

Freedom

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Why not a Co-operative City?

A SUGGESTION FOR THE UNEMPLOYED.

The terrible distress through bad times, and the immense increase in the numbers of the unemployed, is not only heartrending from the fact of the untold suffering it involves, but also because it brings us the sad reflection that for the past eighteen years—since 1886, when the unemployed riots brought the critical conditions home to the ruling classes—the problem has constantly recurred, and is as far off a solution as ever.

The amount of fruitless and absurd discussion that has been indulged in on a question that by its very nature needs to be *immediately* and *practically* dealt with is positively criminal, and proves that the official talking machines fear to go to the root of the evil, and show no sincere interest in finding a solution.

Worse still, to our mind, are the ridiculous tactics adopted by the I.L.P. and S.D.F. in calling upon Balfour to summon an autumn session to deal with the matter. There is probably a good deal of cheap advertisement at the bottom of all this; but it is disgusting, nevertheless, that a sworn enemy of the people should be appealed to to throw some crumbs to his starving victims. For victims they certainly are of the Chamberlain-Balfour *régime*, the whole efforts of these enemies of the people having been devoted to aiding and abetting the worst forms of capitalism, and at the same time to destroying the peaceful progress and development of the labour movement with all its hopes of securing a better lot for the toilers. Yet avowed Socialists, well knowing beforehand the futility of their demand, humiliate themselves and the cause by asking favours of those who care no more for the sufferings of the English worker than they cared for the sufferings of the women and children in the concentration camps.

The real truth is there is no solution of this terrible evil while the present system lasts, and so long as that exists the unemployed we shall always have with us in greater or less degree. But if we really wish to do something, as things are, to alleviate the crisis, why go to the empty heads and the Jacks-in-office after all the experience we have had of their circumlocutionary tactics?

Why not turn to the trade unions and co-operative societies, and try to rouse sufficient practical common sense and initiative in these bodies to set about applying their resources in this direction? They certainly could do wonders in this work if the necessary energy and intelligence, which they surely possess, were so applied. Some unions, at any rate, have accumulated funds that might be used in this way, and the sooner they are so used the better, as, judging by the way things are going, the employers, with the law on their side as usual, will devour them all ere many years are passed.

"A Co-operative City! Utopia!" we shall be told. But there is no Utopia, no dream about the practicability of such a plan. It is only the goodwill and the initiative that are lacking.

Let us look at the matter from the "practical man's" point of view.

In the first place, the vast army of unemployed is a grave menace to the unions themselves, and gives the masters an opportunity for reducing wages which they well know how to use. If this danger can be minimised this is a practical gain. Besides this, however, there is the charge on the funds of their own out-of-works, which is heavy even in skilled trades. The co-operators also feel the pinch of bad times, and would surely adopt any practicable scheme that would maintain their societies in full work. Well, does not the Co-operative City offer more immediate possibilities for the employment of skilled labour than the Garden City? Cannot the men who have built up these wonderful societies in the face of immense difficulties—and even penalties,—cannot they organise on useful work the labour of their own unemployed? Is it "practical" to keep all these willing hands idle? Suppose some money is lost over the starting of such a scheme. Suppose the eternal "five per cent. on the capital" cannot be obtained in the beginning. Are these things of more practical importance than a generous effort made on behalf of the unemployed, with all the beneficial consequences the good work would bring for all concerned? For be it remembered, the evils of the present distress do not stop at the doors of those who are suffering.

As we said before, all workers suffer directly or indirectly as a consequence of these conditions. To alleviate them is to help themselves as well as others.

At the present moment trade unionism is in a state of lethargy. It needs a stimulus to warm its blood, an ideal if you will, but at least some worthy aim to stir it from its stagnation. So if the idea became prevalent that the organised workers, turning their backs on officials and politicians, could take this work in hand and accomplish by their own efforts this great good, new life would be given, new strength gained, at a moment when the unions need it most. We are told we must have "stepping stones" to the social revolution. A city built by the united efforts of trade unionists and co-operators might prove a "stepping-stone" that could be built into the foundations of a new society.

There is little hope, unfortunately, that a suggestion of this kind would be regarded as worthy any attention by the leaders in these movements, most of them preferring to rely on the State to initiate reform. Here, for instance, is a resolution to be brought forward at the next L.R.C. conference by the I.L.P. :—

"Recognising the great amount of distress due to unemployment, and the baneful effect thereof upon the social and industrial life of the community, declares that the responsibility for bringing remunerative work within the reach of every capable and willing worker is a duty devolving upon the State, acting through Parliament and the local administrative authorities," and demands the creation of a fully-equipped Ministry of Labour, etc., etc.

Some of us can remember well enough those really impressive meetings organised by the S.D.F. in the winter of '86-'87 calling upon the Government to provide work for the unemployed. Nothing was done, and spite of the many appeals since then, nothing has been done. But the Social Democrats never learn from past failures, and the old comedy of calling upon the State "to do its duty" to the workers goes on as before. "The creation of a fully-equipped Ministry of Labour" sounds very imposing, and no doubt the would-be ministers are already tasting in imagination the sweets of office. We trust they will long remain imaginary. There are quite enough obstacles to the realisation of Socialism without adding to them. And be it remembered that Socialism is the only solution of the unemployed problem. There is no escape from this; and peaceful or not, it is only by the social revolution that it can be attained. Nevertheless, there are many things that can be done in the industrial field by the workers to prepare for the new society without putting themselves under the heel of that worst of all masters—the State—and without placing themselves at the mercy of reactionary methods. We think the above suggestion is one of them; and when in time some more thousands of the unemployed have died of disease and starvation waiting for the State "to do its duty," perhaps it will be tried.

BROTHERHOOD.

The crest and crowning of all good,
Life's final star, is brotherhood;
For it will bring again to Earth
Her long-lost Poesy and Mirth;
Will send new light on every face,
A kingly power upon the race.
And till it come, we men are slaves,
And travel downward to the dust of graves.

Come, clear the way, then, clear the way;
Blind creeds and kings have had their day.
Break the dead branches from the path:
Our hope is in the aftermath—
Our hope is in heroic men,
Star-led to build the world again.
To this Event the ages ran:
Make way for Brotherhood—make way for Man.

EDWIN MARKHAM.

Edinburgh.

Comrade McAra is still keeping the flag flying both here and at Leith, and manages to get rid of a large quantity of literature. The unemployed are very numerous, but whether their present condition will teach them to study social questions for themselves is a moot point.

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NOTES.

DEMOCRACY DECADENT.

The imperialist tory democrat Rosebery, who feels so secure in his position of wealth and privilege that he can afford to laugh at genuine progressive democracy, has been saying things about the harmlessness to his class of the political reforms on which so much value is set by Radicals and Democrats, that one would think it should induce the Socialist and Labour parties to find other means of achieving their aims. As an example, take this from the Rosebery speech:—

That was the case with Lord Salisbury, who used language of absolute despair when the Reform Bill of 1867 was passed. He retired from office; it seemed as if he were to retire from political life. He said from his place in Parliament that the monarchical principle was dead, the aristocratic principle was doomed, that the democratic principle triumphed. He lived to see every one of those prophecies falsified. (Laughter.) Before he died the monarchical principle was infinitely stronger than it had been in 1867, the aristocratic principle was very much stronger, and the democratic principle which he thought would govern the country had had rather a sickly time of it since. (Laughter.)

We can hardly see where the laugh comes in, at least for those who pin their faith to Parliamentary methods. For if there is one measure, excepting the Factory Acts, that has been quoted as a blessing for the people, it is the Reform Bill. And yet they laugh at the "democratic principle" that was supposed to have dealt such a blow at monarchy and aristocracy. They will do the same as the so-called Socialist measures proposed by the L.R.C. and others. And now they see Keir Hardie and the Countess of Warwick masquerading on the same platform, and an imbecile in the labour movement thanking royalty for peace, their laughter has probably thrown them into convulsions.

GOODWILL TOWARDS MEN.

At the same time that we are reading of the lavish expenditure on the man who rules and oppresses the Portuguese nation, the terrible record of "deaths from starvation" and "suicide through unemployment" is mounting up. If an instance were needed of how man can sink below the level of the beast, one need not turn to the drunkard, the loafer, and the hooligan, but note rather the way in which the well-to-do upper classes take their pleasures, fill their stomachs, and adorn their persons regardless of the misery around them. Then listen to the remarks made when any drastic measure is suggested for relieving the distress, and you will wonder if these gorgeous but useless creatures have any human nature left.

THE APOTHEOSIS OF EXPLOITATION.

If an object lesson had been needed to show what unrestrained capitalism can do in the way of exploitation, the condition of things in the South African mines would have afforded it. We know now that there is nothing the capitalist—the civilised capitalist, mind you—will not do to wring wealth from labour. Slavery, torture, outrage, murder, it makes no difference to him what means are used; give him his gold at all costs.

The British workers who are now suffering for the war can readily see, if they will open their eyes, how true is the Anarchist principle that no man, and no body of men can be trusted with power over their fellow man. They trusted Chamberlain and he betrayed them. The political power they had given him was transferred to the millionaires, who, making Milner their tool, used the power of gold to enslave the Chinese and native the population. Here we have in full view the logical connection and consequences of unchecked political, economic, and executive power working in a direct line for a given end. And the irony of the situation lies in the fact that the process begins in conditions of "free institutions," and ends in conditions worse than Czarism. It is an example for all the ages of how the progress of the power of capitalism throws back the human race. And the imbeciles of the English press describe the conditions resulting from this unbridled power of the men who support States, as Anarchy!

JUSTICE AND THE LAW.

The case of Adolf Beck is too monstrous even for the British public, and certainly its blind faith in the impeccability of English judges has received a rude shock. It will now have some doubt as to the fairness shown towards the so-called criminal class, and it may even have suspicions as to whether the verdicts recently given by judges in labour disputes are as free from class prejudice as the capitalist press would have us believe.

Events of the present year have laid bare the workings of the law in such a manner as to make even the average man sick with disgust. We have had the Whitaker Wright case, with the Government's open and direct attempt to interfere with the course of the law; we have had the Slater case, which resulted in an exposure of detective methods that must have made society stink in the nostrils of decent people; and now we have the case of Beck, a "gross miscarriage of justice," as the misleading phrase goes. There is no justice, and never was, where rich men tried the poor, where strong men tried the weak, and where interested officials crush their victims without granting any appeal. So let the British public remember these facts before it goes to sleep again. And perhaps it would be well to ask one other thing: How many Adolf Becks are there who have suffered the horrors of our prison system without the fact ever coming to light? And finally, what would have been the fate of Beck had he been an Anarchist?

A VICTIM OF SOCIETY.

As I walked down to my work this morning the clear autumn air exhilarated me: the hoar frost glistened on the slender branches of the trees like some fairy tracery whose drops shone like diamonds as the sunlight caught them. A delightful freshness and hopefulness was in the air: I felt that it was something on such a day merely to be active, to feel my limbs moving easily as I stepped along, my heels making a sharp, ringing sound on the granite pavement. It was early, and the buckets of rubbish had not yet been cleared away from in front of the houses. Suddenly I saw, going slowly in front of me, an old woman, bent almost double by the weight of a great sack she had on her back, so heavy that she looked more like some four-legged beast than a human being. At each bucket she stooped still further to pick up something, which she put in her sack. Her grey head was bare and covered with dust: the deep-set, blood-shot eyes looked out of her face, grey with dirt and the pallor of hunger, like the eyes of some hunted wolf. The lean arm she shot out from time to time was like a claw; as she shuffled along in her old loose boots she was like some unseemly animal. A chill repugnance passed over me at the sight of this dishonoured old age—a repugnance that changed into a fierce indignation when I looked again and tried to trace in the distorted face the lineaments of former youth. This horrible mask had once concealed the same feelings, the same desires that I felt now: there had been there the longing for happiness that is common to all human beings, and to this I, too, might come! Oh no, I cried within me; there is something rotten at the heart of a society where old age can be like this—it is the portent of a deep-seated evil. What is the meaning of morality in a country where this is a spectacle that is common. I looked up at the large houses I was passing: immense mansions, decorated with everything that luxury could desire and bad taste execute; and I looked again at the dehumanised old woman who was picking up the rubbish they threw out before their gates, and the resolve became strong within me to find the way to change all this.

M. A. A.

CHICAGO MARTYRS MEETING.

A crowded and enthusiastic meeting was held on November 11th at the Empress Hall, Cambridge Road, Mile End, E. The numerous speeches were loudly applauded, the lessons to be learnt from our comrades' execution being well brought out by the various speakers. John Turner gave a short history of the events which led up to the trial, and read extracts from the speeches in court, the prevailing note in which was a supreme contempt for their persecutors, and undying conviction of the justice of the cause for which they were to suffer. Comrade Kropotkin sent a telegram saying: "Entirely at heart with you. The idea our brothers died for will live and conquer." Taken altogether, the meeting was a great success, and it is to be hoped that it will be the means of inspiring the comrades to carry on the propaganda still more energetically.

Fresh notions are as disagreeable to some as fresh air to others, and this inability to bear them is equally a symptom of disease.—Landor.

Every revolution was first a thought in one man's mind, and when the same thought occurs to another man, it is the key to that era. Every reform was once a private opinion, and when it shall be a private opinion again, it will solve the problem of the age. The fact narrated must correspond to something in me to be credible or intelligent.—Emerson, *Essay on History*.

EVILS OF INEQUALITY.

"No one will question that all men, however different their characters, come into the world with equal right to existence; this right is hardly respected when one is born with a silver spoon in his mouth, another with the pangs of hunger. The one is soon worth millions in the balance, or can call his own a large portion of the land that should belong to all; the other stands helplessly between heaven and earth, and would die of hunger if he did not at once place at the service of others more favourably situated the strength that nature has given him. Heredity, or the right of the individual to dispose of what he leaves behind, is not an outcome of natural law, but an invention of later times, probably of Roman origin; in ancient Germany, for instance, it was quite unknown. Learned investigations as to the rise of the idea of property have rather shown that communal ownership was its first stage. It was Roman law, with its excessive emphasis of individualism and the rights of personal ownership, that abolished the earlier condition of things, and pushed personal rights to their extreme conclusion in the sense of personal egoism—a condition that still weighs heavily on the shoulders of society. 'Every man for himself! Let those who can, help themselves! Let those who cannot perish!' Such is the general cry to-day; the voices of the economically weak are drowned in the din of the onward rush, and whoever falls is trodden mercilessly under foot."—Büchner, *The Distribution of Blood in the Animal and Social Organism*.

LITERARY NOTE.

It is regrettable that the study of early English Socialism is rather neglected in England. The long-promised works on Robert Owen and on Chartism have never been published, and Holyoake's History (1875) is richer in rapid indications of the many forgotten movements than in a closer examination of facts and theories. Such researches show the eminently *extra-statist*, so to speak; in some cases *anti-statist*, consciously Anarchist, tendencies of some early Socialists, at any rate at given periods of their activity. There is an excellent summary and bibliography of early Socialism in Professor H. S. Foxwell's introduction to A. Menger's *Right to the Whole Produce of Labour* (London, 1899); but nearly all further literature that I know of, is published abroad. E. Bernstein dealt with the 17th century, and studied Winstanley, the Digger and similar literature. A series of reprints is now published in Germany, beginning with extracts from Thomas Spence's writings and Godwin's *Political Justice* (1793). The whole of William Thompson's *Inquiry into the Principles of the Distribution of Wealth* (1824) was recently published in German (Berlin). A French Socialist, Elie Halévy, wrote the life of *Thomas Hodgskin*, from the Place manuscripts and many other sources (Paris, 1903). The author of the largest history of Socialism (1887-1897, 3,323 pages, in Dutch, Amsterdam), H. P. G. Quack, supplemented his work by a volume of essays on *Charles Hall*, *Thomas Hodgskin*, *William Thompson*, *John Gray*, and others (*De Socialisten*, Amsterdam, 1904, 387 pp.). English editors—with the exception of reprints from Spence, Ogilvie's *Birthright in Land* (1891), Gammage's *Chartist History* (1894), *The Life of Francis Place*, etc.—are somewhat behind this output. In nearly all these books we find traces of early Anarchism.

Since October, 1901, E. Bernstein has issued a monthly review for the history of Socialism (*Documente des Socialismus*) which published some interesting records, yet seems capable of great improvement. There the manuscript of Marx, Engels and Hess against the Anarchism of Max Stirner at last saw the light, but I fear it will soon sink into oblivion again.

By the way Henrik Ibsen's letters to George Brandes, as published in the German edition of his correspondence (Berlin, 1904), contain splendid Anarchist remarks, written about the year 1870.

The writer of this note is preparing a record of early, half-forgotten Anarchists which, besides the above mentioned, would comprehend among others Sylvain Maréchal, the group of the *Humanitaire*, Anselme Bellegarrigue, E. Coeurderoy, J. Déjacque, Pisacane; also, standing farther away, E. de La Boétie, the early Burke, Dom Deschamps; to some degree Diderot, R. Wagner and many others. New materials and hints on this subject, especially from early American literature will be welcome.

N.

Comrade Giuseppe Ciancabilla died lately in San Francisco. He had been one of the young Italian Socialists who, in 1897, went with Cipriani to fight for Greece. Soon after his return he became an Anarchist, and in scarce a year's time various persecutions drove him from Italy, from the Continent, from England also, to America, where not long after a fiscal prosecution of the generous Republic, on some lottery chicane, put him in jail too. During the time of his stay in America, from the end of 1898, he edited Anarchist papers—the *Questione Sociale* of Paterson, the *Aurora* of Pennsylvania, the *Protesta Umana* of Chicago and San Francisco. He was a young man, and his untimely death is a sad surprise for his friends in Europe.

After the anarchist publications of Bakunin and his friends and of the group of the *Rabotnik*, in Zurich and Geneva, in the early seventies, for about twenty-five years no anarchist literature was printed in Russian—in spite of the well-informed press calling all this time every Russian Socialist an Anarchist. A few years ago pamphlets and books in Russian began to be printed again, and now a long list of publications exists, part of Kropotkin's *Words of a Rebel*, the whole *Conquest of Bread*, *Anarchy*, *Science and Anarchism*, *Expropriation*, *Grave's Moribund Society*, the first part of Tcherkessoff's *Doctrines of Marxism*, and various pamphlets by E. Reclus, S. Bardina, Most, Etiévant, Emile Henry, etc., also a monthly paper *Chleb i Volya* (Bread and Freedom). Whilst this is literature for propaganda, pub-

ishers in their own interest—which shows that there is a growing interest in Anarchism—reprint Bakunin's pamphlets, have had Eltxbacher's book on Anarchism translated, etc.; a large volume by Basilevski, gives the official accounts of the early political trials up to 1873 (first volume), etc.

In Poland also, where Anarchism so far has not taken root, a paper (the first one, I believe) has been appearing at Lemberg, Galicia, but seems now to be suppressed; yet the first Polish book, a full translation of the *Conquest of Bread*, was published in the same town—a good beginning for a rising movement.

INTOLERANCE.

The mind of an intolerant man will be shut against conviction, and turned with implacable animosity against every one who hoists not his standard or who is not attached to his formula. Every bad passion will be generated in his mind; irascible, impatient of contradiction, and revengeful, he will be ignorant himself and determined to keep others so; will resist every improvement as an attack upon his creed, and invariably weigh every man's worth not by his actions but by the words of his belief. The Arabians, before the appearance of Mahomet, were a tolerant people. They forced none to believe as they believed, but lived in harmony and friendship with persons of every persuasion. In the retired cities of Arabia, the Christian, the Jew, and the Pagan all found a refuge, and not till the persecuting spirit of Islam was established were they disturbed in their hitherto peaceful abode. Arabia, however, became through Mahomet divided against itself, and to the many already existing causes of dispute were added the direful animosities of religion.

One mischievous portion of his religion must not be forgotten, viz., the command to propagate it by force. The following saying raises a vivid conception of the success of Mahomet's preaching on this head: "Holy Wars are the pillars of religion, and the highways of the happy; and to those who are engaged in them the gates of heaven shall be open." If there be one means more effectual than another of keeping men in perpetual ignorance and consequent misery, it is to make truth and justice always the portion of the strongest.

If to the settlement of contending opinions force alone be necessary, it is evident that the correctness of either is a matter of no moment. Consequently, to discover whether an opinion be founded in truth will never be the aim of the disputant. The measurement of his own and his adversary's powers is the circumstance that will concern him; he will be careless concerning the propriety of his belief, provided his arm is the stronger, and hatred the most violent will arise in his mind against all who do not agree with him, inasmuch as non-accordance with his opinion implies contempt of his powers. He will learn to attach to words and symbols immeasurable importance, for they will be all that he can understand.—From the *Life of Mahomet*. Library of Useful Knowledge.

INTERNATIONAL NOTES.

(FROM A FOREIGN CORRESPONDENT.)

When, at the close of another year, I try to form an opinion on the progress of our ideas during that period, my results may somewhat differ from those of other comrades. This is inevitable as soon as light-hearted conventional optimism is avoided and the complicated problems which surround us are closer examined. In early times we considered ourselves, more or less, the only people moving forward, and all others the one reactionary mass, standing still, hopelessly fossilised; under these conditions sweeping judgments were easily obtained. For some time, however, one cannot fail to recognise an infinity of forces at work in all directions, stimulated, no doubt, to a considerable extent by the early efforts of revolutionists; and between the distinctly reactionary and the advanced tendencies a real cobweb of intermediary movements has come in, the real importance and tendency of which is not always easy to understand. Even on the largest and plainest questions opinions necessarily differ. For instance, what is the proportion of strength between the nationalist, patriotic forces which war, even for the most infamous causes, always stirs up even among the working classes, and the forces in favour of peace, brotherhood, solidarity, for which Socialists and humanitarians have worked for over a century? Or, to what extent is freedom really desired by the masses, who pay so little attention to Anarchism, and are almost as equally ready to be soothed by the authoritarian Socialist as to be roused to brutality by the blatant patriot—and who yet, overnight,—are quite ready for a few days' general strike? Or, to what extent do all the reforms in social and political matters consolidate the present system, and to what extent do some of them, forcibly, contribute to its future downfall? To what extent the prosperity of capitalism which is everywhere evident, and which seems not to be affected by the increase of Socialist votes by millions, by labour legislation, &c.—to what extent does this prosperity affect the working class movements, as it necessarily must? The differences of nationalities, which the first stage of a movement, given to generalisations, usually neglects to consider, these differences also claim their right, and misunderstandings are created if a closer knowledge of these differences is lacking in those who formulate opinions. Under these circumstances no one can expect to agree with another one's practical judgment, however much we may harmonise as to fundamental principles. This is no drawback; on the contrary, uniformity of opinion is nothing but dullness, stagnation, decay; in real life there are no two things alike—how, then, should opinions agree?

Whatever Russians may think themselves, to the peoples bordering on that immense empire, from Norway and Finland round to China and Japan, there is no country which is not undermined, in one way or another, by intrigue—instigated by the Russian Government, which has designs of expansion against, and threatens invasion of, one and all. This policy of graft, carried on for centuries, is being checked by Japan—a country which, like the two South African Republics, took up the single-handed struggle against the greatest Power on earth and will perhaps succumb in the unequal struggle just as the South African Republics did. This defiance of the largest Powers by small States—and the Philippines did the same with regard to the American invaders—is akin to our Anarchist struggle of a few against the whole established order of things, is an infinitely hopeful sign of the coming *revolt of minorities*. We see signs of this revolt even in some Parliaments where minorities, by the use of the most for-

cible obstruction, fight against their suppression by the stupid and brutal instrument of a majority vote, which cannot, evidently, solve any question of principle. We see even reactionary people defy laws which they do not care for by "passive resistance." We see the most sensible principle of "conscientious objection" admitted to exempt anti-vaccinationists from the vaccination law, a principle which ought to be extended to all laws.

The claims of minorities are considered in the various schemes, partially adopted here and there, of "proportional representation." All these and many other symptoms show that many people, most of them entirely outside our own ranks, are no longer scared by the bugbear of majority rule, that they give up the chimeric hope of converting a majority to their ideas before acting up to them. To me this seems to tend towards a state of things in which no single system would prevail exclusively, but many systems would co-exist, side by side, just as even to-day besides capitalism we have remains of the feudal system—plenty and to spare!—and germs of collectivism, municipalism, co-operation, even here and there Communism and voluntarism. By-and-by the latter tendencies will be extended, in proportion, as people care to stand up for this extension—not waiting for others to do it for them. Why should anti-vaccinationists—after their struggle for many years, with many personal sacrifices—alone enjoy the right to exempt themselves from a general law? (I do not speak of the chicanery by which magistrates deprive them of their right very often—they will have to fight against this once more.) Why do not other people group themselves together and insist forcibly on being exempted from all sorts of law—and leave others, chicken-hearted and with sheepish brains, to submit to these laws to their heart's desire? There are endless forms of this revolt of minorities, which has only begun, and we are at one with little Japan in her struggle against the despot of two continents.

* *

The great question arises now: Will these events at last set things moving in Russia herself?

The killing of Plehve—which act, by the way, was welcomed by public opinion in nearly all countries, France excepted, in terms hardly different from those with which the shooting of a mad dog would have been received—this act of an individual against an individual can hardly produce a definite effect if things are not ripe for it. But this seems to be the case, and—that odious obstruction once again swept into the gutter—Russian society really seems to awaken to a feeling of the necessity for action. I say society, and not peasants, working men, and the young generation, for the coming movement will, I believe, only be of a political character. For over forty years efforts have been made by generation after generation of the Russian youth to convert peasants and workmen directly to Socialism or Anarchism, believing they could attach the new ideas to the traditional ideas of communal property in land, the earlier peasants revolts, and the like, which, unfortunately, seem to be institutions and ideas in decline instead of being in progressive development. This propaganda cost endless sacrifices, and left the foundations of autocracy unshaken. In a despotic State everything is crushed by the State and the Russian revolutionists, in the late seventies and early eighties, saw the necessity of directing their action against the State before all, until nearly all of that heroic generation were killed or imprisoned, and only to-day the scarce survivors of those days leave the fortress hell of Sillusselburg, where some still linger. After many steps in wrong directions and efforts nearly wasted, they see this again in these days, and fight autocracy face to face.

But nothing can be done unless—as the French, the English, the German, the Italian, all the middle-classes did long since—this part of the Russian middle-class which, we are always told, sympathises to such an extent with the action of the young revolutionists—unless they at last give up the cowardly attitude of standing by and seeing their sons and daughters whipped by Cossacks or driven into prison or exile. Since the nomination of Prince Mirski as Plehve's successor, *spring* is said to have come in Russia; criticism is permitted and is speaking in a loud voice, the foundations of a representative government begin to be laid by the *Zemstvo* meetings—though cold water was poured on this by the Government quite recently. What is wanted is but the faintest part of the spirit of a Danton, whose famous words—"Boldness! boldness! boldness!" Bakunin was so fond of repeating. In that case, what might be the outcome? Parliamentarism is inevitable—the Russians have never had it, and must enjoy it before becoming tired of it. And Socialism will form just a fraction of that Parliament as it forms a part of other Parliaments, hardly more. The immense change that must take place in all administrative, financial, educational, labour and other matters would give the most Radical of Parliaments work to do for years, much more so to Parliaments of the inferior character which our age produces.

And what about the peasants? Do they not revolt continually? Will nothing better come of it than a central or a group of local Parliaments? From all I can see, as long as Plehve and a few other scoundrels easily succeeded in bringing about a Kischinev and a Homel, the peasant and provincial population may possibly be inflamed to acts of destruction, agrarian terrorism; but I do not think that they see any further. The Poles, who now revolt almost daily in Warsaw and other Polish towns, have their definite aims; the Russian peasants, I fear, have not. Hunger and ill-treatment goad them to desperation, but where their enemy is they see not. From this I conclude that, whatever our wishes and desires might be, we shall see either a bold-spirited movement with political aims, or nothing but local outbursts of desperation which will be crushed.

And the time for Russian society to make up their minds as to boldness is possibly short; should a million of Russian soldiers succeed in winning victories in Manchuria, autocracy will once more raise its unblinking, infamous head, and again lay hold of the reins which it never yet let go.

* *

The final solution of this question may well hold us all in suspense and draw attention from labour matters. For labour, powerful as it rises everywhere, is yet utterly deficient, utterly impotent, on this field of foreign politics. Here the mercenary character of capitalism has left till now indelible traces on its actions. Whatever gives employment is welcome; the pilots of neutral countries who safely conduct the Russian fleet are delighted with their high premiums; the seamen who brought the Russian destroyer from the Thames to Libau are highly satisfied with the extra money they earned—blood-money I should call it; and so on. No responsibility is felt for doing such kind of work. The more sympathy is due to the few French comrades who, when the Baltic fleet passed, published a manifesto to the port-workers not to handle these ships; it is entitled: *Stop Death!* Its effects, as far as we can see, are nil; the population of Vigo is delighted over the money the Russians spent there, and so it will be everywhere. How can people acting on these mercenary lines expect a better state of society?

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