The Meaning of Anarchism Via Twelve Libertarians

Anarcho

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Contents

This talk was given in January and February 2018 at the Five Leaves bookshop in Nottingham. As the name suggests, it discusses what anarchism is via the ideas and lives of twelve libertarians. The first part covered six male anarchists and the second six female ones.

The decision to split the talks into two based on "Founding Fathers and Mothers" was not mine's and perhaps not the best as it creates some duplication and, of course, somewhat obscures that male and female libertarians interacted and influenced each other. Still, I think it went well and helped bring out some issues which are often forgotten in introductory talks. Both presentations can be found here and both included a few slides in appendices which were not used in the end nor included in this write-up.

Part 1: The Founding Fathers, 1840 to 1940

Thank you for coming. As you know, this meeting was advertised as follows:

> Anarchism is a much misunderstood and much misrepresented theory. Rejecting the chaos of capitalism and statism, it seeks to create the order of libertarian socialism, a free society of free associates. To discover more, please join Iain McKay (author of *An Anarchist FAQ*) for an exploration of libertarian ideas by means of six male and six female anarchist thinkers and activists.
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> Over two nights, the lives and ideas of the founding fathers and mothers of anarchism –including Michael Bakunin, Peter Kropotkin, Louise Michel and Emma Goldman –will be discussed and their continuing relevance highlighted.

Tonight, I will discuss the following key male anarchist thinkers:

Pierre-Joseph Proudhon

Joseph Déjacque

Michael Bakunin

Peter Kropotkin

Errico Malatesta

Rudolf Rocker

Some are better known than others, but hopefully you will learn something new about all of them. I will cover six key female ones at next week's talk. By discussing the ideas of these specific individuals I hope to indicate the meaning of Anarchism and why you should become an anarchist.

Sages and Movements

First, though, I must address some common misunderstandings.

Some trace Anarchism back to the dawn of civilisation. There is some merit in this for, yes, those subject to hierarchies did conclude the need to end them and have done so over the centuries – but these anarchistic ideas and movement did not call themselves anarchist even if retrospectively anarchists have recognised their libertarian tendencies.

Anarchism – as a named socio-economic theory and movement – dates from 1840, with the publication of Pierre-Joseph Proudhon's seminal *What is Property?*. It is the product of rise of capitalism, the failure of the French Revolution and the growth of labour protest. Needless to say, it did not appear fully formed but rather developed over time as I will sketch in these talks. Nor was it the product of a few isolated men and women of genius: it was part of the wider labour and socialist movements and all had mutual influences and interactions.

As I will note, there are different schools of anarchist thought and while certain thinkers are more associated with specific ones than others, all have a substantial amount in common. So there is a core set of ideas which make a theory, theorist or movement libertarian and, indeed, thinkers only became influential because they championed – and developed – ideas already raised in the wider movement. Needless to say, these thinkers – or "Sages" as they have been called, although not usually by anarchists – have not always been anarchists, they have not always been consistently anarchists and they have not always been right.

Pierre-Joseph Proudhon (1809–1865)

The first libertarian I will discuss is Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, without whom we would not be called anarchists even if we advocate the same ideas.

Proudhon was born into the French working class, having to leave school to work in a printers to help support his family and was the first person to self-describe as an anarchist in 1840 (plenty of rebels had been called anarchists by others before then, but not as a complement). A prolific author, he was an active participation in the 1848 Revolution which deepened his critiques of both State and Capital – in part influenced by his time as a politician, for he was elected to the French Assembly on 4 June 1848. Quickly becoming the public face of the left due to his refusal to be silenced after the crushing of the June Revolt of that year, his parliamentary immunity was finally stripped due to his warnings that President Louis-Napoleon aimed for a dictatorship. He was imprisoned for three years (1849–52) which meant, ironically, he was safe from the repression produced by Louis-Napoleon's *coup d'état* of December 1851. Freed in 1852, he was subject to surveillance and censorship before exiling himself in Belgium between 1858 and 1862 after the publication of *Justice in the Church and in the Revolution* saw him persecuted for attacking religion and morality. Returning to France, he wrote extensively on federalism and dictated his final work, *On the Political Capacity of the Working Classes*, on his death bed.

Easily the most prolific libertarian writer, his numerous books include his three *Memoirs* on Property – *What is Property?* (1840), *Letter to Blanqui* (1841), *Warning to Proprietors* (1842) – and *System of Economic Contradictions* (1846). The semi-autobiographical *Confessions of a Revolutionary* (1849/1851) discusses the 1848 Revolution while the *General Idea of the Revolution* (1851) is his most constructive book, being based on the experiences of this failed revolution. Likewise, *The Federative Principle* (1863) outlines his ideas on the socio-economic federalism which would replace capitalism and the State. He was also the author of numerous pamphlets and articles in such papers as *Le Représentant du Peuple, Le Peuple* and *La Voix du Peuple* (all published – and suppressed – during the 1848 Revolution).

Most of his writings have never been translated into English although a comprehensive selection is in the anthology *Property is Theft!*.

What is Property?

Proudhon is best known for one of his answers to the title of his first book: *What is Property?* It did spawn a well-known joke (why do anarchists drink herbal tea? Because proper tea of theft!) but we must remember that this answer was ground-breaking and ensured his fame (or infamy): "Property is Theft."

This theft happened in two ways. First, the majority are excluded by property from the means of life and so "the people [...] will have nowhere to rest, no place of shelter, no ground to till. They will die of hunger at the proprietor's door, on the edge of that property which was their birth-right; and the proprietor, watching them die, will exclaim, 'So perish idlers and vagrants!'"

Second, this results in the exploitation of the worker by the owner and so while the "[Capitalists] have paid all the individual forces, the collective force still remains to be paid." The initial theft of resources from the people ensures the ongoing theft by the owners of the surplus produced by workers.

Yet we should not forget that Proudhon also argued that "Property is Despotism" as it creates hierarchical social relations based on economic classes – it creates "the proprietor [...] to whom [the worker] has sold and surrendered his liberty" and this "proprietor is sovereign lord within the sphere of his property, absolute king throughout his own domain." This is why libertarians oppose private property:

> "Liberty is inviolable. I can neither sell nor alienate my liberty; every contract, every condition of a contract, which has in view the alienation or suspension of liberty, is null [...] Liberty is the original condition of man; to renounce liberty is to renounce the nature of man: after that, how could we perform the acts of man?"

Yet if Proudhon was against capitalism, he was also against State Socialism (what he termed *Communauté*), arguing that it equalled State Capitalism for "the community is proprietor, and proprietor not only of the goods, but of the persons and wills." I think we can agree that history has confirmed this critique.

"Universal Association"

So what was his alternative to private and State Capitalism? He called it many things over his life but initially he called it the "Universal Association" and it would be based on free association and free access for "liberty — whose sole function is to maintain equality in the means of production and equivalence in exchanges — is the only possible, the only just, the only true form of society."

This logically meant socialisation of the means of life, of workplaces and the land, based on use rights or possession. "Every occupant," he argued, is "necessarily a possessor or usufructuary – a function which excludes proprietorship [...] Man receives his usufruct from the hands of society, which alone is the permanent possessor." The "right to product is exclusive — *jus in re*; the right to means is common — *jus ad rem"* he stressed, and so "all property becomes [...] collective and undivided [...] Products are bought only by products." This would create a world of "possessors without masters" in which "leaders, instructors, superintendents [...] must be chosen from the workers by the workers themselves, and must fulfil the conditions of eligibility." He called this "industrial Democracy" in 1857 (and was one of the first, if not the first, to use the term) within an "agricultural-industrial federation," to use the expression from his 1863 book, *The Federative Principle*.

Such a system would now be called Federal Market Socialism and rather than abstractly compare the grim reality of capitalism to visions of a perfect world, Proudhon's ideas about a free society were based on the critique of capitalism and tendencies within it which point beyond it. Thus, for example, his analysis of how property exploits workers drove his ideas on industrial democracy for "by virtue of the principle of collective force, workers are the equals and associates of their leaders."

Hie socialism was based on social-economic association. Rather than the supporter of small-scale property painted by his critics (primarily Marxists), he was well aware that "under uni-

versal association, ownership of the land and of the instruments of labour is *social* ownership" and he aimed for the "abolition of capitalism and wage labour, the transformation of property [...] governmental decentralisation, the organisation of universal suffrage [...] the substitution of the contractual regime for the legal regime." This federalist system would be based on equality between members:

> "There will no longer be nationality, no longer fatherland [...] only places of birth. Whatever a man's race or colour, he is really a native of the universe; he has citizen's rights everywhere."

Such rights, as should be clear now, did not stop at the workplace door and so anarchism would be based on functional self-management for "each citizen in the sphere of his industry, each municipal, district or provincial council within its own territory, is the only natural and legitimate representative of the Sovereign [...] workers [had] to form themselves into democratic societies, with equal conditions for all members." This means that any libertarian organisation would have elected *delegates* and not representatives for they would be subject to "the imperative mandate and are recallable at will."

Rather than elect a few representatives who do what they like for four or five years, an anarchist society would place power in the hands of those affected by decisions. This would ensure that "the masses are actually, positively and effectively sovereign: how could they not be when the economic organism — labour, capital, property and assets — belongs to them entirely."

Why not the State?

Which raises an obvious question and one which has divided socialists from the start – why not use the State to achieve social change? For Proudhon, the question simply showed a lack of understanding about what the State is: it is a bourgeois body which cannot be captured by the people for it is "nothing but the offensive and defensive alliance of those who possess, against those who do not possess; and the only part played by the citizen is to pay the police." As such, the State has evolved certain characteristics which allow it to do this function and which therefore preclude it from being a popular institution. Foremost amongst these is centralisation:

> "And who benefits from this regime of unity? [...] the upper classes [...] bourgeois exploitation under the protection of bayonets. [...] the cornerstone of bourgeois despotism and exploitation"

This meant that the State was, as he put it in 1846, "inevitably enchained to capital and directed against the proletariat." Yet while it was an instrument of minority class rule – the instrument of the owning class – this was not all. It was also power apart, with its own interests as befitting its hierarchical and centralised nature:

> "We do not want the State, because the State [...] no sooner exists than it creates an interest of its own, apart from and often contrary to the interests of the people [...] it makes civil servants its own creatures, from which results nepotism, corruption, and little by little to the formation of an official tribe, enemies of labour as well as of liberty"

The State, then, was "that alienation of public power for the profit of a few ambitious men" and to "concentrate all public powers in the hands of a single authority [...] only created despotism" in which the "President and the Representatives, once elected, are the masters; all the rest obey." As such, eliminating the capitalist class by means of the State would simply create a new ruling class – the members of government and the State bureaucracy.

I should note that this was no abstract analysis as Proudhon was, for a time, an elected representative in the National Assembly. He recounted his experiences in the quasi-autobiographical account of the 1848 revolution, *Confessions of a revolutionary*. Given that Proudhon's grave in Montparnasse cemetery (Paris) is listed as that of a politician, perhaps this book would have been better entitled *Confessions of a Stateman*? Still, perhaps not as this time confirmed his anti-Statism – being up close with the machinery of parliament brough home its unsuitably for social change due to the isolation and ignorance it caused:

> "Since I first set foot on this parliamentary Sinai, I ceased to be in contact with the masses: by absorbing myself in my legislative work, I had completely lost view of current affairs [...] One has to experience this isolation called a national assembly to understand how the men who are the most completely ignorant of the state of a country are nearly always those who represent it."

In *Confessions* he quoted *System of Economic Contradictions* on the State being an instrument of the bourgeoisie and noted that his experiences as a politician had confirmed this analysis. Hence the pressing need for a Socialism *from Below*:

"*From above* [...] signifies power; *from below* signifies the people. [...] the initiative of the masses. [...] Revolution on the initiative of the masses is a revolution by the concerted action of the citizens, by the experience of the workers, by the progress and diffusion of enlightenment, revolution by the means of liberty."

Proudhon was the first to understand this difference and the need for social change to come from the masses, otherwise tyranny would be produced. Hence he attacked his colleagues on the left as much as his enemies on the right: "Louis Blanc represents governmental socialism, revolution by power, as I represent democratic socialism, revolution by the people. An abyss exists between us."

Given this, the State can be "invited, provoked or compelled by some power outside of itself" towards reform – electing a few politicians to enact change would never work. Thus other means of changes were needed, means rooted in working class self-activity. As a reformist, he was opposed to insurrection and violence but he recognised that "to combat and reduce power [...] an agricultural and industrial combination" was needed.

Although, unlike later anarchists, he opposed strikes and unions, he still thought that social transformation could only be the product of working class self-liberation and self-organisation as "workers [...] will accomplish that synthesis of social composition [...] and you alone can accomplish it." Social change was seen as being produced by the formation of federations of mutualist credit and productive associations and so the "Organisation of Credit" was seen as the means to "Organisation of Labour" – the end of wage-labour by workers' co-operatives. It could not be done any other way, for labour must *organise itself* both to ensure "the organisation of labour by workers, without capitalists or masters" and to meet the multitude of needs, problems and changes a society faced. This meant that "the organisation of labour must not emanate from

the powers-that-be; it ought to be SPONTANEOUS" by the creation of social and economic dual-power to support the creation of co-operative credit, consumption and production as well as pressurise the State from outwith. Thus, during the 1848 Revolution, he argued that "a body representative of the proletariat be formed in Paris, *imperium in imperio,* in opposition to the bourgeoisie's representation" and by so doing "a new society be founded in the heart of the old society."

I have spent some time on Proudhon, I admit, but this is for good reason – he laid the foundations for the anarchists who came later and most of the ideas we associate with, say, Bakunin or Kropotkin were first argued for by him. This is generally not recognised simply due to lack of material available in English. And, before moving on, I must stress that – as Proudhon shows – anarchism has *never* been just against the State as some like to assert. Thus we find Proudhon reiterating time and time against his opposition to both State and Capital for "the capitalist principle and the monarchist or governmental principle are one and the same principle" and so it was the case that "the Revolution in 1848 struck authority. Authority is Church, State, Capital."

Our next libertarian built on this and extended it.

Joseph Déjacque (1821–1864)

Joseph Déjacque has unknown origins, although we do know he was a "paper hanger" by trade. He was, like Proudhon, imprisoned for socialist agitation during the 1848 Revolution and rearrested in 1851 for publishing a collection of poems. This quote from that trial gives a good idea of why he should be better known:

> "Mr. Déjacque," [the Attorney General] said, "is one of those hateful socialists who hold society in horror, and who have no other aim, no thought but to constantly excite the wicked passions of those who possess nothing against those who do possess, so that their detestable doctrines may triumph. This is how one foments the hatred of tenants towards landlords and especially of workers towards bosses."

So a fine upstanding member of society, I hope you agree!

After Louis Napoleon came to power, he escaped to Britain, then New Orleans in 1852. Whether in France or in exile, he wrote books and articles including *Les Lazaréennes, Fables et Poésies Sociales* (1851), *La question révolutionnaire* (1854), the justly famous *De l'être-humain mâle et femelle — Lettre à P.J. Proudhon* (1857) and the utopian vision of *L'Humanisphère, Utopie anarchique (1857)* as well as editing *Le Libertaire, Journal du Mouvement social* (1858–61) in America.

Déjacque's claim to fame is twofold.

First, he coined the term *Libertaire* (Libertarian) in his 1857 work *On the Male and Female Human-Being – Letter to P.J. Proudhon* in which he called upon Proudhon to "be frankly, fully anarchist" and stop supporting patriarchy:

> "Moderate anarchist, a *liberal* and not a LIBERTARIAN, you want free trade for cotton and candles and you advocate protectionist systems for man against woman in the circulation of human passions; you cry out against the high barons of capital and you wish to rebuild the high barony of the male upon the female vassal."

Déjacque noted the obvious contradictions in opposing the hierarchies associated with the State and property but embracing the hierarchies associated with the traditional home. To be a consistent anarchist meant recognising their similarities and opposing all three:

> "To place the question of the emancipation of woman in line with the question of the emancipation of the proletarian, this man-woman, or, to put it differently, this human-slave – flesh for the harem or flesh for the factory – this is understandable, and it is revolutionary"

Second, he extended Proudhon's critique of property and advocated "the anarchic-community" – or what was later called anarchist-communism. This meant "the abolition not only of the sword

and of capital, but of property and authority in every form" and create a society "where everyone would be free to produce and to consume at will and according to his fancy, without controlling anybody or being controlled by anyone else [...] is it not the same for all that is for human consumption, whether it be a raw material [...] or a finished product [...] ?" In other words, from each according to their abilities, to each according to their need – a maxim first raised by French socialist Louis Blanc rather than Karl Marx, incidentally.

He expounded these ideas in his newspaper *Le Libertaire* – the first of many anarchist papers, in many different languages, with the name *Libertarian* – stressing that "no, it is not the product of their labours to which the workers have a right. It is the satisfaction of their needs, whatever the nature of those needs." He noted the contradiction of arguing, like Proudhon, that the product of labour should be owned by the worker but the means of production should be shared by all:

> "To have the possession of the product of our labour is not to have *possession* of that which is proper to us, it is to have *property* in a product made by our hands, and which could be proper to others and not to us. And is not all property theft?"

He mocked those on the left who cannot see beyond hierarchy:

> "Many men [...] see in the demolition of reigning Authority nothing but a substitution of names or persons; they don't imagine that a society could function without masters or servants [...] they are like those reactionaries who say: 'There are always rich and poor, and there always will be. What would become of the poor without the rich? They would die of hunger!'"

Finally, he saw that ending the market – even a non-capitalist one – would need finding new means of economic decision making, "for an organisation of work to be revolutionary and social, it is therefore absolutely necessary to abolish master, capital or boss," "to abolish antagonism, isolation or competition, and [...] to find a new stimulant for production."

Michael Bakunin (1814–1876)

We now turn to one of the most well-known – and one of the most distorted – anarchists, someone most responsible for building modern, revolutionary, anarchism upon the foundations laid by Proudhon: Michael Bakunin.

Born into the Russian aristocracy, in the 1840s he rejected his background and became a republican. Leaving Russia, ostensibly to study to become a university lecturer, he soon joined the radical movement before taking an active part in the 1848 Revolutions as a Slav Nationalist. After manning the barricades in many insurrections, he was captured and sentenced to death before being sent to Russia and imprisoned for most of the 1850s. Eventually he was exiled to Siberia, escaping to the West in 1861 and immediately re-joined the revolutionary movement (so much for prison being a "deterrent"!).

While influenced by, and friends with, Proudhon, so far he was a radical federalist republican who realised that Slavic nationalism could only flourish with policies which addressed the social question, primarily land reform as he correctly predicted that peasants would not fight to replace rule by the Tsar with rule by their landlords. However, in the mid-1860s, he became an anarchist and formed the *International Alliance of Socialist Democracy* in 1868 and joined the *International Workers Association* the following year. It was his conflict with Marx in the International which ensured his place in history.

As you can imagine, his eventful life meant that he penned few books, indeed *Statism and Anarchy* (1873) is his most substantial work (and that was written in Russian for the blossoming populist movement in his homeland) while most of his other well-known works were published from notes after his death. He did write numerous articles for papers like the Swiss *Égalité* and he was a letter writer *extraordinaire*.

Free Association of Equals

Like Proudhon, Bakunin aimed for the free association of equals. This meant the freedom for all within free association for rather than the asocial individualist portrayed by Marxists, Bakunin had a very positive view of freedom and argued for a "freedom which consists in the full development of all the material, intellectual and moral powers which are found in the form of latent capabilities in every individual." This full freedom was inherently social for "man in isolation can have no awareness of his liberty. Being free for man means being acknowledged, considered and treated as such by another man. Liberty is therefore a feature not of isolation but of interaction, not of exclusion but rather of connection." Crucially, unlike Proudhon and like Joseph Déjacque, he was consistent and extended liberty to all of humanity:

> "Equal rights must belong to both men and women [...] Oppressed Women! Your cause is indissolubly tied to the common cause of all the exploited workers – men and women!"

Like his predecessors , Bakunin was aware that freedom needs equality and so socialism, arguing that "the *serious, final, complete emancipation of the workers is possible only on one condition [...] the appropriation of capital, that is to say the raw materials and all the instruments of labour, including land, by the workers collectively*." Like Proudhon, he understood that socialism from above was not socialism and that it had to be created and run from below by the people themselves:

> "The future social organisation must be made solely from the bottom upwards, by the free association or federation of workers, firstly in their unions, then in the communes, regions, nations and finally in a great federation, international and universal"

Like Proudhon, his anarchism was based on federations of workers associations replacing both Capital and State. Unlike the Frenchman, he called this Collectivism.

Mutualists and Collectivists

It was by championing these ideas that his influence grew within the International, much to Marx's chagrin. Yet it must be stressed that he did not somehow "invent" anarchism or "inject" it into the Association. No, far from it – the rise of collectivism began before he joined the International (as his own writings indicate).

Yet the rise of collectivism and the eclipse of the mutualists who helped found the International in 1864 (and, no, Marx did not found it) should not be seen as the rise of Marxism (as Marxists accounts always suggest). Rather, the debates of the time were between socialists heavily influenced by Proudhon (at congresses which Marx never bothered to attend). This can be seen from, for example, the resolution on Collective Ownership passed in 1868 which echoes Proudhon's 1851 book *General Idea of the Revolution* down to the very words used:

> "machines and collective force [...] must in the future only benefit the workers [...] contracted out not to capitalists, as today, but to workers companies, on a double contract; one [...] guaranteeing to society [...] the other guaranteeing the natural rights of every member of the worker Association with respect to his colleagues."

Essentially, these debates were between mutualists over extending collective ownership to land. As leading Collectivist César de Paepe (1841–1890) noted, "I am just as much a mutualist as Tolain [...] but I do not see that the collective ownership of land is opposed to the mutualist program." As well as urging collective ownership of land as well as industry, the collectivists can also be considered as mutualists who saw unions as Proudhon's "agricultural and industrial combination."

The ideas later called syndicalism developed in the First International. Thus we find French Internationalist, trade union organiser and future Communard Eugène Varlin (1839–1871) arguing that:

> "Unless you want to reduce everything to a centralising and authoritarian state [...] the workers themselves must have the free disposal of their instruments of labour [...] trade associations (resistance, solidarity, union) [...] are the natural elements of the social construction of the future; it is they who can easily become producer associations."

These syndicalist ideas were formally put to the International by French anarchist trade unionist Jean-Louis Pindy (1840–1917) and it was agreed that "resistance societies" were essential both "to prepare for the future and to ensure as far as possible the present [...] grouping of different trade unions by town and by country [...] forms the commune of the future [...] Government is replaced by the councils of the assembled trades unions."

This meant that the First International had two main schools of thought.

The first was associated with Michael Bakunin and it argued for direct action and unions as the focus of the International's day-to-day struggle with workers' councils as the means for achieving the social revolution:

> "Workers, no longer count on anyone but yourselves [...] Abstain from all participation in bourgeois radicalism and organise outside of it the forces of the proletariat. The basis of that organisation is entirely given: the workshops and the federation of the workshops [...] instruments of struggle against the bourgeoisie [...] The creation of Chambers of Labour [...] the liquidation of the State and of bourgeois society."

The second was associated with Karl Marx and it argued for political action and the transformation of the International into a political party with Parliament the focus for both day-to-day activity and as the means of achieving the revolution. As Engels summarised later:

> "In every struggle of class against class, the next end fought for is political power; the ruling class defends its political supremacy [...] its safe majority in the Legislature; the inferior class fights for, first a share, then the whole of that power, in order to become enabled to change existing laws in conformity with their own interests and requirements. Thus the working class of Great Britain for years fought ardently and even violently for the People's Charter, which was to give it that political power."

This was the theoretical, practical and organisational context for the clash between Bakunin and Marx, a clash which while often portrayed as driven by individuals actually expressed a deeper conflict and one which has recurred time and time again within the socialist movement between the advocates of direct action and electioneering.

Anarchism and Marxism

Bakunin's critique of Marxism was prophetic on many fronts.

First, he predicted that Social Democratic tactics would produce Reformism as "worker deputies, transferred into bourgeois surroundings and an atmosphere of entirely bourgeois political ideas, ceasing in fact to be workers by becoming Statesmen, will become bourgeois [...] For men do not make situations, on the contrary it is situations that make men." The history of every socialist party confirmed this. Second, based on an analysis of the State which saw that it equals *minority* rule, not people power, he arued that Marxism would create a new ruling class:

> "No state, however democratic [...] can ever give the people what they really want, i.e., the free self-organisation and administration of their own affairs from the bottom upward [...] because every state [...] is in essence only a machine ruling the masses from above, through a privileged minority of conceited intellectuals, who imagine that they know what the people need and want better than do the people themselves"

The State, he rightly argued, "has always been the patrimony of some privileged class" and ending the landlord and capitalism classes while retaining it simply means it "becomes the patrimony of the bureaucratic class." State capitalism would be created, not socialism, for nationalisation would simply mean State officials "concentrating in their own hands all [...] production [...] under the direct command of state engineers, who will form a new privileged scientific and political class." The history of every socialist revolution confirmed this.

Yet, and it is important to stress this as Marxists suggest otherwise, Bakunin's opposition to the so-called "workers' State" had nothing to do with defending a revolution. Hence we find him arguing that "to defend the revolution" we need to "form a communal militia" and "federate [...] for common defence."

So Bakunin developed *revolutionary* anarchism, an anarchism based on Direct Action not political action (electioneering). The International must "at first as its sole basis [wage] the exclusively economic struggle of labour against capital" for there is "only a single path [...] *emancipation through practice*" and this can only mean "the struggle of the workers in solidarity against the bosses. It is *trades unions, organisation and the federation of resistance funds*." In other words, liberation can be achieved only "by the development and organisation, not of the political but of the social (and, by consequence, anti-political) power of the working masses as much in the towns as in the countryside." Unions were seen as a means to both fight and replace capitalism:

> "The organisation of trade sections, their federation [...] and their representation by Chambers of Labour [...] uniting practice with theory [...] carry the living seeds of the *new social order* that is to replace the bourgeois world. They create not only the ideas but the very facts of the future."

The similarities with what was later called syndicalism are clear and it comes as no surprise to discover that Bakunin also viewed the General Strike was a means to start the revolution for when "strikes spread from one place to another, they come close to turning into a general strike" which "can result only in a great cataclysm which forces society to shed its old skin."

Still, in spite of these developments, Bakunin recognised the origins of many of his ideas and so argued that Collectivism was "Proudhonism widely developed and pushed right to these, its final consequences."

Peter Kropotkin (1842–1921)

While Bakunin helped create revolutionary anarchism in the last decade of his life, Peter Kropotkin helped develop it over the course of five decades. Like Bakunin, he was born into the Russian aristocracy but he was also a world renown scientist, specifically a geographer. He, likewise, rejected his elite background and although reading Proudhon while stationed in Siberia, he only become an anarchist during a trip to Switzerland in 1872. Returning to Russia, he took part in the rising populist movement before being arrested and imprisoned. He escaped in 1876 and went into exile, soon becoming an active member of the movement in France and the Swiss Jura. Due to his writing for, and editorship, of *Le Révolté*, he is arrested in France and after the 1883 Lyon show trail imprisoned. Public pressure ensured his release in 1885 and the following year he was again exiled, this time to Britain where he stayed until he finally returned to Russian after the February Revolution of 1917.

During his time in the movement, he wrote many Anarchist books which quickly became recognised as classics: *Words of a Rebel* (1885), *The Conquest of Bread* (1892), *The Great French Revolution, 1789–1793* (1909) and *Modern Science and Anarchy* (1913). However, he also produced many works on popular science and other subjects, including: *In Russian and French Prisons* (1887), *Fields, Factories and Workshops* (1898), his autobiography *Memoirs of a Revolutionist* (1899) and probably his most famous work, *Mutual Aid* (1902).

Yet this only accounts for a fraction of his writings, for he was the author of numerous articles and pamphlets in such libertarian newspapers as *Le Révolté, La Révolte, Les Temps Nouveaux* and *Freedom* (in fact, most of his anarchist books were collections of newspaper articles). He also contributed regularly to mainstream journals, most often the *Nineteenth Century*, a leading British liberal monthly.

A comprehensive selection of his works – books, pamphlets and articles – can be found in the anthology *Direct Struggle Against Capital*.

Mutual Aid

As noted, *Mutual Aid* is Kropotkin's most famous work – although it would appear that some who claim to have read it do not manage read beyond the title (even reading the subtitle would debunk many false notions about it: *A Factor of Evolution*). As he makes clear, it is a deliberately one-sided work as it is "a book on the law of Mutual Aid, viewed at as one of the chief factors of evolution – not of *all* factors of evolution and their respective values." So, rather than seeing nature as one big hippy lovefest, he saw that "the war of each against all is not the law of nature. Mutual aid is as much a law of nature as mutual struggle." As such, it is, as Kropotkin is at pains to stress, very much within the Darwinian tradition. It is based on the "survival of the fittest" (to use Herbert Spencer's expression) for it argued that "animals which acquire habits of mutual aid are undoubtedly the fittest" and that "life in societies is the most powerful weapon in the struggle for life."

Mutual aid (cooperation), in short, benefits individuals and secures survival of their off-spring as it allows "the maintenance and further development of the species, together with the greatest amount of welfare and enjoyment of life for the individual, with the least waste of energy." This position, it must be stressed, has become a standard part of modern sociobiology, although it is usually credited to Robert Trivers and termed "Reciprocal Altruism" rather than mutual aid. Yet the arguments are the same – even down to the enforcement mechanism by which the uncooperative are "treated as an enemy, or even worse." (to use Kropotkin's words)

Unions, Soviets, Assemblies

Kropotkin, like many anarchist thinkers, suffers more than his fair share of misunderstandings and, sadly, deliberate distortions. One of the most obvious is the picture painted of him as some kind of Anarcho-Santa, the gentle advocate of co-operation and – for the really ignorant – pacifism.

It is hard to know how anyone familiar with his ideas could suggest that, for even *Mutual Aid* does not ignore class struggle. Indeed, it is a key aspect of his account of social evolution and in his discussion of modern society points to "the extension and the force of labour organisations" as an example of "mutual aid," which is "constantly practised by" unions and strikers. Still, as we all know, not being familiar with someone's ideas had never stopped critics spouting forth upon them.

Lest we forget, for Kropotkin mutual aid allows individuals and species to flourish within a hostile environment and so it should come as no surprise that he argued that working class people had to organise collectively to resist the hostile environment of capitalism. As such, he was an advocate of syndicalism – revolutionary unionism — before and after the word was coined in the 1890s. Thus, to quote him from 1881, "to make revolution, the mass of workers must organise themselves, and resistance and the strike are excellent means by which workers can organise [...] What is required is to build resistance associations for each trade in each town [...] to federate across France, to federate across borders." He summarised the revolutionary anarchist position in his justly famously entry on Anarchism for *Encyclopaedia Britannia*:

> "the Anarchists have always advised taking an active part in those workers' organisations which carry on the *direct* struggle of Labour against Capital and its protector — the State."

"Unions," then where the "*natural organs for the direct struggle with capital and for the organisation of the future order"* but he also recognised the importance of similar organisations, like workers' councils (soviets), formed spontaneously during social struggles. Thus we find him during the 1905 Russian Revolution arguing that "the workers' Council [...] very much reminds us of the Central Committee which preceded the Paris Commune of 1871, and it is certain that workers across the country should organise on this model [...] these councils represent the revolutionary strength of the working class." The anarchists were the first tendency to see the potential of the soviets as a means to fight and replace the State.

Yet Kropotkin did not limit himself to industrial organisation. He also saw the need for community assemblies and placed them at the heart of his 1909 account of the Great French Revolution. Thus the "general assemblies of the sections [...] will educate every citizen politically [...] The

strength which this [...] gave to the [French] Revolution can be easily understood" and so the "conquest of liberty must begin in each village and each town."

While spontaneity was a factor in social change, Kropotkin was well aware that anarchists had a role to play in helped create what he termed "the spirit of revolt." Our role was to encourage direct action and self-organisation for, as he put it in his final book *Modern Science and Anarchy* (1913):

> "what means can the State provide to abolish this [capitalist] monopoly that the working class could not find in its own strength and groups? [...] Could its governmental machine, developed for the creation and upholding of these [capitalist] privileges, now be used to abolish them? Would not the new function require new organs? And these new organs would they not have to be created by the workers themselves, in *their* unions, *their* federations, completely outside the State?"

Needless to say, Kropotkin – like all anarchists – was aware that an anarchist society could never appear as if by magic. Indeed, he explicitly denounced what he correctly termed "the fallacy of a 'One-day Revolution.'" Revolution was a process, not an event, and has to have two key features if it were to be a success.

First, expropriation of the means of life – the land, workplaces, housing and so on. He was convinced that a successful revolution meant that workers "will not wait for orders from above before taking possession of land and capital. They will take them first, and *then* — already in possession of land and capital — they will organise their work." Only this would "create the situation where each person may live by working freely, without being forced to sell his work and his liberty to others who accumulate wealth by the labour of their serfs." Second, abolition of the State: "Tomorrow's Commune will [...] smash the State and replace it with the Federation."

Creating a world fit for humans would take time as many of the legacies of class society cannot be removed instantaneously. So no "overnight" Revolutions:

> "an *uprising* can overthrow and change a government in one day, while a *revolution* needs three or four years of revolutionary convulsion to arrive at tangible results [...] if we should expect the revolution, from its *earliest* insurrections, to have a communist character, we would have to relinquish the possibility of a revolution"

The key thing was the creation of a new social organisation based on new, liberatory principles, for "[t]o make a revolution it is [...] necessary that after the risings there should be left something new in the institutions, would permit new forms of life to be elaborated and established." Hence his pointing to the need to build federations of unions, soviets and community assemblies. Needless to say, Marxist myths notwithstanding, he – like all anarchists – recognised that the capitalist class would simply not disappear hence the need to organise "mutual protection against aggression, mutual aid, territorial defence" in the shape of a federation of workers' militias.

Libertarian Communism

While Kropotkin is the most famous advocate for anarchist – or libertarian – communism, he did not invent the idea – Joseph Déjacque raised the idea in the 1850s and it developed within the Federalist wing of the First International while Kropotkin was imprisoned in Russia.

Needles to say, anarchist communism has nothing to do with the Soviet Union or the other regimes falsely called "communist." Indeed, like other anarchists, he was an early critic of Bolshevism and argued that the Russian Revolution simply showed "how not to introduce communism" for the "usual vices of every centralised State gnaw away at this administration, the mass of the people is excluded from reconstruction, and the dictatorial powers of the communist bureaucrats, far from alleviating the evils, only aggravate them." Rather than a centralised Statist system, to work and be genuinely liberating "Communism [...] must result from thousands of separate local actions [...] It cannot be dictated by a central body: it must result from the numberless local needs and wants."

So if the Soviet Union was not communism, what is communism? Simply put, it is an economic system which recognises that needs do not equate to deeds (not that capitalism rewards people according to their labour, I am talking about socialism here). In short, it is based on the famous maxim of "From each according to their abilities, to each according to their needs." As Kropotkin argued, "the woman who suckles her infant and spends sleepless nights at its bedside, cannot do as much *work* as the man who has slept peacefully." Similarly with children, the sick and the elderly – the needs of all must be considered rather than mechanically and coldly recording how much labour someone has expended.

As well as fairness and justice, Kropotkin considered communism (libertarian, of course) as being the best placed economic system to develop individuality and personal abilities for "without communism man will never be able to reach that full development of individuality which is, perhaps, the most powerful desire of every thinking being." "Communism," then "guarantees economic freedom better than any other form of grouping because [...] it can guarantee to all well-being and even luxury by only asking man for a few hours of work per day instead of the whole day." This still remains an inspiring vision.

Errico Malatesta (1853–1932)

Now I come to my favourite dead anarchist, Errico Malatesta. Like Kropotkin, a member of the First International and anarchist communist, he was born into the Italian middle-class and rejected his background to become an anarchist in 1872. As a leading militant, he was imprisoned many times in Italy and, as a result, lived mostly in exile and was active internationally – including in Italy, Argentina, Britain and America. He only returned to Italy in 1919 when the revolutionary *Biennio Rosso* began and played such an active part in events the Italian government arrested him and over 80 other anarchists and syndicalists in 1921. Found not guilty by a jury, he left prison to face the rising tide of fascist violence. In the face of indifference – if not outright hostility – by the Italian Marxists (whether Social Democrats or Communists) he advocated united front against rising fascism and with its victory he was placed under house arrest by Mussolini.

Although an important and clear thinker, his adventurous life meant he never wrote a book on anarchism. He did wrote numerous anarchist pamphlets, including *Between peasants* (1884), the classic *Anarchy* (1891) and *At The Cafe – Conversations on Anarchism* (1897). He summarised his ideas in *An Anarchist Programme* (1919) which was political statement of the Italian Anarchist Union. He also edited and contributed to numerous newspapers, including *La Questione Sociale, L'Associazione*, *Volontà*, *Umanità Nova* and *Pensiero e Volontà*

Malatesta's contributions to anarchism are two fold.

First, while a libertarian communist, Malatesta recognised the limitations of what could be termed anarchism with adjectives – the narrow preoccupation with a preferred economic doctrine.

There are many reasons for this position, not least the paradox of advocating free communism for everyone, regardless. As he noted, "free and voluntary communism is ironical if one has not the right and the possibility to live in a different regime, collectivist, mutualist, individualist – as one wishes, always on condition that there is no oppression or exploitation of others." Moreover, the future cannot be predicted, let along fought about now and so "[i]t is not right for us, to say the least, to fall into strife over mere hypotheses." Practically, then, there was "no reason for splitting up into small schools, in our eagerness to overemphasise certain features [...] of the society of the future, which is too remote from us to permit us to envision all its adjustments and possible combinations."

Hence the need for an "anarchism without adjectives," which meant being means orientated and not ends orientated. Anarchists had to "come to an understanding on ways and means, and go forwards." This meant he worked with the Spanish Collectivists as they shared his ideas on working within the labour movement rather than the Spanish Anarcho-Communists who shared his vision of the best form of a future free society. "The subject," then, "is not whether we accomplish Anarchy today, tomorrow, or within ten centuries, but that we walk towards Anarchy today, tomorrow, and always."

Second, he stressed the need for anarchists to organise as anarchists to influence the class struggle. This he termed the Anarchist Party, an expression most anarchists today would reject but by which he simply meant a federation of like-minded comrades working to win others over to their ideas.

Malatesta, rightly, saw what we do now as being key rather than visions of a better world. Hence the need to build counter-power to hierarchy for "resistance from the people is the only boundary set upon the bullying of the bosses and rulers." This meant the task of the anarchist party was clear:

> "We must work [...] to awaken the spirit of revolt and the desire for a free and happy life. We must initiate and support all movements that tend to weaken the forces of the State and of capitalism and to raise the mental level and material conditions of the workers."

"Only freedom or the struggle for freedom can be the school for freedom," Malatesta argued and"[i]f we wait to plunge into the fray until the people mount the Anarchist Communist colours, we shall run great risk of remaining eternal dreamers." For anarchy to be a possibility, then, "Anarchists [...] must strive to acquire overwhelming influence in order to draw the movement towards the realisation of our ideals. But such influence must be won by doing more and better than others." In short:

> "The task of the conscious minority is to profit from very situation to change the environment in a way that will make possible the education of the whole people."

This meant that anarchists needed to organise as anarchists, that "we must deepen, develop and propagate our ideas and co-ordinate our forces in a common action." And he was completely right in this.

Rudolf Rocker (1873–1958)

Our final libertarian tonight is Rudolf Rocker. Born into the German working class, he was initially a social democrat and became an anarchist in 1890. He, like many European anarchists (including Kropotkin and Malatesta), settled in London in 1895 and soon became involved in British Jewish labour movement. His and others activism culminated in the great strike of 1912 against the sweating system and the solidarity actions which helped the dockers win a significant victory.

Like almost all anarchists, he opposed the First World War and was eventually interned during it before being expelled to Germany after its end. He took a leading role in the rising German syndicalist movement and was a founding member of the revolutionary syndicalist *International Workers Association* in 1922. The rise of Nazis saw him flee Germany in 1933 and he arrived in the United States to continue his writing and activism.

A prolific writer of anarchist books, sadly only a few are in English: *Nationalism and Culture* (1933), the classic *Anarcho-Syndicalism: Theory and Practice* (1937), *Pioneers of American Freedom* (1947) and the autobiography *The London Years* (1956). He also wrote many articles for papers like *Arbeter Fraint* and *Freedom* and pamphlets such as *Prinzipienerklärung des Syndikalismus* (1920) and *Der Bankrott des russischen Staatskommunismus* (1921).

Rocker is best known as the author of that great introductory work *Anarcho-Syndicalism: Theory and Practice*, a book Noam Chomsky quotes regularly and provided a preface for its 1989 reprint. This may give the false impression that anarcho-communism and anarcho-syndicalism are somehow radically different or opposed. Indeed, Leninists diatribes against anarchism usually assert that syndicalism is precisely that and at odds with "individualistic" anarchism. This is nonsense as can be seen from Rocker's life and ideas: he was a syndicalist because he was a (libertarian) communism. In fact, he recalls in his autobiography how Kropotkin's "books had influenced my whole development, had shaped my whole life." As noted, Kropotkin – like Bakunin – had advocated what became known as syndicalism from the start of their anarchist lives.

Rocker, like many anarchists, stressed the need to build the new world while fighting the current one, for "[s]ocial ideas are not something only to dream about for the future. If they are to mean anything at all they must be translated into our daily life, here and now; they must shape our relations with our fellow-man." This, be necessity, meant self-activity and self-organisation was the only means of achieving a free society:

> "Direct Action is every method of immediate warfare by the workers against their economic and political oppressors [...] not only a means for the defence of immediate economic interests [...] also a continuous schooling for their powers of resistance"

And like Malatesta, he saw the need for anarchists to work together when appropriate for they had more in common that differences: "all the ideas of mutualism, collectivism or communism were subordinate to the great idea of educating people to be free and to think and work freely."

Another important contribution, for which he is indebted to Kropotkin, is a clear awareness of the power and necessity of hope in achieving social change (whether reforms or revolution):

> "'The worse the better,' was based on an erroneous assumption. Like [...] 'All or nothing,' which made many radical oppose any improvement in the lot of the workers [...] on the ground that it would distract the mind of the proletariat, and turn it away from the road which leads to social emancipation. It is contrary to all the experience of history and of psychology; people who are not prepared to fight for the betterment of their living conditions are not likely to fight for social emancipation. Slogans of this kind are like a cancer in the revolutionary movement"

Hence the pressing need for libertarians to work within and encourage popular movements, not least the labour movement. This was particularly important when looking at the fate of the labour movement when it has embraced Marxist tactics and ideology. Rocker simply stated the obvious when he noted the difference between political (in)action versus Syndicalism:

> "Participation in the politics of the bourgeois States has not brought the labour movement a hair's-breadth nearer to Socialism [...] Socialism has almost been completely crushed and condemned to insignificance"

Parliamentarianism had "destroyed the belief in the necessity of constructive Socialist activity, and, worse of all, the impulse to self-help, by inoculating people with the ruinous delusion that salvation always comes from above." If you question this analysis, then I would humbly suggest that you have not been paying attention.

Rocker was also right to stress that the class struggle was more than just about economic issues. Refuting those who claim that libertarians are indifferent to political issues and rights, he argued that the "point of attack in the political struggle lies, not in the legislative bodies, but in the people. Political rights" are "forced on parliaments from without. And even their enactment into law" is "no guarantee" for governments are always "inclined to restrict [...] rights and freedoms [...] if they imagine that the people will put up no resistance." This means that direct action is needed to resist political and social oppression just as much as exploitation in the workplace.

Socialism, for libertarians, is "not a simple question of a full belly, but a question of culture that would have to enlist the sense of personality and the free initiative of the individual; without freedom it would lead only to a dismal state capitalism which would sacrifice all individual thought and feeling to a fictitious collective interest." Thus social liberties and individual development are socialist issues and cannot be put off to the distant future but conquered today for they are a key means of encourage a social revolution and ensuring its success.

Like Kropotkin and Malatesta, Rocker saw both the hope produced by the Russian Revolution and its degeneration into bureaucratic state-capitalist party dictatorship. Just as Malatesta played a key part in the near revolution in Italy after the end of the First Word War, Rocker took part in the similar events in Germany as well as seeing the Spanish Revolution of 1936 express anarchy in action. This social revolution, although ultimately crushed between the forces of Fascism and Stalinism, showed that the Spanish workers and peasants, "by taking the land and the industrial plants under their own management," had made "the first and most important step on the road to Socialism" and "proved *that the workers* [...] *are able to carry on production and to do it better than a lot of profit-hungry entrepreneurs*."

The Meaning of Anarchism

We are now in a position to define the meaning of Anarchism.

It is, fundamentally, simply freedom within free association. It is based on *liberty* which means *free association* and *equality* within the associations you join, otherwise freedom becomes reduced to picking masters. This, in turn, means *self-management* as those affected by decisions must make them and we create this by applying *solidarity* and *direct action* is our day-to-day struggles against oppression and exploitation now.

Such a society required an economy in which ownership is undivided but its use is divided. In other words, one based on *socialisation* (or *free access*) of the means of life based on *use rights* (or *possession*) replacing private property and the hierarchies it creates. Such a society cannot be other than one based on federalism, one which is rooted in *decentralisation* (so that people control their own lives) and *decentred* around groups and federations based on *functional democracy* in both workplaces and communities.

In short, libertarian socialism.

Conclusions

Some may, in spite of anarchism's positive legacy and confirmation by events, suggest that we are dreamers. Well, I for one prefer anarchist dreams than capitalist nightmares. As Rudolf Rocker put it:

> "People may [...] call us dreamers [...] They fail to see that dreams are also a part of the reality of life, that life without dreams would be unbearable. No change in our way of life would be possible without dreams and dreamers. The only people who are never disappointed are those who never hope and never try to realise their hope"

The question you should ponder is whether to go down the road not travelled or go down, yet again, statist dead-ends. After all, we have had time and time again radicals urging us to take part in elections and time and time again we have seen the same outcome: their adjustment to the status quo as anarchists predicted. Likewise, as Rocker noted, "social development has actually taken the road of political centralisation. As if this were evidence against Proudhon! Have the evils of centralism, which Proudhon clearly foresaw and whose dangers he described so strikingly, been overcome by this development? Or has it overcome them itself? No! And a thousand times no! These evils have since increased to a monstrous degree."

So rather than repeat the same old demands of the past, we should learn from history rather than repeat it. Take, for example, the rip-off of the privatised railways. Yes, it is understandable that people call for renationalisation but that was hardly ideal and so, perhaps we should consider Kropotkin's suggestion that "it would be good tactics to help the *Labour Unions* to enter into a temporary possession of the industrial concerns [...] to check the State nationalisation." Anarchism offers real solutions to real problems, solutions which understand that replacing bosses by bureaucrats is neither a real change nor something to inspire action.

Which means we have a clear choice: Anarchy in action or political inaction? For Malatesta was right, we need to "support all struggles for partial freedom, because we are convinced that one learns through struggle, and that once one begins to enjoy a little freedom one ends by wanting it all."

Our rulers know this to be true: when will we?

Part 2: The Founding Mothers, 1840 to 1940

Thank you for coming. As you will know, this meeting was advertised as follows:

> Anarchism is a much misunderstood and much misrepresented theory. Rejecting the chaos of capitalism and statism, it seeks to create the order of libertarian socialism, a free society of free associates. To discover more, please join Iain McKay (author of *An Anarchist FAQ*) for an exploration of libertarian ideas by means of six male and six female anarchist thinkers and activists.
>
> Over two nights, the lives and ideas of the founding fathers and mothers of anarchism –including Michael Bakunin, Peter Kropotkin, Louise Michel and Emma Goldman – will be discussed and their continuing relevance highlighted.

Tonight, I will discuss the following key female anarchist thinkers:

André Léo

Louise Michel

Lucy Parsons

Voltairine de Cleyre

Emma Goldman

Marie-Louise Berneri

Some are better known than others, but hopefully you will learn something new about all of them. I covered six key male ones at last week's talk and, as I said then, by discussing the ideas of these specific individuals I hope to indicate the meaning of Anarchism and why you should become an anarchist.

The Meaning of Anarchism

At the end of my last talk, I was in a position to define the meaning of Anarchism.

It is, fundamentally, simply freedom within free association. It is based on *liberty* which means *free association* and *equality* within the associations you join, otherwise freedom becomes reduced to picking masters. This, in turn, means *self-management* as those affected by decisions must make them and we create this by applying *solidarity* and *direct action* is our day-to-day struggles against oppression and exploitation now.

Such a society requires an economy in which ownership is undivided but its use is divided. In other words, one based on *socialisation* (or *free access*) of the means of life based on *use rights* (or *possession*) replacing private property and the hierarchies it creates. Such a society cannot be other than one based on *federalism*, one which is rooted in *decentralisation* (so that people control their own lives) and *decentred* around groups and federations based on *functional democracy* in both workplaces and communities.

In short, libertarian socialism.

Tyrannies, home and away

Anarchism, then, is rooted in a critique both *public* and *private* hierarchy. In other words, opposition to State, leading to government being replaced by federalism, and opposition to Capital, leading to wage-labour replaced by association. In this, all major anarchist thinkers agree.

But what about at home? Sad to say, Proudhon defended patriarchy and the male-run family. However, I must stress that he was alone in that and he expressed views, as Kropotkin notes, "with which most modern writers will, of course, not agree." Yet while there is opposition to patriarchy on the left, this is all too often lip-service and often not even that – thus we find the Marxist Social-Democratic Federation's paper *Justice* proclaiming that Kropotkin was "as wayward as a boy and as illogical as a woman" in March 1904. So, it is fair to say that socialists tended to ignore the issue in practice. In short, all schools of socialism have their idiots, libertarian and authoritarian included.

This was the context in which the six libertarians I discuss tonight found themselves and, unsurprisingly, they spent some time pointing out the inconsistencies and stupidities of their male comrades as well as fighting the same evils associated with Capitalism and Statism.

André Léo (1824–1900)

The first libertarian I will discuss tonight is probably the least well-known, which is a shame for she was as a leading member of the French left in the 1860s and 1870s, an Internationalist and Communard.

Born Victoire Léodile Béra, she took the pseudonym André Léo after her two twin sons' names. A novelist and journalist, she was in 1866 a founding member of France's first feminist group, *Société pour la Revendication du Droit des Femmes* and the same year joined the *International Workers' Association*. She wrote for many papers and was editor of the journal *La République des travailleurs*, but she was also an activist and was active participant in the Paris Commune of 1871, working in the *Association of Women for the Defence of Paris and Aid to the Wounded*. After the defeat of the Commune, she went into exile in Switzerland (again) until 1880 and there she joined Bakunin's *Alliance of Socialist Democracy*.

She wrote numerous books, including *La Femme et les Mœurs: monarchie ou liberté* (1869), *La Guerre sociale: Discours prononcé au Congrès de la Paix à Lausanne 1871* (1871) and *La Famille Au droit et l'éducation nouvelle* (1899). In addition, she wrote numerous articles for many radical papers, including *La Coopération, L'Egalité, La Sociale, La Commune, Cri du peuple* and *La Révolution Sociale*. Sadly, very little of her writings have been translated into English.

"the rights of labour"

Like all libertarians, Léo was very much focused on "the rights of labour" and recognised that "[t]he law of capital is aristocratic by nature. It tends increasingly to concentrate power in the hands of a few; it inevitably creates an oligarchy, which is master of the nation's power [...] It pursues the interest of a few as against the interest of all." This resulted in a "pretended order that admits suffering as the condition of what one calls peace is only disorder. There is no economic science, however profound, that is able to reduce to nothing the protest of the most humble workers, who demand with feeling their right to well-being, education, and the leisure necessary for all moral and intelligent creatures." This limited the future potential and options of those subject to it:

> "As long as a child is poor [...] as long as he grows up with no ideal but the tavern, no future but the day-to-day work of a beast of burden, most members of humanity will be deprived of their rights"

Her position can be described as consistent mutualism as she argued for association in all aspects of life. Thus, in the paper *La Coopération* founded in 1867 she advocated the creation of workers associations and after a discussion of the merits of communism, she noted that she had been informed that her "conclusions are precisely those of Proudhon in his *Memoirs* on property." Yet she also attacked the left for not applying its principles and being illogical by

defending patriarchy at home and in society, arguing for "the full right of women – as for every human being – to liberty, to equality." She noted how hierarchy at home affects all: "She moulds her child [...] as a slave, she can only create slaves."

While being unable to vote for it (as suffrage was male only), Léo took an active part in the Paris Commune seeing its vision of a decentralised, communal and associationist France as being the same as hers. Its Council issued her "Appeal to rural workers" as a leaflet (distributed by air balloon) in an attempt to widen support by proclaiming "THE LAND TO THE FARMER, THE TOOL TO THE WORKER, WORK FOR ALL." However, she was critical of its lack of action over women's rights, writing the article "Revolution without woman" in May 1871 which asked "[w]hen will the intelligence of the Republicans rise as far as to understand their principle and their interest?" The question for the Commune was simple: "do we believe we can make the Revolution without women? For eighty years this has been attempted and the Revolution has never come to pass."

This concern during the revolution reflected arguments made before it on association at home. Her comments from 1869 about those on the left who were sexists were cutting:

> "These so-called lovers of liberty, if they cannot all take part in the direction of the State, at least they will be able to have a little kingdom for their personal use, each at home. When we put gunpowder to divine right, it was not for every male (Proudhonian style) to have a piece. Order in the family without hierarchy seems impossible to them. – Well, then, and in the State?"

Léo exposed how, when it came to women, her male colleagues were more than happy to repudiate and contradict their own-stated principles:

> "The democracy believes in association as the natural antidote to competition and hierarchy [...] without the possibility of association, that is to say of agreement and peace between equals, democracy is a crazy pretence [...] However, the democrats see in marriage no other guarantee of order and peace than obedience. They cry out: there must be a chief, a leadership; who will decide?"

The contradiction at the heart of those on the left who supported patriarchy at home but association everywhere else was obvious and had to be addressed. Socialists had to be consistent and logical to be taken seriously.

"the demon of Anarchy"

Fleeing the slaughter inflicted on Paris after the defeat of the Commune, she fled to Switzerland and there joined Bakunin in the struggle within the International Workers' Association against Marx who, she argued, "construct[s] the old pyramid in the International as elsewhere." This saw her attacked and "in debating the infallibility of the supreme council [...] we too are threatened with excommunication, and we have no other course than to yield our soul to the demon of Anarchy." I cannot help thinking that it is this, her opposition to Marx and his explicit denunciation of her as a dreaded "Bakuninist" which has helped ensured her relative obscurity to this day.

Her position in this was consistent with her libertarian ideas and so she saw the necessity of building the new world while fighting the old. It was the case that "[w]e who want to destroy

your hierarchies are not about to establish another" and so the International must practice the ideals now and not relegate them to after a future revolution. This meant applying federalism within our organisations:

> "Each section is sovereign, as are the individuals who compose it, and what binds them all is the profound belief in equality, the desire to establish it [...] The new unity is not uniformity, but its opposite, which consists in expanding all initiatives, all freedoms, all conceptions, bound only by the fact of a common nature that gives them a common interest"

Léo rightly agued that socialism cannot use capitalist organisational principles – forged to best secure minority rule – if it wishes to be genuinely a force of liberation and so "[l]et all the old world's politics go that way; socialism has nothing to do with it, for it must take the opposite path, that of the freedom of all in equality." Socialism had to oppose the structures or principles of the society it rebelled against for otherwise what would be the point of it? Real liberation cannot be achieving by changing who the master is.

Louise Michel (1830–1905)

Our next libertarian was also a Communard and far better known than Léo, Louise Michel. A teacher by trade, she – like Léo – was a member of France's first feminist group, *Société pour la Revendication du Droit des Femmes*, and both were arrested in September 1870 during the Franco-Prussian War.

An active participant in the Paris Commune of 1871, she was arrested after its defeat and sentenced to exile in New Caledonia. Reflecting on recent events, during this journey she became an anarchist and when freed in 1880 she took a leading role in the French movement. In 1883, she raised the Black Flag during a "Bread or Work!" march in Paris and was sentenced, again, to prison. Once freed, she helped form the *International Anarchist School* in London in 1890 and helped launch the newspaper *Le Libertaire* in 1896.

While remembered for her indefatigable activism which saw her imprisoned many time, she also wrote numerous books and articles including *Défense de Louise Michel* (1883), *Mémoires de Louise Michel* (1886), *Les Crimes de l'époque* (1888), *Prise de possession* (1890) and *La Commune* (1898). Sadly, very little of this is available in English.

Convict No. 2182

Michel received this number for being a communard. She was on the barricades (ostensibly as a nurse but a more, let me say, active role cannot be discounted). Proud of her activity and the revolution she was part of, she was defiant at her trial after its crushing:

> "I belong completely to the social revolution and I declare that I accept complete responsibility for all my actions [...] If you are not cowards, kill me!"

Her demand was refused, and she was sent into exile. She became an Anarchist after the Commune because she concluded that "dishonest men, in power, are harmful; honest men, in power, are ineffective. Liberty and power cannot possibly go together." While in New Caledonia, she supported the Kanakas revolt of the native people in 1878 correctly recognising that "they, too, were fighting for independence, control of their own lives and liberty. I sided with them just as I sided with the rebellious, oppressed, and then defeated people of Paris." This position, I should note, was not shared by all the exiled Communards.

Once released and back in France, she took a leading role in the anarchist movement and played a crucial part in making the Black Flag the anarchist symbol by raising it during a "Work or bread!" protest of the unemployed in Paris during 1883. Arrested after some of the marchers pillaged a bakers, she explained why she had raised it at her trial:

> "We took the black flag because the demonstration was to be above all peaceful, because the black flag is the flag of strikes, the flag of those who are hungry"

She also used the opportunity to explain her ideas, arguing that "Individual authority is a crime. What we want is authority for all. M. Advocate General accused me of wanting to be a leader: I have too much pride for that, for I cannot demean myself and to be a leader is to demean yourself." Unsurprisingly, she was imprisoned, again, and was released in 1886 along with Kropotkin and other anarchists as part of a general amnesty. She returned to activism and again raised the flags of revolt:

> "The red banner, which has always stood for liberty, frightens the executioners because it is so red with our blood. The black flag, with layers of blood upon it from those who wanted to live by working or die by fighting, frightens those who want to live off the work of others. Those red and black banners wave over us mourning our dead and wave over our hopes for the dawn that is breaking"

I should note, though, that she viewed her release in a less than positive light: "I have never been so enraged, so indignant, so furious. I did not deserve the insult of a pardon."

The General Strike

Like other libertarians, she argued for Direct Action against Political Action and was lecturing on "General Strikes and the Social Revolution" for many years – including in London during 1890 (as reported in a New Zealand newspaper of all places). That year saw Michel praise "the general strike, whose purpose was to destroy capitalism and usher in world liberty." I should note that Michel's advocating the general strike was at least five years before French syndicalism arose and championed it as the key method to create a social revolution. Her rejection of electioneering was as firm as her awareness of the power of direct action:

> "I've never been involved in politics. The social question has nothing to do with that jackass parliamentary spectacle. I'm no interested in politicians. I'm quite content merely to observe their fear, which is the first sign of their impending fall."

This applied to socialist politicians as well. Michel rejected Marxism for numerous reasons, not least for the intolerance shown at the 1896 London Congress of the Second International:

> "Where I not an Anarchist of long standing, the Parliamentarian [Socialist] Congress in London would have made me one […] It was conclusively proved at the Congress that the best, the most intelligent, the most devoted of men will be worse than those they seek to replace"

These positions have not, needless to say, stopped Leninists seeking to co-opt her.

In short, Michel was "without god or master" and anarchism is for *all*. She argued that "I am an Anarchist because Anarchy alone, by means of liberty and justice based on equal rights, will make humanity happy." This applied in all areas of life, public and private, work and home, for "[i]f power renders a man egotistical and cruel, servitude degrades him. A slave is often worse than his master; nobody knows how tyrannous he would be as a master, or base as a slave." She helped form *The League of Women* in 1882 for, as she put it, "[w]e wish to inform women of their

rights and their duties; we want men to view their companions as equals, not slaves." As well as breaking the chains – physical and mental – forged by patriarchy and fettering those subject to it, Michel recognised that those who benefit from it also need education in freedom:

> "You are not used to seeing a women who dares to think; you want, according to Proudhon's expression, to see in woman a housewife or a courtesan!"

However, self-liberation is essential and, just like the working class, women needed to free themselves. They cannot rely on men for even "when the most advanced men applaud the idea of equality between the sexes [...] in spite of themselves and simply through custom of old prejudices, men will always appear to aid us but will be satisfied with that appearance. So let us take our place without begging for it."

Lucy Parsons (1853–1942)

We now turn to America for our next libertarian, Lucy Parsons. Not much is known for sure of her origins. She was probably born a slave, probably in Texas with Native American, African American and Mexican ancestry (she always denied being black, incidentally). She married Albert Parsons – then a radical republican – and moved to Chicago in the 1870s where both became active state-socialists before both became anarchists in the early 1880s.

She was a founding member of *International Working People's Association* (IWPA) in 1883 and a founding member of the *Industrial Workers of the World* in 1905. A well-known labour agitator, Parsons was described as "more dangerous than a thousand rioters" by the Chicago Police in the 1920s. Sadly, by this stage she had become sympathetic to Soviet Russia (in spite of its repression of both anarchists and the revolution) and worked with Communist Party throughout the 1920s and 1930s in the National Committee of the International Labor Defense (although it must be stressed there is no evidence that she joined the party).

Her books include *Life of Albert R. Parsons: with brief history of the labor movement in America* (1889), *The principles of anarchism: a lecture* (1890s) and *Twenty-fifth anniversary, eleventh of November, memorial edition* (1912). She was involved with many papers and wrote numerous articles for *The Alarm*, *Freedom: A Revolutionary Anarchist-Communist Monthly* and *The Liberator*.

What Parsons stood for remained remarkably consistent throughout her long life as an activist and was expressed by the IWPA Manifesto:

> *First*: Destruction of the existing class rule, by all means, i.e., by energetic, relentless, revolutionary, and international action.
>
> *Second*: Establishment of a free society based upon co-operative organisation of production.
>
> *Third*: Free exchange of equivalent products by and between the productive organisations without commerce and profit-mongery.
>
> *Fourth*: Organisation of education on a secular, scientific, and equal basis for both sexes.
>
> *Fifth*: Equal rights for all without distinction to sex or race.
>
> *Sixth*: Regulation of all public affairs by free contracts between the autonomous (independent) communes and associations, resting on a federalistic basis.

This is often called "the Chicago Idea" and was developed by radicals in that city in the early 1880s who were originally state socialists but moved to anarchism, rejecting the ballot box in favour of militant – revolutionary – trade unionism. As with libertarians in the First International and after, they saw unions as the means to both fight and replace capitalism. As Parsons put it:

> "We hold that the granges, trade-unions, Knights of Labor assemblies, etc., are the embryonic groups of the ideal anarchistic society"

This new social organisation was needed because of a rejection of the State for "[a]ll political government must necessarily become despotic, because, all government tends to become centralised in the hands of the few, who breed corruption among themselves, and in a very short time disconnect themselves from the body of the people."

Some may be aware that the IWPA had a reputation for violent rhetoric. Yes, this is true but such a claim usually ignores the violent rhetoric of bourgeoisie and violent actions of their State. Let me just note that the number of strikers killed by public and private police during this period far out numbers that killed by the anarchists – which was zero, incidentally – while four anarchists were hanged after an unfair trial because of their union activities.

For some reason a few, Leninists in the main, seem keen to deny that the IWPA were anarchists. Rather they were, it is claimed, syndicalists and even Marxists. As the claim that the Chicago anarchists were not anarchists is one you may come across, it is worthwhile debunking it here.

The first claim made was that Parsons and her comrades were not Anarchists but Syndicalists. This was asserted by Carolyn Ashbaugh in her biography *Lucy Parsons: American Revolutionary* which stated that they were "syndicalists" as they had "given up political work for work in the unions which [...] would provide the social organisation of the future." She also noted that "Parsons discussed the general strike." Ashbaugh seemed unaware that these were Bakunin's and Kropotkin's positions – but we should not be that surprised for she proclaimed the latter as the "gentle anarchist theoretician of non-violence"! Sadly, not knowing about anarchism did not hinder commenting upon its advocates.

More recently, James Green in *Death in the Haymarket* suggested that they were, in fact, Marxists. He argued that the Chicago radicals had "turned away from electoral competition and adopted Karl Marx's strategy of organising workers [...] building class-conscious trade unions as a basis for future political action." If so, then Bakunin was a Marxist while Marx was not!

Then there is the notion that "the so-called 'Chicago idea'" was a "synthesis between anarchism and Marxism," to use the words of Staughton Lynd and Andrej Grubacic from their book *Wobblies and Zapatistas*. Strangely, Marxists at the time made no such claim – quite the reverse in fact as their press at the time bemoaned attempts to link anarchism with "socialism." We also find Eleanor Marx and Edward Aveling in an 1887 article entitled "The Chicago Anarchists" stressing that "we are not Anarchists, but are opposed to Anarchism" as well as "our position of antagonism to [its] teachings." Engels made no public defence of the IWPA but in private letters written in 1886 he noted "the anarchist follies of Chicago" and lamented that "there's all sorts of tomfoolery going on — here the anarchists [...]."

Sorry for the slight digression, but these claims – when not done in bad faith– reflect a general ignorance of what anarchism actually means and so has to be covered. Ultimately, if arguing for class struggle and union organising is Marxist then Bakunin was a Marxist...

While the IWPA did not survive the State repression after the Haymarket events which cumulated with the judicial murder of four IWPA activists (include Lucy's husband Albert), she remained active and continued to stress that political action (electioneering) was not revolutionary for the "trusts will not allow you to vote them out of power because they *are* the power" and so working people must "[n]ever be deceived that the rich will allow you to vote away their wealth." As such, political power was limited by the economic power exercised by big business and so economic transformation was the key. "We mean the land shall belong to the landless, the tools to the toiler, and the products to the producers," argued Parsons, and the "method of taking possession of this Earth is that of the general strike [...] the strike of the future is not to

strike and go out and starve, but to strike and remain in and take possession of the necessary property of production." This expropriation was the only means by which freedom for all would be gained:

> "anarchism [...] it has but one infallible, unchangeable motto, 'Freedom.' Freedom to discover any truth, freedom to develop, to live naturally and fully."

Parsons was well aware that exploitation and oppression were not due just to political and economic power as women were subject to patriarchy as well and argued that "[w]e are the slaves of the slaves. We are exploited more ruthlessly than men." Freedom was freedom for all, everywhere:

> "Let us trust that [wives who 'submit yourselves unto your husband and his desires at all times'] will soon become extinct; then we shall have fewer children, better-bred children, and fewer slaves for our factory lords."

As she put it in 1930: "I am an anarchist: I have no apology to make to a single man, woman or child, because I am an anarchist, because anarchism carries the very germ of liberty in its womb."

Voltairine de Cleyre (1866–1912)

Our next libertarian, Voltairine de Cleyre, was also America, being born and raised in small towns across Michigan. After a secondary schooling at a Catholic convent, she began her activist career in the freethought movement before turning to anarchism as a result of the Haymarket events. Initially an individualist anarchist, de Cleyre later turned to (social revolutionary) mutualism before being an advocate of "anarchism without adjectives."

She was a prolific writer and public speaker who learned to speak and write in Yiddish. As befitting how de Cleyre joined the movement, she made regular May Day speeches as well as conducting speaking tours. She also found time to translate Jean Grave's *La société mourante et l'anarchie* (1899) and write numerous pamphlets and articles for papers like *The Truth Seeker*, *Liberty* and *Lucifer the Light-bearer* in her individualist days and for *Free Society*, *Freedom* and *Mother Earth* when she moved to social anarchism. Various collections exist of (some of these) writings and speeches, including *Selected Writings* (1914), *The First Mayday: The Haymarket Speeches 1895–1910* (1980) and *The Voltairine de Cleyre Reader* (2004)

As noted, originally she was attracted to the individualist wing of the American movement and spent a great deal of time fighting sex-slavery, arguing that "[e]quality" for a woman meant "*the freedom to control her own person*" and so:

> "Let Woman ask herself, 'Why am I the slave of Man? Why is my brain said not to be the equal of his brain? Why is my work not paid equally with his? Why must my body be controlled by my husband? Why may he take my labour in the household, giving me in exchange what he deems fit? Why may he take my children from me? Will them away while yet unborn?'"

So "if social progress consists in a constant tendency towards the equalisation of the liberties [...] then the demands of progress are not satisfied so long as half society, Women, is in subjection [...] Woman [...] is beginning to feel her servitude." This meant that "[y]ou can have no free, or just, or equal society, nor anything approaching it, so long as womanhood is bought, sold, housed, clothed, fed, and *protected*, as a chattel." However, freedom could never be granted – it had to be won by a process of self-liberation for "*as a class* I have nothing to hope from men [...] No tyrant ever renounced his tyranny until he had to. If history ever teaches us anything it teaches this. Therefore my hope lies in creating rebellion in the breasts of women."

Yet she soon recognised that to be consistent she also had to start fighting wage-slavery for picking masters is not freedom whether at home or at work:

> "Break up the home? Yes, every home that rests in slavery! Every marriage that represents the sale and transfer of the individuality of one of its parties to the other! Every institution, social or civil, that stands between man and his right; every tie that renders one a master, another a serf."

Under capitalism "working-people" went "from factory to factory, begging for the opportunity to be a slave, receiving the insults of bosses [...] in these factories they built, whose machines they wrought." Thus property was theft and despotism, as Proudhon had stressed decades before, for "a 'free country' in which all the productive tenures were already appropriated was not free at all [...] to be free one must have liberty of access to the sources and means of production" This was "the natural heritage of all." Those subject to oppression had to organise to create a counter-power to hierarchy to create and defend freedom:

> "Nearly all laws which were originally framed with the intention of benefiting workers, have either turned into weapons in their enemies' hands, or become dead letters unless the workers through their organisations have directly enforced their observance. So that in the end, it is direct action that has to be relied on anyway."

Yet important as this was to defend and extend freedom today, this was not considered an end in itself and resistance had to turn into revolution. This meant going from Direct Action to Expropriation – to occupy everywhere and everything:

> "Do *the workers* perceive, that it must be the strike which will *stay in* the factory, not *go out*? which will guard the machines and allow no scab to touch them? Which will organise, not to inflict deprivation on itself, but on the enemy? which will take over industry and operate it for the workers, not for franchise holders, stockholders, and officeholders"

Like other anarchists, de Cleyre saw that we had to move from unions to associations, to go from resisting the exploitation and oppression of wage-labour to ending it by self-management. Thus an "international federation of labour [...] shall take possession of land, mines, factories, all the instruments of production" and workers will "conduct their own industry without regulative interference from law-makers or employers." In other words, "the trade union is the nucleus of the free cooperative group, which will obviate the necessity of an employer."

She also saw the limitations of what can be termed Anarchism with Adjectives, arguing that "[l]iberty and experiment alone can determine the best forms of society." However, this did not mean she did not have her own preferences and predictions of what a free society should be like – even if these changed over the course of her life. Her reasons for moving from individualism are noteworthy and help clarify the meaning of anarchism.

Initially, de Cleyre was an Individualist Anarchist and did not see the need to end oppression along with exploitation. She soon recognised that while "bosses would be hunting men rather than men bosses" under individualist-anarchism and so "wages would rise to the full measure of the individual production," such a regime, "resting upon property, involve [...] the private policeman [which is] not at all compatible with my notions of freedom." She also lamented the often obscure language utilised in individualist circles: "Can't you simplify it as to language? [...] I am frequently called upon to translate it."

These issues saw her move to a (revolutionary) mutualist position before working on Emma Goldman's *Mother Earth*. In 1907 she stated that "I am not now and never have been at any time a Communist" yet the following year saw her argue that "the best thing ordinary workingmen or women could do was to organise their industry so as to get rid of money altogether." Then, just before her death in 1912 she penned an article on the Paris Commune:

> "In short, though there were other reasons why the Commune fell, the chief one was that in the hour of necessity, the Communards were not Communists. They attempted to break political chains without breaking economic ones; and it cannot be done."

Clearly, de Cleyre had eventually embraced the (libertarian) communism which most anarchists subscribe to then and now. Like Déjacque, she although in reverse, she came to see the inconsistency and illogicality in denouncing hierarchy in one realm (the home, the State) while defending it elsewhere (the workplace).

Emma Goldman (1869–1940)

We now reach probably the most famous of the libertarians I am discussing tonight, Emma Goldman. Born in Lithuania in a religious Jewish family, her family immigrated to United States and there she worked as seamstress. Like de Cleyre, she became an anarchist due to the Haymarket events.

I cannot attempt to even summarise her eventful life beyond noting that she was arrested numerous times in America, the final time for anti-war work in 1917. She was sentenced to be deported in 1918 and was sent to Soviet Russia in December 1919 before leaving Russia in December 1921 after two years of "disillusionment."

Goldman's writings include the books *Anarchism and Other Essays* (1910), *My Disillusionment in Russia* (1923, 1924, 1925) and her famous autobiography *Living My Life* (1931) as well as numerous pamphlets including *Syndicalism: The Modern Menace to Capitalism* (1913), *Deportation: Its Meaning and Menace* (1919), *Trotsky Protests Too Much* (1938) and *The Place for the Individual in Society* (1940). She provided articles for many journals, including *Mother Earth, Freedom* and *Vanguard*.

"If I can't paraphrase..."

As I am sure you are aware, Goldman is famous for proclaiming that "If I can't dance, then it's not my revolution" – except, she didn't.

At best, it's a paraphrase created for a T-shirt sold during anti-war protests in the late 1960s in America but it is reflective of her ideas and life. Indeed, she recalled in her autobiography an incident at an Anarchist dance just after she joined the movement where she had been reprimanded for enjoying herself too much by a puritan comrade, provoking this response:

> "I told him to mind his own business, I was tired of having the Cause constantly thrown in my face. I did not believe that a Cause which stood for a beautiful ideal, for anarchism, for release and freedom from conventions and prejudice, should demand denial of life and joy. I insisted that our Cause could not expect me to behave as a nun and that the movement should not be turned into a cloister. If it meant that, I did not want it. I want freedom, the right to self-expression, everybody's right to beautiful, radiant things."

Admittedly, it would need a very big T-shirt for that to fit – or a very small font! – but the paraphrase summarises the sentiment extremely well. And she is right, anarchism is about individuals as much as society, otherwise what is the point of any form of socialism if it is not based on enriching the individual and their surroundings? As Goldman put it:

> "Real wealth consists in things of utility and beauty, in things that help to create strong, beautiful bodies and surroundings inspiring to live in [...] the freest possible expression of all the latent powers of the individual."

This means breaking both physical and mental chains, fighting our rulers and bosses as well as "[t]hese internal tyrants" which living under hierarchies create in all of us.

Goldman reiterated time and time that libertarians were not just opposed to the State, that Anarchism stands for "the liberation of the human mind from the dominion of religion; the liberation of the human body from the dominion of property; liberation from the shackles and restraint of government." She was well aware that we cannot have sexual equality without social equality. So the "private dominion over things [...means] that man must sell his labour [...] his inclination and judgment are subordinated to the will of a master" and, given this, "how much independence is gained if the narrowness and lack of freedom of the home is exchanged for the narrowness and lack of freedom of the factory, sweat-shop, department store, or office?" Feminism had to socialist just as socialism had to be feminist. She also rightly stressed the importance of militant minorities in social change and how their action can get majorities to change their ideas and take action themselves. Their importance was clear:

> "true emancipation [...] begins in woman's soul. History tells us that every oppressed class gained true liberation from its masters through its own efforts [...] her freedom will reach as far as her power to achieve her freedom reaches [...] begin with her inner regeneration, to cut loose from the weight of prejudices, traditions, and customs."

Freedom, in short, could not be granted: it had to be taken by the oppressed themselves in the face of resistance by the oppressors.

"The Modern Menace to Capitalism"

As freedom had to be conquered it meant that "the logical, consistent method of Anarchism" was direct action: "Direct action against the authority in the shop, direct action against the authority of the law, direct action against the invasive, meddlesome authority of our moral code." This was how we change ourselves and the world.

Some, particularly Leninists (who seem to hate her with a passion) try to present her as some kind of individualist or lifestylist, seeking personal liberation within capitalism rather than seeing the need for class struggle and a social revolution. This is nonsense as can be seen from the fact Goldman lectured on and wrote extensively on *Syndicalism: the Modern Menace to Capitalism*, noting approvingly that "Marx and Engels [were] aiming at political conquest" while "Bakunin and the Latin workers [were] forging ahead along industrial and Syndicalist lines [...] Syndicalism is, in essence, the economic expression of Anarchism." Indeed, *Mother Earth* regularly linked its ideas to "the Chicago Idea" of the International Working People's Association and, for example, in 1907 argued that "labour unions [...] can have but one worthy object – to achieve their full economic stature by complete emancipation from wage slavery [...] They bear the germs of a potential social revolution [...] they are the factors that will fashion the system

of production and distribution in the coming free society." Syndicalism, as she put it in "Reflections on the General Strike" in 1926 in *Freedom*, "prepares the masses for fundamental social changes on a federative libertarian basis, away from the State [...] its most effective weapon in the economic struggle – the General Strike."

Rather than being the lifestylist of Marxist myth, she was a committed libertarian communist revolutionary who rightly argued that we needed to apply our ideas today in all aspects of life – whether in our personal relationships or in the class struggle.

"There Is No Communism In Russia"

Like all anarchists, Goldman welcomed the Russian Revolutions of 1917 and, thanks to the American State deporting her, she spent two years in Bolshevik Russia. Her initial enthusiasm soon disappeared as she saw the failure of the Bolshevik regime after "the Communists began their process of elimination [...] of all independent organisations. They were either subordinated to the needs of the new State or destroyed altogether [....] the Soviets, the trade unions and the cooperatives — three great factors for the realisation of the hopes of the Revolution." She chronicled the new bureaucratic regime and how it resulted in both inertia as people "did nothing else but stand in line, waiting for the bureaucrats, big and little, to admit them to their sanctums" and the creation of a new ruling class around the party hierarchy and the State officialdom.

Her opposition to the regime must be understood. Some like to suggest that it was driven by idealism and the new system not being perfect. Far from it. As she later noted, "these criticisms would be justified had I come to Russia expecting to find Anarchism realised [...] I do not therefore expect Anarchism to follow in the immediate footsteps of centuries of despotism and submission [...] hope to find [...] the beginnings of the social changes for which the Revolution had been fought." In fact her opposition was based on a clear class analysis, as shown by her comments against those on the left who argued that Russia was on strike and so revolutionaries cannot side with the master class by criticising it:

> "It is not true that the Russian people are on strike [they...] have been *locked out* and that the Bolshevik State — even as the bourgeois industrial master — uses the sword and the gun to keep the people out. [...] because I am a revolutionist I refuse to side with the master class, which in Russia is called the Communist Party."

Yet it must be stressed that Goldman was "Disillusioned" with Bolshevism, not revolution (the title of her eye-witness account of Bolshevik Russia was changed without her knowledge by the publisher). She spent the 1920s and 1930s seeking to convince the left that "Soviet Russia [...] is an absolute despotism politically and the crassest form of state capitalism economically" and to learn the lessons of that failure:

> "Only free initiative and popular participation in the affairs of the revolution can prevent the terrible blunders committed in Russia [...] libertarian, industrial organisations and the co-operatives"

These writings explain why Leninists hate her so much and why they stoop at nothing to demonise her in the eyes of radicals today, not least by ignoring her syndicalism to portray her

as an individualist intellectual only interested in lifestyle choices. As can be seen, nothing could be further from the truth.

When the Spanish Revolution broke out in July 1936, she swiftly visited Barcelona and took the lead in drumming up support in the English-speaking world for the struggle against Franco. She was impressed by all the gains of the social revolution but she made special note of the activities of the *Mujeres Libres* (*Free Women*), the Spanish anarchist women's federation which was formed shortly before the revolution and which organised against the "triple enslavement to ignorance, as women, and as producers." It campaigned on many issues, not least the sexism rampant in Anarchist men who were happy to preach equality between the sexes but still expected their dinner to be on the table when they got home from trying to change the world. As they summarised:

> "We could not separate the women's problem from the social problem, nor could we deny [its] significance [...] by converting women into a simple instrument for any organisation, even our own libertarian organisation. The intention [...] was much much broader: [...] to empower women to make of them individuals capable of contributing to the structuring of the future society, individuals who have learned to be self-determining"

Part of the problem they faced was the sexism of their male comrades. Manarchy in action, if you like, or as one activist (Kyralina) put it:

> "All those compañeros, however radical they may be in cafes, unions, and even affinity groups, seem to drop their costumes as lovers of female liberation at the doors of their homes. Inside, they behave with their compañeras just like common husbands."

The *Mujeres Libres* considered that "[it] was essential that we work and struggle together, because otherwise, there would be no social revolution. But we needed our own organisation to fight for ourselves" as another activist (Soledad) argued. This was based on encouraging Empowerment (*capacitación*) as Lucia Sanchez Saornil explained:

> "It is not [the man] who is called upon to set out the roles and responsibilities of the woman in society, no matter how elevated he might consider them to be. No, the anarchist way is to allow the woman to act freely herself, without tutors or external pressures; that she may develop in the direction that her nature and her faculties dictate."

Goldman wrote for the journal of the *Mujeres Libres*, seeing them as expressing the same kind of revolutionary libertarian ideas and activity she had been expounding for decades.

Marie-Louise Berneri (1918–1949)

Our final libertarian is Marie-Louise Berneri. She was born into Italian anarchist family, her father being Camillo Berneri (who was assassinated by Stalinists in Barcelona during the May Days of 1937) while her mother and younger sister were also active anarchists.

Her family had to flee Italy with the rise of fascism, going into exile in France in 1926 and then Britain where she was instrumental in revival of British Anarchism in the 1930s. She was arrested along with the four other editors of *War Commentary* in 1945, although she was acquitted on a legal technicality (the law proclaimed that wives cannot conspire with husbands and she was married to another one of the editors). Reflecting her position in the movement, she was sent as a British delegate to International Anarchist Conference in Paris in 1948.

Berneri wrote such books and pamphlets as *Workers in Stalin's Russia* (1944), *Journey Through Utopia* (1950) and *Neither East Nor West* (1952) as well as many articles for papers like *Spain and the World* and its successors *Revolt!*, *War Commentary* and *Freedom* as well as *Now*.

Some may be wondering why Berneri is included as a "founding mother" given when she became active. Well, she played a key part in reinvigorating the British Anarchist movement – indeed, without her our history would have been radically different and nowhere near as strong. As such she is a "founding mother" of British anarchism and, as I hope becomes clear, someone who should be remembered for her contributions, both practical and theoretical.

Berneri summarised her core politics – "a few fundamental truths," as she put it – as follows:

> 1. "That workers and capitalists cannot have a common cause.
> 2. That imperialism is the prime cause of war, and the cause must be eradicated.
> 3. That governments, Tory and Labour, are always instruments of oppression, and that the workers must learn to do without them.
> 4. That parties seek power only for their own benefit – a small minority. Therefore all power must be seized and retained in the hands of syndicates which comprise the great majority of the men and women producers."

These are basic anarchist principles and, unsurprisingly, she was against the State Socialism which infatuated so-much of the left at the time. Looking at Stalinist Russia, it was clear that a "strong State necessitates a ruling class or caste holding power over the rest of the people" and so "[t]o hold political and economic power the workers should be able to control the factory they work in, or the land they cultivate." Without this base in workers' control, no socialism was possible for "the creative instinct of the workers should be able to manifest itself, not only outside the sphere of their work, but in the factory itself. It is therefore important that the State should not deprive them of the work of organising and running the factory." This applied to social freedoms as well, with Berneri indicating how the relatively progressive laws on marriage and such-like introduced under Lenin were removed by Stalin. The conclusion was clear:

> "real freedom for women cannot be established by Government decrees […] Women can have only a caricature of liberty so long as they are not prepared to organise their own lives but instead allow the State to decide for them in the minutest details."

We can see that this applies every where and that freedom cannot be secure as long as we are dependent on the good intentions of our rulers – we need to wrestle as much freedom as we can and defend it ourselves.

Berneri is probably best known for her critical book on utopias, published shortly after her untimely death. This is unsurprising as her views of nowhere – yes, indeed, a terrible pun on William Morris' utopian novel, *News from Nowhere*, but a necessary one! – shed light on both the politics of such writers and on contemporary society.

Her analysis showed that utopias are usually authoritarian. "The builders of utopias claimed to give freedom to the people," Berneri noted, "but freedom which is given ceases to be freedom." They wish to create and enforce their vision of a perfect society and that, necessarily, means "setting up a vast machinery which will ensure the perfect running of society […] The State becomes an all-wise, all-providing God which can never make any mistakes" and so in these utopias "the amount of autonomy granted to factory committees or consumers' unions is mostly fictitious. There is little which the workers can discuss when everything is regulated by the State, thanks to its experts and bureaux of statistics." She said the same of that "utopia realised," the Soviet Union.

Berneri is also of note for being the first to introduce the works of Wilhelm Reich and his analysis of the hierarchical family to the English-speaking movement. She noted how "the authoritarian family […] accustoms [the children…] to respect the authority of the father; they will later obey just as unquestionably the orders of the State." It was a case of looking at the whole person rather than the fractured, compartmentalised thing created by capitalism:

> "The worker is not merely the producer in the factory or the field; he is also the lover, the father. The problems which he faces in his home are no less important than those at his place of work. By trying to separate biological and psychological problems from the sociological ones, we not only mutilate our theories, but are bound to reach false conclusions."

Her work reminds us that class struggle anarchism does not imply the ignoring of other, wider, issues and that it always critiqued all forms of social hierarchy, seeking freedom everywhere and recognising that oppression in one sphere was never separate or isolated from oppression in others.

Conclusions

The meaning of anarchism is now, I hope, clear.

It stresses that for people to flourish a new society is needed for, as Lucy Parsons put it, there are "certain things that are priceless. Among these are life, liberty and happiness, and these are things which the society of the future, the free society, will guarantee to all." This does not mean it would be a perfect world but rather a better one as Emma Goldman noted:

> "I do not claim that the triumph of my ideas would eliminate all possible problems from the life of man for all time [...] Nature and our own complexes are apt to continue to provide us with enough pain and struggle. Why then maintain the needless suffering imposed by our present social structure [...with its] broken hearts and crushed lives [...]?"

A new world needs new structures, forms and attitudes for as André Léo recognised "[i]f we act like our adversaries, how will the world choose between them and us?" So ideas matter. Goldman was right to argue that "had the Russians made the Revolution à la Bakunin instead of à la Marx" then "the result would have been different and more satisfactory [...] Bolshevik methods [...] demonstrated how a revolution should *not* be made."

Hence the need to apply anarchist ideas now, to increase the numbers and influence of libertarians in the social struggles of today. This also means that we need to hove true to our ideals regardless of political expediency. Marie-Louise Berneri put it well when she argued that "[w]e cannot alter our views about Russia simply because, for imperialist reasons, American and British spokesmen now denounce Russian totalitarianism." Yet having the right ideas is not enough: ideas need to be applied for reasons Louise Michel indicated:

> "We women are not bad revolutionaries. Without begging anyone, we are taking our place in the struggles; otherwise, we could go ahead and pass motions until the world ends and gain nothing."

This struggle ensures that we change ourselves as we change the world, so ensuring that anarchism becomes more than a nice idea but a factor in social evolution towards a freer, better world.

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