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# THE COMMUNITIES OF TOLSTOYANS

## AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE COOPERATIVE COMMUNITY MOVEMENT OF TODAY

By

**HENRI LASSERRE**

Translated from the French by
PURCELL WEAVER

**Rural Cooperative Community Council**
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# INTRODUCTION

About the year 1888, a movement of a very special nature began among the young intellectuals of revolutionary tendencies in Russia. Inspired by Leo Tolstoy, it was strongly imbued with his principles of non-violence and non-cooperation with the State.

The movement encouraged the formation of agricultural colonies or communities on a Christian-communist basis, as a means of realizing as fully as possible the ideals of life advanced by the great master. Some colonies of this kind were soon established here and there within the vast empire. Their example was quickly imitated and a sudden multiplication of communities took place. These communities played an important part in spreading the ideas of Tolstoy. Others were gradually established in a number of European countries: Austria, Germany, France, Holland, England.

These organizations lasted for several years. Later, indeed, the whole movement experienced a crisis, and one by one the communities broke up. Today they are practically forgotten.

Nevertheless, there is much to be learnt from the social and religious experiments made in these little centres of communal and Christian life, especially by those—increasing in numbers at the present crucial time—who in various countries aspire after this mode of living and toward a social structure more in keeping with their faith or their ideals.

The Tolstoyan communities, moreover, present certain interesting analogies with those of the first Christians, where "they had all things common." They also possessed a number of features which invite comparison with the Doukhobor communities of Universal Brotherhood; and, still more, with the Hutterian communities, which, originating in the sixteenth century, have maintained their existence and their principles of practical Christianity right up to the present. There are now some fifty Hutterian communities, spread over Alberta and Manitoba (Canada) and the state of South Dakota (U.S.A.), with an aggregate membership of about five thousand.

The ideal of social life held by the communities of Tolstoyans was in many respects similar to that of a more recent religious group centred round the late Dr. Eberhard Arnold, when he was leader of the Student Christian Movement in Germany. His community, beginning at Sannerz in Germany in 1920, was affiliated with the Hutterian movement in America; it emigrated to England soon after the Nazis came to power, and settled on a farm at Ashton Keynes, Wiltshire, where it became known as the Cotswold Bruderhof, and later as the Society of Brothers. Shortly after the outbreak of World War II, most of the members of the Cotswold Bruderhof left England

for Paraguay, where they established a similar colony known as the Sociedad Fraternal Hutteriana, now numbering some 350 souls. The four or five Brothers who remained in England were soon joined by adepts with the same religious and social conception in the British Isles, and in March, 1942, a new settlement was formed in Shropshire, —the Wheathill Bruderhof.

The Tolstoyan communities thus constitute a link—a vital, important link—in the long chain of groups which from antiquity to the present time have sought to realize their ideal of the good life by living in communist colonies, as economically independent as possible of the outside world.

For these various reasons we feel that the following brief account of the communities of Tolstoyans may not be lacking in interest for contemporary readers. Its publication is all the more appropriate at a moment when the world, long politically and economically sick, is once more embroiled in war and violence of every kind. As the crisis deepens, more and more people will begin to realize the need for a completely new basis of our social and economic life, implying a fundamentally different attitude of man towards man, and to think of the advisability of forming groups living voluntarily in fraternal communities, freed (as much as may be) from the oppressions and follies of a disordered world.

Our chief source of information about the Tolstoyan communities has been a small and little-known French book by Paul Birukoff, "Paroles de Tolstoi" (Sayings of Tolstoy). This book, or rather pamphlet, is most probably a reprint of a series of articles written about 1917 for some unidentified French-Swiss review. It is principally valuable for its numerous quotations of Tolstoy himself: we shall borrow from these extensively in the pages that follow.

Paul Birukoff was one of Tolstoy's closest associates during the later years of the great Russian writer's life, and his fervent disciple. For many years he was manager of a firm in St. Petersburg (Leningrad), which published his master's philosophical works. Towards the end of Tolstoy's life Birukoff became his private secretary, and was like a son to him. After Tolstoy's death in 1910, Birukoff, himself an exile from Tsarist Russia, lived for ten years in Geneva, where he published the "Journal Intime" (Intimate Diary) and other posthumous works of the master. Later, he wrote a complete biography of him, "Tolstoy, his Life and Work," which is regarded as the most dependable source of information on the great Russian author.

The present writer met Paul Birukoff in Geneva and, some twenty-five years ago, received from him the little work referred to above. Not long before the present war he paid a visit to the Cotswold Bruderhof in England, which served to rekindle his faith—long held—

in the value of community living. Shortly afterwards, he chanced to lay his hand again on Birukoff's pamphlet, and felt that this was a good moment to revive knowledge of the Tolstoyan community movement of two generations ago—for the benefit both of those who wish to extend their information on Tolstoy and his influence, and of those who are interested in the rapidly developing community movement of the present day.

Such, then, are the inspiration and origin of the pages that follow. It is the hope of the writer that they may help to stimulate interest in these courageous and noble endeavours to establish here and now cells of a social life based upon justice, brotherhood and the Christian spirit.

In closing, the writer wishes to express his sincere thanks to Mr. Purcell Weaver for translating the original (and as yet unpublished) French manuscript into English, and for his careful and accurate interpretation of the author's thought.

HENRI LASSERRE.

Toronto, Canada,
June, 1944.

## CHAPTER I

## ORIGIN OF THE TOLSTOYAN COMMUNITIES

How are we to account for the fact that, about the year 1888, young Russian intellectuals in revolt against the established order set up a number of Christian-communist agricultural settlements in different parts of their country?

In order to understand this phenomenon, it is necessary to refer to events that took place in the years prior to the one in question, and, more particularly, to the internal political situation in Russia at that time and the ferment of intense thought with which the Russian youth was seething.

It was a moment of acute crisis. Till then, the majority of revolutionaries—understandably numerous under the frightful tyranny of the Tsarist regime—held the view that terror should be matched with terror, and advocated the assassination of rulers of states and high officials, with the aim of destroying violently the public power in answer to governmental attacks upon themselves. The movement was thus closely identified with anarchist-nihilist doctrine.

The assassination of the Tsar Alexander II in 1881 was followed by a series of other outrages. But the ruthless measures of repression adopted by the authorities soon completely disorganized the revolutionary party. Its leaders were either executed or deported to Siberia. The obscure taverns in which the terrorists met and hatched their plots were discovered by the police and closed for a long while.

These severe measures left the militant elements among the working class, as well as the young intellectuals, in a badly-crippled condition. Most of them lost faith in the nihilist teaching which declared that the victims of oppression were to free themselves of their oppressors—the rulers—by a process of systematic assassination. It was a madly grotesque idea. But as every nihilist knew that he might at any moment be called upon to "do his duty," involving almost certain death, a sentiment of personal moral obligation developed among all the members of the group. And this obligation, even though mistakenly conceived, was extraordinarily powerful and by no means lacking in nobility, since it involved the conscious sacrifice of life.

But this moral obligation now came to be questioned. Many of the younger generation went further and began to realize the folly of the nihilist creed they had hitherto believed in. They saw the utter ineffectiveness of direct action by the individual, which had only resulted in aggravating the tyranny of the Tsarist regime.

These reflections led to further questions. Would the struggle be abandoned, and with it all hopes of a better future for humanity? And now that individual effort had lost its value in their eyes, must the revolutionary give up? Perhaps he had better be content to seek immediate pleasure wherever it was to be found, and cease to worry about the sufferings of others and about the future of society. If this were the case, would he retain his lofty sentiment of moral obligation, his readiness for self-sacrifice, his strong sense of good and evil?

Such were the questions men were asking themselves in working-class circles and among the intellectual youth at this period of acute crisis in Russia, when two new currents of ideas began to circulate: first, the teachings of Karl Marx, and, very soon afterwards, Leo Tolstoy's principle of non-violence.

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It is easy to see how ripe the Russian soil was to receive the seed of Marxism under these circumstances. The new doctrine was superior to nihilism in that it explained the existing form of social organization. It gave to the latter a scientific basis, with the affirmation that its evolution and transformations were in obedience to fixed and necessary laws. It followed from this that isolated acts were powerless to modify the general course of events.

According to the Marxist doctrine (new at that time to the Russian working class), individual action counted for nought. Thus were confirmed the lessons taught by recent cruel experiences. The important factor, setting in motion vast movements destined to alter

the course of history and periodically to reshape the world, was the pressure of impersonal collectivities, put in action by the play of material needs. In the present age, the only collectivity able to effect the anticipated social changes was the organized working class.

Such, then, was the doctrine which began to assert itself in Russia at this period. The fact that it set aside any idea of individual moral obligation contributed greatly to its highly favourable reception by the youth, with which the sentiment of duty had recently become unpopular as a reaction against the sacrifice of life demanded by the creed of nihilism. The new conception, moreover, provided the youth with a social ideal, a positive, concrete ideal of justice and brotherhood, which was to be realized in the establishment of a classless society, freed from the exploitation of man by man. There was to be a great fraternal association of all men, united for organized collective work. The doctrine went on to affirm that this entrancing vision must of necessity one day become a reality, through the collective action of the workers themselves. Though the realization of the vision was doubtless still a long way off, it was worth while striving for at once.

So a new faith was born, very different indeed from that of the terrorists: a faith in the advent—still remote, it might be, but as certain as a scientifically proven fact—of the Socialist City of the future.

It was to the workers themselves, to the proletariat, that the high mission of building the new social order, when the time should be ripe, belonged. All they were required to do for the moment was to unite and organize. One can understand how attractive such a creed must have been to the youth, coming to them so soon after the destruction of the faith which had hitherto sustained them. It was a gift without price to a young generation desperately seeking a new reason for living and hoping, even under the crushing yoke of Tsarist despotism. It was not surprising that the new doctrine spread with great rapidity and gained numerous and enthusiastic converts.

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Yet Marxism did not correspond to the spiritual condition of all progressive Russians. Many, especially among the young intellectuals, were too deeply imbued with idealism to be able to accommodate themselves to a system based on a materialist philosophy. They were too convinced of the individual worth of the person to forego protest against the dialectiçal determinism of Karl Marx which attaches only a very relative value to the individual and to his spiritual aspirations and sentiment of moral obligation. Having come to recognize the error of violence, they were opposed not only to individual terrorist acts, but also to the collective violence, sanctioned

by the new doctrine in order that the ultimate triumph of the proletariat over the other classes might be assured.

Finally, the Marxist doctrine was repugnant to a section of rebellious youth which disliked the notion that the era of justice and brotherhood announced by Marx and his disciples could only be expected in the distant future and must be the exclusive achievement of the working class. They wanted to take every possible step here and now to break the chains that bound them. And if it was impossible for them to do anything, individually, to set the oppressed masses free, they thought they ought to try and avoid complicity in the cruelties and monstrous injustices of the established social order.

Could they not make themselves almost independent of the machinery of organized society by beginning to live in common and sustaining themselves from the produce of the soil? It seemed wrong to pursue a career in the midst and with the support of the society which they so heartily condemned. Rather than devote their energies to maintaining and strengthening this system, rather than submit to the oppressions and humiliations which society had in store for them or acquiesce in all the compromises which life within it imposed, why should they not establish agricultural communities, where they could immediately practise those principles of a simple, just and brotherly life to which they were so deeply attached? What they did would be on a very small scale, of course, but it would be done in all sincerity.

It was not long before various groups were formed here and there in Russia to discuss these ideas and give expression to these aspirations. They established contact with the great apostle of non-violence, Count Leo Tolstoy, the humble thinker of Yasnaya Polyana.

One of these groups in particular, that of St. Petersburg (Leningrad), showed great enthusiasm and activity. Its members met frequently at the house of a keen disciple of Tolstoy—Paul Birukoff. Birukoff was still quite young at this time, and was engaged in managing a publishing house which issued popular editions of Tolstoyan literature. Gentle by nature and highly cultivated, Paul Birukoff came of an aristocratic family and so had contacts in high circles, which, despite his connection with the already suspect Tolstoy, provided him with a certain degree of protection for a long period of time. He was therefore able to organize regular meetings in his apartment, which immediately became the centre of Tolstoyan propaganda.

Here the philosophical and social writings of the master were read aloud, followed by discussions lasting far into the night. Finally, in an atmosphere vibrant with enthusiasm, the young people present took great decisions. They were going to launch a mighty movement, that would lay the foundations of a new social order based on goodness, justice and love, an order which would prepare the way for the coming of the "Kingdom of God" upon earth.

## CHAPTER II

# PRINCIPLES OF THE TOLSTOYAN COMMUNITIES

The Tolstoyans of St. Petersburg, who met at the house of Paul Birukoff, entered into relations with the other groups of Tolstoyans scattered over the whole of Russia. From these they learnt that under the impetus of Tolstoy's ideas Christian-communist communities, not unlike those of the first Christians, were in process of formation at various points throughout the country. A number of the young people of St. Petersburg decided to join them, and, in furtherance of this decision, Paul Birukoff was given the task of gathering precise information on the existing settlements. He applied to the head of one of the nascent organizations, a former revolutionary terrorist, recently converted to Tolstoyism. This person was not long in replying to the inquiry and with all the enthusiasm of a recent convert set out the principles on which his little community was founded. The document he sent is extremely instructive, and no less interesting today than when it was written. We are going to give a translation of it in full, just as it stands in Birukoff's little book, "Sayings of Tolstoy," of which we have already spoken in the Introduction.

"We have neither programme nor by-laws—nothing of the kind. We do not want any chains. The strongest ties are without solidity if inner union is lacking; on the contrary, the complete absence of formal ties makes spiritual union in the truth all the more necessary.

"Recognizing love for our neighbour as the basis of life, which for us consists of serving men with all our faculties, we consider agricultural work done with our own hands to be the best, as being the only work that is just from every standpoint. Since agricultural work requires for its accomplishment the cooperation of several persons, we take four men and four women as being the smallest membership with which to start activities. Our work will doubtless become more productive as our family grows in size, beyond this minimum.

"We regard collective work as possessing an educational role which manifests itself in reciprocal influence, in moral support, and in mutual strengthening in the principles which bind us together. As we look upon manual labour not only as an inescapable condition of our existence, but equally as the means of serving others, we feel obliged to reduce to a minimum the work done to secure our own material wants, so as to have more time left for the satisfaction of our spiritual needs, for the activity of love. Hence our formula: the minimum for oneself and the maximum for others, without the least anxiety for the future.

"The extent of our needs is governed by the conditions of our life. We endeavour to produce everything that we have to consume. Anything else is purchased with the money gained from the sale of farm produce. Naturally our material needs can still be considerably reduced; the place they occupy in each individual's life is always inversely proportional to the degree of spiritual development attained. We do not hold with asceticism or the mortification of the flesh, but aspire to the absorption of the flesh by the spirit. So for us there is no question of privations—I mention this merely to indicate to you the direction of our thoughts.

"With regard to economic and legal relations, we do not recognize either the right of property or the right to the labour of others. We only recognize the right to the enjoyment of land and the means of production in so far as we apply our own labour to them.

"Religious ceremonies obscure for us the moral sense of Christ's teaching; we therefore reject them as useless. Instances of dissolute living or drunkenness do not exist among us. We even consider self-indulgent habits like smoking, et cetera, to be undesirable.

"We keep aloof from political revolutionary propaganda, because it is based on violence, with which we do not hold, considering that love alone can give understanding of life and the ability to destroy evil. We cannot, therefore, countenance compulsion, either directly or indirectly. We affirm our faith without any compromise, even to the point of sacrificing our lives.

"We accept all whose beliefs are in harmony with ours and who wish to acquire knowledge of our work. Each newcomer will be recognized as having all the rights of a member of our Family, provided that he is fitted to work, feels in complete spiritual solidarity with the other members, and unreservedly decides to break with the old life. If he has not yet reached this stage of development, he can stay with us as a 'pobationer,' when all that will be asked from him is conscientious work and friendly relations with his fellows. His criticisms of the common life will be received with gratitude, as being a means of improvement. The members of the Family likewise reserve the right to make observations to the newcomer, if he does anything contrary to the Family's line of conduct. If the probationer does not find among us the conditions of life that can satisfy his spiritual needs, he has only to declare it in all sincerity, and, bidding our Family a brotherly farewell, to leave.

"Married couples are required not to lavish special care upon their own family, to the detriment of others. When a child has been weaned, that is to say, when the natural physical bond between mother and child has been broken, it is transferred to a common room with the other children, under the loving supervision of one of the women members of the community.

"The dining-room is common. Women are exempt from laborious tasks. The work is divided according to the natural aptitudes of the members and having regard to their respective tastes. The organization of all work is decided upon in common. In general, unanimity is reached on all practical questions.

"Each member considers it his duty to rid his heart of every kind of discord in his relations with the other members of the Family. In case of offence being given, it is expressly recommended never to answer at once, but to put off replying until the following day. It is understood that an active member is not to have sexual relations with a woman from outside.

"This is all there is to tell you concerning the questions which have been solved thus far by common agreement of all the members of our Family. I hope it will suffice to give you an understanding of the ideas which unite us. Naturally, if one of our members feels that the moral standard of our life falls short of the dictates of his conscience, he has but to take his leave of us, and we to kiss the latchet of his shoe, as that of one who has attained the higher degree of the Son of Man with no place to lay his head.

"Since the minimum of members required for the definite establishment of the nucleus of our Family has not yet been reached, we are for the moment only accepting persons who intend to join us permanently. We are particularly short of women. If you know of any who would like to contribute to the formation of this nucleus, then acquaint them with this report. If they are in agreement with our principles, let them write and ask us for further information and at the same time tell us about themselves. We are not sure, however, that letters addressed to us are not being opened, so nothing should be written which the writer is not prepared to own to before the authorities."

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The reader of this document cannot help being struck by the lofty idealism of the principles of community life which are there outlined. There is every reason to believe that the other settlements derived from the same movement were founded on the same or very similar principles. This description, therefore, can give us a fairly good idea of the spirit animating the whole movement.

I would like at this point to make a few personal observations on two or three of these principles.

First and foremost will be noted the fundamentally altruistic, Christian conception of human nature adopted by the Tolstoyans. Life for them consists "in serving men with all their faculties." They recognize "love for our neighbour as the basis of life." They wish

to *live* their Christianity; therein lies the whole of their religion. They consequently reject religious ceremonies as useless, and even charge them with "obscuring the moral sense of Christ's teaching." Does not such an attitude correspond with the profound religious sentiments of many men and women of today?

This religion did not permit of any compromise. In particular, all recourse to violence was forbidden, and consequently all direct or indirect participation in a social order based on the use of compulsion. What of the problem of evil? The task is to destroy it, and not to add yet another act of wrongdoing. Is there any other force besides love truly able to eradicate evil?

The Tolstoyans knew that such an uncompromising attitude towards any recourse to violence or compulsion—an attitude which implied in particular condemnation of the State and refusal to conform to its demands whenever they were at variance with the "Law of Love"—exposed them to repression at the hands of the law and to persecution. They were prepared for this, and affirmed their determination to hold fast to their faith, even unto death. What a teaching! What an example!—even though one may wonder whether in actual practice it was at all possible for them to abstain absolutely and always, as their creed demanded, from compliance with certain of the commands of the State or even from appeal to some of its institutions.

Love for one's neighbour is not, for the Tolstoyans, limited to a few determined activities of man. For them it embraces the whole of life. In particular, it attaches a very special significance to work. In the communities, work is no longer motivated by egoistic, private interest. This idea of private interest, generally regarded as a necessary stimulus to man's economic activity, is entirely foreign to them. It is true that they admit the necessity of providing materially for their existence. The only means for providing for it that they recognize is, of course, their own labour, since the right to the labour of others—particularly in the form of income derived from property—is strictly excluded. Yet their satisfaction and joy in labour are not drawn from this necessity of working in order to live, but rather from the sentiment that they are thereby serving others.

It is just here that all generally-accepted ideas—all treatises of political economy and all the great social and economic systems—are thrown overboard. It must be admitted, however, that most men, whatever the class to which they may belong, would today be unable, without first undergoing a complete moral re-education and a profound spiritual change, to find in the pleasure of serving their neighbour a sufficient motive for putting all their energies and faculties joyously and whole-heartedly into the tasks before them.

As things are, then, it is probably true that for the majority of men the egoistic incentives to which appeal is commonly made remain

today a necessity. But are there not also quite a few other people who have discovered the futility of this appeal to self-interest, and can only find satisfaction in their work through the benefit which their exertions enable them to bring to others?

Among these people with a developed social consciousness there must be many who have asked themselves, or will ask themselves, why they and others with the same outlook should not come together and set up organizations in which the economic life would no longer be motivated by egoistic ends, but by the need for helping others, for serving humanity; by the desire of "living one's Christianity" effectively.

* * * *

Another principle affirmed by the Tolstoyans and practised in all their communities is that of agricultural work being the only calling that a consistent Christian can follow, on the ground of its being "the only one just from every standpoint." As is well known, this is one of the ideas on which Tolstoy used to insist with the greatest vigour.

There are one or two things, however, to be said on this question. It is doubtless true that for small groups of from ten to fifty persons, as was the case in the communities we are discussing, farming was the only logical occupation. It required a relatively small amount of capital and made possible the production of most of the things directly essential to the colonists' existence. External purchases were thereby reduced to a minimum. A further advantage is that it is probably easier to cut down one's material needs, without danger to health, when leading the life of a farmer in the country, than in the pursuit of any other occupation.

But in a larger organization, can everyone be advantageously employed in cultivation (even when one includes various accessory occupations, such as repair of tools, maintenance of power supply, canning and preserving, small home industries, the education of children, etc.)? It must not be forgotten that the larger the agricultural enterprise, the smaller will be the proportion of those who can be employed beyond the growing season. Nor must it be overlooked that it is extremely hard to direct the work of a large number of farm hands in a normally productive way, particularly if some of them are inexperienced in the use of farm implements and the care of animals. This is especially true of market gardening, which is naturally an important feature of agricultural settlements that are at all numerically large. It is usually estimated that a man not born on a farm will, during the first three or four months of training, only average about a third or even a quarter of the work done by workers of equal strength who are accustomed to farming.

With these considerations in mind, is it not desirable that communities—we are now thinking not of the Tolstoyan communities with which the question did not arise, but of communities now in existence or being projected—should add a suitably-sized industrial enterprise to their agricultural operations, and thus be in a position to utilize continuously the labour strength of a good proportion of the members?

The experiments in industrial decentralization made by Henry Ford at his Dearborn plant can be instructive in this connection. They have served to demonstrate the numerous advantages of transferring certain units of manufacturing mass production to the countryside, and combining their operation with some agricultural enterprise. Of similar import are the various industries which were carried on in the—now defunct—Llano Colony of Louisiana, U.S.A., and the factories for combing wool, knitting, and the like, which, according to our information, provide an appreciable source of income for some of the Hutterian communities in Canada.

Though we are aware of the difficult problems involved in an industrial enterprise, especially when it is controlled by the operatives themselves, we do not believe that they are insoluble. We feel that it is worth while striving to overcome the difficulties that may arise, as one of the aims of every community should be to bring the labour force of all its members to a peak of efficiency. Further, it has to be borne in mind that the products of industry have an increasingly large place among the articles that are indispensable to man, even when he has reduced his needs to that modest minimum required in a community. It would therefore appear that an experiment in community living can hardly be considered as complete and conclusive, unless a rightful place is given to industrial manufacture in the colony's programme of economic activities.

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Before concluding this chapter, a few words must be said on the question of family relations within the community. It will be recalled that the description sent to Paul Birukoff mentioned that children, as soon as they were weaned, were transferred to a common room, presumably early in the morning and for the whole day. It would seem that the intention was to reduce to a minimum the ties between parents and children, for fear, no doubt, that these natural ties might interfere with those which should bind all the members of the community into a larger Family.

It would also seem that marriage did not imply for these Tolstoyans any idea of constraint or permanence. Such an attitude was natural for men and women resolved to avoid all fetters, but there was probably also the desire to avoid the danger that conjugal ties of too hard and fast a character might damage the unity of the entire group.

This question of sexual relations and natural ties of blood has always been one of the delicate problems of community organization. Certain communist colonies—with or without a religious basis—solved it by adopting the principle of "collective marriage," by which all the women of the colony became the wives of all the men. Under this scheme, children were not attached in any way to their father or mother, but depended on the group as a whole.* In another community—the Oneida community in the U.S.A.—a system of "complex marriage" was for long adopted, under which a man and woman were forbidden to form a mutual attachment of a lasting character: after a year or two of association they were required to make a change of partners. Among the Shakers of the Mount Lebanon colony and its branches, and among the Separatists of Harmony, Aurora (N.Y.) and Bethel, the rule was celibacy, though their communities were composed of members of both sexes. Children were adopted from outside and brought up in the colonies, but this measure did not suffice to secure their continued existence.

These various colonies, all of them American, have now disappeared, after enjoying long and prosperous lives. It may be added that despite the eccentricity of their principles regarding marriage, these communities acquired a reputation of high morality. The same is true of the colonies of Tolstoyans.

Is it not possible, however, to combine the natural effective ties of marriage and blood with the demands of community life? The example of the Cotswold Bruderhof community would seem to show that it is. When the writer visited this community in 1938 (before it emigrated from England to South America), it consisted of some forty families, with about ninety children, as well as a number of celibate members. Each family had its completely separate dwelling. Just as in the Tolstoyan colonies, the children were tended and

*Strangely enough, this system of collective marriage finds some support with no less an authority than Plato. In the fifth book of his "Republic," where he describes the place that he would assign to women and children of the highest class—that of the "Guardians"—in an ideal commonwealth, he went much further, indeed, in his recommendations, than any actual community has ever gone in practice, combining communalization of wives and offspring with quite a programme of eugenics. These views of Plato are repugnant to us. It must not be forgotten, however, that in his time the concepts and institutions of marriage and family were intimately tied up with those of private property. The head of the family was positively the owner of his wife and children, just as of his slaves, house and other possessions. In the ideal commonwealth imagined by Plato, on the contrary, there was to be no private property whatsoever among the Guardians of the City. Everything was to be held in common, including, therefore, those important objects of property, the women and children. In our days, the weakness of Plato's reasoning is easy to detect. Relations of marriage and blood are no longer direct property relations: they belong to the realm of affection, and imply social and educational responsibilities rather than rights. All things can be held common, therefore, and yet at the same time monogamic marriage and family ties be upheld, while this would have seemed sheer nonsense to the people of ancient Greece, and even to a Plato.

It is hardly necessary to add that there is nothing in common between the collective marriage of Plato's "Republic," regulated by law, selected by the authorities, sanctioned and officially celebrated by the community, and the system practised by the Tolstoyan communities. The latter regarded the bond of marriage as a strictly personal affair and individual responsibility with which no outside authority, either of the State or of the Church, had any business to interfere, and which was even of no concern for the community group itself except for the practical considerations that it had to provide adequate living accommodation for couples and nurture for their offspring.

educated in common from an early age. In the morning they were handed over to the care of women, the instructors and teachers of the nursery, kindergarten, and primary school. But they did not remain there all day. After the midday meal which was taken in common—by the adults in the large refectory and by the children in the schools—an hour and a half was reserved for the joys of home life. Father, mother, and children would meet in their house or walk together under the beautiful shady trees which adorned the Bruderhof estate. In addition, on Sundays the family had all its meals together at home.

So far from counteracting the influence of natural ties, every effort would appear to have been made in the Cotswold Bruderhof to give them a large place in the life of the community, a far larger place, it may be said, than that allowed them in most city families today. And there is no reason to think that the unity of the colony was impaired by this arrangement.

Will it perhaps be through Christian-communist communities of the modified Cotswold Bruderhof type, that family life, which has suffered so grievously under capitalism, will be restored in the possession of its essential, affective and educational features?

Strict monogamic marriage, with all its implications, has also been the rule in the Hutterian Bruderhoefe now in Western Canada and South Dakota, which have already been in existence for a number of generations. But it would seem that there has been a tendency in these communities towards excessive intermarriage between close relatives, with its consequent degenerating effects. It cannot therefore be said that the Hutterites have solved the problem of family relations completely.

If, despite the difficulties, the Society of Brothers can adhere in the years to come to its high ideal of marriage and the family without disadvantage either to the community life or to the full personal development of the members, its example will no doubt have a considerable influence upon social institutions of the future.

## CHAPTER III

## VIEWS OF TOLSTOY ON THE COMMUNITIES

The statement of principles (reproduced at the beginning of Chapter II) which was sent to Paul Birukoff by the head of one of the Tolstoyan communities, sums up well the aspirations of the young followers of Tolstoy towards the end of the eighteen-eighties, and the ideas underlying the various Christian-communist colonies established at this time. And the statement is an accurate reflection of the ideas of Leo Tolstoy himself—at any rate of his ideas on community life.

It is not surprising, therefore, that when Paul Birukoff read this statement of principles to the many young people who used to gather in his home, they should have been filled with enthusiasm. A number of them, of both sexes, offered to go to the colony mentioned in the document. The movement rapidly gained new converts, and quite a few new communities were founded, which contributed greatly to the spread of Tolstoyan ideas.

It must be borne in mind, however, that these colonies of young Tolstoyan intellectuals were not set up by Tolstoy himself or even at his direct instigation or with his cooperation. The master, of course, was in frequent contact with them and gave generously of his advice by correspondence. Representatives of the colonies often came to see him at his famous residence of Yasnaya Polyana, where they received the brotherly welcome and cordial hospitality which the master was wont to extend to his disciples when they visited him. Yet for all this, Tolstoy remained sceptical, even anxious, about these organizations which put themselves forward as the social interpretation of his own teachings.

It is therefore interesting to see what Tolstoy thought of these attempts to translate his ideas into practice. His opinions on these and other questions are found in his "Intimate Diary" and also in various letters to his friends which were later collected by Paul Birukoff. Portions of these letters were published by the latter in "Sayings of Tolstoy," and the quotations which follow are taken from this work. From them we may get an idea of Tolstoy's views on the colonies. They will also help us—better perhaps than anything else could—to form a clear estimate of the social and moral value of these experiments in community living. They will show the qualities to which this kind of life can give birth and also the dangers to be guarded against.

The first extract is a brief commentary by Tolstoy on the account given him of life in a small community by a visiting member—a former naval officer. The letter from which the extract is taken was addressed by Tolstoy to a friend who, like Tolstoy himself, lived a life of self-sacrifice and service to his fellow men, while still remaining in his natural social environment.

"There are fifteen people there, eight men and seven women. They live honourable lives, and are laborious, thrifty, sober, chaste and friendly. Moreover, they help the poor of the neighbourhood. One thing, however, displeases me: some of them say and think that there is no other life for a Christian to follow than their own and that in any other mode of life—yours and mine for instance—one is engaged in 'cannibalism,' that is to say, in the exploitation of others. All the same, there is something good in this affirmation; it reminds us of our continual sin, which we are too often inclined to forget. . . ."

Tolstoy thus affirms the high morality of community living, but, unlike some of those of his followers who were members of communities, he refuses to regard it as the only way of living a Christian life. More precisely, as appears from the last sentence in this extract, as well as frequently elsewhere, Tolstoy believes that we can never be exempt, with the world as it is, from the commission of what he calls "our perpetual sin." By this he means that we are all accomplices in social injustice in one way or another. Even when we live isolated from the world and forego all the advantages conferred by social organization, we do not participate any the less in human solidarity. This participation places on our shoulders responsibilities which we cannot evade, even through the collective isolation of community life.

In the following passage, taken from the "Intimate Diary," Tolstoy is still more categorical: "To withdraw into a community, to live this community life, to preserve in it a certain innocence—all this is a sin, an error! One cannot purify oneself alone or even in a small company. If one wishes to purify oneself, it must be done with others without separating oneself from the rest of the world. It is like wanting to clean a place by working at the edges where it is already clean. No! He who seeks to do good work must plunge right into the mire. At least if he is already in it, he must not think that he should escape from it."

This blunt outburst is very characteristic of the "Intimate Diary." While such sallies—and they are numerous—are somewhat disconcerting, they are nevertheless what makes the diary such a vivid and vitally human document. The passage quoted above reveals the constant perplexity of Tolstoy's tormented conscience, always seeking to find the right path. It cannot be regarded as a considered criticism of the communities. Indeed, if it were to be taken literally, it would be an unfair condemnation of them. For most of the Tolstoyan communities were not characterized by that self-retirement, collective egoism, and separation from the rest of the world, which this passage seems to attribute to them. Quite the contrary is the case. Tolstoy himself, as the earlier quotation shows, recognized that the members of the community he was describing "help the poor in the neighbourhood." And it will be recalled that in the statement of principles given in the last chapter, the formula defining the moral attitude of the community was "the minimum for oneself and the maximum for others."

In reality Tolstoy was delighted to see the re-awakening of Christian life in various places in Russia at this period—a re-awakening which was largely inspired by him. He rejoiced whatever form the manifestation took, whether it was brought about by men who stayed

"right in the mire" or by those who lived in communities. Here, for example, is what he wrote after receiving a visit from two young friends who had become members of a community a few months previously.

"These two young people came on foot all the way to my home, after working hard in the fields all through the summer. With their bare feet and sun-burned bodies, travelling without passports, they resembled moujiks. At first I was uneasy; I thought: 'Isn't this a fashion, a new kind of sport, something of mere outward seeming?' But when talking to them I saw that they were consistent, that at bottom their desire was to serve God, to love, to be Christians."

* * * *

But Tolstoy is still troubled about the communities.* He seems to have two main objections. The first, already mentioned, is that the members are inclined to claim that their way of life is the only one compatible with the Christian faith. The second is that contrary to what its adherents affirmed the community movement was not wholly true to its principles, that it was unfaithful, in practice, to the Christian faith. This faith, indeed, implies the banishment from our lives of all acts of violence and of every advantage derived from the violence done by others. They therefore had no business to be severe in their attitude towards the compromises of Christians living elsewhere.

In Tolstoy's view this complicity in the violence of others lay particularly in the fact that the communities owned the property on

*It is interesting to contrast the scepticism of Tolstoy regarding these organizations of young intellectuals, who were certainly his genuine disciples, with his faith and interest in the uneducated Doukhobors. In a sense, he may be said to have been a disciple of the latter himself. The Doukhobors, who seceded from the Russian Orthodox Church in the middle of the eighteenth century, were the first religious sect to put into practice the doctrine of "non-resistance to evil" later taught by the great Russian writer. It is a well-known fact that from the time when the Tsarist government began to persecute the Doukhobors more cruelly on account of their stand against military service (about 1875), Tolstoy defended them with an indefatigable energy, until at last they were able to leave Russia and settle in Canada. In order to assist their emigration, he went so far as to make an exception to his rule—self-imposed for conscientious reasons—never to sell the copyright in his books or accept royalties on them from publishers, by taking the proceeds of his famous novel, "Resurrection," and turning them over to the Doukhobors.

Even after the Doukhobors established in Canada, Tolstoy maintained a regular correspondence with Peter Verigin, the leader of the sect in North America. After Tolstoy's death in 1910, this correspondence was continued by Paul Birukoff. When Verigin became conscious of the need for a higher level of education among the Doukhobor communities, he turned to Birukoff for advice and assistance in setting the programmes of studies, choosing text and library books, training teachers and librarians, etc. Accordingly, in 1926 or 1927, Birukoff joined Verigin in the Doukhobors' head community at Brilliant in British Columbia, and was there for about two years—practically the last of his life—doing the organizing and educational work required.

Many books have been written on this peculiar, yet remarkable and in many ways most inspiring sect of the Doukhobors (often also known as the "Christians of Universal Brotherhood") and on Tolstoy's relations with them. There is therefore no necessity to develop the subject further; besides it is somewhat beyond the central theme of this study. Nevertheless, the Doukhobors deserve recognition for their bearing both on Tolstoy's thought regarding community life and on the history and background of the present cooperative community movement, most of whose protagonists support the principles of non-violence.

which they were established. Though the property was common and not individual, it was nevertheless guaranteed by the state, protected by the police, and consequently based on the use of violence. This radical condemnation of property was, of course, one of the fundamental points of Tolstoy's philosophy. "Property is at the bottom of all evil," he somewhere exclaims. And again: "Property is simply the means of enjoying the labour of others." And it is a means resting solely on the power of the state. The great apostle of non-violence was obsessed by this idea. It explains, for instance, the following remarks addressed to Paul Birukoff after a visit from the representatives of various colonies:

"I have had some interesting conversations with R. It was a repetition of what I said to F. In these conversations their error appeared clearly. I would never have thought of seeking to discover where their inconsistency lay, if they themselves had not been so hard on others. The basic point of the Christian faith is not only that one should not employ violence, but also that one should not profit by the violence of someone else and consequently not acquire property or defend property already acquired. . . ."

But how is one to reconcile this notion with Tolstoy's extolment of the cultivation of the soil, where manual labour in the field is represented as the only truly honourable and Christian employment? Were not the founders of the communities acting fully in accord with his ideas when they decided to devote themselves exclusively to agriculture? Tolstoy at this point draws a distinction between the man who works for his own advantage (or the advantage of his group in the case of communities) and the man who works for the benefit of other people.

"The essential point," he writes, "on which every energy should be concentrated, is the renunciation of property, leading to the status of labourer, of share-cropper. The status of farmer, on the other hand, with a guarantee of landed property, not only does not lead to the renunciation of property, but on the contrary often leads to its defence."

Tolstoy was doubtless right in looking on the communities' ownership of the lands they occupied as a contravention of their professed principle of eschewing violence and carrying on their activities in total independence of state institutions. But it may be asked whether they did not also violate this principle in other ways. Was it only in the matter of property that the communities found themselves in a position of depending materially on the outside world, and in consequence "profiting by the violence done by others"? Could a community exist without using farm implements and machines, building materials, clothing or parts of clothing, and many other

articles, which can only be obtained from capitalist trade and industry? Not to mention railways, the post office and other public services, with which it would be impossible to dispense today.

Christian-communist communities must therefore recognize that they are by no means free from their share of guilt for the use of violence and for the other misdeeds of the social and political order in which they live. It would be as naive for them to think that they were, merely because the use of force had been abolished in the internal relations of the group, as it was for Tolstoy to reproach them with the private ownership of land, as if that constituted their sole infraction of the principle of non-violence, and one truly meriting condemnation.

This naivete reached its high-water mark in the Tolstoyan colony at Whiteway, near Stroud (England). In this colony, founded in 1898, a great effort was made to conform to the letter of the master's teachings on private property. Though the community estate was bought with every legal formality, the deeds of conveyance were burnt upon completion with the intent of making clear that the property was thenceforward to be no longer private property, but communally held and free to all who chose to join the community.

Communities cannot escape their share of collective responsibility for the crimes of the existing social order. There is an inescapable limitation to their aim of non-participation in violence. Communities must accept it with humility and strive to make their own contribution—by peaceful means—to the advent of a better social order. They must never forget that their work is valueless if limited to the improvement of their own members. It must look to the welfare and emancipation of all men.

Tolstoy felt this strongly. He expressed it in a letter to another English colony, inspired by principles similar to his own, known as the Brotherhood Church. This organization was founded at the close of the nineteenth century. (It was still in existence at Stapleton, Yorkshire, in a rudimentary and considerably altered form at the outbreak of the present war). Its members farmed in common a piece of land "dedicated entirely to the service and law of God." For a while they published a magazine, the "New Order." When the colony felt the need of initiating certain reforms, it asked Tolstoy's advice. In the course of his reply, Tolstoy made the following pertinent observations:

". . . There can be no such thing as a group of saints among sinners. . . . We are so made that we cannot become perfect each for himself, nor one by one, nor in groups, but only all, yes, only all together. The heat of a drop of water passes to other drops. If it

were possible to retain the heat in a drop of water without its passing to neighbouring drops, that would prove to us that it was not true heat."

This criticism, so delicately expressed here for the benefit of the Brotherhood Church, had already been formulated by Tolstoy, as we saw, in the passage from the "Intimate Diary" given at the beginning of the present chapter. It probably applies to other colonies of a similar kind, but certainly not to all. There are some where the sense of universal human solidarity is very powerfully developed. In these the heat of the drop of water which they represent is valued only for the heat it can communicate to other drops. Such is the case, we believe, with the communities of the Society of Brothers (in Paraguay and in England). We know of no other colonies where the sentiment of universal brotherhood, the desire for social justice throughout the world, and the anxiety to do something towards bringing about this social justice and relieving the misfortunes of others are so real: an attitude which is the direct outcome of their religious faith. Perhaps this attitude is one of the chief reasons why these communities have been able to guard the purity of their principles through many sore trials, and maintain their pristine vitality for more than twenty years.

## CHAPTER IV

## THE COMMUNITY MOVEMENT SINCE THE TIME OF TOLSTOY

Despite his many reservations, Tolstoy was keenly interested in the communities of Tolstoyans. He kept in constant touch with several, guiding them with his advice and helping them to progress along the path of moral development. It is perhaps true to say that he was more interested in the personal worth of the members of the communities than in the organizations as such. He looked on the latter as a more or less transitory form of social life, "which certain men have chosen on their journey towards Christian perfection, while other men have chosen other forms because their circumstances were different."

And so, when after some years the communities began to break up, Tolstoy was not disturbed. According to him, the reason for the colonies' short span of life was to be found in the defects of the organization itself and not in the failings of their constituent members.

"If the communities break up, it is because the men composing them have outgrown them. They have burst through the envelope no longer large enough to contain them. I rejoice in consequence."

Paul Birukoff was also in contact with the communities and visited several. He was inclined to ascribe their failure to other factors.

He tended to put it down to the shortcomings of the members rather than to the community form of life itself. There is an interesting passage in "Sayings of Tolstoy," where Birukoff explains the failure of his young friends who had thrown themselves into this new way of life with so much zest and enthusiasm.

"The supporters of a religiously motivated communist life," he writes, "based their standpoint on the verse of the New Testament (Acts IV, 32) which says: 'And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that aught of the things that he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.' The youth, which was then aspiring after a social ideal, found this saying very attractive. But they lacked the moral strength. They did not possess the chief condition: the union of heart and soul which can only be achieved by a long discipline of mutual understanding and self-denial. The pooling of material possessions ought to have flowed quite naturally from this union. The communists of whom we are speaking, however, wished to reverse the process. They said to themselves: 'Let us hold our goods in common and that will lead to the union of our souls and of our hearts.' But this could hardly be. Community of material possessions can only be attained either through great sacrifices and renunciations or else by submission to a spiritual authority. In this case there was neither the one nor the other. Despite all their efforts, they did not achieve the intimate union of their individual lives. The mortar of love was absent and their temple collapsed. But while it lasted it was very beautiful. I myself came to admire it and to feel its captivating beauty. I spent some days in one of these communities, and the atmosphere—at once simple and dignified—of this life took an irresistible hold on me. This society of young people of both sexes gave one the impression that it had solved all the vital problems."

This complete "union of heart and soul" without which no community venture can be of lasting character is of course extremely difficult to achieve. In general, a long period of close acquaintance, and some preliminary practical test in collective living would be necessary before the initial group engages in actual community enterprise, to make sure that it is homogeneous enough.* But even complete brotherly love and community of purpose among the founders of the colony are not sufficient. Since one of the principles of the Tolstoyan communities was that their doors were open to all who chose to join them, the risk was great that newcomers would not all be capable of adjustment to and harmony with the original nucleus. A period of probation is necessary, as is the general practice in more recent communities, but was not always so in Tolstoyan settlements.

*Many of the problems involved in this preliminary training appear to have been solved by the Zionist organization "Hechalutz," which has been created to assist the formation by American Jews of collectivist communities or "Kvutzoth" in Palestine. Boys and girls wanting to form or join a Kvutzah are provided with the requisite training on two cooperative training farms in New Jersey.

A typical example of the consequences of too free an admission into the community is provided by the experience of the Tolstoyan colony of Whiteway, near Stroud in Gloucestershire, England, to which reference has already been made. Here the initial group, some twelve in number, who launched the venture in 1898, seem to have achieved that unity of spirit which, as Birukoff admitted, was often lacking in other settlements. "They shared everything, even clothes," wrote Nellie Shaw, who was one of them, in 1936. "They endured great hardships, but the strong spirit of brotherhood made it into a splendid experience. Good will and freedom were the watchwords, and voluntarism the dominant factor."* But the trouble came when new colonists joined. No pledge or promise was even asked from them, the mere wish to join being taken as evidence of sincerity. And the result was that the land had soon to be divided into individual plots and most of the community features to be abandoned.

According to Nellie Shaw, then, the troubles at Whiteway were due rather to lack of discrimination in the choice of new members than to want of understanding and brotherhood among the founders. She concluded her report: "Having lived on the Colony for thirty-seven years. . . . I have been able to live a happy, useful, simple life: had I my time again, I would ask nothing better than to do the same again, that is, provided there were the same fine disinterested group of people that we had in the beginning."**

* * * *

Notwithstanding the dispersion of the communities of Tolstoyans, Birukoff remained convinced of the value of this kind of organization. He concluded his little work referred to above as follows: "We regard these colonies as valuable experiments in the new social life, and would be very glad to see them spring anew, under new conditions and with new objectives. Every sincere effort towards social and moral progress is assuredly not without its value, but will contribute to the welfare of humanity."

This opinion is worth having. It is that of a man who was intimately connected with the life of several of these community enterprises and who followed closely the circumstances which led to the dispersal of many of them. He is convinced that such experiments have a great social value, even if they only last a short time. In his opinion their failure is not to be ascribed to the community organization as such, but rather to the inadequacy of many of those taking part in the experiments. They lacked the requisite moral development, they lacked the necessary technical preparation for fulfilling the manifold tasks awaiting them in the community, and, finally, they

*Report on Whiteway Colony in the book, "Community in Britain" (mentioned in the Bibliography at the end of this booklet), page 35.

**Ibid., page 37.

had no clear and precise understanding of their ultimate common objectives. Birukoff also recognizes that the new human relationships to which their principles gave rise often had to be inaugurated in very unfavourable circumstances.

Nevertheless, Birukoff remained optimistic about these ventures. We have just seen him express the wish that new communities of a Christian-communist character will be established (they may be qualified as "communist" in that they hold in common all property other than personal belongings, and as "Christian" in that they practise the Christian virtues, though in general opposed to the established Churches). His wish has been amply fulfilled. Several communities were founded in Switzerland during the first World War, while shortly afterwards others were established in Austria, Germany, Poland and Bulgaria. Most of these were undertakings independent of one another or of any definite, common school of thought; they were rather inspired by this or that outstanding moral personality who drew a group of disciples around him. It was thus, for example, that was founded, at Sannerz in Germany in 1920, round the person of Dr. Eberhard Arnold, the little community which later became the Cotswold Bruderhof. As mentioned in the Introduction, most of the members migrated to Paraguay soon after the outbreak of the present war, while the few brothers who remained set up a branch community in Shropshire (England).

About 1925, the movement which had originated in the last years of the war burgeoned with a fresh vigour and assumed a more organized form. An "International Movement for Christian Communism" was established, with headquarters at Prague, Czechoslovakia, and branches in France, in the United States of America, and very probably in other countries as well. Though inspired chiefly by Quakers, it was strongly influenced by Tolstoyan ideas. For instance, in 1928, a book was published under its auspices, with the title "Tolstoy and Our Time." The various scattered communities mentioned above joined this organization or at least came into close contact with it.

The movement was not, however, exclusively a community movement. The object it had in view was far more general, in fact much too general. It aimed at nothing less than the complete moral regeneration of all men, at the radical transformation of the economic and social life of the world, at the total cleansing of the political life—both internal and external—of the nations. In short, it sponsored a colossal programme of action in the midst of present social institutions, as if society might become Christianized from top to bottom without the generality of individuals being ready first to adopt in their daily life Christian principles as the basis of their economic and social relations. At the same time, the movement gave strong encouragement to the formation of Communities similar to the old

Tolstoyan settlements. It looked on them as a means of trying out here and now the possibility of a Christian social life and thus of providing examples in miniature of what a society regenerated by a rational, practical Christianity might one day become.

The Prague organization did not get very far. From 1930 onwards it gradually receded. The few community projects studied under its auspices do not appear to have yielded anything of lasting value. The programme of the movement was obviously too vast and perhaps too exclusively in the realm of ideas for it to result in practical achievements. Furthermore, political circumstances, the economic crisis, and, most of all, the unreasoning fear by many Europeans of anything which smacked of Soviet Communism were against it. Then came Munich and the successive invasions by the Hitlerite hordes destroying all free attempts to build a better social order.

Yet even if the International Movement for Christian Communism, as organized in Prague, must be regarded as defunct or at least as being dormant for a long period, similar movements, aiming more directly and positively at the formation of communities, were soon to arise in other lands under the impulsion of new groups or new personalities. It seems that there are always some people, now in one country, now in another, who feel an urge to gather together in communities and to live among themselves a life more in harmony with the dictates of their conscience and of their reason.

The idea of forming communities sprang up with a new intensity in Japan, under the influence of Kagawa, the great Christian and cooperative leader. In India, organizations were set up in the tradition of the Hindu "Ashrams". In Palestine, the collectivist settlements called the "Kvutzoth", which first appeared at the end of the last century, were now more methodically established. New "Kvutzoth" were founded almost every year, by a branch of the Zionist Movement, and increasingly became an integral factor in the re-building of the country.

In England the economic crisis and the growing threat of war led to renewed interest in the community way of life, more particularly among pacifists. The English movement became conscious of its own existence and took definite shape between 1936 and 1937. An organization known as the "Community Service Committee" was set up* to aid the movement, as a result of two conferences of interested groups, one held in Bath and the other in London.

The movement has also spread to the United States, always a favourable field for adventures in community. It is becoming centred around the "Rural Cooperative Community Council" which publishes a periodical, "The Communiteer," at New City, New York,

*At "Chancton," Dartnell Park, West Byfleet, Surrey.

while in Yellow Springs, Ohio, "Community Service Inc." also encourages community organization. An interesting development was the creation in 1939 of the "Rural Settlement Institute," in New York,* the central objective of which was to investigate the possibilities for establishing communities in the United States, more particularly along the lines of the Palestinian "Kvutzoth." This Institute sponsors the publication of literature aiming at the furtherance of the movement.**

During the last few years, another focus of interest in communal life has developed on the Pacific coast, with Gerald Heard as its central figure. Here the inspiration seems to have been found largely in Indian philosophy.

Under these various influences, a number of small communities, or cooperative "group-farms" have recently been established in different parts of the United States. Many of them are of pacifist inspiration.*** And now the movement is making its appearance in Canada, where a "Canadian Fellowship for Cooperative Community" has recently been established (1943).****

* * * *

Most of these new communities and community movements are imbued with moral and social aspirations similar in many respects to those of Tolstoy. Yet, while these developments are akin to the Tolstoyan community movement, they cannot properly be regarded as its direct continuation, as too many new factors have entered in, giving the contemporary movement a character of its own, though this is not yet clearly defined. Nevertheless, the influence of Tolstoy's high ideals and of the endeavours of his disciples to live up to them in their communities is undeniably present. Such an influence can only be beneficial to the community developments of the present time and, indeed, to all efforts towards solving the gigantic social problems with which humanity is now, and will likely long remain confronted.

An attempt to clarify and define the contemporary movement has recently been made by the Canadian Fellowship for Cooperative Community, which early in 1943 issued a tentative statement of its fundamental principles and beliefs. This outline contains the following definition of a cooperative community, indicative of the features on which special emphasis is being laid today:

*At 60 Beaver Street.

**Several of the books mentioned in the Bibliography which follows were published under the auspices of the Institute.

***Information on Pacifist Group-Farm developments may be obtained from the Rural Cooperative Community Council or from American Friends' Service Committee, 20 South 12th Street, Philadelphia.

****Headquarters in Toronto, 273 Bloor Street West.

"A cooperative community is understood here to mean: the geographical and social unit formed by a lesser or greater number of people who, activated by a spirit of brotherly love and a common purpose of service, and denying themselves any personal or group advantage derived from anti-social institutions of present society, provide materially for their essential needs through their own work cooperatively organized. Normally each member lives and works on such communal land and uses such communal productive means as the group may have at its disposal. Where these are not yet sufficient to enable the community to cover all its essential needs, its members or some of them work outside and pool their earnings. This plan of economic life, however, is not an end in itself; it is rather a necessary means to provide the members of the group with the proper social setting for their physical and spiritual development and for a life of service to their neighbours and humanity. Cooperative communities, by their very nature, tend to cooperate with each other, and to establish federative and functional relations among themselves, on a basis of mutual help, social justice, solidarity and universal brotherhood."

The reader will no doubt notice the emphasis laid here upon the attitude of service implied in true community. On this point the contemporary movement is on common ground both with the Tolstoyans and with the Society of Brothers. To the former, as the reader may remember, "the basis of life consists in serving men with all our faculties"; while the Society of Brothers recognizes the eschewing of selfishness and the consecration of the individual "to the highest Cause"—to love—as the essence of community.*

On the other hand, the principles implied in this definition contrast sharply with those of communities such as Brook Farm and the Llano Colony (both now defunct), which had a purely cooperative or socialistic basis and in which the economic personal interest of the members was therefore paramount. They also contrast, of course, with the Marxist, materialistic philosophy underlying the Soviet system. Nevertheless, both the voluntary experiments in socialism and the Soviet Union have manifested a gradual, but strong tendency towards appeal to unselfish motives of the people, to their spirit of sacrifice, to the will to serve.**

As already pointed out, the rapid development of Marxism in Russia and the rise of the Tolstoyan Community Movement both

*See the Report of the Cotswold Bruderhof by E. C. H. Arnold in "Community in Britain," pp. 24 and 25.

**On this point, the Introduction to E. S. Wooster's book, "Communities of the Past and Present," by Job Harriman, socialist leader and founder of the Llano Cooperative Colony, is indicative. So is also the insistence on social service in educational programmes for the Soviet youth.

occurred about the same time—in the late eighteen-eighties. Both were the products—divergent in practically everything except their origin—of the collapse of the nihilist movement at that time. Russian Marxism was to have an extraordinary career: it was destined to produce Lenin, the Socialist-Revolutionary Party, and, finally, the Bolshevik Revolution. The Tolstoyan movement, for its part, was the precursor of the contemporary community movement. Applying the Marxist dialectics, may one not envisage the future synthesis of two conceptions of life as yet opposed: on the one hand, the materialistic emphasis, whose ultimate implications were laid bare by Marx; and, on the other, service and brotherly love, personified in the life of Jesus and put into practice—or at least meant to be put into practice—in intentional communities?

The community movement of today is still in its infancy. Its contribution towards the slow preparation of a better social order may not be apparent at the present stage and will possibly not be felt for a long while to come. Nor should it be expected to exert an independent influence apart from that of other similarly motivated movements and other creative social forces at work in the world, such as, for instance, co-operation in its various fields and forms. Nevertheless, it is our belief that Community is called to play a definite role, among these other forces, in the building up of a new society. By bringing into the very core of our social and economic relationships a new consciousness, a higher motivation than individual and even collective interest, it gives promise of pointing the way to a mode of social life rich in creative fellowship, free of the very seeds of war and human exploitation, and thus of setting man firmly on the march towards the full realization of his high destiny.

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