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Goals and Methods of the Anarchist-Communist Party

Shifu

July 1914

Editor's Note: During his short life, Shifu (Liu Sifu. 1884–1915) came to epitomize the dedicated anarchist revolutionary in China. First he abandoned his studies and joined the Revolutionary Alliance, the republican movement led by Sun Vatsen. He was involved in an assassination attempt in 1907 and jailed for two years. He became acquainted with anarchist ideas while in jail reading both *Natural Justice* and the *New Era*. After his release he joined the China Assassination Corps. Following the Revolution of 1911, he adopted an explicitly anarchist position, forming the Conscience Society and then the Cockcrow Society in Guangzhou, publishing what was to become the leading anarchist paper in China, *The People's Voice*. In 1913 he renamed himself Shifu and began organizing workers (the Chinese anarchists were among the first to organize Chinese workers into trade unions). In 1914 he started the Society of Anarchist -Communist Comrades. The group's manifesto, "Goals and Methods of the Anarchist-Communist Party," was published in *The People's Voice* in July 1914, on the eve of the First World War. It illustrates the influence

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of Kropotkin among the Chinese anarchists, not only in respect to anarchist communism, but also in relation to his concept of “mutual aid” (Selection 54). Shifu died of tuberculosis in 1915, but The People’s Voice continued publishing until 1922, and many of Shifu’s comrades went on to play a prominent role in the Chinese anarchist movement. This translation is by Edward S. Krebs, author of the definitive biography of Shifu: Shifu, Soul of Chinese Anarchism (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998).

WHAT IS THE ANARCHIST-COMMUNIST PARTY? What are the goals of the Anarchist-Communist Party? Here they are in simple and direct language:

1. All the important items of production—land, mines, factories, farming tools, machinery, and the like—will be taken back and returned to the common ownership of society; the right of private property will be eradicated, and money will be abolished.
2. All the important items of production are things common to society, and those involved in production may use them freely. (For example, those who farm may freely use land and the tools of cultivation, and will not need to rent from a landlord as at present, or be used by a landlord; those in industry may freely use the machinery in factories to produce goods and will not be employed by factory owners as at present.)
3. There will be no classes of capitalist and labourer; everyone should engage in labour. (Such careers as agriculture, construction, communications, education, medicine, child care, and all other kinds of effort in which humankind is involved for livelihood, all these are labour.) Each person recognizing what he or she is suited for and able to do, will work freely without oppression or limitation.

4. The products of labour-food, clothing, housing, and everything else that is useful-all are the common possessions of society_ Everyone may use them freely, and everyone will enjoy all wealth in common.
5. There will not be any kind of government. Whether central or local, all government organizations will be abolished.
6. There will be no armies, police, or jails.
7. There will be no laws or rules.
8. All kinds of public associations will be organized freely in order to reform all kinds of work and manage all aspects of production so that we may provide for the masses of people. (For example, those adept at farming can unite with their comrades and organize an agricultural society, and those adept at mining can organize a mining society.) These public organizations will range from the simple to the complex. These will be organized by the workers in each kind of work, and there will be no leaders or managers. Those who take these responsibilities will also be seen as workers, and they will not have the authority to manage others. In these associations there will also be no statutes or regulations to restrict people's freedom.
9. The marriage system will be abolished; men and women will unite freely. The offspring will be cared for together in public hospitals. The sons and daughters born will receive care in public nurseries.
10. All the youth will go to school and receive an education, from the age of six to the age of twenty or twenty-five. Both males and females should attain to the highest level of learning according to their abilities.

11. Both men and women will devote themselves to labour after completing their education until the age of forty-five or fifty. After this they will retire to a public old people's home. All who are sick or have other health problems will be examined and treated in a public hospital.
12. All religions and creeds will be abolished. As to morality, people will be free, with no duties or restrictions; this will allow the natural morality of "mutual aid" to develop freely to its fulfillment.
13. Each person will work two to four hours at most every day. In the remaining time each day, people will be free to study science in order to help with the progress of society. For recreation they may pursue the fine arts and the practical arts in order to develop their individual physical and mental powers.
14. In schools and education we will select a suitable international language so that the different languages and literatures of each nation will gradually be eliminated, and the far and the near, the east and west, will have no boundaries at all.

The above also are some of the methods that our party uses to achieve our goals. If we wish to achieve such goals, we need to use the following methods:

1. Use newspapers, books, lectures, schools, and other methods to spread our ideas among the common people so that a majority of them will understand the promise and fullness of our principles and the beauty of social organization in the future, and know that labour is man's natural duty and mutual aid his inherent virtue.

and anarchism are already deeply implanted in the minds of the workers' parties, and in the activities of workers' parties in recent years we already see the incipient emergence of anarchism. Governments look to their armies to take care of things, but in the militia organizations of every country you have those who in ordinary times are the workers! Thus over the past several years when governments sought to put down strikes, the troops would not obey the commands to disperse them, or they would put down their arms and join the workers: they would not attack their brothers and friends on behalf of the government. And so when the great revolution begins one day soon, the soldiers also will rise up against the government-of this we can be sure. What do we have to fear from flesh-eating governments and capitalists?! As to the current situation in China, although the propagation of our principles really is not as broad as in Europe, if we and our comrades in East Asia can bring together all our planning and all our strength and sacrifice for about twenty years, giving all our effort to propaganda, I will dare to say that our ideas will be spread throughout the East Asian continent. At that time our progress in Europe will be even more difficult to imagine. The time of realization is surely something we ourselves will see; do not think it is an ideal that cannot be realized.

Alas, war clouds fill every part of Europe, and millions of workers are about to be sacrificed for the wealthy and the nobility. The evils of government have come to this and now are totally revealed! The day when hostilities cease will be the day when the death sentence for government and the capitalists is proclaimed. The tide of anarchism will then burst forth and rise. We vow that the common people of East Asia will awake from their dreams and rouse themselves with urgency, and we trust that they will not linger on in backwardness.

2. During the period of propaganda, all should consider the circumstances of time and place to make use of two sorts of methods: first, resistance, such as refusal to pay taxes or to participate in military service, strikes, boycotts, and similar actions; second, disturbances, including assassination, violence, and the like. These two methods for opposing authority and extending our principles in order to hasten the tide of revolution, spreading it far and near-are ways to speed and strengthen propaganda.
3. The great people's revolution is the fulfillment of propaganda; the masses will set off an incident, overthrowing government and the capitalists, and rebuilding a proper society.
4. The great people's revolution is a great world revolution. Our party will unite in all countries, not just one country at a time. The present is the period of propaganda: all our comrades should pursue these methods as appropriate to the places where they are and to the strength at their disposal. Then when the opportunity is ripe, the great world revolution will commence, probably starting in Europe-perhaps in France, Germany, England, Spain, Italy, Russia or one of the other nations where propaganda has already become extremely widespread. One day the triggering incident will occur, perhaps with several countries rising together, or perhaps in just one country; then other countries will hear of it and all respond. Labour unions will strike, and armies will lay down their arms. The governments of Europe will be toppled one after another. In North and South America and in Asia, our party will join in and rise up. The speed of our success will be unimaginable. In China today, nothing is more important than to catch up, devoting our utmost effort to propaganda in order to prevent the possibility that a day would come when

that incident would occur in Europe, but propaganda in the East would not be ripe; that would hold back the world's progress.

The above are the methods for achieving our goals. If people have doubts about our principles, it can only be because "they are difficult to put into effect." Or they are concerned that the morality of this generation is inadequate; if the day came when there were no government, surely there would be all sorts of problems and workers might steal the goods needed by society, or they think that with so many people throughout the land, it would be difficult to reach the masses with our propaganda, and it would be impossible for a minority of people in our party to oppose the power of government in the many countries. These two areas of doubt are what many people today are concerned with on these two kinds of questions; here I wish to explain how these questions can be dealt with:

1. We say that in order to realize the society of anarchist communism, we must first propagate our principles and seek the agreement of the majority of ordinary people. If the majority of people understand the beauty of these principles, then it should be easy enough to handle the lack of understanding of the minority. So why should we worry about any problems? Furthermore, under anarchism people do not need to have serious problems implementing morality: this is nothing other than "labour" and "mutual aid." These two qualities are part of the capacity of humanity and do not come from some external inspiration. In order to improve society and have the conditions of our life advance day by day to where it should be, this natural morality must be able to develop freely. In earlier times, work and even the most pleasant things were distresses and not as conditions today. Now, with science and invention, and without the restraints

of money, we can use machinery for everything; no matter what kind of task, we can have efficiency and time-saving, and maintain good hygiene in our work. Thus with a few hours each day, which will be like a daily exercise routine, we can get all the work done, so how could anyone wish to avoid it? With the speed of machinery and the numbers of workers, the wealth of production will be inconceivable. There can only be a surplus of the goods that we need; there will be no worry about them being inadequate. And why would anyone want to steal these goods? But if there are still recalcitrants who would want others to serve them, and themselves sit happily after a full meal, our people would oppose them with the principle of anti-authoritarianism and reject them from society. How could such a small group of people cause problems?

2. Anything that does not accord with universal principles is difficult to propagate, and anything that does is easy to propagate. The universal principles of anarchist communism are shared in the consciences of all people, so how could it be difficult to propagate them? Surely our strength is up to this task! Consider that anarchism appeared in Europe only sixty years ago, and it has only been forty years since party people commenced propaganda work, but today in every country of Europe things are developing especially well, advancing a thousand miles a day! Anarchist groups are spreading far and wide, and books and newspapers are everywhere. What we Chinese are receiving with such great enthusiasm is already old hat in Europe. At the international congress of anarchism in London this year, they made plans to launch an international organization of anarchists. It is not long until the worldwide revolution! It is even more satisfying to realize that, except for the capitalists, in European society there are only workers. Today the great principles of socialism