

The Solidarity of Anarchism and the Fight against the Left

By D. IVON JONES

THE "Anarchist" incident in the closing session of the Red Trade Union Congress is too significant to pass over without comment. It was not a mere misunderstanding which, through good fortune, was smoothed over. Given other conditions it could have developed into a grand combat with West European anarchism—the left menace to the Revolution. One felt we were back again in the old atmosphere of Marx versus Bakunin. Such a propitious ground of attack on Anarcho-Syndicalist philosophy may not appear again, as that arising from the request of the Anarcho-Syndicalist delegation for the Soviet Republic to release the Anarchists in prison, Anarchists caught with arms in their hands conspiring against the proletarian Republic. What will the workers of France, who in the mass do not care a fig for theory when they are faced with a fact, what will they think of such an astounding request? The only drawback to making an issue of the matter is that its proletarian exponents are the dupes of petty bourgeois ideology, and may themselves be quite sincere fighters for the revolution. Although, in reading the reports of the Red Trade Union Congress, one cannot but notice the complete absence of all reference to the Soviet régime and the Dictatorship of the proletariat in the speeches of the anti-political Syndicalists at this congress. The vague word "revolution" is not enough to define working class intentions.

Are they Different?

Bucharin, in making his statement on the imprisoned Anarchists, said that Russian Anarchism is different from West European Anarchism. I think he said this more for the sake of good feeling than of good theory. In other circumstances he would probably have said that Anarchism is at a more advanced stage of expression in Russia than in Western Europe. Just as Communism is more advanced here, so its enemies to Right and to Left have their inherent propensities brought out more blatantly into the open day. What difference is there between the Machno bands which say: "Down with all governments," and the West European Anarchist, who, with mellifluous libertarian phrases, denounces all interference, even proletarian interference, with individual liberty? The only difference is that Machno has passed to the propaganda of the deed.

In Machno the economic basis for Anarchism is exposed. He hates all governments, because all governments rob the poor rich peasants of their hoards of bread. The White Government plunders

him for profit. The Red Government takes his store of corn for the common good. The philosophic Anarchist does not confess even to himself the economic root of his libertarian phrases. He does not know their root.* Petty bourgeois Anarchism, like petty bourgeois reformism, draws on all classes for exponents; even on the proletarian class, the class which has no hoards of bread, it imposes its psychology, as in France.

As Plechanoff showed in his work on Anarchism, it is idle for the philosophic Anarchist to disavow the propaganda of the deed. Firstly, their writings, their phrases and their slogans, become the slogans of the Machno band and the bomb-thrower. Secondly, Plechanoff showed how the philosophic companions greeted the propaganda of the deed when any of the more ardent brethren bombed a Parliament or stabbed a king. While disavowing the act, they greeted the propagandist by deed as worthy of Anarchism. There is no halting place for Anarchism between the phrase and the deed. The very ethereal and refined Berkman provide the watchword for the more practical Machnos. It is a true instinct, therefore, which makes the philosophic brethren of the West plead for the bomb-throwing brethren of Russia.

Anarchism and Anti-Parliamentarism

Anti-Parliamentarism in itself is no sign of Anarchism. Tom Mann was a doughty antagonist of parliamentary reformism in his old syndicalist days, before the conditions of revolutionary political action had yet fully evolved. Much that is healthy disgust with "parliamentary cretinism" goes under the name of Anarchism in Italy, France and Spain. The test of its sincerity is the willingness of such elements not only to acclaim the Soviet Republic (many bourgeois liberals do that), not only to acclaim the Communist International as the fighting head of the proletariat—both these institutions are far away in Moscow, and the petty bourgeois has a habit of acclaiming many things as good at a distance which he will bitterly oppose at home—no, the test of sincerity in such Anarchist or Syndicalist elements, so-called, is their readiness to see in the Communist Party right at home the necessary weapon of emancipation, of the fight against the bourgeois state power.

At the Red Trade Union Congress the Anarchist-Syndicalist elements opposed any relation with either the Communist parties or the Communist International, and even evaded references to the Soviet Republic and the Dictatorship of the proletariat. Without these weapons of revolution, the Anarcho-Syndicalists have failed to show, have not even attempted to show, how they will pull down

*It is a mishandling of the Materialist conception to speak of the "Economic Roots of Ideas." Ideas are exploited but not produced by economic interests. Ideas clamour for admission. Ruling interests decide which ones shall enter the doors of publicity. In a larger sense, of course, the production of ideas is conditioned by the material surroundings as variously seen by thinking men. But the subject is too big to enter into here. It involves the "sincerity" of the propagandist, which is always a tough nut to crack for the counter-propagandist. See Marx in "Eighteenth Brumaire" on relation of petty bourgeois class to its representatives among the Intelligentsia.—D. I. J.

and keep down the bourgeois State power, and how they will build up a proletarian State upon its ruins.

Anarchism and the Petty-Bourgeoisie

Without these conditions of struggle, the Anarcho-Syndicalists express only the aims of the petty bourgeoisie, who wish to break up the big capitalist State, but not to build another in its place. Anarchism is the paradise of the petty bourgeoisie. Anarchism is the ideology of the disgruntled bourgeois, squeezed out in the furious race for profits. "Scratch an Anarchist and you will find a reformist, scratch a reformist and you will find an Anarchist," said Daniel De Leon. But while expressing the vague longings of the petty bourgeois for a state of society, not where all shall be proletarians, but where all shall be petty bourgeois, Anarchism, especially in the form of Anarcho-Syndicalism, serves the purpose of the capitalist domination. The petty trader longs for some weapon against the big capitalist State which will not itself become an organised State power. It wont have the Communist Party for that reason. It has no weapon of its own except the futile one of non-resistance. He sees a weapon in Anarcho-Syndicalism, because it dissipates the power of the proletariat just at the point when it would become an organised State power. Thus both the big and small capitalists are pleased.

Anarcho-Syndicalism pretends that in opposing the Communist Party it only wants to keep the movement purely proletarian on the industrial field. It ignores the overwhelming power of the Capitalist Press, its power to give bourgeois minds to common proletarians. Thus, in the Syndicates without a party, instead of the clear-minded proletarians being able to move to a common watchword and close discipline unhampered by the amorphous mass, as they would be in the form of a Communist Party, they are assimilated to the general level of the mass. The mass can only see its immediate interests. The clear-headed proletarians, gathered together in the form of a Communist Party to direct the mass, see also the ultimate interests of the working class, and are able to guide the masses accordingly. Thus Anarcho-Syndicalism, in spite of its high-sounding phrases, by this very boycott of the organisation of the clear-headed sections of the proletarians into a common group—called a party—hinders most effectively the pursuit of the ultimate aims of the proletariat. It splits up the class movement into a false antagonism of political versus industrial. The amorphous mass of the trades unions, no matter how well organised, well led, are left wholly at the mercy of bourgeois press propaganda, and other bourgeois agencies at the crucial moments. The circumambient air is bourgeois. Even though the leaders be true, having no party following, their voices pitted against the tornado of the bourgeois press, are not heard even by their own membership. The mass moves to its immediate interests only. And Anarcho-Syndicalism in the hour of revolution, would halt the proletariat at the stage of immediate demands, at the stage of disrupting the capitalist State power in the interests of the petty bourgeoisie, without going for-

ward to the formation of a proletarian State power in the interest of the proletariat. We are here speaking of class motives, class designs of an instinctive character imposed upon the workers by petty bourgeois Anarchism. In actual fact, of course, the conditions for the most effective struggle for the immediate needs of the proletariat are also, in the revolutionary crisis, the condition for the attainment of the ultimate objective. The means and the end become one. The dualism of the peaceful era of capitalism vanishes.

Other Symptoms

It is this instinct of the petty bourgeois, this unavowed desire for a political instrument of destruction, which is behind such schemes as Guild Socialism. How it loves to harp on the "consumer." It longs for a state of consumers, based on Orage's instruments of consumption. Meanwhile the trades unions are to control industry, including no doubt the State's Army and Navy! What abnegation! Here is the Anarcho-Syndicalist idea of the after-the-revolution period. Like the Anarchist pure and simple, it dotes on the saving power of the consumer. The proletarian forces, it will be seen, have been good enough to smash up the capitalist State, and then withdrawn to second place to make room for the "consumer," the universal customer. Anarcho-Syndicalism and Guild Socialism makes the proletariat pull the chestnuts out of the fire for the petty bourgeoisie. Because such schemes are Utopian, futile, childish in the extreme to any student of history, it does not follow that they are harmless. In the meantime the sabotaging of the workers' revolutionary party by the Anarcho-Syndicalists to the tune of seemingly ultra-revolutionary slogans, does incalculable harm to the revolution.

The counter-revolutionary effect of the Anarcho-Syndicalist doctrine has been laid bare by the Kronstadt mutiny, where the slogan of the counter-revolution was "Soviets without the Communists." The Vienna Congress of the Two-and-a-Half International pledged itself to Soviets, but minus the 21 points. Thus Anarcho-Syndicalism, Guild Socialism and Reform Pacifism at last find their joint image in the slogan of the Kronstadt counter-revolution, in the camp of the White Guard. So long as classes have not disappeared, so long as the whole of the people have not been turned into producers, Soviets or trade unions without the guiding hand of the Communist Party must inevitably deteriorate into amorphous bodies and become a prey to bourgeois influences. The petty bourgeois have no instrument of their own. They waver between the two big classes. They see an instrument in the trades unions, even in the Soviets, if properly misguided on the lines of Anarcho-Syndicalism. Hence why it is that in countries like France and Spain, with preponderant petty-proprietorship, the prevailing habits of thought tend to permeate the workers' organisations, disguised as anti-capitalist thought, but in reality not pro-proletarian. Thus we have the Comite Syndicaliste Revolutionnaire (C.S.R.), appealing for a return to the Charter of Amiens, which is the identical appeal which Jouhaux, the henchman of Big Capital, makes. Forward to the Communist International, not back to the

Charter of Amiens, is the test of true revolutionary policy to-day. As the pressure increases the rank and file must more and more look to a revolutionary political party of the working class to guide and direct the struggle, even though the Anarcho-Syndicalist leaders themselves may be too deeply rooted in old prejudices and forms of thought, to say nothing of "amour propre," to change. Meanwhile, these leaders, who like the Bourbons, learn nothing and forget nothing, are doing a great dis-service to the proletarian cause by their separatism in regard to the Communist International and their solidarity in regard to the Russian Anarchists—two expressions of the one anti-proletarian idea.

D. IVON JONES.

BACK NUMBERS OF THE "Communist Review"

Those who are anxious to make up a complete set of the
"Communist Review"

may obtain some of the back numbers, price 8d. each,
post free, by sending their order to:—

16, King Street,
Covent Garden,
London, W.C. 2

So great was the demand for the August issue that we printed an additional supply. This is the celebrated number that contains the now famous speech by Lenin on the modern tactics of the Russian Communist Party. It also contains a remarkable statement on revolutionary policy prepared by Lenin, Trotsky, Zinoviev, Radek, Bukarin and Kameneff. There is, further, the interesting theses by Zinoviev on the relation of industrial organisations to the political party and a series of half-tone portraits of distinguished leaders in the International Revolutionary Movement. The August issue of the

"Communist Review"

was a special International Congress number. Branches and Agents should note that this particular issue should be placed in the hands of all new members of the Party, and that they ought to stock sufficient copies to last until the fourth International Communist Congress takes place.