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On the Issue of Revision — Transitional Period (Ending)⁵

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There is a lot of talk now about the impossibility of implementing the anarchist system soon after the revolution, about the necessity of a long transitional period, etc., and they insist that should we acknowledge this point everything will run like clockwork; and should we not — catastrophe will follow. What, in fact, is there to be afraid of? One can say for sure that the anarchist ideal in its entirety will not be implemented anywhere on the next day after the *first attempt* at a social revolution, that certain experience and a certain period of revolutionary social development will be required for that. The anarchists have never denied this; they have always had in mind a transitional period when speaking of the necessity to leave some transformations to life itself and not to resort — once the soil has already been cleared of the old oppression — to forcible imposition of new practices.

Let's take, for instance, the question of small peasant property. The anarchists will never agree that a peasant who works the land by themselves, *by their own labor*, be stripped of this land, and the land be forcibly transferred to collective ownership; they will expect that communalization of the land will take place as a result of the comprehensive development of the spirit of free association and owing to the example offered by prosperous agricultural communities. There will certainly be a lot of vestiges of the past in the new society, in economic relations, in organizational forms, and in the phenomena of spiritual life. Thus, for example, trade unions and public associations (cooperatives, labor exchanges and the like) took over the management of production and product distribution; but some of them stand for application of the communist principle "to each according to their needs," while others do not dare to part with the old form of labor remuneration and product payment. Of course, the anarchists will fight these vestiges of the past, but not by means of force. They will use ideology, mainly, the force of *examples*: their main task will be showing that an activity based on *their* principles will not stand to lose and, moreover, will be more successful. That is why in the circumstances of that new life where *free organizational experiments are possible* the kind of work we now call "cultural" fuses and conflates with revolutionary work, and every cultural conquest achieved by anarchist methods will directly serve the implementation of the anarchist social system.

⁵ Ed: Korn, M. "К Вопросу о Пересмотре — Переходный Период (Окончание) [On the Issue of Revision — Transitional Period (Ending)]." *Дело Трудя/Dielo Trouda* [*The Cause of Labor*], January 1926.

The same applies to the other spheres: in organization of the school, where the anarchists must proclaim the complete freedom to teach and of institute any kind of school; in the sphere of religion where any violence would be extremely contrary to the anarchist spirit; and where the only choice is to leave everything to the natural influence of the environment and to the achievements of intellectual development.

However, accepting the relics of the past as a necessary evil and fighting them ideologically is one thing; elevating these relics to the status of an inevitable developmental stage and regarding this stage as the immediate objective of our activity — while temporarily setting aside “impracticable” slogans — is quite another. In doing so, we forget one more point: the best way to make our slogans truly impracticable is to stop proclaiming them.

The existence of vestiges of the past is a necessary evil, but *it is not the thing* one must adapt to when developing programs, because any such adaptation will make this evil stronger and more viable. No prediction to the effect of *at what moment* and *which part of* our ideal will come true will change anything in this state of affairs. At *every* moment, our program may only be based on *our* communism and *our* political ideal, and afterward life itself will show us what is impracticable at any given moment. Some allow for a longer period before the anarchist system is implemented in full, others predict a shorter time. Regardless, if some are more optimistic and believe the implementation is possible immediately after the revolution, why fight this? Where is the danger? In excessive faith? That has never seemed to harm any cause. That faith moves mountains is not merely a phrase, same as the notion that at a critical moment (war, revolution) the victory is often a result of something that an impassive mind sees as impossible. It seems we are afraid of enthusiasts, but aren't they the ones who drive progress — not only in society, but in science, in art — everywhere?

There is a lot of talk of the Bolsheviks' pragmatism, skills, organization, etc.; they may well have all these faculties, but it is not owing to them that they left the social mark on the Russian revolution only a few of the other active parties aspired to leave in 1917. Soon after the October Revolution, Lenin happened to say that he did not expect practical implementation of lawmaking, that it was enough for him to throw slogans at the masses in that manner. And he was absolutely right: the decrees could not have any practical value (life is not built like that), but the principles proclaimed stuck in the mind and paved a way for the future. There are two techniques in social activities: setting a broad goal in anticipation that the broader it is, the greater part of what is expected will come true, and setting goals pre-acknowledged as attainable, to secure the achievement. The anarchists have initially chosen the first way and discarded all the minimum programs. The second way was that of social democratic parties. Now it has been suggested that we set a goal of “more practicable” requirements of a transitional period; we recollect early disputes about minimum programs. But if back then, in peacetime, we did not consider those programs desirable or appropriate, why should we renounce our birthright now, after the revolution? The transitional period was underway yesterday, still is today; what it will become tomorrow depends on what people of conviction, people who believe in their cause, make of it.

These are the main points of the revision taking place among our ranks. They do not add anything new to anarchism, do not develop or improve it in light of new facts, but, on the contrary, take a lot away. In short, anarchism is deprived of its *soul*. Indeed, by denying the principle “to each according to their

needs,” one knocks its economic foundation, its communism, out of it, reduces it *exclusively* to class struggle, strips it of its philosophical worldview limiting it to purely economic struggle, and blurs its anti-statist nature; by suggesting that we fight for a transitional period, one takes away maximalism and introduces a minimum program. And then — shall I mention the shame everyone of us must feel at the thought that sometimes we may justify political repression of our ideological opponents, even if they are downright counter-revolutionaries? And all that is done for the sake of practicability, feasibility, for the good of the revolution! What does such “anarchism” amount to? A word void of any meaning — or, rather, a word with quite a foreign meaning.

Sure, everyone has the right to acknowledge their mistakes, to change their opinion; but, on finding one’s earlier ideas inconsistent, it would be better and more logical not to smuggle into one’s earlier worldview something that doesn’t fit with it at all. Some new movement may emerge among our Russian comrades, but judging by what is shaping up, that movement will not be anarchism. And, without any doubt, it will be accompanied by the old, sound, and consistent anarchism that will, as before, attract minds and spirit.