


## Under the Yoke of the State: Selected Anarchist Responses to Prisons and Crime Vol. 1, 1886-1929

This pamphlet offers personal reflections from anarchists about time spent behind bars and critiques of the prison system from the Haymarket frame-up to the Sacco-Vanzetti trial. It gives direct testimony on the treatment of prisoners in numerous penitentiaries, World War One internment camps, and Bolshevik jails. It also presents many viewpoints on how capitalism's exploitation is society's greatest crime, and how anti-social acts would be treated in a truly free and just world.

Anarchists have always opposed the prison system. As an institution of the state, it has been used to humiliate and mentally destroy the working class and politically minded who have stood up against their bosses.

This collection includes complete essays by Peter Kropotkin (Prisons and Their Moral Influence on Prisoners), Emma Goldman (Prisons: A Social Crime and Failure), and Alexander Berkman (Crime). Plus material from anarchist fighters Ricardo Flores Magón, Errico Malatesta, Louise Michel, Albert Parsons, Rudolf Rocker, Mollie Steimer, and others.

  
Kansas Mutual Aid Collective  
PO Box 442438  
Lawrence, KS 66044  
kansasmutualaid@hotmail.com

Any money made from the sale of this pamphlet will go to the Prisoners Literature Project.

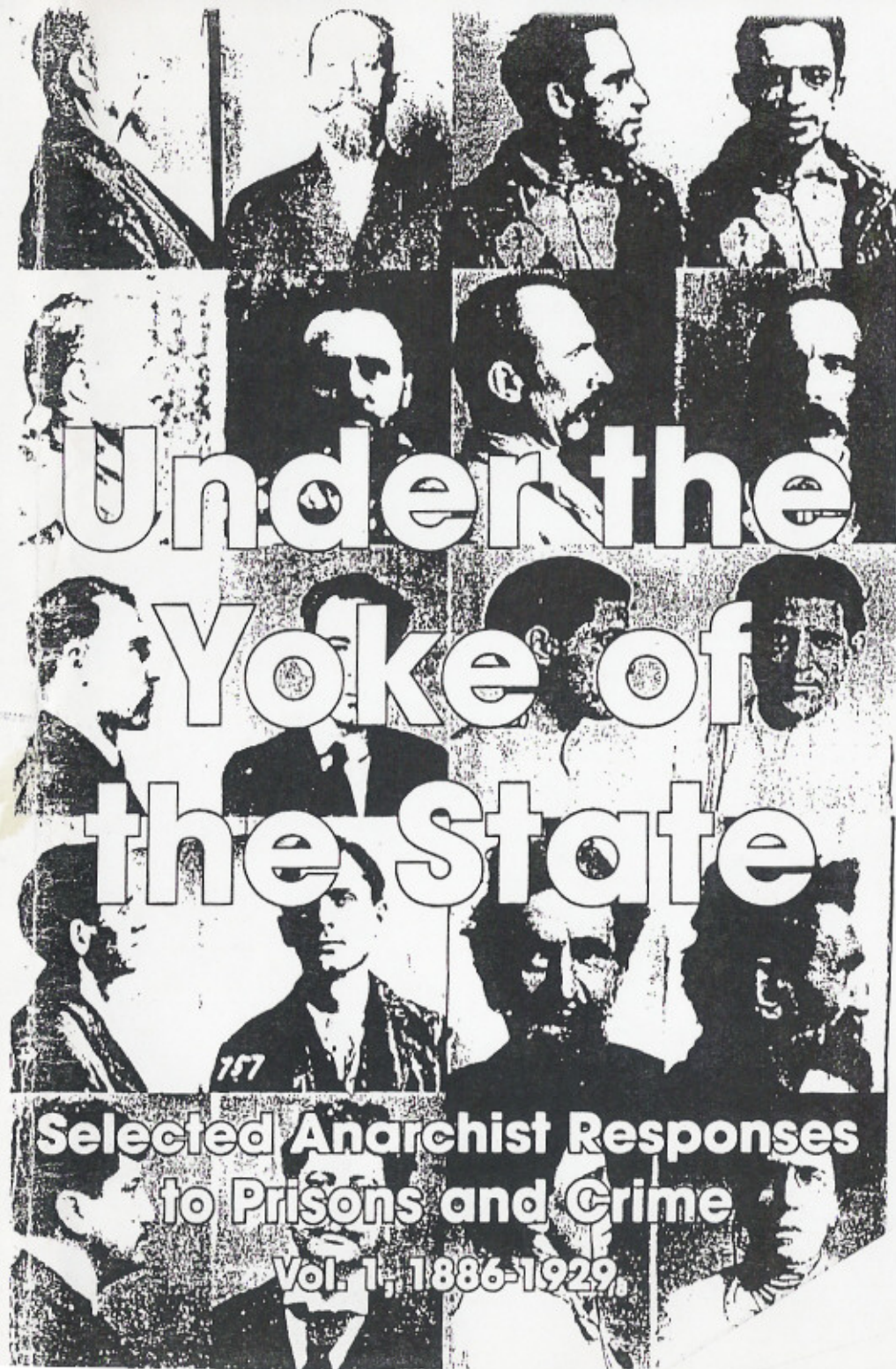
Cover mug shots (left to right, top to bottom): Luigi Galleani, Alexander Berkman, Oscar Neebe, Bartolomeo Vanzetti, Nicola Sacco, IWW organizer and Spanish anarchist Manuel Rey, Leon Czolgosz, Errico Malatesta, Ricardo Flores Magón, and Emma Goldman.

For a sample copy of our regular bulletin send us a stamped addressed envelope.  
Kate Sharpley Library and: PMB 820  
BM Hurricane 2425 Channing Way  
London WC1N 3XX, UK Berkeley, CA 94704, USA

ISBN: 1-873605-48-X

[www.katesharpleylibrary.org](http://www.katesharpleylibrary.org)

Anarchist Sources #3 ISSN: 1479-9065





*Prisoners Literature Project*

*The San Francisco Bay Area Books Through Bus Program*

BACK IN THE EARLY '80S WHEN THERE WERE ONLY ABOUT 500,000 HUMAN BEINGS INCARCERATED in the United States, members of the anarchist collective, Bound Together Books, received first hand knowledge from an incarcerated friend about the sorry state of prison libraries. Not surprisingly, radical literature was not available in the prison system. Also, prisons usually don't allow the general public to send books to incarcerated family and friends. However, bookstores and publishers can. The Prisoners Literature Project was created to get revolutionary ideas and discourse over the prison walls as well as to support the radical folks inside them.

Now in 2003, with the US prison population topping 2 million (an increase of 400% since 1980, the highest per capita rate on the planet!), PLP receives nearly 1000 letters every month. Prison education programs have been shut down one after the other; crowded prisons turn libraries into cells; and library use (even for crap) is a privilege that can easily be withheld. The project has been extremely effective at getting good books into prisons and into the hands of people hungry for information.

Over the years, the PLP has had to depend on the kindness of strangers. Everyone involved is a volunteer. We keep doing what we're doing because we know that it makes a difference. You'd be hard-pressed to ignore the deleterious effect that the U.S. injustice and incarceration system has had on this country (hasn't been too good for the world at large either) and it will take more than books to shift the paradigm. The PLP is part of the greater struggle to create a just world. We can see it from here.

If you would like to help, please donate books or postage money, or come volunteer at the project.

Visit our website for our meeting times and additional information.

<http://plp.versuspress.com> or email us at: [prisonlit@yahoo.com](mailto:prisonlit@yahoo.com)

*Haven Distribution*

HAVEN DISTRIBUTION PROVIDES FREE RADICAL, REVOLUTIONARY, CLASS STRUGGLE AND ALTERNATIVE books, pamphlets, magazines and more, to prisoners we support. We also provide educational books, especially for prisoners on Open University and NVQ courses. We would welcome books to send to prisoners. We will send books, etc to prisoners anywhere in the UK. Donations are always welcome (and much needed). Contact us for more details and to find out how you can help.

"Books are a real lifeline for prisoners, offering knowledge, inspiration and a little bit of sanity in a totally insane environment. Though only a small organisation, Haven are one of the very few that are genuinely committed to helping prisoners, something which they do with efficiency and dedication."

"I would not hesitate to recommend that fellow cons send for Haven's book catalogue nor to encourage those in a position to do so to help support their valuable work by making a financial donation."

"If you wish to contribute to the direct support of prisoners, supporting Haven is a good starting point."

*Mark Burnsley, Full Sutton Prison*

Prisoner's Literature Project  
c/o Bound Together Books  
1369 Haight St.  
San Francisco, CA 94117

Haven Distribution  
27 Old Gloucester Street  
London  
WC1N 3XX

## Under the Yoke of the State

### *Selected Anarchist Responses to Prisons and Crime*

VOL. 1, 1886-1929



*Edited by the Dawn Collective.*

*Published by the Kate Sharpley Library.*

2003

Dawn Collective  
PO Box 24715  
Oakland, CA 94623-1715

Kate Sharpley Library  
BM Hurricane  
London, WC1N 3XX, UK

and: PMB 820  
2425 Channing Way  
Berkeley, CA 94704

## Table of Contents

<i>Introduction</i>	3
<b>PART I: IDEAS</b>	4
<i>Laws Used as Weapons</i> by Albert Parsons	5
<i>Prisons and their Moral Influence on Prisoners</i> by Peter Kropotkin	6
<i>When We Stand on Equal Footing</i> by Lucy Parsons	15
<i>Prisons: A Social Crime and Failure</i> by Emma Goldman	16
<i>Within All of Us</i> by Voltairine De Cleyre	24
<i>Future Customs</i> by Errico Malatesta	25
<i>Crime</i> by Alexander Berkman	27
<i>'Law and Order'</i> by Alexander Berkman	29
<b>PART II: MEMORIES</b>	31
<i>Pages on the Centrale Prison at Clermont</i> by Louise Michel	32
<i>Untitled</i> by Kanno Suga	34
<i>Summons</i> by Nestor Makhno	35
<i>Memoirs</i> by Alexander Berkman	36
<i>Between Jails</i> by Emma Goldman	42
<i>Victims of World-Wide Madness</i> by Rudolf Rocker	44
<i>No. 14596</i> by Ricardo Flores Magón	45
<i>From Behind the Bars</i> by Librado Rivera	50
<i>One Day in the Cheka's Cellar</i> by G.P. Maximoff	51
<i>Inside Bolshevik Jails</i> by Mollie Steimer	54
<i>To Dante Sacco</i> by Nicola Sacco	57
<i>What is Anarchism?</i>	59
<i>Prisoners' Liberator Project and Haven Distribution</i>	60

The woodcuts used for the part heads are the work of Frans Masereel. Part I is from 1919 and titled *Die Sonne* (The Sun), and Part II is from *Die Stadt* (The City; 1925).

## What is Anarchism?

ANARCHISM IS THE MOVEMENT FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE THROUGH FREEDOM. IT IS CONCRETE, DEMOCRATIC and egalitarian. It has existed and developed since the seventeenth century, with a philosophy and a defined outlook that have evolved and grown with time and circumstance. Anarchism began as what it remains today: a direct challenge by the underprivileged to their oppression and exploitation. It opposes both the insidious growth of state power and the pernicious ethos of possessive individualism, which, together or separately, ultimately serve only the interests of the few at the expense of the many.

Anarchism promotes mutual aid, harmony and human solidarity, to achieve a free, classless society—a cooperative commonwealth. Anarchism is both a theory and a practice of life. Philosophically, it aims for perfect accord between the individual, society and nature. In an anarchist society, mutually respectful sovereign individuals would be organized in non-coercive relationships within naturally defined communities in which the means of production and distribution are held in common.

Anarchists are not simply dreamers obsessed with abstract principles. We know that events are ruled by chance, and that people's actions depend on long-held habits and on psychological and emotional factors that are often anti-social and usually unpredictable. We are well aware that a perfect society cannot be won tomorrow. Indeed, the struggle could last forever! However, it is the vision that provides the spur to struggle against things as they are, and for things that might be.

Whatever the immediate prospects of achieving a free society, and however remote the ideal, if we value our common humanity then we must never cease to strive to realize our vision. If we settle for anything less, then we are little more than beasts of burden at the service of the privileged few, without much to gain from life other than a lighter load, better feed and a cosier berth.

Ultimately, only struggle determines outcome, and progress towards a more meaningful community must begin with the will to resist every form of injustice.

In general terms, this means challenging all exploitation and defying the legitimacy of all coercive authority. If anarchists have one article of unshakeable faith that is that, once the habit of deferring to politicians or ideologues is lost, and that of resistance to domination and exploitation acquired, then ordinary people have a capacity to organize every aspect of their lives in their own interests, anywhere and at any time, both freely and fairly.

Anarchism encompasses such a broad view of the world that it cannot easily be distilled into a formal definition. Michael Bakunin, the man whose writings and example over a century ago did most to transform anarchism from an abstract critique of political power into a theory of practical social action, defined its fundamental tenet thus: In a word, we reject all privileged, licensed, official, and legal legislation and authority, even though it arises from universal suffrage, convinced that it could only turn to the benefit of a dominant and exploiting minority, and against the interests of the vast enslaved majority.

Anarchists do not stand aside from popular struggle, nor do they attempt to dominate it. They seek to contribute to it practically whatever they can, and also to assist within it the highest possible levels both of individual self-development and of group solidarity. It is possible to recognize anarchist ideas concerning voluntary relationships, egalitarian participation in decision-making processes, mutual aid and a related critique of all forms of domination in philosophical, social and revolutionary movements in all times and places.

Elsewhere, the less formal practices and struggles of the more indomitable among the propertyless and disadvantaged victims of the authority system have found articulation in the writings of those who on brief acquaintance would appear to be mere millenarian dreamers. Far from being abstract speculations conjured out of thin air, such works have, like all social theories, been derived from sensitive observation. They reflect the fundamental and uncontainable conviction nourished by a conscious minority throughout history that social power held over people is an usurpation of natural rights: power originates in the people, and they alone have, together, the right to wield it.

motherature, and I am sure that she will enjoy this very much, as you surely would be happy for it. But remember always, Dante, in the play of happiness, don't you use all for yourself only, but down yourself just one step, at your side and help the weak ones that cry for help, help the prosecuted and the victim, because that are your better friends; they are the comrades that fight and fall as your father and Bartolo fought and fell yesterday for the conquest of the joy of freedom for all and the poor workers. In this struggle of life you will find more love and you will be loved.

I am sure that from what your mother told me about what you said during these last terrible days when I was lying in the iniquitous death-house—that description gave me happiness because it showed you will be the beloved boy I had always dreamed.

Therefore, whatever should happen tomorrow, nobody knows, but if they should kill us, you must not forget to look at your friends and comrades with the smiling gaze of gratitude as you look at your beloved ones, because they love you as they love every one of the fallen persecuted comrades. I tell you, your father that is all the life to you, your father that loved you and saw them, and knows their noble faith (that is mine) their supreme sacrifice that they are still doing for our freedom, for I have fought with them, and they are the ones that still hold the last of our hope that today they can still save us from electrocution, it is the struggle and fight between the rich and the poor for safety and freedom, Son, which you will understand in the future of your years to come, of this unrest and struggle of life's death.

Much I thought of you when I was lying in the death house—the singing, the kind tender voices of the children from the playground, where there was all the life and the joy of liberty—just one step from the wall which contains the buried agony of three buried souls. It would remind me so often of you and your sister Ines, and I wish I could see you every moment. But I feel better that you did not come to the death-house so that you could not see the horrible picture of three lying in agony waiting to be electrocuted, because I do not know what effect it would have on your young age. But then, in another way if you were not so sensitive it would be very useful to you tomorrow when you could use this horrible memory to hold up to the world the shame of the country in this cruel persecution and unjust death. Yes, Dante, they can crucify our bodies today as they are doing, but they cannot destroy our ideas, that will remain for the youth of the future to come.

Dante, when I said three human lives buried, I meant to say that with us there is another young man by the name of Celestino Maderios that is to be electrocuted at the same time with us. He has been twice before in that horrible death-house, that should be destroyed with the hammers of real progress—that horrible house that will shame forever the future of the citizens of Massachusetts. They should destroy that house and put up a factory or school, to teach many of the hundreds of the poor orphan boys of the world.

Dante, I say once more to love and be nearest to your mother and the beloved ones in these sad days, and I am sure that with your brave heart and kind goodness they will feel less discomfort. And you will also not forget to love me a little for I do—O, Sonny! thinking so much and so often of you.

Best fraternal greetings to all the beloved ones, love and kisses to your little Ines and mother. Most hearty affectionate embrace.

YOUR FATHER AND COMPANION

P.S. Bartolo send you the most affectionate greetings. I hope that your mother will help you to understand this letter because I could have written much better and more simple, if I was feeling good. But I am so weak.

## Introduction

ANARCHISTS ALWAYS COME INTO HARD CONTACT WITH WHATEVER MAKES UP THE STATE. They are the state's biggest enemy. No other group of people threaten the state in such a way. They were among the first to see the futility and malignancy of prisons. If capitalist society is so rotten, so exploitative, so self-consciously driven to make money at the expense of everyone else, then prisoners in capitalism's jails, no matter what their crime, can never be vilified or forgotten. This is a world where economic success is the primary goal, where greed is sanctified by the term "hard working" and where those who don't become a "success" are essentially left to fend for themselves. Revolt at the hurt and bleakness of some aspects of life will come in all sorts of ways. Some of them will upset the liberal and politically correct elements among us. Still who cares? Prison, a place to put everyone who doesn't fit in, doesn't reform people. No anarchist sees it doing any good except in providing a real education for all too few. It punishes people, strips them of their humanity and makes them as much as victims as anyone else. If the whole system is rotten, jails are its most cancerous areas and need cutting—quickly.

Nearly all the people in this anthology have spent time in prison for their beliefs. Some have been executed because of the ideas they had—in some cases as a result of trials that were so obviously flawed and corrupt that we can truthfully describe their defendants as murdered by the state. All of these people were anarchists who believed that people could lead their lives in free association with other people without hierarchies, churches, leaders, politicians, jailers; of any kind. There was, and still is, no need for the state to exist—except to protect and increase the wealth of the rich. Law was the privilege of the powerful and rich, used to imprison those who spoke out against their exploitation or would not obey the mandates of the ruling class. For ordinary people the state was a constant mental and physical intrusion in their private life.

This pamphlet is the first of two. The second will consist of anarchist writings and the thoughts of anarchist prisoners from the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) up to the present day. We have tried to give information about each writer and offer, if we can, suggestions for further reading. If you would like to offer suggestions for the second volume, contact the Dawn Collective at our [dawn@hotmail.com](mailto:dawn@hotmail.com).

RAMA DAMA DING DONG



## PART I



## IDEAS

## To Dante Sacco

Nicola Sacco

### MY DEAR SON AND COMPANION:

Since the day I saw you last I had always the idea to write you this letter, but the length of my hunger strike and the thought I might not be able to explain myself, made me put it off all this time.

The other day, I ended my hunger strike and just as soon as I did that I thought of you to write to you, but I find that I did not have enough strength and I cannot finish it at one time. However, I want to get it down in any way before they take us again to the death-house, because it is my conviction that just as soon as the court refuses a new trial to us they will take us there. And between Friday and Monday, if nothing happens, they will electrocute us right after midnight, on August 22nd. Therefore, here I am, right with you with love and with open heart as ever I was yesterday.

I never thought that our inseparable life could be separated, but the thought of seven dolorous years makes it seem it did come, but then it has not changed really the unrest and the heart-beat of affection. That has remained as it was. More. I say that our ineffable affection reciprocal, is today more than any other time, of course. That is not only a great deal but it is grand because you can see the real brotherly love, not only in joy but also and more in the struggle of suffering. Remember this, Dante. We have demonstrated this, and modesty apart, we are proud of it.

Much we have suffered during this long Calvary. We protest today as we protested yesterday. We protest always for our freedom.

If I stopped hunger strike the other day, it was because there was no more sign of life in me. Because I protested with my hunger strike yesterday as today I protest for life and not for death.

I sacrificed because I wanted to come back to the embrace of your dear little sister Ines and your mother and all the beloved friends and comrades of life and not death. So, Son, today life begins to revive slow and calm, but yet without horizon and always with sadness and visions of death.

Well, my dear boy, after your mother had talked to me so much and I had dreamed of you day and night, how joyful it was to see you at last. To have talked with you like we used to in the days—in those days. Much I told you on that visit and more I wanted to say, but I saw that you will remain the same affectionate boy, faithful to your mother who loves you so much, and I did not want to hurt your sensibilities any longer, because I am sure that you will continue to be the same boy and remember what I have told you. I knew that and what here I am going to tell you will touch your sensibilities, but don't cry Dante, because many tears have been wasted, as your mother's have been wasted for seven years, and never did any good. So, Son, instead of crying, be strong, so as to be able to comfort your mother, and when you want to distract your mother from the discouraging soulness, I will tell you what I used to do. To take her for a long walk in the quiet country, gathering wild flowers here and there, resting under the shade of trees, between the harmony of the vivid stream and the gentle tranquility of the

Written from Charlestown State Prison on 18 August 1927 to his son Dante. Nicola Sacco (1891–1927) was an Italian-born anarchist and follower of Luigi Galleani who immigrated to the US around 1908. Sacco and other were part of a vicious fight against the American government's attack on their anarchist comrades. Arrested in 1920 with Bartolomeo Vanzetti as suspects in a payroll robbery, their case became an international cause célèbre for the left. The two men were executed on 23 August 1927.

Archangel, the local "G.P.U." declared that Maria would not be sent any further, because all prisons and concentration camps of Archangel and vicinity (including Solovetz Monastery) were so overcrowded that the local authorities had resolved to accept no more prisoners. Maria was kept in Vologda for several days, and then sent back, together with a number of other politicals. She was shuffled back and forth, various prisons refusing to accept her for lack of space. No political knows where he will really serve his term of exile, and none of his friends know.

I had an opportunity to talk to Maria Veger. She made no complaint about her own miserable condition, but she spoke of what should be done for those prisoners who had just been returned to Petrograd. She was particularly anxious about the fate of one woman who had been refused a visit of her seven-year-old boy, and asked that everything possible be done for her, as the woman was physically too weak to endure the suffering to which she was being subjected. We got no further in our conversation because a guard compelled us to terminate the "visit."

Comrade Veger parted from me with the following words:

"Tell the comrades abroad to organize and unite all their forces. Let them not be discouraged by the situation in Russia. On the contrary, tell them they must make use of our experience and be well prepared for the coming world revolution."

I left her with a heavy heart. While the Communists are issuing long protests against the persecution of political prisoners (they mean only Communists) in "capitalist" countries, they themselves are imposing savage sentences upon their opponents and are forcing many of our best comrades to die slowly in the jails and concentration camps, and hundreds of others to suffer the bitter pangs of hunger and the unbearable cold of northern Russia and Siberia. The real revolutionaries of Russia today are exiled and cut off from the entire world, forbidden the right of communication with any living person except the damnable spies who are forever shadowing their footsteps.

(Signature) MOLLIE STEIMER

Paris, December 24, 1924.

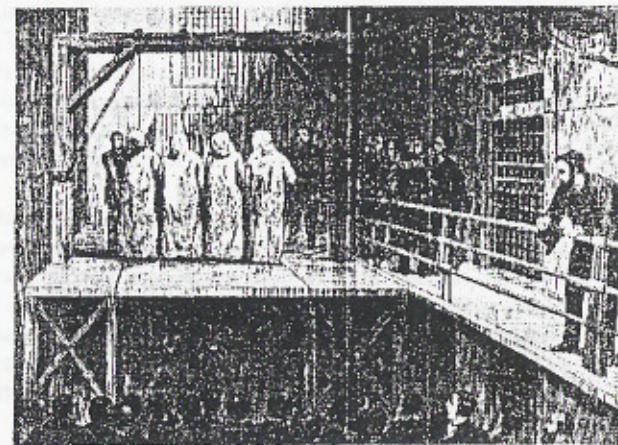
## Laws Used as Weapons

Albert Parsons

FOR FREE SPEECH AND THE RIGHT OF ASSEMBLY FIVE LABOR ORATORS & ORGANIZERS ARE CONDEMNED TO DIE. For free press and free thought three labor Editors are sent to the scaffold. "These eight men," said the attorneys of the monopolists "are picked out by the grand jury because they are the leaders of thousands who are equally guilty with them and we punish them to make examples of them for the others." This much for opinions sake, for free thought, free speech, free press & public assembly.

This Haymarket affair has exposed to public view the hideous enormities of capitalism & the barbarous despotism of government. The tragedy & the effects of it has demonstrated first; that government is power; and statute law is license, because it is privilege. It has shown the people—the poor—the wage-slaves—that law, statute law, is a privilege, & that privileges are for sale to those who can buy them. Government enacts law; the police, the soldiers & the jailors at the behest of the rich enforce it. Law is license. The whole earth & all it contains has been sold to a few who are thus authorized by statute law—licensed—to rob the many of their natural inheritance. Law is license. The few are licensed by law to own the land the machinery the houses, food, clothes & shelter of the people—whose industry; whose labor created them. Law is license; law—statue law—is the coward's weapon, the tool of the thief. By it humanity has ever been degraded & enslaved. By law mankind is robbed of its birthright, liberty transformed into slavery; life into death; & the fair earth into a den of thieves & murderers. The untold millions, the men, women & children of toil, the proletariat are by law deprived of their lives, their liberty & their happiness. Law is license.

Anarchy—natural law—is liberty. Liberty is the natural right to do what one pleases, bounded & limited only by the equal right of every one else to the same liberty. Privileges for none; equal rights for all. Liberty, Fraternity, Equality.



"Drawing the caps over the prisoners' faces, just before the fall of the trap." From sketches of Will F. Chapman.

From his autobiography, first printed in *Knights of Labor* from 16-23 October 1886. Albert Parsons (1848-1887) was an American anarchist, husband of Lucy, executed after the Haymarket affair. Parsons became a Confederate soldier when he was 13. After the war he settled in Waco, Texas, and became a Republican, publishing a weekly paper advocating the civil rights of African Americans. Parsons founded the International Working Peoples' Association American Group of Chicago in 1884. Found guilty of murder by a bomb, which he had no involvement with, he was executed on 11 November 1887.

## Prisons and Their Moral Influence on Prisoners

Peter Kropotkin

AFTER THE ECONOMIC PROBLEM AND AFTER THE PROBLEM OF THE STATE, PERHAPS THE most important of all is that concerning the control of anti-social acts. The meting out of justice was always the principal instrument for creating rights and privilege, since it was based on solid foundations of constituted rights; the problem of what is to be done with those who commit anti-social acts therefore contains within itself the great problem of government and the State.

It is time to ask if condemnation to death or to prison is just. Does it attain the dual end it has as its goal—that of preventing the repetition of the anti-social deed, and (as regards prisons) that of reforming the offender?

They are grave questions. On their answers depend not only the happiness of thousands of prisoners, not only the fate of miserable women and children, whose husbands and fathers are helpless to aid them from behind their bars, but also the happiness of humanity. Every injustice committed against one individual is, in the end, experienced by humanity as a whole.

Having had occasion to become acquainted with two prisons in France and several in Russia, having been led by various circumstances in my life to return to the study of penal questions, I think it is my duty to state openly what prisons are,—to relate my observations and my beliefs as a result of these observations.

### THE PRISON AS A SCHOOL OF CRIME

Once a man has been in prison, he will return. It is inevitable, and statistics prove it. The annual reports of the administration of criminal justice in France show that one-half of all those tried by juries and two-fifths of all those who yearly get into the police courts for minor offenses received their education in prisons. Nearly half of all those tried for murder and three-fourths of those tried for burglary are repeaters. As for the central prisons, more than one-third of the prisoners released from these supposedly correctional institutions are reimprisoned in the course of twelve months after their liberation.

Another significant angle is that the offense for which a man returns to prison is always more serious than his first. If, before, it was petty thieving, he returns now for some daring burglary, if he was imprisoned for the first time for some act of violence, often he will return as a murderer. All writers on criminology are in accord with this observation. Former offenders have become a great problem in Europe. And you know how France has solved it; she ordains their wholesale destruction by the fivers of Cayenne, an extermination which begins on the voyage.

*From Kropotkin's Revolutionary Pamphlets (New York: Vanguard Press, 1927). First appeared as "Influence moral des prisons sur les prisonniers" in La Révolte, serialized December 1887-July 1888. Peter Kropotkin (1842-1921) was a Russian revolutionary, geographer, geologist, and principal theorist of anarchist communism. He was born into the Russian aristocracy in Moscow, and spent his youth in Alexander II's Corps of Pages, subsequently serving as an officer in Siberia, where his experiences helped form his radical consciousness and lay the foundation of his scientific career. Kropotkin traveled to Switzerland in 1872 where he met Michael Bakunin's associate, James Guillaume, and visited the anarchist Jura Federation of workers, returning to Russia a convert to Bakunin's revolutionary collectivism. Joining the Chaikovskiy Circle, he was arrested in 1874 for revolutionary activity but escaped in 1876, settling in Switzerland. There in 1879 he co-founded Le Révolté with Jean Grave. Expelled in 1881, he went to France, where he met Michael Bakunin and was arrested and imprisoned (1882-1886). From 1886 until his return to Russia in 1917, he lived in England, where he was a founder of the anarchist newspaper Freedom. Works in print include In Russian and French Prisons, Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution, and Fields, Factories, and Workshops: Tomorrow.*

in the swamp region, was added to scurvy. When an opportunity afforded itself, Maria escaped and returned to Petrograd. But she did not remain long at liberty. In July, 1923, when 41 Anarchists were arrested in Petrograd, Maria was among them. The agents of the "G.P.U." treated her with special brutality. Whereas all the other prisoners, of whom I was one, were kept at the headquarters of the "G.P.U." for four days before being transferred to another prison, Maria was held there for nearly two weeks.

The prison of the "G.P.U." is not the heavenly home of leisure the Bolsheviks and their agents would have the world believe. I was locked up in a cell that was a closed box. It was provided with a small hole the size of a drinking cup through which air is supposed to enter, but no air enters because the corridor into which this hole leads also has no ventilation. A faint lamp burns day and night in this closed box, causing severe pain in the eyes. There is nothing but a wooden bench to lie upon: lice, bedbugs and other vermin eat your flesh and make life a burden to you. The quiet of this dim, evil-smelling cell is broken only by the ridicule and brutality of a "comrade" jail-keeper.

The "G.P.U." representatives knew what these conditions meant to the sick Maria Veger, and they purposely tortured her. Each day she was called to the office and asked to give them "information," for which they promised to remove her to another jail where life was not so miserable. When finally convinced that she would die rather than give lying "information" about her comrades, the *Tchekists* ordered Maria Veger transferred to the "Home of Preliminary Detention," where she was strictly isolated and kept on the regime of the "common criminal."

"DO YOU THINK YOU ARE IN AMERICA?"

The treatment in my own case was far from being endurable. Like the other politicals, I was denied the most elementary prison rights, scoffed at and ridiculed by the prison administration as well as by the higher authorities. For speaking to Maria when seeing her through the window, I was threatened with the dungeon. Being unable to endure such an existence any longer, denied a trial, and held under criminal conditions, we declared a hunger-strike, demanding better conditions and the right of visits. On the seventh day of our hunger-strike, after the prison doctor stated that we could not hold out any longer and that we must be forcibly fed, one of the "G.P.U." chiefs visited us and granted our demands. But before they were granted another comrade prisoner of mine was called by the prosecuting attorney and asked if he could not use his influence with me to induce me to eat. He said he could not. The prosecuting attorney then said to him angrily: "Then she will be forcibly fed. Does she think she is dealing with the American police?" He spoke as if the brutal methods of the American police were tenderness itself compared with what he and his comrades intended to do.

The physical state of Comrade Maria Veger was becoming worse every day, but the prison doctor said he could do nothing for her under the conditions. In spite of the fact that she was seriously ill, Maria was finally condemned to three years exile in the Solovetz Monastery, the dreaded prison situated on an island in the White Sea, to which boats go but twice a year. This penalty amounted in fact to a death sentence, considering the conditions of our comrade.

On September 16th Maria was sent away to serve the term imposed upon her, but a week afterwards word came back that she was being sent back to Petrograd. After a two days' struggle with the "G.P.U." officials, I finally obtained permission to see her.

Burning with a high fever, and hardly able to stand on her feet, Maria related to me the story of her journey which I shall tell here in brief:

When brought to the Vologda prison, which is half way from Petrograd to



## Inside Bolshevick Jails

Mollie Steimer

RUSSIA OF TODAY IS A GREAT PRISON WHERE EVERY INDIVIDUAL WHO IS KNOWN NOT to be in full agreement with the Communists is spied upon and booked by the "G.P.U." (*Tchéka*) as an enemy of the government. No one can receive books, newspapers, or even a plain letter from his relatives without the control of the censor. This institution which keeps the people in absolute ignorance of all news detrimental to the interests of the Bolshevists is now better organized and more strict than was the famous Black Cabinet under Czar Nicholas II.

The prisons and concentration camps of Moscow, Petrograd, Kharkov, Odessa, Tashkent, Vologda, Archangel, Solovki, and Siberia are filled with revolutionaries who do not agree with the tyrannical regime enforced by the Bolshevicks. The inhuman treatment that those people receive at the hands of their jailers can have only one purpose: that is, to wear them out physically and mentally so that their lives may become a mere burden to them.

To mention a few instances within my *personal knowledge*:

Maria Korshunova, a young Anarchist, while under arrest in Petrograd, was continually dragged from one jail to another. At the end of 1922 she received a sentence of ten years' solitary confinement, and was taken from Petrograd to the Moscow jail where she was supposed to serve her sentence. But she had not been there a month when she was suddenly carried off to Cheliabinsk, Siberia. Here our young comrade thought she would be let alone for a time. But no sooner had she received the first letter from her mother when again was shipped off to another place, this time to Viatka, which is one of the worst prisons in Russia, notorious for filth and starvation conditions, and, what is worst of all, for the outrageous conduct of the men keepers—"comrades," they are called—towards their helpless victims, the women prisoners. Since Korshunova was transferred to that place of torture, no letter has been received from her and no news about her has reached the outside world.

This comrade is well known among the Petrograd workers as a woman revolutionary of great idealism and sincerity. She has often been compared with Sofia Perovskaya.

Another example:

Two years ago, Maria Veger, an Anarchist of many years standing, and a teacher by profession, was arrested as a result of a search in her home, where literature consisting of copies of the London *Freedom* and *Arbeiter Freund*, the *Freie Arbeiter Stimme* (N.Y.), and some books on Anarchism (were found Ed.)

After being held for several months in the Moscow prison, where she became sick with the *tsinga* (scurvy), Maria finally received a sentence of two years' exile in Archangel in the North. The official document which was handed to her read: "Two years exile in the city of Archangel for counter-revolution."

In Archangel, Maria underwent extreme suffering. Malaria, a common disease

## Prisons and Their Moral Influence on Prisoners

### THE FUTILITY OF PRISONS

In spite of all the reforms made up to the present,—in spite of all the experiments of different prison systems, the results are always the same. On the one hand, the number of offenses against existing laws neither increases nor diminishes, *no matter what the system of punishments is*—the knout has been abolished in Russia and the death penalty in Italy, and the number of murders there has remained the same. The cruelty of the judges grows or lessens, the cruelty of the Jesuitical penal system changes, but the number of acts designated as crimes remains constant. It is affected only by other causes which I shall shortly mention. On the other hand, no matter what changes are introduced in the prison régime, the problem of second offenders does not decrease. That is inevitable;—*it must be so*;—the prison kills all the qualities in a man which make him best adapted to community life. It makes him the kind of a person who will inevitably return to prison to end his days in one of those stone tombs over which is engraved—"House of Detention and Correction." There is only one answer to the question, "What can be done to better this penal system?" Nothing. A prison cannot be improved. With the exception of a few unimportant little improvements, there is absolutely nothing to do but demolish it.

I might propose that a Pestalozzi be placed at the head of each prison. I refer to the great Swiss pedagogue who used to take in abandoned children and make good citizens of them. I might also propose that in the place of the present guards, ex-soldiers and ex-policemen, sixty Pestalozzis be substituted. But, you will ask, "Where are we to find them?"—a pertinent question. The great Swiss teacher would certainly refuse to be a prison guard, for, basically, the principle of all prisons is wrong because it deprives man of liberty. So long as you deprive a man of his liberty, you will not make him better. You will cultivate habitual criminals; that is what I shall now prove.

### THE CRIMINALS IN PRISON AND OUTSIDE

To begin with, there is the fact that none of the prisoners recognize the justice of the punishment inflicted on them. This is in itself a condemnation of our whole judicial system. Speak to an imprisoned man or to some great swindler. He will say, "The little swindlers are here but the big ones are free and enjoy public respect." What can you answer, knowing the existence of great financial companies expressly designed to take the last pennies of the savings of the poor, with the founders retiring in time to make good legal hauls out of these small fortunes? We all know these great stock issuing companies with their lying circulars and their huge swindles. What can we answer the prisoner except that he is right?

Or this man, imprisoned for robbing a till, will tell you, "I simply wasn't clever enough; that's all." And what can you answer, knowing what goes on in important places, and how, following terrible scandals, the verdict "not guilty" is handed out to these great robbers? How many times have you heard prisoners say, "It's the big thieves who are holding us here; we are the little ones." Who can dispute this when he knows the incredible swindles perpetrated in the realm of high finance and commerce; when he knows that the thirst for riches, acquired by every possible means, is the very essence of *bourgeois* society. When he has examined this immense quantity of suspicious transactions divided between the honest man (according to *bourgeois* standards) and the criminal, when he has seen all this, he must be convinced that jails are made for the unskillful, not for criminals. This is the standard on the outside. As for the standard in the prison itself, it is needless to dwell on it long. We know well enough what it is. Whether in regard to food or the distribution of favors, in the words of the prisoners, from San Francisco to Kamchatka, "The biggest thieves are those who hold us here, not ourselves."

From *Letters From Russian Prisons* (New York: Albert & Charles Boni, 1925). Mollie Steimer (1897-1980) was a Russian-born anarchist militant. She emigrated to the US with her family in 1912. Joined the *Flagstaff* (Freedom) group of Jewish anarchists based in New York. She was arrested with others in August 1918 for publishing articles critical of American intervention in Russian Revolution. Steimer was sentenced to 15 months. Out on bail, she was arrested various times and was deported to Russia in 1921. She ended up being arrested there by the Bolshevicks for supposedly aiding criminal elements (in other words for being an anarchist). Deported to Germany she helped organize various groups to support revolutionaries imprisoned in Russia. Eventually moved to Mexico to escape Nazi repression.

## PRISON LABOR

Everyone knows the evil influence of laziness. Work relieves a man. But there is work and work. There is the work of the free individual which makes him feel a part of the immense whole. And there is that of the slave which degrades. Convict labor is unwillingly done, done only through fear of worse punishment. The work, which has no attraction in itself because it does not exercise any of the mental faculties of the worker, is so badly paid that it is looked upon as a punishment.

When my anarchist friends at Clairvaux made corsets or mother of pearl buttons and received twelve cents for ten hours labor, of which four cents were retained by the State, we can understand very well the disgust which this work aroused in a man condemned to it. When he receives thirty-six cents at the end of a week, he is right to say, "Those who keep us here are thieves, not we."

## THE EFFECT OF CUTTING OFF SOCIAL CONTACTS

And what inspiration can a prisoner get to work for the common good, deprived as he is of all connections with life outside? By a refinement of cruelty, those who planned our prisons did everything they could to break all relationships of the prisoner with society. In England the prisoner's wife and children can see him only once every three months, and the letters he is allowed to write are really preposterous. The philanthropists have even at times carried defiance of human nature so far as to restrict a prisoner from writing anything but his signature on a printed circular. The best influence to which a prisoner could be subjected, the only one which could bring him a ray of light, a softer element in his life,—the relationship with his kin,—is systematically prevented.

In the sombre life of the prisoner which flows by without passion or emotion, all the finer sentiments rapidly become atrophied. The skilled workers who loved their trade lose their taste for work. Bodily energy slowly disappears. The mind no longer has the energy for sustained attention; thought is less rapid, and in any case less persistent. It loses depth. It seems to me that the lowering of nervous energy in prisons is due, above all, to the lack of varied impressions. In ordinary life a thousand sounds and colors strike our senses daily, a thousand little facts come to our consciousness and stimulate the activity of our brains. No such things strike the prisoners' senses. Their impressions are few and always the same.

## THE THEORY OF WILL POWER

There is another important cause of demoralization in prisons. All transgressions of accepted moral standards may be ascribed to lack of a strong will. The majority of the inmates of prisons are people who did not have sufficient strength to resist the temptations surrounding them or to control a passion which momentarily carried them away. In prisons as in monasteries, everything is done to kill a man's will. He generally has no choice between one of two acts. The rare occasions on which he can exercise his will are very brief. His whole life is regulated and ordered in advance. He has only to swim with the current, to obey under pain of severe punishment.

Under these conditions all the will power that he may have had on entering disappears. And where will he find the strength with which to resist the temptations which will arise before him, as if by magic, when he is free of the prison walls? Where will he find the strength to resist the first impulse to a passionate outbreak, if during several years everything was done to kill this inner strength, to make him a docile tool in the hands of those who control him? This fact is, according to my mind, *the most terrible condemnation of the whole penal system based on the deprivation of individual liberty.*

The origin of this suppression of individual will, which is the essence of all

forlornly, staring fixedly in the empty space.

No one answered him, not even an echo of his own voice, which died away in the cell. It was distressingly painful; death made itself felt. My temples began to throb violently; the head was burning; the lids grew heavy. Invisible hammers kept pounding beneath the cranium box. Consciousness was splitting away; everything became as if in a fog. A savage cacophony broke loose within me; my thoughts kept whirling frenziedly. I felt an increasing weakness, a growing apathy. My taut nerves began to lose their power to react to internal stimuli: "I too don't want to die. I am young, my life lies ahead of me. I did so little in my life. To die under the muzzle of an automatic, to be killed by a Cheka executionist? No, no. And what for? Who will ever learn about my death? And in which way will my death profit anyone? To die for the common cause, yes—there is nothing terrible about that. But now, to die such a senseless death, of what avail will it be? To fulfil my duty? Ha-ha, duty! What sort of duty? The duty of conscience and honor? No, but this . . ."

The rumbling of an approaching truck broke the silence. It found its painful echo in the hearts of the cell inmates. The "doomed" man started up, and then let his head sink upon his knees.

"Oh, Lord, save us and have mercy upon us," whispered the priest, crossing himself.

"They are beginning," said one of the army men.

"Beginning what? Who is beginning?" I asked.

"Lie down and sleep; you will rest better for it; you won't be worked up unnecessarily and you will be saved the affliction of many a stinging thought," exhorted the priest.

"But then, what is really starting now?" I kept on asking anxiously.

"Shootings!" was the sharp and spiteful answer. "Many a soul is now trembling with fear and anxiety. Everyone is thinking: will they come after me?"

I don't remember what happened afterwards. Whether I fell asleep or just sank into a state of stupor; I can hardly remember. A violent noise, loud voices, the clanking of keys, bolts, the squeaking of doors—all that woke me up. We all jumped up like startled gazelles. "Whose turn?" everyone questioned anxiously.

"N.N., get your things ready!"

The "doomed" man jumped off hastily, seized the bundle with his belongings and shoved it under his left arm. A deadly pallor spread over his trembling lips, which kept on moving as if in prayer. His hands were shaking. Rapidly and keeping turns, he approached everyone of us and, stretching out his trembling hand, he said with a peculiar intonation: "Goodbye . . . I am taken out to be shot."

The doors slammed again and a man's life was blotted out.

"Oh, Lord, remember thy servant in thy kingdom," uttered the priest.

"Away with the soul-wracking and pains," said one of the army men sighing deeply.

A long silence!

"He is dead by now," said the other army man loudly, seemingly continuing his train of thought.

There was no answer. A deep brooding silence reigned in the cell.

"Yes, I do," I said loudly, but with restrained malice, hardly of course believing my own words.

"Yes, they will release you. They will release your body from your soul," one of them said in a quiet voice but with the studied intent of making himself heard. "From here," he added, this time loudly and with a manifest undertone of malice, "only lucky people ever get out."

I did not answer. Heavy silence enveloped us all. Everyone was sunk in his thoughts. I walked up to the priest. The latter was breathing heavily, while the army people exchanged whispers from time to time. The petrified figure remained in the same position. A feeling of distress was overtaking me. Cheerless thoughts began to harrow my brain. The idea that I might be executed shook my insides; every cell within my body cried out against a senseless death. . . . We are all silent. Darkness falls upon the cell. The sighs of my cellmates became deeper and more distressful. The whispers sink to barely audible tones.

A sudden light fills the cell. The electric lights were turned on. I took a smoke.

"Don't put out your match," one of the army men asks me.

We all smoke, except the immobile figure. I inquire about the latter.

"The investigator told him," one of the army men whispered to me—"we are going to shoot you."

"We are going to shoot you." That phrase resounded within me. "How?" an inner voice kept clamouring within me. How can they do it? Who gave them the right? People sit there, upstairs, and quietly, ruthlessly kill other people. Barbarity! It is impossible, it is criminal, just to be able to say simply: "We are going to shoot you." And the same wretches tell me the same thing: "We will have you shot." But how come. . . . The train of thought breaks off all of a sudden, and here they follow already in a different direction. "And, perhaps, they won't even say it: they will just take me out and have me shot without any warning. They will take me out ostensibly for a hearing and then . . . bang, straight into the neck. And that is the end of me. Of course, this is what will happen. After all, they can't leave us with Denikin; and on the other hand, they surely will not take us along." That is followed by another train of thought. "No, it is impossible. They won't, they can't shoot me, they must release me. I am not a White-Guardist. I am revolutionist. And who are they, the Bolsheviks?"

I am going through a state of veritable hell. I fling away one cigarette after another.

The petrified figure of the "doomed" man came to life. Slowly, as if he were seriously ill, the "doomed" man climbed down from the plank-bed, knocked at the door, asking to be taken out to the lavatory. He left together with the two army people. Soon they came back. I viewed this man with a certain degree of curiosity. He was a middle-aged man, tall, slender; his face was flat and pale. He halted in the middle of the room and, addressing his companions, he said, seemingly continuing an interrupted conversation: "No, no. Today I will surely be taken out. I was told straight in my face: 'Confess, you will be shot anyway.' Now, I'll have to get my things together. There is little time left now. Night has fallen already."

There was a long pause.

"Eh-h-h-h-h."

No one answered him. Everyone was taken up with his own thoughts. The "doomed" man began to pick up his belongings, tying them up in a bundle. That being done, he took a long look at them and smiled wryly. And then back he went to his plank-bed, back to his huddled, transfixed posture.

"I feel that today the last balance of my life is going to be drawn," he said

prisons, is easy to see. It springs from the desire of guarding the greatest number of prisoners with the fewest possible guards. The ideal of prison officials would be thousands of automatons, arising, working, eating and going to sleep by means of electric currents switched on by one of the guards. Economies might then be made in the budget, but no astonishment should be expressed that men, reduced to machines, are not, on their release, the type which society wants. As soon as a prisoner is released, his old companions await him. He is fraternally received and once again engulfed by the current which once swept him to prison. Protective organizations can do nothing. All that they can do to combat the evil influence of the prison is to counterbalance some of those results in the liberated men.

And what a contrast between the reception by his old companions and that of the people in philanthropic work for released prisoners! Who of them will invite him to his home and say to him simply, "Here is a room, here is work, sit down at this table, and become part of the family"? The released man is only looking for the outstretched hand of warm friendship. But society, after having done everything it could to make an enemy of him, having inoculated him with the vices of the prison, rejects him. He is condemned to become a "repeater."

#### THE EFFECT OF PRISON CLOTHES AND DISCIPLINE

Everyone knows the influence of decent clothing. Even an animal is ashamed to appear before his fellow creatures if something makes him look ridiculous. A cat whom somebody has painted black and yellow will not dare mingle with other cats. But men begin by giving the clothes of a lunatic to those whom they profess to want to reform.

During all his prison life the prisoner is subjected to treatment which shows the greatest contempt of his feelings. A prisoner is not accorded the single respect due a human being. He is a thing, a number, and he is treated like a numbered thing. If he yields to the most human of all desires, that of communicating with a comrade, he is guilty of a breach of discipline. Before entering prison he may not have lied or deceived, but in prison he will learn to lie and deceive so that it will become second nature to him.

And it goes hard with those who do not submit. If being searched is humiliating, if a man finds the food distasteful, if he shows disgust in the keeper's trafficking in tobacco, if he divides his bread with his neighbor, if he still has enough dignity to be irritated by an insult, if he is honest enough to be revolted by the petty intrigues, prison will be a hell for him. He will be overburdened with work unless he is sent to rot in solitary confinement. The slightest infraction of discipline will bring down the severest punishment. And each punishment will lead to another. He will be driven to madness through persecution. He can consider himself lucky to leave prison otherwise than in a coffin.

#### PRISON GUARDS

It is easy to write in the newspapers that the guards must be carefully watched, that the wardens must be chosen from good men. Nothing is easier than to build administrative utopias. But man will remain man—guard as well as prisoner. And when these guards are condemned to spend the rest of their lives in these false positions, they suffer the consequences. They become fussy. Nowhere, save in monasteries or convents, does such a spirit of petty intrigue reign. Nowhere are scandal and tale-bearing so well developed as among prison guards.

You cannot give an individual any authority without corrupting him. He will abuse it. He will be less scrupulous and feel his authority even more when his sphere of action is limited. Forced to live in any enemy's camp, the guards cannot become models of kindness. To the league of prisoners there is opposed the league of jailers. It is the institution which makes them what they are—petty, mean

persecutors. Put a Pestalozzi in their place and he will soon become a prison guard.

Quickly rancor against society gets into the prisoner's heart. He becomes accustomed to detesting those who oppress him. He divides the world into two parts,—one in which he and his comrades belong, the other, the external world, represented by the guards and their superiors. A league is formed by the prisoners against all those who do not wear prison garb. These are their enemies and everything that can be done to deceive them is right.

As soon as he is freed, the prisoner puts this code into practice. Before going to prison he could commit his offenses unthinkingly. Now he has a philosophy, which can be summed up in the words of Zola, "What rascals these honest men are."

If we take into consideration all the different influences of the prison on the prisoner, we will be convinced that they make a man less and less fitted for life in society. On the other hand, none of these influences raises the intellectual and moral faculties of the prisoner, or leads him to a higher conception of life. Prison does not improve the prisoner. And furthermore, we have seen that it does not prevent him from committing other crimes. It does not then achieve any of the ends which it has set itself.

#### HOW SHALL WE DEAL WITH OFFENDERS?

That is why the question must be asked, "What should be done with those who break the laws?" I do not mean the written laws—they are a sad heritage of a sad past—but the principles of morality which are engraved on the hearts of each one of us.

There was a time when medicine was the art of administering some drugs, gropingly discovered through experiment. But our times have attacked the medical problem from a new angle. Instead of curing diseases medicine now seeks primarily to prevent them. Hygiene is the best of all medicines.

We have yet to do the same thing for this great social phenomenon which we still call "crime" but which our children will call a "social disease." To prevent this illness will be the best of cures. And this conclusion has already become the watchword of a whole school of modern thinkers concerned with "crime." In the works published by these innovators we have all the elements necessary for taking a new stand towards those whom society, until now, has in cowardly fashion decapitated, hanged, or imprisoned.

#### CAUSES OF CRIME

Three great categories of causes produce these anti-social acts called crimes. They are social, physiological, and physical. I shall begin with the last-named causes. They are less well known, but their influence is indisputable.

#### Physical Causes

When one sees a friend mail a letter which he has forgotten to address, one says this is an accident—it is unforeseen. These accidents, these unexpected events, occur in human societies with the same regularity as those which can be foreseen. The number of unaddressed letters which will be mailed continues from year to year with astounding regularity. Their number may vary slightly each year, but only slightly. Here we have so capricious a factor as absentmindedness. However, this factor is subject to laws that are just as rigorous as those governing the movements of the planets.

The same is true for the number of murders committed from year to year. With the statistics for previous years in hand, anyone can predict in advance, with striking exactitude, the approximate number of murders that will be committed in the course of the year in every country of Europe.

## One Day in the Cheka's Cellar

G.P. Maximoff

WE ARE AT THE VERY END OF THE CORRIDOR LEADING TO THE CHEKA DUNGEON. THE key clanged and I was shoved into a tiny cell. Another clang of the key and life was left at the other side. I stood still at the door, staring in bewilderment.

The cell prepresented a tiny room with one window, set below the level of the ground and latticed with iron bars. The window opened into a courtyard facing some mysterious barns. Along the wall, stretching from the door to the window, were plank-beds from which four pairs of eyes were staring fixedly at me. One of them belonged to a pain-wracked, huddled figure, fixed in a seated position upon the plank-beds. The sight of it sent a shiver through my body. Its head rose at my appearance and then sank back into its former position. The figure was transfixed as it sank into a state of coma.

Seated near this figure closer to the window were two young men, sturdy and heavy. They jumped off the plank-bed with great alacrity: one could easily tell from their bearing and movements that they were army people. At the other side of the stiffened figure, nearer to the door, a priest was seated; his beard was tousled, and his long dishelved hair was unkempt. The two army people approached me and began firing questions at me.

"Why were you arrested?" one of them asked.

"Because I refused to carry out police duties while in the army, having submitted a written declaration to that effect."

"Ah..." one of them drawled, "you're in a bad fix. What are you—Menshevik or Socialist Revolutionary?"

"No. I am an Anarchist."

"An-ar-chist!" He drawled out the word in amazement. "Are you people getting arrested too?"

"It looks that way," I answered.

"You say," the second one questioned again, "because you refused. Well, then you are a finished man."

A feeling of hatred at this man welled up within me when I heard him say that awful thing. But I restrained myself.

"And you?" I asked in turn.

"We? We are also here on charges of a military nature. On some suspicion." The answer was given rather reluctantly. Both broke off the conversation, turning back to the plank-bed.

"And so you believe that you will be released soon," one of them asked again sneeringly, climbing onto the plank-bed.

Excerpted from Maximoff's *The Guillotine at Work* (Chicago: Alexander Berkman Fund, 1930) (which exposes the state terror of Bolshevism like no other text) by Paul Avrich and published in Avrich's *The Anarchists in the Russian Revolution* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1973). G.P. Maximoff (1893-1950) was a Russian anarcho-syndicalist, archivist, and writer. He took part in revolutionary propaganda before the Russian Revolution. After October 1917 he played a role in the development and operation of workers councils. He was arrested frequently by the Bolsheviks; his final arrest was in March of 1921 at the time of the Kronstadt revolt. He took part in a hunger strike with other militants and eventually, after Spanish and French comrades attending the Red Trade Union International intervened, was released into exile. He settled in the US where he became editor of the IWW paper *Golos Truzhenka* (Voice of the Toiler) and later *Delo Truda-Probozhdenie* (Labor's Cause-Awakening). His works, *Syndicalists in the Russian Revolution*, *Constructive Anarchism: A Debate on the Platform*, and *My Social Creed* are distributed through AK Press.

## From Behind the Bars

Librado Rivera

DEAR COMRADE:

I am referring to your kind letter of October 8th, and which I read with the same interest I have read all yours. Yes, dear comrade, at last my sentence of 15 years was commuted by the President of this country on condition of my extradition to Mexico, where I long to go. I only asked that my deportation be made effective at the earliest possible date. The question is that I am still here in this hated bastille, in spite that my commutation was granted on the 2nd of this month. The thought comes to mind that if I were willing to remain in this country, then perhaps the government had already deported me. One thing is true, that I was hard to be reformed and molded at the capitalist style. My continued unjust imprisonment only served to reaffirm my old convictions and ideals of justice, which I have cherished since long ago. I feel myself more rebel against, the present organized system of injustices than when I was the first day of my confinement in this American Bastille. Tremendous injustices and wrongs wilfully done are clearly seen; they exist and are at sight and have existed centuries before; they are engraved in my mind since my youth and cannot be crossed out with the threatening club in the hand of any hangman. Justice equal for all is what we need, and human kind shall have it at any cost some day in the relative short future, when everything be the common property for the free use and benefit of every human being and not for the benefit of a handful of millionaires, actual owners of the world. I hope these dreams of happiness for all will come to be a fact some day in order the enjoy a true brotherhood and permanent peace all over the world.

I close as always with my best wishes and comradesly love for you,

LIBRADO RIVERA

Dated 14 October 1921, and printed in the *Behind the Bars* (New York: Anarchist Red Cross Society) of January 1924. Librado Rivera (1864-1912) was a Mexican anarchist, teacher, journalist, and PLM member. He was arrested frequently in the US for his agitation against the Mexican government. In 1907-1910 he served fifteen months in Yuma and Florence Penitentiary (Arizona) for violating neutrality laws (that is, for aiding combatants in the Mexican revolution). In 1918 he was sentenced with Ricardo Flores Magón to fifteen years for violating the Espionage Act through the publication of *Regeneración*. In 1921 his sentence was commuted and he was deported to Mexico, where he continued his political activities.

The influence of physical causes on our actions is still far from being completely analyzed. It is, however, known that acts of violence predominate in summer whereas in winter acts against property take the lead. When one examines the curves traced by Prof. Enrico Ferri and when one observes the curve for acts of violence rise and fall with the curve for temperature, one is vividly impressed by the similarity of the two curves and one understands how much of a machine man is. Man who boasts of his free will is as dependent on the temperature, the winds, and the rain as any other organism. Who will doubt these influences? When the weather is fine and the harvest good, and when the villagers feel at their ease, certainly they will be less likely to end their petty squabbles with knife thrusts. When the weather is bad and the harvest poor, the villagers become morose and their quarrels will take on a more violent character.

### *Physiological Causes*

The physiological causes, those which depend on the brain structure, the digestive organs, and the nervous system, are certainly more important than the physical causes. The influence of inherited capacities as well as of physical organization on our acts has been the object of such searching investigation that we can form a fairly correct idea of its importance.

When Cesare Lombroso maintains that the majority of our prison inmates have some defect of their brain structure, we can accept this declaration on condition that we compare the brains of those who died in prison with those who died outside under generally bad living conditions. When he demonstrates that the most brutal murders are perpetrated by individuals who have some serious mental defect, we agree because this statement has been confirmed by observation. But when Lombroso declares that society has the right to take measures against the defectives, we refuse to follow him. Society has no right to exterminate those who have diseased brains. We admit that many of those who commit these atrocious acts are almost idiots. But not all idiots become murderers.

In many families, in palaces as well as insane asylums, idiots were found with the same traits which Lombroso considers characteristic of "criminal insanity." The only difference between them and those sent to the gallows is the environment in which they lived. Cerebral diseases can certainly stimulate the development of an inclination to murder, but it is not inevitable. Everything depends on the circumstances in which the individual suffering from a mental disease is placed.

Every intelligent person can see from the accumulated facts that the majority of those now treated as criminals are people suffering from some malady, and that, consequently, it is necessary to cure them by the best of care instead of sending them to prison where the disease will only be aggravated.

If each one of us subjects himself to a severe analysis, he will see that at times there pass through his mind the germs of ideas, quick as a flash, which constitute the foundations for evil deeds. We repudiated these ideas, but if they had found a favorable response in our circumstances, or, if other sentiments, such as love, pity and the sense of brotherhood had not counteracted these flashes of egoistic and brutal thoughts, they would have ended by leading to an evil act. In brief, the physiological causes play an important part in leading men to prison, but they are not the causes of "criminality" properly speaking. These affections of the mind, the cerebrospinal system, etc., might be found in their incipience among us all. The great majority of us have some one of these maladies. But they do not lead a person to commit an anti-social act unless external circumstances give them a morbid turn.

### *The Social Causes*

But if physical causes have so strong an influence on our actions, if our physiology

so often becomes the cause of the anti-social deeds we commit, how much more potent are the social causes. The most forward-looking and intelligent minds of our time proclaim that society as a whole is responsible for every anti-social act committed. We have our part in the glory of our heroes and geniuses; we also share in the acts of our assassins. It is we who have made them what they are,—the one as well as the other.

Year in and year out thousands of children grow up in the midst of the moral and material filth of our great cities, in the midst of a population demoralized by hand to mouth living. These children do not know a real home. Their home is a wretched lodging today, the streets tomorrow. They grow up without any decent outlets for their young energies. When we see the child population of large cities grow up in this fashion, we can only be astonished that so few of them become highwaymen and murderers. What surprises me is the depth of the social sentiments among humanity, the warm friendliness of even the worst neighborhoods. Without it, the number of these that would declare open warfare on society would be even greater. Without this friendliness, this aversion to violence, not a stone would be left of our sumptuous city palaces.

And at the other end of the ladder, what does the child growing up on the streets see? Luxury, stupid and insensate, smart shops, reading matter devoted to exhibiting wealth, a money-worshipping cult developing a thirst for riches, a passion for living at the expense of others. The watchword is: "Get rich. Destroy everything that stands in your way, and do it by any means save those that will land you in jail." Manual labor is despised to a point where our ruling classes prefer to indulge in gymnastics than handle a spade or a saw. A calloused hand is considered a sign of inferiority and a silk dress of superiority.

Society itself daily creates these people incapable of leading a life of honest labor, and filled with anti-social desires. She glorifies them when their crimes are crowned with financial success. She sends them to prison when they have not "succeeded." We will no longer have any use for prisons, executioners, or judges when the social revolution will have wholly changed the relations between capital and labor, when there are no more idlers, when each can work according to his inclination for the common good, when every child will be taught to work with his hands at the same time that his mind and soul get normal development.

Man is the result of the environment in which he grows up and spends his life. If he is accustomed to work from childhood, to being considered as a part of society as a whole, to understanding that he cannot injure anyone without finally feeling the effects himself, then there will be found few cases of violation of moral laws.

Two-thirds of the acts condemned as crimes today are acts against property. They will disappear along with private property. As for acts of violence against people, they already decrease in proportion to the growth of the social sense and they will disappear when we attack the causes instead of the effects.

#### HOW SHALL OFFENDERS BE CURED?

Until now, penal institutions, so dear to the lawyers, were a compromise between the Biblical idea of vengeance, the belief of the middle ages in the devil, the modern lawyers' idea of terrorization, and the idea of the prevention of crime by punishment.

It is not insane asylums that must be built instead of prisons. Such an execrable idea is far from my mind. The insane asylum is always a prison. Far from my mind also is the idea, launched from time to time by the philanthropists, that the prison be kept but entrusted to physicians and teachers. What prisoners have not found today in society is a helping hand, simple and friendly, which would aid them from childhood to develop the higher faculties of their minds and souls;—faculties

a prison cell is the ideal environment for a sick man, and much less when the presence in prison of such a man is owing to his having been faithful to truth and justice. The government officials have always said that there are not in the United States persons kept in captivity on account of their beliefs, but Mr. Daugherty says in his letter to you: "He, in no manner, evinces any evidence of repentance, but on the contrary, rather prides himself upon his defiance of the law.... I am of the opinion, therefore, that until he indicates a different spirit than that expressed in his letter to Mrs. Branstetter, he should at least serve until August 15, 1925." The quoted paragraphs, and the part of Mr. Daugherty's letter in which he says I am regarded dangerous on account of my doctrines, are the best evidence that there are persons kept in prison owing to their social and political beliefs. If I believed that it is not persecution, but prosecution, that has been exerted against me; if I believed that the law under which I was given a life term in prison was a good law, I would be set free, according to Mr. Daugherty. That law was undoubtedly a good law but to a few persons, those who had something to gain with its enactment. As for the masses, the law was a bad one, for thanks to it thousands of young American men lost their lives in Europe, many thousands more were maimed or otherwise incapacitated to earn a livelihood, and thanks to it the colossal European carnage, where scores of millions of men were either slain or maimed for life, received momentous impulse and bred the tremendous financial crises which is threatening to plunge the world into chaos. However, as I have stated before, I did not violate this law with the issuance of the Manifesto of March 16, 1918.

As for the matter of repentance to which Mr. Daugherty gives so much importance, I sincerely state that my conscience does not reproach me with having done wrong, and therefore, to repent of what I am convinced is right would be a crime on my part, a crime that my conscience would never pardon me. He who commits an anti-social act may repent, and it is desired that he repents, but it is not fair to exact a vow of repentance from him who all he wishes is to secure freedom, justice and well-being for all his fellow men regardless of race and creed. If some one ever convinces me that it is just that children starve, and that young women have to choose of two infernos one—prostitution or starvation; if there is a person who could drive out of my brain the idea of not being honorable to kill within oneself that elementary instinct of sympathy which prompts every sociable animal to stand by the members of its species, and that it is monstrous that man, the most intelligent of beasts, has to wield the weapons of fraud and deceit if he wants to achieve success; if the idea that man must be the wolf of man enters my brain, then I shall repent. But as this will never be, my fate is sealed. I have to die in prison, branded as a felon. Darkness is already enshrouding me as though anxious of anticipating for me the eternal shadows into which the dead sink. I accept my fate with manly resignation, convinced that some day, long perhaps after Mr. Daugherty and myself have breathed our last, and of what we have been there only remained his name exquisitely carved in a marble flag upon his grave in a fashionable cemetery, and mine, only a number, 14596, roughly scraped in some plebeian stone in the prison graveyard, justice shall be done me.

With many thanks for the activity you have shown on my behalf, I remain, sincerely yours,

RICARDO FLORES MAGÓN

in *Regeneración* the Manifesto for which I was given 20 years' imprisonment and Rivera 15. The wording and meaning of the Manifesto were construed as seditious by the prosecution, that is, as aiming at the insubordination and revolt of the military and naval forces of the United States. Any sensible person who happened to read the Manifesto would not draw such a conclusion, for in reality the Manifesto is only an exposition of facts and a fair warning to all mankind of the evils those facts might produce. In one of its paragraphs it is clearly stated that no one can make a revolution on account of it being a social phenomenon. The Manifesto was aimed at the prevention of the evils a revolution carries itself—the revolution being regarded from a scientific standpoint as a world-wide inevitable result of the unsettled conditions of the world. The Manifesto does not refer in the least to the policies of the American Government in the last war, nor gives aid and comfort to its enemies. It is neither pro-German nor pro-Ally, and does not single out the United States in its brief review of the world conditions. It was enough, however, to secure for me a life term behind prison bars. The persecution, this time, was exceedingly severe. My poor wife, Maria, was incarcerated during five months, and is now free on bond awaiting trial for having notified my friends of my arrest, that they should assist me in my legal defense.

After reading this extremely long and dreadfully tedious statement of facts, how could any person believe that I have rightfully been prosecuted and in no way persecuted? In each case, and in defiance of the law, bail has been fixed at enormous rates so as to prevent me making use of the privilege. As to the veracity of my assertions, my honor as a life-long fighter for justice is hereby solemnly pledged.

Mr. Daugherty says I am a dangerous man because of the doctrines I assert and practice. Now, then, the doctrines I assert and practice are the anarchist doctrines, and I challenge all fair-minded men and women the world over to prove to me that the anarchist doctrines are detrimental to the human race. Anarchism strives for the establishment of a social order based on brotherhood and love, as against the actual form of society, founded on violence, hatred and rivalry of one class against the other, and of members of one class among themselves. Anarchism aims at establishing peace forever among all the races of the earth by the suppression of this fountain of all evils—the right of private property. If this is not a beautiful ideal, what is it? No one thinks that the peoples of the civilized world are living under ideal conditions. Every conscientious person feels himself shocked at the sight of this continual strife of men against man, of this unending deceiving of one another. Material success is the goal that lures men and women the world over, and to achieve it no vileness is too vile, no baseness is too base, to deter its worshippers from coveting it. The results of this universal madness are appalling; virtue is trampled upon by crime, and artfulness takes the place of honesty. Sincerity is only a word, or at the most, a mask under which fraud grins. There is no courage to uphold the convictions. Frankness has disappeared and deceit forms the slippery plan on which man meets man in his social and political intercourse. 'Everything for success' is the motto, and the noble face of the earth is desecrated with the blood of the contending beasts. . . . Such are the conditions under which we civilized men live, conditions which breed all sorts of moral and material torture, alas! And all sorts of moral and material degradation. At the correction of all these unwholesome influences and the anarchist doctrines aim, and a man who sustains these doctrines of brotherhood and love can never be called dangerous by any sensible, decent person.

Mr. Daugherty agrees on my being sick, but he thinks that I can be taken care of in my sickness in prison as well as it could be done on the outside. Environment is all-important in the treatment of diseases, and no one would ever imagine that

whose natural development has been impeded either by an organic defect or by the evil social conditions which society itself creates for millions of people. But these superior faculties of the mind and heart cannot be exercised by a person deprived of his liberty, if he never has choice of action. The physicians' prison, the insane asylum, would be much worse than our present jails. Human fraternity and liberty are the only correctives to apply to those diseases of the human organism which lead to so-called crime.

Of course in every society, no matter how well organized, people will be found with easily aroused passions, who may, from time to time, commit anti-social deeds. But what is necessary to prevent this is to give their passions a healthy direction, another outlet.

Today we live too isolated. Private property has led us to an egoistic individualism in all our mutual relations. We know one another only slightly; our points of contact are too rare. But we have seen in history examples of a communal life which is more intimately bound together,—the "composite family" in China, the agrarian communes, for example. These people really know one another. By force of circumstances they must aid one another materially and morally.

Family life, based on the original community, has disappeared. A new family, based on community of aspirations, will take its place. In this family people will be obliged to know one another, to aid one another and to lean on one another for moral support on every occasion. And this mutual prop will prevent the great number of anti-social acts which we see today.

It will be said, however, there will always remain some people, the sick, if you wish to call them that, who constitute a danger to society. Will it not be necessary somehow to rid ourselves of them, or at least prevent their harming others?

No society, no matter how little intelligent, will need such an absurd solution, and this is why. Formerly the insane were looked upon as possessed by demons and were treated accordingly. They were kept in chains in places like stables, riveted to the walls like wild beasts. But along came Pinel, a man of the Great Revolution, who dared to remove their chains and tried treating them as brothers. "You will be devoured by them," cried the keepers. But Pinel dared. Those who were believed to be wild beasts gathered around Pinel and proved by their attitude that he was right in believing in the better side of human nature even when the intelligence is clouded by disease. Then the cause was won. They stopped chaining the insane.

Then the peasants of the little Belgian village, Gheel, found something better. They said: "Send us your insane. We will give them absolute freedom." They adopted them into their families, they gave them places at their tables, chance alongside them to cultivate their fields and a place among their young people at their country balls. "Eat, drink, and dance with us. Work, run about the fields, and be free." That was the system, that was all the science the Belgian peasant had. (I am speaking of the early days. Today the treatment of the insane at Gheel has become a profession and where it is a profession for profit, what significance can there be in it?) And liberty worked a miracle. The insane became cured. Even those who had incurable, organic lesions became sweet, tractable members of the family like the rest. The diseased mind would always work in an abnormal fashion but the heart was in the right place. They cried that it was a miracle. The cures were attributed to a saint and a virgin. But this virgin was liberty and the saint was work in the fields and fraternal treatment.

At one of the extremes of the immense "space between mental disease and crime" of which Maudsley speaks, liberty and fraternal treatment have worked their miracle. They will do the same at the other extreme.

## TO SUM UP

The prison does not prevent anti-social acts from taking place. It increases their numbers. It does not improve those who enter its walls. However it is reformed it will always remain a place of restraint, an artificial environment, like a monastery, which will make the prisoner less and less fit for life in the community. It does not achieve its end. It degrades society. It must disappear. It is a survival of barbarism mixed with Jesuitical philanthropy.

The first duty of the revolution will be to abolish prisons,—those monuments of human hypocrisy and cowardice. Anti-social acts need not be feared in a society of equals, in the midst of a free people, all of whom have acquired a healthy education and the habit of mutually aiding one another. The greater number of these acts will no longer have any *raison d'être*. The others will be nipped in the bud.

As for those individuals with evil tendencies whom existing society will pass on to us after the revolution, it will be our task to prevent their exercising these tendencies. This is already accomplished quite efficiently by the solidarity of all the members of the community against such aggressors. If we do not succeed in all cases, the only practical corrective still will be fraternal treatment and moral support.

This is not Utopia. It is already done by isolated individuals and it will become the general practice. And such means will be far more powerful to protect society from anti-social acts than the existing system of punishment which is an ever-fertile source of new crimes.

the reason of their actions without a warrant, as they had done on Manuel Sarabia on June of the same year. Sarabia was one of my associates. Without a warrant he was arrested at Douglas, Ariz., by American authorities, and in the dead of night delivered to Mexican rurales, who took him to the Mexican side. The whole Douglas population arose against such a crime, and the unrest which it produced was so intense that Sarabia was sent back to the United States three or four days later, where he was immediately released. We avoided being kidnaped into Mexico by voicing in the street the intentions of our captors. A big crowd gathered, and it was necessary for our abductors to take us to the police station, and to rapidly manufacture a charge against us. Our lawyer, Job Harriman, got an affidavit, which I think was sent to the Department of Justice, wherein it is alleged that one Furlong, head of a St. Louis detective's agency, confessed that he was in the employment of the Mexican Government and paid by it, and that it was his purpose to kidnap us across the Mexican border.

Charge after charge was preferred against us, ranging in importance from resisting an officer to robbery and murder. All these charges were successfully fought by Harriman, but in the meantime our persecutors were forging documents, training witnesses and so forth, until at length they finally charged us with having broken the neutrality laws by giving material assistance to patriots to rise in arms against Porfirio Diaz. The forged documents and trained witnesses were examined by the United States Commissioner at Los Angeles, and as a result we were, after more than 20 months' incarceration in the county jail, sent to Tombstone, Ariz., to be tried. The mere reading of the depositions made by the government witnesses before the United States Commissioner at Los Angeles, and then before the judge of our trial at Tombstone, shows that they committed perjury in either place, or in both. Experts for the defense proved that the exhibited documents were gross forgeries. We were, however, sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment, which we served in Yuma and Florence, Ariz., being released on August 1, 1910, after three years spent behind prison bars.

Regeneración appeared again in September of the same year, this time in Los Angeles, Cal. On June, 1911, I was arrested with my brother, Enrique, Librado Rivera, and Anselmo L. Figueroa, charged with having violated the neutrality laws by sending men, arms and ammunition to those fighting in Mexico against that form of chattel slavery known as peonage, which has been the curse of four-fifths of the Mexican population, as everybody knows. Jack Mosby, one of the prospected witnesses for the prosecution, said on the stand that the United States District Attorney had promised him all kinds of benefits if he perjured against us. Fake testimony was introduced by the prosecution, as proven by affidavits sworn by its witnesses after the trial was over, affidavits which must be on file in the Department of Justice, as they were sent there in 1912. In June, 1912, after a year of fighting the case, we were sent to McNeil Island to serve the 23 months' imprisonment to which we were condemned, having been released on January 19, 1914. Figueroa died shortly afterward as a result of his imprisonment.

On February 18, 1917, I was arrested with my brother Enrique, for having published in Regeneración articles against the treachery committed by Carranza, then President of Mexico, against the workers, and for having written that the Mexicans who at the time were being assassinated by Texas rangers deserved justice rather than bullets. I got a sentence of one year and one day, for I was expected to live only a few more months, having been taken from a hospital bed to be tried. Enrique got three years. We appealed and finally succeeded in getting bond, under which we were released pending the appeal.

On the 21st of March, 1918, I was arrested with Rivera for having published





Enrique was made a prisoner and jailed, and finally condemned to pay a fine for disturbing the peace. Emboldened by the protection he enjoyed, the ruffian again forced his entrance into my house. This time I telephoned the police; the man was arrested, and I was summoned to appear in court the following day early in the morning. When I arrived at the police court the man had already been released.... Being my life was so lightly regarded by those who claim to have been empowered with authority to safeguard human interests and life, I decided to move southward, and in February, 1905, *Regeneración* resumed publication at St. Louis, Mo. In October, same year, trouble broke loose against me. A Mexican Government official, by the name of Manuel Esperon y de la Flor, who maintained the worst type of slavery in the district under his command, for he used to kill men, women and children as feudal lords used to do, was chosen by Diaz to come and file against me a complaint for what he deems to be a slanderous article which had been printed in *Regeneración*, and dealing with the despotism he displayed on the unfortunate inhabitants of the district under his control. A charge of criminal libel was preferred and I was thrown into jail with my brother, Enrique, and Juan Sarabia. Everything in the newspaper office was sequestered—printing plant, typewriter machines, books, furniture and so on—and sold before a trial had taken place. A detail that illustrates the connivance between the Mexican and American authorities to persecute one, may be seen in the fact that the postmaster at St. Louis called me to his office with the apparent purpose of getting from me some information as to the financial status of the newspaper, but in reality to let a Pinkerton detective see me, that he might identify me later. The detective was already in the postmaster's office when I arrived there in compliance to his summons. This same detective led the officers who arrested me. After months of languishing in a cell, I got released on bail, to find that the second-class privilege of *Regeneración* had been canceled by the Postmaster General on the flimsy pretext that more than half of the regular issues of the newspaper circulated in Mexico, and that extradition papers were being prepared in Mexico to ask my delivery to the Mexican authorities. I paid my bondsman the amount of my bail, and on March, 1905, I took refuge in Canada, for I was certain that death awaited me in Mexico. At that time, the mere asking by Diaz for a man he wanted was enough to spirit a man across the line to be shot. While in Toronto, Ontario, *Regeneración* was being published in St. Louis. The Diaz agents found at least my whereabouts. I was informed of their intentions and evaded arrest by moving to Montreal, Quebec. Few hours after my having left Toronto, the police called at my abandoned domicile. I ignore until today how could Diaz throw the Canadian authorities against me.

While in Montreal, my Mexican Comrades in Mexico were planning an uprising to overthrow the savage despotism of Porfirio Diaz. I secretly moved to the Mexican frontier on September, 1906, to participate in the generous movement. My presence in El Paso, Texas, though kept strictly unknown, was discovered by American and Mexican sleuths, who on the 20th of October, same year, assaulted the room where I had to confer with some of my Comrades. Antonio I. Villarreal, now Minister of Agriculture in Obregon's cabinet, and Juan Sarabia, were arrested. I escaped. A price was put on my head. A \$25,000 reward was offered for my capture, and hundreds of thousands of leaflets bearing my picture and a description of my personal features were circulated throughout the Southwest, and fixed in post offices and conspicuous places with the tempting reward. I succeeded, however, in evading arrest until August 23, 1907, when, with Librado Rivera and Antonio I. Villarreal, I was made prisoner in Los Angeles, Cal., without the formality of a warrant.

The intention of the persecutors was to send us across the border, this being

## When We Stand on Equal Footing

Lucy Parsons

WE JUDGE FROM EXPERIENCE THAT MAN IS A GREGARIOUS ANIMAL, AND INSTINCTIVELY affiliates with his kind co-operates, unites in groups, works to better advantage, combined with his fellow men than when alone. This would point to the formation of co-operative communities, of which our present trades-unions are embryonic patterns. Each branch of industry will no doubt have its own organization, regulations, leaders, etc.; it will institute methods of direct communications with every member of that industrial branch in the world, and establish equitable relations with all other branches. There would probably be conventions of industry which delegates would attend, and where they would transact such business as was necessary, adjourn and from that moment be delegates no longer, but simply members of a group. To remain permanent members of a continuous congress would be to establish a power that is certain soon or later to be abused.

No great, central power, like a congress consisting of men who know nothing of their constituents' trades, interests, rights or duties, would be over the various organizations or groups; nor would they employ sheriffs, policemen, courts or jailers to enforce the conclusions arrived at while in session. The members of groups might profit by the knowledge gained through mutual interchange of thought afforded by conventions if they choose, but they will not be compelled to do so by any outside force.

Vested rights, privileges, charters, title deeds, upheld by all the paraphernalia of government—the visible symbol of power—such as prison, scaffold and armies will have no existence. There can be no privileges bought or sold, and the transaction kept sacred at the point of the bayonet. Every man will stand on an equal footing with his brother in the race of life, and neither chains of economic thralldom nor metal drags of superstition shall handicap the one to the advantage of the other.

From *The Principles of Anarchism: A Lecture* (Chicago: L.R. Parsons, 1890?). Lucy Parsons (1853-1942) was an American anarchist of African, Native American, and Mexican descent and widow of Albert Parsons. After the execution of her husband, Parsons continued her political activities from Chicago, Illinois. She edited the anarchist newspaper *Freedom* (1890-1892) and *The Liberator* (1905-1905). In 1905 she attended the founding convention of the Industrial Workers of the World. She was also active in many labor defense committees.

IN 1849 FYODOR DOSTOYEVSKY WROTE ON THE WALL OF HIS PRISON CELL THE FOLLOWING STORY of *The Priest and the Devil*:

"'Hello, you little fat father!' the devil said to the priest. 'What made you lie so to those poor, misled people? What tortures of hell did you depict? Don't you know they are already suffering the tortures of hell in their earthly lives? Don't you know that you and the authorities of the State are my representatives on earth? It is you that make them suffer the pains of hell with which you threaten them. Don't you know this? Well, then, come with me!'

"The devil grabbed the priest by the collar, lifted him high in the air, and carried him to a factory, to an iron foundry. He saw the workmen there running and hurrying to and fro, and toiling in the scorching heat. Very soon the thick, heavy air and the heat are too much for the priest. With tears in his eyes, he pleads with the devil: 'Let me go! Let me leave this hell!'

"'Oh, my dear friend, I must show you many more places.' The devil gets hold of him again and drags him off to a farm. There he sees workmen threshing the grain. The dust and heat are insufferable. The overseer carries a knout, and unmercifully beats anyone who falls to the ground overcome by hard toil or hunger.

"Next the priest is taken to the huts where these same workers live with their families—dirty, cold, smoky, ill-smelling holes. The devil grins. He points out the poverty and hardships which are at home here.

"'Well, isn't this enough?' he asks. And it seems as if even he, the devil, pities the people. The pious servant of God can hardly bear it. With uplifted hands he begs: 'Let me go away from here. Yes, yes! This is hell on earth!'

"'Well, then, you see. And you still promise them another hell. You torment them, torture them to death mentally when they are already all but dead physically! Come on! I will show you one more hell—one more, the very worst.'

"He took him to a prison and showed him a dungeon, with its foul air and the many human forms, robbed of all health and energy, lying on the floor, covered with vermin that were devouring their poor, naked, emaciated bodies.

"'Take off your silken clothes,' said the devil to the priest, 'put on your ankles heavy chains such as these unfortunates wear; lie down on the cold and filthy floor—and then talk to them about a hell that still awaits them!'

"'No, no!' answered the priest, 'I cannot think of anything more dreadful than this. I entreat you, let me go away from here!'

"'Yes, this is hell. There can be no worse hell than this. Did you not know it? Did you not know that these men and women whom you are frightening with the picture of a hell hereafter—did you not know that they are in hell right here, before they die?'

From *Anarchism and Other Essays* (New York: Mother Earth Publishing Association, 1911). Emma Goldman (1869-1940) was a Russian-born anarchist-communist. Goldman immigrated to the US in 1885. In 1893 she was convicted of rioting and spent ten months at Blackwell's Island (New York, US). She was arrested frequently for her political activities and was often prevented from giving public speeches. She also served nineteen months at Jefferson City State Penitentiary in Missouri during World War I for opposing conscription and the war. In 1919 she was deported from the US to Russia. Goldman left Russia in 1921 after parting with the Bolsheviks. In 1936 she traveled to Spain to support the CNT after the outbreak of the Civil War. *Anarchism and Other Essays* (1911), *Living My Life* (New York, 1931) and *Emma Goldman: A Documentary History of the American Years* (2003) are still in print.

MY DEAR MR. WEINBERGER:

Your letter of the 25th of last April and a copy of Mr. Daugherty's letter to you received. You want me to furnish you with data regarding the sentence which ended on January 19, 1914; but in order for you to judge whether I have been the victim of a conspiracy bent on keeping in bondage the Mexican peon, or not, I am going to furnish you with an abstract of the persecution I have suffered ever since I took refuge in this country. I must, before going any further, beg your pardon for my keeping your attention from other business undoubtedly more important than mine.

After years, many years, of an unequal struggle in the press and the political clubs of the City of Mexico against the cruel despotism of Porfirio Díaz; after having suffered repeated incarcerations for my political beliefs ever since I was 17 years old, and having almost miraculously escaped death at the hands of hired assassins on several occasions in that dark period of the Mexican history when the practice of the government was to silence truth's voice with the firing squad, or the dagger, or the poison; after the judiciary, by judicial decree of June 30, 1903, forbade me not only to write for my own journals but to contribute for theirs as well, having my printing plants successively sequestered by the government and my life being in peril. I decided to come to this country, which I knew to be the land of the free and the home of the brave, to resume my work of enlightenment of the Mexican masses.

The 11th day of January, 1904, saw me set my foot on this land, almost penniless, for all that I had possessed had been sequestered by the Mexican Government, but rich in illusion and hopes of social and political justice. Regeneración made its reappearance on American soil in November, 1904. On the following December, a ruffian sent by Díaz entered my domicile, and would have stabbed me in the back had it not been for the quick intervention of my brother, Enrique, who happened to be near by. Enrique threw the ruffian out of the house, and showing that this brutal assault on my person had been prepared by certain authorities, and the possible failure of the ruffian's attempt foreseen, at the falling of the latter on the sidewalk a swarm of agents of the public peace invaded the premises.



Ricardo Flores Magón by Carlos Cortez.

To Harry Weinberger, 9 May 1921. Written from Leavenworth Federal Prison (Kansas). Ricardo Flores Magón (1873-1922) was a Mexican anarchist and a founder of the Partido Liberal Mexicano. He abandoned law school to organize against the rule of Porfirio Díaz. He founded, in 1900, with his brother Jesus, the liberal newspaper *Regeneración* (1900). Persecution by the regime forced him into exile in the United States in 1904. He was arrested frequently for his political work, and was eventually sentenced to twenty-one years during World War I for works published in *Regeneración*, by then an anarchist newspaper. He died in 1922 in Leavenworth and was returned to Mexico for burial. A collection of his writings *Dreams of Freedom: Volume One* (also available in Spanish) and *Tierra y Libertad: Land and Liberty* (Spanish and English) are distributed by AK Press.

## Victims of World-Wide Madness

Rudolf Rocker

ON MAY 26TH THE ENGLISH PRESS CARRIED A LONG REPORT OF A SPEECH BY LORD Newton in Parliament about the terrible conditions of the English civilian prisoners of war in the Camp at Ruhleben, near Berlin; it alarmed the British public. I never doubted that the Germans treated their British prisoners badly. But the whole system of internment of civilians for no other reason than their birth in an enemy country was wrong. Lord Newton said that a number of British civilian prisoners who had been released in exchange for German civilian prisoners in England had lost their reason. We had such cases too. It would be futile to record every one of them. Just before Lord Newton spoke, one of them, a man named Machner, had in a fit of madness cut his throat with a razor. We had dozens of people in the Camp who went mad and were put in lunatic asylums. There was Kautimann, a ship's captain in Battalion A, who came to us a perfectly normal man. After a few months he started talking nonsense. He was quite insane, but the doctor refused to send him to a hospital. When he began to masturbate in public they finally put him in a lunatic asylum, and he died there. I remember Bonsel, an intelligent working man who had been a Social Democrat for years. He came to my lectures regularly, and we often discussed various subjects. Later, he became subject to fits of depression. One evening he came to me in a state of great agitation to tell me that his wife was having an affair with an English officer in our Camp. When his wife came to visit him a few days later I made it my business to see her. She was such a faded poverty-stricken little thing, the most unlikely person to indulge in illicit love affairs. He reproached her because she came late. "It isn't my fault," she sobbed. "The fare is fourpence to come here. And I can't afford it. I have to walk part of the way." I was touched by the poor woman's plight, and tried to reason with Bonsel. In vain. His hallucinations became wilder. One morning Bonsel was missing at the count. We found him crouching in a corner. The next day he was raving mad. He was sent to a lunatic asylum and he died there.

I am no psychologist, but it seems to me that there is something quite wrong about the whole idea of imprisoning people who have done nothing themselves to deserve such punishment. After all, a criminal expects to be caught some time, and when he is sentenced he knows more or less when he will go free. We had no idea how long the war would last, and keep us imprisoned. The conditions of our internment were such that we were never free from anxiety, about ourselves, and about our families. It was all mad. But half the world had gone mad then, and we were only some of the victims of this world-wide madness.

From *The London Years* (London: Robert Anson & Co., 1956). Rudolf Rocker (1873-1958) was a German anarcho-synicalist, active member in Freie Vereinigung Deutscher Gewerkschaften (Free Association of German Trade Unions), and a co-founder of the Freie Arbeiter Union Deutschlands (Free Workers Union of Germany). Rocker began contributing to the anarchist press in 1892, and in the same year left Germany to avoid police harassment. In 1895 he eventually settled in London where he became active in the Jewish anarchist movement. He was interned during World War I in England as an enemy alien. In 1919 he returned to Germany but fled to the US in 1923 after the rise of the Nazi regime. He spent the last twenty years of his life in the Mohagan colony in New York, agitating against the evils of fascism and communism. *Anarcho-Synicalism, Nationalism and Culture* and *The Methods of Anarcho-Synicalism* are available from AK Press.

## Prisons: A Social Crime and Failure

This was written fifty years ago in dark Russia, on the wall of one of the most horrible prisons. Yet who can deny that the same applies with equal force to the present time, even to American prisons?

With all our boasted reforms, our great social changes, and our far-reaching discoveries, human beings continue to be sent to the worst of hells, wherein they are outraged, degraded, and tortured, that society may be "protected" from the phantoms of its own making.

Prison, a social protection? What monstrous mind ever conceived such an idea? Just as well say that health can be promoted by a widespread contagion.

After eighteen months of horror in an English prison, Oscar Wilde gave to the world his great masterpiece, *The Ballad of Reading Goal*:

*The vilest deeds, like poison weeds,  
Bloom well in prison air;  
It is only what is good in Man  
That wastes and withers there.  
Pale Anguish keeps the heavy gate,  
And the Warden is Despair.*

Society goes on perpetuating this poisonous air, not realizing that out of it can come naught but the most poisonous results.

We are spending at the present \$3,500,000 per day, \$1,000,095,000 per year, to maintain prison institutions, and that in a democratic country,—a sum almost as large as the combined output of wheat, valued at \$750,000,000, and the output of coal, valued at \$350,000,000. Professor Bushnell of Washington, D.C., estimates the cost of prisons at \$6,000,000,000 annually, and Dr. G. Frank Lydston, an eminent American writer on crime, gives \$5,000,000,000 annually as a reasonable figure. Such unheard-of expenditure for the purpose of maintaining vast armies of human beings caged up like wild beasts!<sup>1</sup>

Yet crimes are on the increase. Thus we learn that in America there are four and a half times as many crimes to every million population today as there were twenty years ago.

The most horrible aspect is that our national crime is murder, not robbery, embezzlement, or rape, as in the South. London is five times as large as Chicago, yet there are one hundred and eighteen murders annually in the latter city, while only twenty in London. Nor is Chicago the leading city in crime, since it is only seventh on the list, which is headed by four Southern cities, and San Francisco and Los Angeles. In view of such a terrible condition of affairs, it seems ridiculous to prate of the protection society derives from its prisons.

The average mind is slow in grasping a truth, but when the most thoroughly organized, centralized institution, maintained at an excessive national expense, has proven a complete social failure, the dullest must begin to question its right to exist. The time is past when we can be content with our social fabric merely because it is "ordained by divine right," or by the majesty of the law.

The widespread prison investigations, agitation, and education during the last few years are conclusive proof that men are learning to dig deep into the very bottom of society, down to the causes of the terrible discrepancy between social and individual life.

Why, then, are prisons a social crime and a failure? To answer this vital question it behooves us to seek the nature and cause of crimes, the methods employed in

<sup>1</sup> *Crime and Criminals*, W.C. Owen.

coping with them, and the effects these methods produce in ridding society of the curse and horror of crimes.

First, as to the *nature* of crime:

Havelock Ellis divides crime into four phases, the political, the passionate, the insane, and the occasional. He says that the political criminal is the victim of an attempt of a more or less despotic government to preserve its own stability. He is not necessarily guilty of an unsocial offense; he simply tries to overturn a certain political order which may itself be anti-social. This truth is recognized all over the world, except in America where the foolish notion still prevails that in a Democracy there is no place for political criminals. Yet John Brown was a political criminal; so were the Chicago Anarchists; so is every striker. Consequently, says Havelock Ellis, the political criminal of our time or place may be the hero, martyr, saint of another age. Lombroso calls the political criminal the true precursor of the progressive movement of humanity.

"The criminal by passion is usually a man of wholesome birth and honest life, who under the stress of some great, unmerited wrong has wrought justice for himself."<sup>2</sup>

Mr. Hugh C. Weir, in *The Menace of the Police*, cites the case of Jim Flaherty, a criminal by passion, who, instead of being saved by society, is turned into a drunkard and a recidivist, with a ruined and poverty-stricken family as the result.

A more pathetic type is Archie, the victim in Brand Whitlock's novel, *The Turn of the Balance*, the greatest American exposé of crime in the making. Archie, even more than Flaherty, was driven to crime and death by the cruel inhumanity of his surroundings, and by the unscrupulous bounding of the machinery of the law. Archie and Flaherty are but the types of many thousands, demonstrating how the legal aspects of crime, and the methods of dealing with it, help to create the disease which is undermining our entire social life.

"The insane criminal really can no more be considered a criminal than a child, since he is mentally in the same condition as an infant or an animal."<sup>3</sup>

The law already recognizes that, but only in rare cases of a very flagrant nature, or when the culprit's wealth permits the luxury of criminal insanity. It has become quite fashionable to be the victim of paranoia. But on the whole the "sovereignty of justice" still continues to punish criminally insane with the whole severity of its power. Thus Mr. Ellis quotes from Dr. Richter's statistics showing that in Germany one hundred and six madmen, out of one hundred and forty-four criminally insane, were condemned to severe punishment.

The occasional criminal "represents by far the largest class of our prison population, hence is the greatest menace to social well-being." What is the cause that compels a vast army of the human family to take to crime, to prefer the hideous life within prison walls to the life outside? Certainly that cause must be an iron master, who leaves its victims no avenue of escape, for the most depraved human being loves liberty.

This terrific force is conditioned in our cruel social and economic arrangement. I do not mean to deny the biologic, physiologic, or psychologic factors in creating crime; but there is hardly an advanced criminologist who will not concede that the social and economic influences are the most relentless, the most poisonous germs of crime. Granted even that there are innate criminal tendencies, it is none the less true that these tendencies find rich nutrition in our social environment.

There is close relation, says Havelock Ellis, between crimes against the person and the price of alcohol, between crimes against property and the price of wheat,

Jefferson Prison, the very morning after a suffocating journey, I tasted the blessings of democracy making coats, with this difference: my lucrative wage of thirty-two years ago was reduced to three meals a day and a cell. Progress moves imperceptibly indeed.

On the whole, however, there are many improvements in Jefferson Prison. I do not wish our friends to understand that I have any personal complaint of the treatment accorded me. I quote from a letter I had written to the Warden in the institution, and which, by the way, he did not see fit to answer:

I understand that contract labor has been abolished in Missouri. Why, then, the necessity of imposing the task system upon prisoners? To compel women to make eighteen dozen suspenders or fifty coats a day, only tends to undermine their health. I have watched them at work and I can assure you they run along half-way smoothly in the morning, but by the afternoon they are so exhausted that they simply can not complete their task. To punish them for such a thing by keeping them on bread and water seems barbarous. Besides, it is futile, since the punishment leaves their physical condition below par and disables them from doing their task the following day.

It seems to me that if the women were made to feel an interest in the work, they would turn out the required quantity and be in better spirits than they are now. No one drove me, and yet I did my work and even enjoyed it, knowing as I did that no parasite would wear the coats I was making. After all, it can not be the purpose of prisons to so unfit the inmates as to make them hardened and brutalized and return them to the world with deeper resentment and hatred for society. In other words, the old system of punishment has been proven a complete failure. More and more, the best minds are realizing that a humane method accomplishes greater results.

I have no personal complaints to make. In fact, I think that many things you have in Jefferson Prison are an improvement over other prisons. For instance, the buying of food once a week, ice water and the recreation. But there are many things which need to be remedied, and which I desire to place before you for consideration.

As I said before, Jefferson has no terrors for me. In fact, in our war-drunk age, with the patriotic frothing of the press, the brutality of the vigilantes and the general confusion of our life, Jefferson may yet prove a preferable retreat.

JEFFERSON HAS NO TERROR FOR ME, ESPECIALLY NOW THAT I AM SOMEWHAT ACQUAINTED with its regime. The attacks directed against the horrors of American prisons have not been in vain. A few changes have taken place everywhere, and Jefferson Prison has not escaped them. But there are still many evils which need to be remedied.

First of all, there is the reception accorded the new comer. Instead of encouragement and sympathy, to which the worst criminal should be entitled, he is met with the kindly query, "Got a disease?" He is then warned that the prison has severe punishment, and that he had better make up his mind to obey the rules without a murmur.

I was curious to know whether any other method had ever been tried,—that of kindness, for instance. But I met with a blank look. The idea of kindness to convicts! "Why do they want to get into trouble! If they must do wrong, they have only themselves to blame." Naturally, people who have exercised discipline for years become hardened; their brains and hearts become solidified and do not permit of a new thought or emotion. How can they understand the black despair and bitter hatred of the offender against the world which first drives him to crime, and then sends him to a living grave.

Prison authorities have it in their power to relieve, to some extent, the bitter agony and resentment accumulated in the soul of the prisoner by the long wait for the trial, the cruel atmosphere of the court-room, the final shock of conviction and sentence. They could, if they would, help the convict over the awful years confronting him or her. They might send him back regenerated to society; but somehow it is not given to them to reach the soul of those whom misfortune and social indifference have placed in their hands.

After a weary trip of forty hours, cooped up in a compartment with a deputy marshal and his wife, I was locked in a cell and left to myself for several hours, the thought never occurring to those who received me whether I had need of food or drink. It almost seemed as though I had been forgotten; but finally the matron arrived and I was made to go through the ordinary procedure of all the other victims who must leave their identity behind and become mere automatons when prison doors close upon them.

Then the silly discipline of absolute silence, long abolished in many penal institutions. Twenty-four years ago, when I was sent to Blackwell's Island, I was struck by this utterly foolish, unnecessarily cruel method of compelling human beings to move about like shadows in grave-like silence. Even the exchange of thoughts in a whisper was severely punished. The fact that this regime still exists shows how slowly progress moves. Thus from six o'clock in the morning until four thirty in the afternoon, but for the loud noise of the machines in the shops and the hard voices of keepers, the prisoners pass in silence. Only during the hour of recreation are the pent-up feelings and thoughts permitted to break loose.

Friedrich Nietzsche was right when he spoke of life as the eternal recurrence. Life indeed is nothing else. Thirty-two years ago, when I came to America with exultation in my heart about liberty and opportunity, I was given a taste of both in a large clothing factory, making coats ten hours a day at \$2.50 per week. In

He quotes Quetelet and Lacassagne, the former looking upon society as the preparer of crime, and the criminals as instruments that execute them. The latter finds that "the social environment is the cultivation medium of criminality; that the criminal is the microbe, an element which only becomes important when it finds the medium which causes it to ferment; *every society has the criminals it deserves.*"<sup>4</sup>

The most "prosperous" industrial period makes it impossible for the worker to earn enough to keep up health and vigor. And as prosperity is, at best, an imaginary condition, thousands of people are constantly added to the host of the unemployed. From East to West, from South to North, this vast army tramps in search of work or food, and all they find is the workhouse or the slums. Those who have a spark of self-respect left, prefer open defiance, prefer crime to the emaciated, degraded position of poverty.

Edward Carpenter estimates that five-sixths of indictable crimes consist in some violation of property rights; but that is too low a figure. A thorough investigation would prove that nine crimes out of ten could be traced, directly or indirectly, to our economic and social iniquities, to our system of remorseless exploitation and robbery. There is no criminal so stupid but recognizes this terrible fact, though he may not be able to account for it.

A collection of criminal philosophy, which Havelock Ellis, Lombroso, and other eminent men have compiled, shows that the criminal feels only too keenly that it is society that drives him to crime. A Milanese thief said to Lombroso: "I do not rob, I merely take from the rich their superfluities; besides, do not advocates and merchants rob?" A murderer wrote: "Knowing that three-fourths of the social virtues are cowardly vices, I thought an open assault on a rich man would be less ignoble than the cautious combination of fraud." Another wrote: "I am imprisoned for stealing a half dozen eggs. Ministers who rob millions are honored. Poor Italy!" An educated convict said to Mr. Davitt: "The laws of society are framed for the purpose of securing the wealth of the world to power and calculation, thereby depriving the larger portion of mankind of its rights and chances. Why should they punish me for taking by somewhat similar means from those who have taken more than they had a right to?" The same man added: "Religion robs the soul of its independence; patriotism is the stupid worship of the world for which the well-being and the peace of the inhabitants were sacrificed by those who profit by it, while the laws of the land, in restraining natural desires, were waging war on the manifest spirit of the law of our beings. Compared with this," he concluded, "thieving is an honorable pursuit."<sup>5</sup>

Verily, there is greater truth in this philosophy than in all the law-and-moral books of society.

The economic, political, moral, and physical factors being the microbes of crime, how does society meet the situation?

The methods of coping with crime have no doubt undergone several changes, but mainly in a theoretic sense. In practice, society has retained the primitive motive in dealing with the offender; that is, revenge. It has also adopted the theologic idea; namely, punishment; while the legal and "civilized" methods consist of deterrence or terror, and reform. We shall presently see that all four modes have failed utterly, and that we are today no nearer a solution than in the dark ages.

The natural impulse of the primitive man to strike back, to avenge a wrong, is out of date. Instead, the civilized man, stripped of courage and daring, has delegated to an organized machinery the duty of avenging his wrongs, in the foolish belief that the State is justified in doing what he no longer has the manhood

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

or consistency to do. The "majesty of the law" is a reasoning thing; it would not stoop to primitive instincts. Its mission is of a "higher" nature. True, it is still steeped in the theologic muddle, which proclaims punishment as a means of purification, or the vicarious atonement of sin. But legally and socially the statute exercises punishment, not merely as an infliction of pain upon the offender, but also for its terrifying effect upon others.

What is the real basis of punishment, however? The notion of a free will, the idea that man is at all times a free agent for good or evil; if he chooses the latter, he must be made to pay the price. Although this theory has long been exploded, and thrown upon the dustheap, it continues to be applied daily by the entire machinery of government, turning it into the most cruel and brutal tormentor of human life. The only reason for its continuance is the still more cruel notion that the greater the terror punishment spreads, the more certain its preventative effect.

Society is using the most drastic methods in dealing with the social offender. Why do they not deter? Although in America a man is supposed to be considered innocent until proven guilty, the instruments of law, the police, carry on a reign of terror, making indiscriminate arrests, beating, clubbing, bullying people, using the barbarous method of the "third degree," subjecting their unfortunate victims to the foul air of the station house, and the still fouler language of its guardians. Yet crimes are rapidly multiplying, and society is paying the price. On the other hand, it is an open secret that when the unfortunate citizen has been given the full "mercy" of the law, and for the sake of safety is hidden in the worst of hells, his real Calvary begins. Robbed of his rights as a human being, degraded to a mere automaton without will or feeling, dependent entirely upon the mercy of brutal keepers, he daily goes through a process of dehumanization, compared with which savage revenge was mere child's play.

There is not a single penal institution or reformatory in the United States where men are not tortured "to be made good," by means of the black-jack, the club, the strait-jacket, the water-cure, the "humming bird" (an electrical contrivance run along the human body), the solitary, the bull-ring, and starvation diet. In these institutions his will is broken, his soul degraded, his spirit subdued by the deadly monotony and routine of prison life. In Ohio, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Missouri, and in the South, these horrors have become so flagrant as to reach the outside world, while in most other prisons the same Christian methods still prevail. But prison walls rarely allow the agonized shrieks of the victims to escape—prison walls are thick, they dull the sound. Society might with greater immunity abolish all prisons at once, than to hope for protection from these twentieth-century chambers of horrors.

Year after year the gates of prison hells return to the world an emaciated, deformed, will-less, ship-wrecked crew of humanity, with the Cain mark on their foreheads, their hopes crushed, all their natural inclinations thwarted. With nothing but hunger and inhumanity to greet them, these victims soon sink back into crime as the only possibility of existence. It is not at all an unusual thing to find men and women who have spent half their lives—nay, almost their entire existence—in prison. I know a woman on Blackwell's Island, who had been in and out thirty-eight times; and through a friend I learn that a young boy of seventeen, whom he had nursed and cared for in the Pittsburg penitentiary, had never known the meaning of liberty. From the reformatory to the penitentiary had been the path of this boy's life, until, broken in body, he died a victim of social revenge. These personal experiences are substantiated by extensive data giving overwhelming proof of the utter futility of prisons as a means of deterrence or reform.

Well-meaning persons are now working for a new departure in the prison

Still day follows night, and life is in the making, but I have no part in the pain and travail. Like a spark from the glowing furnace, flashing through the gloom, and swallowed in the darkness, I have been cast upon the shores of the forgotten. No sound reaches me from the island prison where beats the fervent heart of the Girl, no ray of hope falls across the bars of desolation. But on the threshold of Nirvana life recoils; in the very bowels of torment it cries out to be! Persecution feeds the fires of defiance, and nerves my resolution. Were I an ordinary prisoner, I should not care to suffer all these agonies. To what purpose, with my impossible sentence? But my Anarchist ideals and traditions rise in revolt against the vampire gloating over its prey. No, I shall not disgrace the Cause, I shall not grieve my comrades by weak surrender! I will fight and struggle, and not be daunted by threat or torture.

With difficulty I walk to the office for the weekly weighing. My step falters as I approach the scales, and I sway dizzily. As through a mist I see the doctor bending over me, his head pressing against my body. Somehow I reach the "basket," mildly wondering why I did not feel the cold air. Perhaps they did not take me through the yard—Is it the Block Captain's voice? "What did you say?"

"Return to your old cell. You're on full diet now."

"What for?"

"That you'll have to ask the boss. I'll tell him you want to see him."

Presently the overseer returns, informing me in a confidential manner that he has induced "his Nibs" to grant me an audience. Admitted to the inner office, I find the Warden at the desk, his face flushed with anger. "You are reported for disturbing the peace," he shouts at me.

"There is also, hm, hm, another charge against him," the Deputy interposes.

"Two charges," the Warden continues. "Disturbing the peace and making demands. How dare you demand?" he roars. "Do you know where you are?"

"I wanted to see you."

"It is not a question of what you want or don't want. Understand that clearly. You are to obey the rules implicitly."

"The rules direct you to visit—"

"Silence! What is your request?"

"I want to know why I am deprived of dinner."

"It is not, hm, for you to know. It is enough, hm, hm, that we know," the Deputy retorts.

"Mr. McPane," the Warden interposes, "I am going to speak plainly to him. From this day on," he turns to me, "you are on 'Pennsylvania diet' for four weeks. During that time no papers or books are permitted you. It will give you leisure to think over your behavior. I have investigated your conduct in the shop, and I am satisfied it was you who instigated the trouble there. You shall not have another chance to incite the men, even if you live as long as your sentence. But," he pauses an instant, then adds, threateningly, "but you may as well understand it now as later—your life is not worth the trouble you give us. Mark you well, whatever the cost, it will be at *your* expense. For the present you'll remain in solitary, where you cannot exert your pernicious influence. Officers, remove him to the 'basket.'"

#### THE "BASKET" CELL

Four weeks of "Pennsylvania diet" have reduced me almost to a skeleton. A slice of wheat bread with a cup of unsweetened black coffee is my sole meal, with twice a week dinner of vegetable soup, from which every trace of meat has been removed. Every Saturday I am conducted to the office, to be examined by the physician and weighed. The whole week I look forward to the brief respite from the terrible "basket" cell. The sight of the striped men scouring the floor, the friendly smile on a stealthily raised face as I pass through the hall, the strange blue of the sky, the sweet-scented aroma of the April morning—how quickly it is all over! But the seven deep breaths I slowly inhale on the way to the office, and the eager ten on my return, set my blood aglow with renewed life. For an instant my brain reels with the sudden rush of exquisite intoxication, and then—I am in the tomb again.

The torture of the "basket" is maddening; the constant dusk is driving me blind. Almost no light or air reaches me through the close wire netting covering the barred door. The foul odor is stifling; it grips my throat with deathly hold. The walls hem me in; daily they press closer upon me, till the cell seems to contract, and I feel crushed in the coffin of stone. From every point the whitewashed sides glare at me, unyielding, inexorable, in confident assurance of their prey.

The darkness of despondency gathers day by day; the hand of despair weighs heavier. At night the screeching of a crow across the river ominously voices the black raven keeping vigil in my heart. The windows in the hallway quake and tremble in the furious wind. Bleak and desolate wakes the day—another day, then another—

Weak and apathetic I lie on the bed. Ever further recedes the world of the living,

question,—reclamation, to restore once more to the prisoner the possibility of becoming a human being. Commendable as this is, I fear it is impossible to hope for good results from pouring good wine into a musty bottle. Nothing short of a complete reconstruction of society will deliver mankind from the cancer of crime. Still, if the dull edge of our social conscience would be sharpened, the penal institutions might be given a new coat of varnish. But the first step to be taken is the renovation of the social consciousness, which is in a rather dilapidated condition. It is sadly in need to be awakened to the fact that crime is a question of degree, that we all have the rudiments of crime in us, more or less, according to our mental, physical, and social environment; and that the individual criminal is merely a reflex of the tendencies of the aggregate.

With the social consciousness wakened, the average individual may learn to refuse the "honor" of being the bloodhound of the law. He may cease to persecute, despise, and mistrust the social offender, and give him a chance to live and breathe among his fellows. Institutions are, of course, harder to reach. They are cold, impenetrable, and cruel; still, with the social consciousness quickened, it might be possible to free the prison victims from the brutality of prison officials, guards, and keepers. Public opinion is a powerful weapon; keepers of human prey, even, are afraid of it. They may be taught a little humanity, especially if they realize that their jobs depend upon it.

But the most important step is to demand for the prisoner the right to work while in prison, with some monetary recompense that would enable him to lay aside a little for the day of his release, the beginning of a new life.

It is almost ridiculous to hope much from present society when we consider that workmen, wage-slaves themselves, object to convict labor. I shall not go into the cruelty of this objection, but merely consider the impracticability of it. To begin with, the opposition so far raised by organized labor has been directed against windmills. Prisoners have always worked; only the State has been their exploiter, even as the individual employer has been the robber of organized labor. The States have either set the convicts to work for the government, or they have farmed convict labor to private individuals. Twenty-nine of the States pursue the latter plan. The Federal government and seventeen States have discarded it, as have the leading nations of Europe, since it leads to hideous overworking and abuse of prisoners, and to endless graft.

"Rhode Island, the State dominated by Aldrich, offers perhaps the worst example. Under a five-year contract, dated July 7th, 1906, and renewable for five years more at the option of private contractors, the labor of the inmates of the Rhode Island Penitentiary and the Providence County Jail is sold to the Reliance-Sterling Mfg. Co. at the rate of a trifle less than 25 cents a day per man. This Company is really a gigantic Prison Labor Trust, for it also leases the convict labor of Connecticut, Michigan, Indiana, Nebraska, and South Dakota penitentiaries, and the reformatories of New Jersey, Indiana, Illinois, and Wisconsin, eleven establishments in all.

"The enormity of the graft under the Rhode Island contract may be estimated from the fact that this same Company pays 62 1/2 cents a day in Nebraska for the convict's labor, and that Tennessee, for example, gets \$1.10 a day for a convict's work from the Gray-Dudley Hardware Co.; Missouri gets 70 cents a day from the Star Overall Mfg. Co.; West Virginia 65 cents a day from the Kraft Mfg. Co., and Maryland 55 cents a day from Oppenheim, Oberndorf & Co., shirt manufacturers. The very difference in prices points to enormous graft. For example, the Reliance-Sterling Mfg. Co. manufactures shirts, the cost of free labor being not less than \$1.20 per dozen, while it pays Rhode Island thirty cents a dozen. Furthermore,

the State charges this Trust no rent for the use of its huge factory, charges nothing for power, heat, light, or even drainage, and exacts no taxes. What graft!<sup>6</sup>

It is estimated that more than twelve million dollars' worth of workmen's shirts and overalls is produced annually in this country by prison labor. It is a woman's industry, and the first reflection that arises is that an immense amount of free female labor is thus displaced. The second consideration is that male convicts, who should be learning trades that would give them some chance of being self-supporting after their release, are kept at this work at which they can not possibly make a dollar. This is the more serious when we consider that much of this labor is done in reformatories, which so loudly profess to be training their inmates to become useful citizens.

The third, and most important, consideration is that the enormous profits thus wrung from convict labor are a constant incentive to the contractors to exact from their unhappy victims tasks altogether beyond their strength, and to punish them cruelly when their work does not come up to the excessive demands made.

Another word on the condemnation of convicts to tasks at which they cannot hope to make a living after release. Indiana, for example, is a State that has made a great splurge over being in the front rank of modern penological improvements. Yet, according to the report rendered in 1908 by the training school of its "reformatory," 135 were engaged in the manufacture of chains, 207 in that of shirts, and 255 in the foundry—a total of 597 in three occupations. But at this so-called reformatory 59 occupations were represented by the inmates, 39 of which were connected with country pursuits. Indiana, like other States, professes to be training the inmates of her reformatory to occupations by which they will be able to make their living when released. She actually sets them to work making chains, shirts, and brooms, the latter for the benefit of the Louisville Fancy Grocery Co. Broom-making is a trade largely monopolized by the blind, shirt-making is done by women, and there is only one free chain-factory in the State, and at that a released convict can not hope to get employment. The whole thing is a cruel farce.

If, then, the States can be instrumental in robbing their helpless victims of such tremendous profits is it not high time for organized labor to stop its idle howl; and to insist on decent remuneration for the convict, even as labor organizations claim for themselves? In that way workmen would kill the germ which makes of the prisoner an enemy to the interests of labor. I have said elsewhere that thousands of convicts, incompetent and without a trade, without means of subsistence, are yearly turned back into the social fold. These men and women must live, for even an ex-convict has needs. Prison life has made them anti-social beings, and the rigidly closed doors that meet them on their release are not likely to decrease their bitterness. The inevitable result is that they form a favorable nucleus out of which scabs, black-legs, detectives, and policemen are drawn, only too willing to do the master's bidding. Thus organized labor, by its foolish opposition to work in prison, defeats its own ends. It helps to create poisonous fumes that stifle every attempt for economic betterment. If the workman wants to avoid these effects, he should insist on the right of the convict to work, he should meet him as a brother, take him into his organization, and *with his aid turn against the system which grinds them both.*

Last, but not least, is the growing realization of the barbarity and the inadequacy of the definite sentence. Those who believe in, and earnestly aim at, a change are fast coming to the conclusion that man must be given an opportunity to make

a wagon-load of bad meat. The stench permeated the yard, and several men were punished for passing uncomplimentary remarks about the food. The situation was aggravated by an additional increase of the task. The knitters and loopers were on the verge of rebellion. Twice within the month had the task been enlarged. They sent to the Warden a request for a reduction; in reply came the appalling order for a further increase. Then a score of men struck. They remained in the cells, refusing to return to the shop unless the demand for better food and less work was complied with. With the aid of informers, the Warden conducted a quiet investigation. One by one the refractory prisoners were forced to submit. By a process of elimination the authorities sifted the situation, and now it is whispered about that a decision has been reached, placing responsibility for the unique episode of a strike in the prison.

An air of mystery hangs about the guards. Repeatedly I attempt to engage them in conversation, but the least reference to the strike seals their lips. I wonder at the peculiar looks they regard me with, when unexpectedly the cause is revealed.

### III

It is Sunday noon. The rangeman pushes the dinner wagon along the tier. I stand at the door, ready to receive the meal. The overseer glances at me, then motions to the prisoner. The cart rolls past my cell.

"Officer," I call out, "you missed me."

"Smell the pot-pie, do you?"

"Where's my dinner?"

"You get none."

The odor of the steaming delicacy, so keenly looked forward to every second Sunday, reaches my nostrils and sharpens my hunger. I have eaten sparingly all week in expectation of the treat, and now— I am humiliated and enraged by being so unceremoniously deprived of the rare dinner. Angrily I rap the cup across the door; again and again I strike the tin against it, the successive falls from bar to bar producing a sharp, piercing clatter.

A guard hastens along. "Stop that damn racket," he commands. "What's the matter with you?"

"I didn't get dinner."

"Yes, you did."

"I did not."

"Well, I s'pose you don't deserve it."

As he turns to leave, my can crashes against the door—one, two, three—"What t'hell do you want, eh?"

"I want to see the Warden."

"You can't see 'im. You better keep quiet now."

"I demand to see the Warden. He is supposed to visit us every day. He hasn't been around for weeks. I must see him now."

"If you don't shut up, I'll—"

The Captain of the Block approaches. "What do you want, Berkman?"

"I want to see the Warden."

"Can't see him. It's Sunday."

"Captain," I retort, pointing to the rules on the wall of the cell, "there is an excerpt here from the statutes of Pennsylvania, directing the Warden to visit each prisoner every day—"

"Never mind now," he interrupts. "What do you want to see the Warden about?"

"I want to know why I got no dinner."

"Your name is off the list for the next four Sundays."

<sup>6</sup> Quoted from the publications of the National Committee on Prison Labor.



startles me in horror, and again I pace the cell. I feel cold and hungry. Am I forgotten? Three days must have passed, and more. Have they forgotten me? . . .

The clank of keys sends a thrill of joy to my heart. My tomb will open—oh, to see the light, and breathe the air again. . . .

"Officer, isn't my time up yet?"

"What's your hurry? You've only been here one day."

The doors fall to. Ravenously I devour the bread, so small and thin, just a bite. Only *one* day! Despair enfolds me like a pall. Faint with anguish, I sink to the floor.

II

The change from the dungeon to the ordinary cell is a veritable transformation. The sight of the human form fills me with delight, the sound of voices is sweet music. I feel as if I had been torn from the grip of death when all hope had fled me, caught on the very brink, as it were, and restored to the world of the living. How bright the sun, how balmy the air! In keen sensuousness I stretch out on the bed. The tick is soiled, the straw protrudes in places, but it is luxury to rest, secure from the vicious river rats and the fierce vermin. It is almost liberty, freedom!

But in the morning I awake in great agony. My eyes throb with pain; every joint of my body is on the rack. The blankets had been removed from the dungeon; three days and nights I lay on the bare stone. It was unnecessarily cruel to deprive me of my spectacles, in pretended anxiety lest I commit suicide with them. It is very touching, this solicitude for my safety, in view of the flimsy pretext to punish me. Some hidden motive must be actuating the Warden. But what can it be? Probably they will not keep me long in the cell. When I am returned to work, I shall learn the truth.

The days pass in vain expectation. The continuous confinement is becoming distressing. I miss the little comforts I have lost by the removal to the "single" cell, considerably smaller than my previous quarters. My library, also, has disappeared, and the pictures I had so patiently collected for the decoration of the walls. The cell is bare and cheerless, the large card of ugly-printed rules affording no relief from the irritating whitewash. The narrow space makes exercise difficult: the necessity of turning at every second and third step transforms walking into a series of contortions. But some means must be devised to while away the time. I pace the floor, counting the seconds required to make ten turns. I recollect having heard that five miles constitutes a healthy day's walk. At that rate I should make 3,771 turns, the cell measuring seven feet in length. I divide the exercise into three parts, adding a few extra laps to make sure of five miles. Carefully I count, and am overcome by a sense of calamity when the peal of the gong confuses my numbers. I must begin over again.

The change of location has interrupted communication with my comrades. I am apprehensive of the fate of the *Prison Blossoms*; strict surveillance makes the prospect of restoring connections doubtful. I am assigned to the ground floor, my cell being but a few feet distant from the officers' desk at the yard door. Watchful eyes are constantly upon me; it is impossible for any prisoner to converse with me. The rangeman alone could aid me in reaching my friends, but I have been warned against him: he is a "stool" who has earned his position as trusty by spying upon the inmates. I can expect no help from him; but perhaps the coffee-boy may prove of service.

I am planning to approach the man, when I am informed that prisoners from the hosiery department are locked up on the upper gallery. By means of the waste pipe, I learn of the developments during my stay in the dungeon. The discontent of the shop employees with the insufficient rations was intensified by the arrival of

good. And how is he to do it with ten, fifteen, or twenty years' imprisonment before him? The hope of liberty and of opportunity is the only incentive to life, especially the prisoner's life. Society has sinned so long against him—it ought at least to leave him that. I am not very sanguine that it will, or that any real change in that direction can take place until the conditions that breed both the prisoner and the jailer will be forever abolished.

*Out of his mouth a red, red rose!*

*Out of his heart a white!*

*For who can say by what strange way*

*Christ brings his will to light,*

*Since the barren staff the pilgrim bore*

*Bloomed in the great Pope's sight.*

TWO THOUSAND YEARS AGO A MAN WHOSE SOUL REVOLTED AT PUNISHMENT, CRIED OUT: 'Judge not, that ye be not judged', and yet men and women who have taken his name upon their lips as holy, have for all those two thousand years gone on judging as if their belief in what he said was only lip-belief; and they do it today. And judges sit upon benches and send men to their death,—even judges who do not themselves believe in capital punishment; and prosecutors exhaust their eloquence and their tricks to get men convicted; and women and men bear witness against sinners; and then they all meet in church and pray, 'Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass us!'

Do they mean anything at all by it? . . .

A great ethical teacher once wrote words like unto these: 'I have within me the capacity for every crime.'

Few, reading them, believe that he meant what he said. Most take it as the sententious utterance of one who, in an abandonment of generosity, wished to say something large and leveling. But I think he meant exactly what he said. I think that with all his purity Emerson had within him the turbid stream of passion and desire; for all his hard-cut granite features he knew the instincts of the weakling and the slave; and for all the sweetness, the tenderness, and the nobility of his nature, he had the tiger and jackal in his soul. I think that within every bit of human flesh and spirit that has ever crossed the enigma bridge of life, from the prehistoric racial morning until now, all crime and all virtue were germinal. Out of one great soul-stuff are we sprung, you and I and all of us; and if in you the virtue has grown and not the vice, do not therefore conclude that you are essentially different from him whom you have helped to put in stripes and behind bars. Your balance may be more even, you may be mixed in smaller proportions altogether, or the outside temptation has not come upon you.

From her essay 'Crime and Punishment' in *The Selected Writings of Voltaireine de Cleyre* (New York: Mother Earth Publishing Association, 1914). Voltaireine De Cleyre (1866-1912) was an American anarchist, teacher, poet, and theorist. In 1902 she was the victim of an assassination attempt by one of her former students. She refused to press charges because her attacker was mentally ill and she felt that imprisonment would only worsen his condition. By 1911 De Cleyre's activism was focused almost exclusively on the Mexican Revolution. As treasurer of the Mexican Liberal Defense Conference of Chicago, she raised funds for the Partido Liberal Mexicano by lecturing and distributing copies of *Regeneración*, *Anarchism and American Traditions*, and *Direct Action and the Heart of Angelillo* are distributed through AK Press.

"Stand back!" the Warden commands. "This knife has been stolen from the shoe shop. On whom did you mean to use it?"

"Warden, I didn't even know I had it. A fellow dropped it into my pocket as we—"

"That'll do. You're not so clever as you think."

"It's a conspiracy!" I cry.

He lounges calmly in the armchair, a peculiar smile dancing in his eyes. "Well, what have you got to say?"

"It's a put-up job."

"Explain yourself."

"Some one threw this thing into my pocket as we were coming—"

"Oh, we've already heard that. It's too fishy."

"You searched me for money and secret letters—"

"That will do now. Mr. McPane, what is the sentence for the possession of a dangerous weapon?"

"Warden," I interrupt, "it's no weapon. The blade is only half an inch, and—"

"Silence! I spoke to Mr. McPane."

"Hm, three days, Captain."

"Take him down."

In the storeroom I am stripped of my suit of dark gray, and again clad in the hateful stripes. Coatless and shoeless, I am led through hallways and corridors, down a steep flight of stairs, and thrown into the dungeon.

Total darkness. The blackness is massive, palpable,—I feel its hand upon my head, my face. I dare not move, lest a misstep thrust me into the abyss. I hold my hand close to my eyes—I feel the touch of my lashes upon it, but I cannot see its outline. Motionless I stand on one spot, devoid of all sense of direction. The silence is sinister; it seems to me I can hear it. Only now and then the hasty scrambling of nimble feet suddenly rends the stillness, and the gnawing of invisible river rats haunts the fearful solitude.

Slowly the blackness pales. It ebbs and melts; out of the somber gray, a wall looms above; the silhouette of a door rises dimly before me, sloping upward and growing compact and impenetrable.

The hours drag in unbroken sameness. Not a sound reaches me from the cell-house. In the maddening quiet and darkness I am bereft of all consciousness of time, save once a day when the heavy rattle of keys apprises me of the morning: the dungeon is unlocked, and the silent guards hand me a slice of bread and a cup of water. The double doors fall heavily to, the steps grow fainter and die in the distance, and all is dark again in the dungeon.

The numbness of death steals upon my soul. The floor is cold and clammy, the gnawing grows louder and nearer, and I am filled with dread lest the starving rats attack my bare feet. I snatch a few unconscious moments leaning against the door; and then again I pace the cell, striving to keep awake, wondering whether it be night or day, yearning for the sound of a human voice.

Utterly forsaken! Cast into the stony bowels of the underground, the world of man receding, leaving no trace behind. . . . Eagerly I strain my ear—only the ceaseless, fearful gnawing. I clutch the bars in desperation—a hollow echo mocks the clanking iron. My hands tear violently at the door—"Ho, there! Any one here?" All is silent. Nameless terrors quiver in my mind, weaving nightmares of mortal dread and despair. Fear shapes convulsive thoughts: they rage in wild tempest, then calm, and again rush through time and space in a rapid succession of strangely familiar scenes, wakened in my slumbering consciousness.

Exhausted and weary I droop against the wall. A slimy creeping on my face

## THE WARDEN'S THREAT

## I

THE DYING SUN GROWS PALE WITH HAZE AND FOG. SLOWLY THE DARK-GRAY LINE UNDULATES across the shop, and draws its sinuous length along the gloaming yard. The shadowy waves cleave the thickening mist, vibrate ghostlike, and are swallowed in the yawning blackness of the cell-house.

"Aleck, Aleck!" I hear an excited whisper behind me, "quick, plant it. The screw's goin' t' frisk me."

Something small and hard is thrust into my coat pocket. The guard in front stops short, suspiciously scanning the passing men.

"Break ranks!"

The overseer approaches me. "You are wanted in the office, Berk."

The Warden, bleary-eyed and sallow, frowns as I am led in.

"What have you got on you?" he demands, abruptly.

"I don't understand you."

"Yes, you do. Have you money on you?"

"I have not."

"Who sends clandestine mail for you?"

"What mail?"

"The letter published in the Anarchist sheet in New York."

I feel greatly relieved. The letter in question passed through official channels. "It went through the Chaplain's hands," I reply, boldly.

"It isn't true. Such a letter could never pass Mr. Milligan. Mr. Cosson," he turns to the guard, "fetch the newspaper from my desk."

The Warden's hands tremble as he points to the marked item. "Here it is! You talk of revolution, and comrades, and Anarchism. Mr. Milligan never saw that, I'm sure. It's a nice thing for the papers to say that you are editing—from the prison, mind you—editing an Anarchist sheet in New York."

"You can't believe everything the papers say," I protest.

"Hm, this time the papers, hm, hm, may be right," the Deputy interposes. "They surely didn't make the story, hm, hm, out of whole cloth."

"They often do," I retort. "Didn't they write that I tried to jump over the wall—it's about thirty feet high—and that the guard shot me in the leg?"

A smile flits across the Warden's face. Impulsively I blurt out:

"Was the story inspired, perhaps?"

"Silence!" the Warden thunders. "You are not to speak, unless addressed, remember. Mr. McPane, please search him."

The long, bony fingers slowly creep over my neck and shoulders, down my arms and body, pressing in my armpits, gripping my legs, covering every spot, and immersing me in an atmosphere of clamminess. The loathsome touch sickens me, but I rejoice in the thought of my security: I have nothing incriminating about me.

Suddenly the snakelike hand dips into my coat pocket.

"Hm, what's this?" He unwraps a small, round object. "A knife, Captain."

"Let me see!" I cry in amazement.

From *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist* (New York: Mother Earth Publishing Association, 1912).

WITH THE GROWTH OF CIVILISATION, AND OF SOCIAL RELATIONS; WITH THE GROWING awareness of human solidarity which unites mankind; with the development of intelligence and a refinement of feelings there is certainly a corresponding growth of social duties, and many actions which were considered as strictly individual rights and independent of any collective control will be considered, indeed they already are, matters affecting everybody, and must therefore be carried out in conformity with the general interest. For instance, even in our times parents are not allowed to keep their children in ignorance and bring them up in a way which is harmful to their development and future well-being. A person is not allowed to live in filthy conditions and neglect those rules of hygiene which can affect the health of others; one is not allowed to have an infectious disease and not have it treated. In a future society it will be considered a duty to seek to ensure the good of all, just as it will be considered blameworthy to procreate if there are reasons to believe that the progeny will be unhealthy and unhappy. But this sense of our duties to others, and of theirs to us must, according to our social concepts, develop without any other outside sanction than the esteem or the disapproval of our fellow citizens. Respect, the desire for the well-being of others must enter into the customs, and manifest themselves not as duties but as a normal satisfaction of social instincts.

There are those who would improve the morality of people by force, who would wish to introduce an Article into the penal code for every possible human action, who would place a *gendarme* alongside every nuptial bed and by every table. But these people if they lack the coercive powers to impose their ideas, only succeed in making a mockery of the best things; and if they have the power to command, make what is good hateful and encourage reaction.... For us the carrying out of social duties must be a voluntary act, and one has the right to intervene with material force only against those who offend against others *violently* and prevent them from living in peace. Force, physical restraint, must only be used against attacks of violence and for no other reason than that of self-defence.

But who will judge? Who will provide the necessary defence? Who will establish what measures of restraint are to be used? We do not see any other way than that of leaving it to the interested parties, to the people, that is the mass of citizens, who will act in different ways according to the circumstances and according to their different degree of social development. One must, above all, avoid the creation of bodies specialising in police work; perhaps something will be lost in repressive efficiency but one will also avoid the creation of the instrument of every tyranny.

We do not believe in the infallibility, nor even in the general goodness of the masses; on the contrary. But we believe even less in the infallibility and goodness

From the *Unità Nova* of 2 September 1920, as translated and printed in Vernon Richards, ed., *Errico Malatesta: His Life & Ideas* (London: Freedom Press, 1991). Errico Malatesta (1853-1932) was an Italian anarchist. After taking part in several uprisings in Italy, Malatesta was forced into exile in 1878. Arrested in 1898 after returning to his home country, he escaped from prison and traveled to the US, where he edited *La Questione Sociale* in Paterson, New Jersey from 1899 to 1900. He moved to London but returned to Italy to help organize an unsuccessful anarchist insurrection during "Red Week" (1913). Eventually he settled in Italy where he edited *Unità Nova* (1920-1923). He took part in the founding of the Worker's Alliance—a federation of anti-fascist groups. From 1926 until his death he lived in Rome under house arrest. *Anarchy, Via Contadini* (Between Peasants) and *The Anarchist Revolution: Polemical Articles, 1924-1931* are distributed through AK Press.

of those who seize power and legislate, who consolidate and perpetuate the ideas and interests which prevail at any given moment.

In every respect the unjust, and transitory violence of the people is preferable to the leaden-rule, the legalised State violence of the judiciary and police.

We are, in any case, only one of the forces acting in society, and history will advance, as always, in the direction of the resultant of all the [social] forces.

## Summons

Nestor Makhno

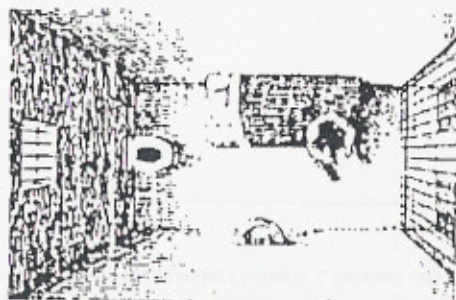
Let us rise in revolt, brethren, and with us the people  
Beneath the black flag of Anarchy will revolt.  
We will surge boldly forward, under the fire  
of enemy bullets in the battle  
for faith in libertarian communism.

Our just regime.  
We shall cast down all thrones and  
bring low the power of Capital.  
We will seize the gold and purple scepter  
And pay no more honor to anything.  
Through savage struggle  
We shall rid ourselves of the State and its laws.  
We have suffered long under the yoke  
Of chains, prisons and teeming gangs of executioners.  
The time has come to rise in rebellion and close ranks.  
Forward beneath the black flag of Anarchy, on to the great struggle!  
Enough of serving tyrants as their tools,  
That is the source of all their might.  
Insurrection, brethren, laboring people!  
We will sweep away all carrion.  
That's the way we shall reply to the lies of tyrants,  
We free workers, armed with our determination.  
Long live freedom, brethren. Long live the free commune.  
Death to all tyrants and their jailers!  
Let us rise, brethren, on the agreed signal,  
Beneath the black flag of Anarchy, against every one of them,  
the tyrants.  
Let us destroy all authorities and their cowardly restraints,  
that push us into bloody battle!

This poem was written when he was 23 years old and had been in prison for two years for 'illegal subversive association'. Nestor Makhno (1889-1934) was a Ukrainian anarchist, guerilla fighter, and writer. Jailed for his anarchist activities, he was released after the February 1917 Revolution. Returning to his native Ukraine he fought against both the Red and White armies establishing libertarian communism whenever and wherever he could. Finally forced to flee the Ukraine, he settled in Paris. He supported the anarchist platform (1927) and contributed regularly to the anarchist paper *Delos Tinda*. For examples of his writings translated in English see *The Struggle Against the State* edited by Alexandre Skirda, translated by Paul Sharkey (1996).

Kuro-gano no  
Mado ni sashi-iru  
Hi no kage no  
Utsura wo mamori  
kyo mo kurashitsu

Watching  
Through the iron-barr'd window  
The sunbeams streaming  
Today  
Also I spent



Kanno Suga (1881-1911) was a Japanese anarchist. In 1909 she co-founded, with her then-companion Kōtoku Shūsui, the newspaper *Jiyū Shisō* (Free Thought), and subsequently spent three months in jail for violating censorship laws. While in jail, officials discovered a plot to assassinate the emperor that implicated her and twenty-five of her comrades. The trial of the 26 anarchists began in December 1910 and twelve of the accused, including Kanno and Kōtoku, were executed on the 24 and 25 January 1911.

SOCIETY MAKES NOT THE LEAST EFFORT TO PREVENT CRIME, AS IT COULD AND SHOULD by pursuing such methods which would tend to remove the conditions breeding criminals. It deals with criminals, not with crime. It concerns itself only with the classes or individuals already criminal—generally after the commitment of a crime and occasionally while in the act of commitment—completely disregarding those standing on the precipice of criminality; ready to take their fatal leap. Along the road of want and suffering and forbearance society's *les misérables*, those guilty without guilt are pushed forward by a strong and irresistible hand, forward and forward towards the yawning abyss; and there, pausing a moment on the brink, they behold the gaping chasm, illuminated by the sun of deceit, and through the eyes of misery and despair they perceive *fata morgana* of lucrative ease, and while they are bending half-frightened, over the dangerous brink, they are lifted up with irresistible force and pushed over the verge and send flying down the steep incline, down and down, deeper and deeper into the yawning abyss, from which there is no returning. And all the while society is calmly looking on, never moving a single finger with a view of retarding the progress of the fallen yet ever ready to stamp them with the label of criminality and to subject the bleeding and torn forms to the care of "Justice," to be punished for their fall.

And how does Justice take care of the criminal classes? how are the latter treated?

Concerning the criminal classes, the motto of Society has always been (and still is): "Get rid of them." And as the simplest way to get rid of them is to kill them, that was the method ordinarily pursued until a very recent period. In Great Britain, under Henry [?], 263 crimes were punished, in the reign of Henry VIII 200,000 persons were hanged in Great Britain.

But we, of the 19th century, have become too humane to carry on the process in that way. We punish men or imprison them to get rid of them.

Have the methods of the past or do the modern methods exterminate crime or even check its progress? By no means. If we would take the census of the criminal classes and those dependent upon the latter in the Un. States, we will find that one person in seventy belongs to the criminal class (in the broad sense of the term). And this criminal class has, on the whole, been increasing throughout Christendom. In Spain it has doubled in thirteen years, in France it has increased several hundred per cent within the last quarter century, and in the United States it has grown one third faster, proportionately, than the population since the Civil War. The annals of criminality clearly demonstrate that our methods of treating crime are flat failures, and the effects of the treatment injurious to society, as a whole.

The fundamental principle of past and present methods is essentially wrong. The administration of Justice to criminals is immoral, brutal and brutalizing, and unjust, for by justice is meant the giving to every wrong deed its equivalent in penalty, a

Unpublished manuscript. Alexander Berkman (1870-1936) was a Russian-born anarchist. He immigrated to the US in 1888. Berkman served fourteen years at the Western Penitentiary in Pennsylvania for attempting to assassinate Henry C. Frick during the Homestead strike in 1892. He also served two years at Atlanta Federal Penitentiary during World War I for opposing conscription and the war. He was deported to Russia in 1919, but left in 1921 after parting with the Bolsheviks. He spent his final years in exile. *Prison Memoirs of an Anarchist* (1912), *The Russian Tragedy* (1923), *Communist Anarchism* (1928) are still available in print.

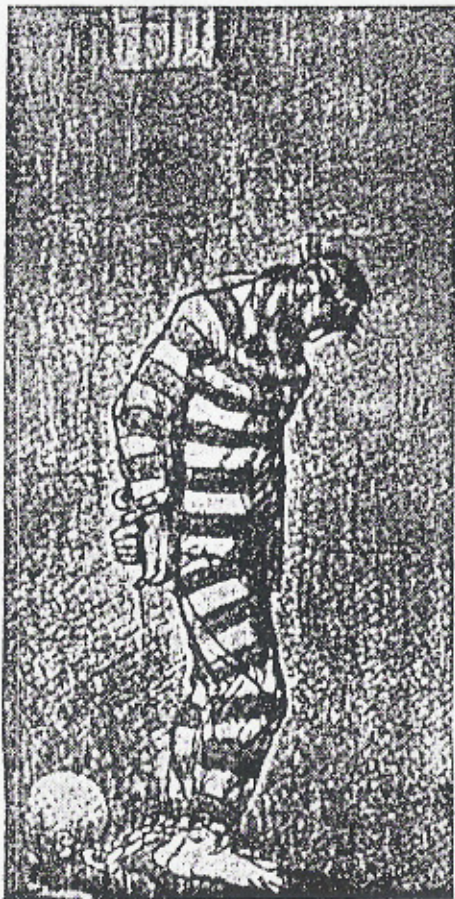
function which is but disguised revenge.

The deterrent power of fear is not the proper means of treating crime. It has been tried and it has failed. Men are not deterred from crime by fear. We have broken men on the wheel and buried them alive; we have hanged them; we have gathered the criminal classes all round the gallows to see the execution, and the victim has gone bravely to the scaffold and died game; he has become a hero in their eyes and the men that have witnessed the execution have gone back to plunge deeper into crime than ever.

Capital punishment which is advocated to deter men from crime, does not deter them. Severe penalty for crime does not prevent its increase.

The protection of society sought directly by the (alleged) deterrent power of fear, is a brazen Utopia as to results. Methods of mere punishment cannot fail to be more injurious than beneficial. And aside from the questions as to society's right to punish and of the possibility that disorders heretofore classed as moral obliquities, vices and simple depravity may prove to be disease, Society should deal with crime not with criminals only. It is by learning the nature of crime and by ascertaining the divers causes, leading men to crime, that society may hope to eliminate this disturbant factor of social progress.

If this compilation serves in any way to awaken the intelligent public to realization of the injustice and costly and untenable impotence of existing methods of dealing with crime, if it excites sufficient interest to induce a further and fuller Study of this problem, then its object is accomplished and the author will consider his effort well repaid.



From *The Blast*.

How many prisons! Have I said that already? Yes, how many prisons. From Bastion 37 to New Caledonia, stopping at Satory, Chantiers, la Rochelle, Clermont, Saint-Lazare . . .

When my book on prisons appears, grass will have grown up over still more unknown corpses, but the idea will remain the same. It will still be on the same subject: that human beings suffering through destitution, poverty, and ignorance are not responsible for acts against each other. The old nations are the murderers, the old nations, where the struggle for existence is so terrible that people turn on each other incessantly, clamoring for their prey. The only noise that can be heard is the cries of crows and the flapping of their wings above people who have been beaten to the earth.

A trap is set all around us, and poor, wretched women get caught in it. Is it the fault of those poor women that there is a place for some of them only in the streets or on display? Is it their fault if they have stolen a few sous to live on or to keep their children alive? Rich people can spend millions of francs and thousands of living beings on their whims. I can't stop myself from speaking about those things with such bitterness.

## My Crimes

Oscar Neebe

WELL, THESE ARE ALL THE CRIMES I HAVE COMMITTED. THEY FOUND A REVOLVER IN my house, and a red flag there. I organized trade unions. I was for reduction of the hours of labor, and the education of laboring men, and the re-establishment of the *Arbeiter-Zeitung*—the workingmen's newspaper. There is no evidence to show that I was connected with the bomb-throwing, or that I was near it, or anything of that kind. So I am only sorry, your honor—that is, if you can stop it or help it—I will ask you to do it—that is, to hang me, too; for I think it is more honorable to die suddenly than to be killed by inches. I have a family and children; and if they know their father is dead, they will bury him. They can go to the grave, and kneel down by the side of it; but they can't go to the penitentiary and see their father, who was convicted for a crime that he hasn't had anything to do with. That is all I have got to say. Your honor, I am sorry I am not to be hung with the rest of the men.

From "The Crimes I Have Committed", in Albert R. Parsons, *Anarchism: Its Philosophy and Scientific Basis, as Defined by Some of Its Apostles* (Chicago: 1887). Oscar Neebe (1850-1916) was an American anarchist and Haymarket defendant. Neebe was a manager of the Socialistic Publishing Society, publisher of the *Chicago Arbeiter-Zeitung*, *Unhate*, and *Die Fackel*, and an organizer for the Central Labor Union. One of the eight anarchists tried and convicted after the Haymarket riot of 1886, he was sentenced to fifteen years but pardoned by Illinois governor John P. Altgeld in 1893.

## Pages on the Centrale Prison at Clermont

Louise Michel

THERE'S NO PARTY WITHOUT A MORNING AFTER. TWO YEARS AGO ON JULY 14, I WAS taken to the Centrale Prison at Clermont. Women's prisons are less harsh than men's. I did not suffer from cold or hunger or any of the vexations our male friends underwent.

As far as I am concerned, my stay in prison was as easy as it would be for any other schoolmistress. Solitude is restful, especially for a person who has spent a great part of her life always needing an hour of silence and never finding it, except at night. That is the case with a great number of schoolmistresses.

In those silent hours of the night, she hurries to think, to feel alive, to read, to write, to be just a little free. At the end of the day, at the last lesson, she feels herself becoming an overworked beast of the fields, but a beast that is still proud, still lifting its head to go to the end of the hour without breaking down. When the hour is ended, silence surrounds her, fatigue has disappeared, and she lives and thinks and is free. In prison, I found those few hours of rest laboriously paid for over long years.

I'm going to write a book on prisons. I have lots of pages for it already, and all I have to do is gather them up. The first pages will be dedicated to the poor gallant ambulance attendants of the Commune, the women condemned to death who instead were sent to Cayenne, where the climate is the murderer. They were convicted because they had cared for the wounded of the Commune and, in passing, for wounded men of the Versailles forces. Wounded men belonged to neither side, and those brave women dressed the wounds of anyone they found, whereas the leaders of the Versailles forces often opportunistically abandoned their wounded soldiers so they could snipe at us better.

Victor Hugo got pardons for those unpretentious and gallant women, Retif and Marchais. Following them were Suétens, Papavoine, and Lachaise, who had been condemned to forced labor for the same deeds.

After my pages on the ambulance attendants, the chapters that followed would belong to the friends met in prison. I would begin with my own. At Satory the wives of my prisoner friends were not afraid to embrace me, although I warned them that the authorities were going to 'treat me as I deserved'. By embracing me they risked their lives. At Chantiers in the great morgue of the living, it was the same, under the rags hung at night along the walls. I must thank those brave souls for their friendship.

Many, alas, are now dead. The first to die was Mme Dereure; already ill, she could not survive the harsh ordeals to which she had to submit. In the full view of conquered Paris, the colors of the Commune followed her coffin. Without doubt, others are dead; we have not seen them again.

From *Mémoires de Louise Michel, écrits par elle-même* (1886). Louise Michel (1810-1905) was a French anarchist, and a frontline fighter on the barricades during the Paris Commune. Michel was banished in 1871 to New Caledonia, where she taught, became a supporter of the colony's movement for independence from France, and converted to anarchism. Pardoned with her fellow Communards in 1880, she returned to France and joined the circle around the anarchist journal *La Révolution Sociale* (Paris, 1880-1881). In 1881 she was arrested with Emile Pouget after a Paris bread riot and imprisoned until January 1886. In 1890, to avoid another prison term, she fled to London, there founding and operating the libertarian International Sunday School. For the remainder of her life, she traveled frequently between England and France, propagandizing while evading arrest.

## 'Law and Order'

Alexander Berkman

WHAT IS THE EXISTENCE OF THE AVERAGE MAN TO-DAY? ALMOST ALL YOUR TIME IS given to earning your livelihood. You are so busy making a living that you hardly have time left to live, to enjoy life. Neither the time nor the money. You are lucky if you have some source of support, some job. Now and then comes slack-time: there is unemployment and thousands are thrown out of work, every year, in every country.

That time means no income, no wages. It results in worry and privation, in disease, desperation, and suicide. It spells poverty and crime. To alleviate that poverty we build homes of charity, poorhouses, free hospitals, all of which you support with your taxes. To prevent crime and to punish the criminals it is again you who have to support police, detectives, State forces, judges, lawyers, prisons, keepers. Can you imagine anything more senseless and impractical? The legislatures pass laws, the judges interpret them, the various officials execute them, the police track and arrest the criminal, and finally the prison warden gets him into custody. Numerous persons and institutions are busy keeping the jobless man from stealing and punish him if he tries to. Then he is provided with the means of existence, the lack of which had made him break the law in the first place. After a shorter or longer term he is turned loose. If he fails to get work he begins the same round of theft, arrest, trial, and imprisonment all over again.

This is a rough but typical illustration of the stupid character of our system; stupid and inefficient. Law and government support that system.

Is it not peculiar that most people imagine we could not do without government, when in fact our real life has no connection with it whatever, no need of it, and is only interfered with where law and government seep in?

"But security and public order," you object, "could we have that without law and government? Who will protect us against the criminal?"

The truth is that what is called "law and order" is really the worst disorder, as we have seen in previous chapters. What little order and peace we do have is due to the good common sense and joint efforts of the people, mostly in spite of the government. Do you need government to tell you not to step in front of a moving automobile? Do you need it to order you not to jump off the Brooklyn Bridge or from the Eiffel Tower?

Man is a social being; he cannot exist alone; he lives in communities or societies. Mutual need and common interests result in certain arrangements to afford us security and comfort. Such co-working is free, voluntary; it needs no compulsion by any government. You join a sporting club or a singing society because your inclinations lie that way, and you cooperate with the other members without any one coercing you. The man of science, the writer, the artist, and the inventor seek their own kind for inspiration and mutual work. Their impulses and needs are their best urge; the interference of any government or authority can only hinder their efforts.

All through life you will find that the needs and inclinations of people make for association, for mutual protection and help. That is the difference between managing things and governing men; between doing something from free choice and

From *Now and After: The ABC of Communist Anarchism* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1929).

being compelled. It is the difference between liberty and constraint, between Anarchism and government, because Anarchism means voluntary coöperation instead of forced participation. It means harmony and order in place of interference and disorder.

"But who will protect us against crime and criminals?" you demand.

Rather ask yourself whether government really protects us against them. Does not government itself create and uphold conditions which make for crime? Does not the invasion and violence upon which all governments rest cultivate the spirit of intolerance and persecution, of hatred and more violence? Does not crime increase with the growth of poverty and injustice fostered by government? Is not government itself the greatest injustice and crime?

Crime is the result of economic conditions, of social inequality, of wrongs and evils of which government and monopoly are the parents. Government and law can only punish the criminal. They neither cure nor prevent crime. The only real cure for crime is to abolish its causes, and this the government can never do because it is there to preserve those very causes. Crime can be eliminated only by doing away with the conditions that create it. Government cannot do it.

Anarchism means to do away with those conditions. Crimes resulting from government, from its oppression and injustice, from inequality and poverty, will disappear under Anarchy. These constitute by far the greatest percentage of crime.

Certain other crimes will persist for some time, such as those resulting from jealousy, passion, and from the spirit of coercion and violence which dominates the world to-day. But these, the offspring of authority and possession, will also gradually disappear under wholesome conditions with the passing away of the atmosphere that cultivated them.

Anarchy will therefore neither breed crime nor offer any soil for its thriving. Occasional anti-social acts will be looked upon as survivals of former diseased conditions and attitudes, and will be treated as an unhealthy state of mind rather than as crime.

Anarchy would begin by feeding the "criminal" and securing him work instead of first watching him, arresting, trying, and imprisoning him, and finally ending by feeding him and the many others who have to watch and feed him. Surely even this example shows how much more sensible and simpler life would be under Anarchism than now.

## PART II



## MEMORIES