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The Wealth of Nations (1776) - An Excerpt from Chapter 8 of Vol. 1

by Adam Smith

What are the common wages of labour, depends everywhere upon the contract usually made between those two parties, whose interests are by no means the same. The workmen desire to get as much, the masters to give as little as possible. The former are disposed to combine in order to raise, the latter in order to lower the wages of labour.

It is not, however, difficult to foresee which of the two parties must, upon all ordinary occasions, have the advantage in the dispute, and force the other into a compliance with their terms. The masters, being fewer in number, can combine much more easily; and the law, besides, authorizes, or at least does not prohibit their combinations, while it prohibits those of the workmen. We have no acts of parliament against combining to lower the price of work; but many against combining to raise it. In all such disputes the masters can hold out much longer. A landlord, a farmer, a master manufacturer, a merchant, though they did not employ a single workman, could generally live a year or two upon the stocks which they have already acquired. Many workmen could not subsist a week, few could subsist a month, and scarce any a year without employment. In the long run the workman may be as necessary to his master as his master is to him; but the necessity is not so immediate.

We rarely hear, it has been said, of the combinations of masters, though frequently of those of workmen. But whoever imagines, upon this account, that masters rarely combine, is as ignorant of the world as of the subject. Masters are always and everywhere in a sort of tacit, but constant and uniform combination, not to raise the wages of labour above their actual rate. To violate this combination is everywhere a most unpopular action, and a sort of reproach to a master among his neighbours and equals. We seldom, indeed, hear of this combination, because it is the usual, and

one may say, the natural state of things, which nobody ever hears of. Masters, too, sometimes enter into particular combinations to sink the wages of labour even below this rate. These are always conducted with the utmost silence and secrecy, till the moment of execution, and when the workmen yield, as they sometimes do, without resistance, though severely felt by them, they are never heard of by other people. Such combinations, however, are frequently resisted by a contrary defensive combination of the workmen; who sometimes too, without any provocation of this kind, combine of their own accord to raise the price of their labour. Their usual pretences are, sometimes the high price of provisions; sometimes the great profit which their masters make by their work. But whether their combinations be offensive or defensive, they are always abundantly heard of. In order to bring the point to a speedy decision, they have always recourse to the loudest clamour, and sometimes to the most shocking violence and outrage. They are desperate, and act with the folly and extravagance of desperate men, who must either starve, or frighten their masters into an immediate compliance with their demands. The masters upon these occasions are just as clamorous upon the other side, and never cease to call aloud for the assistance of the civil magistrate, and the rigorous execution of those laws which have been enacted with so much severity against the combinations of servants, labourers, and journeymen. The workmen, accordingly, very seldom derive any advantage from the violence of those tumultuous combinations, which, partly from the interposition of the civil magistrate, partly from the necessity superior steadiness of the masters, partly from the necessity which the greater part of the workmen are under of submitting for the sake of present subsistence, generally end in nothing, but the punishment or ruin of the ringleaders.

THE CAPITALIST SYSTEM

by Michael Bakunin

Is it necessary to repeat here the irrefutable arguments of Socialism which no bourgeois economist has yet succeeded in disproving? What is property, what is capital in their present form? For the capitalist and the property owner they mean the power and the right, guaranteed by the State, to live without working. And since neither property nor capital produces anything when not fertilized by labor - that means the power and the right to live by exploiting the work of someone else, the right to exploit the work of those who possess neither property nor capital and who thus are forced to sell their productive power to the lucky owners of both. Note that I have left out of account altogether the following question: In what way did property and capital ever fall into the hands of their present owners? This is a question which, when envisaged from the points of view of history, logic, and justice, cannot be answered in any other way but one which would serve as an indictment against the present owners. I shall therefore confine myself here to the statement that property owners and capitalists, inasmuch as they live not by their own productive labor but by getting land rent, house rent, interest upon their capital, or by speculation on land, buildings, and capital, or by the commercial and industrial exploitation of the manual labor of the proletariat, all

live at the expense of the proletariat. (Speculation and exploitation no doubt also constitute a sort of labor, but altogether non-productive labor.)

I know only too well that this mode of life is highly esteemed in all civilized countries, that it is expressly and tenderly protected by all the States, and that the States, religions, and all the juridical laws, both criminal and civil, and all the political governments, monarchies and republican - with their immense judicial and police apparatuses and their standing armies - have no other mission but to consecrate and protect such practices. In the presence of these powerful and respectable authorities I cannot even permit myself to ask whether this mode of life is legitimate from the point of view of human justice, liberty, human equality, and fraternity. I simply ask myself: Under such conditions, are fraternity and equality possible between the exploiter and the exploited, are justice and freedom possible for the exploited?

Let us even suppose, as it is being maintained by the bourgeois economists and with them all the lawyers, all the worshippers and believers in the juridical right, all the priests of the civil and criminal code - let us suppose that this economic relationship between the exploiter and the exploited is altogether legitimate, that it is the inevitable consequence, the product of an eternal, indestructible social law, yet still it will always be true that exploitation precludes brotherhood and equality. It goes without saying that it precludes economic equality. Suppose I am your worker and you are my employer. If I offer my labor at the lowest price, if I consent to have you live off my labor, it is certainly not because of devotion or brotherly love for you. And no bourgeois economist would dare to say that it was, however idyllic and naive their reasoning becomes when they begin to speak about reciprocal affections and mutual relations which should exist between employers and employees. No, I do it because my family and I would starve to death if I did not work for an employer. Thus I am forced to sell you my labor at the lowest possible price, and I am forced to do it by the threat of hunger.

But - the economists tell us - the property owners, the capitalists, the employers, are likewise forced to seek out and purchase the labor of the proletariat. Yes, it is true, they are forced to do it, but not in the same measure. Had there been equality between those who offer their labor and those who purchase it, between the necessity of selling one's labor and the necessity of buying it, the slavery and misery of the proletariat would not exist. But then there would be neither capitalists, nor property owners, nor the proletariat, nor rich, nor poor: there would only be workers. It is precisely because such equality does not exist that we have and are bound to have exploiters.

This equality does not exist because in modern society where wealth is produced by the intervention of capital paying wages to labor, the growth of the population outstrips the growth of production, which results in the supply of labor necessarily surpassing the demand and leading to a relative sinking of the level of wages. Production thus constituted, monopolized, exploited by bourgeois capital, is pushed on the one hand by the mutual competition of the capitalists to concentrate evermore in the hands of an ever diminishing number of powerful capitalists, or in the hands of joint-stock companies which, owing to the merging of their capital, are more powerful than the biggest isolated capitalists. (And the small and medium-sized capitalists, not being able to produce at the same price as the big capitalists, naturally succumb in the deadly struggle.) On the

other hand, all enterprises are forced by the same competition to sell their products at the lowest possible price. It [capitalist monopoly] can attain this two-fold result only by forcing out an ever-growing number of small or medium-sized capitalists, speculators, merchants, or industrialists, from the world of exploiters into the world of the exploited proletariat, and at the same time squeezing out ever greater savings from the wages of the same proletariat.

On the other hand, the mass of the proletariat, growing as a result of the general increase of the population - which, as we know, not even poverty can stop effectively - and through the increasing proletarianization of the petty-bourgeoisie, ex-owners, capitalists, merchants, and industrialists - growing, as I have said, at a much more rapid rate than the productive capacities of an economy that is exploited by bourgeois capital - this growing mass of the proletariat is placed in a condition wherein the workers are forced into disastrous competition against one another.

For since they possess no other means of existence but their own manual labor, they are driven, by the fear of seeing themselves replaced by others, to sell it at the lowest price. This tendency of the workers, or rather the necessity to which they are condemned by their own poverty, combined with the tendency of the employers to sell the products of their workers, and consequently buy their labor, at the lowest price, constantly reproduces and consolidates the poverty of the proletariat. Since he finds himself in a state of poverty, the worker is compelled to sell his labor for almost nothing, and because he sells that product for almost nothing, he sinks into ever greater poverty.

Yes, greater misery, indeed! For in this galley-slave labor the productive force of the workers, abused, ruthlessly exploited, excessively wasted and underfed, is rapidly used up. And once used up, what can be its value on the market, of what worth is this sole commodity which he possesses and upon the daily sale of which he depends for a livelihood? Nothing! And then? Then nothing is left for the worker but to die.

What, in a given country, is the lowest possible wage? It is the price of that which is considered by the proletarians of that country as absolutely necessary to keep oneself alive. All the bourgeois economists are in agreement on this point. Turgot, who saw fit to call himself the 'virtuous minister' of Louis XVI, and really was an honest man, said:

"The simple worker who owns nothing more than his hands, has nothing else to sell than his labor. He sells it more or less expensively; but its price whether high or low, does not depend on him alone: it depends on an agreement with whoever will pay for his labor. The employer pays as little as possible; when given the choice between a great number of workers, the employer prefers the one who works cheap. The workers are, then, forced to lower their price in competition each against the other. In all types of labor, it necessarily follows that the salary of the worker is limited to what is necessary for survival." (Reflexions sur la formation et la distribution des richesses)

J.B. Say, the true father of bourgeois economists in France also said: "Wages are much higher when more demand exists for labor and less if offered, and are lowered accordingly when more labor is offered and less demanded. It is the relation between supply and demand which regulates the price of this merchandise called the workers' labor, as are regulated all other public services. When wages rise a little higher than the price necessary for the workers' families to maintain

themselves, their children multiply and a larger supply soon develops in proportion with the greater demand. When, on the contrary, the demand for workers is less than the quantity of people offering to work, their gains decline back to the price necessary for the class to maintain itself at the same number. The families more burdened with children disappear; from them forward the supply of labor declines, and with less labor being offered, the price rises... In such a way it is difficult for the wages of the laborer to rise above or fall below the price necessary to maintain the class (the workers, the proletariat) in the number required." (Cours complet d' économie politique)

After citing Turgot and J.B. Say, Proudhon cries: "The price, as compared to the value (in real social economy) is something essentially mobile, consequently, essentially variable, and that in its variations, it is not regulated more than by the concurrence, concurrence, let us not forget, that as Turgot and Say agree, has the necessary effect not to give to wages to the worker more than enough to barely prevent death by starvation, and maintain the class in the numbers needed."1

The current price of primary necessities constitutes the prevailing constant level above which workers' wages can never rise for a very long time, but beneath which they drop very often, which constantly results in inanition, sickness, and death, until a sufficient number of workers disappear to equalize again the supply of and demand for labor. What the economists call equalized supply and demand does not constitute real equality between those who offer their labor for sale and those who purchase it. Suppose that I, a manufacturer, need a hundred workers and that exactly a hundred workers present themselves in the market - only one hundred, for if more came, the supply would exceed demand, resulting in lowered wages. But since only one hundred appear, and since I, the manufacturer, need only that number - neither more nor less - it would seem at first that complete equality was established; that supply and demand being equal in number, they should likewise be equal in other respects. Does it follow that the workers can demand from me a wage and conditions of work assuring them of a truly free, dignified, and human existence? Not at all! If I grant them those conditions and those wages, I, the capitalist, shall not gain thereby any more than they will. But then, why should I have to plague myself and become ruined by offering them the profits of my capital? If I want to work myself as workers do, I will invest my capital somewhere else, wherever I can get the highest interest, and will offer my labor for sale to some capitalist just as my workers do.

If, profiting by the powerful initiative afforded me by my capital, I ask those hundred workers to fertilize that capital with their labor, it is not because of my sympathy for their sufferings, nor because of a spirit of justice, nor because of love for humanity. The capitalists are by no means philanthropists; they would be ruined if they practiced philanthropy. It is because I hope to draw from the labor of the workers sufficient profit to be able to live comfortably, even richly, while at the same time increasing my capital - and all that without having to work myself. Of course I shall work too, but my work will be of an altogether different kind and I will be remunerated at a much higher rate than the workers. It will not be the work of production but that of administration and exploitation.

But isn't administrative work also productive work? No doubt it is, for lacking a good and an intelligent administration, manual labor will not produce anything or it will produce very little and very badly. But from the point of view of justice and the needs of production itself, it is not at all

necessary that this work should be monopolized in my hands, nor, above all, that I should be compensated at a rate so much higher than manual labor. The co-operative associations already have proven that workers are quite capable of administering industrial enterprises, that it can be done by workers elected from their midst and who receive the same wage. Therefore if I concentrate in my hands the administrative power, it is not because the interests of production demand it, but in order to serve my own ends, the ends of exploitation. As the absolute boss of my establishment I get for my labor ten or twenty times more than my workers get for theirs, and this is true despite the fact that my labor is incomparably less painful than theirs.

But the capitalist, the business owner, runs risks, they say, while the worker risks nothing. This is not true, because when seen from his side, all the disadvantages are on the part of the worker. The business owner can conduct his affairs poorly, he can be wiped out in a bad deal, or be a victim of a commercial crisis, or by an unforeseen catastrophe; in a word he can ruin himself. This is true. But does ruin mean from the bourgeois point of view to be reduced to the same level of misery as those who die of hunger, or to be forced among the ranks of the common laborers? This so rarely happens, that we might as well say never. Afterwards it is rare that the capitalist does not retain something, despite the appearance of ruin. Nowadays all bankruptcies are more or less fraudulent. But if absolutely nothing is saved, there are always family ties, and social relations, who, with help from the business skills learned which they pass to their children, permit them to get positions for themselves and their children in the higher ranks of labor, in management; to be a state functionary, to be an executive in a commercial or industrial business, to end up, although dependent, with an income superior to what they paid their former workers.

The risks of the worker are infinitely greater. After all, if the establishment in which he is employed goes bankrupt, he must go several days and sometimes several weeks without work, and for him it is more than ruin, it is death; because he eats everyday what he earns. The savings of workers are fairy tales invented by bourgeois economists to lull their weak sentiment of justice, the remorse that is awakened by chance in the bosom of their class. This ridiculous and hateful myth will never soothe the anguish of the worker. He knows the expense of satisfying the daily needs of his large family. If he had savings, he would not send his poor children, from the age of six, to wither away, to grow weak, to be murdered physically and morally in the factories, where they are forced to work night and day, a working day of twelve and fourteen hours.

If it happens sometimes that the worker makes a small savings, it is quickly consumed by the inevitable periods of unemployment which often cruelly interrupt his work, as well as by the unforeseen accidents and illnesses which befall his family. The accidents and illnesses that can overtake him constitute a risk that makes all the risks of the employer nothing in comparison: because for the worker debilitating illness can destroy his productive ability, his labor power. Over all, prolonged illness is the most terrible bankruptcy, a bankruptcy that means for him and his children, hunger and death.

I know full well that under these conditions that if I were a capitalist, who needs a hundred workers to fertilize my capital, that on employing these workers, all the advantages are for me, all the disadvantages for them. I propose nothing more nor less than to exploit them, and if you wish me to be sincere about it, and promise to guard me well, I will tell them:

"Look, my children, I have some capital which by itself cannot produce anything, because a dead thing cannot produce anything. I have nothing productive without labor. As it goes, I cannot benefit from consuming it unproductively, since having consumed it, I would be left with nothing. But thanks to the social and political institutions which rule over us and are all in my favor, in the existing economy my capital is supposed to be a producer as well: it earns me interest. From whom this interest must be taken - and it must be from someone, since in reality by itself it produces absolutely nothing - this does not concern you. It is enough for you to know that it renders interest. Alone this interest is insufficient to cover my expenses. I am not an ordinary man as you. I cannot be, nor do I want to be, content with little. I want to live, to inhabit a beautiful house, to eat and drink well, to ride in a carriage, to maintain a good appearance, in short, to have all the good things in life. I also want to give a good education to my children, to make them into gentlemen, and send them away to study, and afterwards, having become much more educated than you, they can dominate you one day as I dominate you today. And as education alone is not enough, I want to give them a grand inheritance, so that divided between them they will be left almost as rich as I. Consequently, besides all the good things in life I want to give myself, I also want to increase my capital. How will I achieve this goal? Armed with this capital I propose to exploit you, and I propose that you permit me to exploit you. You will work and I will collect and appropriate and sell for my own behalf the product of your labor, without giving you more than a portion which is absolutely necessary to keep you from dying of hunger today, so that at the end of tomorrow you will still work for me in the same conditions; and when you have been exhausted, I will throw you out, and replace you with others. Know it well, I will pay you a salary as small, and impose on you a working day as long, working conditions as severe, as despotic, as harsh as possible; not from wickedness - not from a motive of hatred towards you, nor an intent to do you harm - but from the love of wealth and to get rich quick; because the less I pay you and the more you work, the more I will gain."

This is what is said implicitly by every capitalist, every industrialist, every business owner, every employer who demands the labor power of the workers they hire.

But since supply and demand are equal, why do the workers accept the conditions laid down by the employer? If the capitalist stands in just as great a need of employing the workers as the one hundred workers do of being employed by him, does it not follow that both sides are in an equal position? Do not both meet at the market as two equal merchants - from the juridical point of view at least - one bringing a commodity called a daily wage, to be exchanged for the daily labor of the worker on the basis of so many hours per day; and the other bringing his own labor as his commodity to be exchanged for the wage offered by the capitalist? Since, in our supposition, the demand is for a hundred workers and the supply is likewise that of a hundred persons, it may seem that both sides are in an equal position.

Of course nothing of the kind is true. What is it that brings the capitalist to the market? It is the urge to get rich, to increase his capital, to gratify his ambitions and social vanities, to be able to indulge in all conceivable pleasures. And what brings the worker to the market? Hunger, the necessity of eating today and tomorrow. Thus, while being equal from the point of juridical fiction, the capitalist and the worker are anything but equal from the point of view of the economic

situation, which is the real situation. The capitalist is not threatened with hunger when he comes to the market; he knows very well that if he does not find today the workers for whom he is looking, he will still have enough to eat for quite a long time, owing to the capital of which he is the happy possessor. If the workers whom he meets in the market present demands which seem excessive to him, because, far from enabling him to increase his wealth and improve even more his economic position, those proposals and conditions might, I do not say equalize, but bring the economic position of the workers somewhat close to his own - what does he do in that case? He turns down those proposals and waits. After all, he was not impelled by an urgent necessity, but by a desire to improve his position, which, compared to that of the workers, is already quite comfortable, and so he can wait. And he will wait, for his business experience has taught him that the resistance of workers who, possessing neither capital, nor comfort, nor any savings to speak of, are pressed by a relentless necessity, by hunger, that this resistance cannot last very long, and that finally he will be able to find the hundred workers for whom he is looking - for they will be forced to accept the conditions which he finds it profitable to impose upon them. If they refuse, others will come who will be only too happy to accept such conditions. That is how things are done daily with the knowledge and in full view of everyone.

If, as a consequence of the particular circumstances that constantly influence the market, the branch of industry in which he planned at first to employ his capital does not offer all the advantages that he had hoped, then he will shift his capital elsewhere; thus the bourgeois capitalist is not tied by nature to any specific industry, but tends to invest (as it is called by the economists - exploit is what we say) indifferently in all possible industries. Let's suppose, finally, that learning of some industrial incapacity or misfortune, he decides not to invest in any industry; well, he will buy stocks and annuities; and if the interest and dividends seem insufficient, then he will engage in some occupation, or shall we say, sell his labor for a time, but in conditions much more lucrative than he had offered to his own workers.

The capitalist then comes to the market in the capacity, if not of an absolutely free agent, at least that of an infinitely freer agent than the worker. What happens in the market is a meeting between a drive for lucre and starvation, between master and slave. Juridically they are both equal; but economically the worker is the serf of the capitalist, even before the market transaction has been concluded whereby the worker sells his person and his liberty for a given time. The worker is in the position of a serf because this terrible threat of starvation which daily hangs over his head and over his family, will force him to accept any conditions imposed by the gainful calculations of the capitalist, the industrialist, the employer.

And once the contract has been negotiated, the serfdom of the workers is doubly increased; or to put it better, before the contract has been negotiated, goaded by hunger, he is only potentially a serf; after it is negotiated he becomes a serf in fact. Because what merchandise has he sold to his employer? It is his labor, his personal services, the productive forces of his body, mind, and spirit that are found in him and are inseparable from his person - it is therefore himself. From then on, the employer will watch over him, either directly or by means of overseers; everyday during working hours and under controlled conditions, the employer will be the owner of his actions and movements. When he is told: "Do this," the worker is obligated to do it; or he is told: "Go there," he must go. Is this not what is called a serf?

M. Karl Marx, the illustrious leader of German Communism, justly observed in his magnificent work *Das Kapital*² that if the contract freely entered into by the vendors of money -in the form of wages - and the vendors of their own labor -that is, between the employer and the workers - were concluded not for a definite and limited term only, but for one's whole life, it would constitute real slavery. Concluded for a term only and reserving to the worker the right to quit his employer, this contract constitutes a sort of voluntary and transitory serfdom. Yes, transitory and voluntary from the juridical point of view, but nowise from the point of view of economic possibility. The worker always has the right to leave his employer, but has he the means to do so? And if he does quit him, is it in order to lead a free existence, in which he will have no master but himself? No, he does it in order to sell himself to another employer. He is driven to it by the same hunger which forced him to sell himself to the first employer. Thus the worker's liberty, so much exalted by the economists, jurists, and bourgeois republicans, is only a theoretical freedom, lacking any means for its possible realization, and consequently it is only a fictitious liberty, an utter falsehood. The truth is that the whole life of the worker is simply a continuous and dismaying succession of terms of serfdom - voluntary from the juridical point of view but compulsory in the economic sense - broken up by momentarily brief interludes of freedom accompanied by starvation; in other words, it is real slavery.

This slavery manifests itself daily in all kinds of ways. Apart from the vexations and oppressive conditions of the contract which turn the worker into a subordinate, a passive and obedient servant, and the employer into a nearly absolute master - apart from all that, it is well known that there is hardly an industrial enterprise wherein the owner, impelled on the one hand by the two-fold instinct of an unappeasable lust for profits and absolute power, and on the other hand, profiting by the economic dependence of the worker, does not set aside the terms stipulated in the contract and wring some additional concessions in his own favor. Now he will demand more hours of work, that is, over and above those stipulated in the contract; now he will cut down wages on some pretext; now he will impose arbitrary fines, or he will treat the workers harshly, rudely, and insolently.

But, one may say, in that case the worker can quit. Easier said than done. At times the worker receives part of his wages in advance, or his wife or children may be sick, or perhaps his work is poorly paid throughout this particular industry. Other employers may be paying even less than his own employer, and after quitting this job he may not even be able to find another one. And to remain without a job spells death for him and his family. In addition, there is an understanding among all employers, and all of them resemble one another. All are almost equally irritating, unjust, and harsh.

Is this calumny? No, it is in the nature of things, and in the logical necessity of the relationship existing between the employers and their workers.

SYNDICALISM

THE MODERN MENACE TO CAPITALISM

by Emma Goldman

IN view of the fact that the ideas embodied in Syndicalism have been practised by the workers for the last half century, even if without the background of social consciousness; that in this country five men had to pay with their lives because they advocated Syndicalist methods as the most effective, in the struggle of labor against capital; and that, furthermore, Syndicalism has been consciously practised by the workers of France, Italy and Spain since 1895, it is rather amusing to witness some people in America and England now swooping down upon Syndicalism as a perfectly new and never before heard-of proposition.

It is astonishing how very naïve Americans are, how crude and immature in matters of international importance. For all his boasted practical aptitude, the average American is the very last to learn of the modern means and tactics employed in the great struggles of his day. Always he lags behind in ideas and methods that the European workers have for years past been applying with great success.

It may be contended, of course, that this is merely a sign of youth on the part of the American. And it is indeed beautiful to possess a young mind, fresh to receive and perceive. But unfortunately the American mind seems never to grow, to mature and crystallize its views.

Perhaps that is why an American revolutionist can at the same time be a politician. That is also the reason why leaders of the Industrial Workers of the World continue in the Socialist party, which is antagonistic to the principles as well as to the activities of the I. W. W. Also why a rigid Marxian may propose that the Anarchists work together with the faction that began its career by a most bitter and malicious persecution of one of the pioneers of Anarchism, Michael Bakunin. In short, to the indefinite, uncertain mind of the American radical the most contradictory ideas and methods are possible. The result is a sad chaos in the radical movement, a sort of intellectual hash, which has neither taste nor character.

Just at present Syndicalism is the pastime of a great many Americans, so-called intellectuals. Not that they know anything about it, except that some great authorities --- Sorel, Lagardelle, Berth and others --- stand for it: because the American needs the seal of authority, or he would not accept an idea, no matter how true and valuable it might be.

Our bourgeois magazines are full of dissertations on Syndicalism. One of our most conservative colleges has even gone to the extent of publishing a work of one of its students on the subject, which has the approval of a professor. And all this, not because Syndicalism is a force and is being successfully practised by the workers of Europe, but because --- as I said before --- it has official authoritative sanction.

As if Syndicalism had been discovered by the philosophy of Bergson or the theoretic discourses of Sorel and Berth, and had not existed and lived among the workers long before these men wrote about it. The feature which distinguishes Syndicalism from most philosophies is that it represents the revolutionary philosophy of labor conceived and born in the actual struggle and experience of the workers themselves --- not in universities, colleges, libraries, or in the brain of some scientists. The revolutionary philosophy of labor, that is the true and vital meaning of Syndicalism.

Already as far back as 1848 a large section of the workers realized the utter futility of political activity as a means of helping them in their economic struggle. At that time already the demand went forth for direct economic measures, as against the useless waste of energy along political lines. This was the case not only in France, but even prior to that in England, where Robert Owen, the true revolutionary Socialist, propagated similar ideas.

After years of agitation and experiment the idea was incorporated by the first convention of the internationale, in 1867, in the resolution that the economic emancipation of the workers must be the principal aim of all revolutionists, to which everything else is to be subordinated.

In fact, it was this determined radical stand which eventually brought about the split in the revolutionary movement of that day, and its division into two factions: the one, under Marx and Engels, aiming at political conquest; the other, under Bakunin and the Latin workers, forging ahead along industrial and Syndicalist lines. The further development of those two wings is familiar to every thinking man and woman: the one has gradually centralized into a huge machine, with the sole purpose of conquering political power within the existing capitalist State; the other is becoming an ever more vital revolutionary factor, dreaded by the enemy as the greatest menace to its rule.

It was in the year 1900 while a delegate to the Anarchist Congress in Paris, that I first came in contact with Syndicalism in operation. The Anarchist press had been discussing the subject for years prior to that; therefore we Anarchists knew something about Syndicalism. But those of us who lived in America had to content themselves with the theoretic side of it.

In 1900, however, I saw its effect upon labor in France: the strength, the enthusiasm and hope with which Syndicalism inspired the workers. It was also my good fortune to learn of the man who more than anyone else had directed Syndicalism into definite working channels, Fernand Pelloutier. Unfortunately, I could not meet this remarkable young man, as he was at that time already very ill with cancer. But wherever I went, with whomever I spoke, the love and devotion for Pelloutier was wonderful, all agreeing that it was he who had gathered the discontented forces in the French labor movement and imbued them with new life and a new purpose, that of Syndicalism.

On my return to America I immediately began to propagate Syndicalist ideas, especially Direct Action and the General Strike. But it was like talking to the Rocky Mountains --- no understanding, even among the more radical elements, and complete indifference in labor ranks.

In 1907 I went as a delegate to the Anarchist Congress at Amsterdam and, while in Paris, met the most active Syndicalists in the Confédération Générale an Travail: Pouget, Delesalle, Monatte, and

many others. More than that, I had the opportunity to see Syndicalism in daily operation, in its most constructive and inspiring forms.

I allude to this, to indicate that my knowledge of Syndicalism does not come from Sorel, Lagardelle, or Berth, but from actual contact with and observation of the tremendous work carried on by the workers of Paris within the ranks of the Confédération. It would require a volume to explain in detail what Syndicalism is doing for the French workers. In the American press you read only of its resistive methods, of strikes and sabotage, of the conflicts of labor with capital. These are no doubt very important matters, and yet the chief value of Syndicalism lies much deeper. It lies in the constructive and educational effect upon the life and thought of the masses.

The fundamental difference between Syndicalism and the old trade union methods is this: while the old trade unions, without exception, move within the wage system and capitalism, recognizing the latter as inevitable, Syndicalism repudiates and condemns present industrial arrangements as unjust and criminal, and holds out no hope to the worker for lasting results from this system.

Of course Syndicalism, like the old trade unions, fights for immediate gains, but it is not stupid enough to pretend that labor can expect humane conditions from inhuman economic arrangements in society. Thus it merely wrests from the enemy what it can force him to yield; on the whole, however, Syndicalism aims at, and concentrates its energies upon, the complete overthrow of the wage system. Indeed, Syndicalism goes further: it aims to liberate labor from every institution that has not for its object the free development of production for the benefit of all humanity. In short, the ultimate purpose of Syndicalism is to reconstruct society from its present centralized, authoritative and brutal state to one based upon the free, federated grouping of the workers along lines of economic and social liberty.

With this object in view, Syndicalism works in two directions: first, by undermining the existing institutions; secondly, by developing and educating the workers and cultivating their spirit of solidarity, to prepare them for a full, free life, when capitalism shall have been abolished.

Syndicalism is, in essence, the economic expression of Anarchism. That circumstance accounts for the presence of so many Anarchists in the Syndicalist movement. Like Anarchism, Syndicalism prepares the workers along direct economic lines, as conscious factors in the great struggles of today, as well as conscious factors in the task of reconstructing society along autonomous industrial lines, as against the paralyzing spirit of centralization with its bureaucratic machinery of corruption, inherent in all political parties.

Realizing that the diametrically opposed interests of capital and labor can never be reconciled, Syndicalism must needs repudiate the old rusticated, worn-out methods of trade unionism, and declare for an open war against the capitalist régime, as well as against every institution which today supports and protects capitalism.

As a logical sequence Syndicalism, in its daily warfare against capitalism, rejects the contract system, because it does not consider labor and capital equals, hence cannot consent to an agreement which the one has the power to break, while the other must submit to without redress.

For similar reasons Syndicalism rejects negotiations in labor disputes, because such a procedure serves only to give the enemy time to prepare his end of the fight, thus defeating the very object the workers set out to accomplish. Also, Syndicalism stands for spontaneity, both as a preserver of the fighting strength of labor and also because it takes the enemy unawares, hence compels him to a speedy settlement or causes him great loss.

Syndicalism objects to a large union treasury, because money is as corrupting an element in the ranks of labor as it is in those of capitalism. We in America know this to be only too true. If the labor movement in this country were not backed by such large funds, it would not be as conservative as it is, nor would the leaders be so readily corrupted. However, the main reason for the opposition of Syndicalism to large treasuries consists in the fact that they create class distinctions and jealousies within the ranks of labor, so detrimental to the spirit of solidarity. The worker whose organization has a large purse considers himself superior to his poorer brother, just as he regards himself better than the man who earns fifty cents less per day.

The chief ethical value of Syndicalism consists in the stress it lays upon the necessity of labor getting rid of the element of dissension, parasitism and corruption in its ranks. It seeks to cultivate devotion, solidarity and enthusiasm, which are far more essential and vital in the economic struggle than money.

As I have already stated, Syndicalism has grown out of the disappointment of the workers with politics and parliamentary methods. In the course of its development Syndicalism has learned to see in the State --- with its mouthpiece, the representative system --- one of the strongest supports of capitalism; just as it has learned that the army and the church are the chief pillars of the State. It is therefore that Syndicalism has turned its back upon parliamentarism and political machines, and has set its face toward the economic arena wherein alone gladiator Labor can meet his foe successfully.

Historic experience sustains the Syndicalists in their uncompromising opposition to parliamentarism. Many had entered political life and, unwilling to be corrupted by the atmosphere, withdrew from office, to devote themselves to the economic struggle --- Proudhon, the Dutch revolutionist Nieuwenhuis, John Most and numerous others. While those who remained in the parliamentary quagmire ended by betraying their trust, without having gained anything for labor. But it is unnecessary to discuss here political history. Suffice to say that Syndicalists are anti-parliamentarians as a result of bitter experience

Equally so has experience determined their anti-military attitude. Time and again has the army been used to shoot down strikers and to inculcate the sickening idea of patriotism, for the purpose of dividing the workers against themselves and helping the masters to the spoils. The inroads that Syndicalist agitation has made into the superstition of patriotism are evident from the dread of the ruling class for the loyalty of the army, and the rigid persecution of the anti-militarists. Naturally --- for the ruling class realizes much better than the workers that when the soldiers will refuse to obey their superiors, the whole system of capitalism will be doomed.

Indeed, why should the workers sacrifice their children that the latter may be used to shoot their own parents? Therefore Syndicalism is not merely logical in its anti-military agitation; it is most practical and far-reaching, inasmuch as it robs the enemy of his strongest weapon against labor.

Now, as to the methods employed by Syndicalism --- Direct Action, Sabotage, and the General Strike.

DIRECT ACTION.---Conscious individual or collective effort to protest against, or remedy social conditions through the systematic assertion of the economic power of the workers.

Sabotage has been decried as criminal, even by so-called revolutionary Socialists. Of course, if you believe that property, which excludes the producer from its use, is justifiable, then sabotage is indeed a crime. But unless a Socialist continues to be under the influence of our bourgeois morality --- a morality which enables the few to monopolize the earth at the expense of the many --- he cannot consistently maintain that capitalist property is inviolate. Sabotage undermines this form of private possession. Can it therefore be considered criminal? On the contrary, it is ethical in the best sense, since it helps society to get rid of its worst foe, the most detrimental factor of social life.

Sabotage is mainly concerned with obstructing, by every possible method, the regular process of production, thereby demonstrating the determination of the workers to give according to what they receive, and no more. For instance, at the time of the French railroad strike of 1910 perishable goods were sent in slow trains, or in an opposite direction from the one intended. Who but the most ordinary philistine will call that a crime? If the railway men themselves go hungry, and the "innocent" public has not enough feeling of solidarity to insist that these men should get enough to live on, the public has forfeited the sympathy of the strikers and must take the consequences.

Another form of sabotage consisted, during this strike, in placing heavy boxes on goods marked "Handle with care," cut glass and china and precious wines. From the standpoint of the law this may have been a crime but from the standpoint of common humanity it was a very sensible thing. The same is true of disarranging a loom in a weaving mill, or living up to the letter of the law with all its red tape, as the Italian railway men did, thereby causing confusion in the railway service. In other words, sabotage is merely a weapon of defense in the industrial warfare, which is the more effective because it touches capitalism in its most vital spot, the pocket.

By the General Strike, Syndicalism means a stoppage of work, the cessation of labor. Nor need such a strike be postponed until all the workers of a particular place or country are ready for it. As has been pointed out by Pelloutier, Pouget, as well as others, and particularly by recent events in England, the General Strike may be started by one industry and exert a tremendous force. It is as if one man suddenly raised the cry "Stop the thief!" Immediately others will take up the cry, till the air rings with it. The General Strike, initiated by one determined organization, by one industry or by a small, conscious minority among the workers, is the industrial cry of "Stop the thief," which is soon taken up by many other industries, spreading like wildfire in a very, short time.

One of the objections of politicians to the General Strike is that the workers also would suffer for the necessaries of life. In the first place, the workers are past masters in going hungry; secondly, it

is certain that a General Strike is surer of prompt settlement than an ordinary strike. Witness the transport and miner strikes in England: how quickly the lords of State and capital were forced to make peace! Besides, Syndicalism recognizes the right of the producers to the things which they have created; namely, the right of the workers to help themselves if the strike does not meet with speedy settlement.

When Sorel maintains that the General Strike is an inspiration necessary for the people to give their life meaning, he is expressing a thought which the Anarchists have never tired of emphasizing. Yet I do not hold with Sorel that the General Strike is a "social myth," that may never be realized. I think that the General Strike will become a fact the moment labor understands its full value --- its destructive as well as constructive value, as indeed many workers all over the world are beginning to realize.

These ideas and methods of Syndicalism some may consider entirely negative, though they are far from it in their effect upon society to-day. But Syndicalism has also a directly positive aspect. In fact, much more time and effort is being devoted to that phase than to the others. Various forms of Syndicalist activity are designed to prepare the workers, even within present social and industrial conditions, for the life of a new and better society. To that end the masses are trained in the spirit of mutual aid and brotherhood, their initiative and self-reliance developed, and an esprit de corps maintained whose very soul is solidarity of purpose and the community of interests of the international proletariat.

Chief among these activities are the mutualités, or mutual aid societies, established by the French Syndicalists. Their object is, foremost, to secure work for unemployed members, and to further that spirit of mutual assistance which rests upon the consciousness of labor's identity of interests throughout the world.

In his "The Labor Movement in France," Mr. L. Levine states that during the year 1902 over 74,000 workers, out of a total of 99,000 applicants, were provided with work by these societies, without being compelled to submit to the extortion of the employment bureau sharks.

These latter are a source of the deepest degradation, as well as of most shameless exploitation, of the worker. Especially does it hold true of America, where the employment agencies are in many cases also masked detective agencies, supplying workers in need of employment to strike regions, under false promises of steady, remunerative employment.

The French Confédération had long realized the vicious rôle of employment agencies as leeches upon the jobless worker and nurseries of scabbery. By the threat of a General Strike the French Syndicalists forced the government to abolish the employment bureau sharks, and the workers' own mutualités have almost entirely superseded them, to the great economic and moral advantage of labor.

Besides the mutualités, the French Syndicalists have established other activities tending to weld labor in closer bonds of solidarity and mutual aid. Among these are the efforts to assist workingmen journeying from place to place. The practical as well as ethical value of such

assistance is inestimable. It serves to instill the spirit of fellowship and gives a sense of security in the feeling of oneness with the large family of labor. This is one of the vital effects of the Syndicalist spirit in France and other Latin countries. What a tremendous need there is for just such efforts in this country! Can anyone doubt the significance of the consciousness of workingmen coming from Chicago, for instance, to New York, sure to find there among their comrades welcome lodging and food until they have secured employment? This form of activity is entirely foreign to the labor bodies of this country, and as a result the traveling workman in search of a job --- the "blanket stiff" --- is constantly at the mercy of the constable and policeman, a victim of the vagrancy laws, and the unfortunate material whence is recruited, through stress of necessity, the army of scabdom.

I have repeatedly witnessed, while at the headquarters of the Confédération, the cases of workingmen who came with their union cards from various parts of France, and even from other countries of Europe, and were supplied with meals and lodging, and encouraged by every evidence of brotherly spirit, and made to feel at home by their fellow workers of the Confédération. It is due, to a great extent, to these activities of the Syndicalists that the French government is forced to employ the army for strikebreaking, because few workers are willing to lend themselves for such service, thanks to the efforts and tactics of Syndicalism.

No less in importance than the mutual aid activities of the Syndicalists is the cooperation established by them between the city, and the country, the factory worker and the peasant or farmer, the latter providing the workers with food supplies during strikes, or taking care of the strikers' children. This form of practical solidarity has for the first time been tried in this country during the Lawrence strike, with inspiring results.

And all these Syndicalist activities are permeated with the spirit of educational work, carried on systematically by evening classes on all vital subjects treated from an unbiased, libertarian standpoint --- not the adulterated "knowledge" with which the minds are stuffed in our public schools. The scope of the education is truly phenomenal, including sex hygiene, the care of women during pregnancy and confinement, the care of home and children, sanitation and general hygiene; in fact, every branch of human knowledge --- science, history, art --- receives thorough attention, together with the practical application in the established workingmen's libraries, dispensaries, concerts and festivals, in which the greatest artists and literati of Paris consider it an honor to participate.

One of the most vital efforts of Syndicalism is to prepare the workers, now, for their rôle in a free society, Thus the Syndicalist organizations supply its members with textbooks on every trade and industry, of a character that is calculated to make the worker an adept in his chosen line, a master of his craft, for the purpose of familiarizing him with all the branches of his industry, so that when labor finally takes over production and distribution, the people will be fully prepared to manage successfully their own affairs.

A demonstration of the effectiveness of this educational campaign of Syndicalism is given by the railroad men of Italy, whose mastery of all the details of transportation is so great that they could offer to the Italian government to take over the railroads of the country and guarantee their

operation with greater economy and fewer accidents than is at present done by the government.

Their ability to carry on production has been strikingly proved by the Syndicalists, in connection with the glass blowers' strike in Italy. There the strikers, instead of remaining idle during the progress of the strike, decided themselves to carry on the production of glass. The wonderful spirit of solidarity resulting from the Syndicalist propaganda enabled them to build a glass factory within an incredibly short time. An old building, rented for the purpose and which would have ordinarily required months to be put into proper condition, was turned into a glass factory within a few weeks, by the solidaric efforts of the strikers aided by their comrades who toiled with them after working hours. Then the strikers began operating the glass-blowing factory, and their cooperative plan of work and distribution during the strike has proved so satisfactory in every way that the experimental factory has been made permanent and a part of the glass-blowing industry in Italy is now in the hands of the cooperative organization of the workers.

This method of applied education not only trains the worker in his daily struggle but serves also to equip him for the battle royal and the future, when he is to assume his place in society as an intelligent, conscious being and useful producer, once capitalism is abolished.

Nearly all leading Syndicalists agree with the Anarchists that a free society can exist only through voluntary association, and that its ultimate success will depend upon the intellectual and moral development of the workers who will supplant the wage system with a new social arrangement, based on solidarity and economic well-being for all. That is Syndicalism, in theory and practice.

The Role of the Trade Unions: Anarcho-Syndicalist View

by Rudolph Rocker

THESE WERE THE CONSIDERATIONS WHICH led to the development of Revolutionary Syndicalism or, as it was later called, Anarcho-Syndicalism in France and other countries. The term workers' syndicate meant at first merely an organization of producers for the immediate betterment of their economic and social status. But the rise of Revolutionary Syndicalism gave this original meaning a much wider and deeper import. Just as the party is, so to speak, a unified organization with definite political effort within the modern constitutional state which seeks to maintain the present order of society in one form or another, so, according to the Unionist's view, the trade unions are the unified organization of labour and have for their purpose the defence of the producers within the existing society and the preparing for and practical carrying out of the reconstruction of social life in the direction of Socialism. They have, therefore, a double purpose: 1. To enforce the demands of the producers for the safeguarding and raising of their standard of living; 2. To

acquaint the workers with the technical management of production and economic life in general and prepare them to take the socio-economic organism into their own hands and shape it according to socialist principles.

Anarcho-Syndicalists are of the opinion that political parties are not fitted to perform either of these two tasks. According to their conceptions the trade union has to be the spearhead of the labour movement, toughened by daily combats and permeated by a socialist spirit. Only in the realm of economy are the workers able to display their full strength; for it is their activity as producers which holds together the whole social structure and guarantees the existence of society. Only as a producer and creator of social wealth does the worker become aware of his strength. In solidary union with his followers he creates the great phalanx of militant labour, aflame with the spirit of freedom and animated by the ideal of social justice. For the Anarcho-Syndicalists the labour syndicate are the most fruitful germs of a future society, the elementary school of Socialism in general. Every new social structure creates organs for itself in the body of the old organism; without this prerequisite every social evolution is unthinkable. To them Socialist education does not mean participation in the power policy of the national state, but the effort to make clear to the workers the intrinsic connections among social problems by technical instruction and the development of their administrative capacities, to prepare them for their role of re-shapers of economic life and give them the moral assurance required for the performance of their task. No social body is better fitted for this purpose than the economic fighting organisation of the workers; it gives a definite direction to their social activities and toughens their resistance in the immediate struggle for the necessities of life and the defence of their human rights. At the same time it develops their ethical concepts without which any social transformation is impossible: vital solidarity with their fellows in destiny and moral responsibility for their actions.

Just because the educational work of Anarcho-Syndicalists is directed toward the development of independent thought and action, they are outspoken opponents of all centralising tendencies which are so characteristic of most of the present labour parties. Centralism, that artificial scheme which operates from the top towards the bottom and turns over the affairs of administration to a small minority, is always attended by barren official routine; it crushes individual conviction, kills all personal initiative by lifeless discipline and bureaucratic ossification. For the state, centralism is the appropriate form of organisation, since it aims at the greatest possible uniformity of social life for the maintenance of political and social equilibrium. But for a movement whose very existence depends on prompt action at any favourable moment and on the independent thought of its supporters, centralism is a curse which weakens its power of decision and systematically represses every spontaneous initiative.

The organisation of Anarcho-Syndicalism is based upon the principles of Federalism, on free combination from below upward, putting the right of self-determination of every union above everything else and recognising only the organic agreement of all on the basis of like interests and common conviction. Their organisation is accordingly constructed on the following basis: The workers in each locality join the unions of their respective trades. The trade unions of a city or a rural district combine in Labor Chambers which constitute the centres for local propaganda and education, and weld the workers together as producers to prevent the rise of any narrow-minded factional spirit. In times of local labour troubles they arrange for the united co-operation of the

whole body of locally organised labour. All the Labour Chambers are grouped according to districts and regions to form the National Federation of Labor Chambers, which maintains the permanent connection among the local bodies, arranges free adjustment of the productive labour of the members of the various organisations on; co-operative lines, provides for the necessary co-ordination in the work of education and supports the local groups with council and guidance.

Every trade union is, moreover, federatively allied with all the organisations of the same industry, and these in turn with ' all related trades, so that all are combined in general industrial and agricultural alliances. It is their task to meet the demands of the daily struggles between capital and labour and to combine all the forces of the movement for common action where the; necessity arises. Thus the Federation of the Labor Chambers and the Federation of the Industrial Alliances constitute the two poles about which the whole life of the labour syndicates revolves.

Such a form of organisation not only gives the workers every opportunity for direct action in the struggle for their daily bread, but it also provides them with the necessary preliminaries for the reorganisation of society, their own strength, and without alien intervention in case of a revolutionary crisis. Anarcho-Syndicalists are convinced that a socialist economic order cannot be created by the decrees and statutes of any government, but only by the unqualified collaboration of the workers, technicians and peasants to carry on production and distribution by their own administration in the interest of the community and on the basis of mutual agreements. In such a situation the Labour Chambers would take over the administration of existing social capital in each community, determine the needs of the inhabitants of their districts and organise local consumption. Through the agency of the Federation of Labour Chambers it would be possible to calculate the total requirements of the whole country and adjust the work of production accordingly. On the other hand it would be the task of the Industrial and Agricultural Alliances to take control of all the instruments of production, transportation, etc., and provide the separate producing groups with what they need. In a word:

1. Organisation of the total production of the country by the Federation of the Industrial Alliances and direction of work by labour councils elected by the workers themselves;
2. Organisation of social contribution by the Federation of the Labor Chambers.

In this respect, also, practical experience has given the best instruction. It has shown that the many problems of a socialist reconstruction of society cannot be solved by any government, even when the famous dictatorship of the proletariat is meant. In Russia the Bolshevik dictatorship stood helpless for almost two years before the economic problems and tried to hide its incapacity behind a flood of decrees and ordinances most of which were buried at once in the various bureaus. If the world could be set free by decrees, there would long ago have been no problems left in Russia. In its fanatical zeal for power, Bolshevism has violently destroyed the most valuable organs of a socialist order, by suppressing the Co-operative Societies, bringing the trade unions under state control, and depriving the Soviets of their independence almost from the beginning. So the dictatorship of the proletariat paved the way not for a socialist society but for the most primitive type of bureaucratic state capitalism and a reversion to political absolutism which was long ago abolished in most countries by bourgeois revolutions. In his Message to the Workers of the West European countries Kropotkin said, rightfully: 'Russia has shown us the way in which

Socialism cannot be realised, although the people, nauseated with the old regime, expressed no active resistance to the experiments of the new government. The idea of workers' councils for the control of the political and economic life of the country is, in itself, of extraordinary importance . . . but so long as the country is dominated by the dictatorship of a party, the workers' and peasants' councils naturally lose their significance. They are hereby degraded to the same passive role which the representatives of the Estates used to play in the time of the absolute Monarchy."

The Struggle In Germany and Spain

IN GERMANY, HOWEVER, WHERE THE moderate wing of political socialism had attained power, Socialism, in its long years of absorption with routine parliamentary tasks, had become so bogged down that it was no longer capable of any creative action whatever. Even a bourgeois paper like the Frankfurter Zeitung felt obliged to confirm that "the history of European peoples had not previously produced a revolution that has been so poor in creative ideas and so weak in revolutionary energy." The mere fact that a party with a larger membership than any other of the various labour parties in the world, which was for many years the strongest political body in Germany, had to leave the field to Hitler and his gang without any resistance speaks for itself and presents an example of helplessness and weakness which can hardly be misunderstood.

One has only to compare the German situation of those days with the attitude of the Anarcho-Syndicalist labour unions in Spain and especially in Catalonia, where their influence was strongest, to realise the whole difference between the labour movement of these two countries. When in July, 1936 the conspiracy of the Fascist Army leaders ripened into open revolt, it was by the heroic resistance of the C.N.T. (National Federation of Labour) and the F.A.I. (Anarchist Federation of Iberia) that the Fascist uprising in Catalonia was put down within a few days, ridding this most important part of Spain of the enemy and frustrating the original plan of the conspirators to take Barcelona by surprise. The workers could then not stop half way; so there followed the collectivisation of the land and the taking over of the plants by the workers' and peasants' syndicates. This movement, which was released by the initiative of the C.N.T. and F.A.I. with irresistible power, overran Aragon, the Levante and other sections of the country and even swept along with it a large part of the unions of the Socialist Party in the U.G.T. (General Labour Union). This event revealed that the Anarcho-Syndicalist workers of Spain not only knew how to fight, but that they were also filled with the constructive ideas which are so necessary in the time of a real crisis. It is to the great merit of Libertarian Socialism in Spain that since the time of the First International it has trained the workers in that spirit which treasures freedom above all else and regards the intellectual independence of its adherents as the basis of its existence. It was the passive and lifeless attitude of the organised workers in other countries, who put up with the policy of non-intervention of their governments that led to the defeat of the Spanish workers and peasants after a heroic struggle of more than two and one half years.

The Political Struggle: Anarcho-Syndicalist View

IT HAS OFTEN BEEN CHARGED AGAINST Revolutionary Unionism that its adherents had no interest in the political structure of the different countries and consequently no interest in the political

struggles of the time. This idea is altogether erroneous and springs either from outright ignorance or wilful distortion of the facts. It is not the political struggle as such which distinguishes the Anarcho-Syndicalists from the modern labour parties, both in principles and tactics. but the form of this struggle and the aims which it has in view. Revolutionary Unionists pursue the same tactics in their fight against political suppression as against economic exploitation. But while they are convinced that along with the system of exploitation its political protective device, the state, will also disappear to give place to the administration of public affairs on the basis of free agreement, they do not at all overlook the fact that the efforts of organised labour within the existing political and social order must always be directed against any attack of reaction, and constantly widening the scope of these rights wherever the opportunity for this presents itself. The heroic struggle of the C.N.T. in Spain against Fascism was, perhaps, the best proof that the alleged non-political attitude of the Revolutionary Unionists is but idle talk.

But according to their opinion the point of attack in the political struggle lies not in the legislative bodies but in the people.

Political rights do not originate in parliaments; they are rather forced upon them from without. And even their enactment into; law has for a long time been no guarantee of their security. They do not exist because they have been legally set down on a piece of paper, but only when they have become the ingrown habit of a people, and when any attempt to impair them will meet with the violent resistance of the populace. Where this is not the case, there is no help in any parliamentary opposition or any Platonic appeals to the constitution. One compels respect from others when one knows how to defend one's dignity as a human being. This is not only true in private life; it has always been the same in political life as well.

All political rights and liberties which people enjoy to-day, they do not owe to the good will of their governments, but to their own strength. Governments have always employed every means in their power to prevent the attainment of these rights or render them illusory. Great mass movements and whole revolutions have been necessary to wrest them from the ruling classes, who would never have consented to them voluntarily. The whole history of the last three hundred years is proof of that. What is important is not that governments have decided to concede certain rights to the people, but the reason why they had to do this. Of course, if one accepts Lenin's cynical phrase and thinks of freedom merely as a "bourgeois prejudice", then, to be sure, political rights have no value at all for the workers. But then the countless struggles of the past, all the revolts and revolutions to which we owe these rights, are also without value. To proclaim this bit of wisdom it hardly was necessary to overthrow Tzarism, for even the censorship of Nicholas II would certainly have had no objection to the designation of freedom as a bourgeois prejudice.

If Anarcho-Syndicalism nevertheless rejects the participation in the present national parliaments, it is not because they have no sympathy with political struggles in general, but because its adherents are of the opinion that this form of activity is the very weakest and most helpless form of the political struggle for the workers. For the possessing classes, parliamentary action is certainly an appropriate instrument for the settlement of such conflicts as arise, because they are all equally interested in maintaining the present economic and social order. Where there is a common interest mutual agreement is possible and serviceable to all parties. But for the workers the situation is very

different. For them the existing economic order is the source of their exploitation and their social and political subjugation. Even the freest ballot cannot do away with the glaring contrast between the possessing and non-possessing classes in society. It can only give the servitude of the toiling masses the stamp of legality.

It is a fact that when socialist labour parties have wanted to achieve some decisive political reforms they could not do it by parliamentary action, but were obliged to rely wholly on the economic fighting power of the workers. The political general strikes in Belgium and Sweden for the attainment of universal suffrage are proof of this. And in Russia it was the great general strike in 1905 that forced the Tsar to sign the new constitution. It was the recognition of this which impelled the Anarcho-Syndicalists to centre their activity on the socialist education of the masses and the utilisation of their economic and social power. Their method is that of direct action in both the economic and political struggle of the time. By direct action they mean every method of the immediate struggle by the workers against economic and political oppression. Among these the outstanding are the strike in all its gradations, from the simple wage struggle to the general strike, organised boycott and all the other countless means which workers as producers have in their hands.

One of the most effective forms of direct action is the social strike, which was hitherto mostly used in Spain and partly in France, and which shows a remarkable and growing responsibility of the workers to society as a whole. It is less concerned with the immediate interests of the producers than with the protection of the community against the most pernicious outgrowths of the present system. The social strike seeks to force upon the employers a responsibility to the public. Primarily it has in view the protection of the consumers, of which the workers themselves constitute the great majority. Under the present circumstances the workers are frequently debased by doing a thousand things which constantly serve only to injure the whole community for the advantage of the employers. They are compelled to make use of inferior and often actually injurious materials in the fabrication of their products, to erect wretched dwellings, to put up spoiled foodstuffs and to perpetrate innumerable acts that are planned to cheat the consumer. To interfere vigorously is, in the opinion of the Revolutionary Unionists, the great task of the labour syndicates. An advance in this direction would at the same time enhance the position of the workers in society, and in larger measure confirm that position.

Direct action by organised labour finds its strongest expression in the general strike, in the stoppage of work in every branch of production in cases where every other means is failing. It is the most powerful weapon which the workers have at their command and gives the most comprehensive expression to their strength as a social factor. The general strike, of course, is not an agency that can be invoked arbitrarily on every occasion. It needs certain social assumptions to give it a proper moral strength and make it a proclamation of the will of the broad masses of the people. The ridiculous claim, which is so often attributed to the Anarcho-Syndicalists, that it is only necessary to proclaim a general strike in order to achieve a socialist society in a few days, is, of course just a ludicrous invention of ignorant opponents. The general strike can serve various purposes. It can be the last stage of a sympathetic strike, as, for example, in Barcelona in 1902 or in Bilbao in 1903, which enabled the miners to get rid of the hated truck system and compelled the employers to establish sanitary conditions in the mines. It can also be a means of organised labour

to enforce some general demand, as, for example, in the attempted general strike in the U.S.A. in 1886, to compel the granting of the eight-hour day in ail industries. The great general strike of the English workers in 1926 was the result of a planned attempt by the employers to lower the general standard of living of the workers by a cut in wages.

But the general strike can also have political objectives in view. as, for example, the fight of the Spanish workers in 1904 for the liberation of the political prisoners, or the general strike in Catalonia in July 1909, to force the government to terminate its criminal war in Morocco. Also the general strike of the German workers in 1920, which was instituted after the so-called Kapp putsch and put an end to a government that had attained power by a military uprising, belongs to this category. In such critical situations the general strike takes the place of the barricades of the political uprisings of the past. For the workers, the general strike is the logical outcome of the modern industrial system, whose victims they are to-day, and at the same time it offers them their strongest weapon in the struggle for their social liberation, provided they recognise their own strength and learn how to use this weapon properly.