

Socialism and its Various Tendencies. Influence of Democratic and Liberal Ideas on the Socialist Movement. Babouvism and Jacobinism. Caesaristic and Theocratic Ideas in Socialism. Proudhon and Federalism. The International Workingmens' Association. Bakunin Opposed to the Central State Power. The Paris Commune and its influence on the Socialist Movement. Parliamentary Activity and the International. The Franco-Prussian War and the Political Change in Europe. The Modern Labour Parties and the Struggle for Power. Socialism and National Politics. Authoritarian and Libertarian Socialism. Government or Administration.

Socialism and the State

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fetters of politics, liberation of culture from all political power, liberation of man by solidaric union with his kind. For, as Proudhon says: "Seen from the social viewpoint freedom and solidarity are but different expressions of the same concept. By the freedom of each finding in the freedom of others no longer a limit, as the declaration of rights of 1793 says, but a support. The freest man is the one who has the most relations with his fellow men."

Socialism and the State

by Rudolf Rocker

WITH the development of socialism and the modern labour movement in Europe, there became noticeable among the people a new intellectual trend which has not yet terminated. Its fate will be determined according as libertarian or authoritarian ideas win and hold the upper hand among its leaders. Socialists of all schools share the common conclusion that the present state of social organization is a continuous cause of most dangerous social evils and cannot permanently endure. Common also to all socialist schools is the conviction that a better order of things cannot be brought about by changes of a purely political nature but can be achieved only by a fundamental reform of existing economic conditions; that the earth and all other means of social production can no longer remain the private property of privileged minorities in society but must be transferred to the ownership and administration of the generality. Only thus will it be possible to make the end and aim of all productive activity, not the prospect of personal gain, but the satisfaction of the needs of all members of society.

But as to the special form of the socialist society, and the ways and means of achieving it, the views of the various socialistic factions differ widely. This is not strange, for, like every other idea, socialism came to men not as a revelation from Heaven; it developed, rather, within the existing social structures and directly dependent upon them. So it was inevitable that its advocates should be more or less influenced by the political and social movements of the time which had taken definite root in various countries. The influence which the ideas of Hegel had on the structure of socialism in Germany is well known. Most of its pioneers Grun, Hess, Lassalle, Marx, Engels came from the intellectual circle of German philosophy; only Weitling received his stimulus from another source. In England, the permeation of the socialist movements by liberal ideas was unmistakable. In France, it is the intellectual trends of the great revolution; in Spain, the influence of political federalism, which are most noticeable in their respective socialistic theories. Something similar can be said of the socialistic movement of every country.

But since in a common cultural circle like Europe ideas and social movements do not remain confined within any one country but naturally spread to others, it follows that movements not only retain their purely local colour but

[1] Der Briefwechsel zwischen Marx und Engels, Stuttgart, 1913, Volume IV.

[2] The recently discovered letters between Bismarck and Lassalle published by Gustav Mayer in his valuable essay, Bismarck and Lassalle, throw a curious light on Lassalle's personality and are also psychologically of great interest.

receive also varied stimuli from without, which become imbedded, almost unnoticeably, in the indigenous intellectual product and enrich it in their own peculiar way. How strongly these foreign influences assert themselves depends largely on the general social situation. We need but remember the mighty influence of the French revolution and its intellectual repercussions in most of the countries of Europe. It is therefore self-evident that a movement like socialism gathers in every country the most varied assortment of ideas and is nowhere limited to one definite and special form of expression. Babeuf, and the communist school which has appropriated his ideas, derive from the Jacobin world of ideas, the political viewpoint of which wholly dominated them. They were convinced that society could be given any desired form, provided that the political power of the state could be controlled. As with the spread of modern democracy in Rousseau's sense the superstitious belief in the omnipotence of the laws has deeply penetrated into men's consciousness, so the conquest of political power has, with this section of the socialists, developed into a dogma resting on the principles of Babeuf and the doctrine of the so-called "equals." The whole contest among these factions turned principally on the question how best and most securely to gain possession of the powers of the state. Babeuf's direct successors held fast to the old tradition, being convinced that their secret societies would one day achieve public power by a single revolutionary stroke and with the aid of a proletarian dictatorship make socialism a living fact. But men like Louis Blanc, Pecqueur, Vidal and others, maintained the view that a violent overthrow was to be avoided if possible provided that the state comprehended the spirit of the times and of its own initiative worked towards a complete reorganisation of social economy. Both factions, however, were united in the belief that socialism could only be achieved with the aid of the state and of appropriate legislation. Pecqueur had already prepared a whole book of laws for this purpose, a sort of socialistic code Napoleon, which was to serve as a guide for a far-seeing government.

Nearly all the great pioneers of socialism in the first half of the last century were more or less strongly influenced by authoritarian concepts. The brilliant Saint-Simon recognised, with great keenness of insight, that mankind was moving toward the time when "the art of governing men would be replaced by the art of administering things", but his disciples displayed ever fiercer authoritarian temper and finally settled on the idea of a socialistic theocracy; then they completely vanished from the picture.

Fourier developed, in his Social System, liberal ideas of marvellous depth and imperishable significance. His theory of "attractive work" affects us especially today, at a time of capitalistic "rationalisation of economy," like

parts of an old one which has outlived itself has up to now led always to the same negative result. Either such attempts were at the very beginning thwarted by the youthful vigour of social reconstruction or the tender sprouts and hopeful beginnings of the new forms were so confined and hindered in their natural growth by the old that they gradually declined and their inner life force slowly died out.

When Lenin - much in the style of Mussolini - dared to say that "freedom is a bourgeois prejudice," he only proved that his spirit was quite incapable of rising to socialism, but had remained stuck in the old ideas of Jacobinism. Anyway, it is nonsense to speak of libertarian and authoritarian socialism. Socialism will either be free or it will not be at all.

The two great political trends of thought of liberalism and democracy had a strong influence on the development of the socialist movement. Democracy with its state-affirming principles and its effort to subject the individual to the demands of an imaginary "common will" needs must affect such a movement as socialism most disastrously by endowing it with the idea of adding to the realms the state already ruled the enormous realm of economics, endowing it with a power it never possessed before. Today it appears ever more clearly -- and the experiences in Russia have proved it -- that such endeavours can never lead to socialism, but must inevitably result in the grotesque malformation of state capitalism.

On the other hand, socialism vitalised by liberalism logically leads to the ideas of Godwin, Proudhon, Bakunin and their successors. The idea of reducing the state's sphere of activity to a minimum, itself contains the germ of a much more far-reaching thought, namely, to overthrow the state entirely and to eliminate the will to power from human society. Democratic socialism has contributed enormously to confirm again the vain belief in the state, and in its further development must logically lead to state capitalism. Socialism inspired by liberal ideas, however, leads in a straight line to anarchism, meaning by that, a social condition where man is no longer subject to the guardianship of a higher power and where all relations between him and his kind are self-regulated by mutual agreement.

Liberalism alone could not attain this highest phase of definite intellectual development for the reason that it had too little regard for the economic side of the question, as has already been explained in another place. Only on the basis of fellowship in labour and the community of all social interests is freedom possible; there can be no freedom for the individual without justice for all. For personal freedom also has its roots in man's social consciousness and receives real meaning only from it. The idea of anarchism is the synthesis of liberalism and socialism, liberation of economics from the

the security of the capitalist social order.

The attitude of most of these parties during the World War, and especially after the War, proves that our view is not exaggerated, but fully in accord with the facts. In Germany, this development has taken an actually tragic form, with consequences which even today cannot be estimated. The socialist movement of that country had been completely emasculated by long years of parliamentary routine and was no longer capable of a creative act. This especially is the reason why the German revolution was so shockingly poor in real ideas. The old proverb, "Who eats of the pope dies of him," was proved by the socialist movement; it had so long eaten of the state that its inner life force was exhausted and it could no longer accomplish anything of significance.

Socialism could maintain its role as a cultural ideal for the future only by concentrating its whole activity on abolishing monopoly of property together with every form of government of men by men. Not the conquest of power, but its elimination from the life of society, had to remain the great goal for which it strove, which it could never abandon without abandoning itself. Whoever believes that freedom of the personality can find a substitute in equality of possessions has not even grasped the essence of socialism. For freedom there is no substitute; there can be no substitute. Equality of economic conditions for each and all is always a necessary precondition for the freedom of man, but never a substitute for it. Whoever transgresses against freedom transgresses against the spirit of socialism. Socialism means the mutual activity of men toward a common goal with equal rights for all. But solidarity rests on free resolve and can never be compelled without changing into tyranny.

Every true socialistic activity, the smallest as well as the greatest, must therefore be imbued with the thought of opposing monopoly in all its fields, especially in that of economics, and of guarding and enlarging by all possible means the sum of personal freedom within the frame of the social union. Every practical activity tending towards other results is misdirected and useless for real socialists. So must also be rated the idle talk about the "dictatorship of the proletariat" as a transitional condition between capitalism and socialism. History knows no such "transitions." There exist solely more primitive and more complicated forms in the various evolutionary phases of social progress. Every social order is in its original form of expression naturally imperfect; nevertheless, all further possibilities of development towards a future structure must be contained in each of its newly created institutions, just as already in the embryo the whole creature is foreshadowed. Every attempt to incorporate into a new order of things the essential

an inner revelation of true humanity. But even he was a child of his age and, like Robert Owen, he turned to all the spiritual and temporal powers of Europe in the hope that they would help him realise his plan. Of the real nature of social liberation he hardly had an idea, and most of his numerous disciples knew even less. Cabet's Icarian communism was infiltrated with Caesarian and autocratic ideas. Blanqui and Barbes were communistic Jacobins.

In England, where Godwin's profound work, *Political Justice*, had appeared in 1793, the socialism of the first period had a much more libertarian character than in France; for there liberalism and not democracy had prepared the way for it. But the writings of William Thompson, John Gray and others remained almost totally unknown on the continent. Robert Owen's communism was a strange mixture of libertarian ideas and traditional authoritarian beliefs. His influence on the trade union and cooperative movements in England was for a time very great; but gradually, and especially after his death, it died out to make room for practical considerations which little by little lost sight of the great aims of the movement.

Among the few social thinkers of that period who tried to base their socialistic efforts on a truly libertarian foundation, Proudhon was undoubtedly the most important. His analytic criticism of Jacobin tradition, of governmental systems, of the nature of government and blind belief in the magic power of laws and decrees, affects one like a liberating stroke whose true greatness has even today not been fully recognised. Proudhon perceived clearly that socialism must be libertarian if it is to be the creator of a new social culture. In him there burned the lambent flame of a new age, which he anticipated, clearly foreseeing in his mind its social structure. He was one of the first who confronted the political metaphysics of parties with the concrete facts of science. Economics was for him the real basis of all social life; and since with deep insight he recognised the sensitivity of economics to every external compulsion, he logically associated the abolition of economic monopolies with the banishment of all that is governmental from the life of society. For him the worship of the law to all parties of that period were fanatically devoted had not the slightest creative significance; he knew that in a community of free and equal men only free agreement could be the moral tie of social relations.

"So you want to abolish government?" someone asked him. "You want no constitution? Who will maintain order in society? What will you put in place of the state? In place of the police? In place of the great political powers?"

"Nothing," he answered. "Society is eternal motion; it does not have to

be wound up; and it is not necessary to beat time for it. It carries its own pendulum and its ever wound up spring within it. An organised society needs laws as little as legislators. Laws are to society what cobwebs are to a beehive; they only serve to catch the bees."

Proudhon had recognised the evils of political centralism in all their detail and had proclaimed decentralisation and the autonomy of the communes as the need of the hour. He was the most eminent of all the moderns who have inscribed the principles of federalism on their banners. To his fine mind it was quite clear that men of today could not leap at one bound into the realm of anarchy, that the mental attitude of his contemporaries, formed slowly during the course of long periods, would not vanish in the turn of a hand. Hence, political decentralisation which would withdraw the state gradually from its functions seemed to him the most appropriate means for beginning and giving direction to the abolition of all government of men by men. He believed that a political and social reconstruction of European society in the shape of independent communes federally associated on the basis of free agreement would counteract the fatal development of the modern great state. Guided by this thought, he opposed the efforts at national unification of Mazzini and Garibaldi with political decentralisation and the federalisation of the communes, being firmly convinced that only by these means could the higher social culture of European peoples be achieved.

It is significant that it is just the Marxist opponents of the great French thinker who see in these endeavours of Proudhon a proof of his "utopianism," pointing to the fact that social development has actually taken the road of political centralisation. As if this were evidence against Proudhon! Have the evils of centralism, which Proudhon clearly foresaw and whose dangers he described so strikingly, been overcome by this development? Or has it overcome them itself? No! And a thousand times no! These evils have since increased to a monstrous degree; they were one of the main causes of the fearful catastrophe of the World War; they are now one of the greatest obstacles to the solution of the international economic crisis. Europe writhes in a thousand spasms under the iron yoke of a senseless bureaucracy which abhors all independent action and would prefer to put all people under the guardianship of the nursery. Such are the fruits of political centralisation. If Proudhon had been a fatalist he would have regarded this development of affairs as a "historic necessity" and advised his contemporaries to make terms with it until the famous "change of affirmation into negation" should occur. But being a real fighter he advanced against the evil and tried to persuade his contemporaries to fight it.

Proudhon foresaw all the consequences of the great development of the

their faith in the state frequently assumed such fantastic forms, that the liberal press of that time often accused the Lassalle movement of being in Bismarck's pay. Proof of this accusation could never be found but the curious flirtation of Lassalle with the "social kingdom," which became especially marked in his essay, *The Italian War and the Task of Prussia*, could very easily be ground for such a suspicion. [2]

As the newly created labour parties gradually concentrated all their activities on parliamentary action and maintained that the conquest of political power was the obvious preliminary to the realisation of socialism they created in the course of time an entirely new ideology, which differed essentially from the ideas of the First International. Parliamentarianism, which quickly came to play an important part in the new movement, enticed a number of bourgeois elements and career seeking intellectuals into the camp of the socialist party, by whom the change of attitude was still further advanced. Thus there developed, in place of the socialism of the old International, a sort of substitute having nothing in common with it but the name. In this manner socialism gradually lost more and more the character of a new cultural ideal for which the artificial frontiers of the state had no meaning. In the minds of the leaders of this new trend, the interests of the national state became blended with the interest and spirit of their party until, gradually, they were no longer able to distinguish between them and became used to viewing the world and things through the glasses of the nationalist state. Thus it was inevitable that the modern labour parties gradually came to fit into the national state machine as a necessary part and greatly contributed to restore to the state the balance of power it had lost.

It would be wrong to regard these peculiar ideas simply as conscious treason on the part of the leaders, as has often been done. The truth is that we are here confronted with a slow assimilation of socialist theory into the thought-world of the bourgeois state, induced by the practical activity of present-day labour parties which necessarily affected the mental attitude of their leaders. The same parties which sallied forth under the flag of socialism to conquer political power saw themselves gradually forced by the iron logic of circumstances into the position where bit by bit they had to abandon their former socialism for bourgeois politics. The more thoughtful of their adherents recognised the danger, and sometimes exhausted themselves in fruitless opposition against the tactics of the party. This was necessarily without result, since it was directed solely against the excrescences of the party system and not against the system itself. Thus the socialist labour parties became, without the great majority of their members being conscious of it, buffers in the fight between capital and labour, political lightning rods for

whole life except to interpret the world and history. He analysed capitalistic society in his way, and showed a great deal of intellect and enormous learning in doing so, but Proudhon's creative power was denied him. He was, and remained, the analyst, a brilliant and learned analyst, but nothing else. This is the reason why he did not enrich socialism with a single creative thought, but enmeshed the minds of his followers in the fine network of a cunning dialectic which sees in history hardly anything but economics and obstructs every deeper insight into the world of social events. He even rejected and condemned every attempt to attain clarity regarding the probable formation of socialistic society. As if it were possible to create anything new without being clear about the direction in which one is going! The belief in the compulsive course of all social phenomena led him to reject every thought about the appropriateness of social events, and yet it is this very thought that is the basis of all cultural activity.

With a change of ideas came also a change in the method of the labour movement. In place of those groups imbued with socialistic ideas and economic fighting organisations in the old sense, in which the men of the International had seen the germs of the coming society and the natural instrument for the reorganisation and administration of production, came the present-day labour parties and the parliamentary activity of the working masses. The old socialist doctrine which taught the conquest of industry and of the land was forced gradually more and more into the background, and from now on one spoke only of the conquest of political power and so got completely into the current of capitalistic society.

In Germany, where no other form of the movement had ever been known, this development happened with remarkable quickness, and by its electoral successes had repercussions on the socialist movements of most other countries. Lassalle's powerful activity in Germany had smoothed the way for this new phase of the movement. Lassalle was all his life a passionate worshipper of the idea of the state in the sense of Fichte and Hegel, and had, moreover, appropriated the views of the French state-socialist Louis Blanc, concerning the social functions of government. In his Labour Program he announced to the working class of Germany that the history of humanity had been a constant struggle against nature and against the limitations it had imposed on man. "In this struggle we would never have taken a step forward, nor would ever take one in the future, if we had made it, or wished to make it, alone, as individuals, everyone for himself. It is the state which has the function of bringing about this development of freedom, this evolution of the human race toward freedom."

His adherents were so firmly convinced of this mission of the state, and

state and called men's attention to the threatening danger, at the same time showing them a way to halt the evils. That his word was regarded by but few and finally faded out like a voice in the wilderness was not his fault. To call him from this "utopian" is a cheap and senseless trick. If so, the physician is also a utopian who from a given diagnosis of disease makes a prognosis and shows the patient a way to halt the evil. Is it the physician's fault if the patient throws his advice to the winds and makes no attempt to avoid the danger?

Proudhon's formulation of the principles of federalism was an attempt to oppose by freedom the arising reaction, and his historic significance consists in his having left his imprint on the labour movement of France and other Latin countries and having tried to steer their socialism into the course of freedom and federalism. Only when the idea of state capitalism in all its various forms and derivatives has been finally overcome will the true significance of Proudhon's intellectual labours be rightly understood. When, later, the International Workingmen's Association came to life, it was the federalistic spirit of the socialists in the Latin countries which gave the great union its real significance and made it the cradle of the modern socialist labour movements in Europe. The International itself was a league of militant labour organisations and groups with socialistic ideas which had founded itself on a federalistic basis. Out of its ranks came the great creative thought of a social renaissance on the basis of a socialism whose libertarian purpose became more marked in each of its conventions and was of the greatest significance for the spiritual development of the great labour movement. But it was almost exclusively the socialists from the Latin countries who inspired these ideas and gave them life. While the social democrats of that period saw in the so-called "folkstate" the future political ideal and so propagated the bourgeois tradition of Jacobinism, the revolutionary socialists of the Latin countries clearly recognised that a new economic order in the socialistic sense demands also a new form of political organization for its unobstructed development. They also recognised that this form of social organization would have nothing in common with the present state system, but called rather, for its historic dissolution. Thus there developed in the womb of the International the idea of a common administration of social production and general consumption by the workers themselves in the form of free economic groups associated on the basis of federalism, which at the same time were to be entrusted with the political administration of the Commune. In this manner it intended to replace the caste of the present party and professional politicians by experts without privileges and supplant the power politics of the state by a peaceful economic order having its basis

in the equality of interests and the mutual solidarity of men united in freedom.

About the same time Michael Bakunin had clearly defined the principle of political federalism in his well known speech at the congress of the Peace and Liberty League (1867) and emphasised especially the significance of the peaceful relationship of the peoples to one another.

Every centralised state, however liberal it may pretend to be, whatever republican form it may have, is nevertheless an oppressor, an exploiter of the working masses for the benefit of the privileged classes. It needs an army to keep these masses in check, and the existence of this armed force drives it into war. Hence I come to the conclusion that international peace is impossible until the following principle is adopted with all its logical consequences: Every people, whether weak or strong, little or great, every province, every community, must be free and autonomous; free to live and to administer itself according to its interests and special needs. In this right all people and communities are so united that the principle cannot be violated with respect to a single community without endangering all the rest at the same time.

The uprising of the Paris Commune gave the ideas of local autonomy and federalism a mighty impulse in the ranks of the International. When Paris voluntarily gave up its central prerogative over all other communities in France, the commune became for the socialists of the Latin countries the starting point of a new movement which opposed the central unification principle of the state with the federation of the communes. The commune became for them the political unit of the future, the basis of a new social order organically developed from below upwards, and not imposed on men automatically by a central power from above. Thus arose as a social pattern for the future a new concept of social organization, giving the widest scope for the individual initiative of persons and groups, in which, at the same time, the spirit of communion and of general interest for the welfare of all, lives and works in every member of the social union. It is clearly recognisable that the advocates of this idea had in mind these Words of Proudhon: "The personality is for me the criterion of the social order. The freer, the more independent, the more enterprising the personality is in society, the better for society."

While the authoritarian wing of the International continued to advocate the necessity of the state and pleaded for centralism, the libertarian section within its body saw in federalism not only a political ideal for the future, but also a basis for their own organization and endeavours; for according to their conception the International was to provide the world a model of a free

community, as far as this was at all possible under existing conditions. It was this concept which led to the internal strife between the centralists and federalists which was finally to wreck the International.

The attempt of the London General Council, which was under the immediate intellectual influence of Marx and Engels, to increase its sphere of power and to make the international league of awakened labour subservient to the parliamentary policies of definite parties, naturally led to the sharpest resistance on the part of the liberal-minded federations and sections which adhered to the old principles of the International. Thus happened the great schism of the socialistic labour movement which has not been bridged to this day; for this is a quarrel over inner antagonisms of fundamental significance, and its outcome must have decisive results not only for the labour movement but for the idea of socialism itself. The disastrous war of 1870/71 and the rising reaction in Latin countries after the fall of the Paris Commune, with the revolutionary events in Spain and Italy, where by oppressive laws and brutal persecutions every public activity was inhibited and the International forced into the hiding places of secret societies, have greatly favoured the latest developments of the European labour movement.

On July 20, 1870, Karl Marx wrote to Friedrich Engels these words, very characteristic of his personality and his mental attitude:

The French need a thrashing. If the Prussians are victorious the centralisation of state power will be helpful for the centralisation of the German working class; furthermore, German predominance will shift the centre of gravity of West European labour movements from France to Germany. And one has but to compare the movement from 1866 till today to see that the German working class is in theory and organization superior to the French. Its dominance over the French on the world stage would mean likewise the dominance of our theory over that of Proudhon, etc. [1]

Marx was right. The victory of Germany did in fact mark the turning point in history of the European labour movement. The libertarian socialism of the International was forced into the background by the new state of things and had to abandon the field to the anti-libertarian views of Marxism. Living, creative, unlimited capacity for development of the socialist movement was replaced by a one-sided dogmatism which pretentiously announced itself as science but which in reality was based on a mere historic fatalism leading to the worst fallacies, which slowly stifled every real socialistic idea. Although Marx had in youth exclaimed: "The philosophers have variously interpreted the world, but it is necessary to change it," he himself did nothing during his