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Facing the Bolshevik judges

Speech of the anarchist Fedor Mochanovsky before
the Petrograd Revolutionary Court on 13
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Retrieved on 1st June 2023 from www.katesharpleylibrary.net
Published in *La Antorcha* (Argentina) 23 September 1923.
Translated by Paul Sharkey.

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Let me defer for a second my response to the questions you put to me and give you a little information about the 'Bezvlastiya' group and the way in which that group looks upon governments generally and the soviet government in particular. For openers and as a member of the Bezvlastiya group, let me state that neither Til, Tomson nor Koziarsky, charged with banditry, ever have or had anything to do with our group and that Koziarsky has never been a member of that group nor had any sort of connection with it. On that basis, I protest at the nonsensical and lying articles carried by *Red Gazette* of 13 December 1922 which alleges: "Ivan Til is a member of the Bezvlastiya group." And let me also take exception in advance to any other slander that might pop up in the official socialist press in the future. I shall not talk at length about the Bezvlastiya group and its activities. I shall confine myself to a few words.

It was, I think, at the beginning of March 1921 that the first edition of *Bezvlastiya* newspaper was published. Publication

ceased that August, not because of lack of resources, but for other reasons. The group ceased to exist at the same time as the paper. So it was impossible for Koziarsky to have passed expropriated money on to the group. (The expropriations occurred in December 1922, by which time the group was no longer in existence.)

As for my insubordination and actions directed against the power of the soviets, those I do not deny. The real antagonism between the anarchists and the Bolsheviks is nothing new as far as anarchists are concerned. That antagonism has existed since the days when Karl Marx and Mikhail Bakunin set out their ideas. The former embraced the State and government whereas the latter rejected them, even in embryo. That antagonism became very clear at the congress of Marxists chaired by Engels and Liebknecht and held in The Hague, at which they pledged to string up anarchists as soon as they came power.

In which all they were doing was talking in the same terms as the Bolsheviks talk in Russia today.

For a start, back in 1918 the Bolsheviks organised an anti-anarchist front to seek the destruction of the anarchists in Russia. Throughout the land and in every sphere of life across the territory of the soviet republic, they took up arms against the anarchists. They shut down their presses and their literature. They shut down anarchist clubs and bookshops. They resorted to all sorts of means in order to undo the organisation of their congresses and they arrested the anarchists. And when the opportunity presented itself, they shot them down on one pretext or another.

All of which was done in a vile and cruel fashion. At the time when the Bolsheviks came into power, most anarchists enlisted on the various fronts as reinforcements against the onslaught of the counter-revolutionaries and the White Guards. Most perished. The ones who returned found their organisations smashed by the Bolsheviks. And even now, throughout the soviet republic, many anarchists are suffering the cruellest

conditions in various prisons. Many of them have been banished; many others have been or are going to be killed.

Mindful of the war on the outside since the October revolution and up until 1920, anarchists adopted a wait-and-see approach. But from 1920 onwards anarchists have been posing this question to the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party:

“Are you willing to change your way of dealing with anarchists or are you sticking to it?”

To which the Communist Party replied:

“That will depend on whatever the Party’s Central Committee decides!”

Since when most anarchists have had to give up on public activity, having no illusions about changes to the Bolsheviks’ tactics.

In the “liberated” republic of the soviets, there is no anarchist press, whereas it publishes legally and can be distributed without let in bourgeois regions like France, Italy, Spain, England and America.

From the days of Socrates through to the nineteenth century, thanks to the ideas of the finest thinkers and modern philosophers, the human mind has been shrugging off the yoke of church power and temporal authority and searching out for itself some path by which humanity might arrive at freedom, justice, equality and universal happiness. From which it follows that, for the sake of social progress, freedom of speech is indispensable, so that every endeavour, every opinion, every idea, whether from an individual or a group of individuals, are screened – filtered we might even say – by criticism. In his theory, Darwin demonstrates how an unused organ atrophies and perishes. We say that the same goes for the human being who, in the absence of effort, backslides. Human beings may think whatsoever they please; but if they cannot swap impressions with other human beings they cannot grow ..

The Bolshevik government, like every other government, horrified at the criticisms voiced against its dishonest conduct, denies human beings the right of free expression of opinion and, by trying to cram everybody's head with Marx's ideas, thwarts the unfettered growth of the individual.

Rather than raising them higher with Karl Marx's ideas, the Bolsheviks have trampled upon their own colours. They have set about the founding of the State and wrought their own destruction. (Every government is an agency of decomposition.) They have concocted a religion out of their doctrine and have spilled blood in order to spread it, the very same as the Christians who also regard themselves as the most enlightened men of all time have done.

In primitive times, the savages were idolaters of nature, the prophets and other idols. The human mind has battled against such tendencies for thousands of years. Today, it is the ideas of the great minds and of course the minds themselves that are being turned into idols before which their disciples prostrate themselves. Thanks to this new approach they are turning humanity back into slaves. That is the pitch to which the Bolsheviks have brought us and their fetishism knows no bounds.

There you have my view of all governments and should there some day be produced, even by anarchists, I know not what semblance of "free soviet" government, I will, on behalf of Anarchy, make my stand against any such construction of society.