

MICHAEL BAKOENIN



READER



PRINCIPLES, PROPOSITIONS &
DISCUSSIONS
FOR LAND & FREEDOM

AN INTRODUCTORY WORD TO THE ‘ANARCHIVE’
“Anarchy is Order!”

*I must Create a System or be enslav'd by
another Man's.
I will not Reason & Compare: my business
is to Create'*
(William Blake)

During the 19th century, anarchism has developed as a result of a social current which aims for freedom and happiness. A number of factors since World War I have made this movement, and its ideas, disappear little by little under the dust of history.

After the classical anarchism – of which the Spanish Revolution was one of the last representatives—a ‘new’ kind of resistance was founded in the sixties which claimed to be based (at least partly) on this anarchism. However this resistance is often limited to a few (and even then partly misunderstood) slogans such as ‘Anarchy is order’, ‘Property is theft’,...

Information about anarchism is often hard to come by, monopolised and intellectual; and therefore visibly disappearing. The ‘anarchival’ or ‘anarchist archive’ Anarchy is Order (in short **A.O**) is an attempt to make the ‘**principles, propositions and discussions**’ of this tradition available again for anyone it concerns. We believe that these texts are part of our own heritage. They don't belong to publishers, institutes or specialists.

These texts thus have to be available for all anarchists and other people interested. That is one of the conditions to give anarchism a new impulse, to let the ‘new anarchism’ outgrow the slogans. This is what makes this project relevant for us: we must find our roots to be able to renew ourselves. We have to learn from the mistakes of our socialist past. History has shown that a large number of the anarchist ideas remain

standing, even during the most recent social-economic developments.

‘Anarchy Is Order’ does not make profits, everything is spread at the price of printing- and papercosts. This of course creates some limitations for these archives.

Everyone is invited to spread along the information we give . This can be done by copying our leaflets, printing from the CD that is available or copying it, e-mailing the texts ,...Become your own anarchiv!!!

(Be aware though of copyright restrictions. We also want to make sure that the anarchist or non-commercial printers, publishers and autors are not being harmed. Our priority on the other hand remains to spread the ideas, not the ownership of them.)

The anarchiv offers these texts hoping that values like **freedom, solidarity and direct action** get a new meaning and will be lived again; so that the struggle continues against the

*‘demons of flesh and blood, that sway scepters down here;
and the dirty microbes that send us dark diseases and wish to
squash us like horseflies;
and the will- ‘o-the-wisp of the saddest ignorance’.*

(L-P. Boon)

The rest depends as much on you as it depends on us. Don’t mourn, Organise!

Comments, questions, criticism,cooperation can be send to
A.O@advalvas.be

A complete list and updates are available on this address, new texts are always

welcome!!

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CHRONOLOGY OF BAKUNIN'S LIFE

Michael Aleksandrovich Bakunin born **May 18, 1814** (Russian calander), May 30, 1814 (European calander), in the village of Premukhino in the province of Tvar.

1828 Sent to St. Petersburg to prepare for Artillery School

1829 entered the Artillery School in St. Petersburg.

1832 commisssioned as a junior officer and sent to Misk and Grodno in Poland.

1835 resigned commission.

1836 moved to Moscow and studied philosophy.

1836 translated Fichte's Lectures on the Vocation of the Scholar.

1838 March: published Preface to Hegel's Gymnasium Lectures.

1840 moved to St. Petersburg and in June to Berlin to study and prepare for a professorship at the University of Moscow.

1842 moved to Dresden and collaborates with Arnold Ruge in publishing Deutsche Jahrbücher.

1842 published "Reaction in Germany" in October.

1843 moved to Bern and Zurich, meets Wilhelm Weitling.

February 1844 moved to Paris, via Brussels.

February 1844 ordered home by Russian government.

December 1844 stripped of his noble status and sentenced in abstersia to hard labor in Siberia.

1844-1847 meets and talks with Proudhon often and Marx occasionally, and is on friendly terms with George Sand.

November 29, 1847 at the banquet in Paris commemorating the Polish insurrection of 1830, Bakunin delivered a speech denouncing the Russian government and is subsequently expelled from France. Russian ambassador, in an attempt to discredit Bakunin, circulates the false rumor that Bakunin is employed by the Russian government to pose as a revolutionary.

1847 expelled from France in December and moved to Brussels where he met Marx again.

February 1848 returned to Paris after February Revolution.

March 1848 met Marx and Engels in Cologne and split begins over Marx's denunciation of Bakunin's friend Herwegh, who had led an ill-fated expedition of German exiles to Baden in the hope of instigating an uprising.

June 1848 participated in Slav Congress and insurrection in Prague.

June 1848 Marx publishes false report that Bakunin is a Russian agent responsible for the arrest of Poles.

Latter part of 1848 expelled from Prussia and Saxony, and spends the rest of the year in the principality of Anhalt.

December 1848 Appeal to the Slavs. published.

January 1849 secretly arrived in Leipzig to prepare for an uprising in Bohemia.

April 1849 moved to Dresden.

May 3, 1849 popular rebellion broke out in Dresden and Bakunin emerged as a "heroic" leader.

May 9, 1849 the rebellion crushed, Bakunin, Richard Wagner and Heuber escaped to Chemnitz where Bakunin and Heuber are arrested while Wagner hides in his sister's house and escapes.

January 14, 1850 while held in the Königstein fortress, Bakunin is condemned to death.

June 1850 death sentence commuted to life imprisonment, after which Bakunin is extradited to Austria.

March 1851, after first being jailed in Prague, then Olmütz where he is sentenced to hang. Although the death sentence is commuted, Bakunin is chained hand and foot to the prison wall and suffers acutely. Shortly thereafter, he is handed over to the Russians and

imprisoned in the dungeons of the Fortress of Peter and Paul.

1851 Confession to Tsar Nicholas I.

1854 moved to Schüsselberg prison where he succumbs to scurvy, causing his teeth to fall out.

1857 Tsar Alexander relents, Bakunin is released from prison and sentenced to perpetual exile in Siberia.

1858 married Antonia Kwiatkowski, a young Polish girl, on October 5 and moved to Irkutsk.

June 1861 Bakunin contrives to escape Siberia, arrives in Nikolavsk in July, sails on the Strelak to Kastrup where he boards an American merchant ship, Vickery, to Hakodate, Japan. Next he makes his way to Yokohama, and, in October, sails to San Francisco. In November he crosses to New York, and on December 27, 1861 he arrived in London.

1862 published *To My Russian, Polish and Other Slav Friends, and The People's Cause: Romanov, Pugachev, or Pestel?*

1863 goes to Stockholm and is reunited with his wife, then back to London, and on to Italy.

Mid-1864 back to Sweden, then London, where he saw Marx, and on to Paris where he renewed his friendship with Proudhon, finally moving to Italy where he stayed until 1867. He settled first in Florence.

1864 founded the journal *Libertà e Giustizia*.

October 1865 moved to Naples.

1866 founded International Brotherhood, or the Alliance of Revolutionary Socialists.

1867 travels to Geneva, attends and addresses the inaugural Congress of the League for Peace and Freedom and writes Federalism, Socialism and Anti-Theologism.

September 25, 1868 founds the International Alliance of Socialist Democracy.

July 1868 Bakunin joined the Geneva section of the International Workingmen's Association. Moved to Geneva.

January 1869 secret "Alliance" dissolved.

March 1869 began his collaboration with Nechaev.

Fall 1869 moved to Locarno and translated first volume of Marx's Das Kapital.

September 1869 attended Basle Congress of International.

March 28, 1870 Marx addressed his "Confidential Communication" to his German friends to stir up hatred against Bakunin by declaring him an agent of the pan-Slavist party from which he allegedly received 25,000 francs per year.

June 1870 broke relations with Nechaev.

August 1870 Bakunin expelled from the Geneva section of the International due to his support for the Jura faction.

1870 Published Letters to a Frenchman.

September 9, 1870 left Locarno and arrived in Lyons Sept 15.

September 28, 1870 a popular uprising is suppressed, and Bakunin is forced to flee in the face of an arrest warrant. He hid in Marseilles.

October 24, 1870 sailed from Marseilles to Locarno.

1870-71 Wrote The Knouto-Germanic Empire, including the sections published posthumously as God and the State.

1871 Wrote The Paris Commune and the Idea of the State and published The Political Theory of Mazzini and the International.

Summer and Autumn 1872 Bakunin stayed in Zurich.

September 7, 1872 Bakunin expelled from the International at the Hague congress.

1873 Published Statism and Anarchy.

October 12, 1873 Bakunin retired from the struggle and resigned from the Jura Federation.

First half of 1874 spent in Italy where Bakunin lived with Cafiero near Locarno.

July 1874 Bakunin joins his friends in Bologna where they have planned an uprising, but is forced to return to Switzerland in disguise and settled in Lugano.

1875 in poor health Bakunin traveled to Bern and is hospitalized.

July 1, 1876 at noon Bakunin died.

BAKUNIN ON THE STATE

The State is the organized authority, domination, and power of the possessing classes over the masses the most flagrant, the most cynical, and the most complete negation of humanity. It shatters the universal solidarity of all men on the earth, and brings some of them into association only for the purpose of destroying, conquering, and enslaving all the rest. This flagrant negation of humanity which constitutes the very essence of the State is, from the standpoint of the State, its supreme duty and its greatest virtue. Thus, to offend, to oppress, to despoil, to plunder, to assassinate or enslave one's fellowman is ordinarily regarded as a crime. In public life, on the other hand, from the standpoint of patriotism, when these things are done for the greater glory of the State, for the preservation or the extension of its power, it is all transformed into duty and virtue. This explains why the entire history of ancient and modern states is merely a series of revolting crimes; why kings and ministers, past and present, of all times and all countries---statesmen, diplomats, bureaucrats, and warriors---if judged from the standpoint of simply morality and human justice, have a hundred, a thousand times over earned their sentence to hard labor or to the gallows. There is no horror, no cruelty, sacrilege, or perjury, no imposture, no infamous transaction, no cynical robbery, no bold plunder or shabby betrayal that has not been or is not daily being perpetrated by the representatives of the states, under no other pretext than those elastic words, so convenient and yet so terrible: ``for reasons of state."

---Michael Bakunin, Federalism, Socialism, Anti-Theologism,

found in Noam Chomsky, For Reasons of State,
Pantheon, 1973.

BAKUNIN'S IDEA OF REVOLUTION & REVOLUTIONARY ORGANISATION

ANONYMOUS – RED & BLACK REVOLUTION

The Russian revolutionary liberal Alexander Herzen, who was a close friend of Michael Bakunin, told a story of how when Bakunin was travelling from Paris to Prague he came across a revolt of German peasants "making an uproar around the castle, not knowing what to do. Bakunin got out of his conveyance, and, without wasting any time to find out what the dispute was about, formed the peasants into ranks and instructed them so skilfully that by the time he resumed his seat to continue his journey, the castle was burning on all four sides".[1]

Bakunin was the giant of the revolutionary movement in Europe from 1848 to his death in 1876. At 6'4" and 240lbs he was a literal giant as well as the demon that stalked the bourgeois imagination. Yet although he is often cited as the father of the anarchist movement, today his ideas of revolutionary organisation are poorly understood by anarchists and Marxists. Instead he is most remembered for his role in countering the authoritarian aspects of Marxism in the 1st International.

There are several good reasons why Bakunin is not remembered for his positive ideas. The years Marx spent in the British Library perfecting *Das Kapital* were spent by Bakunin in a series of prisons, chained to walls, and losing his teeth through scurvy. Not the best environment for research or writing! And in any case as he admitted in 1870 "I am neither a scientist, nor a philosopher nor

even a professional writer. I have written very little in my life time, and have only ever done so in self-defence".[2] In fact he wrote thousands of letters but relatively few articles or pamphlets. Many of those available today are drafts of unpublished works.

Also he never claimed any consistency to his life's writings or activity. Even in 1871, when he and Marx were fighting over the future of the First International, he could write "As far as learning was concerned, Marx was [in 1844], and still is, incomparably more advanced than I. I knew nothing at that time of political economy, I had not yet rid myself of my metaphysical observations He called me a sentimental idealist and he was right;....".[3]

Many Marxists came to see Marx as a sort of prophet whose writings comprise a perfect materialist 'revelation' that can be used to answer all of today's questions. This may be a foolish approach but it's true to say that Marx's life's writings are more consistent than Bakunin's are. The writings of the young Bakunin have quite different politics to his writings at the end of his life.

BAKUNIN'S EARLY LIFE

Bakunin followed a similar path of development to many of the other revolutionaries from a bourgeois background of that generation. Like Marx and Engels this included involvement with the left Hegalians. In 1844 he was a member of Marx's Democratic Federation in Paris where he also met and was influenced by Proudhon. When the 1848 revolutions (which centred on the demand for bourgeois parliaments and home rule) erupted, he served

in the Workers' National Guard in Paris. When that rising was defeated he headed to Germany in March as the revolutions there started, hoping to encourage a Polish revolt.

Bakunin's political ideology at the time was fairly unformed but is usually described as 'Pan Slavist'. Many commentators since have had problems putting this in any sensible context. Anarchists have tended to see it as irrelevant, while Marxists have generally concentrated on attacking Bakunin for the anti-German (Prussian) aspect to it.

His writings and activity in this period bear more than a passing resemblance to what has been called left republicanism in Ireland. The idea that the 'national struggle' can be an impetus towards the abolition of class rule even as it achieves national independence is also found in many Marxist writings, including those of Connolly and Trotsky. His anti-German rants are echoed much later in the anti - US diatribes of Marxist South American revolutionaries who, sometimes identified the enemy as the 'blue eyed blondes of the north'.

1848 also saw Bakunin participate in the Slav congress in Prague and publish 'An appeal to the Slavs'. This appeal had many things in common with later left republican statements, for instance the call for revolutionary Slavic unity against the German, Turkish and Magyars occupations "while we stretched our fraternal hands out to the German people, to democratic Germany". He sought to make socialism an inevitable part of the national liberation struggle writing; "Everybody has come to the realisation that liberty was merely a lie where the great majority of the population is

reduced to a miserable existence, where, deprived of education, of liberty and of bread, it is fated to serve as an underprop for the powerful and the rich." The appeal ends with "The social question thus appears to be first and foremost the question of the complete overturn of society." [4]

YEARS IN JAIL

Bakunin moved to Dresden where he met and befriended the composer Richard Wagner. There, in May 1849, a constitutional crisis led to another rising. With Wagner he joined the insurrection and became a revolutionary officer. Marx gives a summary of events in a letter to the New York Daily Tribune (October 2, 1852) on 'Revolution and Counter Revolution in Germany' "In Dresden, the battle in the streets went on for four days. The shopkeepers of Dresden, organised into 'community guards' not only refused to fight, but many of them supported the troops against the insurrectionists. Almost all of the rebels were workers from the surrounding factories. In the Russian refugee Michael Bakunin they found a capable and cool headed leader".

Bakunin was arrested after the rebellion was put down. His luck had run out. He was already wanted by the Russians, the Czar having confiscated all his property and removed all his rights in 1844. He spent 13 months in jail in Dresden under sentence of death. One night he was led out, he presumed to be executed, but instead he was handed over to the Austrians. They jailed him in Prague for nine months before moving him to the Olmutz fortress where he was chained to the wall for two months. They condemned him to hang for high treason.

Instead he was handed to the Russians where he was jailed in the Peter-Paul Fortress. Here he lost his teeth from scurvy and came close to losing his mind.

He spent nearly ten years in the various prisons until he was exiled to Siberia in 1857. There, once he had recovered his health, he fled via Japan to the US and then to London at the end of 1861. His incredible escape from Siberia (Japan had only just opened up to the west in 1853) only added to the mystification that surrounded Bakunin.

In prison he had remained a pan Slavist and was clearly not yet an anarchist. The Czar, like later generations of Russian rulers, had a fondness for extracting confessions from his victims. Bakunin used his as a chance to outline his program which included the idea that what Russia needed was "a strong dictatorial power" to raise the standard of living and education. While some have correctly pointed out that what is said in such a confession should be taken with a pinch of salt, even as late as 1862 Bakunin "thought the Tsar was capable of really working with the people, and the people capable of imposing its will on the Tsar through a National Assembly".[5]

However alongside and contrary to this he was clearly developing his thoughts in a libertarian direction. In 1862 Herzen's journal 'The Bell' published his open letter with the title "To my Russian, Polish and other Slav friends". The section addressed to university students reads "Go to the people. This is your field, your life, your science. Learn from the people how best to serve their cause! Remember, friends, that educated youth must be neither the teacher, the paternalistic benefactor,

nor the dictatorial leader of the people, but only the midwife for the self-liberation, inspiring them to increase their power by acting together and co-ordinating their efforts".[6] In that period the denial of education to the working class in most countries made it inevitable that the vast bulk of revolutionary writers would come from the bourgeois. Leaving that aside, Bakunin suggests a relationship between the 'revolutionary intellectual' and the people that anarchists would still hold with today.

He finally came to reject pan Slavism after the 1863 Polish insurrection when he saw that the Polish nationalists were more interested in Ukrainian land than the support of the Ukrainian Slavs and that they more afraid of peasant insurrection than the Czar. He visited Marx in London on his return. Marx invited him to join the 1st International and wrote to Engels (Nov 4, 1864) saying "On the whole he is one of the few people whom I find not to have retrogressed after 16 years, but to have developed further"[7].

Bakunin had not yet seen the value of the 1st International (which was then in an embryonic form as a combination of British trade unions and French followers of Proudhon or Blanqui). He went to Italy where he worked on an international project of revolutionary organisation. According to Daniel Guerin "The few members of the brotherhood were former disciples of the republican Giuseppe Mazzini, from whom they acquired their taste for and familiarity with secret societies".[8] Brian Morris includes Polish and Russian exiles in this list.[9]

Bakunin comes in for a lot of criticism from modern day revolutionaries over his advocacy of secret societies in

this period. Such criticisms though are looking back from the comparative safety of 20th century western Europe or the US where mass unions are a fact and revolutionaries are comparatively free to hold meetings and publish papers. In Bakunin's time such activity was almost always illegal and liable to get the author sentenced to years in prison, if not death. Marx and Engels had published the 'Communist Manifesto' from one such secret society, the League of the Just, and had continued in another up to the founding of the International despite the fact they were in the relative safety of liberal England.

The group around Bakunin had worked in similar secret societies for years, there were no legal revolutionary organisations in Poland or Russia in this period. In Italy and France these societies, often based on the Freemasons, were also the norm. It is thus hardly surprising that they concluded that "an association with a revolutionary purpose must necessarily take the form of a secret society"[10]

They drew up sets of rules for such groupings, the first under the title Revolutionary Society/Brotherhood in 1865. Arthur Lehning, editor of the Archives Bakunin points out that such programs and statutes mirror Bakunin's evolving thoughts, rather than "the operation of an organisation".[11] They were intended to be a blueprint of an 'ideal' organisation rather than a description of an already fully formed one.

The first of these documents, while clearly on the path to libertarian organisation, is firmly rooted in Bakunin's pre anarchist phase. It combines ideas of libertarian organisation with the contradictory aim of setting up a

parliament; "For the governance of common affairs, a government and provincial assembly or parliament will of necessity be formed"[12]

It also reduces the question of revolution to an organisational one. The assumption is that everywhere the people are ready to rise and that all that is needed is for a relatively small number of revolutionaries to co-ordinate this rising. This an idea also common in 20th century Marxism either in the Trotskyist idea of the 'crisis of leadership' or the Gueverist revolutionary foci.

If this program cannot be considered any sort of final blueprint this does not mean that it is irrelevant. The kind of new society they advocated was a radical advance in the Europe of the 1860's and remains surprisingly relevant. The selection in the box gives the flavour of how they saw post-revolutionary society.

The Program of the Brotherhood (1865) "the advent of liberty is incompatible with the existence of States.....the free human society may arise at last, no longer organised from the top down.... but rather starting from the free individual and the free association and autonomous commune, from the bottom up..... women, different from man but not inferior to him, intelligent, hardworking and free as he is, should be declared his equal in all political and social rightsreligious and civil marriage should be replaced by free marriage, and that the upkeep, education and training of all children should be a matter for everyone, a charge upon society children belonging neither to society nor to their parents but rather to their future liberty..the revolution can be effected only by the people....the revolution cannot succeed unless, sweeping, like a

worldwide conflagration .. it encompasses the whole of Europe for a start and then the world....the social revolution .. will not put up its sword before it has destroyed every state across the whole civilised world"[13]

Bakunin next attempted to introduce a revolutionary socialist program into the League of Peace and Freedom. This was founded at a conference in Geneva in August of 1867 attended by 6,000 people, "all friends of free democracy" . Bakunin is described rising to speak at the conference; "the cry passed from mouth to mouth: 'Bakunin!' Garibaldi, who was in the chair, stood up, advanced a few steps and embraced him. This solemn meeting of two old and tried warriors of the revolution produced an astonishing impression Everyone rose and there was a prolonged and enthusiastic clapping of hands"[14] .

Some people date Bakunin's advocacy of anarchism from this point, not least because as part of his speech he denounced nationalism - a break with his previous pan-Slavism. Others date it from the following congress of Berne in 1868. In any case it is from this period onward that Bakunin becomes centrally involved in the building of mass revolutionary organisations, including that of the 1st International.

It is from this point that he starts to advocate methods of organisation consistent with anarchism. His last major work, written in 1873, outlines the following program for the revolutionary youth in Russia.

"....they must go the people, because today - and this is true everywhere, but especially in Russia - outside of the

people, outside of the multi-million-strong labouring masses, there is neither life, nor cause, nor future"[15]

"The chief defect which to this day paralyses and makes impossible a universal popular insurrection in Russia is the self-containment of the communes, the isolation and separateness of the local peasant worlds. At all costs we must shatter that isolation and introduce the vital current of revolutionary thought, will, and deed to those separate worlds. We must link together the best peasants of all the villages, districts, and, if possible, regions, the progressive individuals, the natural revolutionaries of the Russian peasant world, and, where possible, creating the same vital link between the factory worker and the peasantry.

...We must convince these progressive individuals - and through them, if not all the people then at least a sizeable segment of them, the most energetic segment - that the people as a whole ... share one common misfortune and therefore one common cause. We must convince them that an invincible force lives in the people, which nothing, and no one can withstand, and that if it has not yet liberated the people it is because it is powerful only when it is concentrated and acts simultaneously, everywhere, jointly in concert, and until now it has not done so. In order to concentrate that force, the villages, districts and regions must be linked and organised according to a common plan and with the single objective of universal liberation of the people. To create in our people a feeling and consciousness of real unity, some sort of popular newspaper must be established which would immediately spread information to every corner of Russia, to every region, district and village, about any peasant or factory uprising that breaks out in

one locality or another, and also about the significant revolutionary movements produced by the proletariat of western Europe.

.. the Russian people will acknowledge our educated youth as their own only when they encounter them in their own lives, in their own misfortunes, in their own cause, in their own desperate rebellion. The youth must be present from now on not as witnesses but as active participants, in the forefront of all popular disturbances and uprisings, great and small Acting in accordance with a rigorously conceived and fixed plan, and subjecting all their activity to the strictest discipline in order to create that unanimity without which there can be no victory.." [16]

This one quotation refutes the most common misrepresentations of Bakunin's model of organisation. It does confirm one common criticism of Bakunin, that he did not confine his revolutionary subject to the industrial working class, but looked as much, if not more so, to the artisans and the peasants. However while this criticism might make some sense in modern Europe or North America today, in the 1870's any revolution which only mobilised the urban workers would have been doomed to defeat. At that time urban workers were a tiny minority of society.

For instance in advocating a similar strategy for revolutionaries in Italy Bakunin estimates that "...Italy has a huge proletariat.... It consists of two or three million urban factory workers and small artisans, and some 20 million landless peasants." [17] Bakunin, unlike Marx, saw that the peasants could be actively won over to the side of the revolution, and, because of the numbers

involved there could be no libertarian revolution in that period without the peasants.

But Bakunin did not, as is often claimed, dismiss the industrial workers. In fact, in advance of Marx and in anticipation of the factory committee movement of the Russian revolution, he insisted that "The co-operative associations already have proven that workers are quite capable of administering industrial enterprises, that it can be done by workers elected from their midst and who receive the same wage." [18] He was however critical of a certain layer of the British, German and Swiss working class who he believed had become a labour aristocracy that could be hostile to the interests of the proletariat as a whole.

Bakunin's view of how revolutionaries should organise is often criticised for appearing to advocate a secret dictatorship over the people. The documents on revolutionary organisation he produced in 1867 (above) and in 1868 do indeed contain an odd contradiction, captured by the quotation below.

"That association starts from the basis that revolutions are never made by individuals, nor even by secret societies. They are, so to speak, self-made, produced by the logic of things, by the trend of events and actions.... All that a well organised society can do is, first, to play midwife to the revolution by spreading among the masses ideas appropriate to the masses' instincts, and to organise, not the Revolution's army - for the people at all times must be the army - but a sort of revolutionary general staff made up of committed, energetic and intelligent individuals who are above all else true friends of the people and not presumptions braggarts, with a

capacity for acting as intermediaries between the revolutionary idea and the people's instinct

The numbers of such individuals, then, need not be huge. A hundred tightly and seriously allied revolutionaries will suffice for the whole of Europe. Two or three hundred revolutionaries will be enough to organise the largest of countries".[19]

This contradiction is emphasised in the last couple of lines where Bakunin seems to be suggesting that on the one hand two or three hundred revolutionaries are required in the larger countries but on the other only 100 (a smaller figure) are required for Europe (a larger area).

This 'contradiction' appears again and again in Bakunin's writings, for instance in 1870 he was to write

"Thus the sole aim of a secret society must be, not the creation of an artificial power outside the people, but the rousing, uniting and organising of the spontaneous power of the people; therefore, the only possible, the only real revolutionary army is the organisation should only be the staff of this army, an organiser of the people's power, not its own.... A revolutionary idea is revolutionary, vital, real and true only because it expresses and only as far as it represents popular instincts which are the result of history. To strive to foist on the people your own thoughts-foreign to its instinct-implies a wish to make it subservient to a new state.... The organisation must accept in all sincerity the idea that it is a servant and a helper, but never a commander of the people, never under any pretext its manager, not even under the pretext of the people's welfare.

The organisation is faced with an enormous task: not only to prepare the success of the people's revolution through propaganda and the unification of popular power; not only to destroy totally, by the power of this revolution, the whole existing economic, social and political order; but, in addition to make impossible after the popular victory the establishment of any state power over the people-even the most revolutionary, even your power-because any power, whatever it called itself, would inevitably subject the people to old slavery in a new form....

We are bitter foes of all official power, even if it were ultra-revolutionary power. We are enemies of all publicly acknowledged dictatorship; we are social-revolutionary anarchists. But you will ask, if we are anarchists, by what right do we wish to and by what method can we influence the people? Rejecting any power, by what power or rather by what force shall we direct the people's revolution? An invisible force-recognised by no one, imposed by no one-through which the collective dictatorship of our organisation will be all the mightier, the more it remains invisible and unacknowledged, the more it remains without any official legality and significance.

Imagine.... a secret organisation which has scattered its members in small groups over the whole territory of the Empire but is nevertheless firmly united: inspired by a common ideal.... an organisation which acts everywhere according to a common plan. These small groups, unknown by anybody as such, have no officially recognised power but they are strong in their ideal, which expresses the very essence of the people's instincts, desires and demands....

This dictatorship is free from all self-interest, vanity and ambition for it is anonymous, invisible and does not give advantage or honour or official recognition of power to a member of the group or to the groups themselves. It does not threaten the liberty of the people because it is free from all official character...." [20]

On the one hand Bakunin recognised that "The future social organisation should be carried out from the bottom up" [21] On the other hand the possibility for the creation of this new society would not come about due to a spontaneous revolution but would require an international organisation of revolutionaries which would be "centralised by the idea and by the sameness of a program" [22]

As we have seen Bakunin had some considerable experience of insurrection. He was also of course, like Marx, a disciple of Hegel and hence the dialectical method by which two apparently contradictory things would interact to create a new situation/idea that was an advance on both. At this stage in his writing Bakunin was advocating a way of overcoming the contradiction between the goal of a libertarian society and the organisational methods needed to overthrow an authoritarian one. Other and later revolutionaries faced with this contradiction have tended to either argue for a strongly centralised party that would aim for state power or to pretend that serious organisational methods were not necessary. Bakunin was attempting to go beyond these two opposing ideas to find a new solution that satisfied reality.

Bakunin's views on revolutionary organisation can be presented as a sort of wedding cake with separate but informally connected tiers of revolutionaries. At the top were the '100', the general staff whose role it would be to establish and maintain the informal links between countries. They would allow some judgement of when the time was ripe for revolutionary insurrection on the one hand and on the other a means of trying to co-ordinate this insurrection. This was to be a secret (because of the danger of arrest) and (after 1868) an informal set of contacts who would attempt to influence the course of events through the power of their ideas.

Beneath this was to be a second, much larger and more open organisation. This was the Alliance and its role was primarily to introduce revolutionary ideas into the mass organisations of the proletariat, in particular through the building of regional sections of the international.

After 1868 he would come to see the base of this 'cake' as the International. The base was to be the creation of organs of working class struggle that would favour direct action and reject political (i.e. electoral) activity. The Alliance would act within the international to push these politics to the fore. This was necessary because, he wrote, the mass of the workers - being illiterate and working long hours just to survive - would not be won to socialism through abstract ideas alone. Rather Bakunin wrote

"It follows then that in order to touch the heart and gain the confidence, the assent, the adhesion, and the co-operation of the illiterate legions of the proletariat - and the vast majority of proletarians unfortunately still belong in this category - it is necessary to begin to speak

to those workers not of the general sufferings of the international proletariat as a whole but of their particular, daily, altogether private misfortunes. It is necessary to speak to them of their own trade and the conditions of their work in the specific locality where they live; of the harsh conditions and long hours of their daily work, of the small pay, the meanness of their employer, the high cost of living, and how impossible it is for them properly to support and bring up a family." [23]

This was the work that Bakunin came to see as necessary in the preparation of the revolution. But he did not see the higher tiers commanding the lower, quite the opposite he also insisted that "the peoples' revolution ... will arrange its revolutionary organisation from the bottom up and from the periphery to the centre, in keeping with the principle of liberty". [24]

"As regards organisation of the Commune, there will be a federation of standing barricades and a Revolutionary Communal Council will operate on the basis of one or two delegates from each barricade, one per street or per district, these deputies being invested with binding mandates and accountable and revocable at all times." [25]

An appeal will be issued to all provinces, communes and associations inviting them to follow the example set by the capital, to reorganise along revolutionary lines for a start and to then delegate deputies to an agreed place of assembly (all of these deputies invested with binding mandates and accountable and subject to recall), in order to found the federation of insurgent associations, communes and provinces in furtherance of the same principles and to organise a revolutionary force with the

capability of defeating the reaction. Not official revolutionary commissars in any sort of sashes, but rather revolutionary propagandists are to be dispatched into all the provinces and communes and particularly among the peasants who cannot be revolutionised by principles, nor by the decrees of any dictatorship, but only by the act of revolution itself, that is to say, by the consequences that will inevitably ensure in every commune from complete cessation of the legal and official existence of the state". [26]

This is not simply a historical question. It is true that in western countries revolutionaries are in general free to sell papers and hold meetings in a manner they were generally not in Bakunin's time. Yet this liberalism from the state is largely a result of the fact that most revolutionary organisation is not seen as a serious threat. Where revolutionaries of one form or another have been seen to be a threat, from the Black Panthers, to the Irish civil rights movement, to 1970s Italy, the gloves have come off and the full array of state oppression, including infiltration and provocation have been deployed against them. At the moment the relatively trivial threat of the Black Blocs on the globalisation demonstrations is seeing an increasing array of state oppression being deployed, including now a fatal shooting. Bakunin's writings provide us with one starting point for looking at the apparent contradiction between wanting to create a libertarian society and needing to overthrow a powerful and authoritarian state to do so.

FOOTNOTES

Most of the texts here with a URL can also be accessed via the Bakunin web page at <http://struggle.ws/anarchists/bakunin.html>

1 Quoted in *To the Finland Station*, Edmund Wilson, Fontana 1960, p271

2 Bakunin in *Who am I*, p126, *No Gods, No Masters Vol 1*, taken from *La Commune de Paris et la notion de l'Etat 1870*, Oeuvres IV, p249ff

3 Quoted in Brian Morris, *Bakunin: The Philosophy of Freedom*, 1993, p14

4 *Appeal to the Slavs* (1848), in *Bakunin on Anarchism*, Sam Dolgoff, Black Rose Books, 1972, p63-68

5 Brian Morris, *Bakunin: The Philosophy of Freedom*, 1993, p26

6 Sam Dolgoff, ed, *Bakunin on Anarchy*, New York, 1973, p388

7 Quoted in Brian Morris, *Bakunin: The Philosophy of Freedom*, 1993, p29

8 Daniel Guerin in *No Gods No Master Vol 1*, p 132

9 Brian Morris, *Bakunin: The Philosophy of Freedom*, 1993, p30

10 Bakunin in *The Program of the Brotherhood* (1865) as published in *God and the State, No Gods, No Masters Vol 1*, p138

11 *No Gods No Master Vol 1*, p 132

12 Bakunin in *The Program of the Brotherhood* (1865) as published in *God and the State, No Gods, No Masters Vol 1*, p142

13 Bakunin in *The Program of the Brotherhood* (1865) as published in *God and the State, No Gods, No Masters Vol 1*, p133 - 137

14 Report from a Russian positivist quoted in Brian Morris, *Bakunin: The Philosophy of Freedom*, 1993, p34

15 Bakunin, Statism and anarchism, Appendix A (1873), ed Marshal Shatz, Cambridge University Press, 1990, p212

16 Bakunin, Statism and anarchism, Appendix A (1873), ed Marshal Shatz, Cambridge University Press, 1990, p215

17 Bakunin, Statism and anarchism (1873), ed Marshal Shatz, Cambridge University Press, 1990, p6

18 The capitalist system, http://struggle.ws/anarchists/bakunin/writings/capitalist_system.html

19 Bakunin in Program and Object of the Secret Revolutionary Organisation of the International Brotherhood (1868) as published in God and the State, No Gods, No Masters Vol 1, p156

20 Bakunin to Nechayev on the role of secret revolutionary societies, June 2, 1870, http://struggle.ws/anarchists/bakunin/writings/nechayev_secret_disagree.html

21 The Paris Commune and the Idea of the State (1871), <http://flag.blackened.net/daver/anarchism/bakunin/paris.html>

22 Bakunin in The Program of the Brotherhood (1865) as published in God and the State, No Gods, No Masters Vol 1, p139

23 Founding of the Workers International, <http://flag.blackened.net/daver/anarchism/bakunin/bakunin3.html>

24 Bakunin in Program and Object of the Secret Revolutionary Organisation of the International Brotherhood (1868) as published in God and the State, No Gods, No Masters Vol 1, p155

25 Bakunin in Program and Object of the Secret Revolutionary Organisation of the International

Brotherhood (1868) as published in God and the State,
No Gods, No Masters Vol 1, p155

26 Bakunin in Program and Object of the Secret
Revolutionary Organisation of the International
Brotherhood (1868) as published in God and the State,
No Gods, No Masters Vol 1, p156

BASIC BAKUNIN

ANARCHIST COMMUNIST FEDERATION

"The star of revolution will rise high above the streets of Moscow, from a sea of blood and fire, and turn into a lodestar to lead a liberated humanity"

-Mikhail Bakunin

PREFACE

The aim of this pamphlet is to do nothing more than present an outline of what the author thinks are the key features of Mikhail Bakunin's anarchist ideas.

Bakunin was extremely influential in the 19th century socialist movement, yet his ideas for decades have been reviled, distorted or ignored. On reading this pamphlet, it will become apparent that Bakunin has a lot to offer and that his ideas are not at all confused (as some writers would have us think) but make up a full coherent and well argued body of thought. For a detailed but difficult analysis of Bakunin's revolutionary ideas, Richard B. Saltman's book, "The Social and Political Thought of Michael Bakunin" is strongly recommended. Ask your local library to obtain a copy.

CLASS

Bakunin saw revolution in terms of the overthrow of one oppressing class by another oppressed class and the destruction of political power as expressed as the state and social hierarchy. According to Bakunin, society is divided into two main classes which are fundamentally opposed to each other. The oppressed class, he variously described as commoners, the people, the masses or the workers, makes up a great majority of the population. It is in 'normal' time not conscious of itself as a class, though it has an 'instinct' for revolt and whilst unorganized, is full of vitality. The numerically much smaller oppressing class, however is conscious of its role and maintains its ascendancy by acting in a purposeful, concerted and united manner. The basic differences between the two classes, Bakunin maintained, rests upon the ownership and control of property, which is disproportionately in the hands of the minority class of capitalists. The masses, on the other hand, have little to call their own beyond their ability to work.

Bakunin was astute enough to understand that the differences between the two main classes is not always clear cut. He pointed out that it is not possible to draw a hard line between the two classes, though as in most things, the differences are most apparent at the extremes. Between these extremes of wealth and power there is a hierarchy of social strata which can be assessed according to the degree to which they exploit each other or are exploited themselves. The further away a given group is from the workers, the more likely it is to be part of the exploiting category and the less it suffers from exploitation. Between the two major classes there is a middle class or middle classes which are both exploiting

and exploited, depending on their position of social hierarchy.

The masses who are the most exploited form, in Bakunin's view, the great revolutionary class which alone can sweep away the present economic system. Unfortunately, the fact of exploitation and its resultant poverty are in themselves no guarantee of revolution. Extreme poverty is, Bakunin thought, likely to lead to resignation if the people can see no possible alternative to the existing order. Perhaps, if driven to great depths of despair, the poor will rise up in revolt. Revolts however tend to be local and therefore, easy to put down. In Bakunin's view, three conditions are necessary to bring about popular revolution.

They are:

sheer hatred for the conditions in which the masses find themselves

the belief the change is a possible alternative

a clear vision of the society that has to be made to bring about human emancipation

Without these three factors being present, plus a united and efficient self organization, no liberatory revolution can possibly succeed.

Bakunin had no doubts that revolution must necessarily involve destruction to create the basis of the new society. He stated that, quite simply, revolution means nothing less than war, that is the physical destruction of people and property. Spontaneous revolutions involve, often, the vast destruction of property. Bakunin noted that when circumstances demanded it, the workers will destroy even their own houses, which more often than not, do

not belong to them. The negative, destructive urge is absolutely necessary, he argued, to sweep away the past. Destruction is closely linked with construction, since the "more vividly the future is visualized, the more powerful is the force of destruction."

Given the close relationship between the concentration of wealth and power in capitalist societies, it is not surprising that Bakunin considered economic questions to be of paramount importance. It is in the context of the struggle between labor and capital that Bakunin gave great significance of strikes by workers. Strikes, he believed, have a number of important functions in the struggle against capitalism. Firstly they are necessary as catalysts to wrench the workers away from their ready acceptance of capitalism, they jolt them out of their condition of resignation. Strikes, as a form of economic and political warfare, require unity to succeed, thus welding the workers together. During strikes, there is a polarization between employers and workers. This makes the latter more receptive to the revolutionary propaganda and destroys the urge to compromise and seek deals. Bakunin thought that as the struggle between labor and capital increases, so will the intensity and number of strikes. The ultimate strike is the general strike. A revolutionary general strike, in which class conscious workers are infused with anarchist ideas will lead, thought Bakunin, to the final explosion which will bring about anarchist society.

Bakunin's ideas are revolutionary in a very full sense, being concerned with the destruction of economic exploitation and social/political domination and their replacement by a system of social organization which is in harmony with human nature. Bakunin offered a

critique of capitalism, in which authority and economic inequality went hand in hand, and state socialism, (e.g. Marxism) which is one sided in its concentration on economic factors whilst, grossly underestimating the dangers of social authority.

STATE

Bakunin based his consistent and unified theory upon three interdependent platforms, namely:
human beings are naturally social (and therefore they desire social solidarity)
are more or less equal and,
want to be free

His anarchism is consequently concerned with the problem of creating a society of freedom within the context of an egalitarian system of mutual interaction. The problem with existing societies, he argued, is that they are dominated by states that are necessarily violent, anti-social, and artificial constructs which deny the fulfillment of humanity.

Whilst there are, in Bakunin's view, many objectionable features within capitalism, apart from the state, (e.g. the oppression of women, wage slavery), it is the state which nurtures, maintains and protects the oppressive system as a whole. The state is defined as an anti-social machine which controls society for the benefit of an oppressing class or elite. It is essentially an institution based upon violence and is concerned with its maintenance of inequality through political repression. In addition the state relies upon a permanent bureaucracy to help carry out its aims. The bureaucratic element, incidentally, is

not simply a tool which it promotes. All states, Bakunin believed, have internal tendencies toward self perpetuation, whether they be capitalist or socialist and are thus to be opposed as obstacles to human freedom.

It might be objected that states are not primarily concerned with political repression and violence and indeed that liberal democratic states, in particular, are much interested in social welfare. Bakunin argues that such aspects are only a disguise, and that when threatened, all states reveal their essentially violent natures. In Britain and Northern Ireland this repressive feature of state activity has come increasingly to the fore, when the state has been challenged to any significant degree, it has responded with brutal firmness.

And developments within Britain over the last couple decades tend to substantiate another feature of the state which Bakunin drew attention to, their tendency toward over increasing authoritarianism and absolutism. He believed that there were strong pressures in all states whether they are liberal, socialist, capitalist, or whatever, toward military dictatorship but that the rate of such development will vary, however according to factors such as demography, culture and politics.

Finally, Bakunin noted that states tend toward warfare against other states. Since there is no internationally accepted moral code between states, then rivalries between them will be expressed in terms of military conflict. "So long as there's government, there will be no peace. There will only be more or less prolonged respites, armistices concluded by the perpetually belligerent states; but as soon as a state feels sufficiently

strong to destroy this equilibrium to its advantage, it will never fail to do so."

BOURGEOIS DEMOCRACY

Political commentators and the media are constantly singing the praises of the system of representative democracy in which every few years or so the electorate is asked to put a cross on a piece of paper to determine who will control them. This system works good insofar as the capitalist system has found a way of gaining legitimacy through the illusion that somehow the voters are in charge of running the system. Bakunin's writings on the issue of representative democracy were made at the time when it barely existed in the world. Yet he could see on the basis of a couple of examples (the United States and Switzerland) that the widening of the franchise does little to improve the lot of the great mass of the population. True, as Bakunin noted, middle class politicians are prepared to humble themselves before the electorate issuing all sorts of promises. But this leveling of candidates before the populace disappears the day after the election, once they are transformed into members of the Parliament. The workers continue to go to work and the bourgeoisie takes up once again the problems of business and political intrigue.

Today, in the United States and Western Europe, the predominant political system is that of liberal democracy. In Britain the electoral system is patently unfair in its distribution of parliamentary seats, insofar as some parties with substantial support get negligible representation. However, even where strict proportional representation applies, the Bakuninist critique remains

scathing. For the representative system requires that only a small section of the population concern itself directly with legislation and governing (in Britain a majority out of 650 MP's (Members of Parliament)).

Bakunin's objections to representative democracy rests basically on the fact that it is an expression of the inequality of power which exists in society. Despite constitutions guaranteeing the rights of citizens and equality before the law, the reality is that the capitalist class is in permanent control. So long as the great mass of the population has to sell its labor power in order to survive, there can not be democratic government. So long as people are economically exploited by capitalism and there are gross inequalities of wealth, there can not be real democracy. As Bakunin made clear, economic facts are much stronger than political rights. So long as there is economic privilege there will be political domination by the rich over the poor. The result of this relationship is that representatives of capitalism (bourgeois democracy) "posses in fact, if not by right, the exclusive privilege of governing."

A common fiction that is expounded in liberal democracies is that the people rule. However the reality is that minorities necessarily do the governing. A privileged few who have access to wealth, education and leisure time, clearly are better equipped to govern than ordinary working people, who generally have little free time and only a basic education.

But as Bakunin made clear, if by some quirk, a socialist government be elected, in real terms, things would not improve much. When people gain power and place themselves 'above' society, he argued, their way of

looking at the world changes. From their exalted position of high office the perspective on life becomes distorted and seems very different to those on the bottom. The history of socialist representation in parliament is primarily that of reneging on promises and becoming absorbed into the manners, morality and attitudes of the ruling class. Bakunin suggests that such backsliding from socialist ideas is not due to treachery, but because participation in parliament makes representatives see the world through a distorted mirror. A workers parliament, engaged in the tasks of governing would, said Bakunin, end up a chamber of "determined aristocrats, bold or timid worshipers of the principle of authority who will also become exploiters and oppressors."

The point that Bakunin makes time and time again in his writings is that no one can govern for the people in their interests. Only personal and direct control over our lives will ensure that justice and freedom will prevail. To abdicate direct control is to deny freedom. To grant political sovereignty to others, whether under the mantle of democracy, republicanism, the people's state, or whatever, is to give others control and therefore domination over our lives.

It might be thought that the referendum, in which people directly make laws, would be an advance upon the idea of representative democracy. This is not the case according to Bakunin, for a variety of reasons. Firstly, the people are not in a position to make decisions on the basis of full knowledge of all the issues involved. Also, laws may be a complex, abstract, and specialized nature and that in order to vote for them in a serious way, the people need to be fully educated and have available the time and facilities to reflect upon and discuss the

implications involved. The reality of referenda is that they are used by full-time politicians to gain legitimacy for essentially bourgeois issues. It is no coincidence that Switzerland, which has used the referendum frequently, remains one of the most conservative countries in Europe. With referenda, the people are guided by politicians, who set the terms of the debate. Thus despite popular input, the people still remain under bourgeois control.

Finally, Bakunin on the whole concept of the possibility of the democratic state: For him the democratic state is a contradiction in terms since the state is essentially about force, authority and domination and is necessarily based upon an inequality of wealth and power. Democracy, in the sense of self rule for all, means that no one is ruled. If no one rules, there can be no state. If there is a state, there can be no self rule.

MARX

Bakunin's opposition to Marxism involves several separate but related criticisms. Though he thought Marx was a sincere revolutionary, Bakunin believed that the application of the Marxist system would necessarily lead to the replacement of one repression (capitalist) by another (state socialist).

Firstly, Bakunin opposed what he considered to be the economic determinist element in Marx's thought, most simply stated that "Being determines consciousness." Put in another way, Bakunin was against the idea that the whole range of 'super structural' factors of society, its laws, moralities, science, religion, etc. were "but the

necessary after effects of the development of economic facts." Rather than history or science being primarily determined by economic factors (e.g. the 'mode of production'), Bakunin allowed much more for the active intervention of human beings in the realization of their destiny.

More fundamental was Bakunin's opposition to the Marxist idea of dictatorship of the proletariat which was, in effect, a transitional state on the way to stateless communism. Marx and Engels, in the Communist Manifesto of 1848, had written of the need for labor armies under state supervision, the backwardness of the rural workers, the need for centralized and directed economy, and for wide spread nationalization. Later, Marx also made clear that a workers' government could come into being through universal franchise. Bakunin questioned each of these propositions.

The state, whatever its basis, whether it be proletarian or bourgeois, inevitably contains several objectionable features. States are based upon coercion and domination. This domination would, Bakunin stated, very soon cease to be that of the proletariat over its enemies but would become a state over the proletariat. This would arise, Bakunin believed, because of the impossibility of a whole class, numbering millions of people, governing on its own behalf. Necessarily, the workers would have to wield power by proxy by entrusting the tasks of government to a small group of politicians.

Once the role of government was taken out of the hands of the masses, a new class of experts, scientists and professional politicians would arise. This new elite would, Bakunin believed, be far more secure in its

domination over the workers by means of the mystification and legitimacy granted by the claim to acting in accordance with scientific laws (a major claim by Marxists). Furthermore, given that the new state could masquerade as the true expression of the people's will. The institutionalizing of political power gives rise to a new group of governors with the same self seeking interests and the same cover-ups of its dubious dealings.

Another problem posed by the statist system, that of centralized statist government would, argued Bakunin, further strengthen the process of domination. The state as owner, organizer, director, financier, and distributor of labor and economy would necessarily have to act in an authoritarian manner in its operations. As can be seen by the Soviet system, a command economy must act with decision flowing from top to bottom; it cannot meet the complex and various needs of individuals and, in the final analysis, is a hopeless, inefficient giant. Marx believed that centralism, from whatever quarter, was a move toward the final, statist solution of revolution. Bakunin, in contrast opposed centralism by federalism.

Bakunin's predictions as to the operation of Marxist states has been borne out of reality. The Bolsheviks seized power in 1917, talked incessantly of proletarian dictatorship and soviet power, yet inevitably, with or without wanting to, created a vast bureaucratic police state.

UNIONS

Most of the left in Britain view the present structures of trade unions in a positive light. This is true for members

of the Labor Party, both left and right, the Communist Party, the Militant Tendency and many other Marxist organizations. These bodies wish to capture or retain control of the unions, pretty much as they stand, in order to use them for their own purposes. As a result, there are frequently bitter conflicts and maneuverings within the unions for control. This trend is most apparent in the C.P.S.A. where a vicious anti-communist right wing group alternates with the Militant Tendency and its supporters for control of the union executive and full time posts. The major exception to this is the Socialist Workers Party which advocates rank and file organization, so long as the S.W.P. can control it.

Bakunin laid the foundations of the anarchist approach to union organization and the general tendency of non-anarchist unions to decay into personal fiefdoms and bureaucracy over a century ago. Arguing in the context of union organization within the International Working Mens Association, he gave examples of how unions can be stolen from the membership whose will they are supposed to be an expression of. He identified several interrelated features which lead to the usurpation of power by union leaders.

Firstly, he indicated a psychological factor which plays a key part. Honest, hardworking, intelligent and well meaning militants win through hard work the respect and admiration of their fellow members and are elected to union office. They display self sacrifice, initiative and ability. Unfortunately, once in positions of leadership, these people soon imagine themselves to be indispensable and their focus of attention centers more and more on the machinations within the various union committees.

The one time militant thus becomes removed from the every day problems of the rank and file members and assumes the self delusion which afflicts all leaders, namely a sense of superiority.

Given the existence of union bureaucracies and secret debating chambers in which leaders decide union actions and policies, a 'governmental aristocracy' arises within the union structures, no matter how democratic those structures may formally be. With the growing authority of the union committees etc., the workers become indifferent to union affairs, with the exception Bakunin asserts, of issues which directly affect them e.g. dues payment, strikes etc. Unions have always had great problems in getting subscriptions from alienated memberships, a solution which has been found in the 'check off' system by which unions and employers collaborate to remove the required sum at source, i.e. from the pay packet.

Where workers do not directly control their union and delegate authority to committees and full-time agents, several things happen. Firstly, so long as union subscriptions are not too high, and back dues are not pressed too hard for, the substituting bodies can act with virtual impunity. This is good for the committees but brings almost to an end the democratic life of the union. Power gravitates increasingly to the committees and these bodies, like all governments substitute their will for that of the membership. This in turn allows expression for personal intrigues, vanity, ambition and self-interest. Many intra-union battles, which are ostensibly fought on ideological grounds, are in fact merely struggles for control by ambitious self seekers who have chosen the

union for their career structure. This careerism occasionally surfaces in battles between rival leftists, for example where no political reasons for conflict exist. In the past the Communist Party offered a union career route within certain unions and such conflicts constantly arose.

Presumably, within the Militant Tendency, which also wishes to capture unions, the same problem exists.

Within the various union committees, which are arranged on a hierarchical basis (mirroring capitalism), one or two individuals come to dominate on the basis of superior intelligence or aggressiveness. Ultimately, the unions become dominated by bosses who hold great power in their organizations, despite the safeguards of democratic procedures and constitutions. Over the last few decades, many such union bosses have become national figures, especially in periods of Labor government.

Bakunin was aware that such union degeneration was inevitable but only arises in the absence of rank and file control, lack of opposition to undemocratic trends and the accession to union power to those who allow themselves to be corrupted. Those individuals who genuinely wish to safeguard their personal integrity should, Bakunin argued, not stay in office too long and should encourage strong rank and file opposition. Union militants have a duty to remain faithful to their revolutionary ideals.

Personal integrity, however, is an insufficient safeguard. Other, institutional and organizational factors must also be brought into play. These include regular reporting to

the proposals made by the officials and how they voted, in other words frequent and direct accountability. Secondly, such union delegates must draw their mandates from the membership being subject to rank and file instructions. Thirdly, Bakunin suggests the instant recall of unsatisfactory delegates. Finally, and most importantly, he urged the calling of mass meetings and other expressions of grass roots activity to circumvent those leaders who acted in undemocratic ways. Mass meetings inspire passive members to action, creating a camaraderie which would tend to repudiate the so called leaders.

REVOLUTIONARY ORGANIZATION

Above all else, Bakunin the revolutionary, believed in the necessity of collective action to achieve anarchy. After his death there was a strong tendency within the anarchist movement towards the abandonment of organization in favor of small group and individual activity. This development, which culminated in individual acts of terror in the late nineteenth century France, isolating anarchism from the very source of the revolution, namely the workers.

Bakunin, being consistent with other aspects of his thought, saw organization not in terms of a centralized and disciplined army (though he thought self discipline was vital), but as the result of decentralized federalism in which revolutionaries could channel their energies through mutual agreement within a collective. It is necessary, Bakunin argued, to have a coordinated revolutionary movement for a number of reasons. Firstly, if anarchists acted alone, without direction they would

inevitably end up moving in different directions and would, as a result, tend to neutralize each other. Organization is not necessary for its own sake, but is necessary to maximize strength of the revolutionary classes, in the face of the great resources commanded by the capitalist state.

However, from Bakunin's standpoint, it was the spontaneous revolt against authority by the people which is of the greatest importance. The nature of purely spontaneous uprisings is that they are uneven and vary in intensity from time to time and place to place. The anarchist revolutionary organization must not attempt to take over and lead the uprising but has the responsibility of clarifying goals, putting forward revolutionary propaganda, and working out ideas in correspondence with the revolutionary instincts of the masses. To go beyond this would undermine the whole self-liberatory purpose of the revolution. Putschism has no place in Bakunin's thought.

Bakunin then, saw revolutionary organization in terms of offering assistance to the revolution, not as a substitute. It is in this context that we should interpret Bakunin's call for a "secret revolutionary vanguard" and "invisible dictatorship" of that vanguard. The vanguard it should be said, has nothing in common with that of the Leninist model which seeks actual, direct leadership over the working class. Bakunin was strongly opposed to such approaches and informed his followers that "no member... is permitted, even in the midst of full revolution, to take public office of any kind, nor is the (revolutionary) organization permitted to do so... it will at all times be on the alert, making it impossible for authorities, governments and states to be established."

The vanguard was, however, to influence the revolutionary movement on an informal basis, relying on the talents of its members to achieve results. Bakunin thought that it was the institutionalization of authority, not natural inequalities, that posed a threat to the revolution. The vanguard would act as a catalyst to the working classes' own revolutionary activity and was expected to fully immerse itself in the movement. Bakunin's vanguard then, was concerned with education and propaganda, and unlike the Leninist vanguard party, was not to be a body separate from the class, but an active agent within it.

The other major task of the Bakuninist organization was that it would act as the watchdog for the working class. Then, as now, authoritarian groupings posed as leaders of the revolution and supplied their own members as "governments in waiting." The anarchist vanguard has to expose such movements in order that the revolution should not replace one representative state by another 'revolutionary' one. After the initial victory, the political revolutionaries, those advocates of so-called workers' governments and the dictatorship of the proletariat, would according to Bakunin try "to squelch the popular passions. They appeal for order, for trust in, for submission to those who, in the course and the name of the revolution, seized and legalized their own dictatorial powers; this is how such political revolutionaries reconstitute the state. We on the other hand, must awaken and foment all the dynamic passions of the people."

ANARCHY

Throughout Bakunin's criticisms of capitalism and state socialism he constantly argues for freedom. It is not surprising, then, to find that in his sketches of future anarchist society that the principle of freedom takes precedence. In a number of revolutionary programs he outlined which he considered to be the essential features of societies which would promote the maximum possible individual and collective freedom. The societies envisioned in Bakunin's programs are not Utopias, the sense of being detailed fictional communities, free of troubles, but rather suggest the basic minimum skeletal structures which would guarantee freedom. The character of future anarchist societies will vary, said Bakunin depending on a whole range of historical, cultural, economic and geographical factors.

The basic problem was to lay down the minimum necessary conditions which would bring about a society based upon justice and social welfare for all and would also generate freedom. The negative, that is, destructive features of the programs are all concerned with the abolition of those institutions which lead to domination and exploitation. The state, including the established church, the judiciary, state banks and bureaucracy, the armed forces and the police are all to be swept away. Also, all ranks, privileges, classes and the monarchy are to be abolished.

The positive, constructive features of the new society all interlink to promote freedom and justice. For a society to be free, Bakunin argued, it is not sufficient to simply impose equality. No, freedom can only be achieved and maintained through the full participation in society of a

highly educated and healthy population, free from social and economic worries. Such an enlightened population, can then be truly free and able to act rationally on the basis of a popularly controlled science and a thorough knowledge of the issues involved.

Bakunin advocated complete freedom of movement, opinion, morality where people would not be accountable to anyone for their beliefs and acts. This must be, he argued, complete and unlimited freedom of speech, press and assembly. Freedom, he believed, must be defended by freedom, for to "advocate the restriction of freedom on the pretext that it is being defended is a dangerous delusion." A truly free and enlightened society, Bakunin said, would adequately preserve liberty. An ordered society, he thought, stems not from suppression of ideas, which only breeds opposition and factionalism, but from the fullest freedom for all.

This is not to say that Bakunin did not think that a society has the right to protect itself. He firmly believed that freedom was to be found within society, not through its destruction. Those people who acted in ways that lessen freedom for others have no place; These include all parasites who live off the labor of others. Work, the contribution of one's labor for the creation of wealth, forms the basis of political rights in the proposed anarchist society. Those who live by exploiting others do not deserve political rights. Others, who steal, violate voluntary agreements within and by society, inflict bodily harm etc. can expect to be punished by the laws which have been created by that society. The condemned criminal, on the other hand, can escape punishment by society by removing himself/herself from society and the benefits it confers. Society can also expel the criminal if

it so wishes. Basically thought, Bakunin set great store on the power of enlightened public opinion to minimize anti-social activity.

Bakunin proposed the equalization of wealth, though natural inequalities which are reflected in different levels of skill, energy and thrift, should he argued be tolerated. The purpose of equality is to allow individuals to find full expression of their humanity within society. Bakunin was strongly opposed to the idea of hired labor which if introduced into an anarchist society, would lead to the reintroduction of inequality and wage slavery. He proposed instead collective effort because it would, he thought, tend to be more efficient. However, so long as individuals did not employ others, he had no objection to them working alone.

Through the creation of associations of labor which could coordinate worker's activities, Bakunin proposed the setting up of an industrial assembly in order to harmonize production with the demand for products. Such an assembly would be necessary in the absence of the market. Supplied with statistical information from the various voluntary organization who would be federated, production could be specialized on an international basis so that those countries with inbuilt economic advantages would produce most efficiently for the general good. Then, according to Bakunin, waste, economic crisis and stagnation "will no longer plague mankind; the emancipation of human labor will regenerate the world."

Turning to the question of the political organization of society, Bakunin stressed that they should all be built in such a way as to achieve order through the realization of

freedom on the basis of the federation of voluntary organizations. In all such political bodies power is to flow "from the base to the summit" and from "the circumference to the center/" In other words, such organizations should be the expressions of individual and group opinions, not directing centers which control people.

On the basis of federalism, Bakunin proposed a multi-tier system of responsibility for decision making which would be binding on all participants, so long as they supported the system. Those individuals, groups or political institutions which made up the total structure would have the right to secede. Each participating unit would have an absolute right to self-determination, to associate with the larger bodies, or not. Starting at the local level, Bakunin suggested as the basic political unit, the completely autonomous commune. The commune, on the basis of universal suffrage, would elect all of its functionaries, law makers, judges, and administrators of communal property.

The commune would decide its own affairs but, if voluntarily federated to the next tier of administration, the provincial assembly, its constitution must conform to the provincial assembly. Similarly, the constitution of the province must be accepted by the participating communes. The provincial assembly would define the rights and obligations existing between communes and pass laws affecting the province as a whole. The composition of the provincial assembly would be decided on the basis of universal suffrage.

Further levels of political organization would be the national body, and, ultimately, the international

assembly. As regards international organization, Bakunin proposed that there should be no permanent armed forces, preferring instead, the creation of local citizens' defense militias. Disputes between nations and their provinces would be settled by an international assembly. This assembly, if required, could wage war against outside aggressors but should a member nation of the international federation attack another member, then it faces expulsion and the opposition of the federation as a whole.

Thus, from root to branch, Bakunin's outline for anarchy is based upon the free federation of participants in order to maximize individual and collective well being.

BAKUNIN'S RELEVANCE TODAY

Throughout most of this pamphlet Bakunin has been allowed to speak for himself and any views by the writer of the pamphlet are obvious. In this final section it might be valuable to make an assessment of Bakunin's ideas and actions.

With the dominance of Marxism in the world labor and revolutionary movements in the twentieth century, it became the norm to dismiss Bakunin as muddle-headed or irrelevant. However, during his lifetime he was a major figure who gained much serious support. Marx was so pressured by Bakunin and his supporters that he had to destroy the First International by dispatching it to New York. In order that it should not succumb to Anarchism, Marx killed it off through a bureaucratic maneuver.

Now that Marxism has been seriously weakened following the collapse of the USSR and the ever increasingly obvious corruption in China, Bakunin's ideas and revolutionary Anarchism have new possibilities. If authoritarian, state socialism has proved to be a child devouring monster, then libertarian communist ideas once again offer a credible alternative.

The enduring qualities of Bakunin and his successors are many, but serious commitment to the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism and the state must rank high. Bakunin was much more of a doer than a writer, he threw himself into actual insurrections, much to the trepidation of European heads of state. This militant tradition was continued by Malatesta, Makhno, Durruti, and many other anonymous militants. Those so-called anarchists who adopt a gradualist approach are an insult to Anarchism. Either we are revolutionaries or we degenerate into ineffective passivism.

Bakunin forecast the dangers of statist socialism. His predictions of a militarized, enslaved society dominated by a Marxist ruling class came to pass in a way that even Bakunin could not have fully envisaged. Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin outstripped even the Tsars in their arrogance and brutality. And, after decades of reformist socialism which have frequently formed governments, Bakunin's evaluations have been proved correct. In Britain we have the ultimate insult to working people in the form of "socialist Lords". For services to capitalism, Labor MP's are ultimately granted promotion to the aristocracy.

Bakunin fought for a society based upon justice, equality and freedom. Unlike political leaders of the left he had great faith in the spontaneous, creative and revolutionary

potential of working people. His beliefs and actions reflect this approach. So, revolutionaries can learn much of value from his federalism, his militancy and his contempt for the state, which, in the twentieth century, has assumed gigantic and dangerous proportions, Bakunin has much to teach us but we too must develop our ideas in the face of new challenges and opportunities. We must retain the revolutionary core of his thought yet move forward. Such is the legacy of Bakunin.

With this in mind, the Anarchist Communist Federation is developing a revolutionary anarchist doctrine, which whilst being ultimately based on Bakunin's ideas, goes much further to suit the demands of present-day capitalism. Ecological issues, questions of imperialist domination of the world, the massive oppression of women, the automation of industry, computerized technology etc. are all issues that have to be tackled. We welcome the challenge!

FURTHER READING

There are two main compilations of Bakunin's works which are quite readily available through public libraries. They are "Bakunin on Anarchy" edited by Sam Dolgoff and "The Political Philosophy of Bakunin" edited by G.P. Maximoff. Also worth looking at, if you can get hold of them are "The Basic Bakunin - Writings 1869-1871" edited by Robert M. Cutler and "Mikhail Bakunin - From Out of the Dustbin", edited by the same person.

For an understanding of the full profundity of Bakunin's ideas, there is nothing to match "The Social and Political

"Thought of Michael Bakunin" by Richard B Saltman.
This American publication should be available through
your local library.

Bakunin's works currently available:

"God and the State"

"Marxism, Freedom and the State" (edited by K.J.
Kenafik)

"The Paris Commune and the Idea of the State"

"Statism and Anarchy" (heavy going) ed. Marshall
Shatz.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY IN EDUCATION

FROM EGALITE, GENEVA, JULY 31, 1869.

[Essays by Bakunin](#)

(<http://flag.blackened.net/daver/anarchism/bakunin/bakunin.html>)

[Anarchist Library](#)

(<http://flag.blackened.net/daver/anarchism/index.html>)

The first topic for consideration today is this: will it be feasible for the working masses to know complete emancipation as long as the education available to those masses continues to be inferior to that bestowed upon the bourgeois, or, in more general terms, as long as there exists any class, be it numerous or otherwise, which, by virtue of birth, is entitled to a superior education and a more complete instruction? Does not the question answer itself? Is it not self-evident that of any two persons endowed by nature with roughly equivalent intelligence, one will have the edge - the one whose mind will have been broadened by learning and who, having the better grasped the inter-relationships of natural and social phenomena (what we might term the laws of nature and of society) will the more readily and more fully grasp the nature of his surroundings? And that this one will feel, let us say, a greater liberty and, in practical terms, show a greater aptitude and capability than his fellow? It is natural that he who knows more will dominate him who knows less. And were this disparity of education and education and learning the only one to exist between two classes, would not all the others swiftly follow until the world of men itself in its present circumstances, that is, until it was again divided into a mass of slaves and a

tiny number of rulers, the former labouring away as they do today, to the advantage of the latter?

Now we see why the bourgeois socialists demand only a little education for the people, a soupcon more than they currently receive; whereas we socialist democrats demand, on the people's behalf, complete and integral education, an education as full as the power of intellect today permits, So that, henceforth, there may not be any class over the workers by virtue of superior education and therefore able to dominate and exploit them. The bourgeois socialists want to see the retention of the class system each class, they contend, fulfilling a specific social function; one specialising, say, in learning, and the other in manual labour. We, on the other hand, seek the final and the utter abolition of classes; we seek a unification of society and equality of social and economic provision for every individual on this earth. The bourgeois socialists, whilst retaining the historic bases of the society of today, would like to see them become less stark, less harsh and more prettified. Whereas we should like to see their destruction. From which it follows that there can be no truce or compromise, let alone any coalition between the bourgeois socialists and us socialist democrats. But, I have heard it said and this is the argument most frequently raised against us and an argument which the dogmatists of every shade regard as irrefutable - it is impossible that the whole of mankind should devote itself to learning, for we should all die of starvation. Consequently while some study others must labour so that they can produce what we need to live - not just producing for their own needs, but also for those men who devote themselves exclusively to intellectual pursuits; aside from expanding the horizons of human knowledge, the discoveries of these intellectuals improve the condition of all human beings, without exception, when

applied to industry, agriculture and, generally, to political and social life; agreed? And do not their artistic creations enhance the lives of every one of us?

No, not at all. And the greatest reproach which we can level against science and the arts is precisely that they do not distribute their favours and do not exercise their influence, except upon a tiny fragment of society, to the exclusion and, thus, to the detriment of the vast majority. Today one might say of the advances of science and of the arts, just what has already and so properly been said of the prodigious progress of industry, trade, credit, and, in a word, of the wealth of society in the most civilised countries of the modern world. That wealth is quite exclusive, and the tendency is for it to become more so each day, as it becomes concentrated into an ever shrinking number of hands, shunning the lower echelons of the middle class and the petite bourgeoisie, depressing them into the proletariat, so that the growth of this wealth is the direct cause behind the growing misery of the labouring masses. Thus the outcome is that the gulf which yawns between the privileged, contented minority and millions of workers who earn their keep by the strength of their arm yawns ever wider and that the happier the contented - who - exploit the people's labour become the more unhappy the workers become. One has only to look at the fabulous opulence of the aristocratic, financier, commercial and industrial clique in England and compare it with the miserable condition of the workers of the same country; one has only to re-read the so naive and heartrending letter lately penned by an intelligent and upright goldsmith of London, one Walter Dugan, who has just voluntarily taken poison along with his wife and their six children, simply as a means of escape from the degradation's of poverty and the torments of hunger (1) - and one will find oneself obliged to

concede that the much vaunted civilisation means, in material terms, to the people, only oppression and ruination. And the same holds true for the modern advances of science and the arts. Huge strides, indeed, it is true But the greater the advances, the more they foster intellectual servitude and thus, in material terms, foster misery and inferiority as the lot of the people; for these advances merely widen the gulf which already separates the people's level of understanding from the levels of the privileged classes. From the point of view of natural capacity, the intelligence of the former is, today, obviously less stunted, less exercised, less sophisticated and less corrupted by the need to defend unjust interests, and is, consequently, naturally of greater potency than the brain power of the bourgeoisie: but, then again, the brain power of the bourgeois does have at its disposal the complete arsenal of science filled with weapons that are indeed formidable. It is very often the case that a highly intelligent worker is obliged to hold his tongue when confronted by a learned fool who defeats him, not by dint of intellect (of which he has none) but by dint of his education, an education denied the workingman but granted the fool because, while the fool was able to develop his foolishness scientifically in schools, the working man's labours were clothing, housing, feeding him and supplying his every need, his teachers and his books, everything necessary to his education.

Even within the bourgeois class, as we know only too well, the degree of learning imparted to each individual is not the same. There, too, there is a scale which is determined, not by the potential of the individual but by the amount of wealth of the social stratum to which he belongs by birth; for example, the instruction made available to the children of the lower petite bourgeoisie, whilst itself scarcely superior to that which workers manage to obtain for

themselves, is next to nothing by comparison with the education that society makes readily available to the upper and middle bourgeoisie. What, then, do we find? The petite bourgeoisie, whose only attachment to the middle class is through a ridiculous vanity on the one hand, and its dependence upon the big capitalists on the other, finds itself most often in circumstances even more miserable and even more humiliating than those which afflict the proletariat. So when we talk of privileged classes, we never have in mind this poor petite bourgeoisie which, if it did but have a little more spirit and gumption, would not delay in joining forces with us to combat the big and medium bourgeoisie who crush it today no less than they crush the proletariat. And should society's current economic trends continue in the same direction for a further ten years (which we do, however, regard as impossible) we may yet see the bulk of the medium bourgeoisie tumble first of all into the current circumstances of the petite bourgeoisie only to slip a little later into the proletariat - as a result, of course, of this inevitable concentration of ownership into an ever smaller number of hands - the ineluctable consequences of which would be to partition society once and for all into a tiny, overweaningly opulent, educated, ruling minority and a vast majority of impoverished, ignorant, enslaved proletarians.

There is one fact which should make an impression upon every person of conscience, upon all who have at heart a concern for human dignity and justice; that is, for the liberty of each individual amid and through a setting of equality for all. That is the fact that all of the intelligentsia, all of the great applications of science to the purpose of industry, trade and to the life of society in general have thus far profited no one, save the privileged classes and the power of the State, that timeless champion of all political and social iniquity. Never, not once, have they brought any

benefit to the masses of the people. We need only list the machines and every workingman and honest advocate of the emancipation of labour would accept the justice of what we say. By what power do the privileged classes maintain themselves today, with all their insolent smugness and iniquitous pleasures, in defiance of the all too legitimate outrage felt by the masses of the people? Is it by some power inherent in their persons? No - it is solely through the power of the State, in whose apparatus today their offspring hold, always, every key position (and even every lower and middle range position) excepting that of soldier and worker. And in this day and age what is it that constitutes the principle underlying the power of the State? Why, it is science. Yes, science - Science of government, science of administration and financial science; the science of fleecing the flocks of the people without their bleating too loudly and, when they start to bleat, the science of urging silence, patience and obedience upon them by means of a scientifically organised force: the science of deceiving and dividing the masses of the people and keeping them allays in a salutary ignorance lest they ever become able, by helping one another and pooling their efforts, to conjure up a power capable of overturning States; and, above all, military science with all its tried and tested weaponry, these formidable instruments of destruction which 'work wonders' (2): and lastly, the science of genius which has conjured up steamships, railways and telegraphy which, by turning every government into a hundred armed, a thousand armed Briareos (3), giving it the power to be, act and arrest everywhere at once - has brought about the most formidable political centralisation the world has ever witnessed.

Who, then, will deny that, without exception, all of the advances made by science have thus far brought nothing, save a boosting of the wealth of the privileged classes and

of the power of the State, to the detriment of the well-being and liberty of the masses of the people, of the proletariat? But, we will hear the objection, do not the masses of the people profit by this also? Are they not much more civilised in this society of ours than they were in the societies of bygone centuries?

We shall reply to that with an observation borrowed from the noted German socialist, Lassalle. In measuring the progress made by the working masses, in terms of their political and social emancipation, one should not compare their intellectual state in this century with what it may have been in centuries gone by. Instead, one ought to consider whether, by comparison with some given time, the gap which then existed between the working masses and the privileged classes having been noted, the masses have progressed to the same extent as these privileged classes. For, if the progress made by both has been roughly equivalent, the intellectual gap which separates the masses from the privileged in today's world will be the same as it ever was; but if the proletariat has progressed further and more rapidly than the privileged, then the gap must necessarily have narrowed; but if, on the other hand, the worker's rate of progress has been slower and, consequently, less than that of a representative of the ruling classes over the same period, then that gap will have grown. The gulf which separates them will have increased and the man of privilege grown more powerful and the worker's circumstances more abject, more slave like than at the date one chose as the point of departure. If the two of us set off from two different points at the same time and you have a lead of one hundred paces over me and you move at a rate of sixty paces per minute, and I at only thirty paces per minute, then after one hour the distance which separates us

will not be just over one hundred paces, but just over one thousand nine hundred paces.

That example gives a roughly accurate notion of the respective advances made by the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Thus far the bourgeoisie has raced along the track of civilisation at a quicker rate than the proletariat, not because they are intellectually more powerful than the latter indeed one might properly argue the contrary case - but because the political and economic organisation of society has been such that, hitherto, the bourgeoisie alone have enjoyed access to learning and science has existed only for them, and the proletariat has found itself doomed to a forced ignorance, so that if the proletariat has, nevertheless, made progress (and there is no denying it has) then that progress was made not thanks to society, but rather in spite of it. To sum up. In society as presently constituted, the advances of science have been at the root of the relative ignorance of the proletariat, just as the progress of industry and commerce have been at the root of its relative impoverishment. Thus, intellectual progress and material progress have contributed in equal measure towards the exacerbation of the slavery of the proletariat. Meaning what? Meaning that we have a duty to reject and resist that bourgeois science, just as we have a duty to reject and resist bourgeois wealth. And reject and resist them in this sense - that in destroying the social order which turns it into the preserve of one or of several classes, we must lay claim to it as the common inheritance of all the world.

[Egalite, 31 July 1869]

FEDERALISM, SOCIALISM, ANTI-THEOLOGISM

“Federalism, Socialism, Anti-Theologism” was presented as a “Reasoned Proposal to the Central Committee of the League for Peace and Freedom, by M. Bakunin, Geneva.” The League was an international bourgeois-pacifist organization founded in September 1867 to head off a war between Prussia and France over Luxembourg which threatened to engulf all Europe. Among the sponsors of the League were Victor Hugo, Garibaldi, John Stuart Mill, and other prominent individuals. At the first congress held in Geneva; Bakunin delivered a long address. The text was either lost or destroyed and Bakunin wrote this work in the form of a speech, never finished, like most of his works. It was divided into three parts. The first and second parts, which follow, deal with federalism and socialism, respectively; the third part, on “anti-theologism,” is omitted here, except for the diatribe against Rousseau's theory of the state. Bakunin analyzes Rousseau's doctrine of the social contract, makes distinctions between state and society, and discusses the relationship between the individual and the community, and the nature of man in general.

As noted in the “Biographical Sketch,” Bakunin had no illusions about the revolutionary potentialities of the League, but he hoped to influence as many members as possible and propagandize his principles. In order not to alienate the members Bakunin purposely moderated his language, but not his ideas. While the Central Committee of the League accepted Bakunin's thesis, the congress rejected it and Bakunin and his supporters resigned in 1868.

“Federalism, Socialism, Anti-Theologism” differs from the Catechism in some important ways. While the Catechism is primarily a program of action based on Bakunin's main ideas, “Federalism” is a major theoretical work in which these and other concepts barely mentioned in the Catechism are analyzed. Bakunin introduces the idea of a transitional stage in which the full realization of socialism “will no doubt be the work of centuries” which history has placed on the agenda and which “we cannot afford to ignore.” He also registers his “protest against anything that may in any way resemble communism or state socialism.” Bakunin's conception of a United States of Europe (the objective of the League and the name of its official publication), far from constituting an endorsement of the State, renders the existence of any state, in the accepted sense of the word, impossible. He rejects the idea of state sovereignty as an “attempt at a social organization devoid of the most complete liberty for individuals as well as associations.” Bakunin also formulated ideas about the nature of man and the relationship of the individual to society which are only hinted at in the Catechism but are further developed in his subsequent writings. Bakunin's occasionally extravagant praise of American democracy in the Northern States can be ascribed partly to ignorance, but mostly to his passionate sympathy for the North in the Civil War.

Federalism

We are happy to be able to report that the principle of federalism has been unanimously acclaimed by the Congress of Geneva.... Unfortunately, this principle has

been poorly formulated in the resolutions of the congress. It has not even been mentioned except indirectly. . . while in our opinion, it should have taken first place in our declaration of principles.

This is a most regrettable gap which we should hasten to fill. In accordance with the unanimous sense of the Congress of Geneva, we should proclaim:

1. That there is but one way to bring about the triumph of liberty, of justice, and of peace in Europe's international relations, to make civil war impossible between the different peoples who make up the European family; and that is the formation of the United States of Europe.

2. That the United States of Europe can never be formed from the states as they are now constituted, considering the monstrous inequality which exists between their respective forces.

3. That the example of the now defunct Germanic Confederation has proved once and for all that a confederation of monarchies is a mockery, powerless to guarantee either the peace or the liberty of populations.

4. That no centralized state, being of necessity bureaucratic and militarist, even if it were to call itself republican, will be able to enter an international confederation with a firm resolve and in good faith. Its very constitution, which must always be an overt or covert negation of enduring liberty, would necessarily remain a declaration of permanent warfare, a threat to the existence of its neighbors. Since the State is essentially founded upon an act of violence, of conquest, what in private life goes under the name of housebreaking—an act blessed by all institutionalized religions whatsoever, eventually consecrated by time until it is even regarded as an historic right—and

supported by such divine consecration of triumphant violence as an exclusive and supreme right, every centralized State therefore stands as an absolute negation of the rights of all other States, though recognizing them in the treaties it may conclude with them for its own political interest....

That all members of the League should therefore bend all their efforts toward reconstituting their respective countries, in order to replace their old constitution—founded from top to bottom on violence and the principle of authority—with a new organization based solely upon the interests, the needs, and the natural preferences of their populations—having no other principle but the free federation of individuals into communes, of communes into provinces, of the provinces into nations, and, finally, of the nations into the United States of Europe first, and of the entire world eventually.

6. Consequently, the absolute abandonment of everything which is called the historic right of the State; all questions relating to natural, political, strategic, and commercial frontiers shall henceforth be considered as belonging to ancient history and energetically rejected by all the members of the League.

7. Recognition of the absolute right of each nation, great or small, of each people, weak or strong, of each province, of each commune, to complete autonomy, provided its internal constitution is not a threat or a danger to the autonomy and liberty of neighboring countries.

8. The fact that a country has been part of a State, even if it has joined that State freely and of its own will, does not create an obligation for that country to remain forever so attached. No perpetual obligation could be accepted by human justice, the only kind of justice that may have authority amongst us, and we shall never

recognize other rights or duties than those founded upon liberty. The right of free union and of equally free secession is the first, the most important, of all political rights, the one right without which the federation would never be more than a centralization in disguise.

9. From all that has been said, it follows that the League must openly prohibit any alliance of any national faction whatsoever of the European democracy with the monarchical State, even if the aim of such an alliance were to regain the independence or liberty of an oppressed country. Such an alliance could only lead to disappointment and would at the same time be a betrayal of the revolution.

On the other hand, the League, precisely because it is the League for Peace and Freedom, and because it is convinced that peace can only be won by and founded upon the closest and fullest solidarity of peoples in justice and in liberty, should openly proclaim its sympathy with any national insurrection, either foreign or native, provided this insurrection is made in the name of our principles and in the political as well as the economic interests of the masses, but not with the ambitious intent of founding a powerful State.

11. The League will wage a relentless war against all that is called the glory, the grandeur, and the power of States. It will be opposed to all these false and malevolent idols to which millions of human victims have been sacrificed; the glories of human intelligence, manifested in science, and universal prosperity founded upon labor, justice, and liberty.

12. The League will recognize nationality as a natural fact which has an incontestable right to a free existence and development, but not as a principle, since every principle should have the power of universality, while nationality, a fact of exclusionist tendency,

separates. The so-called principle of nationality, such as has been declared in our time by the governments of France, Russia, Prussia, and even by many German, Polish, Italian, and Hungarian patriots, is a mere derivative notion born of the reaction against the spirit of revolution. It is aristocratic to the point of despising the folk dialects spoken by illiterate peoples. It implicitly denies the liberty of provinces and the true autonomy of communes. Its support, in all countries, does not come from the masses, whose real interests it sacrifices to the so-called public good, which is always the good of the privileged classes. It expresses nothing but the alleged historic rights and ambitions of States. The right of nationality can therefore never be considered by the League except as a natural consequence of the supreme principle of liberty; it ceases to be a right as soon as it takes a stand either against liberty or even outside liberty.

Unity is the great goal toward which humanity moves irresistibly. But it becomes fatal, destructive of the intelligence, the dignity, the well-being of individuals and peoples whenever it is formed without regard to liberty, either by violent means or under the authority of any theological, metaphysical, political, or even economic idea. That patriotism which tends toward unity without regard to liberty is an evil patriotism, always disastrous to the popular and real interests of the country it claims to exalt and serve. Often, without wishing to be so, it is a friend of reaction—an enemy of the revolution, i.e., the emancipation of nations and men. The League can recognize only one unity, that which is freely constituted by the federation of autonomous parts within the whole, so that the whole, ceasing to be the negation of private rights and interests, ceasing to be the graveyard where all local prosperities are buried,

becomes the confirmation and the source of all these autonomies and all these prosperities. The League will therefore vigorously attack any religious, political, or economic organization which is not thoroughly penetrated by this great principle of freedom; lacking that, there is no intelligence, no justice, no prosperity, no humanity.

Such, gentlemen of the League for Peace and Freedom, as we see it and as you no doubt see it, are the developments and the natural consequences of that great principle of federalism which the Congress of Geneva has proclaimed. Such are the absolute conditions for peace and for freedom.

Absolute, yes—but are they the only conditions? We do not think so.

The Southern states in the great republican confederation of North America have been, since the Declaration of Independence of the republican states, democratic par excellence and federalist to the point of wanting secession. Nevertheless, they have drawn upon themselves the condemnation of all friends of freedom and humanity in the world, and with the iniquitous and dishonorable war they fomented against the republican states of the North [the Civil War], they nearly overthrew and destroyed the finest political organization that ever existed in history. What could have been the cause of so strange an event? Was it a political cause? NO, it was entirely social. The internal political organization of the Southern states was, in certain respects, even freer than that of the Northern states. It was only that in this magnificent organization of the Southern states there was a black spot, just as there was a

black spot in the republics of antiquity; the freedom of their citizens was founded upon the forced labor of slaves. This sufficed to overthrow the entire existence of these states.

Citizens and slaves—such was the antagonism in the ancient world, as in the slave states of the new world. Citizens and slaves, that is, forced laborers, slaves not de jure but de facto [not in law but in fact], such is the antagonism in the modern world. And just as the ancient states perished through slavery, the modern states will likewise perish through the proletariat.

It is in vain that we try to console ourselves with the idea that this is a fictitious rather than a real antagonism, or that it is impossible to establish a line of demarcation between the owning and the disowned classes, since these two classes merge through many intermediate imperceptible degrees. In the world of nature such lines of demarcation do not exist either; in the ascending scale of life, for instance, it is impossible to indicate the point at which the vegetable kingdom ends and the animal kingdom starts, where bestiality ceases and Man begins. Nevertheless, there is a very real difference between plant and animal, between animal and Man. In human society likewise, in spite of the intermediate stages which form imperceptible transitions between one type of political and social life and another, the difference between classes is nonetheless strongly marked. Anyone can distinguish the aristocracy of noble birth from the aristocracy of finance, the upper bourgeoisie from the petty bourgeoisie, the latter from the proletariat of factories and cities, just as one can distinguish the great landowner, the man who lives on his income, from the

peasant landowner who himself tills the soil, or the farmer from the landless agricultural laborer.

All these varying types of political and social life may nowadays be reduced to two main categories, diametrically opposed, and natural enemies to each other: the political classes, i.e. privileged classes constituting all those whose privilege stems from land and capital or only from bourgeois education, and the disinherited working classes, deprived of capital and land and even elementary schooling.

One would have to be a sophist to deny the existence of the abyss which separates these two classes today. As in the ancient world, our modern civilization, which contains a comparatively limited minority of privileged citizens, is based upon the forced labor (forced by hunger) of the immense majority of the population who are fatally doomed to ignorance and to brutality.

It is in vain, too, that we would try to persuade ourselves that the abyss could be bridged by the simple diffusion of light among the masses. It is well enough to set up schools among the masses. It is well enough to set up schools for the people. But we should also question whether the man of the people, feeding his family by the day-to-day labor of his hands, himself deprived of the most elementary schooling and of leisure, dulled and brutalized by his toil—we should question whether this man has the idea, the desire, or even the possibility of sending his children to school and supporting them during the period of their education. Would he not need the help of their feeble hands, their child labor, to provide for all the needs of his family? It would be sacrifice enough for him to send to school one or two of

them, and give them hardly enough time to learn a little reading and writing and arithmetic, and allow their hearts and minds to be tainted with the Christian catechism which is being deliberately and profusely distributed in the official public schools of all countries—would this piddling bit of schooling ever succeed in lifting the working masses to the level of bourgeois intelligence? Would it bridge the gap?

Obviously this vital question of primary schooling and higher education for the people depends upon the solution of the problem, difficult in other ways, of radical reform in the present economic condition of the working classes. Improve working conditions, render to labor what is justly due to labor, and thereby give the people security, comfort, and leisure. Then, believe me, they will educate themselves; they will create a larger, saner, higher civilization than this.

It is also in vain that we might say, with the economists, that an improvement in the economic situation of the working classes depends upon the general progress of industry and commerce in each country, and their complete emancipation from the supervision and protection of the State. The freedom of industry and of commerce is certainly a great thing, and one of the essential foundations of the future international alliance of all the peoples of the world. As we love freedom, all types of freedom, we should equally love this. On the other hand, however, we must recognize that so long as the present states exist, and so long as labor continues to be the slave of property and of capital, this particular freedom, while it enriches a minimum portion of the bourgeoisie to the detriment of the immense majority, would produce one benefit alone; it would further

enfeeble and demoralize the small number of the privileged while increasing the misery, the grievances, and the just indignation of the working masses, and thereby hasten the hour of destruction for states.

England, Belgium, France, and Germany are those European countries where commerce and industry enjoy comparatively the greatest liberty and have attained the highest degree of development. And it is precisely in these countries where poverty is felt most cruelly, where the abyss between the capitalist and the proprietor on the one hand and working classes on the other seems to have deepened to a degree unknown elsewhere. In Russia, in the Scandinavian countries, in Italy, in Spain, where commerce and industry have had but slight development, people seldom die of hunger, except in cases of extraordinary catastrophe. In England, death from starvation is a daily occurrence. Nor are those isolated cases; there are thousands, and tens and hundreds of thousands, who perish. Is it not evident that in the economic conditions now prevailing in the entire civilized world—the free development of commerce and industry, the marvelous applications of science to production, even the machines intended to emancipate the worker by facilitating his toil—all of these inventions, this progress of which civilized man is justly proud, far from ameliorating the situation of the working classes, only worsen it and make it still less endurable? North America alone is still largely an exception to this rule. Yet far from disproving the rule, this exception actually serves to confirm it. If the workers in that country are paid more than those in Europe, and if no one there dies of hunger, and if, at the same time, the antagonism between classes hardly exists there; if all its workers are citizens and if the mass of its citizens truly

constitutes one single body politic, and if a good primary and even secondary education is widespread among the masses, it should no doubt be largely attributed to that traditional spirit of freedom which the early colonists brought with them from England. Heightened, tested, strengthened in the great religious struggles, the principle of individual independence and of communal and provincial self-government was still further favored by the rare circumstance that once it was transplanted into a wilderness, delivered, so to speak, from the obsessions of the past it could create a new world—the world of liberty. And liberty is so great a magician, endowed with so marvelous a power of productivity, that under the inspiration of this spirit alone, North America was able within less than a century to equal, and even surpass, the civilization of Europe. But let us not deceive ourselves: this marvelous progress and this so enviable prosperity are due in large measure to an important advantage which America possesses in common with Russia: its immense reaches of fertile land which even now remain uncultivated for lack of manpower. This great territorial wealth has been thus far as good as lost for Russia since we have never had liberty there. It has been otherwise in North America; offering a freedom which does not exist anywhere else, it attracts every year hundreds of thousands of energetic, industrious, and intelligent settlers whom it is in a position to admit because of this wealth. It thereby keeps poverty away and at the same time staves off the moment when the social question will arise. A worker who finds no work or is dissatisfied with the wages which capital offers him can in the last resort always make his way to the Far West and set about clearing a patch of land in the wilderness.

Since this possibility is always open as a way out for all the workers of America, it naturally keeps wages high and affords to each an independence unknown in Europe. This is an advantage; but there is also a disadvantage. As the good prices for industrial goods are largely due to the good wages received by labor, American manufacturers are not in a position in most cases to compete with the European manufacturers. The result is that the industry of the Northern states finds it necessary to impose a protectionist tariff. This, however, first brings about the creation of a number of artificial industries, and particularly the oppression and ruination of the nonmanufacturing Southern states, which drives them to call for secession. Finally, the result is the crowding together in cities such as New York, Philadelphia, Boston, and others of masses of workers who gradually begin to find themselves in a situation analogous to that of workers in the great manufacturing states of Europe. And, as a matter of fact, we now see the social question confronting the Northern states just as it has confronted us a great deal earlier. We are thus forced to admit that in our modern world the civilization of the few is still founded, though not as completely as in the days of antiquity, upon the forced labor and the comparative barbarism of the many. It would be unjust to say that this privileged class is a stranger to labor. On the contrary, in our time they work hard and the number of idle people is diminishing appreciably. They are beginning to hold work in honor; those who are most fortunate realize today that one must work hard in order to remain at the summit of the present civilization and even in order to know how to profit by one's privileges and retain them. But there is this difference between the work done by the comfortable classes and that done by the laboring classes: the former is rewarded in an incomparably

greater proportion and affords the privileged the opportunity for leisure, that supreme condition for all human development, both intellectual and moral—a condition never attained by the working classes. Also, the work done in the world of the privileged is almost exclusively mental work—the work involving imagination, memory, the thinking process. The work done by millions of proletarians, on the other hand, is manual work; often, as in all factories, for instance, it is work that does not even exercise man's entire muscular system at one time, but tends to develop one part of the body to the detriment of all the others, and this labor is generally performed under conditions harmful to his health and to his harmonious development. The laborer on the land is in this respect much more fortunate: his nature is not vitiated by the stifling, often tainted atmosphere of a factory; it is not deformed by the abnormal development of one of his powers at the expense of the others; it remains more vigorous, more complete. On the other hand, his mind is almost always slower, more sluggish, and much less developed than that of the worker in the factories and in the cities.

In sum, workers in the crafts, in the factories, and workers on the land all represent manual labor, as opposed to the privileged representatives of mental labor. What is the consequence of this division, not a fictitious but a real one, which lies at the very foundation of the present political and social situation?

To the privileged representatives of mental work—who, incidentally, are not called upon in the present organization of society to represent their class because they may be the most intelligent, but solely because they were born into the privileged class—to them go all the

benefits as well as all the corruptions of present-day civilization: the wealth, the luxury, the comfort, the well-being, the sweetness of family life, the exclusive political liberty with the power to exploit the labor of millions of workers and to govern them as they please and as profits them—all the inventions, all the refinements of imagination and intellect . . . and, along with the opportunity for becoming complete men, all the depravities of a humanity perverted by privilege. As to the representatives of manual labor, those countless millions of proletarians or even the small landholders, what is left for them? To them go misery without end, not even the joys of family life—since the family soon becomes a burden for the poor man—ignorance, barbarity, and we might say even an inescapable brutality, with the dubious consolation that they serve as a pedestal to civilization, to the liberty and corruption of the few. Despite this, they have preserved a freshness of the spirit and of the heart. Morally strengthened by labor, forced though it may be, they have retained a sense of justice of quite another kind than the justice of lawgivers and codes. Being miserable themselves, they keenly sympathize with the misery of others; their common sense has not been corrupted by the sophisms of a doctrinaire science or by the mendacity of politics—and since they have not yet abused life, or even used it, they have faith in life.

But what of the objection that this contrast, this gulf between the small number of the privileged and the vast numbers of the disinherited has always existed and still exists; just what has changed? It is only that this gulf used to be filled with the great fog banks of religion, so that the masses were deceived into thinking there was a common ground for all. Nowadays, the Great Revolution

has begun to sweep the mists away; the masses, too, are beginning to see the abyss and to ask the reason why. This is a stupendous realization.

Since the Revolution has confronted the masses with its own gospel, a revelation not mystical but rational, not of heaven but of earth, not divine but human—the gospel of the Rights of Man; since it has proclaimed that all men are equal and equally entitled to liberty and to a humane life—ever since then, the masses of people in all Europe, in the entire civilized world, slowly awakening from the slumber in which Christianity's incantations had held them enthralled, are beginning to wonder whether they, too, are not entitled to equality, to liberty, and to their humanity.

From the moment this question was asked, the people everywhere, led by their admirable good sense as well as by their instinct, have realized that the first condition for their real emancipation or, if I may be permitted to use the term, their humanization, was, above all, a radical reform of their economic condition. The question of daily bread is for them the principal question, and rightly so, for, as Aristotle has said: “Man, in order to think, to feel freely, to become a man, must be free from worry about his material sustenance.” Furthermore, the bourgeois who so loudly protest against the materialism of the common people, and who continually preach to them of abstinence and idealism, know this very well; they preach by word and not by example.

The second question for the people is that of leisure after labor, a condition *sine qua non* for humanity. But bread and leisure can never be made secure for the masses except through a radical transformation of society as

presently constituted. That is why the Revolution, impelled by its own logical insistency, has given birth to socialism.

Socialism

The French Revolution, having proclaimed the right and the duty of each human individual to become a man, culminated in Babouvism. Babeuf—one of the last of the high-principled and energetic citizens that the Revolution created and then assassinated in such great numbers, and who had the good fortune to have counted men like Buonarotti among his friends—had brought together, in a singular concept, the political traditions of France and the very modern ideas of a social revolution. Disappointed with the failure of the Revolution to bring about a radical change in society, he sought to save the spirit of this Revolution by conceiving a political and social system according to which the republic, the expression of the collective will of the citizens, would confiscate all individual property and administer it in the interest of all. Equal portions of such confiscated property would be allotted to higher education, elementary education, means of subsistence, entertainment, and each individual, without exception, would be compelled to perform both muscular and mental labor, each according to his strength and capacity. Babeuf's conspiracy failed; he was guillotined, together with some of his old friends. But his ideal of a socialist republic did not die with him. It was picked up by his friend Buonarotti, the arch-conspirator of the century, who transmitted it as a sacred trust to future generations. And thanks to the secret societies Buonarotti founded in Belgium and France, communist ideas germinated in popular imagination. From 1830 to 1848 they found able interpreters in Cabet and M. Louis

Blanc, who established the definitive theory of revolutionary socialism. Another socialist movement, stemming from the same revolutionary source, converging upon the same goal though by means of entirely different methods, a movement which we should like to call doctrinaire socialism, was created by two eminent men, Saint-Simon and Fourier. Saint-Simonianism was interpreted, developed, transformed, and established as a quasi-practical system, as a church, by Le Pere Enfantin, with many of his friends who have now become financiers and statesmen, singularly devoted to the Empire. Fourierism found its commentator in *Democratie Pacifique*, edited until December by M. Victor Considerant.

The merit of these two socialist systems, though different in many respects, lies principally in their profound, scientific, and severe critique of the present organization of society, whose monstrous contradictions they have boldly revealed, and also in the very important fact that they have strongly attacked and subverted Christianity for the sake of rehabilitating our material existence and human passions, which were maligned and yet so thoroughly indulged by Christianity's priesthood. The Saint Simonists wanted to replace Christianity with a new religion based upon the mystical cult of the flesh, with a new hierarchy of priests, new exploiters of the mob by the privilege inherent in genius, ability, and talent. The Fourierists, who were much more democratic, and, we may say, more sincerely so, envisioned their phalansteries as governed and administered by leaders elected by universal suffrage, where everyone, they thought, would personally find his own work and his own place in accordance with the nature of his own feelings.

The defects of Saint-Simonianism are too obvious to need discussion. The twofold error of the Saint-Simonists consisted, first, in their sincere belief that though their powers of persuasion and their pacific propaganda they would succeed in so touching the hearts of the rich that these would willingly give their surplus wealth to the phalansteries; and, secondly, in their belief that it was possible, theoretically, a priori, to construct a social paradise where all future humanity would come to rest. They had not understood that while we might enunciate the great principles of humanity's future development, we should leave it to the experience of the future to work out the practical realization of such principles.

In general, regulation was the common passion of all the socialists of the pre-1848 era, with one exception only. Cabet, Louis Blanc, the Fourierists, the Saint-Simonists, all were inspired by a passion for indoctrinating and organizing the future; they all were more or less authoritarians. The exception is Proudhon.

The son of a peasant, and thus instinctively a hundred times more revolutionary than all the doctrinaire and bourgeois socialists, Proudhon armed himself with a critique as profound and penetrating as it was merciless, in order to destroy their systems. Resisting authority with liberty, against those state socialists, he boldly proclaimed himself an anarchist; defying their deism or their pantheism, he had the courage to call himself simply an atheist or rather, with Auguste Comte, a positivist.

His own socialism was based upon liberty, both individual and collective, and on the spontaneous action of free associations obeying no laws other than the general laws of social economy, already known and yet to be discovered by social science, free from all governmental regulation and state protection. This socialism subordinated politics to the economic, intellectual, and moral interests of society. It subsequently, by its own logic, culminated in federalism.

Such was the state of social science prior to 1848. The polemics of the left carried on in the newspapers, circulars, and socialist brochures brought a mass of new ideas to the working classes. They were saturated with this material and, when the 1848 revolution broke out, the power of socialism became manifest.

Socialism, we have said, was the latest offspring of the Great Revolution; but before producing it, the revolution had already brought forth a more direct heir, its oldest, the beloved child of Robespierre and the followers of Saint-Just—pure republicanism, without any admixture of socialist ideas, resuscitated from antiquity and inspired by the heroic traditions of the great citizens of Greece and Rome. As it was far less humanitarian than socialism, it hardly knew man, and recognized the citizen only. And while socialism seeks to found a republic of men, all that republicanism wants is a republic of citizens, even though the citizens—as in the constitutions which necessarily succeeded the constitution of 1793 in consequence of that first constitution's deliberately ignoring the social question—even though the citizens, I say, by virtue of being active citizens, to borrow an expression from the Constituent Assembly, were to base their civic privilege upon the

exploitation of the labor of passive citizens. Besides, the political republican is not at all egotistic in his own behalf, or at least is not supposed to be so; he must be an egotist in behalf of his fatherland which he must value above himself, above all other individuals, all nations, all humanity. Consequently, he will always ignore international justice; in all debates, whether his country be right or wrong, he will always give it first place. He will want it always to dominate and to crush all the foreign nations by its power and glory. Through natural inclination he will become fond of conquest, in spite of the fact that the experience of centuries may have proved to him that military triumphs must inevitably lead to Caesarism.

The socialist republican detests the grandeur, the power, and the military glory of the State. He sets liberty and the general welfare above them. A federalist in the internal affairs of the country, he desires an international confederation, first of all in the spirit of justice, and second because he is convinced that the economic and social revolution, transcending all the artificial and pernicious barriers between states, can only be brought about, in part at least, by the solidarity in action, if not of all, then at least of the majority of the nations constituting the civilized world today, so that sooner or later all the nations must join together.

The strictly political republican is a stoic; he recognizes no rights for himself but only duties; or, as in Mazzini's republic, he claims one right only for himself, that of eternal devotion to his country, of living only to serve it, and of joyfully sacrificing himself and even dying for it, as in the song Dumas dedicated to the Girondins: "To die for one's country is the finest, the most enviable fate."

The socialist, on the contrary, insists upon his positive rights to life and to all of its intellectual, moral, and physical joys. He loves life, and he wants to enjoy it in all its abundance. Since his convictions are part of himself, and his duties to society are indissolubly linked with his rights, he will, in order to remain faithful to both, manage to live in accordance with justice like Proudhon and, if necessary, die like Babeuf. But he will never say that the life of humanity should be a sacrifice or that death is the sweetest fate.

Liberty, to the political republican, is an empty word; it is the liberty of a willing slave, a devoted victim of the State. Being always ready to sacrifice his own liberty, he will willingly sacrifice the liberty of others. Political republicanism, therefore, necessarily leads to despotism. For the socialist republican, liberty linked with the general welfare, producing a humanity of all through the humanity of each, is everything, while the State, in his eyes, is a mere instrument, a servant of his well-being and of everyone's liberty. The socialist is distinguished from the bourgeois by justice, since he demands for himself nothing but the real fruit of his own labor. He is distinguished from the strict republican by his frank and human egotism; he lives for himself, openly and without fine-sounding phrases. He knows that in so living his life, in accordance with justice, he serves the entire society, and, in so serving it, he also finds his own welfare. The republican is rigid; often, in consequence of his patriotism, he is cruel, as the priest is often made cruel by his religion. The socialist is natural; he is moderately patriotic, but nevertheless always very human. In a word, between the political republican and the socialist republican there is an abyss; the one, as a

quasi-religious phenomenon, belongs to the past; the other, whether positivist or atheist, belongs to the future.

The natural antagonism of these two kinds of republican came plainly into view in 1848. From the very first hours of the Revolution, they no longer understood each other; their ideals, all their instincts, drew them in diametrically opposite directions. The entire period from February to June was spent in skirmishes which, carrying the civil war into the camp of the revolutionaries and paralyzing their forces, naturally strengthened the already formidable coalition of all kinds of reactionaries; fear soon welded them into one single party. In June the republicans, in their turn, formed a coalition with the reaction in order to crush the socialists. They thought they had won a victory, yet they pushed their beloved republic down into the abyss. General Cavaignac, the flagbearer of the reaction, was the precursor of Napoleon III. Everybody realized this at the time, if not in France then certainly everywhere else, for this disastrous victory of the republicans against the workers of Paris was celebrated as a great triumph in all the courts of Europe, and the officers of the Prussian Guards, led by their generals, hastened to convey their fraternal congratulations to General Cavaignac. Terrified of the red phantom, the bourgeoisie of Europe permitted itself to fall into absolute serfdom. BY nature critical and liberal, the middle class is not fond of the military, but, facing the threatening dangers of a popular emancipation, it chose militarism. Having sacrificed its dignity and all its glorious conquests of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, it fancied that it had at least the peace and tranquillity necessary for the success of its commercial and industrial transactions. "We are sacrificing our liberty to you," it seemed to be saying to

the military powers who again rose upon the ruins of this third revolution. "Let us, in return, peacefully exploit the labor of the masses, and protect us against their demands, which may appear theoretically legitimate but which are detestable so far as our interests are concerned." The military, in turn, promised the bourgeoisie everything; they even kept their word. Why, then, is the bourgeoisie, the entire bourgeoisie of Europe, generally discontented today?

The bourgeoisie had not reckoned with the fact that a military regime is very costly, that through its internal organization alone it paralyzes, it upsets, it ruins nations, and moreover, obeying its own intrinsic and inescapable logic, it has never failed to bring on war; dynastic wars, wars of honor, wars of conquest or wars of national frontiers, wars of equilibrium— destruction and unending absorption of states by other states, rivers of human blood, a fire-ravaged countryside, ruined cities, the devastation of entire provinces—all this for the sake of satisfying the ambitions of princes and their favorites, to enrich them to occupy territories, to discipline populations, and to fill the pages of history.

Now the bourgeoisie understands these things, and that is why it is dissatisfied with the military regime it has helped so much to create. It is indeed weary of these drawbacks, but what is it going to put in the place of things as they are?

Constitutional monarchy has seen its day, and, anyway, it has never prospered too well on the European continent. Even in England, that historic cradle of modern institutionalism, battered by the rising democracy it is shaken, it totters, and will soon be unable

to contain the gathering surge of popular passions and demands.

A republic? What kind of republic? Is it to be political only, or democratic and social? Are the people still socialist? Yes, more than ever.

What succumbed in June 1848 was not socialism in general. It was only state socialism, authoritarian and regimented socialism, the kind that had believed and hoped that the State would fully satisfy the needs and the legitimate aspirations of the working classes, and that the State, armed with its omnipotence, would and could inaugurate a new social order. Hence it was not socialism that died in June; it was rather the State which declared its bankruptcy toward socialism and, proclaiming itself incapable of paying its debt to socialism, sought the quickest way out by killing its creditor. It did not succeed in killing socialism but it did kill the faith that socialism had placed in it. It also, at the same time, annihilated all the theories of authoritarian or doctrinaire socialism, some of which, like *L'Icarie* by Cabet, and like *L'Organisation du Travail* by Louis Blanc, had advised the people to rely in all things upon the State—while others demonstrated their worthlessness through a series of ridiculous experiments. Even Proudhon's bank, which could have prospered in happier circumstances, was crushed by the strictures and the general hostility of the bourgeoisie.

Socialism lost this first battle for a very simple reason. Although it was rich in instincts and in negative theoretical ideas, which gave it full justification in its fight against privilege, it lacked the necessary positive and practical ideas for erecting a new system upon the

ruins of the bourgeois order, the system of popular justice. The workers who fought in June 1848 for the emancipation of the people were united by instinct, not by ideas—and such confused ideas as they did possess formed a tower of Babel, a chaos, which could produce nothing. Such was the main cause of their defeat. Must we, for this reason, hold in doubt the future itself, and the present strength of socialism? Christianity, which had set as its goal the creation of the kingdom of justice in heaven, needed several centuries to triumph in Europe. Is there any cause for surprise if socialism, which has set itself a more difficult problem, that of creating the kingdom of justice on earth, has not triumphed within a few years?

Is it necessary to prove that socialism is not dead? We need only see what is going on all over Europe today. Behind all the diplomatic gossip, behind the noises of war which have filled Europe since 1852, what serious question is facing all the countries if it is not the social question? It alone is the great unknown; everyone senses its coming, everyone trembles at the thought, no one dares speak of it—but it speaks for itself, and in an ever louder voice. The cooperative associations of the workers, these mutual aid banks and labor credit banks, these trade unions, and this international league of workers in all the countries—all this rising movement of workers in England, in France, in Belgium, in Germany, in Italy, and in Switzerland—does it not prove that they have not in any way given up their goal, nor lost faith in their coming emancipation? Does it not prove that they have also understood that in order to hasten the hour of their deliverance they should not rely on the States, nor on the more or less hypocritical assistance of the

privileged classes, but rather upon themselves and their independent, completely spontaneous associations?

In most of the countries of Europe, this movement, which, in appearance at least, is alien to politics, still preserves an exclusively economic and, so to say, private character. But in England it has already placed itself squarely in the stormy domain of politics. Having organized itself in a formidable association, The Reform League, it has already won a great victory against the politically organized privilege of the aristocracy and the upper bourgeoisie. The Reform League, with a characteristically British patience and practical tenacity, has outlined a plan for its campaign; it is not too straitlaced about anything, it is not easily frightened, it will not be stopped by any obstacle. "Within ten years at most," they say, "and even against the greatest odds, we shall have universal suffrage, and then . . . then we will make the social revolution!"

In France, as in Germany, as socialism quietly proceeded along the road of private economic associations, it has already achieved so high a degree of power among the working classes that Napoleon III on the one side and Count Bismarck on the other are beginning to seek an alliance with it. In Italy and in Spain, after the deplorable fiasco of all their political parties, and in the face of the terrible misery into which both countries are plunged, all other problems will soon be absorbed in the economic and social question. As for Russia and Poland, is there really any other question facing these countries? It is this question which has just extinguished the last hopes of the old, noble, historic Poland; it is this question which is threatening and which will destroy the pestiferous Empire of All the Russias, now tottering to its fall. Even

in America, has not socialism been made manifest in the proposition by a man of eminence, Mr. Charles Sumner, Senator from Massachusetts, to distribute lands to the emancipated Negroes of the Southern states?

You can very well see, then, that socialism is everywhere, and that in spite of its June defeat it has by force of underground work slowly infiltrated the political life of all countries, and succeeded to the point of being felt everywhere as the latent force of the century. Another few years and it will reveal itself as an active, formidable power.

With very few exceptions, almost all the peoples of Europe, some even unfamiliar with the term “socialism,” are socialist today. They know no other banner but that which proclaims their economic emancipation ahead of all else; they would a thousand times rather renounce any question but that. Hence it is only through socialism that they can be drawn into politics, a good politics.

Is it not enough to say, gentlemen, that we may not exclude socialism from our program, and that we could not leave it out without dooming all our work to impotence? By our program, by declaring ourselves federalist republicans, we have shown ourselves to be revolutionary enough to alienate a good part of the bourgeoisie, all those who speculate upon the misery and the misfortunes of the masses and who even find something to gain in the great catastrophes which beset the nations more than ever today. If we set aside this busy, bustling, intriguing, speculating section of the bourgeoisie, we shall still keep the majority of decent, industrious bourgeois, who occasionally do some harm by necessity rather than willfully or by preference, and

who would want nothing better than to be delivered from this fatal necessity, which places them in a state of permanent hostility toward the working masses and, at the same time, ruins them. We might truthfully say that the petty bourgeoisie, small business, and small industry are now beginning to suffer almost as much as the working classes, and if things go on at the same rate, this respectable bourgeois majority could well, through its economic position, soon merge with the proletariat. It is being destroyed and pushed downward into the abyss by big commerce, big industry, and especially by large-scale, unscrupulous speculators. The position of the petty bourgeoisie, therefore, is growing more and more revolutionary; its ideas, which for so long a time had been reactionary, have been clarified through these disastrous experiences and must necessarily take the opposite course. The more intelligent among them are beginning to realize that for the decent bourgeoisie the only salvation lies in an alliance with the people—and that the social question is as important to them, and in the same way, as to the people.

This progressive change in the thinking of the petty bourgeoisie in Europe is a fact as cheering as it is incontestable. But we should be under no illusion; the initiative for the new development will not belong to the bourgeoisie but to the people—in the West, to the workers in the factories and the cities; in our country, in Russia, in Poland, and in most of the Slav countries, to the peasants. The petty bourgeoisie has grown too fearful, too timid, too skeptical to take any initiative alone. It will let itself be drawn in, but it will not draw in anyone, for while it is poor in ideas, it also lacks the faith and the passion. This passion, which annihilates obstacles and creates new worlds, is to be found in the

people only. Therefore, the initiative for the new movement will unquestionably belong to the people. And are we going to repudiate the people? Are we going to stop talking about socialism, which is the new religion of the people?

But socialism, they tell us, shows an inclination to ally itself with Caesarism. In the first place, this is a calumny; it is Caesarism, on the contrary, which, on seeing the menacing power of socialism rising on the horizon, solicits its favors in order to exploit it in its own way. But is not this still another reason for us to work for socialism, in order to prevent this monstrous alliance, which would without doubt be the greatest misfortune that could threaten the liberty of the world?

We should work for it even apart from all practical considerations, because socialism is justice. When we speak of justice we do not thereby mean the justice which is imparted to us in legal codes and by Roman law, founded for the most part on acts of force and violence consecrated by time and by the blessings of some church, Christian or pagan and, as such, accepted as an absolute, the rest being nothing but the logical consequence of the same. I speak of that justice which is based solely upon human conscience, the justice which you will rediscover deep in the conscience of every man, even in the conscience of the child, and which translates itself into simple equality.

This justice, which is so universal but which nevertheless, owing to the encroachments of force and to the influence of religion, has never as yet prevailed in the world of politics, of law, or of economics, should serve as a basis for the new world. Without it there is no

liberty, no republic, no prosperity, no peace! It should therefore preside at all our resolutions in order that we may effectively cooperate in establishing peace.

This justice bids us take into our hands the people's cause, so miserably maltreated until now, and to demand in its behalf economic and social emancipation, together with political liberty.

We do not propose to you, gentlemen, one or another socialist system. What we ask of you is to proclaim once more that great principle of the French Revolution: that every man is entitled to the material and moral means for the development of his complete humanity—a principle which, we believe, translates itself into the following mandate:

To organize society in such a manner that every individual endowed with life, man or woman, may and almost equal means for the development of his various faculties and for their utilization in his labor; to organize a society which, while it makes it impossible for any individual whatsoever to exploit the labor of others, will not allow anyone to share in the enjoyment of social wealth, always produced by labor only, unless he has himself contributed to its creation with his own labor.

The complete solution of this problem will no doubt be the work of centuries. But history has set the problem before us, and we can now no longer evade it if we are not to resign ourselves to total impotence.

We hasten to add that we energetically reject any attempt at a social organization devoid of the most complete liberty for individuals as well as associations, and one

that would call for the establishment of a ruling authority of any nature whatsoever, and that, in the name of this liberty—which we recognize as the only basis for, and the only legitimate creator of, any organization, economic or political—we shall always protest against anything that may in any way resemble communism or state socialism.

The only thing we believe the State can and should do is to change the law of inheritance, gradually at first, until it is entirely abolished as soon as possible. Since the right of inheritance is a purely arbitrary creation of the State, and one of the essential conditions for the very existence of the authoritarian and divinely sanctioned State, it can and must be abolished by liberty—which again means that the State itself must accomplish its own dissolution in a society freely organized in accordance with justice. This right must necessarily be abolished, we believe, for as long as inheritance is in effect, there will be hereditary economic inequality, not the natural inequality of individuals but the artificial inequality of classes—and this will necessarily always lead to the hereditary inequality of the development and cultivation of mental faculties, and continue to be the source and the consecration of all political and social inequalities. Equality from the moment life begins—insofar as this equality depends on the economic and political organization of society, and in order that everyone, in accordance with his own natural capacities, may become the heir and the product of his own labor—this is the problem which justice sets before us. We believe that the public funds for the education and elementary schooling of all children of both sexes, as well as their maintenance from birth until they come of age, should be the sole inheritors of all the deceased. As Slavs and Russians, we

may add that for us the social idea, based upon the general and traditional instinct of our populations, is that the earth, the property of all the people, should be owned only by those who cultivate it with the labor of their own hands.

We are convinced that this principle is a just one, that it is an essential and indispensable condition for any serious social reform, and hence that Western Europe, too, cannot fail to accept and recognize it, in spite of all the difficulties its realization may encounter in certain countries. In France, for instance, the majority of the peasants already own their land; most of these same peasants, however, will soon come to own nothing, because of the parceling out which is the inevitable result of the politico-economic system now prevailing in that country. We are making no proposal on this point, and indeed we refrain, in general, from making any proposals, dealing with any particular problem of social science or politics. We are convinced that all these questions should be seriously and thoroughly discussed in our journal. We shall today confine ourselves to proposing that you make the following declaration:

As we are convinced that the real attainment of liberty, of justice, and of peace in the world will be impossible so long as the immense majority of the populations are dispossessed of property, deprived of education and condemned to political and social nonbeing and a de facto if not a de jure slavery, through their state of misery as well as their need to labor without rest or leisure, in producing all the wealth in which the world is glorying today, and receiving in return but a small portion hardly sufficient for their daily bread;

As we are convinced that for all these populations, hitherto so terribly maltreated through the centuries, the question of bread is the question of intellectual emancipation, of liberty, and of humanity;

As we are convinced that liberty without socialism is privilege, injustice; and that socialism without liberty is slavery and brutality;

Now therefore, the League highly proclaims the need for a radical social and economic reform, whose aim shall be the deliverance of the people's labor from the yoke of capital and property, upon a foundation of the strictest justice—not juridical, not theological, not metaphysical, but simply human justice, of positive science and the most absolute liberty.

The League at the same time decides that its journal will freely open its columns to all serious discussions of economic and social questions, provided they are sincerely inspired by a desire for the greatest popular emancipation, both on the material and the political and intellectual levels.

Rousseau's Theory of the State

. . . We have said that man is not only the most individualistic being on earth—he is also the most social. It was a great mistake on the part of Jean Jacques Rousseau to have thought that primitive society was established through a free agreement among savages. But Jean Jacques is not the only one to have said this. The majority of jurists and modern publicists, either of the school of Kant or any other individualist and liberal

school, those who do not accept the idea of a society founded upon the divine right of the theologians nor of a society determined by the Hegelian school as a more or less mystical realization of objective morality, nor of the naturalists' concept of a primitive animal society, all accept, nolens volens, and for lack of any other basis, the tacit agreement or contract as their starting point.

According to the theory of the social contract primitive men enjoying absolute liberty only in isolation are antisocial by nature. When forced to associate they destroy each other's freedom. If this struggle is unchecked it can lead to mutual extermination. In order not to destroy each other completely, they conclude a contract, formal or tacit, whereby they surrender some of their freedom to assure the rest. This contract becomes the foundation of society, or rather of the State, for we must point out that in this theory there is no place for society; only the State exists, or rather society is completely absorbed by the State.

Society is the natural mode of existence of the human collectivity, independent of any contract. It governs itself through the customs or the traditional habits, but never by laws. It progresses slowly, under the impulsion it receives from individual initiatives and not through the thinking or the will of the lawgiver. There are a good many laws which govern it without its being aware of them, but these are natural laws, inherent in the body social, just as physical laws are inherent in material bodies. Most of these laws remain unknown to this day; nevertheless, they have governed human society ever since its birth, independent of the thinking and the will of the men composing the society. Hence they should not be confused with the political and juridical laws

proclaimed by some legislative power, laws that are supposed to be the logical sequelae of the first contract consciously formed by men.

The state is in no wise an immediate product of nature. Unlike society, it does not precede the awakening of reason in men. The liberals say that the first state was created by the free and rational will of men; the men of the right consider it the work of God. In either case it dominates society and tends to absorb it completely.

One might rejoin that the State, representing as it does the public welfare or the common interest of all, curtails a part of the liberty of each only for the sake of assuring to him all the remainder. But this remainder may be a form of security; it is never liberty. Liberty is indivisible; one cannot curtail a part of it without killing all of it. This little part you are curtailing is the very essence of my liberty; it is all of it. Through a natural, necessary, and irresistible movement, all of my liberty is concentrated precisely in the part, small as it may be, which you curtail. It is the story of Bluebeard's wife, who had an entire palace at her disposal, with full and complete liberty to enter everywhere, to see and to touch everything, except for one dreadful little chamber which her terrible husband's sovereign will had forbidden her to open on pain of death. Well, she turned away from all the splendors of the palace, and her entire being concentrated on the dreadful little chamber. She opened that forbidden door, for good reason, since her liberty depended on her doing so, while the prohibition to enter was a flagrant violation of precisely that liberty. It is also the story of Adam and Eve's fall. The prohibition to taste the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for no other reason than that such was the will of the

Lord, was an act of atrocious despotism on the part of the good Lord. Had our first parents obeyed it, the entire human race would have remained plunged in the most humiliating slavery. Their disobedience has emancipated and saved us. Theirs, in the language of mythology, was the first act of human liberty.

But, one might say, could the State, the democratic State, based upon the free suffrage of all its citizens, be the negation of their liberty? And why not? That would depend entirely on the mission and the power that the citizens surrendered to the State. A republican State, based upon universal suffrage, could be very despotic, more despotic even than the monarchical State, if, under the pretext of representing everybody's will, it were to bring down the weight of its collective power upon the will and the free movement of each of its members.

However, suppose one were to say that the State does not restrain the liberty of its members except when it tends toward injustice or evil. It prevents its members from killing each other, plundering each other, insulting each other, and in general from hurting each other, while it leaves them full liberty to do good. This brings us back to the story of Bluebeard's wife, or the story of the forbidden fruit: what is good? what is evil?

From the standpoint of the system we have under examination, the distinction between good and evil did not exist before the conclusion of the contract, when each individual stayed deep in the isolation of his liberty or of his absolute rights, having no consideration for his fellowmen except those dictated by his relative weakness or strength; that is, his own prudence and self-interest. At that time, still following the same theory, egotism was

the supreme law, the only right. The good was determined by success, failure was the only evil, and justice was merely the consecration of the fait accompli, no matter how horrible, how cruel or infamous, exactly as things are now in the political morality which prevails in Europe today.

The distinction between good and evil, according to this system, commences only with the conclusion of the social contract. Thereafter, what was recognized as constituting the common interest was proclaimed as good, and all that was contrary to it as evil. The contracting members, on becoming citizens, and bound by a more or less solemn undertaking, thereby assumed an obligation: to subordinate their private interests to the common good, to an interest inseparable from all others. Their own rights were separated from the public right, the sole representative of which, the State, was thereby invested with the power to repress all illegal revolts of the individual, but also with the obligation to protect each of its members in the exercise of his rights insofar as these were not contrary to the common right.

We shall now examine what the State, thus constituted, should be in relation to other states, its peers, as well as in relation to its own subject populations. This examination appears to us all the more interesting and useful because the State, as it is here defined, is precisely the modern State insofar as it has separated itself from the religious idea—the secular or atheist State proclaimed by modern publicists. Let us see, then: of what does its morality consist? It is the modern State, we have said, at the moment when it has freed itself from the yoke of the Church, and when it has, consequently, shaken off the yoke of the universal or cosmopolitan

morality of the Christian religion; at the moment when it has not yet been penetrated by the humanitarian morality or idea, which, by the way, it could never do without destroying itself; for, in its separate existence and isolated concentration, it would be too narrow to embrace, to contain the interests and therefore the morality of all mankind.

Modern states have reached precisely this point. Christianity serves them only as a pretext or a phrase or as a means of deceiving the idle mob, for they pursue goals which have nothing to do with religious sentiments. The great statesmen of our days, the Palmerstons, the Muravievs, the Cavours, the Bismarcks, the Napoleons, had a good laugh when people took their religious pronouncements seriously. They laughed harder when people attributed humanitarian sentiments, considerations, and intentions to them, but they never made the mistake of treating these ideas in public as so much nonsense. Just what remains to constitute their morality? The interest of the State, and nothing else. From this point of view, which, incidentally, with very few exceptions, has been that of the statesmen, the strong men of all times and of all countries—from this point of view, I say, whatever conduces to the preservation, the grandeur and the power of the State, no matter how sacrilegious or morally revolting it may seem, that is the good. And conversely, whatever opposes the State's interests, no matter how holy or just otherwise, that is evil. Such is the secular morality and practice of every State.

It is the same with the State founded upon the theory of the social contract. According to this principle, the good and the just commence only with the contract; they are,

in fact, nothing but the very contents and the purpose of the contract; that is, the common interest and the public right of all the individuals who have formed the contract among themselves, with the exclusion of all those who remain outside the contract. It is, consequently, nothing but the greatest satisfaction given to the collective egotism of a special and restricted association, which, being founded upon the partial sacrifice of the individual egotism of each of its members, rejects from its midst, as strangers and natural enemies, the immense majority of the human species, whether or not it may be organized into analogous associations.

The existence of one sovereign, exclusionary State necessarily supposes the existence and, if need be, provokes the formation of other such States, since it is quite natural that individuals who find themselves outside it and are threatened by it in their existence and in their liberty, should, in their turn, associate themselves against it. We thus have humanity divided into an indefinite number of foreign states, all hostile and threatened by each other. There is no common right, no social contract of any kind between them; otherwise they would cease to be independent states and become the federated members of one great state. But unless this great state were to embrace all of humanity, it would be confronted with other great states, each federated within, each maintaining the same posture of inevitable hostility. War would still remain the supreme law, an unavoidable condition of human survival.

Every state, federated or not, would therefore seek to become the most powerful. It must devour lest it be devoured, conquer lest it be conquered, enslave lest it be

enslaved, since two powers, similar and yet alien to each other, could not coexist without mutual destruction.

The State, therefore, is the most flagrant, the most cynical, and the most complete negation of humanity. It shatters the universal solidarity of all men on the earth, and brings some of them into association only for the purpose of destroying, conquering, and enslaving all the rest. It protects its own citizens only; it recognizes human rights, humanity, civilization within its own confines alone. Since it recognizes no rights outside itself, it logically arrogates to itself the right to exercise the most ferocious inhumanity toward all foreign populations, which it can plunder, exterminate, or enslave at will. If it does show itself generous and humane toward them, it is never through a sense of duty, for it has no duties except to itself in the first place, and then to those of its members who have freely formed it, who freely continue to constitute it or even, as always happens in the long run, those who have become its subjects. As there is no international law in existence, and as it could never exist in a meaningful and realistic way without undermining to its foundations the very principle of the absolute sovereignty of the State, the State can have no duties toward foreign populations. Hence, if it treats a conquered people in a humane fashion, if it plunders or exterminates it halfway only, if it does not reduce it to the lowest degree of slavery, this may be a political act inspired by prudence, or even by pure magnanimity, but it is never done from a sense of duty, for the State has an absolute right to dispose of a conquered people at will.

This flagrant negation of humanity which constitutes the very essence of the State is, from the standpoint of the

State, its supreme duty and its greatest virtue. It bears the name patriotism, and it constitutes the entire transcendent morality of the State. We call it transcendent morality because it usually goes beyond the level of human morality and justice, either of the community or of the private individual, and by that same token often finds itself in contradiction with these. Thus, to offend, to oppress, to despoil, to plunder, to assassinate or enslave one's fellowman is ordinarily regarded as a crime. In public life, on the other hand, from the standpoint of patriotism, when these things are done for the greater glory of the State, for the preservation or the extension of its power, it is all transformed into duty and virtue. And this virtue, this duty, are obligatory for each patriotic citizen; everyone is supposed to exercise them not against foreigners only but against one's own fellow citizens, members or subjects of the State like himself, whenever the welfare of the State demands it.

This explains why, since the birth of the State, the world of politics has always been and continues to be the stage for unlimited rascality and brigandage, brigandage and rascality which, by the way, are held in high esteem, since they are sanctified by patriotism, by the transcendent morality and the supreme interest of the State. This explains why the entire history of ancient and modern states is merely a series of revolting crimes; why kings and ministers, past and present, of all times and all countries—statesmen, diplomats, bureaucrats, and warriors—if judged from the standpoint of simple morality and human justice, have a hundred, a thousand times over earned their sentence to hard labor or to the gallows. There is no horror, no cruelty, sacrilege, or perjury, no imposture, no infamous transaction, no

cynical robbery, no bold plunder or shabby betrayal that has not been or is not daily being perpetrated by the representatives of the states, under no other pretext than those elastic words, so convenient and yet so terrible: “for reasons of state.”

These are truly terrible words, for they have corrupted and dishonored, within official ranks and in society's ruling classes, more men than has even Christianity itself. No sooner are these words uttered than all grows silent, and everything ceases; honesty, honor, justice, right, compassion itself ceases, and with it logic and good sense. Black turns white, and white turns black. The lowest human acts, the basest felonies, the most atrocious crimes become meritorious acts.

The great Italian political philosopher Machiavelli was the first to use these words, or at least the first to give them their true meaning and the immense popularity they still enjoy among our rulers today. A realistic and positive thinker if there ever was one, he was the first to understand that the great and powerful states could be founded and maintained by crime alone—by many great crimes, and by a radical contempt for all that goes under the name of honesty. He has written, explained, and proven these facts with terrifying frankness. And, since the idea of humanity was entirely unknown in his time; since the idea of fraternity— not human but religious— as preached by the Catholic Church, was at that time, as it always has been, nothing but a shocking irony, belied at every step by the Church's own actions; since in his time no one even suspected that there was such a thing as popular right, since the people had always been considered an inert and inept mass, the flesh of the State to be molded and exploited at will, pledged to eternal

obedience; since there was absolutely nothing in his time, in Italy or elsewhere, except for the State—Machiavelli concluded from these facts, with a good deal of logic, that the State was the supreme goal of all human existence, that it must be served at any cost and that, since the interest of the State prevailed over everything else, a good patriot should not recoil from any crime in order to serve it. He advocates crime, he exhorts to crime, and makes it the *sine qua non* of political intelligence as well as of true patriotism. Whether the State bear the name of a monarchy or of a republic, crime will always be necessary for its preservation and its triumph. The State will doubtless change its direction and its object, but its nature will remain the same: always the energetic, permanent violation of justice, compassion, and honesty, for the welfare of the State.

Yes, Machiavelli is right. We can no longer doubt it after an experience of three and a half centuries added to his own experience. Yes, so all history tells us: while the small states are virtuous only because of their weakness, the powerful states sustain themselves by crime alone. But our conclusion will be entirely different from his, for a very simple reason. We are the children of the Revolution, and from it we have inherited the religion of humanity, which we must found upon the ruins of the religion of divinity. We believe in the rights of man, in the dignity and the necessary emancipation of the human species. We believe in human liberty and human fraternity founded upon justice. In a word, we believe in the triumph of humanity upon the earth. But this triumph, which we summon with all our longing, which we want to hasten with all our united efforts— since it is by its very nature the negation of the crime which is

intrinsically the negation of humanity—this triumph cannot be achieved until crime ceases to be what it now is more or less everywhere today, the real basis of the political existence of the nations absorbed and dominated by the ideas of the State. And since it is now proven that no state could exist without committing crimes, or at least without contemplating and planning them, even when its impotence should prevent it from perpetrating crimes, we today conclude in favor of the absolute need of destroying the states. Or, if it is so decided, their radical and complete transformation so that, ceasing to be powers centralized and organized from the top down, by violence or by authority of some principle, they may recognize—with absolute liberty for all the parties to unite or not to unite, and with liberty for each of these always to leave a union even when freely entered into—from the bottom up, according to the real needs and the natural tendencies of the parties, through the free federation of individuals, associations, communes, districts, provinces, and nations within humanity.

Such are the conclusions to which we are inevitably led by an examination of the external relations which the so-called free states maintain with other states. Let us now examine the relations maintained by the State founded upon the free contract arrived at among its own citizens or subjects.

We have already observed that by excluding the immense majority of the human species from its midst, by keeping this majority outside the reciprocal engagements and duties of morality, of justice, and of right, the State denies humanity and, using that sonorous word patriotism, imposes injustice and cruelty as a supreme duty upon all its subjects. It restricts, it

mutilates, it kills humanity in them, so that by ceasing to be men, they may be solely citizens—or rather, and more specifically, that through the historic connection and succession of facts, they may never rise above the citizen to the height of being man.

We have also seen that every state, under pain of destruction and fearing to be devoured by its neighbor states, must reach out toward omnipotence, and, having become powerful, must conquer. Who speaks of conquest speaks of peoples conquered, subjugated, reduced to slavery in whatever form or denomination. Slavery, therefore, is the necessary consequence of the very existence of the State.

Slavery may change its form or its name—its essence remains the same. Its essence may be expressed in these words: to be a slave is to be forced to work for someone else, just as to be a master is to live on someone else's work. In antiquity, just as in Asia and in Africa today, as well as even in a part of America, slaves were, in all honesty, called slaves. In the Middle Ages, they took the name of serfs: nowadays they are called wage earners. The position of this latter group has a great deal more dignity attached to it, and it is less hard than that of slaves, but they are nonetheless forced, by hunger as well as by political and social institutions, to maintain other people in complete or relative idleness, through their own exceedingly hard labor. Consequently they are slaves. And in general, no state, ancient or modern, has ever managed or will ever manage to get along without the forced labor of the masses, either wage earners or slaves, as a principal and absolutely necessary foundation for the leisure, the liberty, and the civilization of the political class: the citizens. On this point, not even

the United States of North America can as yet be an exception.

Such are the internal conditions that necessarily result for the State from its objective stance, that is, its natural, permanent, and inevitable hostility toward all the other states. Let us now see the conditions resulting directly for the State's citizens from that free contract by which they supposedly constituted themselves into a State.

The State not only has the mission of guaranteeing the safety of its members against any attack coming from without; it must also defend them within its own borders, some of them against the others, and each of them against himself. For the State— and this is most deeply characteristic of it, of every state, as of every theology—presupposes man to be essentially evil and wicked. In the State we are now examining, the good, as we have seen, commences only with the conclusion of the social contract and, consequently, is merely the product and very content of this contract. The good is not the product of liberty. On the contrary, so long as men remain isolated in their absolute individuality, enjoying their full natural liberty to which they recognize no limits but those of fact, not of law, they follow one law only, that of their natural egotism. They offend, maltreat, and rob each other; they obstruct and devour each other, each to the extent of his intelligence, his cunning, and his material resources, doing just as the states do to one another. BY this reasoning, human liberty produces not good but evil; man is by nature evil. How did he become evil? That is for theology to explain. The fact is that the Church, at its birth, finds man already evil, and undertakes to make him good, that is, to transform the natural man into the citizen.

To this one may rejoin that, since the State is the product of a contract freely concluded by men, and since the good is the product of the State, it follows that the good is the product of liberty! Such a conclusion would not be right at all. The State itself, by this reasoning, is not the product of liberty; it is, on the contrary, the product of the voluntary sacrifice and negation of liberty. Natural men, completely free from the sense of right but exposed, in fact, to all the dangers which threaten their security at every moment, in order to assure and safeguard this security, sacrifice, or renounce more or less of their own liberty, and, to the extent that they have sacrificed liberty for security and have thus become citizens, they become the slaves of the State. We are therefore right in affirming that, from the viewpoint of the State, the good is born not of liberty but rather of the negation of liberty.

Is it not remarkable to find so close a correspondence between theology, that science of the Church, and politics, that science of the State; to find this concurrence of two orders of ideas and of realities, outwardly so opposed, nevertheless holding the same conviction: that human liberty must be destroyed if men are to be moral, if they are to be transformed into saints (for the Church) or into virtuous citizens (for the State)? Yet we are not at all surprised by this peculiar harmony, since we are convinced, and shall try to prove, that politics and theology are two sisters issuing from the same source and pursuing the same ends under different names; and that every state is a terrestrial church, just as every church, with its own heaven, the dwelling place of the blessed and of the immortal God, is but a celestial state.

Thus the State, like the Church, starts out with this fundamental supposition, that men are basically evil, and that, if delivered up to their natural liberty, they would tear each other apart and offer the spectacle of the most terrifying anarchy, where the stronger would exploit and slaughter the weaker—quite the contrary of what goes on in our model states today, needless to say! The State sets up the principle that in order to establish public order, there is need of a superior authority; in order to guide men and repress their evil passions, there is need of a guide and a curb.

. . . In order to assure the observance of the principles and the administration of laws in any human society whatsoever, there has to be a vigilant, regulating, and, if need be, repressive power at the head of the State. It remains for us to find out who should and who could exercise such power.

For the State founded upon divine right and through the intervention of any God whatever, the answer is simple enough; the men to exercise such power would be the priests primarily, and secondarily the temporal authorities consecrated by the priests. For the State founded on the free social contract, the answer would be far more difficult. In a pure democracy of equals—all of whom are, however, considered incapable of self-restraint on behalf of the common welfare, their liberty tending naturally toward evil—who would be the true guardian and administrator of the laws, the defender of justice and of public order against everyone's evil passions? In a word, who would fulfill the functions of the State?

The best citizens, would be the answer, the most intelligent and the most virtuous, those who understand better than the others the common interests of society and the need, the duty, of everyone to subordinate his own interests to the common good. It is, in fact, necessary for these men to be as intelligent as they are virtuous; if they were intelligent but lacked virtue, they might very well use the public welfare to serve their private interests, and if they were virtuous but lacked intelligence, their good faith would not be enough to save the public interest from their errors. It is therefore necessary, in order that a republic may not perish, that it have available throughout its duration a continuous succession of many citizens possessing both virtue and intelligence.

But this condition cannot be easily or always fulfilled. In the history of every country, the epochs that boast a sizable group of eminent men are exceptional, and renowned through the centuries. Ordinarily, within the precincts of power, it is the insignificant, the mediocre, who predominate, and often, as we have observed in history, it is vice and bloody violence that triumph. We may therefore conclude that if it were true, as the theory of the so-called rational or liberal State clearly postulates, that the preservation and durability of every political society depend upon a succession of men as remarkable for their intelligence as for their virtue, there is not one among the societies now existing that would not have ceased to exist long ago. If we were to add to this difficulty, not to say impossibility, those which arise from the peculiar demoralization attendant upon power, the extraordinary temptations to which all men who hold power in their hands are exposed, the ambitions, rivalries, jealousies, the gigantic cupidities by which

particularly those in the highest positions are assailed by day and night, and against which neither intelligence nor even virtue can prevail, especially the highly vulnerable virtue of the isolated man, it is a wonder that so many societies exist at all. But let us pass on.

Let us assume that, in an ideal society, in each period, there were a sufficient number of men both intelligent and virtuous to discharge the principal functions of the State worthily. Who would seek them out, select them, and place the reins of power in their hands? Would they themselves, aware of their intelligence and their virtue, take possession of the power? This was done by two sages of ancient Greece, Cleobulus and Periander; notwithstanding their supposed great wisdom, the Greeks applied to them the odious name of tyrants. But in what manner would such men seize power? By persuasion, or perhaps by force? If they used persuasion, we might remark that he can best persuade who is himself persuaded, and the best men are precisely those who are least persuaded of their own worth. Even when they are aware of it, they usually find it repugnant to press their claim upon others, while wicked and mediocre men, always satisfied with themselves, feel no repugnance in glorifying themselves. But let us even suppose that the desire to serve their country had overcome the natural modesty of truly worthy men and induced them to offer themselves as candidates for the suffrage of their fellow citizens. Would the people necessarily accept these in preference to ambitious, smooth-tongued, clever schemers? If, on the other hand, they wanted to use force, they would, in the first place, have to have available a force capable of overcoming the resistance of an entire party. They would attain their power through civil war which would end up with a disgruntled

opposition party, beaten but still hostile. To prevail, the victors would have to persist in using force. Accordingly the free society would have become a despotic state, founded upon and maintained by violence, in which you might possibly find many things worthy of approval—but never liberty.

If we are to maintain the fiction of the free state issuing from a social contract, we must assume that the majority of its citizens must have had the prudence, the discernment, and the sense of justice necessary to elect the worthiest and the most capable men and to place them at the head of their government. But if a people had exhibited these qualities, not just once and by mere chance but at all times throughout its existence, in all the elections it had to make, would it not mean that the people itself, as a mass, had reached so high a degree of morality and of culture that it no longer had need of either government or state? Such a people would not drag out a meaningless existence, giving free rein for all its instincts; out of its life, justice and public order would rise spontaneously and naturally. The State, in it, would cease to be the providence, the guardian, the educator, the regulator of society. As it renounced all its repressive power and sank to the subordinate position assigned to it by Proudhon, it would turn into a mere business office, a sort of central accounting bureau at the service of society.

There is no doubt that such a political organization, or rather such a reduction of political action in favor of the liberty of social life, would be a great benefit to society, but it would in no way satisfy the persistent champions of the State. To them, the State, as providence, as director of the social life, dispenser of justice, and

regulator of public order, is a necessity. In other words, whether they admit it or not, whether they call themselves republicans, democrats, or even socialists, they always must have available a more or less ignorant, immature, incompetent people, or, bluntly speaking, a kind of canaille to govern. This would make them, without doing violence to their lofty altruism and modesty, keep the highest places for themselves, so as always to devote themselves to the common good, of course. As the privileged guardians of the human flock, strong in their virtuous devotion and their superior intelligence, while prodding the people along and urging it on for its own good and well-being, they would be in a position to do a little discreet fleecing of that flock for their own benefit.

Any logical and straightforward theory of the State is essentially founded upon the principle of authority, that is, the eminently theological, metaphysical, and political idea that the masses, always incapable of governing themselves, must at all times submit to the beneficent yoke of a wisdom and a justice imposed upon them, in some way or other, from above. Imposed in the name of what, and by whom? Authority which is recognized and respected as such by the masses can come from three sources only: force, religion, or the action of a superior intelligence. As we are discussing the theory of the State founded upon the free contract, we must postpone discussion of those states founded on the dual authority of religion and force and, for the moment, confine our attention to authority based upon a superior intelligence, which is, as we know, always represented by minorities.

What do we really see in all states past and present, even those endowed with the most democratic institutions,

such as the United States of North America and Switzerland? Actual self-government of the masses, despite the pretense that the people hold all the power, remains a fiction most of the time. It is always, in fact, minorities that do the governing. In the United States, up to the recent Civil War and partly even now, and even within the party of the present incumbent, President Andrew Johnson, those ruling minorities were the so-called Democrats, who continued to favor slavery and the ferocious oligarchy of the Southern planters, demagogues without faith or conscience, capable of sacrificing everything to their greed, to their malignant ambition. They were those who, through their detestable actions and influence, exercised practically without opposition for almost fifty successive years, have greatly contributed to the corruption of political morality in North America.

Right now, a really intelligent, generous minority—but always a minority—the Republican party, is successfully challenging their pernicious policy. Let us hope its triumph may be complete; let us hope so for all humanity's sake. But no matter how sincere this party of liberty may be, no matter how great and generous its principles, we cannot hope that upon attaining power it will renounce its exclusive position of ruling minority and mingle with the masses, so that popular self-government may at last become a fact. This would require a revolution, one that would be profound in far other ways than all the revolutions that have thus far overwhelmed the ancient world and the modern.

In Switzerland, despite all the democratic revolutions that have taken place there, government is still in the hands of the well-off, the middle class, those privileged

few who are rich, leisured, educated. The sovereignty of the people—a term, incidentally, which we detest, since all sovereignty is to us detestable—the government of the masses by themselves, is here likewise a fiction. The people are sovereign in law, but not in fact; since they are necessarily occupied with their daily labor which leaves them no leisure, and since they are, if not totally ignorant, at least quite inferior in education to the propertied middle class, they are constrained to leave their alleged sovereignty in the hands of the middle class. The only advantage they derive from this situation, in Switzerland as well as in the United States of North America, is that the ambitious minorities, the seekers of political power, cannot attain power except by wooing the people, by pandering to their fleeting passions, which at times can be quite evil, and, in most cases, by deceiving them.

Let no one think that in criticizing the democratic government we thereby show our preference for the monarchy. We are firmly convinced that the most imperfect republic is a thousand times better than the most enlightened monarchy. In a republic, there are at least brief periods when the people, while continually exploited, is not oppressed; in the monarchies, oppression is constant. The democratic regime also lifts the masses up gradually to participation in public life—something the monarchy never does. Nevertheless, while we prefer the republic, we must recognize and proclaim that whatever the form of government may be, so long as human society continues to be divided into different classes as a result of the hereditary inequality of occupations, of wealth, of education, and of rights, there will always be a class-restricted government and the

inevitable exploitation of the majorities by the minorities.

The State is nothing but this domination and this exploitation, well regulated and systematized. We shall try to prove this by examining the consequences of the government of the masses by a minority, intelligent and dedicated as you please, in an ideal state founded upon the free contract.

Once the conditions of the contract have been accepted, it remains only to put them into effect. Suppose that a people recognized their incapacity to govern, but still had sufficient judgment to confide the administration of public affairs to their best citizens. At first these individuals are esteemed not for their official position but for their good qualities. They have been elected by the people because they are the most intelligent, capable, wise, courageous, and dedicated among them. Coming from the mass of the people, where all are supposedly equal, they do not yet constitute a separate class, but a group of men privileged only by nature and for that very reason singled out for election by the people. Their number is necessarily very limited, for in all times and in all nations the number of men endowed with qualities so remarkable that they automatically command the unanimous respect of a nation is, as experience teaches us, very small. Therefore, on pain of making a bad choice the people will be forced to choose its rulers from among them.

Here then is a society already divided into two categories, if not yet two classes. One is composed of the immense majority of its citizens who freely submit themselves to a government by those they have elected;

the other is composed of a small number of men endowed with exceptional attributes, recognized and accepted as exceptional by the people and entrusted by them with the task of governing. As these men depend on popular election, they cannot at first be distinguished from the mass of citizens except by the very qualities which have recommended them for election, and they are naturally the most useful and the most dedicated citizens of all. They do not as yet claim any privilege or any special right except that of carrying out, at the people's will, the special functions with which they have been entrusted. Besides, they are not in any way different from other people in their way of living or earning their means of living, so that a perfect equality still subsists among all.

Can this equality be maintained for any length of time? We claim it cannot, a claim that is easy enough to prove.

Nothing is as dangerous for man's personal morality as the habit of commanding. The best of men, the most intelligent, unselfish, generous, and pure, will always and inevitably be corrupted in this pursuit. Two feelings inherent in the exercise of power never fail to produce this demoralization: contempt for the masses, and, for the man in power, an exaggerated sense of his own worth.

“The masses, on admitting their own incapacity to govern themselves, have elected me as their head. By doing so, they have clearly proclaimed their own inferiority and my superiority. In this great crowd of men, among whom I hardly find any who are my equals, I alone am capable of administering public affairs. The people need me; they cannot get along without my

services, while I am sufficient unto myself. They must therefore obey me for their own good, and I, by deigning to command them, create their happiness and well-being.” There is enough here to turn anyone's head and corrupt the heart and make one swell with pride, isn't there? That is how power and the habit of commanding become a source of aberration, both intellectual and moral, even for the most intelligent and most virtuous of men.

All human morality—and we shall try, further on, to prove the absolute truth of this principle, the development, explanation, and widest application of which constitute the real subject of this essay—all collective and individual morality rests essentially upon respect for humanity. What do we mean by respect for humanity? We mean the recognition of human right and human dignity in every man, of whatever race, color, degree of intellectual development, or even morality. But if this man is stupid, wicked, or contemptible, can I respect him? Of course, if he is all that, it is impossible for me to respect his villainy, his stupidity, and his brutality; they are repugnant to me and arouse my indignation. I shall, if necessary, take the strongest measures against them, even going so far as to kill him if I have no other way of defending against him my life, my right, and whatever I hold precious and worthy. But even in the midst of the most violent and bitter, even mortal, combat between us, I must respect his human character. My own dignity as a man depends on it. Nevertheless, if he himself fails to recognize this dignity in others, must we recognize it in him? If he is a sort of ferocious beast or, as sometimes happens, worse than a beast, would we not, in recognizing his humanity, be supporting a mere fiction? NO, for whatever his present

intellectual and moral degradation may be, if, organically, he is neither an idiot nor a madman—in which case he should be treated as a sick man rather than as a criminal—if he is in full possession of his senses and of such intelligence as nature has granted him, his humanity, no matter how monstrous his deviations might be, nonetheless really exists. It exists as a lifelong potential capacity to rise to the awareness of his humanity, even if there should be little possibility for a radical change in the social conditions which have made him what he is.

Take the most intelligent ape, with the finest disposition; though you place him in the best, most humane environment, you will never make a man of him. Take the most hardened criminal or the man with the poorest mind, provided that neither has any organic lesion causing idiocy or insanity; the criminality of the one, and the failure of the other to develop an awareness of his humanity and his human duties, is not their fault, nor is it due to their nature; it is solely the result of the social environment in which they were born and brought up.

FOUNDING OF THE WORKER'S INTERNATIONAL

FROM "THE POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF BAKUNIN"

BY G.P. MAXIMOFF

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Awakening of Labor on the Eve of the International. In 1863 and 1864, the years of the founding of the International, in nearly all of the countries of Europe, and especially those where modern industry had reached its highest development - in England, France, Belgium, Germany, and Switzerland - two facts made themselves manifest, facts which facilitated and practically made mandatory the creation of the International. The first was the simultaneous awakening in all the countries of the consciousness, courage, and spirit of the workers, following twelve or even fifteen years of a state of depression which came as a result of the terrible debacle of 1848 and 1851. The second fact was that of the marvelous development of the wealth of the bourgeoisie and, as its necessary accompaniment, the poverty of the workers in all the countries. This was the fact which spurred these workers to action, while their awakening consciousness and spirit endowed them with the essential faith.

The Central Sections. But, as it often happens, this renascent faith did not manifest itself at once among the great masses of the European workers. Out of all the countries of Europe there were only two - soon followed by others - in which it made its first appearance. Even in those privileged countries it was not the whole mass but a small

number of little, widely scattered workers' associations which felt within themselves the stirrings of a reborn confidence, felt it strongly enough to resume the struggle; and in those associations it was at first a few rare individuals, the more intelligent, the more energetic, the more devoted among them, and in most cases those who already had been tried and developed by previous struggles, and who, full of hope and faith, mustered the courage to take the initiative of starting the new movement.

Those individuals, meeting casually in London in 1864, in connection with the Polish question - a problem of the highest political importance, but one that was completely alien to the question of international solidarity of labor-formed, under the direct influence of the founders of the International, the first nucleus of this great association. Then, having returned to their respective countries - France, Belgium, Germany, and Switzerland - the delegates formed nuclei in those lands. That is how the initial Central Sections (of the International) were set up.

The Central Sections do not represent any special industry, since they comprise the most advanced workers in all kinds of industries. Then what do those sections represent? They represent the idea of the International itself. What is their mission? The development and propagandizing of this idea. And what is this idea It is the emancipation not only of workers in such and such an industry or in such and such a country, but of all workers in all industries - the emancipation of the workers of all the countries in the world. It is the general emancipation of all those who, earning, with difficulty their miserable livelihood by any productive labor what ever, are economically exploited and politically oppressed by capital, or I rather by the owners and the privileged brokers of capital.

Such is the negative, militant, or revolutionary power of this idea. And the positive force? It is the founding of a new social world, resting only upon emancipated labor and spontaneously created upon the ruins of the old world, by the organization and the free federation of workers' associations liberated from the economic and political yoke of the privileged classes.

Those two aspects of the same question, one negative and the other positive, are inseparable from each other.

Central Sections Are Mere Ideological Groupings. The Central Sections are the active and living centers where the new faith is preserved, where it develops, and where it is being clarified. No one joins them in the capacity of a special worker of such and such a trade with the view of forming any particular trade union organizations. Those who join those sections are workers in general, having in view the general emancipation and organization of labor, and of the new social world based on labor. The workers comprising the membership of those sections leave behind them their character of special or "real" workers, presenting themselves to the organization as workers "in general." Workers for what? Workers for the idea, the propaganda and organization of the economic and militant might of the International, workers for the Social Revolution.

The Central Sections represent an altogether different character from that of the trade sections, even being diametrically opposed to them. Whereas the latter, following a natural course of development, begin with the fact in order to arrive at the idea, the Central Sections, following, on the contrary, the course of ideal or abstract development, begin with the idea in order to arrive at the

fact. It is evident that in contradistinction to the fully realistic or positivist method of the trade sections, the method of the Central Sections appears to be artificial and abstract. This manner of proceeding from the idea to the fact is precisely the one used by the idealists of all schools, theologians, and metaphysicians, whose final impotence has by now become a matter of historical record. The secret of this impotence lies in the absolute impossibility of arriving at the real and concrete fact by taking the absolute idea as the starting point.

The Central Sections in Themselves Would be Powerless to Draw in Great Masses of Workers. If the International Workingmen's Association were made up only of Central Sections, undoubtedly it would never attain even one hundredth part of the impressive power upon which it is priding itself now. Those sections would be merely so many workers academies where all questions would perpetually be discussed, including of course the question of organization of labor, but without the slightest attempt being made to carry it into practice, nor even having the possibility of doing it...

...If the International were made up only of Central Sections, the latter probably would have succeeded by now in forming conspiracies for the overthrow of the present order of things; but such conspiracies would be confined only to mere intentions, being too impotent to attain their goal since they would never be able to draw in more than a very small number of workers - the most intelligent, most energetic, most convinced and devoted among them. The vast majority, the millions of proletarians, would remain outside of those conspiracies, but in order to overthrow and destroy the political and social order which now crushes us,

it would be necessary to have the co-operation of those millions.

The Empirical Approach of Workers to Their Problems. Only individuals, and a small number of them at that, can be carried away by an abstract and "pure" idea. The millions, the masses, not only of the proletariat but also of the enlightened and privileged classes, are carried away only by the power and logic of "facts," apprehending and envisaging most of the time only their immediate interests or moved only by their monetary, more or less blind, passions. Therefore, in order to interest and draw the whole proletariat into the work of the International, it is necessary approach it not with general and abstract ideas, but with a living tangible comprehension of its own pressing problems, of which evils the workers are aware in a concrete manner.

Their daily tribulations, although presenting to a social thinker a problem of a general character and being actually only the particular effects of general and permanent causes, are in reality infinitely diverse, taking on a multitude of different aspects, produced by a multitude of transitory and contributory causes. Such is the daily reality of those evils. But the mass of workers who are forced to live from hand to mouth and who find hardly a moment of leisure in which to think of the next day, apprehend the evils from which they suffer precisely and exclusively in the context of this particular reality but never or scarcely ever in their general aspect.

Concrete Statement Offers the Only Effective Approach to the Great Mass of Workers. It follows then that in order to touch the heart and gain the confidence, the assent, the adhesion, and the co-operation of the illiterate legions of

the proletariat - and the vast majority of proletarians unfortunately still belong in this category - it is necessary to begin to speak to those workers not of the general sufferings of the international proletariat as a whole but of their particular, daily, altogether private misfortunes. It is necessary to speak to them of their own trade and the conditions of their work in the specific locality where they live; of the harsh conditions and long hours of their daily work, of the small pay, the mean ness of their employer, the high cost of living, and how impossible it is for them properly to support and bring up a family.

And in laying before them the means to combat those evils and to better their position, it is not necessary at all to speak to them at first of the general and revolutionary means which now constitute the program of action of the International Workingmen's Association, such as the abolition of individual hereditary property and the collectivization of property the abolition of the juridical right and that of the State, and their replacement by the organization and free federation of producers' associations. The workers, in all probability, would hardly understand all that. It also is possible that, finding themselves under the influence of the religious political, and social ideas which governments and priests have tried to implant in their minds, they will turn away in anger and distrust from any imprudent propagandist who tries to convert them by using such arguments.

No, they should be approached only by way of holding up before them such means of struggle the usefulness of which they cannot fail to comprehend, and which they are prone to accept upon the promptings of their good sense and daily experience. Those first elementary means are, as we already have said, the establishing of complete

solidarity with their fellow-workers in the shop, in their own defense and in the struggle against their common master; and then the extension of this solidarity to all workers in the same trade and in the same locality in their joint struggle against the employers - that is, their formal entrance as active members into the section of their trade, a section affiliated with the International Workingmen's Association.

The economic fact, the conditions in a special industry and the particular conditions of exploitation of that industry by capital, the intimate and particular solidarity of interests, of needs, sufferings, and aspirations which amongst all workers who are members of the same trade section - all that forms the real basis of their association. The idea comes afterward as the explanation or the adequate expression of the development and the mental reflection of this fact in the collective consciousness.

Solidarity of Trade Union Members Rooted in Actuality. A worker not need any great intellectual preparation to become a member of trade union section [of the International] representing his trade. He is a member of it, in quite a natural way, before even being aware of it. All he has to know is that he is being worked to death and that this killing work, so poorly paid that he has hardly enough to provide for his family, enriches his employer, which means that the latter is his ruthless exploiter, his tireless oppressor, his enemy, his master, toward whom he owes no other feeling but that of hate and the rebelliousness of a slave, to give place much later, after he has vanquished the employer in the final struggle, to a sense of justice and a feeling of brotherhood toward the former employer as one who is now a free man.

The worker also must realize - and this is not difficult for him to understand that by himself he is powerless against his master and that to prevent his being utterly crushed by the latter, he must first unite with his fellow-workers in the shop, and be loyal to them in all the struggles arising there against the master.

Internationalism Growing Out of Actual Experiences of Proletarian struggles. He also must know that merely a union of workers in the same shop is not sufficient, that it is necessary that all the workers in the same trade employed in the same locality should unite. Once he realizes this - and if he is not exceedingly stupid, his daily experience will teach him as much as that - he consciously becomes a devoted member of his corporative section. The latter already exists as a matter of fact, but it is still devoid of international consciousness, it is still only a local fact. The same experience, at this time collective, will soon overcome in the consciousness of the least intelligent worker the narrow limits of exclusively local solidarity.

There comes a crisis, a strike. The workers in a certain locality belonging to the same trade make common cause, demanding from their employers a wage increase or a reduction of hours of work. The employers do not want to grant those demands; and since they cannot do without workers, they bring them from other localities or other provinces of the same country or even from foreign countries. But in those countries the workers work longer hours for less pay; and the employers there can sell their products cheaper, successfully competing against countries where workers working less earn more, and thus force the employers in the latter countries to cut wages and increase the hours of their workers.

Hence it follows that in the long run the relatively tolerable position of the workers in one country can be maintained only on condition that it be more or less the same in other countries. All this repeats itself too often to escape the attention of even the most simple-minded workers. Then they come to realize that in order to protect themselves against the ever-growing exploitation by the employers, it is not enough to organize solidarity on a local scale, but that it is necessary to unite the workers of the same trade not in one province only - and not even in just one country - but in all countries, and above all in those countries which are inter-linked by commercial and industrial ties. When the workers come to realize all this, then an organization will be formed not only on a local nor even on a national scale, but a truly international organization embracing all the workers in a given trade.

But this is not yet an organization of workers in general, it is only an international organization of a single trade. And in order that non-educated workers realize and recognize the actual solidarity existing among all the trade unions of all the countries of the world, it is necessary that the other workers, intellectually more developed than the rest and having some knowledge of economic science, should come to their aid. Not that the ordinary worker lacks daily experience in that respect, but the economic phenomena through which this solidarity manifests itself are exceedingly complex, so that their true meaning may be above the comprehension of the unenlightened worker.

If we assume that international solidarity has been established in a single trade while lacking in the others, it follows that in this organized industry wages will be higher and hours of work shorter than in all other industries. And it having been proven that because of the competition of

employers and capitalists, the source of real profits of both is the comparatively low wages and the long hours imposed upon workers, it is clear that in the industry in which the workers are organized along international lines, the capitalists and the employers will earn less than in all the others, as a result of which the capitalists will gradually transfer their capital and credit, and the employers their exploiting activity, into the less organized or altogether unorganized branches of industry.

This will necessarily lead to a falling off in the demand for labor in the internationally organized industry, which will naturally result in a worsening of the situation of the workers in that industry, who will have to accept lower wages in order not to starve. Hence it follows that conditions of labor cannot get worse or better in any particular industry without immediately affecting the workers in other industries, and that workers of all trades are interlinked with real and indissoluble ties of solidarity.

Internationalism Issues from the Living Experiences of the Proletariat. This solidarity has been proven by science as well as by experience - science for that matter being simply universal experience, clearly expressed, systematically and properly explained. But solidarity manifests itself in the workers' world by a mutual, profound, and passionate sympathy, which, - in a measure that economic factors and their political and social consequences keep on developing, factors telling more and more distressingly upon the workers of all trades - grows and becomes ever more of an intense passion with the proletariat.

The workers in every trade and in every country; owing on one hand to the material and moral support which in the course of their struggle they find among workers in other

trades and other countries, and on the other hand, because of the condemnation and the systematic, hate-breathing opposition with which they meet not only from their own employers but also from employers in other, even very remote industries, and from the bourgeoisie as a whole - become fully aware of their situation and the principal conditions necessary to their emancipation. They see that the social world is in reality divided into three main categories: 1. The countless millions of exploited workers; 2. A few hundred thousand second - or third-rank exploiters; 3. A few thousand, or, at the most, a few tens of thousands of the larger beasts of prey, big capitalists who have grown fat on directly exploiting the second category and indirectly the first category, pocketing at least half the profits obtained from the collective labor of humanity.

As soon as the worker takes note of this special and abiding fact, he must soon realize, backward though he may be in his development, that if there is any means of salvation for him, it must lie along the lines of establishing and organizing the closest practical solidarity among the proletarians of the whole world, regardless of industries, or countries, in their struggle against the exploiting bourgeoisie.

The Necessary Historic Premises of the International. Here then is the ready framework of the International Workingmen's Association. It was given to us not by a theory born in the head of one or several profound thinkers, but by the actual development of economic facts, by the hard trials to which those facts subject the working masses, and the reflections, the thoughts, which they naturally engender in the minds of the workers.

That the International Association could come into existence it was necessary that the elements involved in its making - the economic factors, the experience, strivings, and thoughts of the proletariat - should already have been developed strongly enough to form a solid base for it. It was necessary that there already should have been, in the midst of the proletariat, groups or associations of sufficiently advanced workers who, scattered throughout the world, could take upon themselves the initiative of the great emancipatory movement of the workers. Following that comes, of course, the personal initiative of a few intelligent individuals fully devoted to the cause of the people.

It is not enough that the working masses come to realize that international solidarity is the only means of their emancipation; it also is necessary that they have faith in the real efficacy and certainty of this means of salvation, that they have faith in the possibility of their impending deliverance. This faith is a matter of temperament, collective disposition, and mental state. Temperament is given to various peoples by nature, but it is subject to historic development. The collective disposition of the proletariat is always a two-fold product: first, of all preceding events, and then, especially, of his present economic and social situation.

GOD AND THE STATE

FROM MICHAEL BAKUNIN, **GOD AND THE STATE,**
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MOTHER EARTH PUBLISHING ASSOCIATION.

I.

Who are right, the idealists or the materialists? The question once stated in this way hesitation becomes impossible. Undoubtedly the idealists are wrong and the materialists right. Yes, facts are before ideas; yes, the ideal, as Proudhon said, is but a flower, whose root lies in the material conditions of existence. Yes, the whole history of humanity, intellectual and moral, political and social, is but a reflection of its economic history.

All branches of modern science, of true and disinterested science, concur in proclaiming this grand truth, fundamental and decisive: The social world, properly speaking, the human world - in short, humanity - is nothing other than the last and supreme development - at least on our planet and as far as we know - the highest manifestation of animality. But as every development necessarily implies a negation, that of its base or point of departure, humanity is at the same time and essentially the deliberate and gradual negation of the animal element in man; and it is precisely this negation, as rational as it is natural, and rational only because natural - at once historical and logical, as inevitable as the development and realization of all the natural laws in the world - that constitutes and

creates the ideal, the world of intellectual and moral convictions, ideas.

Yes, our first ancestors, our Adams and our Eves, were, if not gorillas, very near relatives of gorillas, omnivorous, intelligent and ferocious beasts, endowed in a higher degree than the animals of another species with two precious faculties - the power to think and the desire to rebel.

These faculties, combining their progressive action in history, represent the essential factor, the negative power in the positive development of human animality, and create consequently all that constitutes humanity in man.

The Bible, which is a very interesting and here and there very profound book when considered as one of the oldest surviving manifestations of human wisdom and fancy, expresses this truth very naively in its myth of original sin. Jehovah, who of all the good gods adored by men was certainly the most jealous, the most vain, the most ferocious, the most unjust, the most bloodthirsty, the most despotic, and the most hostile to human dignity and liberty - Jehovah had just created Adam and Eve, to satisfy we know not what caprice; no doubt to while away his time, which must weigh heavy on his hands in his eternal egoistic solitude, or that he might have some new slaves. He generously placed at their disposal the whole earth, with all its fruits and animals, and set but a single limit to this complete enjoyment. He expressly forbade them from touching the fruit of the tree of knowledge. He wished, therefore, that man, destitute of all understanding of himself, should remain an eternal beast, ever on all-fours before the eternal God, his creator and his master. But here steps in Satan, the eternal rebel, the first freethinker and the emancipator of worlds. He makes man ashamed of his

bestial ignorance and obedience; he emancipates him, stamps upon his brow the seal of liberty and humanity, in urging him to disobey and eat of the fruit of knowledge.

We know what followed. The good God, whose foresight, which is one of the divine faculties, should have warned him of what would happen, flew into a terrible and ridiculous rage; he cursed Satan, man, and the world created by himself, striking himself so to speak in his own creation, as children do when they get angry; and, not content with smiting our ancestors themselves, he cursed them in all the generations to come, innocent of the crime committed by their forefathers. Our Catholic and Protestant theologians look upon that as very profound and very just, precisely because it is monstrously iniquitous and absurd. Then, remembering that he was not only a God of vengeance and wrath, but also a God of love, after having tormented the existence of a few milliards of poor human beings and condemned them to an eternal hell, he took pity on the rest, and, to save them and reconcile his eternal and divine love with his eternal and divine anger, always greedy for victims and blood, he sent into the world, as an expiatory victim, his only son, that he might be killed by men. That is called the mystery of the Redemption, the basis of all the Christian religions. Still, if the divine Savior had saved the human world! But no; in the paradise promised by Christ, as we know, such being the formal announcement, the elect will number very few. The rest, the immense majority of the generations present and to come, will burn eternally in hell. In the meantime, to console us, God, ever just, ever good, hands over the earth to the government of the Napoleon Thirds, of the William Firsts, of the Ferdinands of Austria, and of the Alexanders of all the Russias.

Such are the absurd tales that are told and the monstrous doctrines that are taught, in the full light of the nineteenth century, in all the public schools of Europe, at the express command of the government. They call this civilizing the people! Is it not plain that all these governments are systematic poisoners, interested stupefies of the masses?

I have wandered from my subject, because anger gets hold of me whenever I think of the base and criminal means which they employ to keep the nations in perpetual slavery, undoubtedly that they may be the better able to fleece them. Of what consequence are the crimes of all the Tropmanns in the world compared with this crime of treason against humanity committed daily, in broad day, over the whole surface of the civilized world, by those who dare to call themselves the guardians and the fathers of the people? I return to the myth of original sin.

God admitted that Satan was right; he recognized that the devil did not deceive Adam and Eve in promising them knowledge and liberty as a reward for the act of disobedience which he had induced them to commit; for, immediately they had eaten of the forbidden fruit, God himself said (see Bible): "Behold, the man is become as one of the gods, to know good and evil; prevent him, therefore, from eating of the fruit of eternal life, lest he become immortal like Ourselves."

Let us disregard now the fabulous portion of this myth and consider its true meaning, which is very clear. Man has emancipated himself; he has separated himself from animality and constituted himself a man; he has begun his distinctively human history and development by an act of disobedience and science - that is, by rebellion and by thought.

Three elements or, if you like, three fundamental principles constitute the essential conditions of all human development, collective or individual, in history: (1) human animality;;(2) thought; and (3) rebellion.; To the first properly corresponds social and private economy; to the second, science; to the third, liberty.

Idealists of all schools, aristocrats and bourgeois, theologians and metaphysicians, politicians and moralists, religionists, philosophers, or poets, not forgetting the liberal economists - unbounded worshippers of the ideal, as we know - are much offended when told that man, with his magnificent intelligence, his sublime ideas, and his boundless aspirations, is, like all else existing in the world, nothing but matter, only a product of vile matter.

We may answer that the matter of which materialists speak, matter spontaneously and eternally mobile, active, productive, matter chemically or organically determined and manifested by the properties or forces, mechanical, physical, animal, and intelligent, which necessarily belong to it - that this matter has nothing in common with the vile matter of the idealists. The latter, a product of their false abstraction, is indeed a stupid, inanimate, immobile thing, incapable of giving birth to the smallest product, a caput mortuum, an ugly fancy in contrast to the beautiful fancy which they call God; as the opposite of this supreme being, matter, their matter, stripped by that constitutes its real nature, necessarily represents supreme nothingness. They have taken away intelligence, life, all its determining qualities, active relations or forces, motion itself, without which matter would not even have weight, leaving it nothing but impenetrability and absolute immobility in space; they have attributed all these natural forces,

properties, and manifestations to the imaginary being created by their abstract fancy; then, interchanging rôles, they have called this product of their imagination, this phantom, this God who is nothing, "supreme Being" and, as a necessary consequence, have declared that the real being, matter, the world, is nothing. After which they gravely tell us that this matter is incapable of producing anything, not even of setting itself in motion, and consequently must have been created by their God.

At the end of this book I exposed the fallacies and truly revolting absurdities to which one is inevitably led by this imagination of a God, let him be considered as a personal being, the creator and organizer of worlds; or even as impersonal, a kind of divine soul spread over the whole universe and constituting thus its eternal principle; or let him be an idea, infinite and divine, always present and active in the world, and always manifested by the totality of material and definite beings. Here I shall deal with one point only.

The gradual development of the material world, as well as of organic animal life and of the historically progressive intelligence of man, individually or socially, is perfectly conceivable. It is a wholly natural movement from the simple to the complex, from the lower to the higher, from the inferior to the superior; a movement in conformity with all our daily experiences, and consequently in conformity also with our natural logic, with the distinctive laws of our mind, which being formed and developed only by the aid of these same experiences; is, so to speak, but the mental, cerebral reproduction or reflected summary thereof.

The system of the idealists is quite the contrary of this. It is the reversal of all human experiences and of that universal

and common good sense which is the essential condition of all human understanding, and which, in rising from the simple and unanimously recognized truth that twice two are four to the sublimest and most complex scientific considerations - admitting, moreover, nothing that has not stood the severest tests of experience or observation of things and facts - becomes the only serious basis of human knowledge.

Very far from pursuing the natural order from the lower to the higher, from the inferior to the superior, and from the relatively simple to the more complex; instead of wisely and rationally accompanying the progressive and real movement from the world called inorganic to the world organic, vegetables, animal, and then distinctively human - from chemical matter or chemical being to living matter or living being, and from living being to thinking being - the idealists, obsessed, blinded, and pushed on by the divine phantom which they have inherited from theology, take precisely the opposite course. They go from the higher to the lower, from the superior to the inferior, from the complex to the simple. They begin with God, either as a person or as divine substance or idea, and the first step that they take is a terrible fall from the sublime heights of the eternal ideal into the mire of the material world; from absolute perfection into absolute imperfection; from thought to being, or rather, from supreme being to nothing. When, how, and why the divine being, eternal, infinite, absolutely perfect, probably weary of himself, decided upon this desperate salto mortale is something which no idealist, no theologian, no metaphysician, no poet, has ever been able to understand himself or explain to the profane. All religions, past and present, and all the systems of transcendental philosophy hinge on this unique and iniquitous mystery.

1 Holy men, inspired lawgivers, prophets, messiahs, have searched it for life, and found only torment and death. Like the ancient sphinx, it has devoured them, because they could not explain it. Great philosophers from Heraclitus and Plato down to Descartes, Spinoza: Leibnitz, Kant, Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel, not to mention the Indian philosophers, have written heaps of volumes and built systems as ingenious as sublime, in which they have said by the way many beautiful and grand things and discovered immortal truths, but they have left this mystery, the principal object of their transcendental investigations, as unfathomable as before. The gigantic efforts of the most Wonderful geniuses that the world has known, and who, one after another, for at least thirty centuries, have undertaken anew this labor of Sisyphus, have resulted only in rendering this mystery still more incomprehensible. Is it to be hoped that it will be unveiled to us by the routine speculations of some pedantic disciple of an artificially warmed-over metaphysics at a time when all living and serious spirits have abandoned that ambiguous science born of a compromise - historically explicable no doubt - between the unreason of faith and sound scientific reason?

It is evident that this terrible mystery is inexplicable - that is, absurd, because only the absurd admits of no explanation. It is evident that whoever finds it essential to his happiness and life must renounce his reason, and return, if he can, to naive, blind, stupid faith, to repeat with Tertullianus and all sincere believers these words, which sum up the very quintessence of theology: Credo quia absurdum. Then all discussion ceases, and nothing remains but the triumphant stupidity of faith. But immediately there arises another question: How comes an intelligent and well-

informed man ever to feel the need of believing in this mystery?

Nothing is more natural than that the belief in God, the creator, regulator, judge, master, curser, savior, and benefactor of the world, should still prevail among the people, especially in the rural districts, where it is more widespread than among the proletariat of the cities. The people, unfortunately, are still very ignorant, and are kept in ignorance by the systematic efforts of all the governments, who consider this ignorance, not without good reason, as one of the essential conditions of their own power. Weighted down by their daily labor, deprived of leisure, of intellectual intercourse, of reading, in short of all the means and a good portion of the stimulants that develop thought in men, the people generally accept religious traditions without criticism and in a lump. These traditions surround them from infancy in all the situations of life, and artificially sustained in their minds by a multitude of official poisoners of all sorts, priests and laymen, are transformed therein into a sort of mental and moral habit, too often more powerful even than their natural good sense.

There is another reason which explains and in some sort justifies the absurd beliefs of the people - namely, the wretched situation to which they find themselves fatally condemned by the economic organization of society in the most civilized countries of Europe. Reduced, intellectually and morally as well as materially, to the minimum of human existence, confined in their life like a prisoner in his prison, without horizon, without outlet, without even a future if we believe the economists, the people would have the singularly narrow souls and blunted instincts of the bourgeois if they did not feel a desire to escape; but of escape there are but three methods - two chimerical and a

third real. The first two are the dram-shop and the church, debauchery of the body or debauchery of the mind; the third is social revolution. Hence I conclude this last will be much more potent than all the theological propagandism of the freethinkers to destroy to their last vestige the religious beliefs and dissolute habits of the people, beliefs and habits much more intimately connected than is generally supposed. In substituting for the at once illusory and brutal enjoyments of bodily and spiritual licentiousness the enjoyments, as refined as they are real, of humanity developed in each and all, the social revolution alone will have the power to close at the same time all the dram-shops and all the churches.

Till then the people. Taken as a whole, will believe; and, if they have no reason to believe, they will have at least a right.

There is a class of people who, if they do not believe, must at least make a semblance of believing. This class comprising all the tormentors, all the oppressors, and all the exploiters of humanity; priests, monarchs, statesmen, soldiers, public and private financiers, officials of all sorts, policemen, gendarmes, jailers and executioners, monopolists, capitalists, tax-leeches, contractors and landlords, lawyers, economists, politicians of all shades, down to the smallest vendor of sweetmeats, all will repeat in unison those words of Voltaire:

"If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him." For, you understand, "the people must have a religion." That is the safety-valve.

There exists, finally, a somewhat numerous class of honest but timid souls who, too intelligent to take the Christian

dogmas seriously, reject them in detail, but have neither the courage nor the strength nor the necessary resolution to summarily renounce them altogether. They abandon to your criticism all the special absurdities of religion, they turn up their noses at all the miracles, but they cling desperately to the principal absurdity; the source of all the others, to the miracle that explains and justifies all the other miracles, the existence of God. Their God is not the vigorous and powerful being, the brutally positive God of theology. It is a nebulous, diaphanous, illusory being that vanishes into nothing at the first attempt to grasp it; it is a mirage, an ignis fatuus; that neither warms nor illuminates. And yet they hold fast to it, and believe that, were it to disappear, all would disappear with it. They are uncertain, sickly souls, who have lost their reckoning in the present civilisation, belonging to neither the present nor the future, pale phantoms eternally suspended between heaven and earth, and occupying exactly the same position between the politics of the bourgeois and the Socialism of the proletariat. They have neither the power nor the wish nor the determination to follow out their thought, and they waste their time and pains in constantly endeavouring to reconcile the irreconcilable. In public life these are known as bourgeois Socialists.

With them, or against them, discussion is out of the question. They are too puny.

But there are a few illustrious men of whom no one will dare to speak without respect, and whose vigorous health, strength of mind, and good intention no one will dream of calling in question. I need only cite the names of Mazzini, Michelet, Quinet, John Stuart Mill. 2 Generous and strong souls, great hearts, great minds, great writers, and the first the heroic and revolutionary regenerator of a great nation,

they are all apostles of idealism and bitter despisers and adversaries of materialism, and consequently of Socialism also, in philosophy as well as in politics.

Against them, then, we must discuss this question.

First, let it be remarked that not one of the illustrious men I have just named nor any other idealistic thinker of any consequence in our day has given any attention to the logical side of this question properly speaking. Not one has tried to settle philosophically the possibility of the divine salto mortale; from the pure and eternal regions of spirit into the mire of the material world. Have they feared to approach this irreconcilable contradiction and despaired of solving it after the failures of the greatest geniuses of history, or have they looked upon it as already sufficiently well settled? That is their secret. The fact is that they have neglected the theoretical demonstration of the existence of a God, and have developed only its practical motives and consequences. They have treated it as a fact universally accepted, and, as such, no longer susceptible of any doubt whatever, for sole proof thereof limiting themselves to the establishment of the antiquity and this very universality of the belief in God.

This imposing unanimity, in the eyes of many illustrious men and writers to quote only the most famous of them who eloquently expressed it, Joseph de Maistre and the great Italian patriot, Giuseppe Mazzini - is of more value than all the demonstrations of science; and if the reasoning of a small number of logical and even very powerful, but isolated, thinkers is against it, so much the worse, they say, for these thinkers and their logic, for universal consent, the general and primitive adoption of an idea, has always been considered the most triumphant testimony to its truth. The I

sentiment of the whole world, a conviction that is found ' and maintained always and everywhere, cannot be mistaken; it must have its root in a necessity absolutely inherent in the very nature of man. And since it has been established that all peoples, past and present, have believed and still believe in the existence of God, it is clear that those who have the misfortune to doubt it, whatever the logic that led them to this doubt, are abnormal exceptions, monsters.

Thus, then, the antiquity; and universality; of a belief should be regarded, contrary to all science and all logic, as sufficient and unimpeachable proof of its truth. Why?

Until the days of Copernicus and Galileo everybody believed that the sun revolved about the earth. Was not everybody mistaken? What is more ancient and more universal than slavery? Cannibalism perhaps. From the origin of historic society down to the present day there has been always and everywhere exploitation of the compulsory labour of the masses - slaves, serfs, or wage workers - by some dominant minority; oppression of the people by the Church and by the State. Must it be concluded that this exploitation and this oppression are necessities absolutely inherent in the very existence of human society? These are examples which show that the argument of the champions of God proves nothing.

Nothing, in fact, is as universal or as ancient as the iniquitous and absurd; truth and justice, on the contrary, are the least universal, the youngest features in the development of human society. In this fact, too, lies the explanation of a constant historical phenomenon - namely, the persecution of which those who first proclaim the truth have been and continue to be the objects at the hands of the

official, privileged, and interested representatives of "universal" and "ancient" beliefs, and often also at the hands of the same masses who, after having tortured them, always end by adopting their ideas and rendering them victorious.

To us materialists and Revolutionary Socialists, there is nothing astonishing or terrifying in this historical phenomenon. Strong in our conscience, in our love of truth at all hazards, in that passion for logic which of itself alone constitutes a great power and outside of which there is no thought; strong in our passion for justice and in our unshakeable faith in the triumph of humanity over all theoretical and practical bestialities; strong, finally, in the mutual confidence and support given each other by the few who share our convictions - we resign ourselves to all the consequences of this historical phenomenon, in which we see the manifestation of a social law as natural, as necessary, and as invariable as all the other laws which govern the world.

This law is a logical, inevitable consequence of the animal origin; of human society; for in face of all the scientific, physiological, psychological, and historical proofs accumulated at the present day, as well as in face of the exploits of the Germans conquering France, which now furnish so striking a demonstration thereof, it is no longer possible to really doubt this origin. But from the moment that this animal origin of man is accepted, all is explained. History then appears to us as the revolutionary negation, now slow, apathetic, sluggish, now passionate and powerful, of the past. It consists precisely in the progressive negation of the primitive animality of man by the development of his humanity. Man, a wild beast, cousin of the gorilla, has emerged from the profound darkness of

animal instinct into the light of the mind, which explains in a wholly natural way all his past mistakes and partially consoles us for his present errors. He has gone out from animal slavery, and passing through divine slavery, a temporary condition between his animality and his humanity, he is now marching on to the conquest and realisation of human liberty. Whence it results that the antiquity of a belief, of an idea, far from proving anything in its favour, ought, on the contrary, to lead us to suspect it. For behind us is our animality and before us our humanity; human light, the only thing that can warm and enlighten us, the only thing that can emancipate us, give us dignity, freedom, and happiness, and realise fraternity among us, is never at the beginning, but, relatively to the epoch in which we live, always at the end of history. Let us, then, never look back, let us look ever forward; for forward is our sunlight, forward our salvation. If it is justifiable, and even useful and necessary, to turn back to study our past, it is only in order to establish what we have been and what we must no longer be, what we have believed and thought and what we must no longer believe or think, what we have done and what we must do nevermore.

So much for antiquity. As for the universality; of an error, it proves but one thing - the similarity, if not the perfect identity, of human nature in all ages and under all skies. And, since it is established that all peoples, at all periods of their life, have believed and still believe in God, we must simply conclude that the divine idea, an outcome of ourselves, is an error historically necessary in the development of humanity, and ask why and how it was produced in history and why an immense majority of the human race still accept it as a truth.

Until we shall account to ourselves for the manner in which the idea of a supernatural or divine world was developed and had to be developed in the historical evolution of the human conscience, all our scientific conviction of its absurdity will be in vain; until then we shall never succeed in destroying it in the opinion of the majority, because we shall never be able to attack it in the very depths of the human being where it had birth. Condemned to a fruitless struggle, without issue and without end, we should for ever have to content ourselves with fighting it solely on the surface, in its innumerable manifestations, whose absurdity will be scarcely beaten down by the blows of common sense before it will reappear in a new form no less nonsensical. While the root of all the absurdities that torment the world, belief in God, remains intact, it will never fail to bring forth new offspring. Thus, at the present time, in certain sections of the highest society, Spiritualism tends to establish itself upon the ruins of Christianity.

It is not only in the interest of the masses, it is in that of the health of our own minds, that we should strive to understand the historic genesis, the succession of causes which developed and produced the idea of God in the consciousness of men. In vain shall we call and believe ourselves Atheists, until we comprehend these causes, for, until then, we shall always suffer ourselves to be more or less governed by the clamours of this universal conscience whose secret we have not discovered; and, considering the natural weakness of even the strongest individual against the all-powerful influence of the social surroundings that trammel him, we are always in danger of relapsing sooner or later, in one way or another, into the abyss of religious absurdity. Examples of these shameful conversions are frequent in society today.

II.

I have stated the chief practical reason of the power still exercised today over the masses by religious beliefs. These mystical tendencies do not signify in man so much an aberration of mind as a deep discontent at Heart. They are the instinctive and passionate protest of the human being against the narrowness, the platitudes, the sorrows, and the shame of a wretched existence. For this malady, I have already said, there is but one remedy - Social Revolution.

In the meantime I have endeavored to show the causes responsible for the birth and historical development of religious hallucinations in the human conscience. Here it is my purpose to treat this question of the existence of a God, or of the divine origin of the world and of man, solely from the standpoint of its moral and social utility, and I shall say only a few words, to better explain my thought, regarding the theoretical grounds of this belief.

All religions, with their gods, their demigods, and their prophets, their messiahs and their saints, were created by the credulous fancy of men who had not attained the full development and full possession of their faculties. Consequently, the religious heaven is nothing but a mirage in which man, exalted by ignorance and faith, discovers his own image, but enlarged and reversed - that is, divinized. The history of religion, of the birth, grandeur, and decline of the gods who have succeeded one another in human belief, is nothing, therefore, but the development of the collective intelligence and conscience of mankind. As fast as they discovered, in the course of their historically progressive advance, either in themselves or in external nature, a power, a quality, or even any great defect whatever, they attributed them to their gods, after having exaggerated and enlarged them beyond measure, after the

manner of children, by an act of their religious fancy. Thanks to this modesty and pious generosity of believing and credulous men, heaven has grown rich with the spoils of the earth, and, by a necessary consequence, the richer heaven became, the more wretched became humanity and the earth. God once installed, he was naturally proclaimed the cause, reason, arbiter and absolute disposer of all things: the world thenceforth was nothing, God was all; and man, his real creator, after having unknowingly extracted him from the void, bowed down before him, worshipped him, and avowed himself his creature and his slave.

Christianity is precisely the religion par excellence, because it exhibits and manifests, to the fullest extent, the very nature and essence of every religious system, which is the impoverishment, enslavement, and annihilation of humanity for the benefit of divinity.

God being everything, the real world and man are nothing. God being truth, justice, goodness, beauty, power, and life, man is falsehood, iniquity, evil, ugliness, impotence, and death. God being master, man is the slave. Incapable of finding justice, truth, and eternal life by his own effort, he can attain them only through a divine revelation. But whoever says revelation says revealers, messiahs, prophets, priests, and legislators inspired by God himself; and these, once recognized as the representatives of divinity on earth, as the holy instructors of humanity, chosen by God himself to direct it in the path of salvation, necessarily exercise absolute power. All men owe them passive and unlimited obedience; for against the divine reason there is no human reason, and against the justice of God no terrestrial justice holds. Slaves of God, men must also be slaves of Church and State, in so far as the State is consecrated by the Church. This truth Christianity, better than all other

religions that exist or have existed, understood, not excepting even the old Oriental religions, which included only distinct and privileged nations, while Christianity aspires to embrace entire humanity; and this truth Roman Catholicism, alone among all the Christian sects, has proclaimed and realized with rigorous logic. That is why Christianity is the absolute religion, the final religion; why the Apostolic and Roman Church is the only consistent, legitimate, and divine church.

With all due respect, then, to the metaphysicians and religious idealists, philosophers, politicians, or poets: The idea of God implies the abdication of human reason and justice; it is the most decisive negation of human liberty, and necessarily ends in the enslavement of mankind, both in theory and practice.

Unless, then, we desire the enslavement and degradation of mankind, as the Jesuits desire it, as the mômiers, pietists, or Protestant Methodists desire it, we may not, must not make the slightest concession either to the God of theology or to the God of metaphysics. He who, in this mystical alphabet, begins with A will inevitably end with Z; he who desires to worship God must harbor no childish illusions about the matter, but bravely renounce his liberty and humanity.

If God is, man is a slave; now, man can and must be free; then, God does not exist.

I defy anyone whomsoever to avoid this circle; now, therefore, let all choose.

Is it necessary to point out to what extent and in what manner religions debase and corrupt the people? They destroy their reason, the principal instrument of human

emancipation, and reduce them to imbecility, the essential condition of their slavery. They dishonor human labor, and make it a sign and source of servitude. They kill the idea and sentiment of human justice, ever tipping the balance to the side of triumphant knaves, privileged objects of divine indulgence. They kill human pride and dignity, protecting only the cringing and humble. They stifle in the heart of nations every feeling of human fraternity, filling it with divine cruelty instead.

All religions are cruel, all founded on blood; for all rest principally on the idea of sacrifice - that is, on the perpetual immolation of humanity to the insatiable vengeance of divinity. In this bloody mystery man is always the victim, and the priest - a man also, but a man privileged by grace - is the divine executioner. That explains why the priests of all religions, the best, the most humane, the gentlest, almost always have at the bottom of their hearts - and, if not in their hearts, in their imaginations, in their minds (and we know the fearful influence of either on the hearts of men) - something cruel and sanguinary.

None know all this better than our illustrious contemporary idealists. They are learned men, who know history by heart; and, as they are at the same time living men, great souls penetrated with a sincere and profound love for the welfare of humanity, they have cursed and branded all these misdeeds, all these crimes of religion with an eloquence unparalleled. They reject with indignation all solidarity with the God of positive religions and with his representatives, past, present, and on earth.

The God whom they adore, or whom they think they adore, is distinguished from the real gods of history precisely in this - that he is not at all a positive god, defined in any way

whatever, theologically or even metaphysically. He is neither the supreme being of Robespierre and J. J. Rousseau, nor the pantheistic god of Spinoza, nor even the at once immanent, transcendental, and very equivocal god of Hegel. They take good care not to give him any positive definition whatever, feeling very strongly that any definition would subject him to the dissolving power of criticism. They will not say whether he is a personal or impersonal god, whether he created or did not create the world; they will not even speak of his divine providence. All that might compromise him. They content themselves with saying "God" and nothing more. But, then, what is their God? Not even an idea; it is an aspiration.

It is the generic name of all that seems grand, good, beautiful, noble, human to them. But why, then, do they not say, "Man." Ah! because King William of Prussia and Napoleon III, and all their compeers are likewise men: which bothers them very much. Real humanity presents a mixture of all I that is most sublime and beautiful with all that is vilest and most monstrous in the world. How do they get over this? Why, they call one divine and the other bestial, representing divinity and animality as two poles, between which they place humanity. They either will not or cannot understand that these three terms are really but one, and that to separate them is to destroy them.

They are not strong on logic, and one might say that they despise it. That is what distinguishes them from the pantheistical and deistical metaphysicians, and gives their ideas the character of a practical idealism, drawing its inspiration much less from the severe development of a thought than from the experiences, I might almost say the emotions, historical and collective as well as individual, of life. This gives their propaganda an appearance of wealth

and vital power, but an appearance only; for life itself becomes sterile when paralyzed by a logical contradiction.

This contradiction lies here: they wish God, and they wish humanity. They persist in connecting two terms which, once separated, can come together again only to destroy each other. They say in a single breath: "God and the liberty of man," "God and the dignity, justice, equality, fraternity, prosperity of men" - regardless of the fatal logic by virtue of which, if God exists, all these things are condemned to non-existence. For, if God is, he is necessarily the eternal, supreme, absolute master, and, if such a master exists, man is a slave; now, if he is a slave, neither justice, nor equality, nor fraternity, nor prosperity are possible for him. In vain, flying in the face of good sense and all the teachings of history, do they represent their God as animated by the tenderest love of human liberty: a master, whoever he may be and however liberal he may desire to show himself, remains none the less always a master. His existence necessarily implies the slavery of all that is beneath him. Therefore, if God existed, only in one way could he serve human liberty - by ceasing to exist.

A jealous lover of human liberty, and deeming it the absolute condition of all that we admire and respect in humanity, I reverse the phrase of Voltaire, and say that, if God really existed, it would be necessary to abolish him.

The severe logic that dictates these words is far too evident to require a development of this argument. And it seems to me impossible that the illustrious men, whose names so celebrated and so justly respected I have cited, should not have been struck by it themselves, and should not have perceived the contradiction in which they involve themselves in speaking of God and human liberty at once.

To have disregarded it, they must have considered this inconsistency or logical license practically necessary to humanity's well-being.

Perhaps, too, while speaking of liberty as something very respectable and very dear in their eyes, they give the term a meaning quite different from the conception entertained by us, materialists and Revolutionary Socialists. Indeed, they never speak of it without immediately adding another word, authority - a word and a thing which we detest with all our heart.

What is authority? Is it the inevitable power of the natural laws which manifest themselves in the necessary concatenation and succession of phenomena in the physical and social worlds? Indeed, against these laws revolt is not only forbidden - it is even impossible. We may misunderstand them or not know them at all, but we cannot disobey them; because they constitute the basis and fundamental conditions of our existence; they envelop us, penetrate us, regulate all our movements, thoughts, and acts; even when we believe that we disobey them, we only show their omnipotence.

Yes, we are absolutely the slaves of these laws. But in such slavery there is no humiliation, or, rather, it is not slavery at all. For slavery supposes an external master, a legislator outside of him whom he commands, while these laws are not outside of us; they are inherent in us; they constitute our being, our whole being, physically - intellectually, and morally: we live, we breathe, we act, we think, we wish only through these laws. Without them we are nothing, we are not. Whence, then, could we derive the power and the wish to rebel against them?

In his relation to natural laws but one liberty is possible to man - that of recognizing and applying them on an ever-extending scale in conformity with the object of collective and individual emancipation or humanization which he pursues. These laws, once recognized, exercise an authority which is never disputed by the mass of men. One must, for instance, be at bottom either a fool or a theologian or at least a metaphysician, jurist, or bourgeois economist to rebel against the law by which twice two make four. One must have faith to imagine that fire will not burn nor water drown, except, indeed, recourse be had to some subterfuge founded in its turn on some other natural law. But these revolts, or, rather, these attempts at or foolish fancies of an impossible revolt, are decidedly, the exception; for, in general, it may be said that the mass of men, in their daily lives, acknowledge the government of common sense - that is, of the sum of the natural laws generally recognized - in an almost absolute fashion.

The great misfortune is that a large number of natural laws, already established as such by science, remain unknown to the masses, thanks to the watchfulness of these tutelary governments that exist, as we know, only for the good of the people. There is another difficulty - namely, that the major portion of the natural laws connected with the development of human society, which are quite as necessary, invariable, fatal, as the laws that govern the physical world, have not been duly established and recognized by science itself.

Once they shall have been recognized by science, and then from science, by means of an extensive system of popular education and instruction, shall have passed into the consciousness of all, the question of liberty will be entirely solved. The most stubborn authorities must admit that then

there will be no need either of political organization or direction or legislation, three things which, whether they emanate from the will of the sovereign or from the vote of a parliament elected by universal suffrage, and even should they conform to the system of natural laws - which has never been the case and never will be the case - are always equally fatal and hostile to the liberty of the masses from the very fact that they impose upon them a system of external and therefore despotic laws.

The liberty of man consists solely in this: that he obeys natural laws because he has himself recognized them as such, and not because they have been externally imposed upon him by any extrinsic will whatever, divine or human, collective or individual.

Suppose a learned academy, composed of the most illustrious representatives of science; suppose this academy charged with legislation for and the organization of society, and that, inspired only by the purest love of truth, it frames none but laws in absolute harmony with the latest discoveries of science. Well, I maintain, for my part, that such legislation and such organization would be a monstrosity, and that for two reasons: first, that human science is always and necessarily imperfect, and that, comparing what it has discovered with what remains to be discovered, we may say that it is still in its cradle. So that were we to try to force the practical life of men, collective as well as individual, into strict and exclusive conformity with the latest data of science, we should condemn society as well as individuals to suffer martyrdom on a bed of Procrustes, which would soon end by dislocating and stifling them, life ever remaining an infinitely greater thing than science.

The second reason is this: a society which should obey legislation emanating from a scientific academy, not because it understood itself the rational character of this legislation (in which case the existence of the academy would become useless), but because this legislation, emanating from the academy, was imposed in the name of a science which it venerated without comprehending - such a society would be a society, not of men, but of brutes. It would be a second edition of those missions in Paraguay which submitted so long to the government of the Jesuits. It would surely and rapidly descend to the lowest stage of idiocy.

But there is still a third reason which would render such a government impossible - namely that a scientific academy invested with a sovereignty, so to speak, absolute, even if it were composed of the most illustrious men, would infallibly and soon end in its own moral and intellectual corruption. Even today, with the few privileges allowed them, such is the history of all academies. The greatest scientific genius, from the moment that he becomes an academician, an officially licensed savant, inevitably lapses into sluggishness. He loses his spontaneity, his revolutionary hardihood, and that troublesome and savage energy characteristic of the grandest geniuses, ever called to destroy old tottering worlds and lay the foundations of new. He undoubtedly gains in politeness, in utilitarian and practical wisdom, what he loses in power of thought. In a word, he becomes corrupted.

It is the characteristic of privilege and of every privileged position to kill the mind and heart of men. The privileged man, whether politically or economically, is a man depraved in mind and heart. That is a social law which admits of no exception, and is as applicable to entire

nations as to classes, corporations, and individuals. It is the law of equality, the supreme condition of liberty and humanity. The principal object of this treatise is precisely to demonstrate this truth in all the manifestations of human life.

A scientific body to which had been confided the government of society would soon end by devoting itself no longer to science at all, but to quite another affair; and that affair, as in the case of all established powers, would be its own eternal perpetuation by rendering the society confided to its care ever more stupid and consequently more in need of its government and direction.

But that which is true of scientific academies is also true of all constituent and legislative assemblies, even those chosen by universal suffrage. In the latter case they may renew their composition, it is true, but this does not prevent the formation in a few years' time of a body of politicians, privileged in fact though not in law, who, devoting themselves exclusively to the direction of the public affairs of a country, finally form a sort of political aristocracy or oligarchy. Witness the United States of America and Switzerland.

Consequently, no external legislation and no authority - one, for that matter, being inseparable from the other, and both tending to the servitude of society and the degradation of the legislators themselves.

Does it follow that I reject all authority? Far from me such a thought. In the matter of boots, I refer to the authority of the bootmaker; concerning houses, canals, or railroads, I consult that of the architect or engineer. For such or such special knowledge I apply to such or such a savant. But I

allow neither the bootmaker nor the architect nor the savant to impose his authority upon me. I listen to them freely and with all the respect merited by their intelligence, their character, their knowledge, reserving always my incontestable right of criticism and censure. I do not content myself with consulting authority in any special branch; I consult several; I compare their opinions, and choose that which seems to me the soundest. But I recognize no infallible authority, even in special questions; consequently, whatever respect I may have for the honesty and the sincerity of such or such an individual, I have no absolute faith in any person. Such a faith would be fatal to my reason, to my liberty, and even to the success of my undertakings; it would immediately transform me into a stupid slave, an instrument of the will and interests of others.

If I bow before the authority of the specialists and avow my readiness to follow, to a certain extent and as long as may seem to me necessary, their indications and even their directions, it is because their authority is imposed upon me by no one, neither by men nor by God. Otherwise I would repel them with horror, and bid the devil take their counsels, their directions, and their services, certain that they would make me pay, by the loss of my liberty and self-respect, for such scraps of truth, wrapped in a multitude of lies, as they might give me.

I bow before the authority of special men because it is imposed upon me by my own reason. I am conscious of my inability to grasp, in all its details and positive developments, any very large portion of human knowledge. The greatest intelligence would not be equal to a comprehension of the whole. Thence results, for science as well as for industry, the necessity of the division and

association of labor. I receive and I give - such is human life. Each directs and is directed in his turn. Therefore there is no fixed and constant authority, but a continual exchange of mutual, temporary, and, above all, voluntary authority and subordination.

This same reason forbids me, then, to recognize a fixed, constant, and universal authority, because there is no universal man, no man capable of grasping in that wealth of detail, without which the application of science to life is impossible, all the sciences, all the branches of social life. And if such universality could ever be realized in a single man, and if he wished to take advantage thereof to impose his authority upon us, it would be necessary to drive this man out of society, because his authority would inevitably reduce all the others to slavery and imbecility. I do not think that society ought to maltreat men of genius as it has done hitherto; but neither do I think it should indulge them too far, still less accord them any privileges or exclusive rights whatsoever; and that for three reasons: first, because it would often mistake a charlatan for a man of genius; second, because, through such a system of privileges, it might transform into a charlatan even a real man of genius, demoralize him, and degrade him; and, finally, because it would establish a master over itself.

To sum up. We recognize, then, the absolute authority of science, because the sole object of science is the mental reproduction, as well-considered and systematic as possible, of the natural laws inherent in the material, intellectual, and moral life of both the physical and the social worlds, these two worlds constituting, in fact, but one and the same natural world. Outside of this only legitimate authority, legitimate because rational and in harmony with

human liberty, we declare all other authorities false, arbitrary and fatal.

We recognize the absolute authority of science, but we reject the infallibility and universality of the savant. In our church - if I may be permitted to use for a moment an expression which I so detest: Church and State are my two bêtes noires - in our church, as in the Protestant church, we have a chief, an invisible Christ, science; and, like the Protestants, more logical even than the Protestants, we will suffer neither pope, nor council, nor conclaves of infallible cardinals, nor bishops, nor even priests. Our Christ differs from the Protestant and Christian Christ in this - that the latter is a personal being, ours impersonal; the Christian Christ, already completed in an eternal past, presents himself as a perfect being, while the completion and perfection of our Christ, science, are ever in the future: which is equivalent to saying that they will never be realized. Therefore, in recognizing absolute science as the only absolute authority, we in no way compromise our liberty.

I mean by the words "absolute science," which would reproduce ideally, to its fullest extent and in all its infinite detail, the universe, the system or coordination of all the natural laws manifested by the incessant development of the world. It is evident that such a science, the sublime object of all the efforts of the human mind, will never be fully and absolutely realized. Our Christ, then, will remain eternally unfinished, which must considerably take down the pride of his licensed representatives among us. Against that God the Son in whose name they assume to impose upon us their insolent and pedantic authority, we appeal to God the Father, who is the real world, real life, of which he (the Son) is only a too imperfect expression, whilst we real

beings, living, working, struggling, loving, aspiring, enjoying, and suffering, are its immediate representatives.

But, while rejecting the absolute, universal, and infallible authority of men of science, we willingly bow before the respectable, although relative, quite temporary, and very restricted authority of the representatives of special sciences, asking nothing better than to consult them by turns, and very grateful for such precious information as they may extend to us, on condition of their willingness to receive from us on occasions when, and concerning matters about which, we are more learned than they. In general, we ask nothing better than to see men endowed with great knowledge, great experience, great minds, and, above all, great hearts, exercise over us a natural and legitimate influence, freely accepted, and never imposed in the name of any official authority whatsoever, celestial or terrestrial. We accept all natural authorities and all influences of fact, but none of right; for every authority or every influence of right, officially imposed as such, becoming directly an oppression and a falsehood, would inevitably impose upon us, as I believe I have sufficiently shown, slavery and absurdity.

In a word, we reject all legislation, all authority, and all privileged, licensed, official, and legal influence, even though arising from universal suffrage, convinced that it can turn only to the advantage of a dominant minority of exploiters against the interests of the immense majority in subjection to them.

This is the sense in which we are really Anarchists.

The modern idealists understand authority in quite a different way. Although free from the traditional

superstitions of all the existing positive religions, they nevertheless attach to this idea of authority a divine, an absolute meaning. This authority is not that of a truth miraculously revealed, nor that of a truth rigorously and scientifically demonstrated. They base it to a slight extent upon quasi-philosophical reasoning, and to a large extent also on sentiment, ideally, abstractly poetical. Their religion is, as it were, a last attempt to divinise all that constitutes humanity in men.

This is just the opposite of the work that we are doing. On behalf of human liberty, dignity and prosperity, we believe it our duty to recover from heaven the goods which it has stolen and return them to earth. They, on the contrary, endeavouring to commit a final religiously heroic larceny, would restore to heaven, that divine robber, finally unmasked, the grandest, finest and noblest of humanity's possessions. It is now the freethinker's turn to pillage heaven by their audacious piety and scientific analysis.

The idealists undoubtedly believe that human ideas and deeds, in order to exercise greater authority among men, must be invested with a divine sanction. How is this sanction manifested? Not by a miracle, as in the positive religions, but by the very grandeur of sanctity of the ideas and deeds: whatever is grand, whatever is beautiful, whatever is noble, whatever is just, is considered divine. In this new religious cult every man inspired by these ideas, by these deeds, becomes a priest, directly consecrated by God himself. And the proof? He needs none beyond the very grandeur of the ideas which he expresses and the deeds which he performs. These are so holy that they can have been inspired only by God.

Such, in so few words, is their whole philosophy: a philosophy of sentiments, not of real thoughts, a sort of metaphysical pietism. This seems harmless, but it is not so at all, and the very precise, very narrow and very barren doctrine hidden under the intangible vagueness of these poetic forms leads to the same disastrous results that all the positive religions lead to - namely, the most complete negation of human liberty and dignity.

To proclaim as divine all that is grand, just, noble, and beautiful in humanity is to tacitly admit that humanity of itself would have been unable to produce it - that is, that, abandoned to itself, its own nature is miserable, iniquitous, base, and ugly. Thus we come back to the essence of all religion - in other words, to the disparagement of humanity for the greater glory of divinity. And from the moment that the natural inferiority of man and his fundamental incapacity to rise by his own effort, unaided by any divine inspiration, to the comprehension of just and true ideas, are admitted, it becomes necessary to admit also all the theological, political, and social consequences of the positive religions. From the moment that God, the perfect and supreme being, is posited face to face with humanity, divine mediators, the elect, the inspired of God spring from the earth to enlighten, direct, and govern in his name the human race.

May we not suppose that all men are equally inspired by God? Then, surely, there is no further use for mediators. But this supposition is impossible, because it is too clearly contradicted by the facts. It would compel us to attribute to divine inspiration all the absurdities and errors which appear, and all the horrors, follies, base deeds, and cowardly actions which are committed, in the world. But perhaps, then, only a few men are divinely inspired, the

great men of history, the virtuous geniuses, as the illustrious Italian citizen and prophet, Giuseppe Mazzini, called them. Immediately inspired by God himself and supported upon universal consent expressed by popular suffrage - Dio e Popolo; - such as these should be called to the government of human societies.³

But here we are again fallen back under the yoke of Church and State. It is true that in this new organization, indebted for its existence, like all the old political organisations, to the grace of God, but supported this time - at least so far as form is concerned, as a necessary concession to the spirit of modern times, and just as in the preambles of the imperial decrees of Napoleon III. - on the (pretended) will of the people, the Church will no longer call itself Church; it will call itself School. What matters it? On the benches of this School will be seated not children only; there will be found the eternal minor, the pupil confessedly forever incompetent to pass his examinations, rise to the knowledge of his teachers, and dispense with their discipline - the people.⁴ The State will no longer call itself Monarchy; it will call itself Republic: but it will be none the less the State - that is, a tutelage officially and regularly established by a minority of competent men, men of virtuous genius or talent, who will watch and guide the conduct of this great, incorrigible, and terrible child, the people. The professors of the School and the functionaries of the State will call themselves republicans; but they will be none the less tutors, shepherds, and the people will remain what they have been hitherto from all eternity, a flock. Beware of shearers, for where there is a flock there necessarily must be shepherds also to shear and devour it.

The people, in this system, will be the perpetual scholar and pupil. In spite of its sovereignty, wholly fictitious, it will

continue to serve as the instrument of thoughts, wills, and consequently interests not its own. Between this situation and what we call liberty, the only real liberty, there is an abyss. It will be the old oppression and old slavery under new forms; and where there is slavery there is misery, brutishness, real social materialism, among the privileged classes as well as among the masses.

In defying human things the idealists always end in the triumph of a brutal materialism. And this for a very simple reason: the divine evaporates and rises to its own country, heaven, while the brutal alone remains actually on earth.

Yes, the necessary consequence of theoretical idealism is practically the most brutal materialism; not, undoubtedly, among those who sincerely preach it - the usual result as far as they are concerned being that they are constrained to see all their efforts struck with sterility - but among those who try to realise their precepts in life, and in all society so far as it allows itself to be dominated by idealistic doctrines.

To demonstrate this general fact, which may appear strange at first, but which explains itself naturally enough upon further reflection, historical proofs are not lacking.

Compare the last two civilisations of the ancient world - the Greek and the Roman. Which is the most materialistic, the most natural, in its point of departure, and the most humanly ideal in its results? Undoubtedly the Greek civilisation. Which on the contrary, is the most abstractly ideal in its point of departure - sacrificing the material liberty of the man to the ideal liberty of the citizen, represented by the abstraction of judicial law, and the natural development of human society to the abstraction of the State - and which became nevertheless the most brutal

in its consequences? The Roman civilisation, certainly. It is true that the Greek civilisation, like all the ancient civilisations, including that of Rome, was exclusively national and based on slavery. But, in spite of these two immense defects, the former none the less conceived and realised the idea of humanity; it ennobled and really idealised the life of men; it transformed human herds into free associations of free men; it created through liberty the sciences, the arts, a poetry, an immortal philosophy, and the primary concepts of human respect. With political and social liberty, it created free thought. At the close of the Middle Ages, during the period of the Renaissance, the fact that some Greek emigrants brought a few of those immortal books into Italy sufficed to resuscitate life, liberty, thought, humanity, buried in the dark dungeon of Catholicism. Human emancipation, that is the name of the Greek civilisation. And the name of the Roman civilisation? Conquest, with all its brutal consequences. And its last word? The omnipotence of the Caesars. Which means the degradation and enslavement of nations and of men.

Today even, what is it that kills, what is it that crushes brutally, materially, in all European countries, liberty and humanity? It is the triumph of the Caesarian or Roman principle.

Compare now two modern civilisations - the Italian and the German. The first undoubtedly represents, in its general character, materialism; the second, on the contrary, represents idealism in its most abstract, most pure, and most transcendental form. Let us see what are the practical fruits of the one and the other.

Italy has already rendered immense services to the cause of human emancipation. She was the first to resuscitate and

widely apply the principle of liberty in Europe, and to restore to humanity its titles to nobility: industry, commerce, poetry, the arts, the positive sciences, and free thought. Crushed since by three centuries of imperial and papal despotism, and dragged in the mud by her governing bourgeoisie, she reappears today, it is true, in a very degraded condition in comparison with what she once was. And yet how much she differs from Germany! In Italy, in spite of this decline - temporary let us hope - one may live and breathe humanly, surrounded by a people which seems to be born for liberty. Italy, even bourgeois Italy, can point with pride to men like Mazzini and Garibaldi. In Germany one breathes the atmosphere of an immense political and social slavery, philosophically explained and accepted by a great people with deliberate resignation and free will. Her heroes - I speak always of present Germany, not of the Germany of the future; of aristocratic, bureaucratic, political and bourgeoisie Germany, not of the Germany of the prolétaires - her heroes are quite the opposite of Mazzini and Garibaldi: they are William I., that ferocious and ingenuous representative of the Protestant God, Messrs, Bismarck and Moltke, Generals Manteuffel and Werder. In all her international relations Germany, from the beginning of her existence, has been slowly, systematically invading, conquering, ever ready to extend her own voluntary enslavement into the territory of her neighbours; and, since her definitive establishment as a unitary power, she has become a menace, a danger to the liberty of entire Europe. Today Germany is servility brutal and triumphant.

To show how theoretical idealism incessantly and inevitably changes into practical materialism, one needs only to cite the example of all the Christian Churches, and, naturally, first of all, that of the Apostolic and Roman Church. What is there more sublime, in the ideal sense,

more disinterested, more separate from all the interests of this earth, than the doctrine of Christ preached by that Church? And what is there more brutally materialistic than the constant practice of that same Church since the eighth century, from which dates her definitive establishment as a power? What has been and still is the principal object of all her contests with the sovereigns of Europe? Her temporal goods, her revenues first, and then her temporal power, her political privileges. We must do her the justice to acknowledge that she was the first to discover, in modern history, this incontestable but scarcely Christian truth that wealth and power, the economic exploitation and the political oppression of the masses, are the two inseparable terms of the reign of divine ideality on earth: wealth consolidating and augmenting power, power ever discovering and creating new sources of wealth, and both assuring, better than the martyrdom and faith of the apostles, better than divine grace, the success of the Christian propagandism. This is a historical truth, and the Protestant Churches do not fail to recognise it either. I speak, of course, of the independent churches of England, America, and Switzerland, not of the subjected churches of Germany. The latter have no initiative of their own; they do what their masters, their temporal sovereigns, who are at the same time their spiritual chieftains, order them to do, It is well known that the Protestant propagandism, especially in England and America, is very intimately connected with the propagandism of the material, commercial interests of those two great nations; and it is known also that the objects of the latter propagandism is not at all the enrichment and material prosperity of the countries into which it penetrates in company with the Word of God, but rather the exploitation of those countries with a view to the enrichment and material prosperity of certain classes, which

in their own country are very covetous and very pious at the same time.

In a word, it is not at all difficult to prove, history in hand, that the Church, that all the Churches, Christian and non-Christian, by the side of their spiritualistic propagandism, and probably to accelerate and consolidate the success thereof, have never neglected to organise themselves into great corporations for the economic exploitation of the masses under the protection and with the direct and special blessing of some divinity or other; that all the States, which originally, as we know, with all their political and judicial institutions and their dominant and privileged classes have been only temporal branches of these various Churches have likewise had principally in view this same exploitation for the benefit of lay minorities indirectly sanctioned by the Church; finally and in general, that the action of the good God and of all the divine idealities on earth has ended at last, always and everywhere, in founding the prosperous materialism of the few over the fanatical and constantly famishing idealism of the masses.

We have a new proof of this in what we see today. With the exception of the great hearts and great minds whom I have before referred to as misled, who are today the most obstinate defenders of idealism? In the first places all the sovereign courts. In France, until lately, Napoleon III. and his wife, Madame Eugénie; all their former ministers, courtiers, and ex-marshals, from Rouher and Bazaine to Fleury and Piétri; the men and women of this imperial world, who have so completely idealised and saved France; their journalists and their savants - the Cossagnacs, the Girardins, the Duvernois, the Veuillots, the Leverriers, the Dumas; the black phalanx of Jesuits and Jesuitesses in every garb; the whole upper and middle bourgeoisie of

France; the doctrinaire liberals, and the liberals without doctrine - the Guizots, the Thiers, the Jules Favres, the Pelletans, and the Jules Simons, all obstinate defenders of the bourgeoisie exploitation. In Prussia, in Germany, William I., the present royal demonstrator of the good God on earth; all his generals, all his officers, Pomeranian and other; all his army, which, strong in its religious faith, has just conquered France in that ideal way we know so well. In Russia, the Czar and his court; the Mouravieffs and the Bergs, all the butchers and pious proselyters of Poland. Everywhere, in short, religious or philosophical idealism, the one being but the more or less free translation of the other, serves today as the flag of material, bloody, and brutal force, of shameless material exploitation; while, on the contrary, the flag of theoretical materialism, the red flag of economic equality and social justice, is raised by the practical idealism of the oppressed and famishing masses, tending to realise the greatest liberty and the human right of each in the fraternity of all men on the earth.

Who are the real idealists - the idealists not of abstraction, but of life, not of heaven, but of earth - and who are the materialists?

It is evident that the essential condition of theoretical or divine idealism is the sacrifice of logic, of human reason, the renunciation of science. We see, further, that in defending the doctrines of idealism one finds himself enlisted perforce in the ranks of the oppressors and exploiters of the masses. These are two great reasons which, it would seem, should be sufficient to drive every great mind, every great heart, from idealism. How does it happen that our illustrious contemporary idealists, who certainly lack neither mind, nor heart, nor good will, and who have devoted their entire existence to the service of

humanity - how does it happen that they persist in remaining among the representatives of a doctrine henceforth condemned and dishonoured?

They must be influenced by a very powerful motive. It cannot be logic or science, since logic and science have pronounced their verdict against the idealistic doctrine. No more can it be personal interests, since these men are infinitely above everything of that sort. It must, then, be a powerful moral motive. Which? There can be but one. These illustrious men think, no doubt, that idealistic theories or beliefs are essentially necessary to the moral dignity and grandeur of man, and that materialistic theories, on the contrary, reduce him to the level of the beasts.

And if the truth were just the opposite!

Every development, I have said, implies the negation of its point of departure. The basis or point of departure, according to the materialistic school, being material, the negation must be necessarily ideal. Starting from the totality of the real world, or from what is abstractly called matter, it logically arrives at the real idealisation - that is, at the humanisation, at the full and complete emancipation of society. Per contra; and for the same reason, the basis and point of departure of the idealistic school being ideal, it arrives necessarily at the materialisation of society, at the organization of a brutal despotism and an iniquitous and ignoble exploitation, under the form of Church and State. The historical development of man according to the materialistic school, is a progressive ascension; in the idealistic system it can be nothing but a continuous fall.

Whatever human question we may desire to consider, we always find this same essential contradiction between the

two schools. Thus, as I have already observed, materialism starts from animality to establish humanity; idealism starts from divinity to establish slavery and condemn the masses to an endless animality. Materialism denies free will and ends in the establishment of liberty; idealism, in the name of human dignity, proclaims free will, and on the ruins of every liberty founds authority. Materialism rejects the principle of authority, because it rightly considers it as the corollary of animality, and because, on the contrary, the triumph of humanity, the object and chief significance of history, can be realised only through liberty. In a word, you will always find the idealists in the very act of practical materialism, while you will see the materialists pursuing and realising the most grandly ideal aspirations and thoughts.

History, in the system of the idealists, as I have said, can be nothing but a continuous fall. They begin by a terrible fall, from which they never recover - by the *salto mortale*; from the sublime regions of pure and absolute idea into matter. And into what kind of matter ! Not into the matter which is eternally active and mobile, full of properties and forces, of life and intelligence, as we see it in the real world; but into abstract matter, impoverished and reduced to absolute misery by the regular looting of these Prussians of thought, the theologians and metaphysicians, who have stripped it of everything to give everything to their emperor, to their God; into the matter which, deprived of all action and movement of its own, represents, in opposition to the divine idea, nothing but absolute stupidity, impenetrability, inertia and immobility.

The fall is so terrible that divinity, the divine person or idea, is flattened out, loses consciousness of itself, and never more recovers it. And in this desperate situation it is still

forced to work miracles ! For from the moment that matter becomes inert, every movement that takes place in the world, even the most material, is a miracle, can result only from a providential intervention, from the action of God upon matter. And there this poor Divinity, degraded and half annihilated by its fall, lies some thousands of centuries in this swoon, then awakens slowly, in vain endeavouring to grasp some vague memory of itself, and every move that it makes in this direction upon matter becomes a creation, a new formation, a new miracle. In this way it passes through all degrees of materiality and bestiality - first, gas, simple or compound chemical substance, mineral, it then spreads over the earth as vegetable and animal organization till it concentrates itself in man. Here it would seem as if it must become itself again, for it lights in every human being an angelic spark, a particle of its own divine being, the immortal soul.

How did it manage to lodge a thing absolutely immaterial in a thing absolutely material; how can the body contain, enclose, limit, paralyse pure spirit? This, again, is one of those questions which faith alone, that passionate and stupid affirmation of the absurd, can solve. It is the greatest of miracles. Here, however, we have only to establish the effects, the practical consequences of this miracle.

After thousands of centuries of vain efforts to come back to itself, Divinity, lost and scattered in the matter which it animates and sets in motion, finds a point of support, a sort of focus for self-concentration. This focus is man his immortal soul singularly imprisoned in a mortal body. But each man considered individually is infinitely too limited, too small, to enclose the divine immensity; it can contain only a very small particle, immortal like the whole, but infinitely smaller than the whole. It follows that the divine

being, the absolutely immaterial being, mind, is divisible like matter. Another mystery whose solution must be left to faith.

If God entire could find lodgment in each man, then each man would be God. We should have an immense quantity of Gods, each limited by all the others and yet none the less infinite - a contradiction which would imply a mutual destruction of men, an impossibility of the existence of more than one. As for the particles, that is another matter; nothing more rational, indeed, than that one particle should be limited by another and be smaller than the whole. Only, here another contradiction confronts us. To be limited, to be greater and smaller are attributes of matter, not of mind. According to the materialists, it is true, mind is only the working of the wholly material organism of man, and the greatness or smallness of mind depends absolutely on the greater or less material perfection of the human organism. But these same attributes of relative limitation and grandeur cannot be attributed to mind as the idealists conceive it, absolutely immaterial mind, mind existing independent of matter. There can be neither greater nor smaller nor any limit among minds, for there is only one mind - God. To add that the infinitely small and limited particles which constitute human souls are at the same time immortal is to carry the contradiction to a climax. But this is a question of faith. Let us pass on.

Here then we have Divinity torn up and lodged, in infinitely small particles, in an immense number of beings of all sexes, ages, races, and colours. This is an excessively inconvenient and unhappy situation, for the divine particles are so little acquainted with each other at the outset of their human existence that they begin by devouring each other. Moreover, in the midst of this state of barbarism and wholly

animal brutality, these divine particles, human souls, retain as it were a vague remembrance of their primitive divinity, and are irresistibly drawn towards their whole; they seek each other, they seek their whole. It is Divinity itself, scattered and lost in the natural world, which looks for itself in men, and it is so demolished by this multitude of human prisons in which it finds itself strewn, that, in looking for itself, it commits folly after folly.

Beginning with fetishism, it searches for and adores itself, now in a stone, now in a piece of wood, now in a rag. It is quite likely that it would never have succeeded in getting out of the rag, if the other; divinity which was not allowed to fall into matter and which is kept in a state of pure spirit in the sublime heights of the absolute ideal, or in the celestial regions, had not had pity on it.

Here is a new mystery - that of Divinity dividing itself into two halves, both equally infinite, of which one - God the Father - stays in the purely immaterial regions, and the other - God the Son - falls into matter. We shall see directly, between these two Divinities separated from each other, continuous relations established, from above to below and from below to above; and these relations, considered as a single eternal and constant act, will constitute the Holy Ghost. Such, in its veritable theological and metaphysical meaning, is the great, the terrible mystery of the Christian Trinity.

But let us lose no time in abandoning these heights to see what is going on upon earth.

God the Father, seeing from the height of his eternal splendour that the poor God the Son, flattened out and astounded by his fall, is so plunged and lost in matter that

even having reached human state he has not yet recovered himself, decides to come to his aid. From this immense number of particles at once immortal, divine, and infinitely small, in which God the Son has disseminated himself so thoroughly that he does not know himself, God the Father chooses those most pleasing to him, picks his inspired persons, his prophets, his "men of virtuous genius," the great benefactors and legislators of humanity: Zoroaster, Buddha, Moses, Confucius, Lycurgus, Solon, Socrates, the divine Plato, and above all Jesus Christ, the complete realisation of God the Son, at last collected and concentrated in a single human person; all the apostles, Saint Peter, Saint Paul, Saint John before all, Constantine the Great, Mahomet, then Charlemagne, Gregory VII Dante, and, according to some, Luther also, Voltaire and Rousseau, Robespierre and Danton, and many other great and holy historical personages, all of whose names it is impossible to recapitulate, but among whom I, as a Russian, beg that Saint Nicholas may not be forgotten.

Then we have reached at last the manifestation of God upon earth. But immediately God appears, man is reduced to nothing. It will be said that he is not reduced to nothing, since he is himself a particle of God. Pardon me! I admit that a particle of a definite, limited whole, however small it be, is a quantity, a positive greatness. But a particle of the infinitely great, compared with it, is necessarily infinitely small, Multiply milliards of milliards by milliards of milliards - their product compared to the infinitely great, will be infinitely small, and the infinitely small is equal to zero. God is everything; therefore man and all the real world with him, the universe, are nothing. You will not escape this conclusion.

God appears, man is reduced to nothing; and the greater Divinity becomes, the more miserable becomes humanity. That is the history of all religions; that is the effect of all the divine inspirations and legislations. In history the name of God is the terrible club with which all divinely inspired men, the great "virtuous geniuses," have beaten down the liberty, dignity, reason, and prosperity of man.

We had first the fall of God. Now we have a fall which interests us more - that of man, caused solely by the apparition of God manifested on earth.

See in how profound an error our dear and illustrious idealists find themselves. In talking to us of God they purpose, they desire, to elevate us, emancipate us, ennoble us, and, on the contrary, they crush and degrade us. With the name of God they imagine that they can establish fraternity among men, and, on the contrary, they create pride, contempt; they sow discord, hatred, war; they establish slavery. For with God come the different degrees of divine inspiration; humanity is divided into men highly inspired, less inspired, uninspired. All are equally insignificant before God, it is true; but, compared with each other, some are greater than others; not only in fact - which would be of no consequence, because inequality in fact is lost in the collectivity when it cannot cling to some legal fiction or institution - but by the divine right of inspiration, which immediately establishes a fixed, constant, petrifying inequality. The highly inspired must be listened to and obeyed by the less inspired, and the less inspired by the uninspired. Thus we have the principle of authority well established, and with it the two fundamental institutions of slavery: Church and State.

Of all despotisms that of the doctrinaires; or inspired religionists is the worst. They are so jealous of the glory of their God and of the triumph of their idea that they have no heart left for the liberty or the dignity or even the sufferings of living men, of real men. Divine zeal, preoccupation with the idea, finally dry up the tenderest souls, the most compassionate hearts, the sources of human love. Considering all that is, all that happens in the world from the point of view of eternity or of the abstract idea, they treat passing matters with disdain; but the whole life of real men, of men of flesh and bone, is composed only of passing matters; they themselves are only passing beings, who, once passed, are replaced by others likewise passing, but never to return in person. Alone permanent or relatively eternal in men is humanity, which steadily developing, grows richer in passing from one generation to another. I say relatively; eternal, because, our planet once destroyed - it cannot fail to perish sooner or later, since everything which has begun must necessarily end - our planet once decomposed, to serve undoubtedly as an element of some new formation in the system of the universe, which alone is really eternal, who knows what will become of our whole human development? Nevertheless, the moment of this dissolution being an enormous distance in the future, we may properly consider humanity, relatively to the short duration of human life, as eternal. But this very fact of progressive humanity is real and living only through its manifestations at definite times, in definite places, in really living men, and not through its general idea.

The general idea is always an abstraction and, for that very reason, in some sort a negation of real life. I have stated in the Appendix that human thought and, in consequence of this, science can grasp and name only the general significance of real facts, their relations, their laws - in

short, that which is permanent in their continual transformations - but never their material, individual side, palpitating, so to speak, with reality and life, and therefore fugitive and intangible. Science comprehends the thought of the reality, not reality itself; the thought of life, not life. That is its limit, its only really insuperable limit, because it is founded on the very nature of thought, which is the only organ of science.

Upon this nature are based the indisputable rights and grand mission of science, but also its vital impotence and even its mischievous action whenever, through its official licensed representatives, it arrogantly claims the right to govern life. The mission of science is, by observation of the general relations of passing and real facts, to establish the general laws inherent in the development of the phenomena of the physical and social world; it fixes, so to speak, the unchangeable landmarks of humanity's progressive march by indicating the general conditions which it is necessary to rigorously observe and always fatal to ignore or forget. In a word, science is the compass of life; but it is not life. Science is unchangeable, impersonal, general, abstract, insensible, like the laws of which it is but the ideal reproduction, reflected or mental - that is cerebral (using this word to remind us that science itself is but a material product of a material organ, the brain). Life is wholly fugitive and temporary, but also wholly palpitating with reality and individuality, sensibility, sufferings, joys, aspirations, needs, and passions. It alone spontaneously creates real things and; beings. Science creates nothing; it establishes and recognises only the creations of life. And every time that scientific men, emerging from their abstract world, mingle with living creation in the real world, all that they propose or create is poor, ridiculously abstract, bloodless and lifeless, still-born, like the homunculus

created by Wagner, the pedantic disciple of the immortal Doctor Faust. It follows that the only mission of science is to enlighten life, not to govern it.

The government of science and of men of science, even be they positivists, disciples of Auguste Comte, or, again, disciples of the doctrinaire; school of German Communism, cannot fail to be impotent, ridiculous, inhuman, cruel, oppressive, exploiting, maleficent. We may say of men of science, as such, what I have said of theologians and metaphysicians: they have neither sense nor heart for individual and living beings. We cannot even blame them for this, for it is the natural consequence of their profession. In so far as they are men of science, they have to deal with and can take interest in nothing except generalities; that do the laws 5.....they are not exclusively men of science, but are also more or less men of life. 6

III.

Nevertheless, we must not rely too much on this. Though we may be well nigh certain that a savant; would not dare to treat a man today as he treats a rabbit, it remains always to be feared that the savants; as a body, if not interfered with, may submit living men to scientific experiments, undoubtedly less cruel but none the less disagreeable to their victims. If they cannot perform experiments upon the bodies of individuals, they will ask nothing better than to perform them on the social body, and that what must be absolutely prevented.

In their existing organisation, monopolising science and remaining thus outside of social life, the savants; form a separate caste, in many respects analogous to the priesthood. Scientific abstractions is their God, living and

real individuals are their victims, and they are the consecrated and licensed sacrificers.

Science cannot go outside of the sphere of abstractions. In this respect it is infinitely inferior to art, which, in its turn, is peculiarly concerned also with general types and general situations, but which incarnates them by an artifice of its own in forms which, if they are not living in the sense of real life none the less excite in our imagination the memory and sentiment of life; art in a certain sense individualizes the types and situations which it conceives; by means of the individualities without flesh and bone, and consequently permanent and immortal, which it has the power to create, it recalls to our minds the living, real individualities which appear and disappear under our eyes. Art, then, is as it were the return of abstraction to life; science, on the contrary, is the perpetual immolation of life, fugitive, temporary, but real, on the altar of eternal abstractions.

Science is as incapable of grasping the individuality of a man as that of a rabbit, being equally indifferent to both. Not that it is ignorant of the principle of individuality: it conceives it perfectly as a principle, but not as a fact. It knows very well that all the animal species, including the human species, have no real existence outside of an indefinite number of individuals, born and dying to make room for new individuals equally fugitive. It knows that in rising from the animal species to the superior species the principle of individuality becomes more pronounced; the individuals appear freer and more complete. It knows that man, the last and most perfect animal of earth, presents the most complete and most remarkable individuality, because of his power to conceive, concrete, personify, as it were, in his social and private existence, the universal law. It knows, finally, when it is not vitiated by theological or

metaphysical, political or judicial doctrinairisme, or even by a narrow scientific pride, when it is not deaf to the instincts and spontaneous aspirations of life - it knows (and this is its last word) that respect for man is the supreme law of Humanity, and that the great, the real object of history, its only legitimate object is the humanization and emancipation, the real liberty, the prosperity and happiness of each individual living in society. For, if we would not fall back into the liberticidal fiction of the public welfare represented by the State, a fiction always founded on the systematic sacrifice of the people, we must clearly recognize that collective liberty and prosperity exist only so far as they represent the sum of individual liberties and prosperities.

Science knows all these things, but it does not and cannot go beyond them. Abstraction being its very nature, it can well enough conceive the principle of real and living individuality, but it can have no dealings with real and living individuals; it concerns itself with individuals in general, but not with Peter or James, not with such or such a one, who, so far as it is concerned, do not, cannot, have any existence. Its individuals, I repeat, are only abstractions.

Now, history is made, not by abstract individuals, but by acting, living and passing individuals. Abstractions advance only when borne forward by real men. For these beings made, not in idea only, but in reality of flesh and blood, science has no heart: it considers them at most as material for intellectual and social development. What does it care for the particular conditions and chance fate of Peter or James? It would make itself ridiculous, it would abdicate, it would annihilate itself, if it wished to concern itself with them otherwise than as examples in support of its eternal

theories. And it would be ridiculous to wish it to do so, for its mission lies not there. It cannot grasp the concrete; it can move only in abstractions. Its mission is to busy itself with the situation and the general conditions of the existence and development, either of the human species in general, or of such a race, such a people, such a class or category of individuals; the general causes of their prosperity, their decline, and the best general methods of securing, their progress in all ways. Provided it accomplishes this task broadly and rationally, it will do its whole duty, and it would be really unjust to expect more of it.

But it would be equally ridiculous, it would be disastrous to entrust it with a mission which it is incapable of fulfilling. Since its own nature forces it to ignore the existence of Peter and James, it must never be permitted, nor must anybody be permitted in its name, to govern Peter and James. For it were capable of treating them almost as it treats rabbits. Or rather, it would continue to ignore them; but its licensed representatives, men not at all abstract, but on the contrary in very active life and having very substantial interests, yielding to the pernicious influence which privilege inevitably exercises upon men, would finally fleece other men in the name of science, just as they have been fleeced hitherto by priests, politicians of all shades, and lawyers, in the name of God, of the State, of judicial Right.

What I preach then is, to a certain extent, the revolt of life against science, or rather against the government of science, not to destroy science - that would be high treason to humanity - but to remand it to its place so that it can never leave it again. Until now all human history has been only a perpetual and bloody immolation of millions of poor human beings in honor of some pitiless abstraction - God, country,

power of State, national honor, historical rights, judicial rights, political liberty, public welfare. Such has been up to today the natural, spontaneous, and inevitable movement of human societies. We cannot undo it; we must submit to it so far as the past is concerned, as we submit to all natural fatalities. We must believe that that was the only possible way, to educate the human race. For we must not deceive ourselves: even in attributing the larger part to the Machiavellian wiles of the governing classes, we have to recognize that no minority would have been powerful enough to impose all these horrible sacrifices upon the masses if there had not been in the masses themselves a dizzy spontaneous movement which pushed them on to continual self-sacrifice, now to one, now to another of these devouring abstractions the vampires of history ever nourished upon human blood.

We readily understand that this is very gratifying, to the theologians, politicians, and jurists. Priests of these abstractions, they live only by the continual immolation of the people. Nor is it more surprising that metaphysics too, should give its consent. Its only mission is to justify and rationalize as far as possible the iniquitous and absurd. But that positive science itself should have shown the same tendencies is a fact which we must deplore while we establish it. That it has done so is due to two reasons: in the first place, because, constituted outside of life, it is represented by a privileged body; and in the second place, because thus far it has posited itself as an absolute and final object of all human development. By a judicious criticism, which it can and finally will be forced to pass upon itself, it would understand, on the contrary, that it is only a means for the realization of a much higher object - that of the complete humanization of the real situation of all the real individuals who are born, who live, and who die, on earth.

The immense advantage of positive science over theology, metaphysics, politics, and judicial right consists in this - that, in place of the false and fatal abstractions set up by these doctrines, it posits true abstractions which express the general nature and logic of things, their general relations, and the general laws of their development. This separates it profoundly from all preceding doctrines, and will assure it for ever a great position in society: it will constitute in a certain sense society's collective consciousness. But there is one aspect in which it resembles all these doctrines: its only possible object being abstractions, it is forced by its very nature to ignore real men, outside of whom the truest abstractions have no existence. To remedy this radical defect positive science will have to proceed by a different method from that followed by the doctrines of the past. The latter have taken advantage of the ignorance of the masses to sacrifice them with delight to their abstractions, which by the way, are always very lucrative to those who represent them in flesh and bone. Positive science, recognizing its absolute inability to conceive real individuals and interest itself in their lot, must definitely and absolutely renounce all claim to the government of societies; for if it should meddle therein, it would only sacrifice continually the living men whom it ignores to the abstractions which constitute the sole object of its legitimate preoccupations.

The true science of history, for instance, does not yet exist; scarcely do we begin today to catch a glimpse of its extremely complicated conditions. But suppose it were definitely developed, what could it give us? It would exhibit a faithful and rational picture of the natural development of the general conditions - material and ideal, economical, political and social, religious, philosophical, aesthetic, and scientific - of the societies which have a

history. But this universal picture of human civilization, however detailed it might be, would never show anything beyond general and consequently abstract estimates. The milliards of individuals who have furnished the living and suffering materials of this history at once triumphant and dismal - triumphant by its general results, dismal by the immense hecatomb of human victims "crushed under its car" - those milliards of obscure individuals without whom none of the great abstract results of history would have been obtained - and who, bear in mind, have never benefited by any of these results - will find no place, not even the slightest in our annals. They have lived and been sacrificed, crushed for the good of abstract humanity, that is all.

Shall we blame the science of history. That would be unjust and ridiculous. Individuals cannot be grasped by thought, by reflection, or even by human speech, which is capable of expressing abstractions only; they cannot be grasped in the present day any more than in the past. Therefore social science itself, the science of the future, will necessarily continue to ignore them. All that, we have a right to demand of it is that it shall point us with faithful and sure hand to the general causes of individual suffering - among these causes it will not forget the immolation and subordination (still too frequent, alas!) of living individuals to abstract generalities - at the same time showing us the general conditions necessary to the real emancipation of the individuals living in society. That is its mission; those are its limits, beyond which the action of social science can be only impotent and fatal. Beyond those limits being the doctrinaire and governmental pretentious of its licensed representatives, its priests. It is time to have done with all popes and priests; we want them no longer, even if they call themselves Social Democrats.

Once more, the sole mission of science is to light the road. Only Life, delivered from all its governmental and doctrinaire barriers, and given full liberty of action, can create.

How solve this antinomy?

On the one hand, science is indispensable to the rational organization of society; on the other, being incapable of interesting itself in that which is real and living, it must not interfere with the real or practical organization of society.

This contradiction can be solved only in one way: by the liquidation of science as a moral being existing outside the life of all, and represented by a body of breveted savants; it must spread among the masses. Science, being called upon to henceforth represent society's collective consciousness, must really become the property of everybody. Thereby, without losing anything of its universal character, of which it can never divest itself without ceasing to be science, and while continuing to concern itself exclusively with general causes, the conditions and fixed relations of individuals and things, it will become one in fact with the immediate and real life of all individuals. That will be a movement analogous to that which said to the Protestants at the beginning of the Reformation that there was no further need of priests for man, who would henceforth be his own priest, every man, thanks to the invisible intervention of the Lord Jesus Christ alone, having at last succeeded in swallowing his good God. But here the question is not of Jesus Christ, nor good God, nor of political liberty, nor of judicial right - things all theologically or metaphysically revealed, and all alike indigestible. The world of scientific abstractions is not revealed; it is inherent in the real world, of which it is only

the general or abstract expression and representation. As long as it forms a separate region, specially represented by the savants as a body, this ideal world threatens to take the place of a good God to the real world, reserving for its licensed representatives the office of priests. That is the reason why it is necessary to dissolve the special social organization of the savants by general instruction, equal for all in all things, in order that the masses, ceasing to be flocks led and shorn by privileged priests, may take into their own hands the direction of their destinies.⁷

But until the masses shall have reached this degree of instruction, will it be necessary to leave them to the government of scientific men? Certainly not. It would be better for them to dispense with science than allow themselves to be governed by savants. The first consequence of the government of these men would be to render science inaccessible to the people, and such a government would necessarily be aristocratic because the existing scientific institutions are essentially aristocratic. An aristocracy of learning! from the practical point of view the most implacable, and from the social point of view the most haughty and insulting - such would be the power established in the name of science. This régime would be capable of paralyzing the life and movement of society. The savants always presumptuous, ever self-sufficient and ever impotent, would desire to meddle with everything, and the sources of life would dry up under the breath of their abstractions.

Once more, Life, not science, creates life; the spontaneous action of the people themselves alone can create liberty. Undoubtedly it would be a very fortunate thing if science could, from this day forth, illuminate the spontaneous march of the people towards their emancipation. But better

an absence of light than a false and feeble light, kindled only to mislead those who follow it. After all, the people will not lack light. Not in vain have they traversed a long historic career, and paid for their errors by centuries of misery. The practical summary of their painful experiences constitutes a sort of traditional science, which in certain respects is worth as much as theoretical science. Last of all, a portion of the youth - those of the bourgeois students who feel hatred enough for the falsehood, hypocrisy, injustice, and cowardice of the bourgeoisie to find courage to turn their backs upon it, and passion enough to unreservedly embrace the just and human cause of the proletariat - those will be, as I have already said, fraternal instructors of the people; thanks to them, there will be no occasion for the government of the savants.

If the people should beware of the government of the savants, all the more should they provide against that of the inspired idealists. The more sincere these believers and poets of heaven, the more dangerous they become. The scientific abstraction, I have said, is a rational abstraction, true in its essence, necessary to life, of which it is the theoretical representation, or, if one prefers, the conscience. It may, it must be, absorbed and digested by life. The idealistic abstraction, God, is a corrosive poison, which destroys and decomposes life, falsifies and kills it. The pride of the idealists, not being personal but divine, is invincible and inexorable: it may, it must, die, but it will never yield, and while it has a breath left it will try to subject men to its God, just as the lieutenants of Prussia, these practical idealists of Germany, would like to see the people crushed under the spurred boot of their emperor. The faith is the same, the end but little different, and the result, as that of faith, is slavery.

It is at the same time the triumph of the ugliest and most brutal materialism. There is no need to demonstrate this in the case of Germany; one would have to be blind to avoid seeing it at the present hour. But I think it is still necessary to demonstrate it in the case of divine idealism.

Man, like all the rest of nature, is an entirely material being. The mind, the faculty of thinking, of receiving and reflecting upon different external and internal sensations, of remembering them when they have passed and reproducing them by the imagination, of comparing and distinguishing them, of abstracting determinations common to them and thus creating general concepts, and finally of forming ideas by grouping and combining concepts according to different methods - intelligence, in a word, sole creator of our whole, ideal world, is a property of the animal body and especially of the quite material organism of the brain.

We know this certainly, by the experience of all, which no fact has ever contradicted and which any man can verify at any moment of his life. In all animals, without excepting the wholly inferior species, we find a certain degree of intelligence, and we see that, in the series of species, animal intelligence develops in proportion as the organization of a species approaches that of man, but that in man alone it attains to that power of abstraction which properly constitutes thought.

Universal experience,⁸ which is the sole origin, the source of all our knowledge, shows us, therefore, that all intelligence is always attached to some animal body, and that the intensity, the power, of this animal function depends on the relative perfection of the organism. The latter of these results of universal experience is not applicable only to the different animal species; we establish

it likewise in men, whose intellectual and moral power depends so clearly upon the greater or less perfection of their organism as a race, as a nation, as a class, and as individuals, that it is not necessary to insist upon this point.

9

On the other hand, it is certain that no man has ever seen or can see pure mind, detached from all material form existing separately from any animal body whatsoever. But if no person has seen it, how is it that men have come to believe in its existence? The fact of this belief is certain and if not universal, as all the idealists pretend, at least very general, and as such it is entirely worthy of our closest attention, for a general belief, however foolish it may be, exercises too potent a sway over the destiny of men to warrant us in ignoring it or putting it aside.

The explanation of this belief, moreover, is rational enough. The example afforded us by children and young people, and even by many men long past the age of majority, shows us that man may use his mental faculties for a long time before accounting to himself for the way in which he uses them, before becoming clearly conscious of it. During this working of the mind unconscious of itself, during this action of innocent or believing intelligence, man, obsessed by the external world, pushed on by that internal goad called life and its manifold necessities, creates a quantity of imaginations, concepts, and ideas necessarily very imperfect at first and conforming but slightly to the reality of the things and facts which they endeavour to express. Not having yet the consciousness of his own intelligent action, not knowing yet that he himself has produced and continues to produce these imaginations, these concepts, these ideas, ignoring their wholly subjective - that is, human-origin, he must naturally consider them as objective; beings, as real

beings, wholly independent of him, existing by themselves and in themselves.

It was thus that primitive peoples, emerging slowly from their animal innocence, created their gods. Having created them, not suspecting that they themselves were the real creators, they worshipped them; considering them as real beings infinitely superior to themselves, they attributed omnipotence to them, and recognised themselves as their creatures, their slaves. As fast as human ideas develop, the gods, who, as I have already stated, were never anything more than a fantastic, ideal, poetical reverberation of an inverted image, become idealised also. At first gross fetishes, they gradually become pure spirits, existing outside of the visible world, and at last, in the course of a long historic evolution, are confounded in a single Divine Being, pure, eternal, absolute Spirit, creator and master of the worlds.

In every development, just or false, real or imaginary collective or individual, it is always the first step, the first act that is the most difficult. That step once taken, the rest follows naturally as a necessary consequence. The difficult step in the historical development of this terrible religious insanity which continues to obsess and crush us was to posit a divine world as such, outside the world. This first act of madness, so natural from the physiological point of view and consequently necessary in the history of humanity, was not accomplished at a single stroke. I know not how many centuries were needed to develop this belief and make it a governing influence upon the mental customs of men. But, once established, it became omnipotent, as each insane notion necessarily becomes when it takes possession of man's brain. Take a madman, whatever the object of his madness - you will find that obscure and fixed

idea which obsesses him seems to him the most natural thing in the world, and that, on the contrary, the real things which contradict this idea seem to him ridiculous and odious follies. Well religion is a collective insanity, the more powerful because it is traditional folly, and because its origin is lost in the most remote antiquity. As collective insanity it has penetrated to the very depths of the public and private existence of the peoples; it is incarnate in society; it has become, so to speak, the collective soul and thought. Every man is enveloped in it from his birth; he sucks it in with his mother's milk, absorbs it with all that he touches, all that he sees. He is so exclusively fed upon it, so poisoned and penetrated by it in all his being that later, however powerful his natural mind, he has to make unheard-of efforts to deliver himself from it, and then never completely succeeds. We have one proof of this in our modern idealists, and another in our doctrinaire; materialists - the German Communists. They have found no way to shake off the religion of the State.

The supernatural world, the divine world, once well established in the imagination of the peoples, the development of the various religious systems has followed its natural and logical course, conforming, moreover, in all things to the contemporary development of economical and political relations of which it has been in all ages, in the world of religious fancy, the faithful reproduction and divine consecration. Thus has the collective and historical insanity which calls itself religion been developed since fetishism, passing through all the stages from polytheism to Christian monotheism.

The second step in the development of religious beliefs, undoubtedly the most difficult next to the establishment of a separate divine world, was precisely this transition from

polytheism to monotheism, from the religious materialism of the pagans to the spiritualistic faith of the Christians. She pagan gods - and this was their principal characteristic - were first of all exclusively national gods. Very numerous, they necessarily retained a more or less material character, or, rather, they were so numerous because they were material, diversity being one of the principal attributes of the real world. The pagan gods were not yet strictly the negation of real things; they were only a fantastic exaggeration of them.

We have seen how much this transition cost the Jewish people, constituting, so to speak, its entire history. In vain did Moses and the prophets preach the one god; the people always relapsed into their primitive idolatry, into the ancient and comparatively much more natural and convenient faith in many good gods, more material, more human, and more palpable. Jehovah himself, their sole God, the God of Moses and the prophets, was still an extremely national God, who, to reward and punish his faithful followers, his chosen people, used material arguments, often stupid, always gross and cruel. It does not even appear that faith in his existence implied a negation of the existence of earlier gods. The Jewish God did not deny the existence of these rivals; he simply did not want his people to worship them side by side with him, because before all Jehovah was a very Jealous God. His first commandment was this:

"I am the Lord thy God, and thou shalt have no other gods before me."

Jehovah, then, was only a first draft, very material and very rough, of the supreme deity of modern idealism. Moreover, he was only a national God, like the Russian God

worshipped by the German generals, subjects of the Czar and patriots of the empire of all the Russias; like the German God, whom the pietists and the German generals, subjects of William I. at Berlin, will no doubt soon proclaim. The supreme being cannot be a national God; he must be the God of entire Humanity. Nor can the supreme being be a material being; he must be the negation of all matter - pure spirit. Two things have proved necessary to the realisation of the worship of the supreme being: (1) a realisation, such as it is, of Humanity by the negation of nationalities and national forms of worship; (2) a development, already far advanced, of metaphysical ideas in order to spiritualise the gross Jehovah of the Jews.

The first condition was fulfilled by the Romans, though in a very negative way no doubt, by the conquest of most of the countries known to the ancients and by the destruction of their national institutions. The gods of all the conquered nations, gathered in the Pantheon, mutually cancelled each other. This was the first draft of humanity, very gross and quite negative.

As for the second condition, the spiritualisation of Jehovah, that was realised by the Greeks long before the conquest of their country by the Romans. They were the creators of metaphysics. Greece, in the cradle of her history, had already found from the Orient a divine world which had been definitely established in the traditional faith of her peoples; this world had been left and handed over to her by the Orient. In her instinctive period, prior to her political history, she had developed and prodigiously humanised this divine world through her poets; and when she actually began her history, she already had a religion readymade, the most sympathetic and noble of all the religions which have existed, so far at least as a religion - that is, a lie - can be

noble and sympathetic. Her great thinkers - and no nation has had greater than Greece - found the divine world established, not only outside of themselves in the people, but also in themselves as a habit of feeling and thought, and naturally they took it as a point of departure. That they made no theology - that is, that they did not wait in vain to reconcile dawning reason with the absurdities of such a god, as did the scholastics of the Middle Ages - was already much in their favour. They left the gods out of their speculations and attached themselves directly to the divine idea, one, invisible, omnipotent, eternal, and absolutely spiritualistic but impersonal. As concerns Spiritualism, then, the Greek metaphysicians, much more than the Jews, were the creators of the Christian god. The Jews only added to it the brutal personality of their Jehovah.

That a sublime genius like the divine Plato could have been absolutely convinced of the reality of the divine idea shows us how contagious, how omnipotent, is the tradition of the religious mania even on the greatest minds. Besides, we should not be surprised at it, since, even in our day, the greatest philosophical genius which has existed since Aristotle and Plato, Hegel - in spite even of Kant's criticism, imperfect and too metaphysical though it be, which had demolished the objectivity or reality of the divine ideas - tried to replace these divine ideas upon their transcendental or celestial throne. It is true that Hegel went about his work of restoration in so impolite a manner that he killed the good God for ever. He took away from these ideas their divine halo, by showing to whoever will read him that they were never anything more than a creation of the human mind running through history in search of itself. To put an end to all religious insanities and the divine mirage, he left nothing lacking but the utterance of those grand words which were said after him, almost at the same

time, by two great minds who had never heard of each other - Ludwig Feuerbach, the disciple and demolisher of Hegel, in Germany, and Auguste Comte, the founder of positive philosophy, in France. These words were as follows:

"Metaphysics are reduced to psychology." All the metaphysical systems have been nothing else than human psychology developing itself in history.

To-day it is no longer difficult to understand how the divine ideas were born, how they were created in succession by the abstractive faculty of man. Man made the gods. But in the time of Plato this knowledge was impossible. The collective mind, and consequently the individual mind as well, even that of the greatest genius, was not ripe for that. Scarcely had it said with Socrates: "Know thyself!" This self-knowledge existed only in a state of intuition; in fact, it amounted to nothing. Hence it was impossible for the human mind to suspect that it was itself the sole creator of the divine world. It found the divine world before it; it found it as history, as tradition, as a sentiment, as a habit of thought; and it necessarily made it the object of its loftiest speculations. Thus was born metaphysics, and thus were developed and perfected the divine ideas, the basis of Spiritualism.

It is true that after Plato there was a sort of inverse movement in the development of the mind. Aristotle, the true father of science and positive philosophy, did not deny the divine world, but concerned himself with it as little as possible. He was the first to study, like the analyst and experimenter that he was, logic, the laws of human thought, and at the same time the physical world, not in its ideal, illusory essence, but in its real aspect. After him the Greeks of Alexandria established the first school of the positive

scientists. They were atheists. But their atheism left no mark on their contemporaries. Science tended more and more to separate itself from life. After Plato, divine ideas were rejected in metaphysics themselves; this was done by the Epicureans and Sceptics, two sects who contributed much to the degradation of human aristocracy, but they had no effect upon the masses.

Another school, infinitely more influential, was formed at Alexandria. This was the school of neo-Platonists. These, confounding in an impure mixture the monstrous imaginations of the Orient with the ideas of Plato, were the true originators, and later the elaborators, of the Christian dogmas.

Thus the personal and gross egoism of Jehovah, the not less brutal and gross Roman conquest, and the metaphysical ideal speculation of the Greeks, materialised by contact with the Orient, were the three historical elements which made up the spiritualistic religion of the Christians.

Before the altar of a unique and supreme God was raised on the ruins of the numerous altars of the pagan gods, the autonomy of the various nations composing the pagan or ancient world had to be destroyed first. This was very brutally done by the Romans who, by conquering the greatest part of the globe known to the ancients, laid the first foundations, quite gross and negative ones no doubt, of humanity. A God thus raised above the national differences, material and social, of all countries, and in a certain sense the direct negation of them, must necessarily be an immaterial and abstract being. But faith in the existence of such a being, so difficult a matter, could not spring into existence suddenly. Consequently, as I have demonstrated in the Appendix, it went through a long course of

preparation and development at the hands of Greek metaphysics, which were the first to establish in a philosophical manner the notion of the divine idea, a model eternally creative and always reproduced by the visible world. But the divinity conceived and created by Greek philosophy was an impersonal divinity. No logical and serious metaphysics being able to rise, or, rather, to descend, to the idea of a personal God, it became necessary, therefore, to imagine a God who was one and very personal at once. He was found in the very brutal, selfish, and cruel person of Jehovah, the national God of the Jews. But the Jews, in spite of that exclusive national spirit which distinguishes them even to-day, had become in fact, long before the birth of Christ, the most international people of the world. Some of them carried away as captives, but many more even urged on by that mercantile passion which constitutes one of the principal traits of their character, they had spread through all countries, carrying everywhere the worship of their Jehovah, to whom they remained all the more faithful the more he abandoned them.

In Alexandria this terrible god of the Jews made the personal acquaintance of the metaphysical divinity of Plato, already much corrupted by Oriental contact, and corrupted her still more by his own. In spite of his national, jealous, and ferocious exclusivism, he could not long resist the graces of this ideal and impersonal divinity of the Greeks. He married her, and from this marriage was born the spiritualistic - but not spirited - God of the Christians. The neoplatonists of Alexandria are known to have been the principal creators of the Christian theology.

Nevertheless theology alone does not make a religion, any more than historical elements suffice to create history. By historical elements I mean the general conditions of any

real development whatsoever - for example in this case the conquest of the world by the Romans and the meeting of the God of the Jews with the ideal of divinity of the Greeks. To impregnate the historical elements, to cause them to run through a series of new historical transformations, a living, spontaneous fact was needed, without which they might have remained many centuries longer in the state of unproductive elements. This fact was not lacking in Christianity: it was the propagandism, martyrdom, and death of Jesus Christ.

We know almost nothing of this great and saintly personage, all that the gospels tell us being contradictory, and so fabulous that we can scarcely seize upon a few real and vital traits. But it is certain that he was the preacher of the poor, the friend and consoler of the wretched, of the ignorant, of the slaves, and of the women, and that by these last he was much loved. He promised eternal life to all who are oppressed, to all who suffer here below; and the number is immense. He was hanged, as a matter of course, by the representatives of the official morality and public order of that period. His disciples and the disciples of his disciples succeeded in spreading, thanks to the destruction of the national barriers by the Roman conquest, and propagated the Gospel in all the countries known to the ancients. Everywhere they were received with open arms by the slaves and the women, the two most oppressed, most suffering, and naturally also the most ignorant classes of the ancient world. For even such few proselytes as they made in the privileged and learned world they were indebted in great part to the influence of women. Their most extensive propagandism was directed almost exclusively among the people, unfortunate and degraded by slavery. This was the first awakening, the first intellectual revolt of the proletariat.

The great honour of Christianity, its incontestable merit, and the whole secret of its unprecedented and yet thoroughly legitimate triumph, lay in the fact that it appealed to that suffering and immense public to which the ancient world, a strict and cruel intellectual and political aristocracy, denied even the simplest rights of humanity. Otherwise it never could have spread. The doctrine taught by the apostles of Christ, wholly consoling as it may have seemed to the unfortunate, was too revolting, too absurd from the standpoint of human reason, ever to have been accepted by enlightened men. According with what joy the apostle Paul speaks of the *scandale de la foi*; and of the triumph of that divine *folie*; rejected by the powerful and wise of the century, but all the more passionately accepted by the simple, the ignorant, and the weak-minded!

Indeed there must have been a very deep-seated dissatisfaction with life, a very intense thirst of heart, and an almost absolute poverty of thought, to secure the acceptance of the Christian absurdity, the most audacious and monstrous of all religious absurdities.

This was not only the negation of all the political, social, and religious institutions of antiquity: it was the absolute overturn of common sense, of all human reason. The living being, the real world, were considered thereafter as nothing; whereas the product of man's abstractive faculty, the last and supreme abstraction in which this faculty, far beyond existing things, even beyond the most general determinations of the living being, the ideas of space and time, having nothing left to advance beyond, rests in contemplation of his emptiness and absolute immobility.

That abstraction, that *caput mortuum*, absolutely void of all contents the true nothing, God, is proclaimed the only real, eternal, all-powerful being. The real All is declared nothing and the absolute nothing the All. The shadow becomes the substance and the substance vanishes like a shadow.¹⁰

All this was audacity and absurdity unspeakable, the true *scandale de la foi*, the triumph of credulous stupidity over the mind for the masses; and - for a few - the triumphant irony of a mind wearied, corrupted, disillusioned, and disgusted in honest and serious search for truth; it was that necessity of shaking off thought and becoming brutally stupid so frequently felt by surfeited minds:

Credo quod absurdum.

I believe in the absurd; I believe in it, precisely and mainly, because it is absurd. In the same way many distinguished and enlightened minds in our day believe in animal magnetism, spiritualism, tipping tables, and - why go so far? - believe still in Christianity, in idealism, in God.

The belief of the ancient proletariat, like that of the modern, was more robust and simple, less *haut goût*. The Christian propagandism appealed to its heart, not to its mind; to its eternal aspirations, its necessities, its sufferings, its slavery, not to its reason, which still slept and therefore could know nothing about logical contradictions and the evidence of the absurd. It was interested solely in knowing when the hour of promised deliverance would strike, when the kingdom of God would come. As for theological dogmas, it did not trouble itself about them because it understood nothing about them. The proletariat converted to Christianity constituted its growing material but not its intellectual strength.

As for the Christian dogmas, it is known that they were elaborated in a series of theological and literary works and in the Councils, principally by the converted neo-Platonists of the Orient. The Greek mind had fallen so low that, in the fourth century of the Christian era, the period of the first Council, the idea of a personal God, pure, eternal, absolute mind, creator and supreme master, existing outside of the world, was unanimously accepted by the Church Fathers; as a logical consequence of this absolute absurdity, it then became natural and necessary to believe in the immateriality and immortality of the human soul, lodged and imprisoned in a body only partially mortal, there being in this body itself a portion which, while material is immortal like the soul, and must be resurrected with it. We see how difficult it was, even for the Church Fathers; to conceive pure minds outside of any material form. It should be added that, in general, it is the character of every metaphysical and theological argument to seek to explain one absurdity by another.

It was very fortunate for Christianity that it met a world of slaves. It had another piece of good luck in the invasion of the Barbarians. The latter were worthy people, full of natural force, and, above all, urged on by a great necessity of life and a great capacity for it; brigands who had stood every test, capable of devastating and gobbling up anything, like their successors, the Germans of today; but they were much less systematic and pedantic than these last, much less moralistic, less learned, and on the other hand much more independent and proud, capable of science and not incapable of liberty, as are the bourgeois of modern Germany. But, in spite of all their great qualities, they were nothing but barbarians - that is, as indifferent to all questions of theology and metaphysics as the ancient

slaves, a great number of whom, moreover, belonged to their race. So that, their practical repugnance once overcome, it was not difficult to convert them theoretically to Christianity.

For ten centuries Christianity, armed with the omnipotence of Church and State and opposed by no competition, was able to deprave, debase, and falsify the mind of Europe. It had no competitors, because outside of the Church there were neither thinkers nor educated persons. It alone though, it alone spoke and wrote, it alone taught. Though heresies arose in its bosom, they affected only the theological or practical developments of the fundamental dogma never that dogma itself. The belief in God, pure spirit and creator of the world, and the belief in the immateriality of the soul remained untouched. This double belief became the ideal basis of the whole Occidental and Oriental civilization of Europe; it penetrated and became incarnate in all the institutions, all the details of the public and private life of all classes, and the masses as well.

After that, is it surprising that this belief has lived until the present day, continuing to exercise its disastrous influence even upon select minds, such as those of Mazzini, Michelet, Quinet, and so many others? We have seen that the first attack upon it came from the renaissance; of the free mind in the fifteenth century, which produced heroes and martyrs like Vanini, Giordano Bruno, and Galileo. Although drowned in the noise, tumult, and passions of the Reformation, it noiselessly continued its invisible work, bequeathing to the noblest minds of each generation its task of human emancipation by the destruction of the absurd, until at last, in the latter half of the eighteenth century, it again reappeared in broad day, boldly waving the flag of atheism and materialism.

The human mind, then, one might have supposed, was at last about to deliver itself from all the divine obsessions. Not at all. The divine falsehood upon which humanity had been feeding for eighteen centuries (speaking of Christianity only) was once more to show itself more powerful than human truth. No longer able to make use of the black tribe, of the ravens consecrated by the Church, of the Catholic or Protestant priests, all confidence in whom had been lost, it made use of lay priests, short-robed liars and sophists. among whom the principal rôles devolved upon two fatal men, one the falsest mind, the other the most doctrinally despotic will, of the last century - J. J. Rousseau and Robespierre.

The first is the perfect type of narrowness and suspicious meanness, of exaltation without other object than his own person, of cold enthusiasm and hypocrisy at once sentimental and implacable, of the falsehood of modern idealism. He may be considered as the real creator of modern reaction. To all appearance the most democratic writer of the eighteenth century, he bred within himself the pitiless despotism of the statesman. He was the prophet of the doctrinaire State, as Robespierre, his worthy and faithful disciple, tried to become its high priest. Having heard the saying of Voltaire that, if God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him, J. J. Rousseau invented the Supreme Being, the abstract and sterile God of the deists. And It was in the name of the Supreme Being, and of the hypocritical virtue commanded by this Supreme Being, that Robespierre guillotined first the Hébertists and then the very genius of the Revolution, Danton, in whose person he assassinated the Republic, thus preparing the way for the thenceforth necessary triumph of the dictatorship of Bonaparte I. After this great triumph, the idealistic reaction

sought and found servants less fanatical, less terrible nearer to the diminished stature of the actual bourgeoisie. In France, Chateaubriand, Lamartine, and - shall I say it? Why not? All must be said if it is truth - Victor Hugo himself, the democrat, the republican, the quasi-socialist of today! and after them the whole melancholy and sentimental company of poor and pallid minds who, under the leadership of these masters, established the modern romantic school in Germany, the Schlegels, the Tiecks, the Novalis, the Werners, the Schellings, and so many others besides, whose names do not even deserve to be recalled.

The literature created by this school was the very reign of ghosts and phantoms. It could not stand the sunlight; the twilight alone permitted it to live. No more could it stand the brutal contact of the masses. It was the literature of the tender, delicate, distinguished souls, aspiring to heaven, and living on earth as if in spite of themselves. It had a horror and contempt for the politics and questions of the day; but when perchance it referred to them, it showed itself frankly reactionary, took the side of the Church against the insolence of the freethinkers, of the kings against the peoples, and of all the aristocrats against the vile rabble of the streets. For the rest, as I have just said, the dominant feature of the school of romanticism was a quasi-complete indifference to politics. Amid the clouds in which it lived could be distinguished two real points - the rapid development of bourgeois materialism and the ungovernable outburst of individual vanities.

To understand this romantic literature, the reason for its existence must be sought in the transformation which had been effected in the bosom of the bourgeois class since the revolution of 1793.

From the Renaissance and the Reformation down to the Revolution, the bourgeoisie, if not in Germany, at least in Italy, in France, in Switzerland, in England, in Holland, was the hero and representative of the revolutionary genius of history. From its bosom sprang most of the freethinkers of the fifteenth century, the religious reformers of the two following centuries, and the apostles of human emancipation, including this time those of Germany, of the past century. It alone, naturally supported by the powerful arm of the people, who had faith in it, made the revolution of 1789 and '93. It proclaimed the downfall of royalty and of the Church, the fraternity of the peoples, the rights of man and of the citizen. Those are its titles to glory; they are immortal!

Soon it split. A considerable portion of the purchasers of national property having become rich, and supporting themselves no longer on the proletariat of the cities, but on the major portion of the peasants of France, these also having become landed proprietors, had no aspiration left but for peace, the re-establishment of public order, and the foundation of a strong and regular government. It therefore welcomed with joy the dictatorship of the first Bonaparte, and, although always Voltairean, did not view with displeasure the Concordat with the Pope and the re-establishment of the official Church in France: "Religion is so necessary to the people!" Which means that, satiated themselves, this portion of the bourgeoisie then began to see that it was needful to the maintenance of their situation and the preservation of their newly-acquired estates to appease the unsatisfied hunger of the people by promises of heavenly manna. Then it was that Chateaubriand began to preach.¹¹

Napoleon fell and the Restoration brought back into France the legitimate monarchy, and with it the power of the Church and of the nobles, who regained, if not the whole, at least a considerable portion of their former influence. This reaction threw the bourgeoisie back into the Revolution, and with the revolutionary spirit that of scepticism also was re-awakened in it. It set Chateaubriand aside and began to read Voltaire again; but it did not go so far as Diderot: its debilitated nerves could not stand nourishment so strong. Voltaire, on the contrary, at once a freethinker and a deist, suited it very well. Béranger and P. L. Courier expressed this new tendency perfectly. The "God of the good people" and the ideal of the bourgeois king, at once liberal and democratic, sketched against the majestic and thenceforth inoffensive background of the Empire's gigantic victories such was at that period the daily intellectual food of the bourgeoisie of France.

Lamartine, to be sure, excited by a vain and ridiculously envious desire to rise to the poetic height of the great Byron, had begun his coldly delirious hymns in honour of the God of the nobles and of the legitimate monarchy. But his songs resounded only in aristocratic salons. The bourgeoisie did not hear them. Béranger was its poet and Courier was its political writer.

The revolution of July resulted in lifting its tastes. We know that every bourgeois in France carries within him the imperishable type of the bourgeois gentleman, a type which never fails to appear immediately the parvenu acquires a little wealth and power. In 1830 the wealthy bourgeoisie had definitely replaced the old nobility in the seats of power. It naturally tended to establish a new aristocracy. An aristocracy of capital first of all, but also an aristocracy of

intellect, of good manners and delicate sentiments. It began to feel religious.

This was not on its part simply an aping of aristocratic customs. It was also a necessity of its position. The proletariat had rendered it a final service in once more aiding it to overthrow the nobility. The bourgeoisie now had no further need of its co-operation, for it felt itself firmly seated in the shadow of the throne of July, and the alliance with the people, thenceforth useless, began to become inconvenient. It was necessary to remand it to its place, which naturally could not be done without provoking great indignation among the masses. It became necessary to restrain this indignation. In the name of what? In the name of the bourgeois interest bluntly confessed? That would have been much too cynical. The more unjust and inhuman an interest is, the greater need it has of sanction. Now, where find it if not in religion, that good protectress of all the well-fed and the useful consoler of the hungry? And more than ever the triumphant bourgeoisie saw that religion was indispensable to the people.

After having won all its titles to glory in religious, philosophical, and political opposition, in protest and in revolution, it at last became the dominant class and thereby even the defender and preserver of the State, thenceforth the regular institution of the exclusive power of that class. The State is force, and for it, first of all, is the right of force, the triumphant argument of the needle-gun, of the chassepot. But man is so singularly constituted that this argument, wholly eloquent as it may appear, is not sufficient in the long run. Some moral sanction or other is absolutely necessary to enforce his respect. Further, this sanction must be at once so simple and so plain that it may convince the masses, who, after having been reduced by the

power of the State. must also be induced to morally recognise its right.

There are only two ways of convincing the masses of the goodness of any social institution whatever. The first, the only real one, but also the most difficult to adopt - because it implies the abolition of the State, or, in other words, the abolition of the organised political exploitation of the majority by any minority whatsoever - would be the direct and complete satisfaction of the needs and aspirations of the people, which would be equivalent to the complete liquidation of the political and economical existence of the bourgeois class, or, again, to the abolition of the State. Beneficial means for the masses, but detrimental to bourgeois interests; hence it is useless to talk about them.

The only way, on the contrary, harmful only to the people, precious in its salvation of bourgeois privileges, is no other than religion. That is the eternal mirage; which leads away the masses in a search for divine treasures, while much more reserved, the governing class contents itself with dividing among all its members - very unequally, moreover and always giving most to him who possesses most - the miserable goods of earth and the plunder taken from the people, including their political and social liberty.

There is not, there cannot be, a State without religion. Take the freest States in the world - the United States of America or the Swiss Confederation, for instance - and see what an important part is played in all official discourses by divine Providence, that supreme sanction of all States.

But whenever a chief of State speaks of God, be he William I., the Knouto-Germanic emperor, or Grant, the

president of the great republic, be sure that he is getting ready to shear once more his people-flock.

The French liberal and Voltairean bourgeoisie, driven by temperament to a positivism (not to say a materialism) singularly narrow and brutal, having become the governing class of the State by its triumph of 1830, had to give itself an official religion. It was not an easy thing. The bourgeoisie could not abruptly go back under the yoke of Roman Catholicism. Between it and the Church of Rome was an abyss of blood and hatred, and, however practical and wise one becomes, it is never possible to repress a passion developed by history. Moreover, the French bourgeoisie would have covered itself with ridicule if it had gone back to the Church to take part in the pious ceremonies of its worship, an essential condition of a meritorious and sincere conversion. Several attempted it, it is true, but their heroism was rewarded by no other result than a fruitless scandal. Finally, a return to Catholicism was impossible on account of the insolvable contradiction which separates the invariable politics of Rome from the development of the economical and political interests of the middle class.

In this respect Protestantism is much more advantageous. It is the bourgeois religion par excellence. It accords just as much liberty as is necessary to the bourgeois, and finds a way of reconciling celestial aspirations with the respect which terrestrial conditions demand. Consequently it is especially in Protestant countries that commerce and industry have been developed. But it was impossible for the French bourgeoisie to become Protestant. To pass from one religion to another - unless it be done deliberately, as sometimes in the case of the Jews of Russia and Poland, who get baptised three or four times in order to receive each

time the remuneration allowed them - to seriously change one's religion, a little faith is necessary. Now, in the exclusive positive heart of the French bourgeois there is no room for faith. He professes the most profound indifference for all questions which touch neither his pocket first nor his social vanity afterwards. He is as indifferent to Protestantism as to Catholicism. On the other hand, the French bourgeois could not go over to Protestantism without putting himself in conflict with the Catholic routine of the majority of the French people, which would have been great imprudence on the part of a class pretending to govern the nation.

There was still one way left - to return to the humanitarian and revolutionary religion of the eighteenth century. But that would have led too far. So the bourgeoisie was obliged, in order to sanction its new State, to create a new religion which might be boldly proclaimed, without too much ridicule and scandal, by the whole bourgeois class.

Thus was born doctrinaire Deism.

Others have told, much better than I could tell it, the story of the birth and development of this school, which had so decisive and - we may well add - so fatal an influence on the political, intellectual, and moral education of the bourgeois youth of France. It dates from Benjamin Constant and Madame de Staël; its real founder was Royer-Collard; its apostles, Guizot, Cousin, Villemain, and many others. Its boldly avowed object was the reconciliation of Revolution with Reaction, or, to use the language of the school, of the principle of liberty with that of authority, and naturally to the advantage of the latter.

This reconciliation signified: in politics, the taking away of popular liberty for the benefit of bourgeois rule, represented by the monarchical and constitutional State; in philosophy, the deliberate submission of free reason to the eternal principles of faith. We have only to deal here with the latter.

We know that this philosophy was specially elaborated by M. Cousin, the father of French eclecticism. A superficial and pedantic talker, incapable of any original conception, of any idea peculiar to himself, but very strong on commonplace, which he confounded with common sense, this illustrious philosopher learnedly prepared, for the use of the studious youth of France, a metaphysical dish of his own making the use of which, made compulsory in all schools of the State under the University, condemned several generations one after the other to a cerebral indigestion. Imagine a philosophical vinegar sauce of the most opposed systems, a mixture of Fathers of the Church, scholastic philosophers, Descartes and Pascal, Kant and Scotch psychologists all this a superstructure on the divine and innate ideas of Plato, and covered up with a layer of Hegelian immanence accompanied, of course, by an ignorance, as contemptuous as it is complete, of natural science, and proving just as two times two make five; the existence of a personal God.....

Footnotes

1 I call it "iniquitous" because, as I believe I have proved In the Appendix alluded to, this mystery has been and still continues to be the consecration of all the horrors which have been and are being committed in the world; I call it unique, because all the other theological and metaphysical absurdities which debase the human mind are but its necessary consequences.

2 Mr. Stuart Mill is perhaps the only one whose serious idealism may be fairly doubted, and that for two reasons: first, that if not absolutely the disciple, he is a passionate admirer, an adherent of the positive philosophy of Auguste Comte, a philosophy which, in spite of its numerous reservations, is really Atheistic; second, that Mr. Stuart Mill is English, and in England to proclaim oneself an Atheist is to ostracise oneself, even at this late day.

3 In London I once heard M. Louis Blanc express almost the same idea. "The best form of government," said he to me, "would be that which would invariably call men of virtuous genius to the control of affairs."

4 One day I asked Mazzini what measures would be taken for the emancipation of the people, once his triumphant unitary republic had been definitely established. "The first measure," he answered "will be the foundation of schools for the people." "And what will the people be taught in these schools?" "The duties of man - sacrifice and devotion." But where will you find a sufficient number of professors to teach these things, which no one has the right or power to teach, unless he preaches by example? Is not the number of men who find supreme enjoyment in sacrifice and devotion exceedingly limited? Those who sacrifice themselves in the service of a great idea obey a lofty passion, and, satisfying this personal passion, outside of which life itself loses all value in their eyes, they generally think of something else than building their action into doctrine, while those who teach doctrine usually forget to translate it into action, for the simple reason that doctrine kills the life, the living spontaneity, of action. Men like Mazzini, in whom doctrine and action form an admirable unity, are very rare exceptions. In Christianity also there have been great men, holy men, who have really practised, or who, at least, have passionately tried to practice all that they preached, and whose hearts, overflowing with love, were full of contempt for the pleasures and goods of this world. But the immense majority of Catholic and Protestant priests who, by trade, have preached and still preach the doctrines of chastity, abstinence, and renunciation belie their teachings by their example It is not without reason,

but because of several centuries' experience, that among the people of all countries these phrases have become by-words: As licentious as a priest; as gluttonous as a priest; as ambitious as a priest; as greedy, selfish, and grasping as a priest. It is, then, established that the professors of the Christian virtues, consecrated by the Church, the priests, in the immense majority of cases, have practised quite the contrary of what they have preached. This very majority, the universality of this fact, show that the fault is not to be attributed to them as individuals, but to the social position, impossible and contradictory in itself, in which these individuals are placed. The position of the Christian priest involves a double contradiction. In the first place, that between the doctrine of abstinence and renunciation and the positive tendencies and needs of human nature - tendencies and needs which, in some individual cases, always very rare, may indeed be continually held back, suppressed, and even entirely annihilated by the constant influence of some potent intellectual and moral passion; which at certain moments of collective exaltation, may be forgotten and neglected for some time by a large mass of men at once; but which are so fundamentally inherent in our nature that sooner or later they always resume their rights: so that, when they are not satisfied in a regular and normal way, they are always replaced at last by unwholesome and monstrous satisfaction. This is a natural and consequently fatal and irresistible law, under the disastrous action of which inevitably fall all Christian priests and especially those of the Roman Catholic Church. It cannot apply to the professors, that is to the priests of the modern Church, unless they are also obliged to preach Christian abstinence and renunciation.

But there is another contradiction common to the priests of both sects. This contradiction grows out of the very title and position of master. A master who commands, oppresses, and exploits is a wholly logical and quite natural personage. But a master who sacrifices himself to those who are subordinated to him by his divine or human privilege is a contradictory and quite impossible being. This is the very constitution of hypocrisy, so well personified by the Pope, who, while calling himself the lowest servant of the servants of God - in token whereof, following the example of Christ, he even washes once a year the feet of twelve Roman beggars - proclaims himself at the same time vicar of God, absolute and infallible master of the world. Do I need to recall that the priests of all churches, far from sacrificing themselves to the flocks confided to their care, have always sacrificed them, exploited them, and kept them in the condition of a flock, partly to satisfy their own personal passions and partly to serve the omnipotence of the

Church? Like conditions, like causes, always produce like effects. It will, then, be the same with the professors of the modern School divinely inspired and licensed by the State. They will necessarily become, some without knowing it, others with full knowledge of the cause, teachers of the doctrine of popular sacrifice to the power of the State and to the profit of the privileged classes.

Must we, then, eliminate from society all instruction and abolish all schools? Far from it! Instruction must be spread among the masses without stint, transforming all the churches, all those temples dedicated to the glory of God and to the slavery of men, into so many schools of human emancipation. But, in the first place, let us understand each other; schools, properly speaking, in a normal society founded on equality and on respect for human liberty, will exist only for children and not for adults: and, in order that they may become schools of emancipation and not of enslavement, it will be necessary to eliminate, first of all, this fiction of God, the eternal and absolute enslaver. The whole education of children and their instruction must be founded on the scientific development of reason, not on that of faith; on the development of personal dignity and independence, not on that of piety and obedience; on the worship of truth and justice at any cost, and above all on respect for humanity, which must replace always and everywhere the worship of divinity. The principle of authority, in the education of children, constitutes the natural point of departure; it is legitimate, necessary, when applied to children of a tender age, whose intelligence has not yet openly developed itself. But as the development of everything, and consequently of education, implies the gradual negation of the point of departure, this principle must diminish as fast as education and instruction advance, giving place to increasing liberty. All rational education is at bottom nothing but this progressive immolation of authority for the benefit of liberty, the final object of education necessarily being the formation of free men full of respect and love for the liberty of others. Therefore the first day of the pupils' life, if the school takes infants scarcely able as yet to stammer a few words, should be that of the greatest authority and an almost entire absence of liberty; but its last day should be that of the greatest liberty and the absolute abolition of every vestige of the animal or divine principle of authority.

The principle of authority, applied to men who have surpassed or attained their majority, becomes a monstrosity, a flagrant denial of humanity, a source of slavery and intellectual and moral depravity. Unfortunately, paternal governments have left the masses to wallow in an ignorance so

profound that it will be necessary to establish schools not only for the people's children, but for the people themselves. From these schools will be absolutely eliminated the smallest applications or manifestations of the principle of authority. They will be schools no longer; they will be popular academies, in which neither pupils nor masters will be known, where the people will come freely to get, if they need it, free instruction, and in which, rich in their own experience, they will teach in their turn many things to the professors who shall bring them knowledge which they lack. This, then, will be a mutual instruction, an act of intellectual fraternity between the educated youth and the people.

The real school for the people and for all grown men is life. The only grand and omnipotent authority, at once natural and rational, the only one which we may respect, will be that of the collective and public spirit of a society founded on equality and solidarity and the mutual human respect of all its members. Yes, this is an authority which is not at all divine, wholly human, but before which we shall bow willingly, certain that, far from enslaving them, it will emancipate men. It will be a thousand times more powerful, be sure of it than all your divine, theological metaphysical, political, and judicial authorities, established by the Church and by the State, more powerful than your criminal codes, your jailers, and your executioners.

The power of collective sentiment or public spirit is even now a very serious matter. The men most ready to commit crimes rarely dare to defy it, to openly affront it. They will seek to deceive it, but will take care not to be rude with it unless they feel the support of a minority larger or smaller. No man, however powerful he believes himself, will ever have the strength to bear the unanimous contempt of society; no one can live without feeling himself sustained by the approval and esteem of at least some portion of society. A man must be urged on by an immense and very sincere conviction in order to find courage to speak and act against the opinion of all, and never will a selfish, depraved, and cowardly man have such courage.

Nothing proves more clearly than this fact the natural and inevitable solidarity - this law of sociability - which binds all men together, as each of us can verify daily, both on himself and on all the men whom he knows. But, if this social power exists, why has it not sufficed hitherto to moralise, to humanise men? Simply because hitherto this power has not been humanised itself; it has not been humanised because the social life of which it is ever the faithful expression is based, as we know, on the worship of divinity not on respect for humanity; on authority, not on liberty; on

privilege, not on equality; on the exploitation, not on the brotherhood of men; on iniquity and falsehood, not on justice and truth. Consequently its real action, always in contradiction of the humanitarian theories which it professes, has constantly exercised a disastrous and depraving influence. It does not repress vices and crimes; it creates them. Its authority is consequently a divine, anti-human authority; its influence is mischievous and baleful. Do you wish to render its authority and influence beneficent and human? Achieve the social revolution. Make all needs really solidary, and cause the material and social interests of each to conform to the human duties of each. And to this end there is but one means: Destroy all the institutions of Inequality; establish the economic and social equality of all, and on this basis will arise the liberty the morality, the solidary humanity of all.

I shall return to this, the most important question of Socialism.

5 Here three pages of Bakunin's manuscript are missing.

6 The lost part of this sentence perhaps said: "If men of science in their researches and experiments are not treating men actually as they treat animals, the reason is that" they are not exclusively men of science, but are also more or less men of life.

7 Science, in becoming the patrimony of everybody, will wed itself in a certain sense to the immediate and real life of each. It will gain in utility and grace what it loses in pride, ambition, and doctrinaire pedantry. This, however, will not prevent men of genius, better organized for scientific speculation than the majority of their fellows, from devoting themselves exclusively to the cultivation of the sciences, and rendering great services to humanity. Only, they will be ambitious for no other social influence than the natural influence exercised upon its surroundings by every superior intelligence, and for no other reward than the high delight which a noble mind always finds in the satisfaction of a noble passion.

8 Universal experience, on which all science rests, must be clearly distinguished from universal faith, on which the idealists wish to support their beliefs: the first is a real authentication of facts; the second is only a supposition of facts which nobody has seen, and which consequently are at variance with the experience of everybody.

9 The idealists, all those who believe in the immateriality and immortality of the human soul, must be excessively embarrassed by the difference in intelligence existing between races, peoples, and individuals. Unless we suppose that the various divine particles have been irregularly distributed,

how is this difference to be explained? Unfortunately there is a considerable number of men wholly stupid, foolish even to idiocy. Could they have received in the distribution a particle at once divine and stupid? To escape this embarrassment the idealists must necessarily suppose that all human souls are equal. but that the prisons in which they find themselves necessarily confined, human bodies, are unequal, some more capable than others of serving as an organ for the pure intellectuality of soul. According to this. such a one might have very fine organs at his disposition. such another very gross organs. But these are distinctions which idealism has not the power to use without falling into inconsistency and the grossest materialism, for in the presence of absolute immateriality of soul all bodily differences disappear, all that is corporeal, material, necessarily appearing indifferent, equally and absolutely gross. The abyss which separates soul from body, absolute immateriality from absolute materiality, is infinite. Consequently all differences, by the way inexplicable and logically impossible, which may exist on the other side of the abyss, in matter, should be to the soul null and void, and neither can nor should exercise any influence over it. In a word, the absolutely immaterial cannot be constrained, imprisoned, and much less expressed in any degree whatsoever by the absolutely material. Of all the gross and materialistic (using the word in the sense attached to it by the idealists) imaginations which were engendered by the primitive ignorance and stupidity of men, that of an immaterial soul imprisoned in a material body is certainly the grossest, the most stupid. and nothing better proves the omnipotence exercised by ancient prejudices even over the best minds than the deplorable sight of men endowed with lofty intelligence still talking of it in our days.

10 I am well aware that in the theological and metaphysical systems of the Orient, and especially in those of India, including Buddhism, we find the principle of the annihilation of the real world in favour of the ideal and of absolute abstraction. But it has not the added character of voluntary and deliberate negation which distinguishes Christianity; when those systems were conceived. the world of human thought of will and of liberty, had not reached that stage of development which was afterwards seen in the Greek and Roman civilisation.

11 It seems to me useful to recall at this point an anecdote - one, by the way, well known and thoroughly authentic - which sheds a very clear light on the personal value of this warmed-over of the Catholic beliefs and on the religious sincerity of that period. Chateaubriand submitted to a publisher a

work attacking faith. The publisher called his attention to the fact that atheism had gone out of fashion, that the reading public cared no more for it, and that the demand, on the contrary, was for religious works. Chateaubriand withdrew, but a few months later came back with his *Genius of Christianity*.

INTEGRAL EDUCATION

INTEGRAL EDUCATION I

In the following four essays on education published in *Egalité* (Geneva) between July and August 1869, Bakunin argues that where there exists differing degrees of education, class society is inevitable. Anarchists, he insists, must seek equality and, therefore, integral education same education available for everyone. ' It is to the interest of both labour and science there must no longer be this division into workers and scholars - henceforth there must only be men.

The first topic for consideration today is this will it be feasible for the working masses to know complete emancipation as long as the education available to those masses continues to be inferior to that bestowed upon the bourgeois, or, in more general terms, as long as there exists any class, be it numerous or otherwise, which, by virtue of birth, is entitled to a superior education and a more complete instruction? Does not the question answer itself? Is it not self-evident that of any two persons endowed by nature with roughly equivalent intelligence, one will have the edge - the one whose mind will have been broadened by learning and who, having the better grasped the inter-relationships of natural and social phenomena (what we might term the laws of nature and of society) will the more readily and more fully grasp the nature of his surroundings? And that this one will feel, let us say, a greater liberty and, in practical terms, show a greater aptitude and capability than his fellow? It is natural that he who knows more will dominate him who knows less. And were this disparity of education and education and learning the only one to exist between two classes, would not all the others swiftly follow

until the world of men itself in its present circumstances, that is, until it was again divided into a mass of slaves and a tiny number of rulers, the former labouring away as they do today, to the advantage of the latter?

Now we see why the bourgeois socialists demand only a little education for the people, a soupcon more than they currently receive; whereas we socialist democrats demand, on the people's behalf, complete and integral education, an education as full as the power of intellect today permits. So that, henceforth, there may not be any class over the workers by virtue of superior education and therefore able to dominate and exploit them. The bourgeois socialists want to see the retention of the class system each class, they contend, fulfilling a specific social function; one specialising, say, in learning, and the other in manual labour. We, on the other hand, seek the final and the utter abolition of classes; we seek a unification of society and equality of social and economic provision for every individual on this earth. The bourgeois socialists, whilst retaining the historic bases of the society of today, would like to see them become less stark, less harsh and more prettified. Whereas we should like to see their destruction. From which it follows that there can be no truce or compromise, let alone any coalition between the bourgeois socialists and us socialist democrats. But, I have heard it said and this is the argument most frequently raised against us and an argument which the dogmatists of every shade regard as irrefutable - it is impossible that the whole of mankind should devote itself to learning, for we should all die of starvation. Consequently while some study others must labour so that they can produce what we need to live - not just producing for their own needs, but also for those men who devote themselves exclusively to intellectual pursuits; aside from expanding the horizons of human

knowledge, the discoveries of these intellectuals improve the condition of all human beings, without exception, when applied to industry, agriculture and, generally, to political and social life; agreed? And do not their artistic creations enhance the lives of every one of us?

No, not at all. And the greatest reproach which we can level against science and the arts is precisely that they do not distribute their favours and do not exercise their influence, except upon a tiny fragment of society, to the exclusion and, thus, to the detriment of the vast majority. Today one might say of the advances of science and of the arts, just what has already and so properly been said of the prodigious progress of industry, trade, credit, and, in a word, of the wealth of society in the most civilised countries of the modern world. That wealth is quite exclusive, and the tendency is for it to become more so each day, as it becomes concentrated into an ever shrinking number of hands, shunning the lower echelons of the middle class and the petite bourgeoisie, depressing them into the proletariat, so that the growth of this wealth is the direct cause behind the growing misery of the labouring masses. Thus the outcome is that the gulf which yawns between the privileged, contented minority and millions of workers who earn their keep by the strength of their arm yawns ever wider and that the happier the contented - who - exploit the people's labour become the more unhappy the workers become. One has only to look at the fabulous opulence of the aristocratic, financier, commercial and industrial clique in England and compare it with the miserable condition of the workers of the same country; one has only to re-read the so naive and heartrending letter lately penned by an intelligent and upright goldsmith of London, one Walter Dugan, who has just voluntarily taken poison along with his wife and their six children, simply as

a means of escape from the degradation's of poverty and the torments of hunger (1) - and one will find oneself obliged to concede that the much vaunted civilisation means, in material terms, to the people, only oppression and ruination. And the same holds true for the modern advances of science and the arts. Huge strides, indeed, it is true But the greater the advances, the more they foster intellectual servitude and thus, in material terms, foster misery and inferiority as the lot of the people; for these advances merely widen the gulf which already separates the people's level of understanding from the levels of the privileged classes. From the point of view of natural capacity, the intelligence of the former is, today, obviously less stunted, less exercised, less sophisticated and less corrupted by the need to defend unjust interests, and is, consequently, naturally of greater potency than the brain power of the bourgeoisie: but, then again, the brain power of the bourgeois does have at its disposal the complete arsenal of science filled with weapons that are indeed formidable. It is very often the case that a highly intelligent worker is obliged to hold his tongue when confronted by a learned fool who defeats him, not by dint of intellect (of which he has none) but by dint of his education, an education denied the workingman but granted the fool because, while the fool was able to develop his foolishness scientifically in schools, the working man's labours were clothing, housing, feeding him and supplying his every need, his teachers and his books, everything necessary to his education.

Even within the bourgeois class, as we know only too well, the degree of learning imparted to each individual is not the same. There, too, there is a scale which is determined, not by the potential of the individual but by the amount of wealth of the social stratum to which he belongs by birth; for example, the instruction made available to the children

of the lower petite bourgeoisie, whilst itself scarcely superior to that which workers manage to obtain for themselves, is next to nothing by comparison with the education that society makes readily available to the upper and middle bourgeoisie. What, then, do we find? The petite bourgeoisie, whose only attachment to the middle class is through a ridiculous vanity on the one hand, and its dependence upon the big capitalists on the other, finds itself most often in circumstances even more miserable and even more humiliating than those which afflict the proletariat. So when we talk of privileged classes, we never have in mind this poor petite bourgeoisie which, if it did but have a little more spirit and gumption, would not delay in joining forces with us to combat the big and medium bourgeoisie who crush it today no less than they crush the proletariat. And should society's current economic trends continue in the same direction for a further ten years (which we do, however, regard as impossible) we may yet see the bulk of the medium bourgeoisie tumble first of all into the current circumstances of the petite bourgeoisie only to slip a little later into the proletariat - as a result, of course, of this inevitable concentration of ownership into an ever smaller number of hands - the ineluctable consequences of which would be to partition society once and for all into a tiny, overweeningly opulent, educated, ruling minority and a vast majority of impoverished, ignorant, enslaved proletarians.

There is one fact which should make an impression upon every person of conscience, upon all who have at heart a concern for human dignity and justice; that is, for the liberty of each individual amid and through a setting of equality for all. That is the fact that all of the intelligentsia, all of the great applications of science to the purpose of industry, trade and to the life of society in general have thus far profited no one, save the privileged classes and the

power of the State, that timeless champion of all political and social iniquity. Never, not once, have they brought any benefit to the masses of the people. We need only list the machines and every workingman and honest advocate of the emancipation of labour would accept the justice of what we say. By what power do the privileged classes maintain themselves today, with all their insolent smugness and iniquitous pleasures, in defiance of the all too legitimate outrage felt by the masses of the people? Is it by some power inherent in their persons? No - it is solely through the power of the State, in whose apparatus today their offspring hold, always, every key position (and even every lower and middle range position) excepting that of soldier and worker. And in this day and age what is it that constitutes the principle underlying the power of the State? Why, it is science. Yes, science - Science of government, science of administration and financial science; the science of fleecing the flocks of the people without their bleating too loudly and, when they start to bleat, the science of urging silence, patience and obedience upon them by means of a scientifically organised force: the science of deceiving and dividing the masses of the people and keeping them allays in a salutary ignorance lest they ever become able, by helping one another and pooling their efforts, to conjure up a power capable of overturning States; and, above all, military science with all its tried and tested weaponry, these formidable instruments of destruction which 'work wonders' (2): and lastly, the science of genius which has conjured up steamships, railways and telegraphy which, by turning every government into a hundred armed, a thousand armed Briareos (3), giving it the power to be, act and arrest everywhere at once - has brought about the most formidable political centralisation the world has ever witnessed.

Who, then, will deny that, without exception, all of the advances made by science have thus far brought nothing, save a boosting of the wealth of the privileged classes and of the power of the State, to the detriment of the well-being and liberty of the masses of the people, of the proletariat? But, we will hear the objection, do not the masses of the people profit by this also? Are they not much more civilised in this society of ours than they were in the societies of bygone centuries?

We shall reply to that with an observation borrowed from the noted German socialist, Lassalle. In measuring the progress made by the working masses, in terms of their political and social emancipation, one should not compare their intellectual state in this century with what it may have been in centuries gone by. Instead, one ought to consider whether, by comparison with some given time, the gap which then existed between the working masses and the privileged classes having been noted, the masses have progressed to the same extent as these privileged classes. For, if the progress made by both has been roughly equivalent, the intellectual gap which separates the masses from the privileged in today's world will be the same as it ever was; but if the proletariat has progressed further and more rapidly than the privileged, then the gap must necessarily have narrowed; but if, on the other hand, the worker's rate of progress has been slower and, consequently, less than that of a representative of the ruling classes over the same period, then that gap will have grown. The gulf which separates them will have increased and the man of privilege grown more powerful and the worker's circumstances more abject, more slave like than at the date one chose as the point of departure. If the two of us set off from two different points at the same time and you have a lead of one hundred paces over me and you move at a rate

of sixty paces per minute, and I at only thirty paces per minute, then after one hour the distance which separates us will not be just over one hundred paces, but just over one thousand nine hundred paces.

That example gives a roughly accurate notion of the respective advances made by the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Thus far the bourgeoisie has raced along the track of civilisation at a quicker rate than the proletariat, not because they are intellectually more powerful than the latter indeed one might properly argue the contrary case - but because the political and economic organisation of society has been such that, hitherto, the bourgeoisie alone have enjoyed access to learning and science has existed only for them, and the proletariat has found itself doomed to a forced ignorance, so that if the proletariat has, nevertheless, made progress (and there is no denying it has) then that progress was made not thanks to society, but rather in spite of it. To sum up. In society as presently constituted, the advances of science have been at the root of the relative ignorance of the proletariat, just as the progress of industry and commerce have been at the root of its relative impoverishment. Thus, intellectual progress and material progress have contributed in equal measure towards the exacerbation of the slavery of the proletariat. Meaning what? Meaning that we have a duty to reject and resist that bourgeois science, just as we have a duty to reject and resist bourgeois wealth. And reject and resist them in this sense - that in destroying the social order which turns it into the preserve of one or of several classes, we must lay claim to it as the common inheritance of all the world.

[Egalite, 31 July 1869]

"And in this day and age what is it that constitutes the principle underlying the power of the State? Why, it is science. Yes, science - Science of government, science of administration and financial science; the science of fleecing the flocks of the people without their bleating too loudly and, when they start to bleat, the science of urging silence, patience and obedience upon them by means of a scientifically organised force: the science of deceiving and dividing the masses of the people and keeping them allays in a salutary ignorance lest they ever become able, by helping one another and pooling their efforts, to conjure up a power capable of overturning States;"

Michael Bakunin 1869

BAKUNIN ON EDUCATION II

[deals with natural ability etc, good for the old lib-caps]

We have shown how, as long as there are two or more degrees of instruction for the various strata of society, there must, of necessity, be classes, that is, economic and political privilege for a small number of the contented and slavery and misery for the lot of the generality of men.

As members of the International Working Men's Association (IWMA/AIT), we seek equality and, because we seek it, we must also seek integral education, the same education for everyone.

But if everyone is schooled who will want to work? we hear someone ask. Our answer to that is a simple one: everyone must work and everyone must receive education. To this, it

is very often objected that this mixing of industrial with intellectual labour cannot be, except one or the other suffer by it. The manual workers will make poor scholars, and the scholars will never be more than quite pathetic workers. True, in the society of today where manual labour and intellectual labour are equally distorted by the quite artificial isolation in which both are kept. But we are quite persuaded that in the rounded human being, each of these pursuits, the muscular and the nervous, must be developed in equal measure and that far from being inimical each must lean upon, enhance and reinforce the other. The science of the sage will become more fruitful, more useful and more expansive when the sage is no longer a stranger to manual labour, and the labours of the workmen, when he is educated, will be more intelligent and thus more productive than those of an ignorant workman. From which it follows that, for work's sake as much as for the sake of science, there must no longer be this division into workers and scholars and henceforth there must be only men.

The result of this is that those men who are today, on account of their superior intellects, caught up in the ivory towers of science and who, once they have established themselves in this world, yield to the need for a thoroughly bourgeois position and bend their every invention to the exclusive use of the privileged class to which they themselves belong. These men, I say, once they become truly the fellows of everyone, fellows not just in their imagination nor just in their speech but in fact, in their work, will just as necessarily convert their inventions and applications of their learning to the benefit of all, and especially apply themselves to the task of making work (the basis, the only real and rightful basis of human society) lighter and more dignified.

It is quite possible and, indeed, likely that during the period of fairly lengthy transition which will, naturally, succeed the great crisis of society, the loftiest sciences will fall considerably below their current levels. Equally, it is not to be doubted that luxury and everything constituting the refinements of life will have to disappear from the social scene for quite a long time and will not be able to reappear as the exclusive amusements of a few, but will have to return as ways of dignifying life for everybody, and then only once society has conquered need in all of us. But would this temporary eclipse of the lofty sciences be such a misfortune? Whatever science may lose in terms of sublime elevation, will it not win through the extension of its base? Doubtless there will be fewer illustrious sages, but at the same time there will be fewer ignoramuses too. There will be no more of these men who can touch the skies, but, on the other hand, millions of men who may be degraded and crushed today will be able to tread the earth as human beings: no demigods, but no slaves either. Both the slave and the demigods will achieve human-ness, the one by rising a lot, the other by stooping a little. Thus no longer will there be a place for deification, nor for contumely. Everyone will shake hands with his neighbour and, once reunited, we shall all march with a new spring in our steps, onwards to new conquests, in the realm of science as in the realm of life itself.

So, far from having any misgivings about that eclipse of science - which will be in any case only a fleeting one we ought to call for it with all our powers since its effect will be to humanise both scholar and manual labourer and to reconcile science and life. And we are convinced that, once we have achieved this new foundation, the progress of mankind, in the realm of science as elsewhere in life, will very quickly outstrip everything that we have seen and

everything we might conjure up in our imaginations today. But here another question crops up: will every individual have an equal capacity for absorbing education to the same degree? Let us imagine a society organised along the most egalitarian lines, a society in which children will, from birth onwards, start out with the same circumstances economically, socially and politically, which is to say the same upkeep, the same education, the same instruction: among these thousands of tiny individuals will there not be an infinite variety of enthusiasms, natural inclinations and aptitudes?

Such is the big argument advanced by our adversaries, the bourgeois pure and simple, and the bourgeois socialists as well. They imagine it to be unanswerable. So let us try to prove the opposite. Well, to begin with, by what right do they make their stand for the principle of individual capabilities? Is there room for the development of capabilities in society as at present constituted? Can there be room for that development in a society which continues to have the right of inheritance as its foundation? Self-evidently not; for, from the moment that the right of inheritance applies, the career of children will never be determined by their individual gifts and application: it will be determined primarily by their economic circumstances, by the wealth or poverty of their families. Wealthy but empty-headed heirs will receive a superior education; the most intelligent children of the proletariat will receive ignorance as their inheritance, just as happens at present. So, is it not hypocritical, when speaking not only of society as it is today but even of a reformed society which would still have as its fundamentals private property ownership and the right of inheritance - Is it not sordid sophistry to talk about individual rights based on individual capabilities? There is such a lot of talk today of individual liberty, yet

what prevails is not the individual person, nor the individual in general, but the individual upon whom privilege is conferred by his social position. Thus what counts is position and class. Just let one intelligent individual from the ranks of the bourgeoisie dare to take a stand against the economic privileges of that respectable class and you will see how much these good bourgeois, forever prattling about individual liberty today, respect his liberty as an individual. Don't talk to us about individual abilities! Is it not an everyday thing for us to see the greatest abilities of working men and bourgeois forced to give way and even to kowtow before the crass stupidity of the heirs to the golden calf? Individual liberty - not privileged liberty but human liberty, and the real potential of individuals - will only be able to enjoy full expansion in a regime of complete equality. When there exists an equality of origins for all men on this earth then, and only then (with safeguards, of course, for the superior calls of fellowship or solidarity, which is and ever shall remain the greatest producer of all social phenomena, from human intelligence to material wealth) only then will one be able to say, with more reason than one can today, that every individual is a self-made man. Hence our conclusion is that, if individual talents are to prosper and no longer be thwarted in bringing forth their full fruits, the first precondition is that all individual privileges, economic as well as political, must disappear, which is to say that all class distinctions must be abolished. That requires that private property rights and the rights of inheritance must go, and equality must triumph economically, politically and socially.

But once equality has triumphed and is well established, will there be no longer any difference in the talents and degree of application of the various individuals? There will

be a difference, not so many as exist today, perhaps, but there will always be differences. Of that there can be no doubt. This is a proverbial truth which will probably never cease to be true - that no tree ever brings forth two leaves that are exactly identical. How much more will this be true of men, men being much more complicated creatures than leaves. But such diversity, far from constituting an affliction is, as the German philosopher Feuerbach has forcefully noted, one of the assets of mankind. Thanks to it, the human race is a collective whole wherein each human being complements the rest and has need of them; so that this infinite variation in human beings is the very cause and chief basis of their solidarity - an important argument in favour of equality.

Basically, even in today's society, if one excepts two categories of men - men of genius and idiots - and provided one abstracts conjured up artificially through the influence of a thousand social factors such as education, instruction, economic and political status which create differences not merely within each social stratum, but in almost every family unit, one will concede that from the point of view of intellectual gifts and moral energy the vast majority of men are very much alike or, at least, are worth about the same - weakness in one regard being almost always counterbalanced by an equivalent strength in another, so that it becomes impossible to say whether one man chosen from this mass is much the superior or the inferior of his neighbour. The vast majority of men are not identical but equivalent and thus equal.

Which means that the line of argument pursued by our adversaries is left with nothing but the geniuses and the idiots.

As we know, idiocy is a psychological and social affliction. Thus, it should be treated not in the schools but in the hospitals and one is entitled to expect that a more rational system of social hygiene - above all, one that cares more for the physical and moral well-being of the individual than the current system - will some day be introduced and that together with a new society organised along egalitarian lines it will eventually eradicate from the surface of the earth this affliction of idiocy, such a humiliation to the human race. As for the men of genius, one should note first of all that, happily or unhappily, according to one's main point of view, such men have not featured in the history of mankind except as the extremely rare exceptions to all of the rules known to us and one cannot organise to cater for exceptions. Even so, it is our hope that the society of the future will be able to discover, through a truly practical popular organisation of its collective assets the means by which to render such geniuses less necessary, less intimidating and more truly the benefactors of us all. For we must never lose sight of Voltaire's great dictum: 'There is someone with more wit than the greatest geniuses, and that is everyone'. So it is merely a question of organising this everyone for the sake of the fullest liberty rooted in the most complete economic, political and social equality, and one need no longer fear the dictatorial ambitions and despotic inclinations of the men of genius.

As for turning out such men of genius through education, one ought to banish the thought from one's mind. Moreover, of all the men of genius we have known thus far, none or almost none ever displayed their genius while yet in their childhood, nor in their adolescence nor yet in their early youth. Only in their mature years did they ever reveal themselves geniuses and several were not recognised as such until after their death whereas many supposedly great

men having had their praises sung while youths by better men have finished their careers in the most absolute obscurity. So it is never in the childhood years, nor even in the adolescent years that one can discern and determine the comparative excellencies and shortcomings of men, nor the extent of their talents, nor their inborn aptitudes. All of these things only become obvious and are governed by the development of the individual person and, just as there are some natures precocious and some very slow - although the latter are by no means inferior and, indeed, are often superior - so no schoolmaster will ever be in a position to specify in advance the career or nature of the occupations which his charges will choose once they attain the age when they have the freedom to choose.

From which it follows that society, disregarding any real or imagined differences in aptitudes or abilities and possessed of no means of determining these in any event and of no right to allot the future career of children owes them all, without a single exception, an absolutely equal education and instruction.

[Egalite, 14 August 1869]

ON THE SOCIAL UPHEAVAL

FROM: BAKUNIN'S WRITINGS,
GUY A. ALDRED MODERN PUBLISHERS,
INDORE KRAUS REPRINT CO.
NEW YORK

1947

Le Reveil du Peuple, for September and October, 1870, published an important summary of an article by Michael Bakunin on the question of the social upheaval. Bakunin denounces all forms of reformist activity as being inimical to the emancipation of the working class, and proceeds to attack those who advocate a mere political revolution, brought about according to the constitutional forms of capitalist society, and through the medium of its parliamentary machine, in opposition to a direct social revolutionary change effected by the workers through the medium of their own political industrial Organization.

Bakunin argues that the fact that wages practically never rise above the bare level of subsistence renders it impossible for the workers to secure increased well-being under bourgeois society. With the progress of capitalist civilization, the gulf between the two classes gapes wider and wider.

"It follows from this also, that in the most democratic and free countries, such as England, Belgium, Switzerland, and the U. S. A., the freedom and political rights which the workers enjoy ostensibly are merely fictitious. They, who are slaves to their masters in the social sense are slaves also in the political sense. They have neither the education, nor the leisure, nor the independence which are so absolutely necessary for the

free and thoughtful exercise of their rights of citizenship. In the most democratic countries, those in which there is universal suffrage, they have one day of mastery, or rather of Saturnalia Election day. Once this day, the bourgeoisie, their daily oppressors and exploiters, come before them, hat in hand and talk of equality, brotherhood, and call them a sovereign people, whose very humble servants and representatives they wish to be. Once this day is passed, fraternity and equality disperse like smoke; the bourgeoisie become once more the bourgeoisie; and the proletariat, the sovereign people, continue in their slavery. This is why the system of representative democracy is so much applauded by the radical bourgeoisie, even when in a popular direction, it is improved, completed, and developed through the referendum and the direct legislation of the people, in which, from it is so strenuously advocated by a certain school of Germans, who strongly call themselves Socialists.

For, so long as the people remain slaves economically, they will also remain slaves politically, express their sentiments as such, and subordinate themselves to the bourgeoisie, who rely upon the continuance of the vote system for the preservation of their authority.

Does that mean that we revolutionary Socialists are opposed to universal suffrage, and prefer limited suffrage or the despotism of an individual ? By no means. What we assert is, that, universal suffrage in itself, based as it is on economic and social inequality, will never be for the people anything but a bait, and that from the side of democratic bourgeoisdom, it will never be aught but a shameful lie, the surest implement for strengthening, with a make believe of liberalism and

justice, the eternal domination of the exploiting and
owing classes, and so suppression of the freedom and
interests of the people.

"Consequently we deny that the universal franchise in
itself is a means in the hands of the people for the
achievement of economic and social equality.

"On this ground we assert that the so-called Social,
Democrats, who, in those countries, where universal
suffrage does not exist yet, exert themselves to persuade
the people that they must achieve this before all else-as
to-day the leaders of the Social Democratic Party are
doing when they tell the people that political freedom is
a necessary condition to the attainment of economic
freedom-are themselves either the victims of a fatal error
or they are charlatans. Do they really not know, or do
they pretend not to know, that this preceding political
freedom, i.e., that which necessarily exists without
economic and social equality, since it should have to
precede these live fundamental equalities, will be
essentially bourgeois freedom, i.e., founded on the
economic dependence of the people and consequently
incapable of bringing forth its opposite: the economic and
social, and creating such economic freedom as leads to
the exclusive freedom of only the bourgeoisie?"

"Are these peculiar Social Democrats victims to a
fallacy or are they betrayers? That is a very delicate
question, which I prefer not to examine too closely. To
me it is certain, that there are no worse enemies of the
people than those who try to turn them away from the
social upheaval, the only change that can give them real
freedom, justice, and well being in order to draw them
again into the treacherous path of reforms, or of

revolutions of an exclusively political character whose tool, victim and deputy the social democracy always has been."

Bakunin then proceeds to point out that the social upheaval does not exclude the political one. It only means that the political institutions shall alter neither before nor after, but together with the economic institutions.

"The political upheaval, simultaneously with and really inseparable from the social upheaval, whose negative expression or negative manifestation it will, so to speak, be, will no longer be a reformation, but a grandiose liquidation." "The people are instinctively mistrustful of every government. when you promise them nice things, they say:-'You talk so because you are not yet at the rudder.' A letter from John Bright to his electors, when he became minister, says:-"The voters should not expect him to act according to what he used to say: it is somewhat different speaking in opposition and different acting as a minister.' Similarly spoke a member of the international, a very honest Socialist, when in September, 1870, he became the perfect of a very republican minded department. He retains his old views, but now he is compelled to act in opposition to them.

Bakunin asserts that both are quite right. Therefore it does not avail to change the personnel of the government. He proceeds to treat of the inevitable corruption that follows from authority, and insists that everyone who attains to power must succumb to such corruption since he must serve and conserve ruling-class economic rights.

POLITICS AND THE STATE

(1871)

FROM: BAKUNIN'S WRITINGS,
GUY A. ALDRED MODERN PUBLISHERS,
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We have repelled energetically every alliance with bourgeois politics, even of the most radical nature. It has been pretended, foolishly and slanderously, that we repudiated all such Political connivance because we were indifferent to the great question of Liberty, and considered only the economic or material side of the problem. It has been declared that, consequently, we placed ourselves in the ranks of the reaction. A German delegate at the Congress of Basle gave classic expression to this view, when he dared to state that, who ever did not recognise, with the German Socialists Democracy, "that the conquest of political rights (power) was the preliminary condition of social emancipation," was, consciously or unconsciously an ally, of the Ceasars!

These critics greatly deceive themselves and, "consciously or unconsciously," endeavour to deceive the public concerning us. We love liberty much more than they do. We love it to the point of wishing it complete and entire. We wish the reality and not the fiction. Hence we repel every bourgeois alliance, since we are convinced that all liberty conquered by the aid of the bourgeoisie, their political means and weapons, or by an alliance with their political dupes, will prove profitable for Messrs. the bourgeois, but never anything more than a fiction for the workers.

Messrs. the bourgeois of all parties, including the most advanced, however cosmopolitan they are, when it is a question of gaining money by a more and more extensive exploitation of the labour of the people, are all equally fervent and fanatical in their patriotic attachment to the state. Patriotism is in reality, nothing but the passion for and cult of the national State, as M. Thiers, the very illustrious assassin of the parisian proletariat, and the present saviour of France, has said recently. But whoever says "State" says domination; and whoever says "domination" says exploitation. Which proves that the popular or "folk's" State, now become and unhappily remaining today the catchword of the German Socialist Democracy, is a ridiculous contradiction, a fiction, a falsehood, unconscious on the part of those who extol it, doubtlessly, but, for the proletariat, a very dangerous trap.

The State, however popular may be the form it assumes, will always be an institution of domination and exploitation, and consequently a permanent source of poverty and enslavement for the populace. There is no other way, then, of emancipating the people economically and politically, of giving them liberty and well-being at one and the same time than by abolishing the State, all States, and, by so doing, killing, once and for all time, what, up to now, has been called "Politics," i e., precisely nothing else than the functioning or manifestation both internal and external of State action, that is to say, the practice, or art and science of dominating and exploiting the masses in favour of the privileged classes.

It is not true then to say that we treat politics abstractly. We make no abstraction of it, since we wish positively to kill it. And here is the essential point upon which we separate ourselves absolutely from politicians and radical bourgeois Socialists (now functioning as social or radical democracy which is only a facade for capitalistic democracy,). Their policy consists in the transformation of State politics, their use and reform. Our policy, the only policy we admit, consists in the total abolition of the State, and of politics, which is its necessary manifestation.

It is only because we wish frankly to this abolition of the State that we believe that we have the right to call ourselves Internationalists and Revolutionary Socialists; for whoever wishes to deal with politics otherwise than how we do; whoever does not, like us, wish the total abolition of politics, must necessarily participate in the politics of a patriotic and bourgeois State. In other words, he renounces, by that very fact, in the name of his great or little national State, the human solidarity of all peoples, as well as the economic and social emancipation of the masses at home.

RECOLLECTIONS ON MARX AND ENGELS

(1869 - 71)

**SOURCE: BAKUNIN ON ANARCHY, P. 25-6 (BY JAMES
GUILLAUME)**

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This is a short collection of memories Bakunin recalls in various letters on his impressions of Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels. These quotes were collected from "Bakunin on Anarchy", save for the note on Das Kapital, which came from the second footnote of Bakunins' The Capitalist System.

As far as learning was concerned, Marx was, and still is incomparably more advanced than I. I knew nothing at that time of political economy, I had not yet rid myself of my metaphysical aberrations, and my socialism was only instinctive. Although younger than I, he was already an atheist, a conscious materialist, and an informed socialist. It was precisely at this time that he was elaborating the foundations of his system as it stands today. We saw each other often. I greatly respected him for his learning and for his passionate devotion- thought it was always mingled with vanity- to the cause of the proletariat. I eagerly sought his conversation, which was always instructive and witty when it was not inspired by petty hate, which alas! was only too often the case. There was never any frank intimacy between us- our

temperaments did not permit it. He called me a sentimental idealist, and he was right; I called him vain, perfidious, and cunning, and I also was right.

In 1845 Marx was the leader of the German communists. While his devoted friend Engels was just as intelligent as he, he was not as erudite. Nevertheless, Engels was more practical, and no less adept at political calumny, lying, and intrigue. Together they founded a secret society of Germany communists or authoritarian socialists.

As I told him a few months before his death, Proudhon, in spite of all his efforts to shake off the tradition of classical idealism, remained all his life an incorrigible idealist, immersed in the Bible, in Roman law and metaphysics. His great misfortune was that he had never studied the natural sciences or appropriated their method. He had the instincts of a genius and he glimpsed the right road, but hindered by his idealistic thinking patterns, he fell always into the old errors. Proudhon was a perpetual contradiction: a vigorous genius, a revolutionary thinker arguing against idealistic phantoms, and yet never able to surmount them himself.... Marx as a thinker is on the right path. He has established the principle that juridical evolution in history is not the cause but the effect of economic development, and this is a great and fruitful concept. Though he did not originate it- it was to a greater or lesser extent formulated before him by many others- to Marx belongs the credit for solidly establishing it as the basis for an economic system. On the other hand, Proudhon understood and felt liberty much better than he. Proudhon, when not obsessed with metaphysical doctrine, was a revolutionary by instinct;

he adored Satan and proclaimed Anarchy. Quite possibly Marx could construct a still more rational system of liberty, but he lacks the instinct of liberty- he remains from head to foot an authoritarian.

Das Kapital, Kritik der politischen Oekonomie, by Karl Marx; Erster Band. This work will need to be translated into French, because nothing, that I know of, contains an analysis so profound, so luminous, so scientific, so decisive, and if I can express it thus, so merciless an expose of the formation of bourgeois capital and the systematic and cruel exploitation that capital continues exercising over the work of the proletariat. The only defect of this work... positivist in direction, based on a profound study of economic works, without admitting any logic other than the logic of the facts - the only defect, say, is that it has been written, in part, but only in part, in a style excessively metaphysical and abstract... which makes it difficult to explain and nearly unapproachable for the majority of workers, and it is principally the workers who must read it nevertheless. The bourgeois will never read it or, if they read it, they will never want to comprehend it, and if they comprehend it they will never say anything about it; this work being nothing other than a sentence of death, scientifically motivated and irrevocably pronounced, not against them as individuals, but against their class.

The German workers, Bornstadt, Marx, Engels- especially Marx, poison the atmosphere. Vanity, malevolence, gossip, pretentiousness and boasting in theory and cowardice in practice. Dissertations about life, action and feeling- and complete absence of life,

action, and feeling- and complete absence of life. Disgusting flattery of the more advanced workers- and empty talk. According to them, Feuerbach is a "bourgeois", and the epithet BOURGEOIS! is shouted ad nauseam by people who are from head to foot more bourgeois than anyone in a provincial city- in short, foolishness and lies, lies and foolishness. In such an atmosphere no one can even breathe freely. I stay away from them and I have openly declared that I will not go to their Kommunistischer Handwerkerverein [Communist Trade Union Society] and will have nothing to do with this organisation.

Bakunin Internet Archive

SOLIDARITY IN LIBERTY
- THE WORKERS PATH TO FREEDOM -

(1867)

FROM: BAKUNIN'S WRITINGS,
GUY A. ALDRED MODERN PUBLISHERS,
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1947

From this truth of practical solidarity or fraternity of struggle that I have laid down as the first principle of the Council of Action flows a theoretical consequence of equal importance. The workers are able to unite as a class for class economic action because all religious philosophies, and systems of morality which prevail in any given order of society are always the ideal expression of its real, material situation. Theologies, philosophies and ethics define, first of all, the economic Organisation of society; and secondly, the political organisation, which is itself nothing but the legal and violent consecration of the economic order. Consequently, there are not several religions of the ruling class; there is one, the religion of property. And there are not several religions of the working class: there is one, the piety of struggle, the vision of emancipation, penetrating the fog of every mysticism, and finding, utterance in a thousand prayers. Workers of all creeds, like workers of all lands, have but one faith, hope, and charity; one common purpose overleaps the barriers of seeming hatreds of race and creed. The workers are one class, and therefore one race, one faith, one nation, This is the theoretical truth to be induced from the practical fraternal solidarity of the Council of Action Organisation. Church and State are liquidated in the vital

Organisation of the working class, the genius of free humanity.

It has been stated that Protestantism established liberty in Europe. This is a great error. It is the economic, material emancipation of the bourgeois class which, in spite of Protestantism, has created that exclusively political and legal liberty, which is too easily confounded with the grand, universal, human liberty, which only the proletariat can create. The necessary accompaniment of bourgeois legal and political liberty, appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, is the intellectual, anti-Christian, and anti-religious emancipation of the bourgeoisie. The capitalist ruling class has no religion, no ideals, and no illusion. It is cynical and unbelieving because it denies the real base of human society, the complete emancipation of the working class. Bourgeois society, by its very nature of interested professionalism, must maintain centres of authority and exploitation, called States. The labourers, by their very economic needs, must challenge such centres of oppression.

The inherent principles of human existence are summed up in the single law of solidarity. This is the golden rule of humanity, and may be formulated thus: no person can recognise or realise his or her own humanity except by recognising it in others and so cooperating for its realisation by each and all. No man can emancipate himself save by emancipating with him all the men about him.

My liberty is the liberty of everybody. I cannot be free in idea until I am free in fact. To be free in idea and not free in fact is to be revolt. To be free in fact is to have

my liberty and my right, find their confirmation, and sanction in the liberty and right of all mankind. I am free only when all men are my equals. (first and foremost economically.)

What all other men are is of the greatest importance to me. However independent I may imagine myself to be, however far removed I may appear from mundane consideration by my social status, I am enslaved to the misery of the meanest member of society. The outcast is my daily menace. Whether I am Pope, Czar, Emperor, or even prime Minister, I am always the creature of their circumstance, the conscious product of their ignorance, want and clamouring. They are in slavery, and I, the superior one, am enslaved in consequence.

For example if such is the case, I am enlightened or intelligent men. But I am foolish with the folly of the people, my wisdom stunned by their needs, my mind palsied. I am a brave man, but I am the coward of the peoples' fear. Their misery appals me, and every day I shrink from the struggle of life. My career becomes an evasion of living. A rich man, I tremble before their poverty, because it threatens to engulf me. I discover I have no riches in myself, no wealth but that stolen from the common life of the common people. As privileged man, I turn pale before the people's demand for justice. I feel a menace in that demand. The cry is ominous and I am threatened. It is the feeling of the malefactor dreading, yet waiting for inevitable arrest. My life is privileged and furtive. But it is not mine. I lack freedom and contentment. In short, wishing to be free, though I am wise, brave, rich, and privileged, I cannot be free because my immediate associates do not wish men to be free; and the Mass, from whom all wisdom, bravery,

riches, and Privileges ascend, do not know how to secure their freedom. The slavery of the common people make them the instruments of my oppression. For we to be free, they must be free. We must conquer bread and freedom in common.

The true, human liberty of a single individual implies the emancipation of all: because, thanks to the law of solidarity, which is the natural basis of all human society, I cannot be, feel, and know myself really, completely free, if I am not surrounded by men as free as myself. The slavery of each is my slavery.

POWER CORRUPTS THE BEST

(1867)

The State is nothing else but this domination and exploitation regularised and systemised. We shall attempt to demonstrate it by examining the consequence of the government of the masses of the people by a minority, at first as intelligent and as devoted as you like, in an ideal State, founded on a free contract.

Suppose the government to be confined only to the best citizens. At first these citizens are privileged not by right, but by fact. They have been elected by the people because they are the most intelligent, clever, wise, and courageous and devoted. Taken from the mass of the citizens, who are regarded as all equal, they do not yet form a class apart, but a group of men privileged only by nature and for that reason singled out for election by the people. Their number is necessarily very limited, for in all times and countries the number of men endowed with qualities so remarkable that they automatically command the unanimous respect of a nation is, as experience teaches us, very small. Therefore, under pain of making a bad choice, the people will always be forced to choose its rulers from amongst them.

Here, then, is society divided into two categories, if not yet to say two classes, of which one, composed of the immense majority of the citizens, submits freely to the government of its elected leaders, the other, formed of a small number of privileged natures, recognised and accepted as such by the people, and charged by them to govern them. Dependent on popular election, they are at first distinguished from the mass of the citizens only by the very qualities which recommended them to their choice and are naturally, the most devoted and useful of

all. They do not yet assume to themselves any privilege, any particular right, except that of exercising, insofar as the people wish it, the special functions with which they have been charged. For the rest, by their manner of life, by the conditions and means of their existence, they do not separate themselves in any way from all the others, so that a perfect equality continues to reign among all. Can this equality be long maintained? We claim that it cannot and nothing is easier to deprive it.

Nothing is more dangerous for man's private morality than the habit of command. The best man, the most intelligent, disinterested, generous, pure, will infallibly and always be spoiled at this trade. Two sentiments inherent in power never fail to produce this demoralisation; they are: contempt for the masses and the overestimation of one's own merits.

"The masses" a man says to himself, " recognising their incapacity to govern on their own account, have elected me their chief. By that act they have publicly proclaimed their inferiority and my superiority. Among this crowd of men, recognising hardly any equals of myself, I am alone capable of directing public affairs. The people have need of me; they cannot do without my services, while I, on the contrary, can get along all right by myself; they, therefore, must obey me for their own security, and in condescending to obey them, I am doing them a good turn.

Is there not something in all that to make a man lose his head and his heart as well, and become mad with pride? It is thus that power and the habit of command become for even the most intelligent and virtuous men, a source of aberration, both intellectual and moral.

STATELESS SOCIALISM: ANARCHISM

FROM "THE POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF BAKUNIN"

BY G.P. MAXIMOFF

1953,

THE FREE PRESS,

NY

Effect of the Great Principles Proclaimed by the French Revolution. From the time when the Revolution brought down to the masses its Gospel - not the mystic but the rational, not the heavenly but the earthly, not the divine but the human Gospel, the Gospel of the Rights of Man - ever since it proclaimed that all men are equal, that all men are entitled to liberty and equality, the masses of all European countries, of all the civilized world, awakening gradually from the sleep which had kept them in bondage ever since Christianity drugged them with its opium, began to ask themselves whether they too, had the right to equality, freedom, and humanity.

As soon as this question was posed, the people, guided by their admirable sound sense as well as by their instincts, realized that the first condition of their real emancipation, or of their humanization, was above all a radical change in their economic situation. The question of daily bread is to them justly the first question, for as it was noted by Aristotle, man, in order to think, in order to feel himself free, in order to become man, must be freed from the material cares of daily life. For that matter, the bourgeois, who are so vociferous in their outcries against the materialism of the people and who preach to the latter the abstinences of idealism, know it

very well, for they themselves preach it only by word and not by example.

The second question arising before the people - that of leisure after work - is the indispensable condition of humanity. But bread and leisure can never be obtained apart from a radical transformation of existing society, and that explains why the Revolution, impelled by the implications of its own principles, gave birth to Socialism.

Socialism Is Justice...Socialism is justice. When we speak of justice, we understand thereby not the justice contained in the Codes and in Roman jurisprudence - which were based to a great extent upon facts of violence achieved by force, violence consecrated by time and by the benedictions of some church or other (Christian or pagan), and as such accepted as absolute principles, from which all law is to be deduced by a process of logical reasoning - no, we speak of that justice which is based solely upon human conscience, the justice to be found in the consciousness of every man - even in that of children - and which can be expressed in a single word: equity.

This universal justice which, owing to conquests by force and religious influences, has never yet prevailed in the political or juridical or economic worlds, should become the basis of the new world. Without it there can be neither liberty, nor republic, nor prosperity, nor peace. It then must govern our resolutions in order that we work effectively toward the establishment of peace. And this justice urges us to take upon ourselves the defense of the interests of the terribly maltreated people

and demand their economic and social emancipation along with political freedom.

The Basic Principle of Socialism. We do not propose here, gentlemen, this or any other socialist system. What we demand now is the proclaiming anew of the great principle of the French Revolution: that every human being should have the material and moral means to develop all his humanity, a principle which, in our opinion, is to be translated into the following problem:

To organize society in such a manner that every individual, man or woman, should find, upon entering life, approximately equal means for the development of his or her diverse faculties and their utilization in his or her work. And to organize such a society that, rendering impossible the exploitation of anyone's labor, will enable every individual to enjoy the social wealth, which in reality is produced only by collective labor, but to enjoy it only in so far as he contributes directly toward the creation of that wealth.

State Socialism Rejected. The carrying out of this task will of course take centuries of development. But history has already brought it forth and henceforth we cannot ignore it without condemning ourselves to utter impotence. We hasten to add here that we vigorously reject any attempt at social organization which would not admit the fullest liberty of individuals and organizations, or which would require the setting up of any regimenting power whatever. In the name of freedom, which we recognize as the only foundation and the only creative principle of organization, economic or political, we shall protest against anything remotely resembling State Communism, or State Socialism.

Abolition of the Inheritance Law. The only thing which, in opinion, the State can and should do, is first to modify little by little inheritance law so as to arrive as soon as possible at its complete abolition. That law being purely a creation of the State, and one of the conditions of the very existence of the authoritarian and divine State can and should be abolished by freedom in the State. In other words, State should dissolve itself into a society freely organized in accord with the principles of justice. Inheritance right, in our opinion, should be abolished, for so long as it exists there will be hereditary economic inequality, not the natural inequality of individuals, but the artificial man inequality of classes - and the latter will always beget hereditary inequality in the development and shaping of minds, continuing to be source and consecration of all political and social inequalities. The task of justice is to establish equality for everyone, inasmuch that equality will depend upon the economic and political organization of society - an equality with which everyone is going to begin his life, that everyone, guided by his own nature, will be the product of his own efforts. In our opinion, the property of the deceased should accrue to social fund for the instruction and education of children of both sexes including their maintenance from birth until they come of age. As Slavs and as Russians, we shall add that with us the fundamental social idea, based upon the general and traditional instinct of our populations, is that the property of all the people, should be owned only by those who cultivate it with their own hands.

We are convinced gentlemen, that this principle is just, that it is essential and inevitable condition of all serious social reform, and consequently Western Europe in turn

will not fail to recognize and accept this principle, notwithstanding the difficulties of its realization in countries as in France, for instance where the majority of peasants own the land which they cultivate, but where most of those very peasants will soon end up by owning next to nothing, owing to the parceling out of land coming as the inevitable result of the political and economic system now prevailing in France. We shall, however, refrain from offering any proposals on the land question...We shall confine ourselves now to proposing the following declaration:

The Declaration of Socialism. "Convinced that the serious realization of liberty, justice, and peace will be impossible so long as the majority of the population remains dispossessed of elementary needs, so long as it is deprived of education and is condemned to political and social insignificance and slavery - in fact if not by law - by poverty as well as by the necessity of working without rest or leisure, producing all the wealth upon which the world now prides itself, and receiving in return only such a small pan thereof that it hardly suffices to assure its livelihood for the next day;

"Convinced that for all that mass of population, terribly maltreated for centuries, the problem of bread is the problem of mental emancipation, of freedom and humanity;

"Convinced that freedom without Socialism is privilege and injustice and that Socialism without freedom is slavery and brutality;

"The League [for Peace and Freedom] loudly proclaims the necessity of a radical social and economic

reconstruction, having for its aim the emancipation of people's labor from the yoke of capital and property owners, a reconstruction based upon strict justice - neither juridical nor theological nor metaphysical justice, but simply human justice - upon positive science and upon the widest freedom."

Organization of Productive Forces in Place of Political Power. It is necessary to abolish completely, both in principle and in fact, all that which is called political power; for, so long as political power exists, there will be ruler and ruled, masters and slaves, exploiters and exploited. Once abolished, political power should be replaced by an organization of productive forces and economic service.

Notwithstanding the enormous development of modern states - a development which in its ultimate phase is quite logically reducing the State to an absurdity - it is becoming evident that the days of the State and the State principle are numbered. Already we can see approaching the full emancipation of the toiling masses and their free social organization, free from governmental intervention, formed by economic associations of the people and brushing aside all the old State frontiers and national distinctions, and having as its basis only productive labor, humanized labor, having one common interest in spite of its diversity.

The Ideal of the People. This ideal of course appears to the people as signifying first of all the end of want, the end of poverty, and the full satisfaction of all material needs by means of collective labor, equal and obligatory for all, and then, as the end of domination and the free organization of the people's lives in accordance with

their needs - not from the top down, as we have it in the State, but from the bottom up, an organization formed by the people themselves, apart from all governments and parliaments, a free union of associations of agricultural and factory workers, of communes, regions, and nations, and finally, in the more remote future; the universal human brotherhood, triumphing above the ruins of all States.

The Program of a Free Society. Outside of the Mazzinian system which is the system of the republic in the form of a State, there is no other system but that of the republic as a commune, the republic as a federation, a Socialist and a genuine people's republic - the system of Anarchism. It is the politics of the Social Revolution, which aims at the abolition of the State, and the economic, altogether free organization of the people, an organization from below upward, by means of a federation.

...There will be no possibility of the existence of a political government, for this government will be transformed into a simple administration of common affairs.

Our program can be summed up in a few words:

Peace, emancipation, and the happiness of the oppressed.

War upon all oppressors and all despoilers.

Full restitution to workers: all the capital, the factories, and all instruments of work and raw materials to go to

the associations, and the land to those who cultivate it with their own hands.

Liberty, justice, and fraternity in regard to all human beings upon the earth.

Equality for all.

To all, with no distinction whatever, all the means of development, education, and upbringing, and the equal possibility of living while working.

Organizing of a society by means of a free federation from below upward, of workers associations, industrial as well as a agricultural, scientific as well as literary associations - first into a commune, then a federation communes into regions, of regions into nations, and of nations into international fraternal association.

Correct Tactics During a Revolution. In a social revolution, which in everything is diametrically opposed to a political revolution, the a of individuals hardly count at all, whereas the spontaneous action of masses is everything. All that individuals can do is to clarify, propagate, and work out ideas corresponding to the popular instinct, and, what is more, to contribute their incessant efforts to revolutionary organization of the natural power of the masses - but nothing else beyond that; the rest can and should be done by the people themselves. Any other method would lead to political dictatorship, to the re-emergence of the State, of privileges of inequalities of all the oppressions of the State - that is, it would lead in a roundabout but logical way toward re-establishment of political, social, and economic slavery of the masses of people.

Varlin and all his friends, like all sincere Socialists, and in general like all workers born and brought up among the people, shared to a high degree this perfectly legitimate bias against the initiative coming from isolated individuals, against the domination exercised by superior individuals, and being above all consistent, they extended the same prejudice and distrust to their own persons.

Revolution by Decrees Is Doomed to Failure. Contrary to the ideas of the authoritarian Communists, altogether fallacious ideas in my opinion, that the Social Revolution can be decreed and organized by means of a dictatorship or a Constituent Assembly - our friends, the Parisian Social-Socialists, held the opinion that that revolution can be waged and brought to fits full development only through the spontaneous and continued mass action of groups and associations of the people.

Our Parisian friends were a thousand times right. For, indeed, there is no mind, much as it may be endowed with the quality of a genius; or if we speak of a collective dictatorship consisting of several hundred supremely endowed individuals - there is no combination of intellects so vast as to be able to embrace all the infinite multiplicity and diversity of the real interests, aspirations, wills, and needs constituting in their totality the collective will of the people; there is no intellect that can devise a social organization capable of satisfying each and all.

Such an organization would ever be a Procrustean bed into which violence, more or less sanctioned by the

State, would force the unfortunate society. But it is this old system of organization based upon force that the Social Revolution should put an end to by giving full liberty to the masses, groups, communes, associations, and even individuals, and by destroying once and for all the historic cause of all violence - the very existence of the State, the fall of which will entail the destruction of all the iniquities of juridical right and all the falsehood of various cults, that right and those cults having ever been simply the complaisant consecration, ideal as well as real, of all violence represented, guaranteed, and authorized by the State.

It is evident that only when the State has ceased to exist humanity will obtain its freedom, and the true interests of society, of all groups, of all local organizations, and likewise of all the individuals forming such organization, will find their real satisfaction.

Free Organization to Follow Abolition of the State. Abolition of the State and the Church should be the first and indispensable condition of the real enfranchisement of society. It will be only after this that society can and should begin its own reorganization; that, however, should take place not from the top down, not according to an ideal plan mapped by a few sages or savants, and not by means of decrees issued by some dictatorial power or even by a National Assembly elected by universal suffrage. Such a system, as I have already said, inevitably would lead to the formation of a governmental aristocracy, that is, a class of persons which has nothing in common with the masses of people; and, to be sure, this class would again turn to exploiting and enthraling the masses under the pretext of common welfare or of the salvation of the State.

Freedom Must Go Hand-in-Hand With Equality. I am a convinced partisan of economic and social equality, for I know that outside of this equality, freedom, justice, human dignity, morality, and the well-being of individuals as well as the prosperity of nations are all nothing but so many falsehoods. But being at the same time a partisan of freedom - the first condition of humanity - I believe that equality should be established in the world by a spontaneous organization of labor and collective property, by the free organization of producers' associations into communes, and free federation of communes - but nowise by means of the supreme tutelary action of the State.

The Difference Between Authoritarian and Libertarian Revolution. It is this point which mainly divides the Socialists or revolutionary collectivists from the authoritarian Communists, the partisans of the absolute initiative of the State. The goal of both is the same: both parties want the creation of a new social order based exclusively upon collective labor, under economic conditions that are equal for all - that is, under conditions of collective ownership of the tools of production.

Only the Communists imagine that they can attain through development and organization of the political power of the working classes, and chiefly of the city proletariat, aided by bourgeois radicalism - whereas the revolutionary Socialists, the enemies of all ambiguous alliances, believe, on the contrary, that this common goal can be attained not through the political but through the social (and therefore anti-political) organization and power of the working masses of the cities and villages,

including all those who, though belonging by birth to the higher classes, have broken with their past of their own free will, and have openly joined the proletariat and accepted its program.

The Methods of the Communists and the Anarchists. Hence the two different methods. The Communists believe that it is necessary to organize the forces of the workers in order to take possession of the political might of the State. The revolutionary Socialists organize with the view of destroying, or if you prefer a more refined expression, of liquidating the State. The Communists are the partisans of the principle and practice of authority, while revolutionary Socialists place their faith only in freedom. Both are equally the partisans of science, which is to destroy superstition and take the place of faith; but the first want to impose science upon the people, while the revolutionary collectivists try to diffuse science and knowledge among the people, so that the various groups of human society, when convinced by propaganda, may organize and spontaneously combine into federations, in accordance with their natural tendencies and their real interests, but never according to a plan traced in advance and imposed upon the ignorant masses by a few "superior" minds.

Revolutionary Socialists believe that there is much more of practical reason and intelligence in the instinctive aspirations and real needs of the masses of people than in the profound minds of all these learned doctors and self-appointed tutors of humanity, who, having before them the sorry examples of so many abortive attempts to make humanity happy, still intend to keep on working in the same direction. But revolutionary Socialists believe, on the contrary, that humanity has permitted itself to be

ruled for a long time, much too long, and that the source of its misfortune lies not in this nor in any other form of government but in the principle and the very existence of the government, whatever its nature may be.

It is this difference of opinion, which already has become historic, that now exists between the scientific Communism, developed by the German school and partly accepted by American and English Socialists, and Proudhonism, extensively developed and pushed to its ultimate conclusions, and by now accepted by the proletariat of the Latin countries. Revolutionary Socialism has made its first brilliant and practical appearance in the Paris Commune.

On the Pan-German banner is written: Retention and strengthening of the State at any cost. On our banner, the social-revolutionary banner, on the contrary, are inscribed, in fiery and bloody letters: the destruction of all States, the annihilation of bourgeois civilization, free and spontaneous organization from below upward, by means of free associations, the organization of the unbridled rabble of toilers, of all emancipated humanity, and the creation of a new universally human world.

Before creating, or rather aiding the people to create, this new organization, it is necessary to achieve a victory. It is necessary to overthrow that which is, in order to be able to establish that which should be...

THE CAPITALIST SYSTEM

FROM "THE POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY OF BAKUNIN"

BY G.P. MAXIMOFF

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(This pamphlet is an excerpt from The Knouto-Germanic Empire and the Social Revolution and included in The Complete Works of Michael Bakunin under the title "Fragment." Parts of the text were originally translated into English by G.P. Maximoff for his anthology of Bakunin's writings, with missing paragraphs translated by Jeff Stein from the Spanish edition, Diego Abad de Santillan, trans. (Buenos Aires 1926) vol. III, pp. 181-196.)

Is it necessary to repeat here the irrefutable arguments of Socialism which no bourgeois economist has yet succeeded in disproving? What is property, what is capital in their present form? For the capitalist and the property owner they mean the power and the right, guaranteed by the State, to live without working. And since neither property nor capital produces anything when not fertilized by labor - that means the power and the right to live by exploiting the work of someone else, the right to exploit the work of those who possess neither property nor capital and who thus are forced to sell their productive power to the lucky owners of both. Note that I have left out of account altogether the following question: In what way did property and capital ever fall into the hands of their present owners? This is a question which, when envisaged from the points of view

of history, logic, and justice, cannot be answered in any other way but one which would serve as an indictment against the present owners. I shall therefore confine myself here to the statement that property owners and capitalists, inasmuch as they live not by their own productive labor but by getting land rent, house rent, interest upon their capital, or by speculation on land, buildings, and capital, or by the commercial and industrial exploitation of the manual labor of the proletariat, all live at the expense of the proletariat. (Speculation and exploitation no doubt also constitute a sort of labor, but altogether non-productive labor.)

I know only too well that this mode of life is highly esteemed in all civilized countries, that it is expressly and tenderly protected by all the States, and that the States, religions, and all the juridical laws, both criminal and civil, and all the political governments, monarchies and republican - with their immense judicial and police apparatuses and their standing armies - have no other mission but to consecrate and protect such practices. In the presence of these powerful and respectable authorities I cannot even permit myself to ask whether this mode of life is legitimate from the point of view of human justice, liberty, human equality, and fraternity. I simply ask myself: Under such conditions, are fraternity and equality possible between the exploiter and the exploited, are justice and freedom possible for the exploited?

Let us even suppose, as it is being maintained by the bourgeois economists and with them all the lawyers, all the worshippers and believers in the juridical right, all the priests of the civil and criminal code - let us suppose that this economic relationship between the exploiter

and the exploited is altogether legitimate, that it is the inevitable consequence, the product of an eternal, indestructible social law, yet still it will always be true that exploitation precludes brotherhood and equality. It goes without saying that it precludes economic equality. Suppose I am your worker and you are my employer. If I offer my labor at the lowest price, if I consent to have you live off my labor, it is certainly not because of devotion or brotherly love for you. And no bourgeois economist would dare to say that it was, however idyllic and naive their reasoning becomes when they begin to speak about reciprocal affections and mutual relations which should exist between employers and employees. No, I do it because my family and I would starve to death if I did not work for an employer. Thus I am forced to sell you my labor at the lowest possible price, and I am forced to do it by the threat of hunger.

But - the economists tell us - the property owners, the capitalists, the employers, are likewise forced to seek out and purchase the labor of the proletariat. Yes, it is true, they are forced to do it, but not in the same measure. Had there been equality between those who offer their labor and those who purchase it, between the necessity of selling one's labor and the necessity of buying it, the slavery and misery of the proletariat would not exist. But then there would be neither capitalists, nor property owners, nor the proletariat, nor rich, nor poor: there would only be workers. It is precisely because such equality does not exist that we have and are bound to have exploiters.

This equality does not exist because in modern society where wealth is produced by the intervention of capital paying wages to labor, the growth of the

population outstrips the growth of production, which results in the supply of labor necessarily surpassing the demand and leading to a relative sinking of the level of wages. Production thus constituted, monopolized, exploited by bourgeois capital, is pushed on the one hand by the mutual competition of the capitalists to concentrate evermore in the hands of an ever diminishing number of powerful capitalists, or in the hands of joint-stock companies which, owing to the merging of their capital, are more powerful than the biggest isolated capitalists. (And the small and medium-sized capitalists, not being able to produce at the same price as the big capitalists, naturally succumb in the deadly struggle.) On the other hand, all enterprises are forced by the same competition to sell their products at the lowest possible price. It [capitalist monopoly] can attain this two-fold result only by forcing out an ever-growing number of small or medium-sized capitalists, speculators, merchants, or industrialists, from the world of exploiters into the world of the exploited proletariat, and at the same time squeezing out ever greater savings from the wages of the same proletariat.

On the other hand, the mass of the proletariat, growing as a result of the general increase of the population - which, as we know, not even poverty can stop effectively - and through the increasing proletarianization of the petty-bourgeoisie, ex-owners, capitalists, merchants, and industrialists - growing, as I have said, at a much more rapid rate than the productive capacities of an economy that is exploited by bourgeois capital - this growing mass of the proletariat is placed in a condition wherein the workers are forced into disastrous competition against one another.

For since they possess no other means of existence but their own manual labor, they are driven, by the fear of seeing themselves replaced by others, to sell it at the lowest price. This tendency of the workers, or rather the necessity to which they are condemned by their own poverty, combined with the tendency of the employers to sell the products of their workers, and consequently buy their labor, at the lowest price, constantly reproduces and consolidates the poverty of the proletariat. Since he finds himself in a state of poverty, the worker is compelled to sell his labor for almost nothing, and because he sells that product for almost nothing, he sinks into ever greater poverty.

Yes, greater misery, indeed! For in this galley-slave labor the productive force of the workers, abused, ruthlessly exploited, excessively wasted and underfed, is rapidly used up. And once used up, what can be its value on the market, of what worth is this sole commodity which he possesses and upon the daily sale of which he depends for a livelihood? Nothing! And then? Then nothing is left for the worker but to die.

What, in a given country, is the lowest possible wage? It is the price of that which is considered by the proletarians of that country as absolutely necessary to keep oneself alive. All the bourgeois economists are in agreement on this point. Turgot, who saw fit to call himself the 'virtuous minister' of Louis XVI, and really was an honest man, said:

"The simple worker who owns nothing more than his hands, has nothing else to sell than his labor. He sells it more or less expensively; but its price whether high or low, does not depend on him alone: it depends on an

agreement with whoever will pay for his labor. The employer pays as little as possible; when given the choice between a great number of workers, the employer prefers the one who works cheap. The workers are, then, forced to lower their price in competition each against the other. In all types of labor, it necessarily follows that the salary of the worker is limited to what is necessary for survival." (Reflexions sur la formation et la distribution des richesses)

J.B. Say, the true father of bourgeois economists in France also said: "Wages are much higher when more demand exists for labor and less if offered, and are lowered accordingly when more labor is offered and less demanded. It is the relation between supply and demand which regulates the price of this merchandise called the workers' labor, as are regulated all other public services. When wages rise a little higher than the price necessary for the workers' families to maintain themselves, their children multiply and a larger supply soon develops in proportion with the greater demand. When, on the contrary, the demand for workers is less than the quantity of people offering to work, their gains decline back to the price necessary for the class to maintain itself at the same number. The families more burdened with children disappear; from them forward the supply of labor declines, and with less labor being offered, the price rises... In such a way it is difficult for the wages of the laborer to rise above or fall below the price necessary to maintain the class (the workers, the proletariat) in the number required." (Cours complet d'conomie politique)

After citing Turgot and J.B. Say, Proudhon cries: "The price, as compared to the value (in real social

economy) is something essentially mobile, consequently, essentially variable, and that in its variations, it is not regulated more than by the concurrence, concurrence, let us not forget, that as Turgot and Say agree, has the necessary effect not to give to wages to the worker more than enough to barely prevent death by starvation, and maintain the class in the numbers needed."1

The current price of primary necessities constitutes the prevailing constant level above which workers' wages can never rise for a very long time, but beneath which they drop very often, which constantly results in inanition, sickness, and death, until a sufficient number of workers disappear to equalize again the supply of and demand for labor. What the economists call equalized supply and demand does not constitute real equality between those who offer their labor for sale and those who purchase it. Suppose that I, a manufacturer, need a hundred workers and that exactly a hundred workers present themselves in the market - only one hundred, for if more came, the supply would exceed demand, resulting in lowered wages. But since only one hundred appear, and since I, the manufacturer, need only that number - neither more nor less - it would seem at first that complete equality was established; that supply and demand being equal in number, they should likewise be equal in other respects. Does it follow that the workers can demand from me a wage and conditions of work assuring them of a truly free, dignified, and human existence? Not at all! If I grant them those conditions and those wages, I, the capitalist, shall not gain thereby any more than they will. But then, why should I have to plague myself and become ruined by offering them the profits of my capital? If I want to work myself as

workers do, I will invest my capital somewhere else, wherever I can get the highest interest, and will offer my labor for sale to some capitalist just as my workers do.

If, profiting by the powerful initiative afforded me by my capital, I ask those hundred workers to fertilize that capital with their labor, it is not because of my sympathy for their sufferings, nor because of a spirit of justice, nor because of love for humanity. The capitalists are by no means philanthropists; they would be ruined if they practiced philanthropy. It is because I hope to draw from the labor of the workers sufficient profit to be able to live comfortably, even richly, while at the same time increasing my capital - and all that without having to work myself. Of course I shall work too, but my work will be of an altogether different kind and I will be remunerated at a much higher rate than the workers. It will not be the work of production but that of administration and exploitation.

But isn't administrative work also productive work? No doubt it is, for lacking a good and an intelligent administration, manual labor will not produce anything or it will produce very little and very badly. But from the point of view of justice and the needs of production itself, it is not at all necessary that this work should be monopolized in my hands, nor, above all, that I should be compensated at a rate so much higher than manual labor. The co-operative associations already have proven that workers are quite capable of administering industrial enterprises, that it can be done by workers elected from their midst and who receive the same wage. Therefore if I concentrate in my hands the administrative power, it is not because the interests of production demand it, but in order to serve my own

ends, the ends of exploitation. As the absolute boss of my establishment I get for my labor ten or twenty times more than my workers get for theirs, and this is true despite the fact that my labor is incomparably less painful than theirs.

But the capitalist, the business owner, runs risks, they say, while the worker risks nothing. This is not true, because when seen from his side, all the disadvantages are on the part of the worker. The business owner can conduct his affairs poorly, he can be wiped out in a bad deal, or be a victim of a commercial crisis, or by an unforeseen catastrophe; in a word he can ruin himself. This is true. But does ruin mean from the bourgeois point of view to be reduced to the same level of misery as those who die of hunger, or to be forced among the ranks of the common laborers? This so rarely happens, that we might as well say never. Afterwards it is rare that the capitalist does not retain something, despite the appearance of ruin. Nowadays all bankruptcies are more or less fraudulent. But if absolutely nothing is saved, there are always family ties, and social relations, who, with help from the business skills learned which they pass to their children, permit them to get positions for themselves and their children in the higher ranks of labor, in management; to be a state functionary, to be an executive in a commercial or industrial business, to end up, although dependent, with an income superior to what they paid their former workers.

The risks of the worker are infinitely greater. After all, if the establishment in which he is employed goes bankrupt, he must go several days and sometimes several weeks without work, and for him it is more than ruin, it is death; because he eats everyday what he earns.

The savings of workers are fairy tales invented by bourgeois economists to lull their weak sentiment of justice, the remorse that is awakened by chance in the bosom of their class. This ridiculous and hateful myth will never soothe the anguish of the worker. He knows the expense of satisfying the daily needs of his large family. If he had savings, he would not send his poor children, from the age of six, to wither away, to grow weak, to be murdered physically and morally in the factories, where they are forced to work night and day, a working day of twelve and fourteen hours.

If it happens sometimes that the worker makes a small savings, it is quickly consumed by the inevitable periods of unemployment which often cruelly interrupt his work, as well as by the unforeseen accidents and illnesses which befall his family. The accidents and illnesses that can overtake him constitute a risk that makes all the risks of the employer nothing in comparison: because for the worker debilitating illness can destroy his productive ability, his labor power. Over all, prolonged illness is the most terrible bankruptcy, a bankruptcy that means for him and his children, hunger and death.

I know full well that under these conditions that if I were a capitalist, who needs a hundred workers to fertilize my capital, that on employing these workers, all the advantages are for me, all the disadvantages for them. I propose nothing more nor less than to exploit them, and if you wish me to be sincere about it, and promise to guard me well, I will tell them:

"Look, my children, I have some capital which by itself cannot produce anything, because a dead thing

cannot produce anything. I have nothing productive without labor. As it goes, I cannot benefit from consuming it unproductively, since having consumed it, I would be left with nothing. But thanks to the social and political institutions which rule over us and are all in my favor, in the existing economy my capital is supposed to be a producer as well: it earns me interest. From whom this interest must be taken - and it must be from someone, since in reality by itself it produces absolutely nothing - this does not concern you. It is enough for you to know that it renders interest. Alone this interest is insufficient to cover my expenses. I am not an ordinary man as you. I cannot be, nor do I want to be, content with little. I want to live, to inhabit a beautiful house, to eat and drink well, to ride in a carriage, to maintain a good appearance, in short, to have all the good things in life. I also want to give a good education to my children, to make them into gentlemen, and send them away to study, and afterwards, having become much more educated than you, they can dominate you one day as I dominate you today. And as education alone is not enough, I want to give them a grand inheritance, so that divided between them they will be left almost as rich as I. Consequently, besides all the good things in life I want to give myself, I also want to increase my capital. How will I achieve this goal? Armed with this capital I propose to exploit you, and I propose that you permit me to exploit you. You will work and I will collect and appropriate and sell for my own behalf the product of your labor, without giving you more than a portion which is absolutely necessary to keep you from dying of hunger today, so that at the end of tomorrow you will still work for me in the same conditions; and when you have been exhausted, I will throw you out, and replace you with others. Know it well, I will pay you a salary as

small, and impose on you a working day as long, working conditions as severe, as despotic, as harsh as possible; not from wickedness - not from a motive of hatred towards you, nor an intent to do you harm - but from the love of wealth and to get rich quick; because the less I pay you and the more you work, the more I will gain."

This is what is said implicitly by every capitalist, every industrialist, every business owner, every employer who demands the labor power of the workers they hire.

But since supply and demand are equal, why do the workers accept the conditions laid down by the employer? If the capitalist stands in just as great a need of employing the workers as the one hundred workers do of being employed by him, does it not follow that both sides are in an equal position? Do not both meet at the market as two equal merchants - from the juridical point of view at least - one bringing a commodity called a daily wage, to be exchanged for the daily labor of the worker on the basis of so many hours per day; and the other bringing his own labor as his commodity to be exchanged for the wage offered by the capitalist? Since, in our supposition, the demand is for a hundred workers and the supply is likewise that of a hundred persons, it may seem that both sides are in an equal position.

Of course nothing of the kind is true. What is it that brings the capitalist to the market? It is the urge to get rich, to increase his capital, to gratify his ambitions and social vanities, to be able to indulge in all conceivable pleasures. And what brings the worker to the market? Hunger, the necessity of eating today and tomorrow.

Thus, while being equal from the point of juridical fiction, the capitalist and the worker are anything but equal from the point of view of the economic situation, which is the real situation. The capitalist is not threatened with hunger when he comes to the market; he knows very well that if he does not find today the workers for whom he is looking, he will still have enough to eat for quite a long time, owing to the capital of which he is the happy possessor. If the workers whom he meets in the market present demands which seem excessive to him, because, far from enabling him to increase his wealth and improve even more his economic position, those proposals and conditions might, I do not say equalize, but bring the economic position of the workers somewhat close to his own - what does he do in that case? He turns down those proposals and waits. After all, he was not impelled by an urgent necessity, but by a desire to improve his position, which, compared to that of the workers, is already quite comfortable, and so he can wait. And he will wait, for his business experience has taught him that the resistance of workers who, possessing neither capital, nor comfort, nor any savings to speak of, are pressed by a relentless necessity, by hunger, that this resistance cannot last very long, and that finally he will be able to find the hundred workers for whom he is looking - for they will be forced to accept the conditions which he finds it profitable to impose upon them. If they refuse, others will come who will be only too happy to accept such conditions. That is how things are done daily with the knowledge and in full view of everyone.

If, as a consequence of the particular circumstances that constantly influence the market, the branch of industry in which he planned at first to employ his

capital does not offer all the advantages that he had hoped, then he will shift his capital elsewhere; thus the bourgeois capitalist is not tied by nature to any specific industry, but tends to invest (as it is called by the economists - exploit is what we say) indifferently in all possible industries. Let's suppose, finally, that learning of some industrial incapacity or misfortune, he decides not to invest in any industry; well, he will buy stocks and annuities; and if the interest and dividends seem insufficient, then he will engage in some occupation, or shall we say, sell his labor for a time, but in conditions much more lucrative than he had offered to his own workers.

The capitalist then comes to the market in the capacity, if not of an absolutely free agent, at least that of an infinitely freer agent than the worker. What happens in the market is a meeting between a drive for lucre and starvation, between master and slave. Juridically they are both equal; but economically the worker is the serf of the capitalist, even before the market transaction has been concluded whereby the worker sells his person and his liberty for a given time. The worker is in the position of a serf because this terrible threat of starvation which daily hangs over his head and over his family, will force him to accept any conditions imposed by the gainful calculations of the capitalist, the industrialist, the employer.

And once the contract has been negotiated, the serfdom of the workers is doubly increased; or to put it better, before the contract has been negotiated, goaded by hunger, he is only potentially a serf; after it is negotiated he becomes a serf in fact. Because what merchandise has he sold to his employer? It is his labor,

his personal services, the productive forces of his body, mind, and spirit that are found in him and are inseparable from his person - it is therefore himself. From then on, the employer will watch over him, either directly or by means of overseers; everyday during working hours and under controlled conditions, the employer will be the owner of his actions and movements. When he is told: "Do this," the worker is obligated to do it; or he is told: "Go there," he must go. Is this not what is called a serf?

M. Karl Marx, the illustrious leader of German Communism, justly observed in his magnificent work *Das Kapital*² that if the contract freely entered into by the vendors of money -in the form of wages - and the vendors of their own labor -that is, between the employer and the workers - were concluded not for a definite and limited term only, but for one's whole life, it would constitute real slavery. Concluded for a term only and reserving to the worker the right to quit his employer, this contract constitutes a sort of voluntary and transitory serfdom. Yes, transitory and voluntary from the juridical point of view, but nowise from the point of view of economic possibility. The worker always has the right to leave his employer, but has he the means to do so? And if he does quit him, is it in order to lead a free existence, in which he will have no master but himself? No, he does it in order to sell himself to another employer. He is driven to it by the same hunger which forced him to sell himself to the first employer. Thus the worker's liberty, so much exalted by the economists, jurists, and bourgeois republicans, is only a theoretical freedom, lacking any means for its possible realization, and consequently it is only a fictitious liberty, an utter falsehood. The truth is that the

whole life of the worker is simply a continuous and dismaying succession of terms of serfdom -voluntary from the juridical point of view but compulsory in the economic sense - broken up by momentarily brief interludes of freedom accompanied by starvation; in other words, it is real slavery.

This slavery manifests itself daily in all kinds of ways. Apart from the vexations and oppressive conditions of the contract which turn the worker into a subordinate, a passive and obedient servant, and the employer into a nearly absolute master - apart from all that, it is well known that there is hardly an industrial enterprise wherein the owner, impelled on the one hand by the two-fold instinct of an unappeasable lust for profits and absolute power, and on the other hand, profiting by the economic dependence of the worker, does not set aside the terms stipulated in the contract and wring some additional concessions in his own favor. Now he will demand more hours of work, that is, over and above those stipulated in the contract; now he will cut down wages on some pretext; now he will impose arbitrary fines, or he will treat the workers harshly, rudely, and insolently.

But, one may say, in that case the worker can quit. Easier said than done. At times the worker receives part of his wages in advance, or his wife or children may be sick, or perhaps his work is poorly paid throughout this particular industry. Other employers may be paying even less than his own employer, and after quitting this job he may not even be able to find another one. And to remain without a job spells death for him and his family. In addition, there is an understanding among all

employers, and all of them resemble one another. All are almost equally irritating, unjust, and harsh.

Is this calumny? No, it is in the nature of things, and in the logical necessity of the relationship existing between the employers and their workers.

NOTES:

1. Not having to hand the works mentioned, I took these quotes from la *Histoire de la Revolution de 1848*, by Louis Blanc. Mr. Blanc continues with these words: "We have been well alerted. Now we know, without room for doubt, that according to all the doctrines of the old political economy, wages cannot have any other basis than the regulation between supply and demand, although the result is that the remuneration of labor is reduced to what is strictly necessary to not perish by starvation. Very well, and let us do no more than repeat the words inadvertently spoken in sincerity by Adam Smith, the head of this school: It is small consolation for individuals who have no other means for existence than their labor."

(Bakunin)

2. *Das Kapital, Kritik der politischen Oekonomie*, by Karl Marx; Erster Band. This work will need to be translated into French, because nothing, that I know of, contains an analysis so profound, so luminous, so scientific, so decisive, and if I can express it thus, so merciless an expose of the formation of bourgeois capital and the systematic and cruel exploitation that capital continues exercising over the work of the proletariat. The only defect of this work... positivist in direction, based on a profound study of economic works, without admitting any logic other than the logic of the facts - the only defect, say, is that it has been written, in part, but only in part, in a style excessively metaphysical and abstract... which makes it difficult to explain and nearly unapproachable for the majority of workers, and it is principally the workers who must read it nevertheless. The bourgeois will never read it or, if they read it, they will never want to comprehend it, and if they comprehend it they will never say anything about it; this work being nothing other than a sentence of death, scientifically motivated and irrevocably pronounced, not against them as individuals, but against their class. (Bakunin)

THE CLASS WAR

(1870)

FROM: BAKUNIN'S WRITINGS,
GUY A. ALDRED MODERN PUBLISHERS,
INDORE KRAUS REPRINT CO.
NEW YORK
1947

Except Proudhoun and M. Louis Blanc almost all the historians of the revolution of 1848 and of the coup d'etat of December, 1851, as well as the greatest writers of bourgeois radicalism, the Victor Hugos, the Quinets, etc. have commented at great length on the crime and the criminals of December; but they have never deigned to touch upon the crime and the criminals of June. And yet it is so evident that December was nothing but the fatal consequence of June and its repetition on a large scale. Why this silence about June? Is it because the criminals of June are bourgeois republicans of whom the above named writers have been, morally, more or less accomplices? Accomplices in their principles and therefore indirectly accomplices to their acts. This reason is probable, but there is yet another which is certain. The crime of June struck workers only, revolutionary socialists, consequently strangers to the class and natural enemies of the principles that all these honorable writers represent. The crime of December attacked and deported thousands of bourgeois republicans, the social brothers of these honorable writers and their political co-religionists. Besides, they themselves have been its victims. Hence their extreme sensibilities to the December crimes, and their indifference to those of June.

A general rule: A bourgeois, however red a republican he be, will be much more keenly affected, aroused and

smitten by a mishap to another bourgeois were this bourgeois even a mad imperialist than by the misfortune of a worker, of a man of the people. There is undoubtedly a great injustice in this difference, but the injustice is not premeditated. It is instinctive. It arises out of the conditions and habits of life which exercise a much greater influence over men than their ideas and political convictions. Conditions and habits, their special manner of existing, developing, thinking and acting; all their social relationships so manifold and various, and yet so regularly convergent towards the same aim; all this diversity of interest expressing common social ambition and constituting the life of the bourgeois world, establishes between those who belong to this world a solidarity infinitely more real, deeper, and unquestionably more sincere than any that might come between a section of the bourgeoisie and the workers. No difference of political opinions is sufficient to overcome the bourgeois community of interests. No seeming agreement of political opinions is sufficient to overcome the antagonism of interests that divide the bourgeoisie from the workers. Community of convictions and ideas are and must ever be subsidiary to a community of class interests and prejudices.

Life dominates thought and determines the will. This is a truth that should never be lost sight of when we wish to understand anything about social and political phenomena. If we wish to establish a sincere and complete community of thought and will between men, we must find it on similar conditions of life, or on a community of interests. And as there is, by the very conditions of their respective existence, an abyss between the bourgeois world and the world of the worker, - the one being the exploiting world, the other the

world of the victimized and exploited, I conclude that if a man born and brought up in the bourgeois environment wishes to become sincerely and unreservedly the friend and brother of the workers, he must renounce all the conditions of his past existence; and outgrow all his bourgeois habits. He must break off his relations of sentiment with the bourgeois world, its vanity and ambition. He must turn his back upon it and become its enemy; proclaim irreconcilable war; and throw himself wholeheartedly into the world and cause of the worker.

If his passion for justice is too weak to inspire him to such resolution and audacity, let him not deceive himself and let him not deceive the workers. He can never become their friend and at every crisis must prove their enemy. His abstract thoughts his dreams of justice will easily influence him in hours of calm reflection when nothing stirs in the exploited world. But let the moment of struggle come when the armed truce gives place to the irreconcilable conflict, his interests will compel him to serve in the camp of the exploiters. This has happened to our one-time friends in the past. It will happen again to many good republicans and socialists who have not lost their attachment to the bourgeois world.

Social hatreds are like religious hatreds. They are intense and deep. They are not shallow like political hatred. This fact explains the indulgence shown by the bourgeois democrats for the Bonapartists. It explains also their excessive severity against the socialist revolutionaries. They detest the former much less than the latter because of the pressure of economic interests. Consequently they unite with the Bonapartists to form a common reaction against the oppressed masses.

THE COMMUNE, THE CHURCH & THE STATE.

**FROM: BAKUNIN'S WRITINGS,
GUY A. ALDRED MODERN PUBLISHERS,
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1947**

I am a passionate seeker for truth and just as strong an opponent of the corrupting lies, through which the party of order-this privileged, official, and interested representative of all religions, philosophical political, legal economical, and social outrage in the past and present-has tried to keep the world in ignorance. I love freedom with all my heart. It is the only condition under which the intelligence, the manliness, and happiness of the people, can develop and expand. By freedom, however, I naturally understand not its mere form, forced down as from above, measured and controlled by the state, this eternal lie which in reality, is nothing but the privilege of the few founded upon the slavery of all. Nor do I mean that "individualistic," selfish, petty, and mock freedom, which is propagated by J.J. Rousseau and all other schools of bourgeois liberalism. The mock freedom which is limited by the supposed right of all, and defended by the state, and leads inevitably to the destruction of the rights of the individual. No: I mean the only true freedom, that worthy of the name; the liberty which consists therein for everyone to develop all the material, intellectual, and moral faculties which lie dormant in him; the liberty which knows and recognizes no limitations beyond those which nature decrees. In this sense, there are no limitations, for the laws of our own nature are not forced upon us by a law-giver who, beside

or above us, sits on a throne. They are in us, the real basis of our bodily and intellectual existence. Instead of limiting them, we must know that they are the real condition and first cause of our liberty.

I mean that liberty of each which is not limited or restrained or curtailed by the liberty of another, but is strengthened and enlarged through it: the unlimited liberty of each through the liberty of all, liberty through solidarity, liberty in equality. (Political, & economical and social.) The liberty which has conquered brute force and vanquished the principle of authority, which is, always, only the expression of that force. The liberty, which will abolish all heavenly and earthly idols, and erect a new world of fellowship and human solidarity on the ruins of all states and churches.

I am a confirmed disciple of economic and social equality. Outside of this, I know, freedom, justice, manliness, morality, and the welfare of the individual as well as that of the community, can only be a hollow lie, an empty phrase. This equality must realise itself through the free organisation of labour and the voluntary cooperative ownership of the means of production, through the combination of the productive workers into freely organised communes, and the free federation of the communes. There must be no controlling intervention of the state.

This is the point which separates, especially, the revolutionary socialists from the authoritarian i. e. marxian socialists. Both work for the same end. Both are out to create a new society. Both agree that the only basis of this new society shall be: the organisation of labour which each and all will have to perform under

equal economic conditions, following the demands of nature; and the common ownership of, everything that is necessary to perform that labour, lands, tools, machinery, etc. But, where as, the revolutionary socialists believe in the direct initiative of the workers themselves through their industrial combinations, this is anarchist stand point in contradiction to marxian or as it claims to be scientific. The authoritarians believe in the direct initiative of the state. They imagine they can reach their goal with the help of the radical parties (now it should be understood as communist) through the development and organisation of the political power of the working-class, especially the proletariat of the big towns, due to concentration of large industries employing large mass of proletariat. But the revolutionary socialists oppose all these compromising and confusing alliances. They are convinced that the goal of a free society can only be reached through the development and organisation of the non-political, but social power of the working class of both town and country, with the fusion of forces of all those members of the upper class who are willing to declass themselves and ready to break with the past, and to combine together for the same demands. The revolutionary socialists are opposed, therefore, to all politics.

Thus we have two methods:

- 1) The organisation of the representative or political strength of the proletariat for the purpose of capturing political power in the state in order to transform society.
- 2) The organisation of the direct strength, the social and industrial solidarity of the proletariat for the purpose of abolishing all political power and the state.

The advocates of both methods believe in science which is out to slay superstition, and which shall take the place of religious church belief. But the former propose to force it into humanity, whilst the latter seek to convince the people of its truth, to educate them everywhere, so that they shall voluntarily organise and combine-freely, from the bottom upwards through individual initiative and according to their true interests, but never according to a plan drawn up before hand for the "ignorant masses" by a few intellectually superior persons.

Revolutionary-now known as libertarian socialists believe that, in the instinctive yearnings and true wants of the masses, is to be found much sound reason and logic than in the deep wisdom of all the doctors, servants, and teachers of humanity who, after many disastrous attempts, still dabble in the problem of making the people happy. Humanity, think they, has been ruled and governed much too long and so they think this state of the affairs should continue. Indeed the source of people's trouble, lies not in this or that form of government, but in the existence and manifestation of Government itself, whatever form it may assume.

This is the historical difference between the authoritarian communist ideas, scientifically developed through the German Marxist school and partly adopted by English and American Socialists, on one hand and the Anarchist ideas of Joseph Pierre Proudhon which have educated the proletariat of the Latin countries and led them intellectually to the last consequences of Proudhon's teachings This latter revolutionary or libertarian socialism has now for the first time, attempted to put its ideas into practice in the Paris Commune.

I am a follower of the Paris Commune, which, though dastardly murdered and drowned in blood by the assassins of the clerical and monarchical reaction, yet lives, more than ever, in the imagination and hearts of the European proletariat. I am its follower, especially because of the fact that it was a courageous, determined, negation of the state. It is a fact of enormous significance, that this should have happened in France, hitherto the land of strongest political centralisation; that it was Paris, the head and creator of this great centralisation, which made the start- thus destroying itself and proclaiming with joy its fall, in order to give life to France, to Europe, to the whole world; thus revealing to all enslaved people-and who are the people who are not slaves-the only way to liberty and happiness; delivering a deathly stroke against the political traditions of bourgeois liberalism, and giving a sound basis to revolutionary socialism.

Paris thus earned for itself the curses of the reactionaries of France and Europe. It inaugurated the new era, that of the final and entire liberation of the people, and their truly realised solidarity, above and in spite of all limitations of the State. Proclaimed the religion of humanity. Made manifest its humanism and atheism, and substituted the great truths of social life and science for godly lies. Paris, heroic, sane, unflinching, asserted its strong belief in the future of humanity. It substituted liberty, justice, and fraternity for the falsehood and injustice of religious and political morality. Paris, choked in the blood of its children, symbolised humanity crucified by the international united reaction of Europe at the direct inspiration of the churches and the high

priests (Politicians) of injustice. The next international upheaval of humanity will be the resurrection of Paris.

Such is the true meaning and the beneficial and immeasurably important results of the two-months' existence and memorable fall of the Paris Commune. It lasted only a short time. It was hampered too much by the deadly war it had to wage against the Versailles reaction and Holy Alliance. Consequently, it was unable to work out its Socialist programme, even theoretically, much less practically. The majority of the members of the Commune, even, were not Socialists in the real sense of the word. And if they acted as Socialists, it was only because they were irresistibly carried away by the nature of their surroundings, the necessity of their position, and not by their own innermost convictions. The Socialists, led by our friend Varlin, formed in the Commune only a disappearingly small minority say fourteen or fifteen members. The rest consisted of Jacobins. But we must discriminate between Jacobins and Jacobins.

There are doctrinaire Jacobins like Gambetta whose, oppressing lust for power and formal republicanism has lost the old revolutionary fire, and preserved only a respect for centralised unity and authority. This was the Jacobinism that betrayed the France of the people to the Prussian conquerors, and then to the native reaction. But there were honest revolutionary Jacobins also, the last heroic descendants of the democratic impulse of 1793, men and women who could sacrifice their centralised unity and well-armed authority to the needs of the revolution rather than bend their conscience before the obnoxious reaction. In the vanguard of these great-hearted jacobins we see Delecluse, a great and noble figure. Before everything he desired the triumph of the

revolution; and as, without the people, no revolution is possible, as the people are Socialistically inclined, and could not be won for any other revolution than a social or economic one, Delecluse and his fellow honest Jacobins allowed themselves to be carried away by the logic of the revolutionary movement. Without desiring it, they became revolutionary Socialists, and signed proclamations and appeals whose general spirit was of a decidedly Socialist nature.

But, in spite of their honesty and goodwill, their Socialism was the product of external circumstances rather than inner conviction. They had neither the time nor the ability to overcome bourgeois prejudices diametrically opposed to their newly acquired Socialism. This internal conflict of opinion weakened them in action. They never got beyond fundamental theories, and were unable to come to decisive conclusions such as would have severed their connection with bourgeois society once and for all.

This was a great calamity for the Commune and for the men themselves. It paralysed them, and they paralysed the Commune. But we must not reproach them on that account. Man does not change in a day, and we cannot change our natures and customs overnight. The Jacobins of the commune have shown their honesty by suffering themselves to be murdered for it. Who can expect more of them?

Even the people of Paris, under whose influence they thought and acted, were Socialists more by instinct than by well-balanced conviction. All their yearnings were in the highest degree entirely Socialistic. But their thoughts were expressed in traditional forms far removed from

this height. Among the proletariat of the French towns, and even of Paris, many Jacobin prejudices still remain. Many false ideas about the necessity of dictatorship and government still flourish. The worship of authority—the inevitable result of religious education, that eternal source of all evil, all degradation, all enslavement of peoples—has not yet been entirely removed from its midst. So much is this the case that even the most intelligent sons of the people, the self-conscious Socialists of that time, have not yet been able to free themselves from this superstition. Were one to dissect their minds, one would find the Jacobin, the believer in government, huddled together in a little corner, forsaken and almost lifeless, but not quite dead.

Besides, the position of the small minority of class conscious and revolutionary Socialists in the Commune was very difficult. They felt that they lacked the support of the mass of the Paris population. The organisation of the International Workers' Association was very imperfect, and it only had a few thousand members. With this backing, they had to fight daily against a Jacobin majority. And under what circumstances! Daily they had to find work and bread for several hundred thousand workers, to organize and arm them, and to guard against reactionary conspiracies. All in a town like Paris, beleaguered, menaced with starvation, and exposed to all underhand attacks of the reaction which had established itself in Versailles by kind permission of the Prussian Conqueror. They were forced to create a revolutionary government and army in order to oppose Versailles government and army. They had to forget and violate the first principles of revolutionary Socialism, and organise themselves as a Jacobin reaction, in order to fight the monarchical and clerical reaction.

It is obvious that, under these circumstances, the Jacobins were the stronger party. They were in a majority and possessed superior political cunning. Their traditions and greater experience in the organisation of government gave them a gigantic advantage over the few genuine Socialists. But the Jacobins took little advantage of this fact; they -did not strive to give to the uprising of Paris a distinctive Jacobin character, but allowed themselves to drift into a social revolution.

Many Socialists, very consequential in their theory, reproach our Paris comrades with not having acted sufficiently Socialistic, whilst the barkers of the bourgeois forces accused them of having been too loyal to the Socialist programme. We will leave the latter gentry on one side now, and endeavour to convince the stern theorists of the liberation of labour that they are unjust to our Paris brethren. Between the best theories and their practical realisation is a gigantic difference, which cannot be covered in a few days. Those of us who knew for instance, our friend Varlin-to mention only him whose death was certain-how strong, well considered, and deep-rooted were the convictions of Socialism in him and his friends. They were men whose enthusiasm, honesty, and self-sacrifice nobody could doubt. Their very honesty make them suspicious of themselves, and they underestimated their strength and character in face of the titanic labour to which they were consecrating their life and thought. Besides, they had the right conviction that, in the social revolution-which in this, as in every other respect, is the direct opposite of political revolution-the deeds of the single leading personality nearly disappear, and the independent, direct reaction of the masses count as everything. The only thing which the

more advanced can do is to work out, spread, and explain the ideas which suit the requirements and ideals of the people, and contribute to the national strength of the latter by working untiringly on the task of revolutionary organisation-nothing more. Everything else can and must be accomplished by the people themselves. Otherwise we would arrive at political dictatorship; that is, a re-instatement of the State, privilege, inequality, persecution; a re-establishment, by a long and roundabout way, of political, social, and economic slavery.

Varlin and all his friends; like all true Socialists, and like the average worker who is born and bred amongst the people, experienced in highest degree this well justified fear of the continued initiative of the same men, this distrust of the rule of distinguished personalities. Their uprightness caused them to turn this fear and suspicion as much against themselves as against others.

In opposition to the, in my opinion, entirely erroneous idea of State Socialists, that a dictatorship or a constitutional assembly-that has emerged from a political revolution-can proclaim and organise the social revolution by laws and degrees, our Paris friends were convinced that it could only be brought about and developed through the independent and unceasing efforts of the masses and the groups. They were a thousand times right. Where is the head, however genial, or-if one speaks of the collective dictatorship of an elected assembly, even if it consists of several hundred uncommonly well educated people-where is the brain that is mighty and grasping enough to grasp the unending number and multitude of true interests, yearnings, wills, and requirements, the sum total of which constitute the

collective will of the people? And who could invent a social organisation which would satisfy every want--such an organisation would be nothing less than a torture-chamber, into which the more or less aggressive State would put unhappy society. This has always happened up to now. But the social revolution must make an end of this antiquated system of organisation. It must give back to the masses, the groups, communes, societies, even to every man and woman, their full and unrestricted liberty. It must abolish, once and for all, political power. The State must go. With its fall must disappear all legal rights, all the lies of various religions. For law and religion were always only the forged justification for privilege outrages and established aggression.

It is clear that liberty can only be restored to mankind, and that the true interests of society, of all groups, all local organisations, as well as every single, being can be entirely satisfied entirely only when all States have been abolished.

All the so-called "common interests of society" which are supposed to be represented by the State, are in reality nothing else than the entire and continued suppression of the true interests of the districts, communes, societies, and individuals which are subservient to the State. They are an imagination, an abstract idea, a lie. Under the guise of this idea of representing common interests, the State becomes a vast slaughter-house or cemetery, wherein is slain all the living energy of the people.

But an abstract idea can never exist for itself and through itself. It has no feet with which to walk, no arms with which to work, no stomach in which to digest its

slaughtered victims. The religious idea, God, represents, in reality, the self-evident and real interests of a privileged class, the clergy, who represent the earthly half of the God idea. The State, the political abstraction, represents as real and self evident interests of the bourgeoisie. Today, that class is the most important and practically only exploiting class, which is threatening to swallow up all other classes, Priesthood is developing gradually into a very rich and mighty minority, but is rather relegated and with poor majority. The same is true of the bourgeoisie. Its political and social organisations are every day making for a real ruling oligarchy, to whom a majority of more or less conceited and impoverished bourgeois creatures who are obliged to serve the almighty oligarchy as blind tools. This majority lives in a continuous illusion, and is, through the irresistible power of economic development, unavoidably and ever more pulled down to the ranks of the proletariat.

The abolition of Church and State must be the first and essential condition for the true liberation of society. Only afterwards can and must society organise itself on a new basis. But not from the top downwards, after a more or less beautiful plan of a few experts or theorists, or on the Strength of decrees of a ruling power, or through a universal-suffrage-elected Parliament. Such a proceeding would lead inevitably to the creation of a new ruling aristocracy, i.e., a class who have nothing in common with the people. This class would exploit and bleed the people under the presence of the common welfare. Or in order to preserve the new State.

The organisation of the society of the future must and can be accomplished only from the bottom upwards,

through the free federation and union of the workers into groups, unions, and societies, which will unite again into districts, communes, national communes, and finally form a great international federation. Only thus can be evolved the true vital order of liberty and happiness for all, the order which is not opposed to the interests of the individual or of society, but on the contrary strengthens the same and brings them into harmony.

It is said that the harmony and the solidarity between the interests of the individual and society can never be effected, because of an inherent antagonism. But if these interests never and nowhere did harmonise, up to now, it has been the fault of the State in sacrificing the interests of the majority of the people to the gain of a small privileged minority. This oft-mentioned opposition of personal and social interests is only a swindle and political lie, which originated through the religious and theological lie of the Fall—a dogma which was invented to degrade man and destroy his consciousness of his own value. Support was lent to this false idea of antagonism of interests by little speculation of the metaphysical philosophies. These are closely related to theology. Metaphysics over-look the fact that man is a social animal, however, and view society as a mechanical and wholly artificial conglomeration of individuals, who suddenly organise themselves on the basis of a secret or sacred compact out of their free will or at the dictation of a higher power. Before coming together in this fashion, these individuals had boasted an eternal soul and lived in alleged unlimited liberty!

But when the metaphysicians, especially those who believe in the immortality of the soul, assert that men, outside society, are free beings, they maintain that men

can enter into society only by denying their freedom and natural independence, and sacrificing both their personal and local interests. This denial and sacrifice of the ego becomes greater the more developed the society and the more complicated its organisation. From this viewpoint the State becomes the expression of individual sacrifice, which all have to bring to its altar. In the name of the abstract and outrageous lie called "the common good," and "law and order" it imperils increasingly all personal liberty, in the interests of the governing class it exclusively represents. Hence the State appears to us as an inevitable negation and destruction of all liberty, all personal, individual, and common interests.

Everything in the metaphysical and theological system follows and solves itself. Therefore the upholders of these systems are obliged to exploit the masses through the medium of Church and State. Whilst filling their pockets and satisfying all their filthy desires, they tell themselves that they work for the honour of God, the triumph of civilisation, and the eternal welfare of the proletariat.

But we revolutionary Socialists, who believe neither in God, nor yet in (absolute or unqualified) free will, nor yet in the immortality of the soul, we say that liberty, in its fullest sense, must be the goal of human progress.

Our idealistic opponents, the theologian and metaphysicians, take the abstract "liberty" as the foundation of their theories. It is then quite easy for them to draw the conclusion that slavery is the indisputable condition of human existence, who are in our empirical scientific theory, materialists, strive in practice for the triumph of a sane and noble idealism. We are convinced

that the whole wealth of the intellectual, moral and material development of humanity, as well as its seeming independence, is due to the fact that man lives in society. Outside of society man would not only not have been free. He would not even have been capable of becoming a man, i. e., a self-conscious being, capable of thought and speech. Thinking and working together lifted man out of his animal condition. We are absolutely convinced that the whole life of man is a social product. His interests, yearnings, needs, dreams, and even his foolishness, as well as his brutality, injustice, and actions, depending, seemingly, on free will, are only the inevitable results of forces at work in our social life. Men are not independent of each other, but each influences the other. We are all in continual co-relation with our neighbours and surrounding nature.

In nature itself this wonderful co-working and fitting together of events does not take place without a struggle. On the contrary, the harmony of the elements is but the result of this continual struggle, which is the condition of all life and of movement. Both in nature and society order without struggle is the equivalent of death.

Order is possible and natural in world system only when the latter is a previously thought out arrangement imposed upon mankind from above. The Jewish religious imagination of a godly law-giver makes for unparalleled nonsense, and the negation not only of all order, but of nature itself. "The laws of nature" relate only to the goal of nature itself. The phrase is not true if used to mean laws decreed by an outside authority. For these "laws" are nothing else than the continual adaptation which is part of the evolution of things, of the working together of vastly different passing but real

facts. The sum total of all action and interaction is what we call "nature." The thoughts and science of man observe these phenomena, controlled and experimented with them and finally united them into a system, the single parts of which are called "laws." But nature itself knows no laws. Nature acts unconsciously. In itself it demonstrates the unending difference of its necessarily appearing and self repeating phenomena. This is how, thanks to the inevitableness of activity, the common order can and does exist.

So with human society, which apparently develops against nature, but in reality goes hand in hand with the natural and inevitable development of things. Only the superiority of man over the rest of the animals and his highly developed thinking ability brought a special feature into his evolution-also, by the way, quite natural since man, like everything else, is the material result of the working together and union of natural forces. This special feature is the calculating, thinking ability, the power of induction and abstraction. Through this man has been able to carry his thoughts outside himself, and so observe and criticism himself as a thing apart, some strange or foreign object. And as he, in his thoughts, lifts himself out of himself and the surrounding world, he arrives at the idea of the entire abstraction, the pure nothingness, the absolute. But this represents nothing beyond man's own ability to abstract thought, which looks down on all that is and finds peace in the entire negation of all that is. This is the very limit of the highest abstraction of thought: this is God.

Herein is to be found the spirit and historical proof of every theological and religious doctrine. Man did not understand nature and the material foundation of his own

thoughts. He was unconscious of the natural circumstances and powers which were characteristic of them. So he failed to realise that his abstract ideas only expressed his own ability to abstract thought. Therefore, he came to regard the abstract idea as something really existing something before which even nature sank into insignificance And so he worshiped and honored in every conceivable fashion this unreality of his imagination. But it became necessary to imagine more clearly and to make understood somehow this Goal, this supreme nothingness which seemed to contain all things in essence but not in fact. So primitive man enlarged his idea of God. Gradually he bestowed on the deity all the powers which existed in human society, good and bad, virtuous and vicious. Such was the beginning of all religions, such their evolution from fetish worship to Christianity.

We will not stop to analyse the history of religious, theological, and metaphysical nonsense, nor speak about the ever occurring godly incarnations and visions which have happened during centuries of human ignorance. Everyone knows that these superstitions occasioned terrible suffering, and their progress was accompanied by rivers of blood and much mourning. All these terrible errors of poor humanity were inevitable in the evolution of society. They were the necessary effect, the natural consequence of that all powerful idea that the universe is governed and conditioned by a supernatural power and will. Century succeeds century. Man becomes more And more used to this belief. Finally it seeks to crush and to kill every effort towards any higher development.

The mad desire to rule or to govern, first on the part of a few men, then of a certain class, demanded that slavery

and conquest should be accepted as the underlying principles of society. This, more than anything else, strengthened the terrible belief in a God above. Consequently, no social order could exist without being founded on the Church and State. All doctrinaires defend both of these outrageous institutions.

With their development increased the power of the ruling class, of the priests and aristocrats. Their first concern was to inoculate the enslaved peoples with the idea of the necessity, the benefit, and the sacredness of Church and State. And the purpose of all this was to change brutal and violent slavery into legal, divinely preordained and sanctified slavery.

Did the priests and aristocrats really and truly believe in these institutions which they were endeavoring to uphold with all their power, and to their own benefit Or were they only lairs and hypocrites? In my opinion the, were honest believers and dishonest deceivers simultaneously.

They themselves believe , since they participated, naturally, in the errors of the masses. Only later, at the time the old world declined-that is, in the Middle Ages did they become unbelievers and shameless liars. The founders of states can be regarded also as honest men. Man readily believes that which he desires and that which is not detrimental to his own interests. It makes no difference if he is intelligent and educated. Through his egotism and his desire to live with his neighbours and to profit by their estimation he will believe always only in that which is useful and desirable to him. I am convinced, for instance, that Thiers and the Versailles government were trying to convince themselves,

violently, that they were saving France by murdering several thousand men, women, and children.

Even if the priests, prophets, aristocrats, and bourgeois of all times were honest believers, in spite of all, they were parasites. One cannot suppose that they believed every bit of nonsense in religion and politics which they taught the masses. I will not go so far back as to the time when two Augurs in Rome were unable to look into each others face without smiling. It is hard to believe that even in the time of mental darkness and superstition the inventors of miracles were convinced of their truth. The same may be said of politics, where the motto is: "One must understand how to govern and rob a people so that they do not complain too much or forget to be subservient, so that they get no chance to think of resentment and revolt."

How can one possibly believe after this that the men who make a business out of politics, and whose goal is injustice, violence, lies, treason, single, and wholesale murder, honestly believe that the wisdom and art of ruling the State make for the common wealth? In spite of all their brutality they are not so stupid as to think this. Church and State were in all times the schools of vice. History testifies to their crimes. Ever and always were priest and politician the conscious, systematic, unyielding, bloodthirsty enemies and executioners of the people. But how can we reconcile two seemingly opposed things like cheater and cheated, liar and believer? In thought it looks difficult, but in life we find the two often together.

The great bulk of mankind live in a continual quarrel and apathetic misunderstanding with themselves, they remain

unconscious of this, as a rule, until some uncommon occurrence wakes them up out of their sleep, and forces them to reflect on themselves and their surroundings.

In politics, as well as in religion, man is only a machine in the hands of his oppressors. But robber and robbed, oppressor and oppressed live side by side, ruled by a handful of people, in whom one recognises the real oppressors. It is always the same type of men, who, free of all political and religious prejudice, consciously torture and oppress the rest of the people. In the 17th and 18th century, until the advent of the great revolution, they ruled Europe and did as they liked. They do the same today. But we have reason to hope that their rule will be over soon.

History teaches us that the chief priests of Church and State or also the sworn servants and creatures of these damnable institutions. Whilst consciously deceiving the people and leading them into disaster, these persons are concerned to uphold zealously the sanctity and unapproachability of both establishments. The Church, on the authority of all priests and most politicians, is essential to the proper care of the people's souls; and the State is indispensable, in their opinion, for the proper maintenance of peace, order, and justice. And the doctrinaires of all schools exclaim in chorus: "Without Church or government progress and civilisation is impossible."

We make no comment on the heavenly hereafter, since we do not believe in an immortal soul. But we are convinced that nothing offers a greater menace to truth and the progress of humanity than the Church. How else could it be ? Is it not the task of the Church to

chloroform the women and children . Does she not kill all sound reason and science with her dogmas, and degrade the self-respect of man by confusing his ideas of right and justice ? Does she not preach eternal slavery to the masses in the interest of the ruling and oppressing class ? And is she not determined to perpetuate the present reign of darkness, ignorance, misery, and crime ? For the progress of our age not to be an empty dream, it must first sweep the Church out of its path.

THE GERMAN CRISIS

(1870)

FROM: BAKUNIN'S WRITINGS,
GUY A. ALDRED MODERN PUBLISHERS,
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NEW YORK
1947

Whosoever mentions the State, implies force, oppression, exploitation, injustice—all these brought together as a system are the main condition of present-day society. The State has never had, and never can have, a morality. Its only morality and justice is its own interest, its existence, and its omnipotence at any price; and before its interest, all interest of humanity must stand in the back-ground. The State is the negation of Humanity. It is this in two ways: the opposite of human freedom and human justice (internally), as well as the forcible disruption of the common solidarity of mankind (externally). The Universal State, repeatedly attempted, has always proved an impossibility, so that as long as the State exists, States will exist and since every State regards itself as absolute, and proclaims the adoration of its power as the highest law, to which all other laws must be subordinated, it therefore follows that as long as States exist wars cannot cease. Every State must conquer, or be conquered. Every State must build its power on the weakness or, if it can do it without danger to itself, on the destruction, of other States.

To strive for international justice, liberty, and perpetual peace, and at the same time to uphold the State, is contradictory and naive. It is impossible to alter the nature of the State, because it is just this nature that

constitutes the State; and States cannot change their nature without ceasing to exist. It thus follows that there cannot be a good, just, virtuous State. All States are bad in that sense, that they, by their nature, by their principle, by their very foundation and the highest ideal of their existence, are the opponents of human liberty, morality, and justice. And in this regard there is, one may say what one likes, no great difference between the barbaric Russian Empire and the civilized States of Europe. Wherein lies the only difference ? Russian Tsardom does openly what the others do under the mask of hypocrisy. Tsardom, with its undisguised political method, and its contempt for humanity, is the only goal to which all statesmen of Europe secretly but enviously aspire. All States of Europe do the same as Russia, as far public opinion, and especially as far as the reawakened but very powerful solidarity of the people allow them-a public opinion and solidarity which contain in themselves the gems of the destruction of States. There is no "good" State, with the possible exception of those that are powerless. And even they are quite criminal enough in their dreams. He who wants freedom, justice, and peace, he who wants the entire (economic and political) liberation of the masses, must strive for the destruction of the States, and the establishment of a universal federation of free groups for Production.

As long as the German workers strive for the establishment of a national State-however popular and free they may imagine this State (and there is a far stop from imagination to realization, especially when there is the fraternization of two diametrically opposed principles, the State and the liberty of the people, involved)-so long will they Sacrifice the liberty of the people to the might of the State, Socialism to politics,

international justice and fraternity to patriotism. It is clear that their own economic liberation will remain a beautiful dream, looming in the distant future.

It is impossible to reach two opposite poles simultaneously. Socialism, the Social Revolution, presupposes the abolition of the State; it is therefore clear that he who is in favor of the State must give up Socialism, and sacrifice the economic liberation of the workers to the political power of some privileged party.

The German Social Democratic Party is forced to sacrifice the economic liberation of the proletariat, and consequently also their political liberation- or, better expressed, their liberation from politics-to the self-seeking and triumph of the bourgeois Democracy. This follows unquestionably from Articles 2 and 3 of their program. The first three paragraphs of Article 2 are quite in accord with the Socialist principles of the International, whose programming they copy nearly literally. But the fourth paragraph of the same article, which declares that political liberty is the forerunner of economic liberty, entirely destroys the practical value of the recognition of our principles. It can mean nothing else than this:- -

"Proletarians, you are slaves, the victims of private property and capitalism. You want to liberate yourselves from this yoke. This is good, and your demands are quite just. But in order to realize them, you must help us to accomplish the political revolution. Afterwards we will help you to accomplish the Social Revolution. Let us therefore, through the might of your arms establish the Democratic State, and then-and then we will create

commonweal for you, similar to the one the Swiss workers enjoy."

In order to convince oneself that this preposterous delusion expresses entirely the spirit and tendency of the German Social Democratic Party-i.e., their program, not the natural aspirations of the German workers, of whom the party consists-one need only study the third article of this program, wherein all the initial demands, which shall be brought about by the peaceful and legal agitation of the party, are elaborated. All these demands, with the exception of the tenth, which had not even been proposed by the authors of the program, but had been added later-during the discussion, by a member of the Eisenach Congress-all these demands are of an entirely political character. All those points which are recommended as the main object of the immediate practical activity of the party consist of nothing else but the well known program of bourgeois Democracy; universal suffrage, with direct legislation by the people, abolition of all political privilege; a citizen army; separation of Church and State, and school and State; free and compulsory education; liberty of the Press assembly, and combination; conversion of all indirect taxation into a direct, progressive, and universal income-tax.

These are the true objects, the real goal of the party! An exclusively political reform of the State, the institutions and laws of the State. Am I not, therefore, entitled to assert that this program is in reality a purely political and bourgeois affair, which looks upon Socialism only as a dream for a far distant future? Have I not likewise a right to assert that if one would judge the Social Democratic Party of the German workers by their

program of which I will beware, because I know that the real aspirations of the German working, class go infinitely further than this program-then one Would have a right to believe that the creation of this party had no other purpose than the exploitation of the mass of the proletariat as blind and sacrificed tools towards the realization of the political plans of the German bourgeois Democracy.

THE INTERNATIONAL AND KARL MARX

(EXCERPTED FROM **BAKUNIN ON ANARCHISM** EDITED BY **SAMUEL DOLGOFF**, PUBLISHED BY **BLACK ROSE BOOKS**)

(Mikhail Bakunin and Karl Marx clashed ideologically on the basis of state socialism versus what later became anarchism--a dispute which culminated in Bakunin (and his followers) getting ousted from the International Workingmen's Association, at the time the largest proletarian organization in existence, having millions of members. Below are excerpts from Bakunin's attack on Marx's notions of how to arrive at socialism.)

When it comes to exploitation the bourgeoisie practice solidarity. In combatting them, the exploited must do likewise; and the organization of this solidarity is the sole aim of the International. This aim, so simple and so clearly expressed in our original statutes, is the only legitimate obligation that all the members, sections, and federations of the International must accept....

...Mr. Marx and company, it seems, having never taken into account the nature and source of this prodigious power of the International, imagine that they can make it a stepping-stone or an instrument for the realization of their own political pretensions. Mr. Marx...should have understood better than anyone two things which are self-evident and which only those blinded by vanity and ambition could ignore: 1) that the marvelous growth of the International is due to the elimination from its official program and rules of all political and philosophical questions, and 2) that basing itself on the

principle of the autonomy and freedom of all its sections and federations the International has happily been spared the ministrations of a centralizer or director who would naturally impede and paralyze its growth. Before 1870, precisely in the period of the International's greatest expansion, the General Council of the International did not interfere with the freedom and autonomy of the sections and federations--not because it lacked the will to dominate, but only because it did not have the power to do so and no one would have obeyed it....

Take the trouble to read the magnificent "Considerations" which are the Preamble to our general statutes and you will see that the political question is dealt with in these words:

Considering that the emancipation of the workers must be the task of the workers themselves; that the efforts of the workers to achieve their emancipation must not be to reconstitute new privileges, but to establish, once for all, equal duties and equal rights; that the enslavement of the workers to capital is the source of all servitude--political, moral, and material; that for this reason the the economic emancipation of the workers is the great aim to which must be subordinated every political movement, etc. [All emphases are Bakunin's]

...The Alliance, true to the program of the International, disdainfully rejected all collaboration with bourgeois politics, in however radical and socialist a disguise. They advised the proletariat that the only real emancipation, the only policy truly beneficial for them, is the exclusively negative policy of demolishing political institutions, political power, government in general, and the State, and that to do this it is necessary to unify the

scattered forces of the proletariat into an International organization, a revolutionary power directed against the entrenched power of the bourgeoisie.

These facts are real and they are a natural effect of the triumph of Marxian propaganda. And it is for this reason that we fight the Marxian theories to the death, convinced that if it should triumph throughout the International, they would at least kill its spirit....

The International permits no censor and no official truth in whose name this censorship can be imposed. So far, the International has refused to grant this privilege either to the Church or to the State, and it is precisely because of this fact that the unbelievably rapid growth of the International has surprised the world.

The effective power of our association, the International, was based on eliminating from its program all political and philosophical planks, not as subjects for discussion and study but as obligatory principles which all members must accept.

...For it is evident that politics, that is, the institutions of and relations between states, has no other object than to assure to the governing classes the legal exploitation of the proletariat. Consequently, from the moment that the proletariat becomes aware that it must emancipate itself, it must of necessity concern itself with the game of politics in order to fight and defeat it....

...Marx, in spite of all his misdeeds, has unconsciously rendered a great service to the International by demonstrating in the most dramatic and evident manner

that if anything can kill the International, it is the introduction of politics into its program.

The International Workingmen's Association, as I have said, would not have grown so phenomenally if it had not eliminated from its statutes and program all political and philosophical questions. This is clear and it is truly surprising that it must again be demonstrated.

I do not think that I need show that for the International to be a real power, it must be able to organize within its ranks the immense majority of the proletariat of Europe, of America, of all lands. But what political or philosophic program can rally to its banner all these millions? Only a program which is very general, hence vague and indefinite, for every theoretical definition necessarily involves elimination and in practice exclusion from membership.

For example: there is today no serious philosophy which does not take as its point of departure not positive but negative atheism....But do you believe that if this simple word "atheism" had been inscribed on the banner of the International this association would have been able to attract more than a few hundred thousand members? Of course not--not because the people are truly religious, but because they believe in a Superior Being; and they will continue to believe in a Superior Being until a social revolution provides the means to achieve all their aspirations here below. It is certain that if the International had demanded that all its members must be atheists, it would have excluded from its ranks the flower of the proletariat.

To me the flower of the proletariat is not, as it is to the Marxists, the upper layer, the aristocracy of labor, those who are the most cultured, who earn more and live more comfortably than all other workers. Precisely this semibourgeois layer of workers would, if Marxists had their way, constitute their fourth governing class. This could indeed happen if the great mass of the proletariat does not guard against it....

By the flower of the proletariat, I mean above all that great mass, those millions of the uncultivated, the disinherited, the miserable, the illiterates, whom Messrs. Engel and Marx would subject to their paternal rule by a strong government--naturally for the people's own salvation! All governments are supposedly established only to look after the welfare of the masses! By flower of the proletariat, I mean precisely that eternal "meat" (on which governments thrive), that great rabble of the people (underdogs, "dregs of society") ordinarily designated by Marx and Engels in the picturesque and contemptuous phrase Lumpenproletariat....

...No matter how hard Messrs. Marx and Engels may try, they will not change what is now plainly and universally apparent: there does not exist any political principle capable of inspiring and stirring the masses to action. What the masses want above all else is their immediate economic emancipation; this emancipation is for them the equivalent to freedom and human dignity, a matter of life or death. If there is an ideal that that masses are today capable of embracing passion, it is economic equality. And the masses are a thousand times right, for as long as the present condition is not replaced by economic equality, all the rest, all that constitutes the value and dignity of human existence--liberty, science,

love, intelligence, and fraternal solidarity--will remain for them a horrible and cruel deception.

The instinctive passion of the masses for economic equality is so great that if they had hopes of receiving it from a despotic regime, they would indubitably and without much reflection, as they have often done before, deliver themselves to despotism. Happily, historical experience has been of service even to the masses. Today they are everywhere beginning to understand that no despotism has or had or can have either the will or the power to give them economic equality. The program of the International is very happily explicit on the question: the emancipation of the workers can be achieved only by the workers themselves.

...the organization and the rule of the new society by socialist savants--is the worst of all despotic governments!

...the proletariat in all countries is today animated by a deep distrust against everything political, and against all politicians--whatever their party color. All of them, from the "reddest" republicans to the most absolutist monarchists, have equally deceived, oppressed, and exploited the people.

Taking into consideration these feelings of the masses, how can anyone hope to attract them to any political program? And supposing that the masses allow themselves to be drawn into the International even so, as they do, how can anyone hope that the proletariat of all lands, who differ so greatly in temperament, in culture, in economic development, would shoulder the yoke of a

uniform political program? Only the demented could imagine such a possibility.

...To sum up: By introducing the political question in the official and obligatory programs and statutes of the International, the Marxists have put our association into a terrible dilemma. Here are the two alternatives: Either political unity with slavery or liberty with division and dissolution. What is the way out? Quite simply: we must return to our original principles and omit the specific political issue, thus leaving the sections and federations free to develop their own policies. But then would not each section and each federation follow whatever political policy it wants?

The foundation for the unity of the International, so vainly looked for in the current political and philosophical dogmas, has already been laid by the common sufferings, interests, needs, and real aspirations of the workers of the whole world. This solidarity does not have to be artificially created. It is a fact, it is life itself, a daily experience in the world of the worker. And all that remains to be done is to make him understand this fact and help him to organize it consciously. This fact is solidarity for economic demands. This slogan is in my opinion the only, yet at the same time a truly great, achievement of the first founders of our association....

The masses, regardless of their degree of culture, religious beliefs, country, or native tongue, understood the language of the International when it spoke to them of their poverty, their sufferings, and their slavery under the yoke of capitalism....

A political program has no value if it deals only with vague generalities. It must specify precisely what institutions are to replace those that are to be overthrown or reformed....

We hasten to say that it is absolutely impossible to ignore political and philosophical questions. An exclusive preoccupation with economic questions would be fatal for the proletariat. Doubtless the defense and organization of its economic interests--a matter of life and death--must be the principal task of the proletariat. But it is impossible for the workers to stop there without renouncing their humanity and depriving themselves of the intellectual and moral power which is so necessary for the conquest of their economic rights. In the miserable circumstances in which the worker now finds himself, the main problem he faces is most likely bread for himself and his family. But much more than any of the privileged classes today, he is a human being in the fullest sense of the word; he thirsts for dignity, for justice, for equality, for liberty, for humanity, and for knowledge, and he passionately strives to attain all these things together with the full enjoyment of the fruits of his own labor....

No political or philosophical theory should be considered a fundamental principle, or introduced into the official program of the International. Nor should acceptance of any political or philosophical theory be obligatory as a condition for membership, since as we have seen, to impose any such theory upon the federations composing the International would be slavery, or it would result in division and dissolution, which is no less disastrous. But it does not follow from this that free discussion of all political and philosophical theories cannot occur in the

International. On the contrary, it is precisely the existence of an official theory that will kill such discussion by rendering it absolutely useless instead of living and vital, and by inhibiting the expression and development of the worker's own feelings and ideas. As soon as an official truth is pronounced--having been scientifically discovered by this great brainy head laboring all alone--a truth proclaimed and imposed on the whole world from the summit of the Marxist Sinai, why discuss anything?

All that remains to be done is to learn by heart the commandments of the new decalogue.

The workers, as I have said, originally join the International for one very practical purpose: solidarity in the struggle for full economic rights against the oppressive exploitation by the bourgeoisie of all lands. Note that by this single act, though at first without realizing it, the proletariat takes a decisively negative position on politics. And this is in two ways. First of all, it undermines the concept of political frontiers and international politics of states, the existence of which depends upon the sympathies, the voluntary cooperation, and the fanatical patriotism of the enslaved masses. Secondly, it digs a chasm between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat and places the proletariat outside the activity and political conniving of all the parties within the State; but in placing itself outside all bourgeois politics, the proletariat necessarily turns against it.

The proletariat, by its adherence to the International, has unconsciously taken up a very definite political position. However, this is an absolutely negative political position....

The true program, I will repeat it a thousand times, is quite simple and moderate: the organization of solidarity in the economic struggle of labor against capitalism. On this foundation, at first exclusively material, will rise the intellectual and moral pillars of the new society.

...[A]nd this process is now taking place...sometimes at a quickened, sometimes at a slower pace, and always in three different, but firmly connected ways: first, by the establishment and coordination of strike funds and the international solidarity of strikes; second, by the organization and the international (federative) coordination of trade and professional unions; third, by the spontaneous and direct development of philosophical and sociological ideas in the International, ideas which inevitably develop side by side with and are produced by the first two movements.

Let us now consider these three ways, different but inseparable, and begin with the organization of strike funds and strikes.

Strike funds aim only at collecting resources which make it possible to organize and maintain strikes, always a costly undertaking. The strike is the beginning of the social war of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie, a tactic that remains within the limits of legality. Strikes are a valuable tactic in two ways. First they electrify the masses, reinforcing their moral energy and awakening in them the sense of profound antagonism between their interests and those of the bourgeoisie. Thus strikes reveal to them the abyss which from this time on irrevocably separates the workers from the bourgeoisie. Consequently they contribute immensely by arousing

and manifesting between the workers of all trades, of all localities, and of all countries the consciousness and the fact itself of solidarity. Thus a double action, the one negative, the other positive, tending to create directly the new world of the proletariat by opposing it in an almost absolute manner to the bourgeois world.

THE ORGANIZATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL (1869)

The masses are the social power, or, at least, the essence of that power. But they lack two things in order to free themselves from the hateful conditions which oppress them: education, and organization. These two things represent: today, the real foundations of power of all government.

To abolish the military and governing power of the State, the proletariat must organize. But since organization cannot exist without knowledge, it is necessary to spread among the masses real social education.

To spread this real social education is the aim of the International. Consequently, the day on which the international succeeds in uniting in its ranks a half, a fourth, or even a tenth part of the workers of Europe, the State or States will cease to exist. The organization of the International will be altogether different from the organization of the State, since its aim is not to create new States but to destroy all existing government systems. The more artificial, brutal, and authoritarian is the power of the State, the more indifferent and hostile it is to the natural developments, interests and desires of the people, the freer and more natural must be the organization of the International. It must try all the more to accommodate itself to the natural instincts and ideals of the people.

But what do we mean by the natural organization of the masses? We mean the organization which is founded upon the experience and results of their everyday life and the difference of their occupations, i.e., their industrial

organization. The moment all branches of industry are represented in their International, the organization of the masses will be complete.

But it might be said that, since we exist, the International, organized influence over the masses: we are aiming at new power equally with the politicians of the old State systems. This change is a great mistake. The influences of the International over the masses differs from all government power in that, it is no more than a natural, unofficial influence of ordinary ideas, without authority.

The State is the authority, the rule, and organized power of the possessing class, and the make-believe experts over the life and liberty of masses. The State does not want anything other than the servility of the masses. At once it demands their submission.

The International, on the other hand, has no other object than the absolute freedom of the masses. Consequently, it appeals to the rebel instinct. In order that this rebel instinct should be strong and powerful enough to overthrow the rule of the State and the privileged class, the International must organize.

To realize this goal, it has to employ two quite just weapons:

1. The propagation of its ideas.
2. The natural organization of its power or authority, through the influence of its adherents on the masses.

A person who can assert that, organized activity is an attack on the freedom of the masses, or an attempt to create a new rule, is either a sophist or a fool. It is sad enough for these who don't know the rules of human solidarity, to think that complete individual independence is possible, or desirable. Such a condition would mean the dissolution of all human society, since the entire social existence of man depends on the interdependence of individuals and the masses. Every person, even the cleverest and strongest--nay, especially the clever and strong--are at all times, the creatures as also the creators of this influence. The freedom of each individual is the direct outcome of these material mental and moral influences, of all individuals surrounding him in that society in which he lives, develops, and dies. A person who seeks to free himself from that influence in the name of a metaphysical, superhuman, and perfectly egotistical "freedom" aims at his own extermination as a human being. And these who refuse to use that influence on others, withdraw from all activity of social life, and by not passing on their thoughts and feelings, work for their own destruction. Therefore, this so-called "independence," which is preached so often by the idealists and metaphysicians: this so-called individual liberty is only the destruction of existence.

In nature, as well as in human society, which is never anything else than part of that same nature, every creature exists on condition that he tries, as much as his individuality will permit, to influence the lives of others. The destruction of that indirect influence would mean death. And when we desire the freedom of the masses, we by no means want to destroy this natural influence, which individuals or groups of individuals, create through their own contract.

What we seek is the abolition of the artificial, privileged, lawful, and official influence. If the Church and State were private institutions, we should be, even then, I suppose their opponents. We should not have protested against their right to exist. True, in a sense, they are, today, private institutions, as they exist exclusively to conserve the interests of the privileged classes. Still, we oppose them, because they use all the power of the masses to force their rule upon the latter in an authoritarian, official, and brutal manner. If the International could have organized itself in the State manner, we, its most enthusiastic friends, would have become its bitterest enemies. But it cannot possibly organize itself in such a form. The International cannot recognize limits to human fellowship and, whilst the State cannot exist unless it limits, by territorial pretensions, such fellowship and equality, History has shown us that the realization of a league of all the States of the world, about which all the despots have dreamt, is impossible. Hence these who speak of the State, necessarily think and speak of a world divided into different States, who are internally oppressors and outwardly despoilers, i.e., enemies to each other. The State, since it involves this division, oppression, and despoliation of humanity, must represent the negation of humanity and the destruction of human society.

There would not have been any sense in the organization of the workers at all, if they had not aimed at the overthrow of the State. The International organizes the masses with this object in view, to the end that they might recall this goal. And how does it organize them?

Not from the top to the bottom, by imposing a seeming unity and order on human society, as the state attempts, without regards to the differences of interest arising from differences of occupation. On the contrary, the International organizes the masses from the bottom upwards, taking the social life of the masses, their real aspirations as a starting point, and encouraging them to unite in groups according to their real interests in society. The International evolves a unity of purpose and creates a real equilibrium of aim and well-being out of their natural difference in life and occupation.

Just because the International is organized in this way, it develops a real power. Hence it is essential that every member of every group should be acquainted thoroughly with all its principles. Only by these means will he make a good propagandist in time of peace and real revolutionist in time of war.

We all know that our program is just. It expresses in a few noble words the just and humane demands of the proletariat. Just because it is an absolutely humane program, it contains all the symptoms of the social revolution. It proclaims the destruction of the old and the creation of the new world.

This is the main point which we must explain to all members of the International. This program substitutes a new science, a new philosophy for the old religion. And it defines a new international policy, in place of the old diplomacy. It has no other object than the overthrow of the States.

In order that the members of the International scientifically fill their posts, as revolutionary

propagandists, it is necessary for every one to be imbued with the new science, philosophy, and policy: the new spirit of the International. It is not enough to declare that we want the economic freedom of the workers, a full return for our labor, the abolition of classes, the end of political slavery, the realization of nil human rights, equal duties and justice for all: in a phrase, the unity of humanity. All this, is, without a doubt, very good and just. But when the workers of the International simply go on repeating these phrases, without grasping their truth and meaning. they have to face the danger of reducing their just claims to empty words, cant which is nothing without understanding.

It might be answered that not all workers, even when they are members of the International, can be educated. It is not enough, then, that there are in the organization, a group of people, who--as far as possible--re acquainted with the science, philosophy, and policy of Socialism? Cannot the wide mass follow their "brotherly advice "not to turn from the right path, that leads ultimately to the freedom of the proletariat?

The authoritarian Communists in the International often make use of these arguments, although they have wanted the courage to state them so freely and so clearly. They have sought to hide their real opinion under demagogic compliments about the cleverness and all powerfulness of the people. We were always the bitterest enemies of this opinion. And we are convinced, that, if the International split into two groups-a big majority, and small minority of ten, twenty or more people-in such a way, that the majority were convinced blindly of the theoretical and practical sense of the minority, the result would be the reduction of the International to an

oligarchy--the worst form of State. The educated and capable minority would, together with its responsibilities, demand the rights of a governing body. And this governing body would prove more despotic than an avowed autocracy, because it would be hidden beneath a show of servile respect for the will of the people. The minority would rule through the medium of resolutions, imposed upon the people, and afterwards called "the will, of the people." In this way, the educated minority would develop into a government, which, like all other governments, would grow every day more despotic and reactionary.

The International only then can become a weapon for liberating the people, when it frees itself; when it does not permit itself to be divided into two groups--a big majority, the blind tool of an educated minority. That is why its first duty is to imprint upon the minds of its members the science, philosophy, and policy of Socialism.

THE PARIS COMMUNE AND THE IDEA OF THE STATE

FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1871

**ALFRED A. KNOPF,
NEW YORK,
NY.**

This work, like all my published work, of which there has not been a great deal, is an outgrowth of events. It is the natural continuation of my Letters to a Frenchman (September 1870), wherein I had the easy but painful distinction of foreseeing and foretelling the dire calamities which now beset France and the whole civilized world, the only cure for which is the Social Revolution.

My purpose now is to prove the need for such a revolution. I shall review the historical development of society and what is now taking place in Europe, right before our eyes. Thus all those who sincerely thirst for truth can accept it and proclaim openly and unequivocally the philosophical principles and practical aims which are at the very core of what we call the Social Revolution.

I know my self-imposed task is not a simple one. I might be called presumptuous had I any personal motives in undertaking it. Let me assure my reader, I have none. I am not a scholar or a philosopher, not even a professional writer. I have not done much writing in my life and have never written except, so to speak, in self-defense, and only when a passionate conviction

forced me to overcome my instinctive dislike for any public exhibition of myself.

Well, then, who am I, and what is it that prompts me to publish this work at this time? I am an impassioned seeker of the truth, and as bitter an enemy of the vicious fictions used by the established order - an order which has profited from all the religious, metaphysical, political, juridical, economic, and social infamies of all times - to brutalize and enslave the world. I am a fanatical lover of liberty. I consider it the only environment in which human intelligence, dignity, and happiness can thrive and develop. I do not mean that formal liberty which is dispensed, measured out, and regulated by the State; for this is a perennial lie and represents nothing but the privilege of a few, based upon the servitude of the remainder. Nor do I mean that individualist, egoist, base, and fraudulent liberty extolled by the school of Jean Jacques Rousseau and every other school of bourgeois liberalism, which considers the rights of all, represented by the State, as a limit for the rights of each; it always, necessarily, ends up by reducing the rights of individuals to zero. No, I mean the only liberty worthy of the name, the liberty which implies the full development of all the material, intellectual, and moral capacities latent in every one of us; the liberty which knows no other restrictions but those set by the laws of our own nature. Consequently there are, properly speaking, no restrictions, since these laws are not imposed upon us by any legislator from outside, alongside, or above ourselves. These laws are subjective, inherent in ourselves; they constitute the very basis of our being. Instead of seeking to curtail them, we should see in them the real condition and the effective cause of our liberty - that liberty of each man which does

not find another man's freedom a boundary but a confirmation and vast extension of his own; liberty through solidarity, in equality. I mean liberty triumphant over brute force and, what has always been the real expression of such force, the principle of authority. I mean liberty which will shatter all the idols in heaven and on earth and will then build a new world of mankind in solidarity, upon the ruins of all the churches and all the states.

I am a convinced advocate of economic and social equality because I know that, without it, liberty, justice, human dignity, morality, and the well-being of individuals, as well as the prosperity of nations, will never amount to more than a pack of lies. But since I stand for liberty as the primary condition of mankind, I believe that equality must be established in the world by the spontaneous organization of labor and the collective ownership of property by freely organized producers' associations, and by the equally spontaneous federation of communes, to replace the domineering paternalistic State.

It is at this point that a fundamental division arises between the socialists and revolutionary collectivists on the one hand and the authoritarian communists who support the absolute power of the State on the other. Their ultimate aim is identical. Both equally desire to create a new social order based first on the organization of collective labor, inevitably imposed upon each and all by the natural force of events, under conditions equal for all, and second, upon the collective ownership of the tools of production.

The difference is only that the communists imagine they can attain their goal by the development and organization of the political power of the working classes, and chiefly of the proletariat of the cities, aided by bourgeois radicalism. The revolutionary socialists, on the other hand, believe they can succeed only through the development and organization of the nonpolitical or antipolitical social power of the working classes in city and country, including all men of goodwill from the upper classes who break with their past and wish openly to join them and accept their revolutionary program in full.

This divergence leads to a difference in tactics. The communists believe it necessary to organize the workerspi forces in order to seize the political power of the State. The revolutionary socialists organize for the purpose of destroying - or, to put it more politely - liquidating the State. The communists advocate the principle and the practices of authority; the revolutionary socialists put all their faith in liberty. Both equally favor science, which is to eliminate superstition and take the place of religious faith. The former would like to impose science by force; the latter would try to propagate it so that human groups, once convinced, would organize and federalize spontaneously, freely, from the bottom up, of their own accord and true t their own interests, never following a prearranged plan imposed upon "ignorant"; masses by a few "superior" minds.

The revolutionary socialists hold that there is a great deal more practical good sense and wisdom in the instinctive aspirations and real needs of the masses than in the profound intelligence of all the doctors and guides of humanity who, after so many failures, still keep on

trying to make men happy. The revolutionary socialists, further more, believe that mankind has for too long submitted to being governed; that the cause of its troubles does not lie in any particular form of government but in the fundamental principles and the very existence of government, whatever form it may take.

Finally, there is the well-known contradiction between communism as developed scientifically by the German school and accepted in part by the Americans and the English, and Proudhonism, greatly developed and taken to its ultimate conclusion by the proletariat of the Latin countries. Revolutionary socialism has just attempted its first striking and practical demonstration in the Paris Commune.

I am a supporter of the Paris Commune, which for all the bloodletting it suffered at the hands of monarchical and clerical reaction, has nonetheless grown more enduring and more powerful in the hearts and minds of Europe's proletariat. I am its supporter, above all, because it was a bold, clearly formulated negation of the State.

It is immensely significant that this rebellion against the State has taken place in France, which had been hitherto the land of political centralization par excellence, and that it was precisely Paris, the leader and the fountainhead of the great French civilization, which took the initiative in the Commune. Paris, casting aside her crown and enthusiastically proclaiming her own defeat in order to give life and liberty to France, to Europe, to the entire world; Paris reaffirming her historic power of leadership, showing to all the enslaved peoples

(and are there any masses that are not slaves?) the only road to emancipation and health; Paris inflicting a mortal blow upon the political traditions of bourgeois radicalism and giving a real basis to revolutionary socialism against the reactionaries of France and Europe! Paris shrouded in her own ruins, to give the solemn lie to triumphant reaction; saving, by her own disaster, the honor and the future of France, and proving to mankind that if life, intelligence, and moral strength have departed from the upper classes, they have been preserved in their power and promises in the proletariat! Paris inaugurating the new era of the definitive and complete emancipation of the masses and their real solidarity across state frontiers; Paris destroying nationalism and erecting the religion of humanity upon its ruins; Paris proclaiming herself humanitarian and atheist, and replacing divine fictions with the great realities of social life and faith in science, replacing the lies and inequities of the old morality with the principles of liberty, justice, equality, and fraternity, those eternal bases of all human morality! Paris heroic, rational and confident, confirming her strong faith in the destinies of mankind by her own glorious downfall, her death; passing down her faith, in all its power, to the generations to come! Paris, drenched in the blood of her noblest children - this is humanity itself, crucified by the united international reaction of Europe, under the direct inspiration of all the Christian churches and that high priest of iniquity, the Pope. But the coming international revolution, expressing the solidarity of the peoples, shall be the resurrection of Paris.

This is the true meaning, and these are the immense, beneficent results of two months which encompassed the life and death of the ever memorable Paris Commune.

The Paris Commune lasted too short a time, and its internal development was too hampered by the mortal struggle it had to engage in against the Versailles reaction to allow it at least to formulate, if not apply, its socialist program theoretically. We must realize, too, that the majority of the members of the Commune were not socialists, properly speaking. If they appeared to be, it was because they were drawn in this direction by the irresistible course of events, the nature of the situation, the necessities of their position, rather than through personal conviction. The socialists were a tiny minority - there were, at most, fourteen or fifteen of them; the rest were Jacobins. But, let us make it clear, there are Jacobins and Jacobins. There are Jacobin lawyers and doctrinaires, like Mr. Gambetta; their positivist...presumptuous, despotic, and legalistic republicanism had repudiated the old revolutionary faith, leaving nothing of Jacobinism but its cult of unity and authority, and delivered the people of France over to the Prussians, and later still to native-born reactionaries. And there are Jacobins who are frankly revolutionaries, the heroes, the last sincere representatives of the democratic faith of 1793; able to sacrifice both their well-armed unity and authority rather than submit their conscience to the insolence of the reaction. These magnanimous Jacobins led naturally by Delescluze, a great soul and a great character, desire the triumph of the Revolution above everything else; and since there is no revolution without the masses, and since the masses nowadays reveal an instinct for socialism and can only make an economic and social revolution, the Jacobins of good faith, letting themselves be impelled increasingly by the logic of the revolutionary movement, will end up becoming socialists in spite of themselves.

This precisely was the situation in which the Jacobins who participated in the Paris Commune found themselves. Delescluze, and many others with him, signed programs and proclamations whose general import and promise were of a positively socialist nature. However, in spite of their good faith and all their goodwill, they were merely socialists impelled by outward circumstances rather than by an inward conviction; they lacked the time and even the capacity to overcome and subdue many of their own bourgeois prejudices which were contrary to their newly acquired socialism. One can understand that, trapped in this internal struggle, they could never go beyond generalities or take any of those decisive measures that would end their solidarity and all their contacts with the bourgeois world forever.

This was a great misfortune for the Commune and these men. They were paralyzed, and they paralyzed the Commune. Yet we cannot blame them. Men are not transformed overnight; they do not change their natures or their habits at will. They proved their sincerity by letting themselves be killed for the Commune. Who would dare ask more of them?

They are no more to be blamed than the people of Paris, under whose influence they thought and acted. The people were socialists more by instinct than by reflection. All their aspirations are in the highest degree socialist but their ideas, or rather their traditional expressions, are not. The proletariat of the great cities of France, and even of Paris, still cling to many Jacobin prejudices, and to many dictatorial and governmental concepts. The cult of authority - the fatal result of religious education, that historic source of all evils,

depravations, and servitude - has not yet been completely eradicated in them. This is so true that even the most intelligent children of the people, the most convinced socialists, have not freed themselves completely of these ideas. If you rummage around a bit in their minds, you will find the Jacobin, the advocate of government, cowering in a dark corner, humble but not quite dead.

And, too, the small group of convinced socialists who participated in the Commune were in a very difficult position. While they felt the lack of support from the great masses of the people of Paris, and while the organization of the International Association, itself imperfect, compromised hardly a few thousand persons, they had to keep up a daily struggle against the Jacobin majority. In the midst of the conflict, they had to feed and provide work for several thousand workers, organize and arm them, and keep a sharp lookout for the doings of the reactionaries. All this in an immense city like Paris, besieged, facing the threat of starvation, and a prey to all the shady intrigues of the reaction, which managed to establish itself in Versailles with the permission and by the grace of the Prussians. They had to set up a revolutionary government and army against the government and army of Versailles; in order to fight the monarchist and clerical reaction they were compelled to organize themselves in a Jacobin manner, forgetting or sacrificing the first conditions of revolutionary socialism.

In this confusing situation, it was natural that the Jacobins, the strongest section, constituting the majority of the Commune, who also possessed a highly developed political instinct, the tradition and practice of governmental organization, should have had the upper hand over the socialists. It is a matter of surprise that

they did not press their advantage more than they did; that they did not give a fully Jacobin character to the Paris insurrection; that, on the contrary, they let themselves be carried along into a social revolution.

I know that many socialists, very logical in their theory, blame our Paris friends for not having acted sufficiently as socialists in their revolutionary practice. The yelping pack of the bourgeois press, on the other hand, accuse them of having followed their program too faithfully. Let us forget, for a moment, the ignoble denunciations of that press. I want to call the attention of the strictest theoreticians of proletarian emancipation to the fact that they are unjust to our Paris brothers, for between the most correct theories and their practical application lies an enormous distance which cannot be bridged in a few days. Whoever had the pleasure of knowing Varlin, for instance (to name just one man whose death is certain), knows that he and his friends were guided by profound, passionate, and well-considered socialist convictions. These were men whose ardent zeal, devotion, and good faith had never been questioned by those who had known them. Yet, precisely because they were men of good faith, they were filled with self-distrust in the face of the immense task to which they had devoted their minds and their lives; they thought too little of themselves! And they were convinced that in the Social Revolution, diametrically opposite to a political revolution in this as in other ways, individual action was to be almost nil, while the spontaneous action of the masses had to be everything. All that individuals can do is formulate, clarify, and propagate ideas expressing the instinctive desires of the people, and contribute their constant efforts to the revolutionary organization of the natural powers of the

masses. This and nothing more; all the rest can be accomplished only by the people themselves. Otherwise we would end up with a political dictatorship - the reconstitution of the State, with all its privileges, inequalities, and oppressions; by taking a devious but inevitable path we would come to reestablish the political, social, and economic slavery of the masses.

Varlin and all his friends, like all sincere socialists, and generally like all workers born and bred among the people, shared this perfectly legitimate feeling of caution toward the continuous activity of one and the same group of individuals and against the domination exerted by superior personalities. And since they were just and fair-minded men above all else, they turned this foresight, this mistrust, against themselves as much as against other persons.

Contrary to the belief of authoritarian communists - which I deem completely wrong - that a social revolution must be decreed and organized either by a dictatorship or by a constituent assembly emerging from a political revolution, our friends, the Paris socialists, believed that revolution could neither be made nor brought to its full development except by the spontaneous and continued action of the masses, the groups and the associations of the people.

Our Paris friends were right a thousand times over. In fact, where is the mind, brilliant as it may be, or - if we speak of a collective dictatorship, even if it were formed of several hundred individuals endowed with superior mentalities - where are the intellects powerful enough to embrace the infinite multiplicity and diversity of real interests, aspirations, wishes and needs which sum up the

collective will of the people? And to invent a social organization that will not be a Procrustean bed upon which the violence of the State will more or less overtly force unhappy society to stretch out? It has always been thus, and it is exactly this old system of organization by force that the Social Revolution should end by granting full liberty to the masses, the groups, the communes, the associations and to the individuals as well; by destroying once and for all the historic cause of all violence, which is the power and indeed the mere existence of the State. Its fall will bring down with it all the inequities of the law and all the lies of the various religions, since both law and religion have never been anything but the compulsory consecration, ideal and real, of all violence represented, guaranteed, and protected by the State.

It is obvious that liberty will never be given to humanity, and that the real interests of society, of all groups, local associations, and individuals who make up society will never be satisfied until there are no longer any states. It is obvious that all the so-called general interests of society, which the State is supposed to represent and which are in reality just a general and constant negation of the true interests of regions, communes, associations, and individuals subject to the State, are a mere abstraction, a fiction, a lie. The State is like a vast slaughterhouse or an enormous cemetery, where all the real aspirations, all the living forces of a country enter generously and happily, in the shadow of that abstraction, to let themselves be slain and buried. And just as no abstraction exists for and by itself, having no legs to stand on, no arms to create with, no stomach to digest the mass of victims delivered to it, it is likewise clear that the celestial or religious abstraction, God, actually represents the very real interests of a class, the

clergy, while its terrestrial complement, that political abstraction, the State, represents the no less real interests of the exploiting class which tends to absorb all the others - the bourgeoisie. As the clergy has always been divisive, and nowadays tends to separate men even further into a very powerful and wealthy minority and a sad and rather wretched majority, so likewise the bourgeoisie, with its various social and political organizations in industry, agriculture, banking, and commerce, as well as in all administrative, financial, judiciary, education, police, and military functions of the State tend increasingly to weld all of these into a really dominant oligarchy on the one hand, and on the other hand into an enormous mass of more or less hopeless creatures, defrauded creatures who live in a perpetual illusion, steadily and inevitably pushed down into the proletariat by the irresistible force of the present economic development, and reduced to serving as blind tools of this all-powerful oligarchy.

The abolition of the Church and the State should be the first and indispensable condition for the real enfranchisement of society which can and should reorganize itself not from the top down according to an ideal plan dressed up by wise men or scholars nor by decrees promulgated by some dictatorial power or even by a national assembly elected through universal suffrage. Such a system, as I have already said, would inevitably lead to the creation of a new state and, consequently, to the formation of a ruling aristocracy, that is, an entire class of persons who have nothing in common with the masses. And, of course, this class would exploit and subject the masses, under the pretext of serving the common welfare or saving the State.

The future social organization should be carried out from the bottom up, by the free association or federation of workers, starting with the associations, then going on to the communes, the regions, the nations, and, finally, culminating in a great international and universal federation. It is only then that the true, life-giving social order of liberty and general welfare will come into being, a social order which, far from restricting, will affirm and reconcile the interests of individuals and of society.

It is said that the harmony and universal solidarity of individuals with society can never be attained in practice because their interests, being antagonistic, can never be reconciled. To this objection I reply that if these interests have never as yet come to mutual accord, it was because the State has sacrificed the interests of the majority for the benefit of a privileged minority. That is why this famous incompatibility, this conflict of personal interests with those of society, is nothing but a fraud, a political lie, born of the theological lie which invented the doctrine of original sin in order to dishonor man and destroy his self-respect. The same false idea concerning irreconcilable interests was also fostered by the dreams of metaphysics which, as we know, is close kin to theology. Metaphysics, failing to recognize the social character of human nature, looked upon society as a mechanical and purely artificial aggregate of individuals, suddenly brought together in the name of some formal or secret compact concluded freely or under the influence of a superior power. Before uniting in society, these individuals, endowed with some sort of immortal soul, enjoyed complete liberty, according to the metaphysicians. We are convinced that all the wealth of man's intellectual, moral, and material development, as well as his apparent independence, is the product of his

life in society. Outside society, not only would he not be a free man, he would not even become genuinely human, a being conscious of himself, the only being who thinks and speaks. Only the combination of intelligence and collective labor was able to force man out of that savage and brutish state which constituted his original nature, or rather the starting point for his further development. We are profoundly convinced that the entire life of men - their interests, tendencies, needs, illusions, even stupidities, as well as every bit of violence, injustice, and seemingly voluntary activity - merely represent the result of inevitable societal forces. People cannot reject the idea of mutual independence, nor can they deny the reciprocal influence and uniformity exhibiting the manifestations of external nature.

In nature herself, this marvelous correlation and interdependence of phenomena certainly is not produced without struggle. On the contrary, the harmony of the forces of nature appears only as the result of a continual struggle, which is the real condition of life and of movement. In nature, as in society, order without struggle is death.

If order is natural and possible in the universe, it is only because the universe is not governed according to some pre imagined system imposed by a supreme will. The theological hypothesis of divine legislation leads to an obvious absurdity, to the negation not only of all order but of nature herself. Natural laws are real only in that they are inherent in nature; that is, they are not established by any authority. These laws are but simple manifestations, or rather continuous variations, of the uniformities constituting what we call 'nature.' Human intelligence and its science have observed them, have

checked them experimentally, assembled them into a system and called them laws. But nature as such knows no laws. She acts unconsciously; she represents in herself the infinite variety of phenomena which appear and repeat themselves inevitably. This inevitability of action is the reason the universal order can and does exist.

Such an order is also apparent in human society, which seems to have evolved in an allegedly anti natural way but actually is determined by the natural animal's needs and his capacity for thinking that have contributed a special element to his development - a completely natural element, by the way, in the sense that men, like everything that exists, represent the material product of the union and action of natural forces. This special element is reason, the captivity for generalization and abstraction, thanks to which man is able to project himself in his thought, examining and observing himself like a strange, eternal object. By lifting himself in thought above himself, and above the world around him, he reaches the representation of perfect abstraction the absolute void. And this absolute is nothing less than his capacity for abstraction, which disdains all that exists and finds its repose in attaining complete negation. This is the ultimate limit of the highest abstraction of the mind; this absolute nothingness is God.

This is the meaning and the historical foundation of every theological doctrine. As they did not understand the nature and the material causes of their own thinking, and did not even grasp the conditions or natural laws underlying such thinking, these early men and early societies had not the slightest suspicion that their absolute notions were simply the result of their own

capacity for formulating abstract ideas. Hence they viewed these ideas, drawn from nature, as real objects, next to which nature herself ceased to amount to anything. They began to worship their fictions, their improbably notions of the absolute, and to honor them. But since they felt the need of giving some concrete form to the abstract idea of nothingness or of God, they created the concept of divinity and, furthermore, endowed it with all the qualities and powers, good and evil, which they found only in nature and in society. Such was the origin and historical development of all religions, from fetishism on down to Christianity.

We do not intend to undertake a study of the history of religious, theological, and metaphysical absurdities or to discuss the procession of all the divine incarnations and visions created by centuries of barbarism. We all know that superstition brought disaster and caused rivers of blood and tears to flow. All these revolting aberrations of poor mankind were historical, inevitable stages in the normal growth and evolution of social organizations. Such aberrations engendered the fatal idea, which dominated men's imagination, that the universe was governed by a supernatural power and will. Centuries came and went, and societies grew accustomed to this idea to such an extent that they finally destroyed any urge toward or capacity to achieve further progress which arose in their midst.

The lust for power of a few individuals originally, and of several social classes later, established slavery and conquest as the dominant principle, and implanted this terrible idea of divinity in the heart of society. Thereafter no society was viewed as feasible without these two institutions, the Church and the State, at its base. These

two social scourges are defended by all their doctrinaire apologists.

No sooner did these institutions appear in the world than two ruling classes - the priests and the aristocrats - promptly organized themselves and lost no time in indoctrinating the enslaved people with the idea of the utility, indispensability, and sacredness of the Church and of the State.

THE POLICY OF THE COUNCIL.

(1869)

FROM: BAKUNIN'S WRITINGS,
GUY A. ALDRED MODERN PUBLISHERS,
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1947

The Council of Action does not ask any worker if he is of a religious or atheistic turn of mind. She does not ask if he belongs to this or that or no political party. She simply says: Are you a worker? If not, do you feel the necessity of devoting yourself wholly to the interests of the working class, and of avoiding all movements that are opposed to it! Do you feel at one with the workers? And have you the strength in you that is requisite if you would be loyal to their cause? Are you aware that the workers-who create all wealth, who have made civilisation end fought for liberty-are doomed to live in misery, ignorance, and slavery! Do you understand that the main root of all the evils that the workers experience, is poverty? And that poverty-which is the common lot of the workers in all parts of the world-is a consequence of the present economic organisation of society, and especially of the enslavement of labour-i. e. the proletariat-under the yoke of capitalism -i.e. the bourgeoisie.

Do you know that between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie there exists a deadly antagonism which is the logical consequence of the economic positions of the two classes? Do you know that the wealth of the bourgeoisie is incompatible with the comfort and liberty of the workers, because their excessive wealth is, and can only be, built upon the robbing and enslavement of

the workers! Do you understand that, for the same reason, the prosperity and dignity of the labouring man inevitably demands the entire abolition of the bourgeoisie! Do you realise that no single worker, however intelligent and energetic he may be, can fight successfully against the excellently organised forces of the bourgeoisie- a force which is upheld mainly by the Organisation of the State- all States?

Do you not see that, in order to become a power, you must unite-not with the bourgeoisie, which would be a folly and a crime, since all the bourgeoisie, so far as they belong to their class, are our deadly enemies?-Nor with such workers as have deserted their own cause and have lowered themselves to beg for the benevolence of the governing class? But with the honest men, who are moving, in all sincerity, towards the same goal as you? Do you understand that, against the powerful combinations, formed by the privileged classes, the capitalists or possessors of the means and instruments of production and distribution, the divided or sectarian associations of labour, can ever triumph? Do you not realise that, in order to fight and to vanquish this capitalist combination, nothing less than the amalgamation, in council and action, of all local, and national labour associations-federating into an international association of the workers of all lands,-is required.

If you know and comprehend all this, come into our camp whatever else your political or religious convictions are. But if you are at one with us, and so long as you are at one with us, you will wish to pledge the whole of your being, by your every action as well as by your words, to the common cause, as a spontaneous

and whole-hearted expression of that fervent of loyalty that will inevitably take possession of you. You will have to promise:

(1) To subordinate your personal and even your family interest, as well as political and religious bias and would be activities, to the highest interest of our association, namely the struggle of labour against Capital, the economic fight of the Proletariat against the Bourgeoisie.

(2) Never, in your personal interests, to compromise with the bourgeoisie.

(3) Never to attempt to secure a position above your fellow workers, whereby you would become at once a bourgeois and an enemy of the proletariat: for the only difference between capitalists and workers is this: the former seek their welfare outside, and at the expense of, the welfare of the community whilst the welfare of the latter is dependent on the solidarity of those who are robbed on the industrial field.

(4) To remain ever and always to this principle of the solidarity of labour: for the smallest betrayal of this principle, the slightest deviation from this solidarity, is, in the eyes of the International, the greatest crime and shame with which a worker can soil himself.

The pioneers of the Councils of Action act wisely in refusing to make philosophic or political principles the basis of their association, and preferring to have the exclusively economic struggle of Labour against Capital as the sole foundation. They are convinced that the moment a worker realises the class struggle, the moment he-trusting to his right and the numerical strength of his

class-enters the arena against capitalist robbery: that very moment, the force of circumstances and the evolution of the struggle, will oblige him to recognise all the political, socialistic, and philosophic principles of the class-struggle. These principles are nothing more or less than the real expression of the aims and objects of the working-class. The necessary and inevitable conclusion of these aims, their one underlying and supreme purpose, is the abolition-from the political as well as from the social viewpoint of:-

(1) The class-divisions existent in society, especially of those divisions imposed on society by, and in, the economic interests of the bourgeoisie.

(2) All Territorial States, Political Fatherlands and Nations, and on the top of the historic ruins of this old world order, the establishment of the great international federation of all local and national productive groups.

From the philosophic point of view, the aims of the working class are nothing less than the realisation of the eternal ideals of humanity, the welfare of man, the reign of equality, justice, and liberty on earth, making unnecessary all belief in heaven and all hopes for a better hereafter.

The great mass of the workers, crushed by their daily toil, live in ignorance and misery. Whatever the political and religious prejudices in which they have been reared individually may be, this man is unconsciously Socialistic; instinctively, and, through the pinch of hunger and their position, more earnestly and truly Socialistic all the "scientific" and "bourgeois Socialists" put together. The mass are Socialists through all the

circumstances reasoning; and, in reality, the necessities of life have a greater influence over those of pure reasoning, because reasoning (or thought) is only the reflex of the continually developing life-force and not its basis.

The workers do not lack reality, the zeal for Socialist endeavour, but only the Socialist idea. Every worker, from the bottom of his heart, is longing for a really human existence, i.e. material comfort and mental development founded on justice, i.e. equality and liberty for each and every man in work. This cannot be realised in the existing political and social Organisation, which is founded on injustice and bare-faced robbery of the labouring masses. Consequently, every reflective worker becomes a revolutionary Socialist, since he is forced to realise that his emancipation can only be accomplished by the complete overthrow of present-day society. Either this organisation of injustice with its entire machine of oppressive laws and privileged institutions, must disappear, or else the proletariat is condemned to eternal slavery.

This is the quintessence of the Socialist idea, whose germs can be found in the instinct of every serious thinking worker. Our object. therefore. is to make him conscious of what he wants, to awaken in him a clear idea that corresponds with instincts: for the moment the class consciousness of the proletariat has lifted itself up to the level of their instinctive feeling, their intention will have developed into determination, and their power will be irresistible.

What prevents the quicker development of this idea, of salvation amongst the Proletariat? Its ignorance; and, to a

great extent, the political and religious prejudices with which the governing classes are trying to befog the consciousness and the natural intelligence of the people. How can you disperse this ignorance and destroy these strange prejudices? "The liberation of the Proletariat must be the work of the Proletariat itself," says the preface to the general statute of the (First) International. And it is a thousand times true! This is the main foundation of our great association. But the working class is still very ignorant. It lacks completely every theory. There is only one way out therefore, namely-Proletarian liberation through action. And what will this action be that will bring the masses to Socialism? It is the economic struggle of the Proletariat against the governing class carried out in solidarity. It is the Industrial Organisation of the workers-the Council of Action.

THE POLICY OF THE INTERNATIONAL.

[The Policy was published in Egalite In 1869. It was translated by K. L. from a German version, in 1911, and was published in the Herald of Revolt, for October of that year tinder the title of "The Issue." It is now republished tinder its original title.-ED.]

I.

"Up to now we believed," says a reactionary paper, "that the political and religious opinions of a man depended upon the fact of his being a member of the International or not."

At first sight, one might think that this paper was correct in its altered opinion. For the International does not ask any new member if he is of a religious or atheistic turn of mind. She does not ask if lie belongs to this or that or no political party. She simply says: Are you a worker? If not, do you feel the necessity of devoting yourself wholly to the interests of the working class, and of avoiding all movements that are opposed to it? Do you feel at one with the workers? And have you the strength in you that Is requisite if you would be loyal to their cause? Are you aware that the workers --- who create all wealth, who have made civilization and fought for liberty --- are doomed to live in misery, ignorance, and slavery? Do you understand that the main root of all the evils that the workers experience, is poverty? And that poverty --- which is the common lot of the worker -- in all parts of the world --- is a consequence of the present economic organization of society, and especially of the enslavement of labour --- i.e. the proletariat --- under the yoke of capitalism --- i.e the bourgeoisie?

Do you know that between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie there exists a deadly antagonism which is the logical consequence of the economic positions of the two classes? Do you know that the wealth of the bourgeoisie is incompatible with the comfort and liberty of the workers, because their excessive wealth is, and can only be, built upon the robbing and enslavement of the workers? Do you understand that for the same reason, the prosperity and dignity of the labouring masses inevitably demands the entire abolition of the bourgeoisie? Do you realise that no single worker, however intelligent and energetic he may be, can fight successfully against the excellently organized forces of the bourgeoisie --- a force which is upheld mainly by the organization of the State --- all States?

Do you not see that, in order to become a power, you must unite --- not with the bourgeoisie, which would be a folly and a crime, since all the bourgeoisie, so far as they belong to their class) are our deadly enemies? Nor with such workers as have deserted their own cause and have lowered themselves to beg for the benevolence of the governing class? But with honest men, who are moving, in all sincerity, towards the same goal as, you? Do you understand that, against the powerful combinations formed by the privileged classes, the capitalists or possessors of the means and instruments of production and distribution, and all the states on earth --- a local or national association --- even if it belonged to one of the biggest countries in Europe --- can never triumph? Do you not realise that, in order to fight and to vanquish this Capitalist combination, nothing less than an amalgamation of all local and national labour associations --- i.e. The International Association of the Workers of all Lands --- Is required?

If you know and comprehend all this, come into our camp whatever else your political or religious convictions are. But if you are at one with us, and so long as you are at one with us, you will wish to pledge the whole of your being, by your every action as well as by your words, to the common cause, as a spontaneous and whole-hearted expression of that fervour of loyalty that will inevitably take possession of you. You will have to promise:

(1) To subordinate your personal and even your family interest, as well as political and religious bias and would-be activities, to the highest interest of our association, namely the struggle of Labour against Capital, the economic fight of the Proletariat against the Bourgeoisie.

(2) Never, in your personal interests, to compromise with the bourgeoisie.

(3) Never to attempt to secure a position above your fellow workers, whereby you would become at once a bourgeois and all enemy of the proletariat; for the only difference between capitalist's and workers is this: the former seek their welfare outside, and at the expense of, the welfare of the community whilst the welfare of the latter is dependent on the solidarity of those who are robbed on the industrial field.

(4) To remain ever and always loyal to this, principle of the solidarity of labour: for the smallest betrayal of this principle, the slightest deviation from this solidarity, is, in the eyes of the International, the greatest crime and shame with which a worker can soil himself.

II.

The founders of the International acted wisely in refusing to make philosophic or political principles the basis of their association, and preferring to have the exclusively economic struggle of Labour against Capital as the sole foundation. They were convinced that the moment a worker realised the class-struggle, the moment he --- trusting to his right and the numerical strength of his class --- enters the arena against capitalist robbery: that very moment, the force of circumstances and the evolution of the struggle, will oblige him to recognise all the political, socialistic, and philosophic principles of the International. These principles are nothing more or less than the real expressions of the aims and objects of the working-class. The necessary and inevitable conclusion of these aims, their one underlying and supreme purpose, is the abolition --- from the political as well as from the social viewpoint --- of: ---

(1) The class-divisions existent in society, especially of those divisions imposed on society by, and in, the economic interests of the bourgeoisie.

(2) All Territorial States, Political Fatherlands, and Nations, and on the top of the historic ruins of this old world order, the establishment of the great international federation of all local and national productive groups.

From the philosophic point of view, the aims of the International are nothing less than the realisation of the eternal ideals of humanity, the welfare of man, the reign of equality, justice, and liberty on earth, making unnecessary all belief in heaven and all hopes for a better hereafter.

The great mass of the workers, crushed by their daily toil, live in ignorance and misery. Whatever the political and religious prejudices that have been forced into their heads may be, this mass is unconsciously Socialistic: instinctively, and, through the pinch of hunger and their position, more earnestly and truly Socialistic than all the "scientific" and "bourgeois Socialists" put together. They (the mass) are Socialists through all the circumstances of their material existence, whereas the latter (the bourgeois Socialists") are only Socialistic through the circumstances of reasoning; and, in reality, the necessities of life have a greater influence over those of pure reasoning, because reasoning (or thought) is only the reflex of the continually developing life-force and not its basis.

The workers do not lack reality, the real longing for Socialist endeavour, but only the Socialist idea. Every worker, from the bottom of his heart, is longing for a really human existence, i.e., material comfort and mental development founded on justice, i.e., equality and liberty for each and every man in work. This cannot be realised in the existing political and social organization, which is founded on and bare-faced robbery of the labouring masses. Consequently, every reflective worker becomes a revolutionary Socialist, since he is forced to realise that his emancipation can only be accomplished by the complete overthrow of present-day society. Either this organisation of injustice with its entire machine of oppressive laws and privileged institutions, must disappear, or else the proletariat is condemned to eternal slavery.

This is the quintessence of the Socialist idea, whose germs can be found in the instinct of every serious thinking worker. Our object, therefore, is to make him conscious, of what he wants, to awaken in him a clear idea that corresponds to his instincts: for the moment the class consciousness of the proletariat has lifted itself up to the level of their instinctive feeling, their intention will have developed into determination, and their power will be irresistible.

What prevents the quicker development of this idea of salvation amongst the Proletariat? Its ignorance; and, to a great extent, the political and religious prejudices with which the governing class are trying to befog the consciousness and the natural intelligence of the people. How can you disperse this ignorance and destroy these strange prejudices? "The liberation of the Proletariat must be the work of the Proletariat itself," says the preface to our general statute (The International). And it is a thousand times true! This is the main foundation of our great association. But the working class is still very ignorant. It lacks completely every theory. There is only one way out therefore, namely --- Proletarian liberation through action. And what will this action be that will bring the masses to Socialism? It is the economic struggle of the Proletariat against the governing class carried out in solidarity. It is the Industrial Organisation of the workers of the world.

THE RED ASSOCIATION

(1870)

Political Freedom without economic equality is a pretense, a fraud, a lie; and the workers want no lying. The workers necessarily strive after a fundamental transformation of society, the result of which must be the abolition of classes, equally in economic as in political respects: after a system of society in which all men will enter the world under special conditions, will be able to unfold and develop themselves, work and enjoy the good things of life. These are the demands of justice.

But how can we from the abyss of ignorance, of misery and slavery, in which the workers on the land and in the cities are sunk, arrive at that paradise, the realization of justice and manhood? For this the workers have one means: the Association of Councils.

Through the Association they brace themselves up, they mutually improve each other and, through their own efforts, make an end of that dangerous ignorance which is the main support of their slavery. By means of the Association, they learn to help, and mutually support one another. Thereby they will recall, finally, a power which will prove more powerful than all confederated bourgeois capital and political powers put together.

The Council must become the Association in the mind of every worker. It must become the password of every political and agitation organization of the workers, the password of every group, in every industry throughout all lands. Undoubtedly the Council; is the weightiest and most hopeful sign of the proletarian struggle an infallible omen of the coming complete emancipation of the workers.

Experience has proved that the isolated associations are not more powerful than are the isolated workers. Even the Association of all Workers' Associations of a single country would not be sufficiently powerful to stand up in conflict with the International combination of all profit making world capital. Economic science establishes the fact that the emancipation of the worker is no national question. No country, no matter how wealthy, mighty, and well-served it may be, can undertake--without ruining itself and surrendering its inhabitants to misery--a fundamental alteration in the relations between capital and labor, if this alteration is not accomplished, at the same time, at least, in the greatest part of the industrial countries of the world. Consequently, the question of the emancipation of the worker from the yoke of capital and its representatives, the bourgeois capitalists, is, above all, an International question. Its solution, therefore, is only possible through an International Movement.

Is this International Movement a secret idea, a conspiracy? Not in the least. The International Movement, the Council Association, does not dictate from above or prescribe in secret. It federates from below and will from a thousand quarters. It speaks in every group of workers and embraces the combined decision of all factions. The Council is living democracy: and whenever the Association formulates plans, it does it openly, and speaks to all who will listen. Its word is the voice of labor recruiting its energies for the overthrow of capitalist oppression.

What does the Council say? What is the demand it makes through every association of these who toil and think, in every factory, in every country? What does it request? Justice! The strictest justice and the rights of humanity: the right of manhood, womanhood, childhood, irrespective of all distinctions of birth, race, or creed.

The right to live and the obligation to work to maintain that right. Service from each to all and from all to each. If this idea appears appalling and prodigious to the existent bourgeois society, so much the worse for this Society. Is the Council of Action a revolutionary enterprise? Yes and no.

The Council of Action is revolutionary in the sense that it will replace a society based upon injustice, exploitation, privilege, laziness, and authority, by one which is founded upon justice and freedom for all mankind. In a word, it wills an economic, political, and social organization, in which each person, without prejudice to his natural and personal idiosyncrasies, will find it equally possible to develop himself, to learn, to think, to work, to be active, and to enjoy life honorably. Yes, this it desires; and we repeat, once more, if this is incompatible with the existing organization of society, so much the worse for this society.

Is the Council of Action revolutionary in the sense of barricades and of violent uprising or demonstration? No; the Council concerns itself but little with this kind of politics; or, rather, one should say that the Council takes no part in it whatever. The bourgeois revolutionaries, anxious for some change of power, and police agents finding occupation in passing explosions of sound and fury, are annoyed greatly with the Council of Action on account of the Council's indifference towards their activities and schemes of provocation.

The Council of Action, the Red Association of these who want and toil, comprehended, long since, that each bourgeois politic--no matter how red and revolutionary it might appear--served not the emancipation of the workers, but the tightening of their slavery. Even if the Council had not comprehended this fact, the miserable game, which, at times, the bourgeois republican and even

the bourgeois Socialist plays, would have opened the workers' eyes.

The Council of Action, ever evolving more completely into the International Workers' Movement, holds itself severely aloof from the dismal political intrigues, and knows to-day only one policy: to each group and to each worker: his propaganda, its extension and organization into struggle and action. On the day when the great proportion of the world's workers have associated themselves through Council of Actions, and so firmly organized through Council of Actions, and so firmly organized through their divisions into one common solidarity of movement, no revolution, in the sense of violent insurrection, will be necessary. From this it will be seen that anarchists do not stand for abortive violence which its enemies attribute to it. Without violence, justice will triumph. Oppression will be liquidated by the direct power of the workers through association. And if that day, there are impatient pleads, and some suffering, this will be the guilt of the bourgeoisie refusing to recognize what has happened, through their machination. To the triumph of the social revolution itself violence will be unnecessary.

THE TWO CAMPS.

[The two Camps, which is here included, was translated by "Crastinus" from Bakunin's preface to his pamphlet refuting Mazini's theistic idealism. This work was published in the year 1871. At this time Italy witnessed the breaking-up of the workers' associations, guided by the patriotic spirit, and saw the spreading of the ideals of International Socialism, as well as the conflict between the capitalist and the working class conceptions of life. After nearly fifty years, the vibrating audacity of Bakunin's thought, their penetrating inwardness, their generosity are as alive as ever. ---ED.]

You taunt us with disbelieving in God. We charge you with believing in him. We do not condemn you for this. We do not even indict you. We pity you. For the time of illusions is past. We cannot be deceived any longer.

Whom do we find under God's banner? Emperors, kings, the official and the officious world; our lords and our nobles; all the privileged persons of Europe whose names are recorded in the Almanac de Gotha; all the guinea pigs of the industrial, commercial and banking world; the patented professors of our universities; the civil service servants; the low and high police officers; the gendarmes; the gaolers; the headsmen or hangmen; not forgetting the priests, who are now the black police enslaving our souls to the State; the glorious generals, defenders of the public order; and lastly, the writers of the reptile Press.

This is God's army!

Whom do we find in the camp opposite? The army of revolt the audacious deniers of God and repudiators of all divine and authoritarian principles! Those who are therefore, the believers in humanity, the asserters of human liberty.

You reproach us with being Atheists. We do not complain of this. We have no apology to offer, We admit we are. With what pride is allowed to frail individuals --- who, like passing waves, rise only to disappear again in the universal ocean of the collective life --- we pride ourselves on being Atheists. Atheism is Truth --- or, rather, the real basis of all Truths.

We do not stoop to consider practical consequences. We want Truth above everything. Truth for all!

We believe in spite of all the apparent contradictions --- in spite of the wavering political wisdom of the Parliamentarians --- and of the scepticism of the times --- that truth only can make for the practical happiness of the people. This is our first article of faith.

It appears as if you were not satisfied in recording our Atheism. You jump to the conclusion that we can have neither love nor respect for mankind, inferring that all those great ideas or emotions which, in all ages, have set hearts throbbing are dead letters to us. Trailing at hazard our miserable existences --- crawling, rather than walking, as you wish to imagine us --- you assume that we cannot know of other feelings than the satisfaction of our coarse and sensual desires.

Do you want to know to what an extent we love the beautiful things that you revere? Know then that we love

them so much that we are both angry and tired at seeing them hanging, out of reach, from your idealistic sky. We sorrow to see them stolen from our mother earth, transmuted into symbols without life, or into distant promises never to be realised. No longer are we satisfied with the fiction of things. We want them in their full reality. This is our second article of faith.

By hurling at us the epithet of materialists, you believe you have driven us to the wall. But you are greatly mistaken. Do you know the origin of your error?

What you and we call matter are two things totally different. Your matter is a fiction. In this it resembles your God, your Satan, and your immortal soul. Your matter is nothing beyond coarse lowness, brutal lifelessness. It is, in impossible entity, as impossible as your pure spirit --- "immaterial," "absolute"!

The first thinkers of mankind were necessarily theologians and metaphysicians. Our earthly mind is so constituted that it begins to rise slowly-through a maze of ignorance-by errors and mistakes-to the possession of a minute parcel of Truth. This fact does not recommend "the glorious conditions of the past." But our theologian, and metaphysicians, owing to their ignorance, took all that to them appeared to constitute-power, movement, life, Intelligence; and, by a sweeping generalisation, called it, spirit! To the lifeless and shapeless residue they thought remained after such preliminary selection --- unconsciously evolved from the whole world of reality --- they gave the name of matter! They were then surprised to see that this matter --- which, like their spirit existed only in their imagination --- appeared to be so lifeless and stupid when compared to their god, the eternal spirit!

To be candid, we do not know this God. We do not recognise this matter.

By the words matter and material, we understand the totality of things, the whole gradation of phenomenal reality as we know it, from the most simple inorganic bodies to the complex functions of the mind of a man of genius; the most beautiful sentiments, the highest thoughts; the most heroic deeds; the actions of sacrifice and devotion; the duties and the rights, the abnegation and the egoism of our social life. The manifestations of organic life, the properties and qualities of simple bodies: electricity, light, heat, and molecular attraction, are all to our mind but so many different evolutions of that totality of things that we call matter. These evolutions, are characterised by a close solidarity, a unity of motive power.

We do not look upon this totality of being and of forms as an eternal and absolute substance, as Pantheists do. But we look upon it as the result, always changed and always changing, of a variety of actions, and reactions, and of the continuous working of real beings that are born and live in its very midst. Against the creed of the theologians I set these propositions:-

I. That if there were I God who created it the world could never have existed.

2. That if God were, or ever had been, the ruler of nature, natural, physical, and social law could never have existed. It would have presented a spectacle of complete chaos, Ruled from above, downwards, it would have resembled the calculated and designed disorder of the political State,

3. That moral law is a moral, logical, and real law, only in so far as it emanates from the needs of human society.

4. That the idea of God is not necessary to the existence and working of the moral law. Far from this, 'It is a disturbing and socially demoralising factor.

5. That all gods, past and present, have owed their existence to a human imagination unfreed from the fetters of its primordial animality.

6. That any and every god, once established on his throne becomes the curse of humanity, and the natural ally of all tyrants, social charlatans, and exploiters of humanity.

7. That the routing of God will be a necessary consequence of the triumph of mankind. The abolition of the idea of God will be a fatal result of the proletarian emancipation. From the moral point of view, Socialism is the advent of self respect to mankind. It will mean the passing of degradation and Divinity.

From the practical viewpoint, Socialism is the final acceptance of a great principle that is leavening society more and more every day. It is making itself felt more and more by the public conscience. It has become the basis of scientific investigations and progress, and of the revolutionary movement of the proletariat. It is making its way everywhere. Briefly, this principle is as follows:

As in what we call the material world, the inorganic matter- mechanical, physical, and chemical-is the determinant basis of the organic matter-vegetable,

animal, Intellectual-in like manner in the social world, the development of economical questions has been and is, the, basis that determines our religious, philosophical, political, and social developments.

This principle audaciously destroys all religious ideas and metaphysical beliefs. It is a rebellion far greater than that which, born during the Renaissance and the seventeenth century, levelled down all scholastic doctrine- once the powerful rampart of the Church, of the absolute monarchy, and of the feudal nobility- and brought about the dogmatic culture of the so-called pure reason, so favourable to our latter-day rulers the bourgeois classes. We therefore, say, through the International: The economical enslavement of the workers- to those who control the necessities of life and the instruments of labour, tools and machinery- is the sole and original cause of the present slavery- in all its forms. To it are attributable mental degeneration and political, submission. The economic emancipation of the workers, therefore, is the aim to which any political movement must subordinate its being, merely as a means to that end. This briefly is the central idea, of the International.

THE WORKERS AND THE SPHINX.

(1867)

**FROM BAKUNIN (1920). GOD AND THE STATE.
ED. G. ALDRED.
GLASGOW AND LONDON: BAKUNIN PRESS.**

1. The Council of Action claims for each the full product of his labour: meaning by that his complete and equal right to enjoy, in common with his fellow-workers, the full amenities of life and happiness that the collective labour of the People creates. The Council declares that it is wrong for those who produce nothing at all to be able to maintain their insolent riches, since they do so only by the work of others. Like the Apostle Paul, the Council maintains that, if any would not work, neither should he eat."

The Council of Action avers that the right to the noble name of labour belongs exclusively to productive labor. Some years ago, the young King of Portugal paid a visit to his august father-in-law. He was presented to a gathering of the Working Men's Association at Turin: and there, surrounded by workers, he uttered these memorable words: "Gentlemen, the present century is the century of labor. We all labor. I, too, labor for the good of my people."

However flattering this likening of royal labor to working-class labor may appear, we cannot accept it. We must recognize that royal labor is a labor of absorption and not of production. Capitalists, proprietors, contractors also labor: but all such labor is parasitic, since it has no other object than to transfer the real

products of labour from the hands of the workers, whose toil creates them, into the possession of those who do not create them, to serve the purpose of further gain and exploitation. Such labor cannot be considered productive labor. In this sense, thieves and brigand labor also. Roughly, they risk every day their liberty and their life. But they do not work.

The Council of Action recognises intellectual labor-that of men of science-as productive labor.It places the application of science to industry, and the activity of the organisers and administrators of industrial and commercial affairs, in the category of useful or productive labor. But it demands for all men a participation as much in manual labor as in the labor of the mind. The question of how much manual and how much mental labor a person shall contribute to the community must be decided not by the privileges of birth of social status, but by suitability to the natural capacities of each, developed by equal opportunity of education and instruction.

Only thus can class distinctions and privileges disappear and the cant phrase, "the intelligent and working masses" be relegated to deserved oblivion.

2 The Council of Action declares that, so long as the working masses are plunged in the misery of economic servitude, all so-called reforms and even so-called political revolutions of a seeming proletarian character, will avail them nothing. They are condemned to live in a forced ignorance and to accept a slave status by the economic Organisation of wage-slave society.

3. Consequently, the Council of Action urges the workers in their own interests, material as well as moral, - and moral because so completely and thoroughly and equally material for each and all - to subordinate all seeming political questions to definite economic issues. The material means of an education and of an existence really human, are for the proletariat, the first condition of liberty, morality and humanity.

4. The Council of Action declares that the record of past centuries, the class legacy of exploitation, as well as contemporary experience, should have convinced the workers that they can expect no social amelioration of their lot from the generosity of the privileged classes. There is no justice in class society, since justice can exist only in equality; and equality means the abolition of class and privilege. (Monopoly) There never has been and there never will be a generous or just ruling class. The classes and orders existing in present day - society - clergy, bureaucracy, plutocracy, nobility, bourgeoisie - dispute for power only to consolidate their own strength and to increase their profits within the system. The Council of Action exists to express the truth that, henceforth, the proletariat must take the direction of its own affairs into its own hands.

5. Once the proletariat clearly understands itself, its solidarity will find expression in the Council of Action, or Federated Councils of Action. Then there will remain no power in the world that can resist the workers.

6. To this end, the Council of Action affirms that the proletariat ought to tend, not to the establishment of a new rule or of a new class for its alleged profit as a class, but to the definite abolition of all rule, of every class.

Dictatorship, political sectarianism, all spell power, exploitation and injustice. The proletariat, through their Council of Action Organisation, must express the Organisation of justice liberty, without distinction of race, color, nationality, or faith—all to fully exercise the same duties and enjoy the same rights.

7. The cause of the working class of the entire world is one, is solidarity, across and in spite of all State frontiers. Expressing that common purpose, that complete proletarian identity of interest, the Council of Action proclaims the International oneness of the workers cause, It pioneers the definite International Association of the Workers of the World in a chain of Industrial Associations. The cause of the workers is International because, pushed by an inevitable law which is inherent in it, bourgeois capital in its threefold employment—in industry, commerce and in banking speculation has been tending, since the beginning of the nineteenth century, towards an Organisation more and more International and complete, enlarging each day more, and simultaneous in all countries, the abyss which separates the working world from the bourgeois world. From this fact, it results that, for every worker endowed with intelligence and heart, for every proletarian who has vision and action for his companions in misery and servitude; who is conscious of the situation of himself and his class and of his actual interest: the real country is henceforth the International Camp of Labor. And the true local Organisation of that camp is the Council of Action.

To every worker, truly worthy of the name, the workers of so-called foreign countries, who suffer and are oppressed as he is oppressed, are infinitely nearer and of more immediate kin than the bourgeoisie of his own

country, who enrich themselves to his detriment. Because of this the Council of Action will replace the geographical unit of false democracy, the National State.

8. The deliverance of Clio proletariat from the oppression and exploitation which it endures in all countries alike, must be International. In those lands which are bound by means of credit, industry, and commerce, the scenic and social emancipation of the proletariat must be achieved almost simultaneously by a common struggle ending in a triumphant challenge to the existing political constitution of the world. The economic emancipation of the proletariat is the foundation of the political emancipation of the world. Realising this, the Council of Action preaches the proletarian duty and message of fraternity.

By the duty of fraternity, as well as by the call of enlightened self interest, the workers are called upon to establish, organise, and exercise the greatest practical solidarity industrial, communal, provincial, national and international:beginning in their workshop, their home, their tenement,their street, their political group and extending it to all their trade societies, to all their trade propaganda federations, a close industrial solidarity. They ought to observe this solidarity scrupulously, and practice it in all the developments, catastrophes, and incidents of the incessant daily struggle of the labor of the worker against the stolen capital of the bourgeois; all those demands and claims of hours and wages, strikes, and every question that relates to the existence, whether material or moral, of the working people.

The revolt of the workers and the spontaneous organisation of human solidarity through the free but

involuntary and inevitable federation of all working-class groups into the Council of Action ! This, then, is the answer to the enigma which the Capitalist Sphinx forces us today to solve, threatening to devour us if we do not solve it.

WHAT IS AUTHORITY?

What is authority? Is it the inevitable power of the natural laws which manifest themselves in the necessary linking and succession of phenomena in the physical and social worlds? Indeed, against these laws revolt is not only forbidden - it is even impossible. We may misunderstand them or not know them at all, but we cannot disobey them; because they constitute the basis and the fundamental conditions of our existence; they envelop us, penetrate us, regulate all our movements, thoughts and acts; even when we believe that we disobey them, we only show their omnipotence.

Yes, we are absolutely the slaves of these laws. But in such slavery there is no humiliation, or, rather, it is not slavery at all. For slavery supposes an external master, a legislator outside of him whom he commands, while these laws are not outside of us; they are inherent in us; they constitute our being, our whole being, physically, intellectually, and morally; we live, we breathe, we act, we think, we wish only through these laws. Without them we are nothing, we are not. Whence, then, could we derive the power and the wish to rebel against them?

In his relation to natural laws but one liberty is possible to man - that of recognising and applying them on an ever-extending scale of conformity with the object of collective and individual emancipation of humanisation which he pursues. These laws, once recognised, exercise an authority which is never disputed by the mass of men. One must, for instance, be at bottom either a fool or a theologian or at least a metaphysician, jurist or bourgeois economist to rebel against the law by which twice two make four. One must have faith to imagine

that fire will not burn nor water drown, except, indeed, recourse be had to some subterfuge founded in its turn on some other natural law. But these revolts, or rather, these attempts at or foolish fancies of an impossible revolt, are decidedly the exception: for, in general, it may be said that the mass of men, in their daily lives, acknowledge the government of common sense - that is, of the sum of the general laws generally recognised - in an almost absolute fashion.

The great misfortune is that a large number of natural laws, already established as such by science, remain unknown to the masses, thanks to the watchfulness of those tutelary governments that exist, as we know, only for the good of the people. There is another difficulty - namely, that the major portion of the natural laws connected with the development of human society, which are quite as necessary, invariable, fatal, as the laws that govern the physical world, have not been duly established and recognised by science itself.

Once they shall have been recognised by science, and then from science, by means of an extensive system of popular education and instruction, shall have passed into the consciousness of all, the question of liberty will be entirely solved. The most stubborn authorities must admit that then there will be no need either of political organisation or direction or legislation, three things which, whether they emanate from the will of the sovereign or from the vote of a parliament elected by universal suffrage, and even should they conform to the system of natural laws - which has never been the case and never will be the case - are always equally fatal and hostile to the liberty of the masses from the very fact that

they impose on them a system of external and therefore despotic laws.

The Liberty of man consists solely in this: that he obeys natural laws because he has himself recognised them as such, and not because they have been externally imposed upon him by any extrinsic will whatsoever, divine or human, collective or individual.

Suppose a learned academy, composed of the most illustrious representatives of science; suppose this academy charged with legislation for and the organisation of society, and that, inspired only by the purest love of truth, it frames none but the laws but the laws in absolute harmony with the latest discoveries of science. Well, I maintain, for my part, that such legislation and such organisation would be a monstrosity, and that, and that for two reasons: first, that human science is always and necessarily imperfect, and that, comparing what it has discovered with what remains to be discovered, we may say that it is still in its cradle. So that were we to try to force the practical life of men, collective as well as individual, into strict and exclusive conformity with the latest data of science, we should condemn society as well as individuals to suffer martyrdom on a bed of Procrustes, which would soon end by dislocating and stifling them, life ever remaining an infinitely greater thing than science.

The second reason is this: a society which should obey legislation emanating from a scientific academy, not because it understood itself the rational character of this legislation (in which case the existence of the academy would become useless), but because this legislation,

emanating from the academy, was imposed in the name of a science which it venerated without comprehending - such a society would be a society, not of men, but of brutes. It would be a second edition of those missions in Paraguay which submitted so long to the government of the Jesuits. It would surely and rapidly descend to the lowest stage of idiocy.

But there is still a third reason which would render such a government impossible - namely that a scientific academy invested with a sovereignty, so to speak, absolute, even if it were composed of the most illustrious men, would infallibly and soon end in its own moral and intellectual corruption. Even today, with the few privileges allowed them, such is the history of all academies. The greatest scientific genius, from the moment that he becomes an academian, an officially licensed savant, inevitably lapses into sluggishness. He loses his spontaneity, his revolutionary hardihood, and that troublesome and savage energy characteristic of the grandest geniuses, ever called to destroy old tottering worlds and lay the foundations of new. He undoubtedly gains in politeness, in utilitarian and practical wisdom, what he loses in power of thought. In a word, he becomes corrupted.

It is the characteristic of privilege and of every privileged position to kill the mind and heart of men. The privileged man, whether practically or economically, is a man deprived in mind and heart. That is a social law which admits of no exception, and is as applicable to entire nations as to classes, corporations and individuals. It is the law of equality, the supreme condition of liberty and humanity. The principle object of this treatise is

precisely to demonstrate this truth in all the manifestations of social life.

A scientific body to which had been confided the government of society would soon end by devoting itself no longer to science at all, but to quite another affair; and that affair, as in the case of all established powers, would be its own eternal perpetuation by rendering the society confided to its care ever more stupid and consequently more in need of its government and direction.

But that which is true of scientific academies is also true of all constituent and legislative assemblies, even those chosen by universal suffrage. In the latter case they may renew their composition, it is true, but this does not prevent the formation in a few years' time of a body of politicians, privileged in fact though not in law, who, devoting themselves exclusively to the direction of the public affairs of a country, finally form a sort of political aristocracy or oligarchy. Witness the United States of America and Switzerland.

Consequently, no external legislation and no authority - one, for that matter, being inseparable from the other, and both tending to the servitude of society and the degradation of the legislators themselves.

Does it follow that I reject all authority? Far from me such a thought. In the matter of boots, I refer to the authority of the bootmaker; concerning houses, canals, or railroads, I consult that of the architect or the engineer. For such or such special knowledge I apply to such or such a savant. But I allow neither the bootmaker nor the architect nor savant to impose his authority upon me. I listen to them freely and with all the respect merited by

their intelligence, their character, their knowledge, reserving always my incontestable right of criticism and censure. I do not content myself with consulting a single authority in any special branch; I consult several; I compare their opinions, and choose that which seems to me the soundest. But I recognise no infallible authority, even in special questions; consequently, whatever respect I may have for the honesty and the sincerity of such or such individual, I have no absolute faith in any person. Such a faith would be fatal to my reason, to my liberty, and even to the success of my undertakings; it would immediately transform me into a stupid slave, an instrument of the will and interests of others.

If I bow before the authority of the specialists and avow my readiness to follow, to a certain extent and as long as may seem to me necessary, their indications and even their directions, it is because their authority is imposed on me by no one, neither by men nor by God. I would even repel them with horror, and bid the devil take their counsels, their directions, and their services, certain that they would make me pay, by the loss of my liberty and self-respect, for such scraps of truth, wrapped in a multitude of lies, as they might give me.

I bow before the authority of special men because it is imposed on me by my own reason. I am conscious of my own inability to grasp, in all its detail, and positive development, any very large portion of human knowledge. The greatest intelligence would not be equal to a comprehension of the whole. Thence results, for science as well as for industry, the necessity of the division and association of labour. I receive and I give - such is human life. Each directs and is directed in his

turn. Therefore there is no fixed and constant authority, but a continual exchange of mutual, temporary, and, above all, voluntary authority and subordination.

This same reason forbids me, then, to recognise a fixed, constant and universal authority, because there is no universal man, no man capable of grasping in all that wealth of detail, without which the application of science to life is impossible, all the sciences, all the branches of social life. And if such universality could ever be realised in a single man, and if he wished to take advantage thereof to impose his authority upon us, it would be necessary to drive this man out of society, because his authority would inevitably reduce all the others to slavery and imbecility. I do not think that society ought to maltreat men of genius as it has done hitherto: but neither do I think it should indulge them too far, still less accord them any privileges or exclusive rights whatsoever; and that for three reasons: first, because it would often mistake a charlatan for a man of genius; second, because, through such a system of privileges, it might transform into a charlatan even a real man of genius, demoralise him, and degrade him; and, finally, because it would establish a master over itself.

WHERE I STAND

**FROM: BAKUNIN'S WRITINGS,
GUY A. ALDRED MODERN PUBLISHERS,
INDORE KRAUS REPRINT CO.
NEW YORK
1947**

I am a passionate seeker after truth (and no less embittered enemy of evil doing fictions) which the party of order, this official, privileged and interested representative of all the past and present religions, metaphysical, political, juridical and "social" atrociousness claim to employ even today only to make the world stupid and enslave it, I am a fanatical lover of truth and freedom which I consider the only surroundings in which intelligence, consciousness and happiness develop and increase.

I do not mean the completely formal freedom which the State imposes, judges and regulates, this eternal lie which in reality consists always of the privileges of a few based upon the slavery of all-not even the individualists, egotistical, narrow and fictitious freedom which the school of J. J. Rousseau and all other system of property moralists, middle class bourgeoisism and liberalism recommend-according to which the so-called rights of individuals which the State "represents" has the limit in the right of all, whereby the rights of every individual are necessarily, always reduced to nil. No, I consider only that as freedom worthy and real as its name should imply, which consists in the complete development of all material, intellectual and spiritual powers which are in a potential state in everyone, the freedom which knows no other limits than those

prescribed by the laws of our own nature, so that there be really no limits—for these laws are not enforced upon us by external legislators who are around and over us, these laws are innate in us, clinging to us and form the real basis of our material, intellectual and moral being; instead of therefore seeing in them a limitation, we must look upon them as the real condition and the actual cause of our freedom.

UNCONDITIONAL FREEDOM

I mean that freedom of the individual which, instead of stopping far from the freedom of others as before a frontier, sees on the contrary the opening and the expansion into the infinity of its own free will, the unlimited freedom of the individual through the freedom of all; freedom through solidarity, freedom in equality; the freedom which triumphs over brute force and over the principle of authoritarianism, the ideal expression of that force which, after the destruction of all terrestrial and heavenly idols, will find and organize a new world of undivided mankind upon the ruins of all churches and States. I am a convinced partisan of economic and social equality, for I know that outside this equality, freedom, justice, human dignity and moral and spiritual well-being of mankind and the prosperity of nation, and individuals will always remain a lie only. But as an unconditional partisan of freedom, this first condition of humanity, I believe the equality must be established through the spontaneous organization of voluntary cooperation of work freely organized, and into communes federated, by productive associations and through the equally spontaneous federation of communes—not through and by supreme supervising action of the State. This point separates above all others the revolutionary socialists or

collectivists from the authoritarian "comunists", the adherents of the absolute initiative necessity of and by the State. The communists imagine that condition of freedom and socialism (i.e., the administration of the society's affairs by the self-government of the society itself without the medium and pressure of the State) can be achieved by the development and organization of the political power of the working class, chiefly of the proletariat of the towns with the help of bourgeois radicalism, while the revolutionary (who are otherwise, known as libertarian) socialists, enemies of every double-edged allies and alliance believe, on the very contrary that the aim can be realised and materialized only through the development and organization not of the political but of the social and economic, and therefore antipolitical forces of the working masses of the town and country, including all well disposed people of the upper classes who are ready to break away from their past and join them openly and accept their programme unconditionally.

TWO METHODS

From the difference named, there arise two different methods. The "Communists" pretend to organize the working classes in order to "capture the political power of the State". The revolutionary socialists organize people with the object of the liquidation of the States altogether whatever be their form. The first are the partisans of authoritiveness in theory and practice, the socialists have confidence only in freedom to develop the initiative of peoples in order to liberate themselves. The communist authoritarians wish to force class "science" upon others, the social libertarians propagate empiric science among them so that human groups and

aggregations infused with conviction in and understanding of it, spontaneously, freely and voluntarily, from bottom up wards, organize themselves by their own motion and in the measure of their strength-not according to a plan sketched out in advance and dictated to them, a plan which is attempted to be imposed by a few "highly intelligent, honest and all that" upon the so-called ignorant masses from above. The revolutionary social libertarians think that there is much more practical reason and common, sense in the aspirations and the of the people than in the "deep" intelligence of all the learned, men and tutors of mankind who want to add to the many disastrous attempts "to make humanity happy" a still newer attempt. We are on the contrary of the conviction that humankind has allowed itself too long enough to be governed and legislated for and that the origin of its misery is not to be looked for in this or that form of government and man-established State, but in the very nature and existence of every ruling leadership, of whatever kind and in whatever name this may be. The best friends of the ignorant people are those who free them from the thralldom of leadership and let people alone to work among themselves with one another on the basis of equal comradeship.

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