscow. Militant anarchism had received a fatal blow. But outside Russia, the anarchists who had lived through the Russian Revolution undertook an enormous labour of criticism and doctrinal revision which reinvigorated libertarian thought and made it more concrete. As early as September 1920, the congress

of work, new manufacturing processes, new agricultural techniques. It distributes labour from one region to another, from one branch of the economy to another.

There is no doubt that Santillan learned a great deal from the Russian Revolution. On the one hand, it taught him to beware of the danger of a resurgence of the state and bureaucratic apparatus; but, on the other, it taught him that a victorious revolution cannot avoid passing through intermediate economic forms,¹³ in which there survives for a time what Marx and Lenin call “bourgeois law.” For instance, there could be no question of abolishing the banking and monetary system at one fell swoop. These institutions must be transformed and used as a temporary means of exchange to keep social life moving and prepare the way to new economic forms.

Santillan was to play an important part in the Spanish Revolution: he became, in turn, a member of the central committee of the anti-fascist militia (end of July 1936), a member of the Catalanian Economic Council (August 11), and Economics Minister of the Catalanian government (mid-December).

An “Apolitical” Revolution

The Spanish Revolution was, thus, relatively well prepared, both in the minds of libertarian thinkers and in the consciousness of the people. It is therefore not surprising that the Spanish Right regarded the electoral victory of the Popular Front in February 1936 as the beginning of a revolution.

In fact, the masses soon broke out of the narrow framework of their success at the ballot box. They ignored the rules of the parliamentary game and did not even wait for a government to be formed to set the prisoners free. The farmers ceased to pay rent to the landlords, the agricultural day labourers occupied land and began to cultivate it, the villagers got rid of their municipal councils and hastened to administer themselves, the railwaymen went on strike to enforce a demand for the nationalization of the railways. The building workers of Madrid called for workers’ control, the first step toward socialisation.

The military chiefs, under the leadership of Colonel Franco, responded to the symptoms of revolution by a *putsch*. But they only succeeded

understanding of economic problems than had appeared in subsequent periods.

Santillan was not backward, but a true man of his times. He was aware that “the tremendous development of modern industry has created a whole series of new problems, which it was impossible to foresee at an earlier time.” There is no question of going back to the Roman chariot or to primitive forms of artisan production. Economic insularity, a parochial way of thinking, the *patria chica* (little fatherland) dear to the hearts of rural Spaniards nostalgic for a golden age, the small-scale and medieval “free commune” of Kropotkin — all these must be relegated to a museum of antiquities. They are the vestiges of out-of-date communalist conceptions. No “free communes” can exist from the economic point of view: “Our ideal is the commune which is associated, federated, integrated into the total economy of the country, and of other countries in a state of revolution.” To replace the single owner by a hydra-headed owner is not collectivism, is not self-management. The land, the factories, the mines, the means of transport are the product of the work of all and must be at the service of all. Nowadays the economy is neither local, nor even national, but world-wide. The characteristic feature of modern life is the cohesion of all the productive and distributive forces. “A socialised economy, directed and planned, is an imperative necessity and corresponds to the trend of development of the modern economic world.”

Santillan foresaw the function of co-ordinating and planning as being carried out by a federal economic council, which would not be a political authority, but simply an organ of co-ordination, an economic and administrative regulator. Its directives would come from below, from the factory councils federated into trade union councils for different branches of industry, and into local economic councils. The federal council is thus at the receiving end of two chains of authority, one based on locality and the other on occupation. The organisations at the base provide it with statistics so that it will be aware of the real economic situation at any given moment. In this way it can spot major deficiencies, and determine the sectors in which new industries or crops are most urgently required. “The policemen will no longer be necessary when the supreme authority lies in figures and statistics.” In such a system state coercion has no utility, is sterile, even impossible. The federal council sees to the propagation of new norms, the growth of interdependence between the regions and the formation of national solidarity. It stimulates research into new methods

of the Confederation of Anarchist Organisations of the Ukraine, Nabat, had categorically rejected the expression “dictatorship of the proletariat,” seeing that it led inevitably to dictatorship over the masses by that fraction of the proletariat entrenched in the Party, by officials, and a handful of leaders. Just before he died Kropotkin had issued a “Message to the Workers of the West” in which he sorrowfully denounced the rise of a “formidable bureaucracy”: “It seems to me that this attempt to build a communist republic on the basis of a strongly centralised state, under the iron law of the dictatorship of one party, has ended in a terrible fiasco. Russia teaches us how not to impose communism.”

A pathetic appeal from the Russian anarcho-syndicalists to the world proletariat was published in the January 7–14, 1921, issue of the French journal *Le Libertaire*: “Comrades, put an end to the domination of your bourgeoisie just as we have done here. But do not repeat our errors; do not let state communism establish itself in your countries!” In 1920 the German anarchist, Rudolf Rocker, who later lived and died in the United States, wrote *Die Bankrotte des Russischen Staatskommunismus* (The Bankruptcy of State Communism), which appeared in 1921. This was the first analysis to be made of the degeneration of the Russian Revolution. In his view the famous “dictatorship of the proletariat” was not the expression of the will of a single class, but the dictatorship of a party pretending to speak in the name of a class and kept in power by force of bayonets. “Under the dictatorship of the proletariat in Russia a new class has developed, the ‘commissarocracy,’ which oppresses the broad masses just as much as the old regime used to do.” By systematically subordinating all the factors in social life to an all-powerful government endowed with every prerogative, “one could not fail to end up with the hierarchy of officials which proved fatal to the development of the Russian Revolution.” “Not only did the Bolsheviks borrow the state apparatus from the previous society, but they have given it an all-embracing power which no other government arrogates to itself.”

In June 1922 the group of Russian anarchists exiled in Germany published a revealing little book under the names of A. Gorielik, A. Komoff, and Voline: *Repression de l’Anarchisme en Russie Soviétique* (The Repression of Anarchism in Soviet Russia). Voline made a French translation which appeared at the beginning of 1923. It contained an alphabetical list of the martyrs of Russian anarchism. In 1921–1922, Alexander Berkman, and in 1922–1923, Emma Goldman published a succession of pamphlets on the dramatic events which they had witnessed in Russia.

In their turn, Peter Arshinov and Nestor Makhno himself, escaped Makhnovites who had taken refuge in the West, published their evidence.

The two great libertarian classics on the Russian Revolution, *The Guillotine at Work: Twenty Years of Terror in Russia* by G. P. Maximoff and *The Unknown Revolution* by Voline, came much later, during the Second World War, and were written with the maturity of thought made possible by the passage of the years.

For Maximoff, whose account appeared in America, the lessons of the past brought to him a sure expectation of a better future. The new ruling class in the U.S.S.R. cannot and will not be permanent, and it will be succeeded by libertarian socialism. Objective conditions are driving this development forward: "Is it conceivable... that the workers might desire the return of the capitalists to their enterprises? Never! for they are rebelling specifically against exploitation by the State and its bureaucrats." What the workers desire is to replace this authoritarian management of production with their own factory councils, and to unite these councils into one vast national federation. What they desire is workers' self-management. In the same way, the peasants have understood that there can be no question of returning to an individualist economy. Collective agriculture is the only solution, together with the collaboration of the rural collectives with the factory councils and trade unions: in short, the further development of the program of the October Revolution in complete freedom.

Voline strongly asserted that any experiment on the Russian model could only lead to "state capitalism based on an odious exploitation of the masses," the "worst form of capitalism and one which has absolutely nothing to do with the progress of humanity toward a socialist society." It could do nothing but promote "the dictatorship of a single party which leads unavoidably to the repression of all freedom of speech, press, organisation, and action, even for revolutionary tendencies, with the sole exception of the party in power," and to a "social inquisition" which suffocates "the very breath of the Revolution." Voline went on to maintain that Stalin "did not fall from the moon." Stalin and Stalinism are, in his view, the logical consequence of the authoritarian system founded and established between 1918 and 1921. "This is the lesson the world must learn from the tremendous and decisive Bolshevik experiment: a lesson which gives powerful support to the libertarian thesis and which events will soon make clear to the understanding of all those who grieve, suffer, think, and struggle."

shortcomings of the individual, in the moral field as well as in his role as producer, were to be investigated by popular assemblies which would make every effort to find a just solution in each separate case.

Libertarian communism was unwilling to recognize the need for any penal methods other than medical treatment and re-education. If, as the result of some pathological condition, an individual were to damage the harmony which should reign among his equals he would be treated for his unbalanced condition, at the same time that his ethical and social sense would be stimulated. If erotic passions were to go beyond the bounds imposed by respect for the freedom of others, the Saragossa congress recommended a "change of air," believing it to be as good for physical illness as for lovesickness. The trade-union federation really doubted that such extreme behaviour would still occur in surroundings of sexual freedom.

When the CNT congress adopted the Saragossa program in May 1936, no one really expected that the time to apply it would come only two months later. In practice the socialisation of the land and of industry which was to follow the revolutionary victory of July 19 differed considerably from this idyllic program. While the word "commune" occurred in every line, the term actually used for socialist production units was to be *collectividades*. This was not simply a change of terminology: the creators of Spanish self-management looked to other sources for their inspiration.

Two months before the Saragossa congress Diego Abad de Santillan had published a book, *El Organismo Económico de la Revolución* (The Economic Organisation of the Revolution). This outline of an economic structure drew a somewhat different inspiration from the Saragossa program.

Unlike many of his contemporaries, Santillan was not a rigid and sterile disciple of the great anarchists of the nineteenth century. He regretted that anarchist literature of the previous twenty-five or thirty years should have paid so little attention to the concrete problems of a new economy, and that it had not opened up original perspectives on the future. On the other hand, anarchism had produced a superabundance of works, in every language, going over and over an entirely abstract conception of liberty. Santillan compared this indigestible body of work with the reports presented to the national and international congresses of the First International, and the latter seemed to him the more brilliant for the comparison. He thought they had shown a very much better

Active workers were to receive a producer's card on which would be recorded the amount of labour performed, evaluated in daily units, which could be exchanged for goods. The inactive members of the population would receive simply a consumer's card. There was to be no general norm: the autonomy of the communes was to be respected. If they thought fit, they could establish a different system of internal exchange, on the sole condition that it did not injure the interests of the other communes. The right to communal autonomy would, however, not obviate the duty of collective solidarity within the provincial and regional federations of communes.

One of the major concerns of the members of the Saragossa congress was the cultivation of the mind. Throughout their lives all men were to be assured of access to science, art, and research of all kinds, provided only that these activities remained compatible with production of material resources. Society was no longer to be divided into manual workers and intellectuals: all were to be, simultaneously, both one and the other. The practice of such parallel activities would insure a healthy balance in human nature. Once his day's work as a producer was finished the individual was to be the absolute master of his own time. The CNT foresaw that spiritual needs would begin to be expressed in a far more pressing way as soon as the emancipated society had satisfied material needs.

Spanish anarcho-syndicalism had long been concerned to safeguard the autonomy of what it called "affinity groups." There were many adepts of naturism and vegetarianism among its members, especially among the poor peasants of the south. Both these ways of living were considered suitable for the transformation of the human being in preparation for a libertarian society. At the Saragossa congress the members did not forget to consider the fate of groups of naturists and nudists, "unsuited to industrialization." As these groups would be unable to supply all their own needs, the congress anticipated that their delegates to the meetings of the confederation of communes would be able to negotiate special economic agreements with the other agricultural and industrial communes. Does this make us smile? On the eve of a vast, bloody, social transformation, the CNT did not think it foolish to try to meet the infinitely varied aspirations of individual human beings.

With regard to crime and punishment the Saragossa congress followed the teachings of Bakunin, stating that social injustice is the main cause of crime and, consequently, once this has been removed offenses will rarely be committed. The congress affirmed that man is not naturally evil. The

■ Anarchism in the Italian Factory Councils

The Italian anarchists followed the example of events in Russia, and went along with the partisans of soviet power in the period immediately after the Great War. The Russian Revolution had been received with deep sympathy by the Italian workers, especially by their vanguard, the metal workers of the northern part of the country. On February 20, 1919, the Italian Federation of Metal Workers (FIOM) won a contract providing for the election of "internal commissions" in the factories. They subsequently tried to transform these organs of workers' representation into factory councils with a managerial function, by conducting a series of strikes and occupations of the factories.

The last of these, at the end of August 1920, originated in a lockout by employers. The metal workers as a whole decided to continue production on their own. They tried persuasion and constraint alternately, but failed to win the co-operation of the engineers and supervisory personnel. The management of the factories had, therefore, to be conducted by technical and administrative workers' committees. Self-management went quite a long way: in the early period assistance was obtained from the banks, but when it was withdrawn the self-management system issued its own money to pay the workers' wages. Very strict self-discipline was required, the use of alcoholic beverages forbidden, and armed patrols were organised for self-defence. Very close solidarity was established between the factories under self-management. Ores and coal were put into a common pool, and shared out equitably.

The reformist wing of the trade unions opted for compromise with the employers. After a few weeks of managerial occupation, the workers had to leave the factories in exchange for a promise to extend workers' control, a promise which was not kept. The revolutionary left wing, composed of anarchists and left socialists, cried treason, in vain.

This left wing had a theory, a spokesman, and a publication. The weekly *L'Ordine Nuovo* (The New Order) first appeared in Turin on May 1, 1919. It was edited by a left socialist, Antonio Gramsci, assisted by a professor of philosophy at Turin University with anarchist ideas, writing under the pseudonym of Carlo Petri, and also of a whole nucleus of Turin libertarians. In the factories, the *Ordine Nuovo* group was supported by a number of people, especially the anarcho-syndicalist militants of the metal trades, Pietro Ferrero and Maurizio Garino. The manifesto of *Ordine Nuovo* was signed by socialists and libertarians together, agreeing to regard the factory councils as “organs suited to future communist management of both the individual factory and the whole society.”

Ordine Nuovo tended to replace traditional trade unionism by the structure of factory councils. It was not entirely hostile to trade unions, which it regarded as the “strong backbone of the great proletarian body.” However, in the style of Malatesta in 1907, it was critical of the decadence of a bureaucratic and reformist trade-union movement, which had become an integral part of capitalist society; it denounced the inability of the trade unions to act as instruments of the proletarian revolution.

On the other hand, *Ordine Nuovo* attributed every virtue to the factory councils. It regarded them as the means of unifying the working class, the only organ which could raise the workers above the special interests of the different trades and link the “organised” with the “unorganised.” It gave the councils credit for generating a producers’ psychology, preparing the workers for self-management. Thanks to them the conquest of the factory became a concrete prospect for the lowliest worker, within his reach. The councils were regarded as a prefiguration of socialist society.

The Italian anarchists were of a more realistic and less verbose turn of mind than Antonio Gramsci, and sometimes indulged in ironic comment on the “thaumaturgical” excesses of the sermons in favour of factory councils. Of course, they were aware of their merits, but stopped short of hyperbole. Gramsci denounced the reformism of the trade unions, not without reason, but the anarcho-syndicalists pointed out that in a non-revolutionary period the factory councils, too, could degenerate into organs of class collaboration. Those most concerned with trade unionism also thought it unjust that *Ordine Nuovo* indiscriminately condemned not only reformist trade unionism but the revolutionary trade unionism of their centre, the Italian Syndicalist Union.⁶

Theory

The Spanish anarchists continuously published the major and even minor works of international anarchism in the Spanish language. They thus preserved from neglect, and even perhaps absolute destruction, the traditions of a socialism both revolutionary and free. Augustin Souchy was a German anarcho-syndicalist writer who put himself at the service of Spanish anarchism. According to him, “the problem of the social revolution was continuously and systematically discussed in their trade-union and group meetings, in their papers, their pamphlets, and their books.”

The proclamation of the Spanish Republic, in 1931, led to an outburst of “anticipatory” writings: Peirats lists about fifty titles, stressing that there were many more, and emphasizes that this “obsession with revolutionary construction” led to a proliferation of writings which contributed greatly to preparing the people for a revolutionary road. James Guillaume’s pamphlet of 1876, *Idees sur L’Organisation Sociale*, was known to the Spanish anarchists because it had been largely quoted in Pierre Besnard’s book, *Les Syndicats Ouvriers et la Révolution Sociale*, which appeared in Paris in 1930. Gaston Leval had emigrated to the Argentine and in 1931 published *Social Reconstruction in Spain*, which gave direct inspiration to the important work of Diego Abad de Santillan, to be discussed below.

In 1932, the country doctor Isaac Puente published a rather naive and idealistic outline of libertarian communism; its ideas were taken up by the Saragossa congress of the CNT in May 1936. Puente himself had become the moving spirit of an insurrectionary committee in Aragon in 1933.

The Saragossa program of 1936 defined the operation of a direct village democracy with some precision. A communal council was to be elected by a general assembly of the inhabitants and formed of representatives of various technical committees. The general assembly was to meet whenever the interests of the commune required it, on the request of members of the communal council or on the direct demand of the inhabitants. The various responsible positions would have no executive or bureaucratic character. The incumbents (with the exception of a few technicians and statisticians) would carry out their duties as producers, like everybody else, meeting at the end of the day’s work to discuss matters of detail which did not require decisions by the general assembly.

favourite slogan was the “free commune.” Various practical experiments in libertarian communism took place during the peasant insurrections which followed the foundation of the Republic in 1931. By free mutual agreement some groups of small-peasant proprietors decided to work together, to divide the profits into equal parts, and to provide for their own consumption by “drawing from the common pool.” They dismissed the municipal administrations and replaced them by elected committees, naively believing that they could free themselves from the surrounding society, taxation, and military service.

Bakunin was the founder of the Spanish collectivist, syndicalist, and internationalist workers’ movement. Those anarchists who were more realistic, more concerned with the present than the golden age, tended to follow him and his disciple Ricardo Mella. They were concerned with economic unification and believed that a long transitional period would be necessary during which it would be wiser to reward labour according to the hours worked and not according to need. They envisaged the economic structure of the future as a combination of local trade-union groupings and federations of branches of industry.

For a long time, the *syndicatos unicos* (local unions) predominated within the CNT. These groups, close to the workers, free from all corporate egoism, served as a physical and spiritual home for the proletariat.¹¹ Training in these local unions had fused the ideas of the trade union and the commune in the minds of rank-and-file militants.

The theoretical debate in which the syndicalists opposed the anarchists at the International Anarchist Congress of 1907¹² was revived in practice to divide the Spanish anarcho-syndicalists. The struggle for day-to-day demands within the CNT had created a reformist tendency in the face of which the FAI (*Federación Anarquista Ibérica*), founded in 1927, undertook the defence of the integrity of anarchist doctrines. In 1931 a “Manifesto of the Thirty” was put out by the syndicalist tendency condemning the “dictatorship” of minorities within the trade-union movement, and declaring the independence of trade unionism and its claim to be sufficient unto itself. Some trade unions left the CNT and a reformist element persisted within that trade-union centre even after the breach had been healed on the eve of the July 1936 Revolution.

Lastly, and most important, the anarchists were somewhat uneasy about the ambiguous and contradictory interpretation which *Ordine Nuovo* put on the prototype of the factory councils, the soviets. Certainly, Gramsci often used the term “libertarian” in his writings, and had crossed swords with the inveterate authoritarian Angelo Tasca, who propounded an undemocratic concept of the “dictatorship of the proletariat” which would reduce the factory councils to mere instruments of the Communist Party, and who even attacked Gramsci’s thinking as “Proudhonian.” Gramsci did not know enough about events in Russia to distinguish between the free soviets of the early months of the revolution and the tamed soviets of the Bolshevik State. This led him to use ambiguous formulations. He saw the factory council as the “model of the proletarian State,” which he expected to be incorporated into a world system: the Communist International. He thought he could reconcile Bolshevism with the withering away of the State and a democratic interpretation of the “dictatorship of the proletariat.”

The Italian anarchists had begun by welcoming the Russian soviets with uncritical enthusiasm. On June 1, 1919, Camillo Berneri, one of their number, had published an article entitled “Auto-Democracy” hailing the Bolshevik regime as “the most practical experiment in integral democracy on the largest scale yet attempted,” and “the antithesis of centralising state socialism.”

However, a year later, at the congress of the Italian Anarchist Union, Maurizio Garino was talking quite differently: the soviets which had been set up in Russia by the Bolsheviks were materially different from workers’ self-management as conceived by the anarchists. They formed the “basis of a new State, inevitably centralised and authoritarian.”

The Italian anarchists and the friends of Gramsci were subsequently to follow divergent paths. The latter at first maintained that the Socialist Party, like the trade unions, was an organisation integrated into the bourgeois system and that it was, consequently, neither necessary nor desirable to support it. They then made an “exception” for the communist groups within the Socialist Party. After the split at Livorno on January 21, 1921, these groups formed the Italian Communist Party, affiliated with the Communist International.

The Italian libertarians, for their part, had to abandon some of their illusions and pay more attention to a prophetic letter written to them by Malatesta as early as the summer of 1919. This warned them against “a

new government which has set itself up [in Russia] above the Revolution in order to bridle it and subject it to the purposes of a particular party... or rather the leaders of a party." The old revolutionary argued prophetically that it was a dictatorship,

with its decrees, its penal sanctions, its executive agents, and, above all, its armed forces which have served to defend the Revolution against its external enemies, but tomorrow will serve to impose the will of the dictators on the workers, to check the course of the Revolution, to consolidate newly established interests, and to defend a newly privileged class against the masses. Lenin, Trotsky, and their companions are certainly sincere revolutionaries, but they are preparing the governmental cadres which will enable their successors to profit by the Revolution and kill it. They will be the first victims of their own methods.

Two years later, the Italian Anarchist Union met in congress at Ancona on November 2–4, 1921, and refused to recognize the Russian government as a representative of the Revolution, instead denouncing it as "the main enemy of the Revolution," "the oppressor and exploiter of the proletariat in whose name it pretends to exercise authority." And the libertarian writer Luigi Fabbri in the same year concluded that "a critical study of the Russian Revolution is of immense importance... because the Western revolutionaries can direct their actions in such a way as to avoid the errors which have been brought to light by the Russian experience."

The basis for a libertarian revolution was pretty well laid in the consciousness of the popular masses and in the thinking of libertarian theoreticians. According to José Peirats, anarcho-syndicalism was, "because of its psychology, its temperament, and its reactions, the most Spanish thing in all Spain." It was the double product of a compound development. It suited both the backward state of a poorly developed country, in which rural living conditions remained archaic, and also the growth of a modern proletariat born of industrialization in certain areas. The unique feature of Spanish anarchism was a strange mixture of past and future. The symbiosis between these two tendencies was far from perfect.

In 1918, the CNT had more than a million trade-union members. In the industrial field it was strong in Catalonia, and rather less so in Madrid and Valencia;¹⁰ but it also had deep roots in the countryside, among the poor peasants who preserved a tradition of village communalism, tinged with local patriotism and a co-operative spirit. In 1898 the author Joaquin Costa had described the survivals of this agrarian collectivism. Many villages still had common property from which they allocated plots to the landless, or which they used together with other villages for pasturage or other communal purposes. In the region of large-scale landownership, in the south, the agricultural day labourers preferred socialisation to the division of the land.

Moreover, many decades of anarchist propaganda in the countryside, in the form of small popular pamphlets, had prepared the basis for agrarian collectivism. The CNT was especially powerful among the peasants of the south (Andalusia), of the east (area of the Levant around Valencia), and of the northeast (Aragon, around Saragossa).

This double base, both industrial and rural, had turned the libertarian communism of Spanish anarcho-syndicalism in somewhat divergent directions, the one communalist, the other syndicalist. The communalism was expressed in a more local, more rural spirit, one might almost say: more southern, for one of its principal bastions was in Andalusia. Syndicalism, on the other hand, was more urban and unitarian in spirit — more northerly, too, since its main centre was Catalonia. Libertarian theoreticians were somewhat torn and divided on this subject.

Some had given their hearts to Kropotkin and his erudite but simplistic idealization of the communes of the Middle Ages which they identified with the Spanish tradition of the primitive peasant community. Their

The principles of the Communist Party are exactly the opposite of those which it was affirming and proclaiming during the first hours of the Revolution. The principles, methods, and final objectives of the Communist Party are diametrically opposed to those of the Russian Revolution.... As soon as the Communist Party had obtained absolute power, it decreed that anyone who did not think as a communist (that is, according to its own definition) had no right to think at all.... The Communist Party has denied to the Russian proletariat all the sacred rights which the Revolution had conferred upon it.

Pestaña, further, cast doubt on the validity of the Communist International: a simple extension of the Russian Communist Party, it could not represent the Revolution in the eyes of the world proletariat.

The national congress of the CNT held at Saragossa in June 1922 received this report and decided to withdraw from the trade union front, the Red Trade-Union International. It was also decided to send delegates to an international anarcho-syndicalist conference held in Berlin in December, from which resulted a "Workers' International Association." This was not a real international, since aside from the important Spanish group, it had the support of very small numbers in other countries.⁹

From the time of this breach Moscow bore an inveterate hatred for Spanish anarchism. Joaquin Maurin and Andres Nin were disowned by the CNT and left it to found the Spanish Communist Party. In May 1924 Maurin published a pamphlet declaring war to the death on his former comrades: "The complete elimination of anarchism is a difficult task in a country in which the workers' movement bears the mark of fifty years of anarchist propaganda. *But we shall get them.*" A threat which was later carried out.

The Anarchist Tradition in Spain

The Spanish anarchists had thus reamed the lesson of the Russian Revolution very early, and this played a part in inspiring them to prepare an antinomian revolution. The degeneration of authoritarian communism increased their determination to bring about the victory of a libertarian form of communism. They had been cruelly disappointed in the Soviet mirage and, in the words of Diego Abad de Santillan, saw in anarchism "the last hope of renewal during this sombre period."

■ Anarchism in the Spanish Revolution

The Soviet Mirage

The time lag between subjective awareness and objective reality is a constant in history. The Russian anarchists and those who witnessed the Russian drama drew a lesson as early as 1920 which only became known, admitted, and shared years later. The first proletarian revolution in triumph over a sixth of the globe had such prestige and glitter that the working-class movement long remained hypnotized by so imposing an example. "Councils" in the image of the Russian soviets sprang up all over the place, not only in Italy, as we have seen, but in Germany, Austria, and Hungary. In Germany the system of councils was the essential item in the program of the Spartacus League of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht.

In 1919 the president of the Bavarian Republic, Kurt Eisner, was assassinated in Munich. A Soviet Republic was then proclaimed under the leadership of the libertarian writer Gustav Landauer, who was in turn assassinated by the counter-revolution. His friend and companion in arms, the anarchist poet Erich Muhsam, composed a "*Räte-Marseillaise*" (Marseillaise of the Councils), in which the workers were called to arms not to form battalions but councils on the model of those of Russia and Hungary, and thus to make an end of the centuries-old world of slavery.

However, in the spring of 1920 a German opposition group advocating *Räte-Kommunismus* (Communism of the councils) left the Communist Party to form a German Communist Workers Party (KAPD).⁷ The idea of councils inspired a similar group in Holland led by Hermann Gorter and Anton Pannekoek. During a lively polemic with Lenin, the former was not afraid to reply, in pure libertarian style, to the infallible leader of the Russian Revolution: "We are still looking for real leaders who will not seek to dominate the masses and will not betray them. As long as we do not have them we want everything to be done from the bottom

upward and by the dictatorship of the masses over themselves. If I have a mountain guide and he leads me over a precipice, I prefer to do without." Pannekoek proclaimed that the councils were a form of self-government which would replace the forms of government of the old world; just like Gramsci he could see no difference between the latter and "Bolshevik dictatorship."

In many places, especially Bavaria, Germany, and Holland, the anarchists played a positive part in the practical and theoretical development of the system of councils.

Similarly, in Spain the anarcho-syndicalists were dazzled by the October Revolution. The Madrid congress of the CNT ⁸ (December 10–20, 1919), adopted a statement which stated that "the epic of the Russian people has electrified the world proletariat." By acclamation, "without reticence, as a beauty gives herself to the man she loves," the congress voted provisionally to join the Communist International because of its revolutionary character, expressing the hope, however, that a universal workers' congress would be called to determine the basis upon which a true workers' international could be built. A few timid voices of dissent were heard, however: the Russian Revolution was a "political" revolution and did not incorporate the libertarian ideal. The congress took no notice and decided to send a delegation to the Second Congress of the Third International which opened in Moscow on July 15, 1920.

By then, however, the love match was already on the way to breaking up. The delegate representing Spanish anarcho-syndicalism was pressed to take part in establishing an international revolutionary trade-union centre, but he jibed when presented with a text which referred to the "conquest of political power," "the dictatorship of the proletariat," and proposed an organic relationship between the trade unions and the communist parties which thinly disguised a relationship of subordination of the former to the latter. In the forthcoming meetings of the Communist International the trade-union organisations of the different nations would be represented by the delegates of the communist parties of their respective countries; and the projected Red Trade-Union International would be openly controlled by the Communist International and its national sections. Angel Pestaña, the Spanish spokesman, set forth the libertarian conception of the social revolution and exclaimed: "The revolution is not, and cannot be, the work of a party. The most a party can do is to foment a *coup d'état*. But a *coup d'état* is not a revolution." He concluded: "You tell us that the revolution cannot take place without

a communist party and that without the conquest of political power emancipation is not possible, and that without dictatorship one cannot destroy the bourgeoisie: all these assertions are absolutely gratuitous."

In view of the doubts expressed by the CNT delegate, the communists made a show of adjusting the resolution with regard to the "dictatorship of the proletariat." The Russian trade-union leader Lozovsky nevertheless ultimately published the text in its original form without the modifications introduced by Pestaña, but bearing his signature. From the rostrum Trotsky had laid into the Spanish delegate for nearly an hour but the president declared the debate closed when Pestaña asked for time to reply to these attacks.

Pestaña spent several months in Moscow and left Russia on September 6, 1920, profoundly disillusioned by all that he had observed during that time. In an account of a subsequent visit to Berlin, Rudolf Rocker described Pestaña as being like a man "saved from a shipwreck." He had not the heart to tell his Spanish comrades the truth. It seemed to him like "murder" to destroy the immense hope which the Russian Revolution had raised in them. As soon as he crossed the Spanish border he was thrown into prison and was thus spared the painful duty of being the first to speak.

During the summer of 1921 a different delegation from the CNT took part in the founding congress of the Red Trade-Union International. Among the CNT delegates there were young disciples of Russian Bolshevism, such as Joaquin Maurin and Andres Nin, but there was also a French anarchist, Gaston Leval, who had a cool head. He took the risk of being accused of "playing the game of the bourgeoisie" and "helping the counter-revolution" rather than keep silent. Not to tell the masses that what had failed in Russia was not the Revolution, but the State, and not "to show them behind the living Revolution, the State which was paralyzing and killing it," would have been worse than silence. He used these terms, in *Le Libertaire* in November 1921. He thought that "any honest and loyal collaboration" with the Bolsheviks had become impossible and, on his return to Spain, recommended to the CNT that it withdraw from the Third International and its bogus trade union affiliate.

Having been given this lead, Pestaña decided to publish his first report and, subsequently, extend it by a second in which he would reveal the entire truth about Bolshevism: