

1871

CHAPTER VIII

THE COURSE OF ANARCHY

Nihilism in Russia—Murder of Alexander II.—The revived Illuminati—Johann Most—Revolutionary Congress in London—Anarchist outrages in Western Europe—Fenianism—British Socialism.

ALTHOUGH Anarchy had been vanquished in the Internationale, it was Anarchy not State Socialism that after the revolution of 1871 obtained control of the revolutionary movement. Revolts against the Marxian autocracy of the Internationale—"the Marxist synagogue"¹ as Bakunin described it—broke out in Italy, Spain, Belgium, and in the Jura Federation that had been organized by the expelled Anarchists.²

But it was in Russia that Anarchy found its natural home, where the ground had been prepared by the propaganda of the Nihilists carried on indefatigably since the early 'sixties. Romantic Russian writers are anxious to make us believe that *Nihilism*—of which the name first appears in Turghenieff's novel, *Fathers and Sons*, in 1861—was some kind of mystic creed indigenous to Russia, but to the readers of this book the tenets of the Nihilists will seem strangely familiar. Thus, for example, Bazaroff, the hero of Turghenieff's romance, explains that "it is necessary above all to clear the ground. Later, when all institutions have been destroyed, when a *tabula rasa* is complete, then existing forces, then humanity will crystallize again in new institutions which will no doubt be appropriate to surrounding conditions." The words have a reminiscent echo of Rabaud de St. Etienne's: "Everything, yes,

¹ Ettore Zoccoli, *L'Anarchia*, p. 116.
Kropotkine, *Modern Science and Anarchism*, pp. 43, 62.

everything must be destroyed, since everything must be remade."

The Nihilist, Prince Kropotkine informs us, "declared war upon what may be described as 'the conventional lies of civilized mankind' . . . he refused to bow before any authority except that of reason. . . ." Accordingly he "broke, of course, with the superstitions of his fathers" with regard to religion, whilst in the matter of social relations "he assumed a certain external roughness"—as a protest against conventional politeness. "Art was involved in the same sweeping negation," the Nihilist's attitude being expressed in the words: "A pair of boots is more important than all your Madonnas and all your refined talk about Shakespeare."¹

The "equality of the sexes" was a fundamental doctrine of Nihilism which, as the Père Deschamps points out, is only another expression for the destruction of family life.² "According to the Nihilists, men and women live together in little groups where all is in common. In order to be wholly independent the woman must herself provide her livelihood." Maternity being an inequality of nature, "the Nihilist woman therefore willingly abandons" her offspring.³

Above all, of course, religion must be destroyed, and Stepniak admiringly describes the campaign carried on by the band of enthusiastic propagandists who preached materialism throughout Russia both in speech and print. "Atheism excited people like a new religion. The zealous went about, like veritable missionaries, in search of living souls, in order to cleanse them from the abomination of Christianity."⁴

Had not Anacharsis Cloutz done likewise up to the very foot of the scaffold? What indeed is there in all this but the resuscitated plan of Illuminism? Père Deschamps' suggestion that Nihilism was simply the Eastern branch of Bakunin's Alliance Sociale Démocratique modelled on

¹ Kropotkine, *Memoirs of a Revolutionary*, ii. 86, 88.

² Deschamps, ii. 574.

³ Fribourg, *L'Association Internationale des Travailleurs*, p. 184.

⁴ Stepniak, *Underground Russia*, p. 5.

Weishaupt's Order, goes less to the root of the matter than his further explanation that the youthful philosophers of Russia had gone to the fountain-head by studying at German universities. Turghenieff himself had spent three years in Berlin reading Hegelian philosophy. It was therefore directly from Germany that Illuminism under its new name of Nihilism travelled to Russia. The very name itself had been foretold by Joseph de Maistre in the first years of the century when he declared that the doctrines of Illuminism would lead men to become "rienistes."¹

Yet if the seed was not indigenous to Russia the soil was peculiarly adapted to its growth. The theory that "civilization is all wrong," however preposterous when applied to Western Europe, had something to commend it in the case of Russia. There civilization, consisting in a foreign veneer hastily applied to a rude natural surface, might appear even to non-anarchic minds "all wrong"—a process that needed redoing from the outset.

Civilization to be of any value must be necessarily of slow growth, must moreover begin at the bottom—in the hearts not in the manners of the people. England had her Alfred the Great, her Richard Cœur de Lion; France her Saint Louis and her Henri IV. These and other great founders of their civilizations had implanted deep down in the life of each nation those principles of humanity and compassion, of honour and of justice, which in the latter country even the Revolution could not entirely eradicate.

Russia had never known these early influences; founded on Tartar instead of Roman ideas, she had remained sunk in barbarism until Peter the Great began his veneering process which, applied to the rude surface of Russian life, resulted in a form of culture both premature and unnatural. To change the simile, such civilization as Russia had attained in the nineteenth century was not the natural growth of the soil; it was a German civilization wholly foreign to the "genius" of her people. There was much that was good and wholesome in the life of the Russian peasants. De Custine declared that it was worth coming to Russia if

¹ Deschamps, ii. 586.

only to see "the pure image of patriarchal society" and the "celestial faces" of the old peasants seated with dignity at the end of the day before the threshold of their cottages.¹ "One must go into the interior of Russia to know what primitive man was worth and all that the refinements of society have made him lose. I have said and I repeat it . . . in this patriarchal country, it is civilization that spoils man."²

It is easy then to understand how the "illuminated" doctrine of a return to Nature might find an echo in the least anarchic minds when applied to Russia, and if it had been only this foreign and artificial civilization the Nihilists had set out to destroy, who could have blamed them? If, further, they had had anything better to offer in its place, who could have failed to applaud them? But the tragedy of Russia is never to have been allowed to develop along her own national lines; she had been made by the Romanovs to imitate Western civilization, now she was to be taught by the revolutionaries to imitate Western methods of overthrowing it. Bakunin had raged against German Petersbourgeois Imperialism (*cet impérialisme pétersbourgeois allemand*), and it was German Illuminism his followers brought to Russia in its stead. The tendency to anarchy latent in the Russian nature, as exemplified in the Baron Ungern von Sternberg, was to be exploited in the interests of World Revolution. For, in spite of the serenity described by de Custine as characteristic of the Russian peasant in his normal moments, he responds only too readily to suggestions of violence. And when we consider this peculiarity, when we remember the tendency to drunkenness and to brutality that underlies his surface impassiveness, we realize the fearful danger of taking from him the only restraints he knew—respect for God and the Czar.

Was the Imperial Government, then, to tolerate the campaign of insubordination and of militant atheism conducted by the Nihilists from 1866 onwards?

Can it be seriously maintained that any government would have been doing its duty if it had not protected the simple peasantry from these disintegrating doctrines?

¹ *La Russie en 1839*, iv. 9, 10

² *Ibid.* v. 97.

What could it do but arrest, imprison, exile, and suppress by all means in its power the germ-carriers who would have infected the whole life of the people? If the methods adopted resembled those of Eastern potentates rather than those of our own enlightened legislators, it must be remembered that the rulers of Russia can no more than their subjects be judged by Western standards. Moreover, without condoning the brutality of the repression exercised, it must be recognized that a *revers du médaillon* exists.

Let us put ourselves in the place of Nicholas I., who has been persistently represented as an intractable autocrat. Ascending the throne with the warning of the French Revolution ringing in his ears, he found himself immediately confronted by the Dekabrist outbreak, obviously engineered by secret forces—an experience that left a deep impression on his mind. Yet, in spite of this, have we not seen him visiting Robert Owen at New Lanark, and in 1839 receiving deputations of serfs begging to be transferred to the royal domains, assuring them, moreover, of his desire for their emancipation—alas, with what fatal results! No wonder, then, that we find him declaring: "Despotism exists in Russia since it is the essence of my government, but it is in accord with the genius of the nation."¹ Three hundred years earlier the Austrian ambassador to Moscow had asked whether it was the character of the Russian nation that had made autocrats, or autocrats that had made the character of the Russian nation,² and de Custine, echoing the question in 1839, gives as his opinion: "If the iron rod that directs this still brutalized people were to cease for an instant to weigh on it, the whole of society would be overthrown."³

We have only to study the history of Russia throughout the nineteenth century to realize that every step towards reform became the signal for a fresh outbreak of revolutionary agitation. The Nihilist movement followed directly on the era of reform inaugurated by Alexander II. The emancipation of the serfs in 1861 did nothing to allay agitation, and if, as we are assured, the measure failed to

¹ de Custine, *La Russie en 1839*, ii. 46.

² *Ibid.* i. 241.

³ *Ibid.* ii. 217.

satisfy the peasants we must at least recognize the sincerity of the Emperor's intentions. To turn against him at this juncture was naturally to drive him into reaction and to arrest the whole movement of reform.

It cannot be too often repeated—violence begets violence; and if we are to see in Nihilism the outcome of repression, as truly must we recognize in so-called "Czarism" the result of agitation. The revolutionaries plotted secretly against the State, and the State defended itself by the secret methods of "the Third Section"; the authorities forbade the circulation of seditious pamphlets, and the traffickers in forbidden literature redoubled their efforts to smuggle it into the country; each side pitted its wits against the other, and thus the vicious circle once created could not be arrested.

It was not, however, until after 1871 that the Russian revolutionary movement entered on its violent phases. The example of the Paris Commune then spread eastwards, and the revolutionaries, no longer known as Nihilists but as "Revolutionary Socialists," embarked on the series of outrages which marked the years 1873-1881.

Much has been written about the heroism, the self-sacrifice, the burning enthusiasm of the "Tchaikovsky Circle" that was inaugurated towards the end of 1872 at St. Petersburg with ramifications at Moscow and other large towns of Russia. This little band of propagandists that consisted solely of upper- and middle-class intellectuals certainly showed themselves capable of great courage and endurance when the movement passed from words to deeds, but at the outset it is evident, from the accounts given by the members themselves, that they derived no small amount of enjoyment from the novelty and excitement the new life provided.

One must know something of the Russian character from personal experience to understand this; to the Russian, intrigue, particularly of the political variety, is as the breath of life, and we have already seen how to Bakunin the preparing of revolution—the secret signs and codes, chemical inks, all-night discussions over tea and cigarettes—afforded a joy incomprehensible to the Western

mind. More especially was this passion to be found in the young women of the country who hitherto had exercised in the service of the Czars their talent for secret political intrigue; Catherine the Great had made great use of these "Northern Aspasia's" acting as her unofficial ambassadors and spies, and under Nicholas I. the same "organized feminine diplomacy" was continued by "political Amazons" whose passion for meddling in affairs of State absorbed them to the exclusion of all other matters—even love.

It is easy to understand that to women of this type the revolutionary movement should have offered a career even more enticing; to the delights of intrigue were added the charm of novelty and the excitement provided by an element of danger. The young Russian girls with cropped hair, dressed in boyish garments, who crowded to Zürich as students—medical or otherwise—could enjoy all the sensation of an adventure, and on their return to Russia thousands of men and women students went to live in towns and villages to carry on Socialistic propaganda amongst the workers. To the young, the strong, and the adventurous this kind of life may well have proved congenial; indeed in Prince Kropotkin's own account of his adventures as a member of the Tchaikovsky Circle we cannot fail to detect an afterglow of exhilaration. Throwing a peasant's shirt and coat over his silk undergarments this aristocratic anarchist would slip out of the Winter Palace at night and betake himself to the slums of St. Petersburg where meetings of the workers were held.

To play at being peasants has frequently proved a pastime to jaded aristocracy, and Kropotkin, masquerading as "Borodin" in a sheepskin, consulted as an oracle by the other sheepskins, evidently found these evenings more entertaining than the dreary formalities of St. Petersburg society.

Peter Kropotkin, who may be regarded as the milder type of visionary anarchist, was born in 1842 at Moscow. Although a follower and an ardent admirer of Bakunin, Kropotkin in his private life showed himself greatly superior to his master. Unlike Bakunin he was a worker, though not in the sense he implied in his writings. To

identify himself with the "proletariat" in such phrases as "*we* shall succeed in getting *our* rights respected" is of course the purest affectation. Kropotkine, who had never worked with his hands but only with his brain, was essentially an aristocrat of the same variety as the aristocrats of France who before 1789 loved to dilate on the necessity of destroying the existing order. The keynote of all Kropotkine's writings is unreality, never does he at any point come to grips with life, and it is here he differs from Bakunin. The "Russian giant" was a realist, and in advocating revolution he knew perfectly well what revolution meant—violence, bloodshed, confusion, chaos—all things in which his soul delighted. On human nature, as we have seen, he entertained no illusions, and it was for criminals that he expressed his warmest sympathy. Kropotkine, less practical, or perhaps lest honest, expressed a boundless belief in human nature; a disciple of Rousseau as well as of Weishaupt, he held that "the inequality of fortunes and conditions, the exploitation of man by man, the domination of the masses by a few, had in the course of ages undermined and destroyed the precious products of the primitive life of society"¹—a passage that might well seem to be taken verbatim from the famous essay on "l'Inégalité des Conditions."

With the same wild disregard for truth Kropotkine echoes Rousseau's panegyrics on the happiness and benevolence of savages,² "the fraternity and solidarity" that distinguishes tribal life, "the hospitality of primitive peoples, their respect for human life, compassion for the weak," and personal self-sacrifice. Arriving inevitably at the same conclusions as Weishaupt, Kropotkine argues that human nature being so inherently benign, all restraints should be removed, all law and government abolished, even murderers should go unpunished and criminals should "be soothed with fraternal care."³ So identical are many of these theories with those of Weishaupt that it is impossible not to believe that, like Bakunin, he had fallen under the spell of Illuminism and was consciously working for the

¹ Kropotkine, *Paroles d'un révolté*, p. 19.

² *Les Temps nouveaux*, p. 21.

³ *Paroles d'un révolté*, pp. 223, 242, 244.

sect that had as its object the "universal revolution which should deal the death-blow to society."

The connection between all the succeeding disciples of Weishaupt can only be established by comparing their writings, when it will become evident that passages so closely resembling each other cannot be attributed to mere coincidence, and the main ideas of World Revolution will be seen to descend in unbroken sequence from one revolutionary group to another. Indeed Kropotkine himself informs us that between the "Alliance Sociale Démocratique" of Bakunin and the secret societies of 1795 there was "a direct affiliation."¹ If, then, Nihilism was working in conjunction with Bakunin's association—and we cannot doubt it—it is easy to see how the theories of the Philadelphes percolated to the Tchaikovsky Circle.

It is thus that in Kropotkine's *Paroles d'un révolté*, where more than in any other of his writings his programme of revolution is set forth, we seem to hear again the voice of that earlier Illuminatus Gracchus Babeuf, member of the Philadelphes and continuer of the plan of Weishaupt. Although not a Communist like Babeuf, Kropotkine advocates, for example, the same system of trade by barter. "Do you wish tools and machinery?" he asks the peasants; "you will come to an understanding with the workers of the towns, who will send them to you in exchange for your products";² and we are seriously asked to imagine life conducted by means of this continual weighing up of values—the peasant requiring a scythe despatching to the town a sitting of turkeys' eggs, and the worth being deemed insufficient, receiving in exchange a chisel—which he does not happen to want!

Not merely in puerilities such as these does Kropotkine continue the tradition of Babeuf, but also in the organization of the coming revolution. Babeuf, it will be remembered, was the first to preach the "great day of the people"—the day whereon the maddened multitude should fling itself upon all wealth and property as the preliminary to Communism. This simple and expeditious method, long since

¹ Kropotkine, *The Great French Revolution*, p. 580.

² *Paroles d'un révolté*, p. 166.

abandoned by the Communists in favour of the gradual acquisition of political power, was now revived by the Anarchists with the object of inaugurating their rival system, and thus in his chapter on "Expropriation" we find Kropotkine reproducing almost verbatim the old programme of Babeuf.

"General expropriation alone," writes Kropotkine, "can satisfy the multitude of sufferers and oppressed. From the domain of theory they must be made to enter that of practice. But in order that expropriation should answer to its principle, which is to suppress all private property and to give back all to all, it must be accomplished on a vast scale. On a small scale we should see nothing but vulgar pillage; on a large one it is the beginning of social re-organization."¹

But although Bakunin had declared that "robbery was one of the most honourable forms of Russian national life," and that "he who does not understand robbery can understand nothing in the history of the Russian masses,"² it appears that the plan of laying violent hands on all property was one to which the people could not be expected yet to rise: "It would be a fatal error," Kropotkine observes regretfully, "to believe that the idea of expropriation has yet penetrated into the minds of all the workers and become one of those convictions for which an upright man is ready to sacrifice his life. Far from it!"³ And he goes on to explain the necessity of educating the people up to this sublime ideal.

In order to persuade the Russian peasants to emulate those of France in the preceding century by seizing social riches, "we"—Revolutionary Socialists—he writes, "must work incessantly from this moment to disseminate the idea of expropriation by all our words and all our acts. . . . Let the word 'expropriation' penetrate into every *commune* of the country, let it be discussed in every village, and become, for every workman and every peasant, an integral part of the word Anarchy, and then, only then, we shall be

¹ *Paroles d'un révolté*, p. 337.

² *Words addressed to Students*, by Bakunin and Netchaieff (1869).

³ *Paroles d'un révolté*, p. 320.

sure that on the day of the Revolution it will be on all lips, that it will rise formidable, backed by the whole people, and that the blood of the people will not have flowed in vain." ¹

Kropotkin's idol Marat himself could not have written a more direct incentive to violence, and when we consider that he was one of the leading members of the Tchaikovsky Circle, and that this was the kind of propaganda the band of heroic "missionaries" was engaged in carrying out amongst the people from 1872 onwards, we cannot wonder that the Government again saw fit to intervene.

Thirty-seven provinces, a Government circular declared, had been "infected" by the Socialist contagion,² and in 1878 wholesale arrests were ordered. Then the vicious circle began again: a propagandist, Boguljuboff, was knouted by the police, and a woman revolutionary, Vera Sassulitch, retaliated by attempting to shoot Trepoff, the Prefect of Police in St. Petersburg; Sassulitch was acquitted, but Kowalsky, the leader of a band of revolutionaries in Odessa, was shot, and in revenge Mesentseff, head of the Third Section, was murdered by Kravchinsky (alias Stepniak) on the Nevsky Prospect.

Then followed a series of attempts on the life of Alexander II.: in September 1879 the conspirators, led by Sophie Perovskaia and Leo Hartmann, formed a plan to blow up the Imperial train just outside Moscow, but only succeeded in destroying a train which did not contain the Emperor; in the following year two other Terrorists, Halturin and Scheliaboff, succeeded in exploding a charge of dynamite beneath the dining-room of the Winter Palace, but again the Emperor escaped without injury.

Meanwhile Alexander II., with a newly appointed minister, Count Loris Melikoff, continued to work out plans for reform. Melikoff, whatever his shortcomings might be, was a man of far more liberal tendencies than his predecessors, and indeed we find a Russian writer declaring that "some of the measures adopted by him should have shown to every thoughtful person that he was planning the introduction of far-reaching reforms which might perhaps have

¹ *Paroles d'un révolté*, p. 322.

² Stepniak, *Underground Russia*, p. 28.

led to the regeneration of Russia." ¹ Whether this is so or not it is certain that Loris Melikoff was largely instrumental in deciding the Emperor to convoke an advisory assembly on the question of reforms, and, more important, it was Melikoff who finally on the 2nd of March 1881 laid before him the plan of a constitution.

• Are we to believe that, as has been already suggested, the word "Constitution" was the rallying cry of the secret societies? We have seen that in the French Revolution both the framing of the Constitution in 1789 and its acceptance by the king in 1791 became the signals for fresh outbreaks of revolutionary fury; we have seen the Dekabrist outbreak of 1825 in Russia led by the same war-cry, and now again in Russia of 1881 the same strange phenomenon occurs.

No sooner had Melikoff embarked on his career of reforms than an attempt had been made to murder him, and on the very day that Alexander II. signed the Constitution he was cut down by the hand of an assassin.

• Even Prince Kropotkin is obliged to recognize the Emperor's courage and noble self-sacrifice at that supreme moment when, at a signal from Sophie Petrovskaja, a bomb was thrown at the Imperial carriage as it passed along the road by the Catherine Canal; only the mounted Cossacks surrounding it received any injuries, and the coachman urged the Tsar to allow him to drive on out of danger. But Alexander refused to leave his followers to their fate and deliberately went forth to meet his death. As he walked towards the wounded and dying Cossacks lying in the snow beside his carriage a second assassin with inconceivable cowardice threw another bomb, and this time Alexander fell mortally wounded.

The same night the draft of the Constitution bearing the Emperor's signature was torn into a hundred fragments by one of his son's advisers. •

So ended for the moment all hope of reform in Russia. Inevitable reaction followed on this dastardly crime. The conspirators—Scheliaboff, Ryssakoff, Sophie Petrovskaja, and two others—were put to death, it is said with fearful cruelty.

But though we must execrate these barbarous methods

¹ *The Revolutionary Movement in Russia*, by Konni Zilliacus, p. 101.

of retaliation, we must surely admit that brutality was to be found on both sides. If we pity the so-called "martyrs" of Imperial despotism may we not also ask: What pity had these men and women felt for *their* victims—not only for the "agents of despotism" they set out to destroy, but for the innocent men of the people sacrificed with them? What regard had they shown for human life in their attempts to wreck the Imperial train? What of the engine-driver and other employés involved in the disaster? What of the many people actually killed and wounded in this attempt that miscarried? What of the thirty soldiers on duty who perished in the explosion at the Winter Palace?

Let us pity, then, the "martyrs" whose tortures no circumstances can justify, but let us reserve some pity for those and humble and forgotten victims whom no revolutionary writer seems to consider of the slightest consequence.

ANARCHY IN WESTERN EUROPE

In 1878 Western Europe experienced a repercussion of the Russian Terror, and the four leading Anarchists, Kropotkin, Cafiero, Malatesta, and Brousse, organized a world-wide scheme of violence described by them as the "Propaganda of the Deed," which found its first expression in an attempt on the life of King Humbert of Italy. This outrage was followed by two attempts of the same kind directed against the Emperor William I. of Germany. If we are to believe Socialist writers, neither Hödel nor Dr. Karl Nöbiling, who within a month fired at the Emperor in Berlin, had any connection with the Socialist or Anarchist movement, but served simply as a pretext for the anti-Socialist law which Bismarck passed triumphantly at the end of the year. This would be quite in keeping with German Imperial policy, which had always consisted in crushing at home the subversive forces it used so freely abroad, and it is quite possible that a half-witted youth such as Hödel—with photographs of the leading Socialists, Liebknecht and Bebel, placed in his pockets by the Berlin police—may have been hired for the deed,—*agents provocateurs* are, of course, a favourite resource of autocratic governments.

Bismarck was thus able to nip in the bud not only Socialism but Anarchy, which in the person of Johann Most threatened to become a danger.

Germany itself, as Zenker observes, "may be termed the most free from Anarchists of any country in Europe."¹ The "genius" of the German people is naturally disinclined to Individualism, and whether in the form of Prussian militarism or of State Socialism always favours mass formation. It was thus by the Social Democrats themselves that Most was finally expelled. It will be noticed that whenever agitators threaten seriously to disturb the peace in Germany they are either summarily suppressed or used for export—preferably to England. Whether in accordance with this plan or on his own initiative Most came to London in 1879, where he organized a society called the "United Socialists," on the principles of Marx's *Communist Manifesto*, and having for its motto the Marxian battle-cry, "Workers of all countries, unite!" At the same time he founded a secret association under the name of the "Propagandist Club" with a view to preparing "the general revolution."²

Yet in London he found an even less fruitful field for his labours than in Berlin. "England, the ancient refuge of political offenders," wrote Zenker in 1895, "although it has sheltered Bakunin, Kropotkine, Reclus, Most, Penkert, Louise Michel, Cafiero, Malatesta, and other Anarchist leaders, and still shelters some of them; although London is rich in Anarchist clubs and newspapers, meetings, and congresses; yet possesses no Anarchism 'native to the soil,' and has formed at all times merely a kind of exchange or market-place for Anarchist ideas, motive forces, and the literature of agitation. London is especially the headquarters of German Anarchism; the English working-classes have, however, always regarded their ideas very coldly, while the Government have always regarded the eccentric proceedings of the Anarchists, as long as they confined themselves merely to talking or writing, in the most logical spirit of the doctrine of *laissez-faire*."³ Indeed, so sturdy was the resistance

¹ E. V. Zenker, *Anarchism* (Eng. trans.), p. 238.

² Dr. Zacher, *Die Rothe Internationale* (1884).

³ *Anarchism*, p. 242. Zenker here displays remarkable discernment with regard to the attitude of the British Government, which is usually

offered by British Labour to Most's doctrines that when he endeavoured to publish his paper *Freedom* no printer could be found to set up the type. Alas! with the spread of "education" (?) such obstacles have long since been removed!

In 1881 Prince Kropotkin visited London and found his reception equally discouraging. At his meetings he was obliged to talk to almost empty benches. Only in the towns of the North were anarchic doctrines met with some degree of enthusiasm. "The year I passed in London," he wrote despondently, "was a year of real exile. For one who held advanced Socialist opinions there was no atmosphere to breathe in. There was no sign of that animated Socialist movement which I found so largely developed on my return in 1886."¹

What was it that provided the fresh impetus to the plan of World Revolution during those five years? In the past, as we have seen, the secret societies had provided the medium through which it was able to work, and after their absorption by the Internationale the so-called "Working Men's Association" had become the great cover for its activities. But now that the Internationale was dead it became necessary for the secret societies to reorganize, and it is at this crisis that we find that "formidable sect" springing to life again—the original *Illuminati of Weishaupt*.

The facts about this resuscitated order are very difficult to ascertain, for naturally they have been carefully kept from the public, and as in the case of the earlier *Illuminati* of 1776 every effort has been made by interested writers to conceal the existence of the society, or, if it must be admitted, to represent it as a perfectly innocuous and unimportant association.

What we do know definitely is that the society was

incomprehensible to foreigners, the prevalent idea on the Continent (especially in France) being that the tolerance displayed in this country towards alien agitators springs from a profound Machiavellian policy of encouraging subversive ideas for the weakening of rival powers. To the French mind our national naïveté is inconceivable; it cannot believe that we really regard these people as harmless eccentrics whom it would be tyrannical to suppress.

¹ *Memoirs of a Revolutionary*, ii. 251.

refounded in Dresden in 1880¹—not in 1896 as it has been asserted—but it seems that its existence was not discovered until 1899. That it was consciously modelled on its eighteenth-century predecessor is clear from the fact that its chief, one Leopold Engel, was the author of a lengthy panegyric on Weishaupt and his Order, entitled *Geschichte des Illuminaten Ordens* (published in 1906), and in 1903 the original lodge at Ingoldstadt was restored. The official organ of the association from 1893 onwards was *Das Wort*. The society is still in existence and is believed to number adherents not only on the Continent but in our own country.

Of course we shall be assured that this association had no connection with the course of the World Revolution; yet the fact remains that the year of 1880, in which it was refounded, inaugurated a recrudescence of the revolutionary movement both in Europe and America.

On the 20th of August of this same year a secret revolutionary congress was held at Wyden in Switzerland, which brought about a definite rupture between the two German groups—the Social Democrats, led by Liebknecht and Bebel, formally expelling the Anarchists, led by Johann Most and Hasselmann. The theory of the latter as summarized by Zacher will be seen to be identical with the plan of the first Illuminati: "They held the existing order of things to be so corrupt that they were ready to compass its overthrow by any means, however violent, without concerning themselves as to what should take the place of that which they destroyed. *Their ideal was universal chaos, which must have as its necessary consequence the war of all against all and the break-up of all civilization.*"²

The connection between these plotters and the Nihilists of Russia is also clearly apparent. Two days after the assassination of Alexander II. Hasselmann had addressed a meeting in New York, from which a message of sympathy was sent to the Russian Nihilists containing this phrase: "Brothers, we thoroughly approve your procedure. Kill,

¹ "Die Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart," *Encyclopedia*, edited by Friedrich Schiele and Leopold Zscharnack (Tübingen, 1912); article on "Illuminaten."

² Zacher, *Die Rothe Internationale*.

destroy, make of everything a *tabula rasa* till your enemies and ours have been annihilated." ¹ The exact formula of Nihilism will be here recognized.

The Social Democrats differed only from the Anarchists in believing that this consummation should be effected by a more gradual process; and herein, as Zacher points out, lies their sole claim to "moderation"—if the Socialist party "attempts before the outer world to play the rôle of a peaceable party of reform, this is nothing more than a strategical manœuvre in order to maintain a show of legality in the face of public opinion and not to frighten waverers away. . . . However divergent, therefore, may be the views of the two factions of German Socialists, *i.e.* the Social Democrats and Anarchists, with regard to the policy to be pursued and the final goal to be attained, yet they both rest upon the same foundation, that is, the conviction that the present system cannot continue and must therefore be overthrown, which can only take place by forcible means."

Moreover, by the respective organs of the two parties, the *Sozialdemokrat* of the so-called moderates and the *Freiheit* of the Anarchists, we find the original ideas of Weishaupt, Cloutz, and Bakunin clearly expressed. Thus, for example, in the matter of religion the *Sozialdemokrat* for the 25th of May 1880 declares that "it must be candidly avowed Christianity is the bitterest enemy of Social Democracy. . . . When God is driven out of the brains of men, the whole system of privilege by the grace of God comes to the ground, and when Heaven hereafter is recognized as a big lie, men will attempt to establish Heaven here. Therefore whoever assails Christianity assails, at the same time, monarchy and capitalism." ²

In the same manner the *Freiheit* for February 5, 1881, characterized Christianity as "a swindle invented by jugglers," and went on to observe: "Do but read the Bible through, supposing you can overcome the disgust that must seize you when you open the pages of the most infamous of all shameful books ("das infamste aller Schandbücher"), and you may soon observe that the God whom this twaddle

¹ Zacher, *Die Rothe Internationale*, p. 28.

² *Ibid.* p. 25.

inculcates is a million-headed, fire-spitting, vengeance-breathing, ferocious dragon." ¹

The war on the *bourgeoisie* waged by Marat, Robespierre, Cloutz, and Hébert under the influence of the Illuminati is again declared by *Freiheit* for December 18, 1880: "It is no longer aristocracy and royalty that the people can intend to destroy. Here perhaps but a *coup de grâce* or two are yet needed. No, but in the coming onslaught the object is to smite the entire middle-class with annihilation." Or again: "Extirpate all the contemptible brood! Such is the refrain of a revolutionary song. . . . Science now puts means into our hands which make it possible to arrange for the wholesale destruction of the brutes in a perfectly quiet and business-like fashion," etc.²

In July 1881 the Anarchists assembled a small International Revolutionary Congress in London under the aegis of Johann Most and the German-Jewish Nihilist, Hartmann—author of the plot for blowing up the Czar's trains two years earlier—at which Prince Kropotkine was present as delegate from the Anarchists of Lyons. Amongst the resolutions passed were the following:

The revolutionaries of all countries are uniting into an "International Social Revolutionary Working Men's Association" for the purpose of a social revolution. The headquarters of the Association is at London, and sub-committees are formed in Paris, Geneva, and New York. . . . The committees of each country keep up regular correspondence amongst themselves and with the chief committee by means of intermediate addresses for the sake of giving continuous information; and it is their duty to collect money for the purchase of poison and arms, as well as to discover places suitable for the construction of mines, etc. To attain the proposed end, the annihilation of all rulers, ministers of State, nobility, the clergy, the most prominent capitalists, and other exploiters, any means are permissible, and therefore great attention should be given specially to the study of chemistry and the preparation of explosives, as being the most important weapons, etc.³

This was a little too much even for the confiding British Government, and Most was at last condemned to eighteen

¹ Zacher, *Die Rothe Internationale*, p. 27.

² *Ibid.* p. 26.

³ Zenker, *Anarchism*, p. 231; Zacher, *Die Rothe Internationale*.

months' imprisonment. Disgusted at this treatment, and still more at his difficulties with the printing of his *Freiheit*, "Most, grumbling, left thankless old England and went to the New World, where however he was, if possible, taken even less seriously." ¹

Prince Kropotkine also shook the dust of Britain off his feet. "My wife and I," he writes, "felt so lonely in London, and our efforts to awaken a Socialist movement in England seemed so hopeless, that in the autumn of 1882 we decided to remove again to France. We were sure that in France I should soon be arrested; but we often said to each other, "Better a French prison than this grave." ²

People who see in the Russian revolutionary movement only the natural result of repression will do well to note this passage. The amazing degree of liberty accorded by the British Government to the foreign agitator elicits from him no word of gratitude or appreciation, nor does it seem to occur to him that the fact of England being a free country might have something to do with the difficulty of rousing in it a spirit of rebellion. To Kropotkine this land of liberty, even more than Czarist Russia, was "a grave."

It will be seen that the recrudescence of the revolutionary movement cannot then be attributed to any subversive tendencies on the part of the people, but coincides exactly with the reorganization of the Illuminati. Even the most incredulous must surely admit it to be a curious coincidence that the society was reconstructed in 1880 and that on January 1, 1881—that is to say, the very year when Prince Kropotkine was lamenting the lack of Socialist enthusiasm amongst the British working-classes—Mr. Hyndman in the *Nineteenth Century* announced "The Dawn of a Revolutionary Epoch." It is evident that once again the people were not in the secret of the movement and that preparations were going forward without their knowledge in co-operation with foreign revolutionaries. The connection between the secret organizations of this date with German Illuminism is,

¹ Zenker, p. 243.

² *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*, ii. 254. In the light of this sentence it was amusing to find the British press referring to Prince Kropotkine in his obituary notices as "a sincere lover of England!"

moreover, clearly evident. Thus in London a lodge called by the same name as that to which the Illuminatus Gracchus Babeuf had belonged—the *Philadelphes*—carried on the rite of Memphis—founded, it is said, by Cagliostro on Egyptian occultism—and initiated adepts into the higher grades of illumined Freemasonry.¹ It was here that Johann Most and Hartmann conducted their intrigues and that, in spite of the recalcitrance of the printers, they succeeded for a time in publishing their journal *Freiheit*, and it was by associations of the same kind in New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia that both Most and Hartmann were received on their arrival in America. That these American associations were continuously in touch with the Anarchist movement in England is clear from the fact that delegates had been sent by them to attend the aforesaid International Congress in London in July 1881 “with the object of studying chemical methods which might be useful to the work of revolution.”²

In all these plottings England seems to have been the chief objective, as the following extraordinary passage that appeared in the *New York World* a year or two later testifies :

“ÇA IRA ! ÉCRASEZ LES INFÂMES !”

The storm of revolution is looming and lowering over Europe which will crush out and obliterate for ever the hydra-headed monarchies and nobilities of the Old World. In Russia the Nihilist is astir. In France the Communist is the coming man. In Germany the Social Democrat will soon rise again in his millions as in the days of Ferdinand Lassalle. In Italy the Internationalist is frequently heard from. In Spain the marks of the Black Hand have been visible on many an occasion. In Ireland the Fenian and Avenger terrorise, and in England the Land League is growing. All cry aloud for the blue blood of the monarch and the aristocrat. They wish to see it pouring again on the scaffold. Will it be by the guillotine that cut off the head of Louis XVI. ? Or by the headsman's axe that decapitated Charles I. ? Or by the dynamite that searched out the vitals of Alexander the Second ? Or will it be by the hangman's noose around the neck of the next British monarch ?

No one can tell but that the coming English *sans-culottes*,

¹ Deschamps, iii. 628.

² *Ibid.* iii. 629.

the descendants of Wamba the Fool and Gurth the Swineherd, will discover the necessary method and relentlessly employ it. They will make the nobles—who fatten and luxuriate in the castles and abbeys, and on the lands stolen from the Saxon, sacrilegiously robbed from the Catholic Church and kept from the peasantry of the villages and the labourer of the towns—wish they had never been born. They will be the executioners of the fate so justly merited by the aristocratic criminals of the past and the present. The cry that theirs is blue blood and that they are the privileged caste will not avail the men and women of rank when the English Republic is born. They will have to expiate their tyrannies, their murders, their lusts, and their crimes in accordance with the law given on Sinai amid the thunders of heaven: "The sins of the fathers shall be visited upon the children even unto the third and fourth generations."¹

Sir Lepel Griffin, who quotes "these ravings," adds the significant words: "It is necessary to note that the *New York World* is edited by a German."

If we do not believe in a connection between occult forces and world revolution how are we to explain these periodic outbursts of revolutionary fury proceeding not from the people but from the enemies of the country against which they are directed? According to Mr. Hyndman, in the aforesaid article, the movement was largely developing under the auspices of the Jews, and it is interesting to compare this prophecy with that of Disraeli that had immediately preceded the 1848 explosion, for the point of view in both will be seen to be identical:

The influence of the Jews at the present time is more noticeable than ever. . . . They are at the head of European capitalists. . . . In politics many Jews are in the front rank. The press in more than one European capital is almost wholly in their hands. The Rothschilds are but the leading name among a whole series of capitalists, etc. . . . But whilst on the one hand the Jews are thus beyond dispute the leaders of the plutocracy of Europe . . . another section of the same race form the leaders of that revolutionary propaganda which is making way against that very capitalist class represented by their own fellow-Jews. Jews—more than any other men—have held forth against those who make their living not by producing value, but

¹ *The Great Republic*, by Sir Lepel Henry Griffin, (1884) pp. 3-4.

by trading on the differences of value ; they at this moment are acting as the leaders in the revolutionary movement which I have endeavoured to trace. Surely we have here a very strange phenomenon. . . . Those, therefore, who are accustomed to look upon all Jews as essentially practical and conservative, as certain, too, to enlist on the side of the prevailing social system, will be obliged to reconsider their conclusions. But the whole subject of the bad and good effects of Jewish influence on European social conditions is worthy of a more thorough investigation than can be undertaken here. Enough, that in the period we are approaching not the slightest influence on the side of revolution will be that of the Jew.

That Jews belonging to both the revolutionary camps of Anarchy and of State Socialism were now co-operating in their efforts to overthrow the existing social system is seen from another passage in Mr. Hyndman's works, in which he describes a visit he paid to Karl Marx when the anarchist Hartmann was present.¹ That these two Jews both desired the downfall of the country which so foolishly offered them hospitality is further evident.

Already twelve years earlier Marx had formed his plan of attack on Great Britain. In the Instructions issued by the General Council of the Internationale signed by Dupont, the acolyte of Marx, and despatched from London to Geneva in 1870, this axiom had been laid down : " Although revolutionary initiative must come from France, England alone can serve as a lever for a serious economic revolution."

But this revolution was not to be brought about by the English workers, for the instructions go on to say :

The General Council being placed in the happy position of having its hand on the great lever of the proletarian revolution, what folly to let it fall into purely English hands !²

This policy is then summed up in the following message by Marx :

1. England is the only country in which a real Socialist revolution can be made.
2. The English people cannot make this revolution.
3. Foreigners must make it for them.

¹ Hyndman's *Reminiscences*, p. 280.

² Deschamps, ii. 569.

4. The foreign members, therefore, must retain their seats at the London board.

5. The point to strike at first is Ireland, and in Ireland they are ready to begin their work.¹

"These English," Dupont added, "have all the materials needed for a Socialistic revolution; what they lack are the generalizing spirit and the revolutionary fire."

The author of the *Secret History*, whence we glean this gem, observes:

What then? Karl Marx, Eugène Dupont, and George Eccarius, must clutch their power and keep their seats. They say so boldly. . . . These gentlemen were aware that a revolutionary march is not an easy thing in London, where the people are so individual in their tastes and tempers, and so stupidly attached to independent judgement, private property, and personal rights. But they were not without some hope. In turning to the West they saw a star descending to the Irish Sea. That star they followed with beseeching eyes: it trembled over Cork. "The only point where we can strike the great blow against official England is on Irish soil. In Ireland the movement is made a hundred times more easy for us by the two prime facts that the social question is that of rent, and that the people are more revolutionary and exasperated than in England. . . ."

A final phrase completed M. Dupont's account:

The position of the Internationale in face of the Irish question is very clear. Our first care is to push the revolution in England. To this end we must strike the first blow in Ireland.²

Through what agency was this blow to be struck? What was the organization on which the World Revolutionists depended for the execution of their plan? Again a secret society. From the French Revolution onwards it was always by secret societies that Continental agitators had carried on their work in Ireland. The Society of United Irishmen founded in 1791 was, as we have already seen, directly modelled on the method of Weishaupt, the Secret Societies under Fenton Lalor in 1848 had followed the same tradition, and now the Fenians, who had come into being between 1858 and 1870, were organizing them-

¹ *The Secret History of the International*, by Onslow Yorke, p. 156.

² *Ibid.* p. 159.

selves on the same model. This was the society on which Marx and his council depended for support. The statement will of course be indignantly denied by the conspiracy of history which seeks to prove Fenianism, like Nihilism, to be indigenous to the soil in which it flourished, a movement wholly unconnected with the central organization of World Revolution. But as it happens, the connection between Marx and the revolutionaries of Ireland is not a matter of surmise but of fact, for it rests not only on the above-quoted message dated January 1, 1870, but receives further confirmation from an entry in the records of the Internationale containing a message of sympathy addressed to the Fenians in December 1869 by the General Council of the Internationale in London.¹ It was evidently, therefore, on the strength of the manner in which this overture was received that Marx a few weeks later despatched his confident declaration to Geneva.

But the Internationale had failed to bring about the desired revolution in Ireland, and it was not until the date we have now reached, 1882—after Illuminism had been reconstructed—that Fenianism, which in about 1872 had become a secret society, known as the "Irish Republican Brotherhood," embarked on its course of dynamite outrages in Great Britain and America. The patriotic Catholic prelate, Monsignor Dillon, in a course of lectures held in Dublin, thus eloquently warned Ireland of the danger to itself and to all Christian countries from the conspiracy that was seeking to destroy every national and religious ideal :

It is not an expression of Irish discontent finding a vent in dynamite which England has most to fear from anarchy. . . . The dark directory of Socialism is powerful, wise, and determined. It laughs at Ireland and her wrongs. It hates and ever will hate the Irish people for their fidelity to the Catholic faith. But it seizes upon those subjects which Irish discontent in America affords to make them teach the millions everywhere the power of dynamite, and the knife, and the revolver, against the comparatively few who hold property. This is the real secret of dynamite outrages in England, in Russia, and all the world over ; and I fear we are but upon the threshold of a social

¹ Guillaume, *Documents de l'Internationale*, i. 251.

convulsion which will try every nation where the wiles of the secret societies have obtained, through the hate of senseless Christian sectaries, the power for Atheism to dominate over the rising generation and deprive it of Christian faith, and the fear and the love of God.

Monsignor Dillon goes on to describe the manner in which the occult powers enlist their dupes, and shows the terrible fate of

the Irishman who first begins to listen to the seducer of the secret society, and afterwards becomes himself a seducer, a leader, perhaps a traitor, in the deadly conspiracy to ruin religion, to destroy God. His career is often this: At first a hopeful, young, ambitious student of his country's history, he begins to feel indignation at her wrongs, and wishes to right them. In a fatal hour he meets the tempter. He is sworn into the terrible sect. He gets a command, an importance in the organization. He is youthful, but the season of life wherein to make an honest livelihood passes rapidly in intrigue. He knows the course into which he has fallen is bad, is injurious to religion, but he hopes to repent. . . . But having lived his best days to conspire, he now must conspire to live, and inured to bad habits, he is at last ready for anything. . . .

By degrees he herds with the worst class of Atheistic and Socialist plotters.

And this is strange, for while the Irish conspirator may be as able to plot mischief as the worst of the miscreants with whom he associates in France, he differs from them in this, that in the secret of his soul he never loses his faith. They know this well, and they watch him, use him, but never fully trust him. Many a broken Irish heart the children of the Revolution in Paris have made already. Many a one of those Irish victims wishes again for the days of his boyish innocence and blessed faith. . . . God grant that . . . the race of wretched men who have so often in the past ensnared generous-hearted Catholic Irishmen in Ireland, in Great Britain, in America, and elsewhere, may end for ever. From such false agents, and from the machinations of all enemies to Irish Faith, we may well pray, GOD SAVE IRELAND.

The New World, like the Old, was soon to experience the effects of the great conspiracy. In 1886 the Anarchists of America, led by Johann Most, gave evidence of their presence by a dynamite explosion in the Haymarket of Chicago.

But it was not until 1891 that the series of Anarchic outrages described as the *période tragique* began in earnest. Was it again a mere coincidence that in July 1889 an International Socialist Congress in Paris decided that May 1, which was *the day on which Weishaupt founded the Illuminati*, should be chosen for an annual International Labour demonstration, and that it was with a demonstration organized by the Anarchists on May 1, 1891, that the *période tragique* began?

For three years a gang led by Ravachol continued to terrorize the population of Paris with bombs and dynamite outrages, a series of crimes that ended with the stabbing of President Carnot at Lyons on June 25, 1894.

Later on followed the attacks on crowned heads—the murder of the Empress of Austria in 1898, of King Humbert of Italy in 1900, of King Carlos and the Crown Prince of Portugal in 1908, of the King of Greece in 1914.

Professor Hunter, who in his book *Violence and the Labour Movement* deals in an interesting manner with the psychology of the men who perpetrated these deeds, asks our sympathy with them on the score of their devotion to a cause. Quoting Emma Goldman's explanation that they were impelled "not by the teachings of anarchism but by the tremendous pressure of conditions making life unbearable to their sensitive natures," Professor Hunter goes on to ask how it is possible for society to take the lives of these "tormented souls," driven to desperation by the sorrow and suffering of the world.

Now to begin with, a great number of the perpetrators of Anarchist outrages cannot be placed in the category of tormented souls, but belong simply to the class of common criminals who, if they had lived a couple of centuries earlier, would have found a congenial career as footpads, cut-throats, or banditti. One group of German Anarchists in New York who lived by arson—that is to say by insuring their premises for amounts far in excess of their real value and then burning them down with kerosene—ended by murdering and robbing an old woman in Jersey City; Ravachol, the leader of the Paris Terrorist gang, was finally convicted and executed for strangling a mendicant hermit;

whilst the motor bandits of 1912 led by Bonnot, whom we are also asked to regard as rebels against "society," seem to the lay mind indistinguishable from the highway-men of romance.

But in the case of those "tormented souls" which it would perhaps be nearer the truth to describe as "unbalanced brains" who appear to be victims of an idea rather than of mere criminal instincts, the point overlooked—and we cannot help thinking wilfully overlooked—by Professor Hunter is that they were not solitary fanatics acting on irresistible individual impulse but the agents of a conspiracy. The art of the secret societies has always been to seek out physical and mental degenerates and work upon their minds until they have roused them to the requisite degree of revolutionary fervour. Bound at the same time by terrible oaths, the wretched tools selected for each crime set forth on their tasks knowing full well there could be no turning back for fear of the vengeance of their instigators. Even as recently as the attack on M. Clemenceau the weak-minded youth Cottin admitted that he was a member of a secret society and his connection with the Anarchist movement was clearly established by the papers found at his lodgings.

It is not then these poor creatures who should be led to the scaffold or caged in prison cells until they lapse into imbecility; the lunatic asylum should be reserved for such as these, the scaffold for the superiors of the secret societies who direct their strokes. But hardly less guilty are the sane and responsible Socialists like Professor Hunter who, by their glorification of crime, impel other weak minds to follow the same course.

Whilst Anarchy was thus making itself felt throughout Europe, Socialism pursued a more leisurely course. As in all revolutionary movements violence had won the day, and the decline in popular favour that had begun with the anti-Marxian demonstrations of 1872 continued to the end of Marx's life. Although by 1881 he had spent thirty-two years in London, he was "practically unknown to the British public"¹ and counted no following amongst British

¹ Hyndman's *Reminiscences*, p. 272.

workmen. Moreover, at this date he contrived to fall foul of one of his staunchest supporters amongst the intelligentsia, Mr. Hyndman, whom he accused of pilfering his works without acknowledgement. "His attacks," writes Mr. Hyndman, "of the most vindictive character, were" "followed up by Engels with even more of vitriolic fervour for years."¹

Of the various British Socialist organizations inaugurated during this period I do not propose to treat in detail. Neither the Social Democratic Federation, founded in 1883 by Mr. Hyndman, nor "The Fabian Society," formed by Mr. Sidney Webb in the same year, nor the "Christian Socialists" under the Rev. Stuart Headlam, originated any new doctrines, but merely elaborated the ideas of their Continental inspirers. Many members of these societies were probably not Socialists at all but merely honest social reformers, whilst the less sincere—"drawing-room Socialists" living in luxury and tilting against the social system to which they owed their mode of existence—took up Socialism as a novel form of excitement and carried little weight, for their inflammatory speeches met with scant appreciation even in the poorest quarters of London. That they succeeded in obtaining a certain following amongst malcontents—mainly of their own class—is undeniable, but it was not they who supplied the driving force behind the great revolutionary machine which thirty-four years later was to deliver the supreme attack dreamt of by Weishaupt for the destruction of civilization.

¹ Hyndman's *Reminiscences*, p. 283.