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Leo Tolstoy as a thinker and revolutionary of anarchism

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Considering Leo Tolstoy and his anarchist teachings and world-view at the present time, in a world shaken by significant stages of political and social revolution, amounts to a fundamental and decisive examination of his views, but also to a review of one's own understanding of goals and practical activities. The World War and the period following it overthrew and eliminated much that had previously been untested, the recognition or rejection of which had been theoretical on both sides. Social and economic laws of development, ideological postulates, the labor movement in its manifold forms, aspirations, and expectations—all these have had the potential for revelation, and it is no longer difficult to assess their usefulness and correctness. But also the attitude of individual people, the principles and thoughts and elements of will that uplift or depress them—in short, all those peculiar conscious processes that manifest themselves in the individual at moments of greatest significance—these too have had, and still have, the opportunity for manifestation.

To what extent have you withstood the tremendous event of the World War, this touchstone for nations and continents in their sociological, political, and economic nature? To what extent have the means and methods of action following the (…) teachings proven effective? And to what extent has the effectiveness and activity of the social idea and its embodiments in society been demonstrated, creating new things, displacing the old, and liberating and gratifying both mankind and society?

If today, ten years after Tolstoy's death, since which so much has happened and can never be undone, we consider his teachings in the light of events, taking stock of his will and aspirations alongside the events that have taken place, then the figure of the great spiritual leader of Yasnaya Polyana rises to such gigantic proportions that, if we are able to appreciate Leo Tolstoy's significance for human culture, we find ourselves almost overwhelmed by the immense contours of the spiritual sky that Tolstoy occupies.

It should not be considered a banal exaggeration when I say: It is thanks to Tolstoy alone that anarchism still rises as a shining tower of human culture, offering a goal of salvation, a liberating ideal, and a blissful fulfillment of the present to all the oppressed, all the exploited, and all those crushed by political, clerical-theological, and economic exploitation. It is only to Tolstoy's teachings that we owe the invincibility and ever-flaming triumph of the idea of anarchy over the state, militarism, war, and revolutionary rhetoric.

From the womb of the modern labor movement, two wings have emerged that set themselves the goal of abolishing the existing system. These two strands of socialist thought—whose earlier stages of evolution we will disregard entirely—can be called, in succinct terms, social democracy and anarchism.

At its cradle stands Leo Tolstoy, born on September 9, 1828. He thus experienced the modern labor movement, the intellectual development of socialism and anarchism, almost more than another glorious, luminous spirit of humanity: Peter Kropotkin. In his prime, Tolstoy met Proudhon, and as a struggling man, inwardly

driven by the fervor of ceaseless searching, the various metamorphoses of the proletarian movement passed him by.

Today, this phase of the socialist movement, which began in the 1830s, allowed itself to be transformed into the precursor to bourgeois democracy and was naturally shamefully betrayed by it, which then temporarily placed the power of the state in the hands of the Parisian proletariat and its socialist democracy, made a new start in 1864, crystallized, but only relapsed into the same old mistakes. Today, this phase, which lasted until 1914, is dead and gone, and its aftereffects, like its epigones, leave behind only the same disappointment as the former one; they must remain just as barren for human liberation as this entire era, which has sunk in the sea of blood of the World War and the international dismemberment of peoples.

In this sea of blood, madness, and nationalist-militaristic idiocy, three ideas in particular have been lost, which, in their entirety, can best be expressed by the title: bankruptcy, the complete self-destruction of Marxism. But quite apart from its dogmatic doctrinal structure, the distinctive features of the collapse of the social movement as such are the collapse of the belief that the proletariat would be united into an international unity through the labor movement; the collapse of the belief that a new cultural and spiritual conception, that of socialism and humanity, had so overwhelmingly taken hold of the proletarian psyche as to render it incapable of war; and finally, the collapse of the belief that the proletariat, through capitalism and the state—that is, its essential economic and political conditions—would be led to embrace revolution rather than allow itself to be used as an international sacrificial victim for war purposes, preferring to proclaim political or social revolution.

In the demise of these three postulates of faith, not only do these three collapse in their particular nature, but anyone who understands the idea, problem, and task of the social struggle and its movement knows only too well that with it, all the preconditions and foundations of the labor movement, its future victory on its

previous paths, have collapsed. Admitting what is, is the most important thing today: the previous labor movement, and more than that: the social movement of all tendencies, insofar as it plods along the usual paths of political parties, trade union wage struggles—including in the form of syndicalism, for unfortunately, this has become no less of a disappointment in France than social democracy as a party for the spirit of peace of humanity—and Marxist-revolutionary cothurnas, is a carcass. And in the form of life peculiar to this, it will never lead to a transformation or the abolition of the existing authoritarian and monopolistic world order. This is unshakably certain today.

Leo Tolstoy's tremendous mission of cultural liberation lies in having gathered the essential materials for a liberation of the human spirit, which finds its clearest fulfillment in anarchism, but which he himself only attains when he has absorbed, processed, and further developed them. Tolstoy is the greatest revolutionary of socialism, and in the purification he bestows upon it, Tolstoy creates those ethical, intellectual, but also socially disruptive and reunifying elements that bring socialism to fruition and, in anarchism, provide it with both its foundation and its extension.

His, Tolstoy's, greatest achievement is to have torn socialism, anarchism, and revolution from the realms of vague enthusiasm and postponement of the future and placed them on the real ground of struggle. For him, there are no intermediate stages, no economic preconditions, and no human mass quantities in the realization of the social ideal of humanity. He rightly knows that they are present wherever and whenever the spirit of understanding and cognition dwells and lives—and he knows even more: namely, that this spirit is created by the ruthless act of realization and a life without compromise. To state briefly what I feel and what I have learned to recognize through Tolstoy: It is the greatest delusion to believe that the social revolution will lead to capitalism and anarchism; on the contrary: the realization of socialism and anarchism by the individual, the small and ever-growing minority group—this realiza-

capitalism, and monopoly ownership, and communist anarchism emerges as the only possible form of life for a natural human transformation in freedom.

Leo Tolstoy taught us this, and more than ever, he is today, and for the struggle of the present and future, the most pioneering revolutionary, the only one who makes strict demands: Immediately put into practice what you believe in! Live it! In formulating this strict demand, he is also the most brilliant pioneer for a free human community. Therefore, his name shines before us as an inspiration, and we thank him by striving to act in his spirit.

entangled—through education and external influences—in the web of violence that the proletariat neither recognizes nor understands the nature of violence.

The old theory of socialism mistakenly attributed the existence of the existing system either to economic laws or to the state and its institutions. In truth, these are merely consequences and effects; the existing system of violence is based on the masses' use of violence in all individual and social spheres, and this use stems from the proletariat's erroneous, spiritless worship of violence, which is artificially cultivated by the state, schools, militarism, the church, parties, and demagogic lust for power. The moment the proletariat refuses to exercise the force it demands in all areas of the existing order of power—and this is the essence of Christianity, as Tolstoy teaches—this entire order of power collapses helplessly, and, perhaps most importantly, no new one emerges. Humanity and society are finally liberated, free.

Leo Tolstoy called for this struggle of a heroic way of life, which declares the social revolution to be opened for every individual who embraces it, to be initiated by him—this struggle for self-liberation and universal liberation until his last breath. It is the most grotesque ignorance of his will to interpret his words about non-resistance as if he had preached submission to evil, while in reality he meant by this a rejection of all legal and political quackery, such as military force—he was writing in Tsarist Russia! — and at the same time, non-resistance through armed force, because this never brings about revolution, but always only war and new power. And because he understood that it is foolish to call on the workers to take up arms when the workers produce the very weapons that turn against them; since they can win much more easily, more humanely, and more surely through the destruction of all weapons and non-production—this is what Tolstoy understood by his non-resistance; just think about it a little, you braggarts of pseudo-revolution!—the same thing by which, at a stroke, society is freed from the state, clericalism,

tion leads to the social revolution, which is necessarily a brief final stage in the completion of a gradually growing and ever-growing process of realization of liberation.

At a time when the screaming agony of Marxism enforces the universal enslavement and self-enslavement of the people through the most powerful state autocracy, through mind-numbing, capitalist discipline and toil, through Machiavellian slaughter of the people in nationalist-state war interests, all this under the most infamous Jesuitism of lies: this would be necessary to achieve liberation; Where Bolshevism has thus made the millennia-old villainy of all priests and state scoundrels its shibboleth: existence on earth, the life of human beings, their ego and personality, and their very own vital interests must recede and be sacrificed for the salvation of a mystical future, one that will only emerge after their earthly existence. While these very priests, clergymen, and statesmen who speak thus themselves think as little of sacrificing themselves in the present for the future as, for example, the Pope of Rome thinks of shortening his earthly life for the sake of the glories in the heavenly afterlife. In this time, when the word "communism" has become synonymous with the most dishonorable Marxist state fraud perpetrated against the misled people, Leo Tolstoy has become our only leader and guide, the brightest star that humanity must follow if it truly wants to find its salvation!

What are Leo Tolstoy's fundamental ideas, how do they enrich the incomparably life-creating principle and ideal of anarchism and shape it into a contemporary form of reality in human and social life?

It is only in Tolstoy that anarchism becomes less a sociological system and more a cultural concept of spiritual life for the present and of the deeds and actions that truly fulfill it with those self-liberating actions. This occurs primarily because Tolstoy lifts the issue of reshaping the social condition beyond the confines of a purely sociological conception and raises it to the highest spiritual sphere of the meaning of life and all that humankind considers

valuable and essential: Tolstoy revolutionized the human outlook within which the majority of European-American civilized humanity grows up and is educated.

What we call worldview, philosophy, and science is possessed only by a small, largely privileged handful of people, of whom, due to their scientific or philosophical education, only a tiny fraction achieves an individually and socially liberating way of life and outlook. Even highly distinguished liberal scholars such as Häckel, for example, by no means achieve liberal perspectives due to their scientific convictions. Quite apart from that, all these intellectual elements of scholastic philosophy and scientific education exist outside the real people. Not only are they by no means positive axioms in their foundations and essential content, they do not even offer the moral and ethical guarantee for a truly ideal elevation of the human spirit and its social milieu. The people themselves are completely ignorant of it, and one of the most unfortunate side effects of socialism is its desire to be considered "scientific," which from the outset distances it from the people's true understanding, even closing itself off from it, creating a caste of "knowers," so-called "theorists," and a caste of the infinite majority of "ignorant people."

It is only through Leo Tolstoy that we are able—and in a completely incomparably different and infinitely deeper form than through St. Simon, Lamennais, or Weitling—to bring anarchism and its communist economic form closer to the people's consciousness, indeed to allow it to flow from it. Tolstoy achieved this by purifying popular philosophy—religion, and especially Christianity—of everything that is essential for church and state to keep people in bondage. Infinitely more than Luther, Tolstoy is a destroyer of all ecclesiastical dogma and theology, and in a certain respect his conduct, in its purity and relentlessness, can only be compared with that of the ancient Jewish prophets who rebelled against the literal meaning of Judaism and its commandments, but even more so with the luminous figure of Christ, of whom it is of no consequence whether he ever lived or not, as long as we

possess his anti-state, anti-mammonistic, anti-priestly teachings of love, which locate the divine in the good of the human powers of understanding and thus declare human reason to be the most sovereign and only element of God.

Here, Tolstoy created a connection to the national consciousness, the national spirit as it is, that could not be more magnificently accomplished. And anyone who knows the power of religiously intuitively perceived feudal ideals from the history of the people will also understand what surefire weapons have been forged for us here against all power, authority, violence, and oppression of the state and the church!

At the same time, they offer what can be found nowhere else: the positive guarantee that new people and thus new conditions, new relationships will be created. The Christianity of the Sermon on the Mount, as Tolstoy teaches, transforms the simplest, even the most spiritually cultivated individual into a new human being of equal value. In him, peasant and spiritual man find each other; both have their inner humanity, their divinity, to discover and—to live! And both are led by this true Christianity to a common basis of action for struggle and liberation: both must turn against the institutions of state and church as such and strive to achieve their complete abolition, not just for the future, but also in their daily lives, which must inevitably lead to the collapse of these institutions of universal enslavement and universal degradation, maintained primarily only through inner subjugation.

But how is this collapse to be achieved? Probably only through the hitherto customary and, unfortunately, only known to us, methods of political revolution? That is, through violence in a warlike-military sense?

Here again we encounter Tolstoy's sublimely unified worldview, which prepares and brings about a revolution in life through a lifestyle in the spirit of a true religion of life. We now arrive at the Archimedean point of the entire social problem, and it is a misfortune for the international proletariat that it is so spiritually