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Reply to Anarchism's Confusionists

A response to the "Reply to the Platform" by Several
Russian Anarchists

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With a foreword by Piotr Arshinov, Dielo Truda, (Workers' Cause)

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cannot be described as anything other than an **object lesson in calumny**.

Foreword: The Crux Of The Matter

The debates provoked by the “Organizational Platform” have thus far focused chiefly upon its various arguments or indeed the draft organization proposed by it. Most of its critics, as well as several of its supporters, have at no time been clear-sighted in their appreciation of the matter of the Platform’s premises: they have never tried to discover what were factors that prompted its appearance, the point of departure adopted by its authors. And yet these are matters of the greatest importance to those who seek to understand the spirit and importance of the Platform.

The recently published “Reply to the Platform” from Volin and a few other anarchists, purporting to be a wholesale rebuttal of the Platform, has — for all the effort invested in the undertaking, for all its claims to be reading “between the lines” — failed to rise above the level of banal diatribe against arguments that are considered in isolation, and it has shown itself powerless to strike at the very heart of the matter.

Given that this “Reply” displays utter incomprehension of the theses of the Platform, misrepresenting them and using sophistry to counter them, the Group of Russian Anarchists Abroad, having scrutinized this would-be rebuttal, has once again identified a series of points that are being queried: at the same time, the Group has registered the political and theoretical inadequacies of “The Reply.”

The commentary below is given over to an examination of their reply. It is not intended either as a complement nor as an addendum to the Platform: it is merely designed to clarify a few of its theses.

Nevertheless, let us avail of this opportunity to point out a few things for consideration by comrades who may take an interest in the Platform for organization of anarchism. We believe that in so doing we will be helping to make its meaning and its spirit better understood.

We have fallen into the habit of ascribing the anarchist movement's failure in Russia in 1917–1919 to the Bolshevik Party's statist repression, which is a serious error. Bolshevik repression hampered the anarchist movement's spread during the revolution, but it was only one obstacle. Rather, it was the anarchist movement's own internal ineffectuality which was one of the chief causes of that failure, an ineffectuality emanating from the vagueness and indecisiveness that characterized its main policy statements on organization and tactics.

Anarchism had no firm, hard and fast opinion regarding the main problems facing the social revolution, an opinion needed to satisfy the masses who were carrying out the revolution. Anarchists were calling for a seizure of the factories, but had no well-defined homogeneous notion of the new production and its structures. Anarchists championed the communist device "*from each according to abilities, to each according to needs*," but they never bothered to apply this precept to the real world. In this way, they allowed suspect elements to turn this grand principle into a caricature of anarchism. (We might just remember how many swindlers seized upon this principle as a means of grabbing collective assets during the revolution for their own personal advantage.) Anarchists talked a lot about the revolutionary activity of the workers themselves, but they were unable to direct the masses, even roughly, towards the forms that such activity might assume: they proved unable to regulate reciprocal relations between the masses and their ideological centre. They incited the masses to shrug off the yoke of authority, but they did not indicate how the gains of revolution might be consolidated and defended. They had no clear cut opinion and specific action policies with regard to lots of other problems. Which is what alienated them from the activities of the masses and condemned them to social and historical impotence.

That is where we have to look for the prime cause of their failure in the Russian Revolution. We Russian anarchists who lived

But, to credit the authors of the "Reply," it is only then that the Anarchist Communist Party comes into its own; positioned somewhere up above, it is to direct the "higher" and "lower" toilers' organizations, the army, etc. That is their way of dealing with a document of which they propose to offer a critique, their way of treating the reader to whom they promised truth. The **irresponsibility** of these methods will surely startle any reader capable of reflection on matters political.

In scrutinizing the other reasons for the anarchist movement's weakness, the authors of the "Reply" point to this one: "The current state of mind of the masses who have neither the wherewithal nor the desire to **investigate, analyze and make comparisons** and who, consequently still and always plump for the easiest option, the course of the least resistance according to the "ready-made" recipes on offer from demagogues of every hue."

Let us conclude our examination of the "Reply" by these remarkable utterances from its authors. Remarkable words in that they demonstrate the futility and hypocrisy of their speechifying about the creative potential "of the masses, their autonomous activity, the dire threat that ideological direction poses to that potential, etc. If the Platform is to be believed, one gets the impression that the masses are not only incapable of finding the paths to their liberation, but also have not the slightest desire to do so, and prefer to follow the line of least resistance."

If that is how things really stand, things are going badly for anarchism, since it is by force that it has to draw the masses to its side. In setting themselves the target of rebutting the Platform, regardless of cost, even should they have to fly in the face of reason, the facts of life itself, in order to achieve that, the authors of the "Reply" have been reduced to declarations like those.

We hope that we have proved, in the foregoing exposition, that the program of the authors of the "Reply" was quite without foundation and that they are typical specimens of the political incoherence in our movement. As for the ethical side of the "Reply," that

which they reply without preamble. They always start off ferreting out the Jesuitical recesses of the position and, after having concocted those, they put their objections to them. In their hands, the Platform has been turned into a fiendish conspiracy against the anarchist movement and against the working class. This is how they represent the thinking of the Platform: “On top, **the leading party** (the General Union of Anarchists); down below, the higher peasant and worker organizations directed by the Union; lower still, the inferior organizations, the organs of struggle against the counter-revolution, the army, etc.” Elsewhere, they talk about “investigatory and political violence” institutions. A whole picture is painted there, a portrait of a police state, directed by the General Union of Anarchists.

One might well ask: why this recourse to all these lies? The authors of the “Reply” have read the Platform. So they ought to know that the thinking behind the Platform boils down to the organization of the anarchist forces **for the period of struggle against the capitalist class society**; its object is simply to spread anarchism among the masses and ideological direction of their struggle. The moment that the toilers have defeated the capitalist society, a new era in their history will be ushered in, an era when all social and political functions are transferred to the hands of the workers and peasants who will set about the creation of the new life. At that point, the anarchist organizations and, with them, the General Union, will lose all their significance and they should, in our view, gradually melt away into the productive organizations of the workers and peasants. The Platform contains a whole constructive section dealing with the role of the workers and peasants in the wake of the revolution. By contrast, it says nothing about the specific role at that juncture of the World Union of Anarchists. And this is no accident, but rather a deliberate omission. Because all political and economic activity will then be concentrated, as we see it, in the toilers’ organs of self-administration: in the trade unions, the factory committees, the councils, etc.

through the ordeal of revolution in 1905 and 1917 have not the slightest lingering doubt of that.

The obviousness of anarchism’s **internal ineffectuality** has impelled us to search around for ways that might afford it success.

Upwards of twenty years of experience, revolutionary activity, twenty years of efforts in anarchist ranks, and of effort that met with nothing but failures by anarchism as an **organizing movement**: all of this has convinced us of the necessity of a new comprehensive anarchist party organization rooted in one homogenous theory, policy and tactic.

These are the premises of the “Organizational Platform.” Should anarchist militants of other countries, with no first-hand experience of the Russian Revolution, but with any knowledge of it, however meagre, be willing to examine carefully the climate within the anarchist movement in their own country, they cannot fail to notice that the **internal ineffectuality** that caused anarchism to fail in the Russian Revolution is equally prevalent in their own ranks and represents a deadly threat to the movement, especially in time of revolution. They will then understand the significance of the step forward that the “Organizational Platform” represents for anarchism, from the point of view of ideas as well as that of organization and construction.

Piotr Arshinov

Response to the “Reply” of Some Russian Anarchists

The “Reply” (of April 1927) from some Russian anarchists to the Platform is an attempt to criticize and utterly refute the “Organizational Platform” published by the Group of Russian Anarchists Abroad.

The Reply’s authors claim to be in disagreement, not with certain ideas set out in the Platform, but rather with the whole thing.

It is precisely “the Platform as such... its underlying principles, its essence, its very mentality” that are not, in our estimation, acceptable, they say. They reckon it is not anarchism, but Bolshevism which is set out therein. The **ideological essence** of the Bolsheviks and the “platformists” is identical. Unquestionably, they say, “the Platform’s authors look upon these as indispensable: the creation of a **directing policy centre**, the organization of an army and police force at the disposal of that centre, which, in essence means, **the introduction of a transitional political authority statist in character.**” And the “Reply” is peppered with lots of other similar and similarly stunning assertions.

It is our belief that such assertions make it obligatory upon their authors that they adduce adequate evidence before they make them. Indeed, this practice of making unfounded allegations may lead the anarchist to questionable conduct. Every anarchist, in a true sense of the word, ought thus to make a determined stand against this approach.

In the course of our exposition, we shall see in what measure the authors of the “Reply” have authenticated their claims and this may enlighten us as to the meaning and worth of their arguments.

Its authors open with the declaration that they are “wholly in disagreement with the group regarding several fundamental or important theses in the Platform.” But in reality, the dissension relates to every one of the Platform’s theses on organization and principle. To explain their difference of opinion, they go to a lot of bother, resort to lots of sophistry and come up with unlikely arguments of their own. Since they are *a priori* hostile to the entirety of the Platform, but have no explicit view of their own on any of the issues broached therein, this necessarily had to be the case. We can appreciate this if we examine their main objections. But there is more: we shall see too that the authors of the “Reply,” while rebutting certain arguments of the Platform, very often wind up reiterating those arguments, claiming them as their own and using them to counter the Platform.

While rejecting the idea of a broad anarchist organization based on a homogeneous ideology, the authors of the “Reply” peddle the idea of a synthesizing organization wherein all strands of anarchism are gathered together into “one single family.” To pave the way for the establishment of that organization, they propose to set up a newspaper in every country which would discuss and examine all controversial issues, from every angle, and thus bring about an entente between anarchists.

We have already spelled out our position regarding this notion of synthesis and we shall not rehearse our reasoning here. We shall confine ourselves simply to adding that the existence of discrepancies between the opinions of anarchists is due more to the lack of a periodical to act as a forum for discussion (there were some once). A forum for discussion will never manage to bring the divergent currents together, but it will assuredly clutter up the minds of the labouring masses. Furthermore, a whole swathe of individuals claiming to be anarchists has nothing in common with anarchism. Gathering these people (on the basis of what?) into “one family” and describing that gathering as “anarchist organization” would not only be nonsense, it would be positively harmful. If that were to happen by some mischance, all prospects for anarchism’s developing into a revolutionary social movement of toilers would be banished.

It is not an indiscriminating mix, but rather a selection from the wholesome anarchist forces and the organization thereof into an anarchist-communist party that is vital to the movement; not a hotchpotch synthesis, but **differentiation** and exploration of the anarchist idea so as to bring them to a homogeneous movement program. That is the only way to rebuild and strengthen the movement in the labouring masses.

To conclude, a few words on the ethical **features** of the “Reply.” In reality, it is not to the Platform that this “Reply” is addressed, but to a whole series of positions duly misrepresented in advance by the authors of the “Reply.” There is not a single paragraph to

forces in the revolution, thereby aping the idea of the Platform, albeit misrepresenting it as usual.

But it is by examining the necessity, announced by the Platform, of the revolutionary army's being subordinated to the toilers' higher productive organizations that the authors of the "Reply" display a true penetrating mind, a real masterpiece of farsightedness. How dare you, they exclaim, argue that is not a transitional period? Precisely how subordination of the revolutionary army to the workers' and peasants' productive organizations constitutes a transitional period — that is the inscrutable enigma. The toilers' military forces will not in any way become an end in themselves; they will have only one way of implementing the formalities of the worker and peasant revolution. As a result, it is to the workers and peasants that the army should be answerable and by them alone that it should be directed politically. According to the authors of the "Reply" the revolutionary army, or indeed the armed groupings, should not be answerable to those organizations; they will lead an independent existence and fight as they deem fit. Thus are folk who have the effrontery to speak of things upon which they have never reflected hoist on their own petard!

(7) Anarchist organization

On this score too, the authors of the "Reply" are primarily concerned with misrepresenting the meaning of the Platform. First of all they turn the idea of an Executive Committee into that of a Party Central Committee, a committee that issues orders, makes laws and commands. Anybody in the least degree slightest conversant with politics knows well that an executive committee and a central committee are two quite different ideas. The executive committee may very well be an anarchist agency; indeed, such an organ exists in many anarchist and anarcho-syndicalist organizations.

One point: the best retort to their objections is the Platform itself and the reader will find a specific and definite opinion there on all of the issues broached. We shall, in order to clarify the spirit and the current by which they are motivated, by dwelling only upon certain points from the Platform which the authors of the "Reply" have sought to rebut.

(1) The causes of the anarchist movement's weakness

The Platform locates the main cause of the anarchist movement's weakness in the absence of organizing factors and organized relations within the movement, which plunges it into a state of "chronic disorganization." At the same time, the Platform adds that this disorganization itself nestles in a few shortcomings of an ideological nature. We can see these shortcomings in a whole range of petit-bourgeois principles which have nothing to do with anarchism. The disorganization prevailing in our ranks draws succor from ideological confusion. And in order to overcome such practical and ideological confusion, the Platform floats the idea of establishing a general organization founded upon a homogeneous program. In this way, the Platform lays the foundations for a general organization of anarchists and creates ideological homogeneity. The organization thus collectively created will be strong enough to free anarchism from its ideological contradictions and organizational inadequacies and to pave the way for a mighty anarchist organization banded around homogeneous principles. We see no other way of developing and fortifying anarchism among the masses. The Platform has pointed out that the approach of bringing the various strands of anarchism together into one "tenderly united family" will not restore the health of the anarchist movement, but will instead weaken and befuddle it.

The criticisms from the “Reply” utterly repudiate the picture of the causes of the anarchist movement’s weaknesses that the Platform has outlined. They see the causes located in “**the vagueness of several ideas basic to our outlook**, such as: the notion of social revolution, that of violence, that of collective creativity, that of the transitional period, that of organization, and still others.” Also, the authors of the ‘Reply’ enumerate other matters on which not all anarchists see eye to eye. If they are to be believed, you would think that anarchists have no common view on any matter, and that we would first have to theorize about everything before going on to tackle the organization issue. We have heard these ideas and promises often by now. And, instead of threatening for the hundredth and first time to come up with a probing theoretical work, would the authors of the “Reply” not be better employed getting on with that task, bringing it to fruition and offering it as a counter to the Platform? Our conception of the principles of anarchism is quite different. We are well aware that there is agreement among anarchists on the major issues like the idea of social revolution, that of violence, collective creativity, dictatorship, organization, etc. Those who have thus far remained adversaries of social revolution, of revolutionary violence and of organization, will always be such, and it really would be too naive to begin the history of anarchism all over again just for them. As soon as somebody would come along and tell us that they do not accept the idea of social revolution, someone else would announce that they are against revolutionary violence, and a third would express unhappiness with the very idea of communist anarchism, and a fourth would speak up against the class struggle. Shouting in every instance that “anarchism’s principles” are not precise enough is tantamount in fact to the failure to devise an overall theory. Didn’t we have Bakunin, Kropotkin and Malatesta who were precise enough about **anarchism’s principles**? There were anarchist movements in a variety of countries based on those principles. How can we claim that they were not clear enough?

partisan warfare waged by the partisans against Kolchak and Denikin and which brought the latter to military and social defeat.)

Insurgent revolutionary work during the civil war must know how to use the methodology of unity of operational planning and overall command of the revolutionary armed forces. Without that, the workers and peasants will be beaten by counter-revolutionary forces highly conversant with the military arts. The Platform pointed out how necessary it was that workers utilize that methodology as well as create a single army embracing all of the armed forces at the revolution’s disposal. It goes without saying that the Platform insists upon this organization only for the duration of the civil war in the fight against the counter-revolution. Once that war ends, the revolutionary army has no further *raison d’être* and will fade away. To tell the truth, the whole chapter in the Platform that deals with defence of the revolution stressed only the need that workers will have to utilize the methodology of a common operational plan and common command. The Platform also labours the point that these methods as well as the idea of the revolutionary army are to be regarded only as a stratagem necessitated by civil war and as no way as anarchist principles. It strikes us that no sane and honest mind could find grounds there of accusing the Platform with pushing the idea of a standing, centralized army. But the authors of the “Reply” manage it nonetheless. They charge us with nothing more nor less than aspiring to create a centralized army placed at the disposal of the overall productive organizations directed, in their turn, by the Union/Party. We believe that anarchist circles are clear-sighted enough to grasp for themselves that this view is absurd and incoherent. The “Reply” proposes no hard and fast solution to the problem of defence of the revolution. After having proffered the most motley shower of insults against the Platform, the authors of the “Reply” start to mumble something about union of the armed

and unity of overall command.” It goes on to say that the toilers will also have to have recourse to these methods of struggle, and all the armed units that will spring up voluntarily will have to amalgamate into a single army. This necessity does not make it impossible for local detachments to wage an independent fight against the counter-revolution. It does, though, require that a revolutionary worker and peasant army confront the broad front of the counter-revolutionary onslaught.

In order to combat the counter-revolution, the workers must possess their common operational plan and overall command. Otherwise, the enemy will attack them where they are weakest and least expecting it.

History is the best proof of this:

1. All popular revolutions were especially successful when the army ceased blindly to serve the ruling classes and threw in its lot with the rebels.
2. During the Russian Revolution, it was those popular movements that managed to unite their armed forces, units of importance, to which military operations affecting an entire region were entrusted, that met with appreciable success. This was the case with the insurgent movement headed by Makhno. Insurgent groups that failed to understand this necessity perished in the face of a well organized enemy. There were hundreds of instances of that in the Russian Revolution.
3. The Russian counter-revolution led by Kolchak, Denikin, Yudenich and others owes its military defeat chiefly to the fact that it failed to establish a single operational plan and united command for the counter-revolutionary armies. Thus while Kolchak was (in 1918) near Kazan and making for Moscow, Denikin stayed in the Caucasus; but it was only when Kolchak was “liquidated” (in 1919) that Denikin rounded on Moscow. (*Note*: We are not speaking here of the

True, there are many obscure points in anarchism. But those are of quite another character. The fact is that alongside unquestionably anarchist personnel, the movement contains a number of liberal tendencies and individualist deviations that prevent it from having a stable base. To restore the movement to health, it must be freed of those tendencies and deviations; but this purge is, to a very large extent, prevented by just those individualists, open or disguised (and the authors of the “Reply” are undoubtedly to be numbered among the latter), who are part of the movement.

(2) The class struggle in the anarchist system

The Platform declares quite plainly that the “class struggle between labour and capital was at all times in the history of human societies the chief factor determining the form and structure of those societies,” that anarchism emerged and developed on the terrain of that struggle, in the bosom of oppressed, labouring humanity; that anarchism is a social **movement** of the oppressed masses. The attempt to represent it as a general humanitarian problem amounts to a social and historical falsehood. In the struggle between capital and labour, anarchism fights wholeheartedly and inseparably alongside the latter.

The authors of the “Reply” counter that clear and precise message with “anarchism is a synthesis of elements: class, humanitarian, individual.” That is the view held in common with liberals fearful of relying upon the truths of labour, who are forever dithering ideologically between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat looking for common humanitarian values to use as connections between the contending classes. But we know well that there is no mankind, one and indivisible, that the demands of anarchist communism will be met only through the determination of the working class and that the activity of mankind as a whole, including the bourgeoisie, will not come into that at all; consequently the view-

point peddled by the liberals who do not know how to pick a side in the worldwide social tragedy cannot have anything to do with the class struggle, and thus with anarchism.

(3) On the problem of direction of the masses and events from the ideal point of view

The “Reply” rather takes issue more with the idea of an authoritarian leadership of **its own devising** than with the idea set out in the Platform. And, broadly speaking, throughout the “Reply” its authors strive to divine some hidden meaning to the enigmatic Platform and go on to paint a picture that might strike terror not just into anarchists but even into certain overly sentimental statist. Thus, the influence wielded in the realm of ideas by the anarchists over the revolutionary trade unions is turned by them into subordination of those unions to the anarchist organization. The method of the common revolutionary military strategy applied in defence of the revolution “becomes” (in their interpretation) the idea of a centralized State’s army. The notion of an executive committee of an anarchist organization “becomes” (in their representation of it) that of a dictatorial Central Committee demanding unquestioning obedience. One might think that the authors of the “Reply” are too ignorant to be capable of grasping the essence of all these problems. Not a bit of it! All of the misrepresentations and alterations made by the latter are made to the same end. We shall demonstrate anon to what end our adversaries pretend to be alarmed by the expression “direction of the masses and events from the ideas point of view.” But are they not then like those odd sorts who, being terrified by the idea of influence, are afraid of influencing themselves? Direction of the masses from the “ideas” point of view simply means the existence of a guiding idea in their movement. In the world of socialist struggle and socialist demands, such ideas are not numerous. But it is natural that we anarchists wanted the toil-

of existence in this mammoth factory. Production carried out in accordance with an overall scheme prescribed by the workers’ and peasants’ production organizations, a plan drafted in the light of the needs of society as a whole. The products of that factory belong to the whole of labouring society. Such production is truly socialist.

It is very much to be regretted that the authors of the “Reply” omitted to explain how the envisage decentralized production. But we may suppose that they are talking about several independent productions, isolated industries, separate trusts and maybe even separate factories producing and disposing of their products as they see fit. The authors of the “Reply” declare that decentralized production will operate according to federalist principles. But, since the federated units will be nothing more than small private entrepreneurs (to wit, the united workforce of a single plant, trust or industry), production will not be at all socialist; it will be capitalist, in that it is based on the parcelization of ownership, which will not take long to provoke competition and antagonisms.

Unified production is not centralized production directed from authoritarian “centre.” Unified production is merely authentically communist production.

(6) Defence of the revolution

Examining the problem of the defence of the revolution, the Platform remarks first the most effective means of defending the revolution would be to find a radical solution to the problems of production, supply and the land. But the Platform also foresaw that the solution to these problems will necessarily spark a bitter civil war in which the exploiter class will strive to retain or regain its privileges. That is quite inescapable. The Platform indicates also that the class currently in power will in that war resort to “the methodology of all military action: unity of operational planning

find them presenting a bold outline of the post-revolutionary anarchist society, of the society in which everybody would find their every need met and which would have nothing in common with the one sketched in the Platform. Not a bit of it, though. All one finds there is an admission that the creative endeavor of the social revolution “**will be a natural start to the formation of an anarchist society.**” Now that declaration is borrowed, word for word, from the Platform, which states “the victory of the toilers... will be the **start of the construction** of the anarchist society which, once outlined, will then, without interruption, follow its line of development, growing stronger and more rounded.” In truth, with our adversaries, the right side of their minds has no idea what the left side is thinking and doing.

(5) The problem of production

Nor do the authors of the “Reply” fail to raise categorical objections to us in relation to the problem of production as well. It is very hard to get an idea of what prompts their objections, as well as what they are advocating in their exposition. The idea of **unified** and **coordinated** production set out by the Platform leaves them cold, as does the idea of agencies directing production and elected by the workers. In the idea of coordinated production they divine the spectre of centralization and statism and they offer instead the idea of decentralized production.

The idea of unified production is clear: the Platform looks upon the whole of modern history as one single, giant workshop of producers, created by the efforts of several generations of toilers and altogether the property of everybody and no one in particular.

Particular branches of production are inseparably interconnected and they can neither produce nor exist as separate entities. The **unity** of that workshop is determined by technical factors. But there is only one unified and coordinated production capable

ers’ guiding idea to be the anarchist idea and not that of the social democrats for example, of those who have only recently betrayed the Viennese workers’ revolutionary movement.

But, in order that the anarchist idea should become the lodestone of the masses, we have to develop well organized ideological activity which in turn necessitates an anarchist organization whose members spread very clear and coherent notions among the masses. All of which is so elementary and self-evident that it is embarrassing to have to spell it out again in this day and age to folk who claim to be conversant with anarchism. The authors of the “Reply” are, moreover well aware of that, since, after having misrepresented our point of view and peddled a mountain of absurdities regarding the General Union of Anarchists, they close by saying that the anarchists’ role in economic organization is to influence the masses morally and in terms of ideas, while that of specifically anarchist organizations would be to help them indeed from this “ideas” point of view. But is not saying that tantamount to borrowing the positions of the Platform after having blackened the name? What is the meaning of “influence and assist the masses from the idea point of view”? Are anarchists going to render ideological assistance to a mob in the process of mounting a pogrom or of carrying out a lynch law? All assistance afforded to the masses in the realm of ideas must be consonant with the ideology of anarchism, otherwise it will not be anarchist assistance. “Ideologically assist” simply means: influence from the ideas point of view, direct from the ideas point of view [a leadership of ideas]. Bakunin, Kropotkin, Reclus, Malatesta — those are men who were, incontestably, ideological directors of the masses. But we aim to see that such direction, exercised occasionally, becomes a permanent factor. That is only going to be possible when there is an organization possessed with a common ideology and whose membership engages in ideologically coordinated activity, without being sidetracked or dispersed as has been the case hitherto. Those are the terms in which the question is posed. And it is in vain that the au-

thors of the “Reply” will dream up sophisms in order to show that direction in the realm of ideas mean authoritarian direction.

It is the masses of people that will make the revolution themselves, say our adversaries. Understood. But they ought to know that the revolutionary mass is forever nurturing in its bosom a minority of initiators who precipitate and direct events. And we are entitled to assert that in a true social revolution the supporters of worker anarchism alone will account for that minority.

(4) The idea of the transitional period

The Platform notes that the social political parties understand the term “transitional period” to mean a specific stage in the life of a people, the essential features of which period are: a breach with the old order of things and the installation of a new economic and political system, a system which as yet does not represent the complete emancipation of the toilers. Communist anarchism, however, repudiates transitional arrangements of that sort. It advocates social revolution of the toilers that will lay the foundations for their free and egalitarian society.

It strikes us that the problem could not be posed any more clearly. But the authors of the “Reply” have contrived to discover the precise opposite in the Platform. In their estimation, the Platform is, all in all, merely **“an attempt to peddle this idea (of the transitional period) and to graft it on to anarchism.”** And here comes the proof: the Platform looks forward to certain points when the press (or rather the abuse thereof) of the class hostile to the toilers will have been shut down by struggling labour. And the authors of the “Reply” insist: why, doesn’t that amount to a “transitional period really”? Then again the Platform declares the anarchist communist principle “from each according to abilities, to each according to needs” in no way makes it incumbent upon labour in rebellion to feed everyone, including its avowed enemies

who, for counter-revolutionary motives, would refuse to play a part in the production and would dream of nothing other than decapitating the revolution. That principle merely means equality in distribution within the parameters of the egalitarian society; it does not at all apply to those who have placed themselves outside that society for counter-revolutionary purposes. Furthermore, that principle means that every member of labouring society who profits from its services should serve it in accordance with their strengths and capabilities and not at all in accordance with their whims or indeed not at all. The authors of the “Reply” again raise the hue and cry: what about that, is that not a transitional period? They proclaim “the application of the principle of equal enjoyment of all available and freshly manufactured products, regardless of their quantity, by all the members of the collectivity, without exception, restriction or privilege of any sort.” True, it is none too clear from this formula whether the rebel workers must feed the bourgeoisie that plays no part in the production and uses its ingenuity to oppose them. But, since that formula is opposed to the labour principle of the Platform, we have to conclude that the toilers do have a duty to maintain the bourgeoisie, even if they have not the slightest desire to do so.

We shall not enter into discussion of such a viewpoint. The working class itself will resolve it practically, come the social revolution. However we do believe that it will not shower the authors of the “Reply” with praise for the tender care with which they surrounded a bourgeois that refuses to work. Would the authors of the “Reply” not be better advised to devise some way of turning bourgeois into honest members of labouring society instead of watching out for them with such solicitude?

But the most impressive sleight of hand by the authors of the “Reply” comes only later. After having seen them rebut all of the positions of the Platform, after having seen them dismiss its authors as shameful Bolsheviks, and their constructive system as a transitional political and economic State system — one would expect to