

# **Anarchism, Syndicalism & Workers Councils**

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# Overview

**We know what anarchists are against: capitalism and the State. We know what anarchists are for: libertarian socialism.**

**But how to get from one to the other, by means compatible with the ends?**

**Anarchy is organisation, organisation, organisation.**

# Laying the Foundations

“We want legislation of the people by the people, without representatives;

“government of the people by the people, without that supernatural person called the prince or the state;

“industrial centralisation, administrative, without hierarchy;

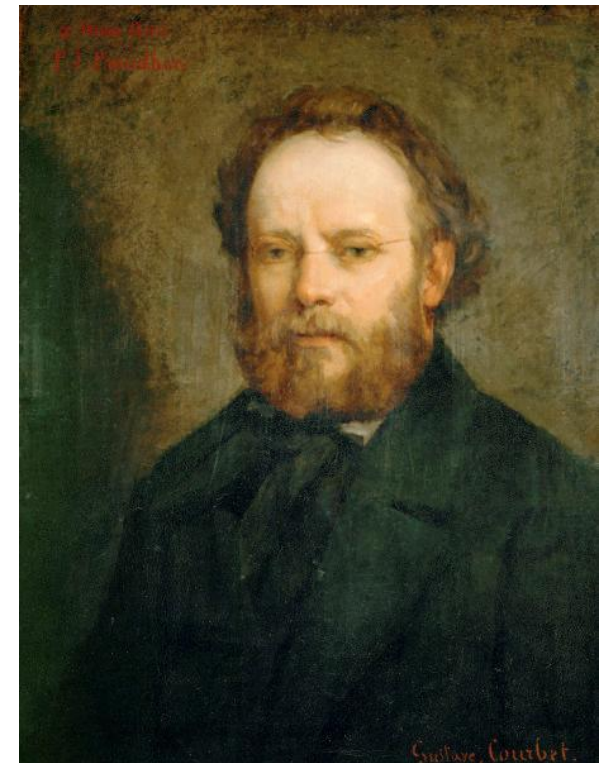
“guarding of the people by the people, without any other army than a citizen militia;

“justice of the people by the people, without unremovable magistrates;

“education of the people by the people without university monopolies and without Jesuits;

“finally we want the organisation of labour by the workers, without capitalists or masters”

– *Manuscript (1847)*



**Pierre-Joseph Proudhon**

# “Universal Association”

## **Social and economic dual-power, 1846**

- “a war of labour against capital; a war of liberty against authority; a war of the producer against the non-producer; a war of equality against privilege [...] to combat and reduce power, to put it in its proper place in society, it is of no use to change the holders of power or introduce some variation into its workings: an agricultural and industrial combination must be found”

## **Social and economic dual-power, 1848 Revolution**

- “a body representative of the proletariat be formed in Paris [...] in opposition to the bourgeoisie’s representation [...] a new society be founded in the heart of the old society”
- “The organisation of popular societies was the pivot of democracy, the cornerstone of republican order [...] Under the name of clubs [...] it is a matter of the organisation of universal suffrage in all its forms, of the very structure of Democracy itself.”

## **“possessors without masters”**

- “leaders, instructors, superintendents [...] must be chosen from the workers by the workers themselves, and must fulfil the conditions of eligibility”
- “Industrial Democracy” within an “agricultural-industrial federation” (1857, 1863)

# Federal Market Socialism

## **Social-Economic Association**

- “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”
- “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.”

## **Free Association and Free Access**

- “Free association, 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.”

## **Functional self-management**

- “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 to form themselves into democratic societies, with equal conditions for all members”

## **Election of delegates, not representatives**

- “The choice of talents, the imperative mandate, and permanent revocability are the most immediate and incontestable consequences of the electoral principle. It is the inevitable program of all democracy”

# Why not the State?

## **A Bourgeois Body, which cannot be captured**

- “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”
- “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”
- “inevitably enchained to capital and directed against the proletariat.” (1846)

## **A Power apart, with its own interests**

- “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 [...] that alienation of public power for the profit of a few ambitious men”
- “concentrate all public powers in the hands of a single authority [...] only created despotism”
- “The President and the Representatives, once elected, are the masters; all the rest obey.”

# Confessions of a Statesman

## Isolation and ignorance

- “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.”

## 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.”
- “Louis Blanc represents governmental socialism, revolution by power, as I represent democratic socialism, revolution by the people. An abyss exists between us.”
- “the organisation of labour must not emanate from the powers-that-be; it ought to be SPONTANEOUS”
- “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”

# Association internationale des travailleurs

“resistance societies be established to prepare for the future and to ensure as far as possible the present [...] how the ideas we have on the organisation of labour in the future can help us to establish resistance societies in the present [...] labour is organised for the present and the future, by eliminating wage-labour [...] 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 [...] regulating the labour relations that will replace politics”

– *Report to the Basle Congress on Resistance Societies (1868)*





# Mutualists and Collectivists

## Debates between mutualists over extending collective ownership *to land*

- “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” (César de Paepe, 1868)
- “under universal association, ownership of the land and of the instruments of labour is *social* ownership [...] handed over to democratically organised workers’ associations” (Proudhon, 1848)

## Collectivists saw unions as Proudhon’s “agricultural and industrial combination”

- “Resistance Societies have already defined the practical application of the principle of solidarity between workers. It is again to their influence that emancipation must be achieved through the takeover of tools, the abolition of bosses, the organisation of credit and exchange, and the transformation of the social order” (Jean-Louis Pindy, 1868)
- “bears social regeneration within itself [...] the International already offers the model of the society to come, and that its various institutions, with appropriate modifications, will form the future social order [...] the International contains within itself the seeds of all the institutions of the future” (César de Paepe, 1869)
- “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 [...] are the natural elements of the social construction of the future; it is they who can easily become producer associations” (Eugène Varlin, 1870)

# The First International

- **Michael Bakunin**

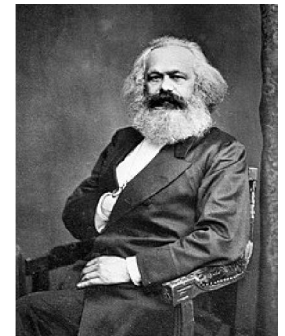
- *Direct Action*
- *Unions*
- *Workers Councils*



“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.”  
(Bakunin)

- **Karl Marx**

- *Political Action*
- *Parties*
- *Parliament*



“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.” (Engels)

# Anarchism and Marxism

- **Social Democratic tactics would produce Reformism**
  - “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”
- **State equals *minority* rule, not people power**
  - “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”
  - “has always been the patrimony of some privileged class [...] becomes the patrimony of the bureaucratic class”
- **State capitalism, not socialism**
  - “concentrating in their own hands all [...] production [...] under the direct command of state engineers, who will form a new privileged scientific and political class.”
- **Opposition to “workers’ State” nothing to do with defending a revolution**
  - “to defend the revolution [...] form a communal militia [...] federate [...] for common defence.”

# Revolutionary Anarchism

## Direct Action not Political Action

- “at first as its sole basis the exclusively economic struggle of labour against capital [...] only a single path [...] *emancipation through practice* [...] the struggle of the workers in solidarity against the bosses. It is *trades unions, organisation and the federation of resistance funds.*”
- “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 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.”

## General Strike as a means to start the revolution

- “strikes spread from one place to another, they come close to turning into a general strike [...] can result only in a great cataclysm which forces society to shed its old skin.”
- “Liberty can only be created by liberty, by an insurrection of all the people and the voluntary organisation of the workers from below upward”

# The Paris Commune

## What was the Paris Commune?

- Revolt began on 18<sup>th</sup> of March, after troops refused to fire on civilians on the Butte of Montmartre
- Government evacuated the city, the Central Committee called elections

## Was it a Soviet?

- “since Marx’s writings on the Paris Commune, a cornerstone of revolutionary theory: that the soviet is a superior form of democracy because it unifies political and economic power.” (John Rees, SWP)
- “The Commune was formed of the municipal councillors, chosen by [male!] universal suffrage in the various wards of the town, responsible and revocable at short terms.” (Marx, *The Civil War in France*)

## No, but federalist and bottom-up...

- “The absolute autonomy of the Commune extended to all the localities of France, and assuring to each one its full rights, and to every Frenchman the full exercise of his faculties and abilities as man, citizen and worker [...] Political unity, as Paris wants it, is the voluntary association of all local initiatives”
- “it affirms more than ever, against Jacobin doctrines, the revolutionary principle: FEDERATION [...] We, citizens of Paris, want to govern, administer, organise our city as we wish” (André Léo)

# ***A Libertarian Revolution***

## **Marx (1871)**

- “each delegate to be at any time revocable and bound by the *mandat impératif* (formal instructions) of his constituents”
- “The Commune was to be a working, not a parliamentary body, executive and legislative at the same time.”
- “The unity of the nation was not to be broken, but, on the contrary, to be organised by Communal Constitution”
- “it wanted to make individual property a truth by transforming the means of production, land, and capital, now chiefly the means of enslaving and exploiting labour, into mere instruments of free and associated labour.”

## **Proudhon**

- “choice of talents, the imperative mandate, and permanent revocability are [...] the inevitable program of all democracy”
- “It is up to the National Assembly, through organisation of its committees, to exercise executive power, just the way it exercises legislative power”
- “In the federative system [...] central authority [...] has a quite restricted part [...] concerning federal services [...] subordinate and entrusted to an Assembly [...] of delegates”
- “democratically organised workers’ associations [...] core of that vast federation of companies and societies woven into the common cloth of the democratic and social Republic [...] property restored to its proper limits [...] free disposition of the fruits of labour”

**“Revolutionary socialism has just attempted its first demonstration, both splendid and practical, in the Paris Commune.” (Bakunin)**

# Lessons Learned

## **Federal outwith, centralised within...**

- “set up a revolutionary government and army [...] organise[d] themselves in a Jacobin manner, forgetting or sacrificing the first conditions of revolutionary socialism.” (Bakunin)
- Council was “overwhelmed” by suggestions from other bodies, the “sheer volume” of which “created difficulties” and it “found it hard to cope with the stream of people who crammed into the offices.” (Donny Gluckstein, SWP)

## **Bureaucratic processes, so need Direct Action to Expropriate...**

- “Workers trade councils are convened to establish a commission of inquiry [...] To compile statistics on abandoned workshops, as well as an inventory [...] To present a report on the practical requisites for the prompt restarting of these workshops [...] by the co-operative association of the workers who were employed there [...] must send its report to the Communal Commission on Labour and Exchange, which will be required to present to the Commune[...] the draft of a decree [...]” (Decree on convening workers trade councils)
- Workers will “not wait to expropriate the holders of social capital by a decree [...] They will take possession on the spot and [...] organise themselves in the workshops to continue the work.” (Kropotkin)

## **Workers’ councils as the alternative**

- Community organisations (the clubs) – pressurising Commune Council, not managing directly public affairs
- “future social organisation [...] from the bottom upwards, by the free [...] federation of workers, firstly in their unions, then in the communes, regions, nations and finally in a great federation, international” (Bakunin)

# The Federalist International

## The Sonvillier Circular (1871)

- “The future society must be nothing else than the universalisation of the organisation that the International will give itself. We must therefore take care to ensure that this organisation is close as possible to our ideal. How could an egalitarian and free society emerge from an authoritarian organisation? It is impossible. The International, embryo of the future human society, must from now on be the faithful reflection of our principles of federation and liberty, and reject from its midst any principle tending towards authority, towards dictatorship.”

## Saint-Imier Congress (1872)

- “the establishment of an absolutely free economic organisation [...] this federation can only be the outcome of the spontaneous action of the proletariat itself, of trades unions and autonomous communes [...] the worker can never free himself from age-old oppression unless he replaces [...the State] with the free federation of all producer groups based upon solidarity and equality [...] The strike [...] a product of the antagonism between labour and capital [...] strengthening the workers’ organisation, and preparing, as a result of ordinary economic struggles, the proletariat for the great and final revolutionary struggle”

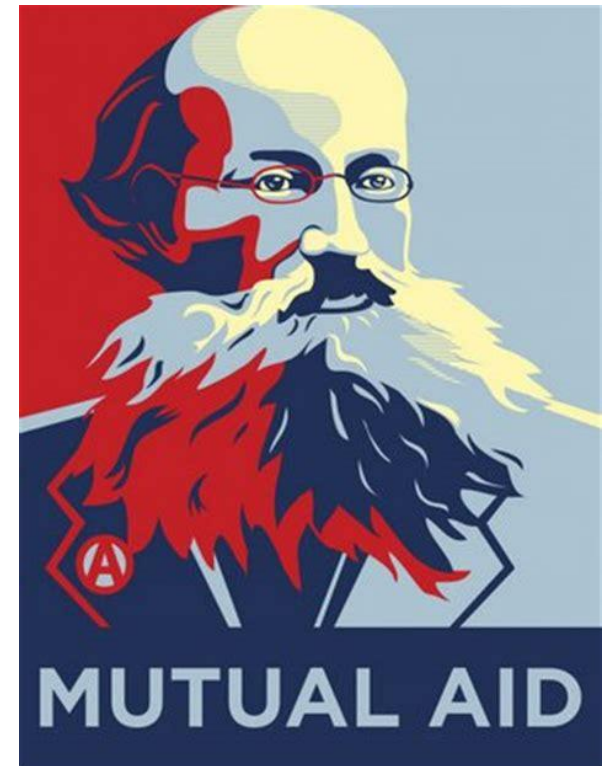
**“If we act like our adversaries, how will the world choose between them and us?” (André Léo)**



# The Spirit of Revolt

“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?”

– *Modern Science and Anarchy* (1913)



*Peter Kropotkin*

# Syndicalism, before the word....

## “Direct Struggle Against Capital”

- “a force that will crush capital, come the day of revolution: the revolutionary trades association. Trades sections, federations embracing all the workers in the same trade, federation of all the trades of the locality, of the region [...] constitute the structures of the revolutionary army” (1881)
- “to make revolution, the mass of workers must organise themselves, and resistance and the strike are excellent means by which workers can organise [...] build resistance associations for each trade in each town [...] federate across France [...] federate across borders” (1881)

## General Strike and Expropriation

- “the general strike [...] the day when those anarchists who exhaust themselves in empty discussions will act [...] the day when they will *work* amongst the workers to prepare the stopping of work [...] they will have done more to prepare the social, economic, Revolution, than [...] the socialist party.” (1889)
- “[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.” (1887)

# “the fallacy of a ‘One-day Revolution’”

## Building the new world by fighting the current one

- “Unions [...] *natural organs for the direct struggle with capital and for the organisation of the future order* — organs that are *inherently necessary* to achieve the workers’ own goals” (1906)

## 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”
- “To 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.”

## Abolition of the State

- “*smash the State* and rebuild a new organisation starting with the very foundations of society—the liberated village commune, federalism, groupings from simple to complex, the free workers union”
- “mutual protection against aggression, mutual aid, territorial defence”

# “The Chicago Idea”

## Unions as the means to fight and replace capitalism

- “Trades Unions [are] the embryonic group of the future free society [...] an autonomous commune in the process of incubation. The Trades Union is a necessity of capitalistic production, and will yet take its place by superseding it under the system of universal free co-operation” (Albert Parsons)
- “We hold that the granges, trade-unions, Knights of Labor assemblies, etc., are the embryonic groups of the ideal anarchistic society” (Lucy Parsons)

## Not Anarchists but Syndicalists?

- “syndicalists [...] they had given up political work for work in the unions which [...] would provide the social organisation of the future” (Carolyn Ashbaugh, *Lucy Parsons: American Revolutionary*)
- **This was the position of Bakunin and Kropotkin (aka, the “gentle anarchist theoretician of non-violence”!)**

## Not Anarchists but Marxists?

- “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.” (James Green, *Death in the Haymarket*)
- **“Bakunin’s programme [...] The working class must not occupy itself with *politics*. They must only organise themselves by trades-unions. One fine day, by means of the *Internationale* they will supplant the place of all existing states.” (Marx)**

# Rise of Syndicalism

## Mid-1890s, after the failure of “Propaganda by the deed”?

- “from 1881 to 1894 had been a time of isolation [...] anarchists [...] sought the way to a millennium in desperate acts [...] The period from 1894 [...] saw a fruitful equilibrium between the visionary and the practical [...] Anarcho-syndicalism [...] showed anarchism seeking constructive solutions.” (Woodcock)

## Economic direct action?

- “We have to organise the workers’ forces — not to make them into a fourth party in Parliament, but in order to make them a formidable MACHINE OF STRUGGLE AGAINST CAPITAL. We have to group workers of all trades under this single purpose: “War on capitalist exploitation!” And we must prosecute that war relentlessly, day by day, by the strike, by agitation, *by every revolutionary means.*” (Kropotkin, 1881)

## Unions to organise production?

- “No one can underrate the importance of this labour movement for the coming revolution. It will be those agglomerations of wealth producers which will have to reorganise production on new social bases. [...] They — the labourers, grouped together — not the politicians” (Kropotkin, 1892)

## The General Strike?

- “general strike, whose purpose was to destroy capitalism and usher in world liberty” (Louise Michel, 1890)

# Russian Revolution, 1905

## The Bolshevik reaction:

- Adopt a Social-Democratic program or disband: “only a strong party along class lines can guide the proletarian political movement and preserve the integrity of its program, rather than a political mixture of this kind, an indeterminate and vacillating political organisation such as the workers council represents and cannot help but represent.” (Bolsheviks, 1905)
- ***The soviets could not reflect workers' interests because they were elected by... the workers***
- “participate [...] provided this is done on strict Party lines for the purpose of developing and strengthening the Social-Democratic Labour Party [...] if Social-Democratic activities among the proletarian masses are properly, effectively and widely organised, such institutions may actually become superfluous” (Lenin, 1907)

## The Anarchist reaction

- “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.” (Kropotkin)
- “Syndicalists [...] regarded the soviets [...] as admirable versions of the *bourses du travail*, but with a revolutionary function added to suit Russian conditions [...] the soviets were to act as nonpartisan labour councils improvised ‘from below’” (Paul Avrich, historian)
- “The land — to the peasant; the factory, the workshop, the railway and the rest — to the worker. And everywhere the Commune [...] taking into its hands the economic life of the people.” (Kropotkin)

# Russian Revolution, 1917

## Lenin's reformulation of Marxism in *April Theses* and *State and Revolution*

- Soviets as basis of new “workers’ State” modelled on the Paris Commune
- Abolition of “parliamentarianism” by fusion of legislative and executive functions into soviets
- “All officials, without exception, to be elected and subject to recall *at any time*”
- Abolition of standing army by the “armed masses,” no “special bodies of armed men”
- “an immense expansion of democracy [...] for the poor, democracy for the people”

## October, 1917 – the party seizes power (“*the seizure of power through the soviets*”)

- Immediate creation of Council of People's Commissars, an executive *over* the Soviet Congress
- Four days later the Council of People's Commissars unilaterally gave itself legislative power
- “a purely Bolshevik government [...] impossible to refuse [...] a majority at the Second All-Russian Congress of Soviets [...] handed power over to this government” (Bolshevik statement)

## Soviets quickly marginalised in new, centralised State

- “a single and indivisible [...] republic [...] the most determined centralisation of power in the hands of the state authority [...] the path of revolutionary activity [...] can proceed with full force only from the centre” (Marx, 1850)
- “Effective power [...] relentlessly gravitated to the executive committees, and especially their presidia. Plenary sessions became increasingly symbolic and ineffectual.” (Carmen Sirianni, historian)

# The fate of the Soviets

## Soviet Power versus the Power of the Soviets

- “the Bolsheviks felt constrained to dissolve Soviets or prevent re-elections where Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries had gained majorities” (Israel Getzler, historian)
- “demands from below for the immediate re-election [...] saw] new regulations [...] to help offset possible weaknesses [in] electoral strength in factories [...] the makeup of the new soviet was that numerically decisive representation was given to agencies in which the Bolsheviks had overwhelming strength [...] Only 260 of roughly 700 deputies in the new soviet were to be elected in factories, which guaranteed a large Bolshevik majority in advance.” (Alexander Rabinowitch, historian)

## The Fifth All-Russian Congress of Soviets, July 1918

- “electoral fraud gave the Bolsheviks a huge majority of congress delegates [...] Bolsheviks delegates whose right to be seated was challenged by the Left SR minority in the congress’s credentials commission” (Rabinowitch)
- Denied of their majority, Left-SR leadership assassinate German Ambassador to provoke “revolutionary war”
- Left-SRs repressed, joining the Mensheviks and Right-SRs in being expelled from the soviets

## Kronstadt Uprising of 1921 did not mark the end of the revolution...

- Kronstadt’s soviet was first disbanded by the Bolsheviks on 9 July 1918, in the wake of the Left SR “revolt.”



# The fate of the Revolution

## July 1918, *de facto* one-party dictatorship

- “at the start of 1919 I was horrified to read an article by Zinoviev [...] on the monopoly of the party in power.” (Victor Serge, *but he happily defended this as a necessity in the anarchist press...*)

## Not only in the Soviets...

- *Armed Forces*: “the principle of election is politically purposeless and technically inexpedient, and it has been, in practice, abolished by decree” (Trotsky, March 1918) – *Cheka created in December 1917...*
- *Supreme Economic Council*: “widely acknowledged by the Bolsheviks as a move towards ‘statisation’ [...] of economic authority.” It began “to build, from the top, its ‘unified administration’ of particular industries”. It “gradually took over” the Tsarist state agencies such as the *Glavki* “and converted them [...] into administrative organs subject to [its] direction and control.” (Maurice Brinton, libertarian socialist)
- *Workplace*: “Obedience, and unquestioning obedience at that, during work to the one-man decisions of Soviet directors [...] vested with dictatorial powers.” (Lenin, April 1918)

## All Power to the Bureaucracy

- “The old state’s political apparatus was ‘smashed,’ but in its place a new bureaucratic and centralised system emerged with extraordinary rapidity [...] As the functions of the state expanded so did the bureaucracy” (Richard Sakwa, historian)

# A lesson for the world?

## Zinoviev: Second Congress of the Communist International (1920)

- “Today, people like Kautsky come along and say that in Russia you do not have the dictatorship of the working class but the dictatorship of the party. They think this is a reproach against us. Not in the least! We have a dictatorship of the working class and that is precisely why we also have a dictatorship of the Communist Party. The dictatorship of the Communist Party is only a function, an attribute, an expression of the dictatorship of the working class [...] the dictatorship of the proletariat is at the same time the dictatorship of the Communist Party”

## Lenin: *‘Left-Wing’ Communism: An Infantile Disorder* (1920)

- “*non-Party workers’ and peasants’ conferences* [...] to be able to observe the temper of the masses, come closer to them, meet their requirements [...] The district congresses of Soviets are *democratic* institutions, the like of which even the best of the democratic republics of the bourgeois world have never known”
- “directed by a Central Committee of nineteen [...] This, it would appear, is a full-fledged ‘oligarchy’. No important [...] question is decided by any state institution [...] without the guidance of the Party’s Central Committee.”
- “all this talk about ‘from above’ or ‘from below’, about the dictatorship of leaders or the dictatorship of the masses, etc., as ridiculous and childish nonsense”

**“The revolutionary dictatorship of a proletarian party [...] is an objective necessity” (Trotsky, 1936)**

# “how not to introduce communism”

## “absolute despotism politically and the crassest form of state capitalism economically”

- “the inefficiency of the centralised bureaucratic machine [...] Moscow had ordered them made [...] and six months already had passed without the ‘central authorities’ making any effort to distribute [...] one of the countless examples of the manner in which the Moscow system “worked,” or, rather, did not work” (E. Goldman)
- “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” (Kropotkin)

## The cause of the problem...

- “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.” (Emma Goldman)

## Not Perfect?

- “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.” (Goldman)

# Conclusions

## Revolutionary Anarchism has always been “syndicalist”

- “since the foundation of the *International Working Men’s Association* in 1864-1866, [the anarchists] have endeavoured to promote their ideas directly amongst the labour organisations and to induce those unions to a direct struggle against capital, without placing their faith in parliamentary legislation.” (Kropotkin)

## A “Soviet State” is a contradiction in terms

- “The state [...] cannot take this or that form at will [...] necessarily hierarchical, authoritarian—or it ceases to be the State.” (Kropotkin)
- “Alliance of all labour associations [...] will constitute the Commune [...] delegates [...] invested with binding mandates and [...] revocable at all times [...] found the federation of insurgent associations, communes and provinces [...] organise a revolutionary force with the capacity of defeating the reaction” (Bakunin)

## Anarchism vindicated, time and again

- “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 [...] 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” (R. Rocker)

**“Everything for the councils or soviets! No power above them!” (Rudolf Rocker)**