It is evident that we are advancing rapidly towards revolution, towards an upheaval that will begin in one country and spread, as in 1848, into all the neighboring lands, and, as it rocks existing society to its foundations, will also reopen the springs of life.

To confirm our view, we do not even have to invoke the testimony of a celebrated German historian, (1) or a well-known Italian philosopher, (2) both of whom, having deeply studied the history of our times, have reached the conclusion that a great revolution was inevitable towards the end of this century. We need only watch the panorama that has unrolled before us over the past twenty years; we need only observe what goes on around us.

When we do so, we perceive two major facts emerging from the murky depths of the canvas: the awakening of the peoples, in contrast to the moral, intellectual and economic failure of the ruling classes; and the agitated yet powerless efforts of people of wealth to hinder that awakening.
Yes, the awakening of the peoples!

In the suffocating atmosphere of the factory as much as in the darkness of the cookshop kitchen, under the roof of the granary as much as in the streaming galleries of the mine, a new world is taking shape these days. Among those shadowy masses, whom the bourgeois despise as much as they fear them, yet from whose midst has always stirred the breath that inspired the great reformers, the most difficult problems of social economy and political organization are posed one after another, discussed, and given new solutions dictated by the sense of justice. These discussions cut to the heart of society's sickness. New hopes are awakened, new ideas emerge.

Opinions mingle and vary to the point of infinity, but two streams of ideas already sound more and more distinctly in this din of voices: the abolition of individual property and communism; and the abolition of the State, its replacement by the free commune, and the international union of working men. The two ways converge in a single aim: Equality. Not that hypocritical formula of equality, inscribed by the bourgeoisie on its banners and in its codes for the easier enslavement of the producer, but true equality: land, capital and work shared by all.

It is in vain that the ruling classes seek to stifle these aspirations by imprisoning men and suppressing their writings. The new ideas penetrate people's minds, take possession of their hearts in the same way as in the past the myth of the rich and free lands of the East possessed the hearts of the serfs when they rushed into the ranks of the crusaders. The idea may sleep for a while; if its appearance on the surface is prevented, it may burrow beneath the soil, but that will lead only to its resurging stronger than ever before. You have only to look at the present reawakening of socialism in France, the second revival in the short space of fifteen years. When the wave breaks it rises even higher an instant afterwards. And as soon as a first attempt is made to put the new ideas into practice, they will stand up before everyone in all their simplicity, in all their splendor. Let one attempt be successful, and the awareness of their own strength will give the peoples a heroic impulse.

This moment cannot be long delayed. Everything brings us near the point when
poverty itself, which forces the unfortunate to take thought, reaches the point of
defined unemployment, when the man who has already started to think is torn from
the narrow setting of his workshop and thrown into the streets, where he quickly
comes to know both the viciousness and the powerlessness of the ruling classes.

And, in the meantime, what are these ruling classes achieving?

While natural sciences are assuming a vigor that reminds one of the last century
when the great French revolution was approaching and while bold inventors open
up new horizons each day to the struggle of humanity against the hostile forces of
nature, social science -- a bourgeois creation -- remains silent and is content to
work over its outdated theories.

But perhaps these ruling classes are making progress in practical matters? Far from
it. They remain obstinately intent on waving their ragged banners, on defending
egotistic individualism, competition between man and man and nation and nation,
and the omnipotence of the centralizing State.

They change from protectionism to free trade, and from free trade back to
protectionism; from reaction to liberalism and from liberalism back to reaction;
from atheism to superstition and from superstition back to atheism; always fearful,
always looking towards the past, ever less capable of realizing anything that lasts.
Everything these ruling classes have achieved has in fact been a contradiction of
whatever they have promised. They promised to guarantee us freedom to work-and
they have made us slaves to the factory, to the owner, to the overseer. They took
the responsibility for organizing industry, for guaranteeing our well being, and they
have given us endless crises and resultant poverty; they promised us
education-and we are reduced to the impossible task of teaching ourselves; they
promised us political freedom, and have led us on from one reaction to the next;
they promised us peace, and have given us wars without end. They have failed in
all their promises.

But the people are weary of it all; they are beginning to ask each other where they
have ended up, after letting themselves be gulfed and governed for so long by the
bourgeoisie. The answer to that question can be seen in the economic situation
that now afflicts Europe. The crises that hitherto were passing calamities have become chronic. The crisis in cotton, the crisis in the metal industry, the crisis in watchmaking, all of these crises now occur simultaneously and take on permanence.

At the present moment one can count several millions of people out of work in Europe; tens of thousands prowl from town to town, begging for their living or rioting and with threats demanding *work or bread!* As the peasants of 1787 wandered by thousands over the roads without finding in the rich soil of their country, appropriated by the aristocrats, a plot of land to cultivate or a hoe to till it, so today the workers wait with idle hands for lack of access to the materials and tools needed for production because they are in the hands of a few idlers.

Great industries are allowed to die, great cities like Sheffield are turned into deserts. There is poverty in England, above all in England, for it is there that the "economists" have most thoroughly applied their principles, but there is poverty also in Alsace and hunger in Spain and Italy. Unemployment exists everywhere, and with unemployment, mere lack becomes real poverty; anemic children and women aging five years in a single winter; sickness moving with great sweeps through the ranks of the workers! This is what we have attained under the rule of the capitalists.

And they talk to us of over-production! Over-production? When the miner who piles up mountains of coal has no money to pay for a fire in the depth of winter? When the weaver who produces miles of cloth cannot afford shirts for his ragged children? When the mason who builds a palace lives in a hovel, and the seamstress who creates masterpieces for the fashionable dress shops has only one ragged shawl to protect her in all weathers?

Is this what they call the organization of industry? One might rather call it a secret alliance of the capitalists to tame the workers by hunger.

We are told that capital, that product of work of all humankind which has been accumulated in the hands of the few, is fleeing from agriculture and industry for lack of confidence. But where will it find its perch, once it has left the strong-boxes?
In fact, it has many advantageous destinations. It can go to furnish the harems of the Sultan; it can supply the wars, sustaining the Russian against the Turk and, at the same time, the Turk against the Russian. Or, alternatively, it can be used to found a joint stock company, not to produce anything, but simply to lead in a couple of years to a scandalous failure as soon as the financial bigshots have withdrawn, taking millions with them as the reward for their "idea." Or, again, capital can be used to construct useless railways, over the Gothard, in Japan, across the Sahara if need be—provided that the Rothschilds who underwrite them, the engineers in charge and the contractors can make a few million each.

But above all, capital can plunge into speculation, the great game of the stock exchange. The capitalist gambles on artificially induced increases in the price of wheat or cotton; he gambles on politics, on the rising prices induced by some rumor of reform or some leaked diplomatic note; and very often—we see it every day—the government officials themselves dabble in these speculations.

Speculation killing industry—that is what they call the intelligent management of business! It is for that the capitalists tell us that we should support them!

In brief, economic chaos is at its height. However, this chaos cannot last for long. The people are tired of crises provoked by the greed of the ruling classes; they want to live by working and not to suffer years of poverty, seasoned by humiliating charity, for the sake of perhaps two or three years of exhausting work, sometimes more or less assured, but always badly remunerated.

The worker is becoming aware of the incapacity of the governing classes; their incapacity to understand his own new aspirations; their incapacity to manage industry; their incapacity to organize production and exchange.

The people will soon declare the deposition of the bourgeoisie. They will take matters into their own hands as soon as the propitious moment offers itself.

That moment cannot be far off, since the very difficulties that are gnawing away at industry will precipitate it, and its advent will be hastened by the breakdown of the State, a breakdown that in our day has entered its final precipitate phase.
Chapter 2: The Breakdown of the State

If the economic situation of Europe can be summed up in these words—industrial and commercial chaos and the failure of capitalist production—the situation in politics can be defined as the rapid breakdown of the State and its entire failure, which will take place very soon.

Consider all the various States, from the police autocracy of Russia to the bourgeois oligarchy of Switzerland, and you will not find a single example today (with the possible exception of Sweden and Norway) of a State that is not set on an accelerating course towards disintegration and eventually, revolution.

Like wornout old men, their skin shriveled and their feet stumbling, gnawed at by mortal sicknesses, incapable of embarking on the tide of new ideas, the States of Europe squander what strength remains to them, and while living on credit of their past, they merely hasten their ends by squabbling like aged gossips.

Having reached a high point in the eighteenth century, the old States of Europe have now entered into their decline; they are falling into decrepitude. The peoples—and especially those of Latin race—are already looking forward to the destruction of that power which merely hinders their free development. They desire autonomy for provinces, for communes, for groups of workers drawn together, no longer by a power imposed on them, but by the links of mutual agreement, by free consent.
This is the phase of history on which we are entering, and nothing can hinder its realization. If the ruling classes could understand the situation they would hasten to put themselves in the van of such a movement and its aspirations. But, having grown old in their traditions and having no other object of worship than their money bags, they oppose the new current of ideas with all their strength. And, inevitably, they are leading us towards a violent outburst. The hopes of men and women will see the light of day—but the dawn will be accompanied by the rumbling of cannon and the rattle of machine-gun fire and it will be illuminated by conflagrations.

After the decline of the institutional life of the Middle Ages, the nascent States made their appearance in Europe, consolidating themselves and growing by conquest, by intrigue, by assassination, but as yet they interfered only in a small sphere of human affairs.

Today the State takes upon itself to meddle in all the areas of our lives. From the cradle to the grave, it hugs us in its arms. Sometimes as the central government, sometimes as the provincial or cantonal government, and sometimes even as the communal or municipal government, it follows our every step, it appears at every turning of the road, it taxes, harasses and restrains us.

It legislates on all our actions. It accumulates mountains of laws and ordinances among which even the shrewdest of lawyers can no longer find his way. Every day it devises new cogwheels to be fitted into the wornout old engine, and it ends up having created a machine so complicated, so misbegotten and so obstructive that it repels even those who attempt to keep it going.

The State creates an army of employes like light-fingered spiders, who know the world only through the murky windows of their offices or through their documents written in absurd jargons; it is a black band with only one religion, that of money, only one care, that of attaching oneself to any party, black, purple, or white, so long as it guarantees a maximum of appointments with a minimum of work.

The results we know only too well. Is there a single branch of the State's activity that does not arouse revolution in those unfortunate enough to have dealings with it? Is there a single direction in which the State, after centuries of existence and of
patchy renovation, has not shown its complete incompetence?

The vast and ever growing sums of money which the States appropriate from the people are never sufficient.. The State always exists at the expense of future generations; it accumulates debt and everywhere it approaches bankruptcy. The public debts of the European States have already reached the vast, almost incredible figure of more than five milliards, i.e. five hundred million francs!(4) If all the receipts of the various States were employed to the last penny just to pay off these debts, it could hardly be done in fifteen years. But, far from diminishing, the debts grow from day to day, for it is in the nature of things that the needs of States are always in excess of their means. Inevitably the State seeks to extend its jurisdiction; every party in power is obliged to create new employment for its supporters. It is an irrevocable process.

Thus the deficits and public debts continue and will continue, always growing, even in times of peace. But as soon as a war begins, however small, the debts of the States increase at an alarming rate. There is no ending; it is impossible to find our way out of this labyrinth.

The States of the world are heading full steam for ruin and bankruptcy; and the day is not distant when the people, tired of paying four milliards of interest each year to the bankers, will declare the failure of State governments and send the bankers to dig the soil if they are hungry.

Say "State" and you say "war." The State strives and must strive to be strong, and stronger than its neighbors; if it is not so, it will become a plaything in their hands. Of necessity it seeks to weaken and impoverish other States so that it can impose on them its laws, its policies, its commercial treaties, and grow rich at their expense. The struggle for preponderance, which is the basis of economic bourgeois organization, is also the basis of political organization. This is why war has now become the normal condition of Europe. Prusso-Danish, Prusso-Austrian, FrancoPrussian wars, war in the East, war in Afghanistan follow each other without a pause. New wars are in preparation; Russia, Prussia, England, Denmark, all are ready to unleash their armies. And at any moment they will be at each other's throats. There are enough excuses for wars to keep the world busy for another
thirty years.

But war means unemployment, economic crisis, growing taxes, accumulating debts. More than that, war deals a mortal blow to the State itself. After each war, the peoples realize that the States involved have shown their incompetence, even in the tasks by which they justify their existence; they are hardly capable of organizing the defense of their own territory, and even victory threatens their survival. Only look at the fermentation of ideas that emerged from the war of 1871, as much in Germany as in France; only observe the discontent aroused in Russia by the war in the Far East.

Wars and armaments are the death of the State; they accelerate its moral and economic failure. Just one or two great war will give the final blow to these decrepit machines.

But parallel to war outside is war within.

Accepted originally by the people as a means of defending all men and women, and above all of protecting the weak against the strong, the State today has become the fortress of the rich against the exploited, of the employer against the proletarian.

Of what use in fact is this great machine that we call the State? Is it to hinder the exploitation of the worker by the capitalist, of the peasant by the landlord? Is it to assure us work? To protect us from the loan-shark? To give us sustenance when the woman has only water to pacify the child who weeps at her dried-out breast?

No, a thousand times no! The State is there to protect exploitation, speculation and private property; it is itself the byproduct of the rapine of the people. The proletarian must rely on his own hands; he can expect nothing of the State. It is nothing more than an organization devised to hinder emancipation at all costs.

Everything in the State is loaded in favor of the idle proprietor, everything against the working proletarian: bourgeois education, which from an early age corrupts the child by inculcating anti-egalitarian principles; the Church which disturbs women's
minds; the law which hinders the exchange of ideas of solidarity and equality; money, which can be used when needed to corrupt whoever seeks to be an apostle of the solidarity of the workers; prison-and grapeshot as a last resort-to shut the mouths of those who will not be corrupted. Such is the State.

Can it last? Will it last? Obviously not. A whole class of humanity, the class that produces everything, cannot sustain for ever an organization that has been created specifically in opposition to its interests. Everywhere, under Russian brutality as much as under the hypocrisy of the followers of Gambettas, the discontented people are in revolt. The history of our times is the history of the struggle of the privileged rulers against the egalitarian aspiration of the peoples. This struggle has become the principal occupation of the ruling class; it dominates their actions. Today it is neither principles nor considerations of the public good that determine the appearance of such-and-such a law or administrative decree; it is only the demands of the struggle against the people for the preservation of privilege.

This struggle alone would be enough to shake the strongest of political organizations. But when it takes place within States that for historical reasons are declining; when these States are rolling at full speed towards catastrophe and are harming each other on the way; when, in the end, the all-powerful State becomes repugnant even to those it protects: then all these causes can only unite in a single effort: and the outcome of the struggle cannot remain in doubt. The people, who have the strength, will prevail over their oppressors; the collapse of the States will become no more than a question of time, and the most peaceful of philosophers will see in the distance the dawning light by which the great revolution manifests itself.

• Chapter 3 : The Inevitability of Revolution

Words of a Rebel
Chapter 3: The Inevitability of Revolution

THERE are periods in human existence when the inevitability of a great upheaval, of a cataclysm that shakes society to its very roots, imposes itself on every area of our relationships. At such epochs, all men of good will begin to realize that things cannot go on as they are; that we need great events that roughly break the thread of history, shake humanity out of the ruts in which it is stuck, and propel it towards new ways, towards the unknown, towards the search for the ideal. One feels the inevitability of a revolution, vast, implacable, whose role will be not merely to overthrow an economic machine based on cold exploitation, on speculation and fraud, not merely to throw down the political ladder that sustains the rule of the few through cunning, intrigue and lies, but also to stir up the intellectual and moral life of society, shake it out of its torpor, reshape our moral life, and set blowing in the midst of the low and paltry passions that occupy us now the livening wind of noble passions, great impulses and generous dedications.

In those eras when prideful mediocrity stifles all intelligence that does not kowtow to authority, when the niggardly morality of compromise creates the law, and servility reigns supreme; in such eras revolution becomes a need. Honest men of all classes call down the tempest, so that it can burn up with its breath of flame the pestilence that afflicts us, blow away the miasmas that stifle us, and sweep up in its furious progress all that debris of the past which weighs down on us, stifles us, deprives us of air and light, so that in the end it can give us a whole new atmosphere' instinct with life, with youth, with honesty. It is not merely the question of bread that is posed in such epochs; it becomes a question of progress against immobility, of human development against brutalization, of life against the fetid stagnation of the marsh.

History has retained for us the memory of such an epoch: that of the decadence of the Roman Empire; humanity today is passing through another such decadence.
Like the Romans of the decadence, we find ourselves facing a fundamental transformation which is affecting the minds of men and which only waits for favorable circumstances to become transposed into actuality. If the revolution imposes itself in the economic domain, if it has become an imperious necessity in the political domain, it assumes even more urgency in the field of morality.

Without moral links, without certain obligations which each member of society develops in his relations with others, no kind of society is possible. Thus we encounter these moral links, these sociable customs, in all human groups; we see them well-developed and rigorously put into practice among primitive peoples, who are the living remnants of what all humanity was in its beginnings.

But the inequality of fortunes and conditions, the exploitation of man by man, the domination of the masses by a few, have undermined and destroyed through the ages these precious products of the pristine stages of our societies. Large industry based on exploitation, commerce based on fraud, domination by those who call themselves "the Government," can no longer tolerate co-existence with those principles of morality, based on the solidarity of all, which we still encounter among the tribes who have been driven back to the verges of the policed world. What solidarity can exist between the capitalist and the worker he exploits? Between the head of an army and the soldier? Between the governing and the governed?

Thus we see that the primitive morality, based on the identification of the individual with his fellows, is replaced by the hypocritical morality of various religions, which search through sophistry to give legitimacy to exploitation and domination, and confine themselves to condemning only the most brutal manifestations of these phenomena. They relieve the individual of his moral obligations towards his fellows and impose them on him only in relation to a Supreme Being—an invisible abstraction, whose wrath you can avert and whose good will you can purchase, provided you pay his so-called servitors well.

But the more and more frequent contacts that occur these days between individuals, groups, nations and continents, impose new moral obligations on humanity. And as religious beliefs begin to vanish, we realize that if we want to be happy we must assume duties, not towards some unknown being, but towards all
those with whom we enter into relationships. We understand more and more clearly that the individual's welfare is no longer possible in isolation; it can only be sought in the welfare of all-the happiness of the human race. The negative principles of religious morality: "Thou shalt not steal! Thou shalt not kill!" are being replaced by the positive principles of a humane morality, infinitely broader and growing from day to day. The sanctions of a deity, which one could always violate at the price of appeasing him later on with offerings, are being replaced by a sentiment of solidarity with one and all which tells human beings, "If you want to be happy, do to others as you would like others to do to you." That simple affirmation, that scientific induction which has nothing to do with religious prescriptions, opens in an instant a whole immense horizon of perfectibility, of betterment for the human race.

The need to recreate our relations on this principle, so sublime and so simple, becomes more evident from day to day. But nothing can or will be done in that direction while exploitation and domination, hypocrisy and sophistry, remain the bases of our social organization.

I could bring a thousand examples to support my argument, but let us limit ourselves now to a single one-the most terrible of all-that of our children. What can we do for them in modern society?

Respect for childhood is one of the finest qualities that developed in humanity as it accomplished its painful march from the state of savagery to its present condition. How often has one not seen the most depraved of men disarmed by the smile of a child? But such respect is vanishing, and among us today the child has become a machine of flesh-and-blood, if it has not been turned into a plaything for bestial passions.

We have been shown recently how the bourgeoisie massacre our children by making them work long hours in the factories.(6) There, they are physically ruined. But that is not everything. Corrupt to the core as it is, society also kills our children morally.

It reduces education to a routine apprenticeship which gives no expression to young and noble passions and no release to that need for idealism which emerges
at a certain age in most children, and so it insures that children who are naturally so varied become less independent, proud and poetic, that they hate their schools and either turn in on themselves or seek elsewhere an outlet for their passions. Some will search in novels for the poetry that is lacking in their lives; they will stuff their minds with this literary rubbish, cobbled together by and for the bourgeoisie at a penny or two a line, and they will end up, like the young Lemaitre, slashing open the bellies and cutting the throats of children in the hope of becoming "celebrated murderers." Others will give themselves up to execrable vises. Only the mediocrities, those who have neither passion nor impulse nor any sense of independence will get through it all without trouble. This minority will provide society with its contingent of good citizens with niggardly mentalities who admittedly do not steal handkerchiefs in the street, but "honestly" rob their customers; who have no passion but secretly visit the brothel to get rid of the gravy from the stewpot, who stagnate in their marshes and curse whoever tried to stir up their muck.

This is how it is for boys! As for the girls, the bourgeoisie corrupt them at an early age. Absurd children's books, dolls done up like whores, the mother's dresses and her example, the chatter of the boudoir—nothing is lacking to turn the child into a woman who will sell herself to the highest bidder. And that child already spreads the infection around her: do not working-class children look with envy on this over-dressed girl, with her elegant demeanor, a courtesan at twelve years old? But if the mother is "virtuous"—in the way a good middle-class woman understands the term—then the situation is even worse. If the child is intelligent and passionate, she will take at its true value this double morality which consists in saying: "Love your neighbor, but plunder him when you can! Be virtuous, but only up to a certain point, etc." and, stifling in that atmosphere of Tartuffian morality, finding in her life nothing of the beautiful, sublime, inspiring, nothing that breathes of true passion, she will throw herself headfirst into the arms of the first comer, provided he can satisfy her appetite for a life of luxury.

Consider these facts, think about their causes, and admit that we are right to declare that a terrible revolution is inevitable if we are finally to cleanse our societies down to the roots, for as long as the causes of the gangrene from which they suffer remain, there can be no cure.
As long as we have a caste of idlers, sustained by our work under the presence that they are necessary to govern us, these very idlers will remain a pestilential influence on public morality. The besotted playboy who spends his life in the pursuit of new pleasures, in whom the feeling of solidarity for other people is destroyed by the very manner of his existence, and in whom the most vilely egotistical feelings are nourished by the very manner of his life; such a man will always lean towards the grossest kind of sensuality, and he will degrade everything he touches. With his moneybags and his brutal instincts, he will prostitute women and children, he will prostitute art, the stage, the press—he has already done so! He will sell his country and those who defend it, and, though he is too cowardly to do the deed himself, he will arrange the slaughter of the best people of his fatherland on the day he has reason to fear the loss of his wealth, the sole source of his pleasure.

All this is inevitable, and the writings of the moralists will do nothing to change it. The plague is already on our doorsteps; we must destroy its causes, and even if we have to proceed by fire and iron, we must not hesitate. It is a question of the salvation of humanity.

• Chapter 4 : The Coming Revolution

Words of a Rebel

Peter Kropotkin

Chapter 4: The Coming Revolution

IN the preceding chapters we came to the conclusion that Europe is proceeding down a steep slope towards a revolutionary outbreak.
In considering the methods of production and exchange, as they have been organized by the bourgeoisie, we found a situation of irremediable decay. We see the complete absence of any kind of scientific or humanitarian basis for public actions, the unreasoning dissipation of social capital, the thirst for gain that led men to an absolute contempt for all the laws of social behavior, and industrial war without an end in sight: in all, chaos. And we hailed the approach of the day on which the call, "An end to the bourgeoisie!" would echo from all lips with the same unanimity as hitherto characterized the call for an end to the dynasties.

In studying the development of the State, its historic role, and the decomposition that is attacking it today, we saw that this type of organization had accomplished in its history everything of which it was capable, and today is collapsing under the weight of its own presumptions; that it must give way to new forms of organization based on new principles and more in line with the modern tendencies of humanity.

At this very time, those who watch attentively the development of ideas in the heart of present-day society are fully aware of the ardor with which human thinking these days is working towards the complete revision of the assumptions we have inherited from past centuries and towards the elaboration of new philosophic and scientific systems destined to provide the foundations for societies in the future. It is not merely a matter of the gloomy reformer, wornout by a task beyond his strength and by a poverty he can no longer endure, who condemns the shameful institutions that bear down on him and who dreams of a better future.

It is also a matter of the scholar, who may have been raised with antiquated prejudices, but gradually finds them being shaken, and who gives ear to the currents of ideas that are moving through the minds of the people and one day emerges as their spokesman and proclaims them to the world. "The critic's pickax," cry the defenders of the past, "is undercutting with great blows the whole of the heritage that has been transmitted to us as revealed truth; philosophy, the natural sciences, morality, history, art, nothing is spared in this work of demolition." Nothing indeed is spared, down to the very foundations of our social institutions—property and power—attacked with equal strength by the slave in the factory and by the intellectual worker, by the man who has an urgent interest in change as much as by the man who will recoil with fright on the day he sees his ideas take on flesh,
shake free of the dust of the libraries, and become manifest in the tumult of popular realization.

The decay and decomposition of accepted forms and the general discontent with them; the arduous elaboration of new forms of social organization and the impatient longing for change; the rejuvenating impulse of the critic in the domain of the sciences, of philosophy, of ethics, and the general ferment of public opinion. And on the other side the sluggish indifference or criminal resistance of those who hold on to power and who still have the strength, and sporadically the courage, to oppose themselves to the development of new ideas.

Such was always the condition of societies on the eve of great revolutions; such is the condition of society again today. It is not the overexcited imagination of a crowd of hotheads that reveals it, but calm and scientific observation, to such an extent that even those who excuse their guilty indifference by saying: "Stay calm! There is no danger yet!" will admit that the situation becomes steadily more inflamed and that they no longer have any idea where we are going; having relieved themselves by such an admission, they return to their thoughtless ruminations.

"But it has been announced so often, that revolution of yours," the pessimist sighs in our ears: "Even I believed in it for a while, but it has not happened." It will be all the more mature when it does. "On two occasions' the revolution was on the point of breaking out, in 1754 and 1771," a historian tells us in speaking of the 18th century.(7) (I had almost written: in 1848 and 1871). But since it has not even yet broken out, it can only be all the more powerful and productive when it happens at the end of the century.

But let the thoughtless people continue their slumber and the pessimists grumble; we have other things to do. We must ask what will be the nature of that revolution which so many people expect and for which they prepare, and what should be our attitude in the presence of that eventuality.

We are not making historical prophecies: neither the embryonic condition of sociology, nor the present state of history which, according to Augustin Thierry,(8)
"merely stifles the truth under conventional formulas," give us the authority to do so. Let us then confine ourselves to posing a few quite simple questions.

Can we admit, even for a moment, that the immense intellectual work of revision and reformation that goes on in all classes of society, can be satisfied by a simple change of government? Can we claim that the economic discontent which grows and spreads from day to day will not become manifest in public life as soon as favorable circumstances—such as the disorganization of authority—appear as the results of yet unforeseen events?

Is posing these questions a solution? Obviously not.

Can we believe that the Irish and English farm workers, if they see the possibility of seizing the land which they have coveted for so long, and driving away the landlords they hate so cordially, would not seek to profit from the first outbreak to attempt the realization of their hopes?

Can we believe, if there were a new 1848 in Europe, that France would be content merely to send Gambetta packing so as to replace him with M. Clemenceau, (9) and not make an effort to see what The Commune might do to ameliorate the lot of the workers? Can we imagine that the French peasant, seeing the central power in disorder, would not do his best to lay hands on the rich meadows of the holy sisters as well as the fertile lands of the great merchants who—once they have established themselves around him do not cease to enlarge their properties? That he will not take his stand beside those who offer him their support in realizing his dream of steady and well-paid work?

And can we believe that the Italian or the Spanish or the Slavic peasant will not do the same thing?

Do you think that the miners, weary of their poverty, of their suffering and of the massacres that firedamp explosions wreak among them (all of which they still endure—though murmuring—under the watchful eyes of the company guards)—do you think that they would not do their best to eliminate the owners of the mines if one day they could sense that the demoralized guards had become unwilling to obey
And consider the small craftsman, crouching in his damp cave of a workshop, his fingers frozen and his belly empty, striving from dawn to dusk to earn enough to pay the baker and feed his five little mouths, who become all the more dear to him as they grow pallid from their privations. And think of this other man, who has lain down under the first archway he came to, because he cannot pay his twopence to sleep in the common lodging house. Don't you think they would like to find in some sumptuous palace a dry and warm corner to shelter their families, which may indeed be more worthy than those of the wealthy? Don't you think they might like to see common stores stocked with enough bread for all those who have not learned how to live in idleness, with enough clothing to fit the narrow shoulders of the workers' children as well as the soft bodies of well-to-do brats? Do you believe that those who live in rags are unaware that they could find in the shops of the cities more than enough to supply the essential needs of all the inhabitants, and that if all the workers could apply themselves to the production of useful objects, instead of wasting their energy on producing items of luxury, they would provide enough necessities for the whole community and for many neighboring communities?

Finally, must we not admit that such things are becoming evident everywhere and find expression on all men's lips in moments of crisis (don't forget the siege of Paris!), and that the people will seek to put them into practice on the day they feel strong enough to act?

The wisdom of humanity has already answered these questions, and here is its reply.

The coming revolution will have a universality distinguishing it from its predecessors. It will no longer be one country that launches itself into the turmoil, it Will be all the countries of Europe. In the past, local revolutions may have been possible, but today, when one thinks of the shaken equilibrium of all European States and the links of solidarity that have been established on the continent, a local revolution cannot succeed though it may survive over a short period. As in 1848, a disturbance in one country will inevitably spread to the others, and the
revolutionary conflagration will embrace the whole of Europe.

But if in 1848 the rebellious cities might still place their confidence in changes of government or constitutional reforms, this is no longer the case today. The Parisian worker will not expect from any government— even a government like that of the Commune—the accomplishment of his wishes; he will set to work himself, saying as he does, "Then it will be done for certain!"

The people of Russia will not wait for a Constituent Assembly to grant them possession of the land they cultivate: once they have any hope of success they will try to seize it for themselves; they are already seeking to do that, as witness the continued peasant insurrections. It is the same in Italy and in Spain; and if the German worker allows himself to be lulled for a while by those who would like everything to be done by telegrams from Berlin, the example of his neighbors and the incapability of his leaders will soon teach him the true revolutionary way. Thus, the distinct character of the coming revolution will consist in international attempts at economic revolution, made by the people without waiting for the revolution to fall like manna from the heavens.

But already we see the pessimist, with a sly smile on his chops coming to us with "A few objections, just a few objections!" So be it. We will listen to him and give our answers.

• Chapter 5: Political Rights

Words of a Rebel

Peter Kropotkin

Chapter 5: Political Rights
Each day, in a whole range of tones, the bourgeois press praises the value and the importance of our political liberties, of the "political rights of the citizen": universal suffrage, free elections, freedom of the press and of meeting, etc.

"Since you have these freedoms," they say to us, "what is the point of rebelling? Don't the liberties you already possess assure the possibilities of all the reforms that may be necessary, without your needing to resort to the gun?" So, let us analyze, from our point of view, what these famous "political liberties" are worth to the class that owns nothing, rules nobody, and has in fact very few rights and plenty of duties.

We are not asserting, as has sometimes been said, that political rights have no value to us. We know very well that since the days of serfdom and even since the last century, we have made a certain amount of progress; the man of the people is no longer the being deprived of all rights that he was in the past. The French peasant can no longer be flogged at the roadside, as he still is in Russia. In public places, outside his factory or workshop, the worker considers himself the equal of anyone, especially in the great cities. The French worker is no longer that being lacking in all human rights who in the past was treated by the aristocracy as a beast of burden. Thanks to the revolutions, thanks to the blood which the people shed, he has acquired certain personal rights whose value we have no desire to minimize.

But we know how to draw distinctions, and we assert that there are rights and rights. There are those that have a real value and those that do not, and whoever tries to confound them is only deceiving the people. Certain rights like, for example, the equality of the peasant and the squire in their personal relations, or the corporal inviolability of the person, have been won through great struggles, and are so dear to the people that they will rise up rather than allowing them to be violated. But there are others, like universal suffrage, freedom of the press, etc., towards which the people have always remained lukewarm, because the know perfectly well that these rights, which have served so well to defend the ruling bourgeoisie against the encroachments of royal power and of the aristocracy, are no more than an instrument in the hands of the dominant classes to maintain their power over the people. These rights are not even real political rights, since they
provide no safeguard for the mass of the people; and if we still decorate them with that pompous title it is because our political language is no more than a jargon elaborated by the ruling classes for their own use and in their own interest.

What, in fact, is a political right if it is not an instrument to safeguard the independence, the dignity and the freedom of those who do not yet have the power to impose on others a respect for that right? What is its use, if it is not and instrument of liberation for those who need to be freed? The Gambetas, the Bismarcks, the Gladstones need neither the freedom of the press nor the freedom of meeting, because they can write what they want, can meet whomsoever they wish, and profess whatever ideas they please; they are already liberated. They are free. If there is any need together, it is surely to those who are not powerful enough to impose their will. Such in fact is the origin of all political rights.

But, looked at from this viewpoint, have the political rights we are talking of been created with an eye to those who alone need safeguards? Obviously not. Universal suffrage can sometimes and to a certain extent protect, without the need for a constant recourse to force in self-defense. It can serve to reestablish the equilibrium between two forces which struggle for power, without the rivals being forces to draw their swords on each other as they did in the past. But it can be no help if it is a matter of overthrowing or even limiting power, or of abolishing domination. Since it is such an excellent instrument for resolving in a peaceful manner any quarrels among the rulers, what use can it possibly be to the ruled?

Does not the history of universal suffrage tell us this? Whenever the bourgeoisie has feared that universal suffrage might become a weapon in the hands of the people that could be turned against the privileged, it has fought it stubbornly. But the day it was proved, in 1848, that universal suffrage held nothing to fear, and that one could rule the people with an iron rod by the use of universal suffrage, it was immediately accepted. Now the bourgeoisie itself has become its defender, because it understands that here is a weapon adapted to sustain its domination, but absolutely harmless as a threat to its privileges.

It is the same with freedom of the press. What, in the eyes of the bourgeoisie, has been the most conclusive argument in favor of freedom of the press? Its
powerlessness. Yes, its powerlessness. M. de Girardin has written a whole book on this theme: the powerlessness of the press. "Formerly -- he says -- we burned witches because people had the stupidity to believe they were all-powerful; now people commit the same stupidity regarding the press, because they believe that it also is all-powerful. But it is nothing of the kind; it is as powerless as the witches of the middle ages. Hence, more persecutions of the press!" This is the contention that M. de Girardin offered in the past. And when the bourgeoisie discuss the freedom of the press among themselves, what arguments to they advance in its favor?

"Look at England, Switzerland and the United States," they say. "In all of them the press is free and yet capitalist exploitation is better established in them than in any other country; its reign is more secure among them than anywhere else." And they add, "What does it matter if dangerous doctrines are produced. Don't we have all the means of stifling the voices of the journals that protect them without even a recourse to violence? And even if one day, at a time of agitation, the revolutionary press becomes a dangerous weapon, so what? On that day it will be time enough to destroy it with a single blow on the most convenient pretext."

As for the freedom of meeting, the same kind of reasoning holds. "Give complete freedom of meeting." Say the bourgeoisie. "It will do no harm to our privileges. What we have to fear are the secret societies, and public meetings are the best way of paralyzing them. But if, in a moment of excitement, public meeting should get out of hand, we would always have the means of suppressing them, since we hold the powers of government."

"The inviolability of the dwelling? Of Course! Write it into all the codes! Cry it from rooftops!" say the knowing ones among the bourgeoisie. "We don't want policemen coming to surprise us in our little nests." But we will institute a secret service to keep an eye on suspects; we will people the country with police spies, make lists of dangerous people, and watch them closely. And if we smell out one day that anything is afoot, then we must set to vigorously, make a jest of inviolability, arrest people in their beds, search and ransack their homes! But above all we must do this boldly and if anyone protests too loudly, we must lock them up as well, and say to the rest, 'What would you have us do, gentlemen? We
must deal firmly with the situation!' And we shall be applauded."

"The privacy of correspondence? Say it everywhere, write and cry it out, that correspondence is inviolable. If the head of some village post office opens a letter out of curiosity, sack him at once and proclaim loudly that he is a monstrous criminal. Take good care that the little secrets we exchange with each other in our letters shall not be divulged. But if we get wind of some plot being hatched against our privileges, then let us not stand on ceremony; let us open everyone's letters, allocate a thousand clerks to the task if necessary, and if someone takes it on himself to protest, let us say frankly, as an English minister did recently to the applause of parliament. 'Yes, gentlemen, it is with a heavy heart and the deepest of distaste that we order letters to be opened, but it is entirely because the country (i.e. the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie) is in danger."

This is what these so-called liberties can be reduced to. Freedom of press and of meeting, inviolability of home and all the rest, are only respected if the people do not make use of them against the privileged classes. But the day the people begin to take advantage of them to undermine those privileges, the so-called liberties will be cast overboard.

This is quite natural. Humanity retains only the rights it has won by hard struggle and is ready to defend at every moment, with arms in hand.

If men and women are not whipped in the streets of Paris, as they are in Odessa, it is because on the day a government dared to attempt this people would tear its agents to pieces. If an aristocrat can no longer make way for himself through the streets with the help of blows delivered right and left by the staves of his servants, it is because any of the servants who got such ideas into their heads would immediately be overpowered. If a degree of equality exists between the worker and his employer, at least in the streets and in public establishments, it is not because the worker's rights are written into the law but because, thanks to revolutions in the past, he has a feeling of personal dignity that will not let him endure an offense from anyone.

Yet it is evident that in present-day society, divided as it is between masters and
serfs, true liberty cannot exist; it will not exist so long as there are exploiters and slaves, governments and governed. At the same time it does not follow that, as we await the day when the anarchist revolution will sweep away all social distinctions, we wish to see the press muzzled, as in Germany, the right of meeting annulled as in Russia, or the inviolability of the person reduced as it is in Turkey. Slaves of capital that we all are, we want to be able to write and publish whatever seems right to us, we want to be able to meet and organize as we please, precisely so that we can shake off the yoke of capital.

But it is high time we understood that we must not demand these rights through constitutional laws. We cannot go in search of our natural rights by way of a law, a scrap of paper that could be torn up at the least whim of the rulers. For it is only by transforming ourselves into a force, capable of imposing our will, that we shall succeed in making our rights respected.

Do you want to have freedom to speak and write whatever seems right to you? Do you want to have the liberty to meet and organize? It is not from a parliament that we seekers of freedom should ask permission, nor must we beg a law from the Senate. We must become an organized force, capable of showing our teeth every time anyone sets about restraining our rights of speech and meeting; we must be strong, and then we may be sure that nobody will dare dispute our right to speak, to write, to print what we write, and meet together. The day we have been able to establish enough agreement among the exploited for them to come out in their millions in the streets and take up the defense of our rights, nobody will dare to dispute those rights, nor any others that we choose to demand. Then, and only then, shall we have truly gained such rights, for which we might plead to parliament for decades in vain. Then those rights will be guaranteed to us in a far more certain way than if they were merely written down on a bit of paper.

Freedoms are not given, they are taken.

10 Emile de Girardin (1806-1881), an active journalist in Paris from the 1848 Revolution down to the Third Republic; he almost single-handedly invented the cheap popular press in France with his La Presse, as early as 1836; he was a clever feuilletonist, and the Vicar of Bray of French journalism, supporting all the timely
IT is to the young that I wish to speak now. Let the old—I mean of course the old in heart and spirit—put these pages aside without tiring themselves pointlessly by reading something which will tell them nothing.

I assume you are about eighteen or twenty; that you are finishing your apprenticeship or your studies; that you are about to enter into life. I imagine you have a mind detached from the superstitions people have tried to inculcate in you; you are in no fear of the Devil and you do not listen to the rantings of priests and parsons. Furthermore I am sure you are not one of those popinjays, the sad products of a society in decline, who parade in the streets with their Mexican trousers and their monkey faces and who already, at their age, are dominated by the appetite for pleasures at any price. I assume, on the contrary, that your heart is in the right place, and it is because of this that I am speaking to you.

An urgent question, I know, lies before you.
Many times you have asked yourself, "What shall I become?" In fact, when you are young you understand that, after having studied a trade or a science for several years—at the expense of society, let it be noted—you have not done so in order to make yourself an instrument of exploitation. You would have to be very depraved and vicious never to have dreamed of one day applying your intelligence, your capacities and your knowledge to help in the liberation of those who still swarm in poverty and ignorance.

You are one of those who dreamed in this way, are you not? Very well, let us see what you might do to turn your dream into a reality.

I do not know into what condition you were born. Perhaps, favored by fortune, you have made scientific studies; you intend to become a doctor, a lawyer, a man of letters or science; a wide field of action opens up before you, and you are entering into life with broad knowledge and proven aptitudes. Or you are an honest artisan; your scientific knowledge is bounded by the little you have learned at school, but you have had the advantage of knowing at first hand the life of harsh labor which the worker must lead in our days.

For the sake of argument, I am assuming that you have received a scientific education. Let us suppose you are about to become a doctor.

Tomorrow, a man in a worker's blouse will call you to visit a sick person. He will lead you into one of those alleys where neighbors can almost shake hands over the heads of the passersby; you will climb in fetid air and by the shivering light of a lantern up two, three, four or five flights of stairs covered in slippery filth, and in a dark, cold room you will find the invalid, lying on a straw pallet and covered in dirty rags. Pale, anemic children, shivering under their tatters, look at you through great, wide-open eyes. The husband has worked all his life twelve or thirteen hours a day on any jobs he could get; now he has been out of work for three months. Unemployment is not unusual in his trade; every year it happens periodically; but normally, when the man was idle, the woman would take casual work—washing your shirts, perhaps, and earning a dollar or so a day; but now she has been bedridden for two months, destitution rears its hideous face before the family.
If you show an honest look and a good heart, and speak frankly, the family will tell you a good many things. They will tell you that the woman on the other side of the partition, the woman with the heartbreaking cough, earns her wretched living by ironing; that on the floor below all the children have fever, that the laundress on the ground floor will not see the spring, and that in the next door house things are even worse.

What would you prescribe for all these sicknesses? Good food, a change of air, less exhausting work? You would very much like to say that, but you dare not, and you hurry broken-heartedly out of the house with a curse on your lips.

Next day you are still thinking about those inhabitants of the slums, when your colleague tells you that a footman came to fetch him in a coach. It was for one of the inhabitants of a rich mansion, a woman, exhausted by sleepless nights, who gives all her life to her boudoir, to paying visits, to balls and to quarrels with her boorish husband. Your colleague has prescribed for her a less frivolous way of life, a less rich diet, walks in the open air, calm of mind and some exercises at home which might partly make up for the lack of productive work! One woman is dying because, all her life, she has never eaten or rested enough; the other is wilting because all her life she has never known what work is.

If you have one of those apathetic natures that can adapt itself to anything and in the face of the most revolting facts can console itself with a sigh and a glass of beer, you will harden yourself to these contrasts, and, given your nature, you will have only one idea, which is to make yourself a niche in the ranks of the pleasure-seekers so that you will never find yourself a place among the poor.

But if you are a real man, if each feeling is translated within you into an act of will, if the beast within you has not killed the intelligent being, one day you will go back to your house, saying: "No, it is all unjust! It cannot continue like this! It is not a question of curing sicknesses; they must be prevented. A little bit of well being and intellectual development would be enough to wipe from our lists half the sick people and their sicknesses. To hell with drugs! Fresh air, proper feeding, less brutalizing work: that is where we must start. Without these things, the whole occupation of a doctor is no more than a trickery and a deception."
That day you will begin to understand what socialism means. You will want to know more about it, and if altruism is more to you than a word void of meaning, if you apply to the study of the social question the severe inductive standards of the naturalist, you will end up in our ranks, and like us you will work for the social revolution.

But perhaps you will say: "To the Devil with practice! Let us devote ourselves, like the astronomer, the physicist, and the chemist, to pure science! That will always bear its fruits, even if it is only for later generations." But before you do that, let us determine what you will be seeking in science. Will it be simply the enjoyment—which is certainly immense—that you will gain from the study of the mysteries of nature and the exercise of your intellectual faculties? If that is so, let me ask you how the scholar who cultivates science to pass his life agreeably differs from the drunkard who also seeks in life no more than immediate enjoyment and finds it in wine? It is true that the scholar makes a better choice of the source of his pleasures, since they are more intense and more durable, but that is all. Both of them, the drunkard and the scholar, have the same egotistical aim, personal enjoyment.

But of course you will tell me you are not seeking such an egotistical life. In working for science, you have every intent of working for humanity, and that idea will guide you in the choice of your research.

What a beautiful illusion! And who among us, giving himself for the first time to science, has not cherished it for a moment?

But if you are really thinking of helping humanity, if that is what you aspire to in your studies, you will find yourself facing a formidable objection, for, in so far as you have any sense of justice, you will immediately observe that in present-day society, science is only a kind of luxury that makes life more agreeable to a few, and remains absolutely inaccessible to almost the whole of humanity.

For example, it is more than a century since science established strong cosmological notions, but what increase has there been in the number of people who hold such notions or who have acquired a spirit of truly scientific criticism?
Hardly a few thousands, lost in the midst of hundreds of millions still sharing prejudices and superstitions worthy of barbarians and destined in consequence to serve for ever as the playthings of religious impostors.

Or take a look at what science has done to elaborate the rational foundations of physical and moral hygiene. It tells you how we must live to preserve our bodily health, how we can maintain in good condition our human collectivities; it shows the way to intellectual and moral happiness. But does not all the immense work carried out in these directions remain as dead words in our books? And why is that? Because science nowadays is carried on for a handful of privileged people, because the social inequality that divides wage-earners from the owners of capital turns all our teachings about the conditions of a rational life into a mockery for nine-tenths of humanity.

I could cite you many more examples, but I will be brief: just come out of Faust's study, whose dust-blackened window panes hardly allow the daylight to reach the books, and look around you; at every step you yourself will find proofs to support my contention.

It is no longer a question at this moment of accumulating scientific truths and discoveries. It is more important to spread the truths already gained by science, to make them enter into human life, to turn them into a common domain. This must be done in such a way that the whole of humanity may become capable of assimilating and applying them, so that science will cease to be a luxury and will become the foundation for the life of all. Justice demands that it happen in this way.

I would add that the interests of science itself also impose this solution. Science makes real progress only when a new truth enters a situation that is ready to accept it. The theory of the mechanical origin of heat, stated in the last century in almost the same terms as Hirn and Clausius enunciate it today, remained for eighty years buried in academic memoirs until our knowledge of physics was sufficiently expanded to create a milieu capable of accepting it. Three generations had to pass by until the ideas of Erasmus Darwin on the variation of species were welcomed from the mouth of his grandson and accepted, not without pressure from public opinion, by the scholarly academicians. For the scholar, like the poet or the
artist, is always the product of the society in which he lives and teaches.

The more deeply you look into these ideas, the more you will realize that before anything else is done we must modify the state of affairs which today condemns the scholar to overflow with scientific truths while almost the whole of humanity remains what it was five or ten centuries ago, in the condition of virtual slaves, mere machines incapable of adapting themselves to established truths. And the day you accept that idea, which is at once broadly humanitarian and profoundly scientific, you will lose all your taste for pure science.

You will devote yourself to seeking ways to bring about that transformation, and if you do not abandon the impartiality that has guided you in your scientific investigations, you will inevitably adopt the cause of socialism; you will put an end to sophistry and find your place among us; tired of working to create enjoyment for that small group which already has so much of it, you will apply your knowledge and devotion to the immediate service of the oppressed.

And you can be sure that then, when you have fulfilled your sense of duty and feel a true harmony between your sentiments and your acts, you will discover within yourself forces whose existence you had never even suspected. And one day—which with all due respect to your professors will not be long in coming—when the modifications you have worked for become evident, then, drawing new strengths from collective research and from the powerful co-operation of the masses of workers who will put themselves at its service, science will take on an impetus in comparison with which the slow progress of today will seem like the simple experiments of schoolboys.

Then you will be able to take joy in science, since that joy will be available to all humanity.

2.

If you have finished your studies in law and are preparing yourself for the bar, it is likely that you too have illusions about your future activity—granted that you are one of those who know the meaning of altruism. Perhaps you think like this: "To
consecrate one's life without truce or surrender to bringing about the triumph of a law that is the expression of supreme justice; what vocation could be finer?" And you enter life full of confidence in yourself and in the vocation you have chosen.

Very well, let us open at a venture the chronicles of the judiciary, and see what life has to tell you.

Here is a rich landowner; he is asking for the expulsion of a tenant farmer who is not paying the rent agreed on. From the legal viewpoint, there is no question; if the farmer does not pay, he must go. But when we analyze the facts, this is what we learn. The landlord has always dissipated his rents on high living, the farmer has always worked hard. The landowner has done nothing to improve his property, yet its value has tripled in fifteen years, thanks to the surplus value given the soil by laying down a railway, making new local roads, draining marshes, clearing bushland; while the farmer, who has largely contributed to raising the value of the land is ruined; having fallen into the hands of speculators and burdened himself with debt, he can no longer pay his rent. The law, always on the side of property, makes a technical decision in favor of the landlord. But what would you do, if legal fictions have not yet killed in you the sense of justice? Would you demand that the farmer be thrown out on the road—which is what the law says—or would you demand that the landlord return to the farmer all the share of surplus value that is due to his labor, which is what equity would dictate? On what side would you stand? For the law, but against justice? Or for justice, which would make you against the law?

And when workers go on strike against their employers without giving the required fortnight's notice, on what side would you be found? On the side of the law, which means on the side of the employer who, profiting from a time of crisis, made scandalous profits (as you will see from reading about recent trials), or on the side of the workers who at the same time were getting a wage of two and a half francs and watching their wives and children wasting away? Would you defend the fiction which affirms the "freedom of agreement"? Or would you uphold equity, according to which a contract concluded between a man who has dined well and one who sells his work in order to eat, between the strong and the weak, is not a contract at all?
Here is another case. One day in Paris, a man is prowling around. Suddenly he
seizes a steak and runs. He is caught and questioned, and it turns out that he is an
unemployed worker and that he and his family have had nothing to eat for four
days. People beg the butcher to let him go, but the butcher wants to taste the
triumph of "justice," he prosecutes, and the man is condemned to six months in
prison. Such is the will of the blind goddess Themis.12 Doesn't your conscience
rebel against the law and against society when it sees such verdicts given from day
to day?

Or, to give another example, would you demand the application of the law against
that man, ill-treated and scoffed from childhood, growing up without hearing a word
of sympathy, who in the end kills his neighbor to take five francs from him? Would
you demand that he be guillotined or-worse, that he be shut up for twenty years in
a prison when you know that he is sick rather than criminal, and that in any case
society as a whole must bear the responsibility for his crime?

Would you demand that the weavers who in a moment of exasperation set fire to
their factory be sent to prison? That the man who has shot at a crowned tyrant be
sent to prison? That the military should fire on the insurgent populace when it
plants the flag of the future on the barricades? No, a thousand times no!

If you apply your reason instead of repeating what you have been taught, if you
analyze and remove the law from that fog of fictions in which it has been veiled to
conceal its origins, which lie in the will of the strong, and also to mask its
substance, which has always been the consecration of all the oppressions
bequeathed to humanity by its bloody history-you will acquire a supreme contempt
for that law. You will understand that to remain the servant of the written law is to
find yourself each day in opposition to the law of conscience, with which you will
find yourself trying to accommodate; and as the struggle cannot continue, either
you will stifle your conscience and become a mere rascal, or you will break with
tradition and come to work among us for the abolition of all injustices, economic,
political and social. But that will mean that you are a socialist, that you have
become a revolutionary.

And what about you, my young engineer, who have dreamed of bettering the lot of
the workers through applying science to industry? What sad disillusion and vexation awaits you! You give the youthful energy of your intelligence to elaborating a railway project which, by clambering along the edges of precipices and penetrating the hearts of granite mountain giants, will bring together two lands divided by nature. But once you have reached the site of this work, you will see whole battalions of workers decimated by exhaustion and sickness in the building of a single tunnel, you will see thousands of others going home with a few dollars and the unmistakable signs of consumption, you will see human corpses -the victims of a vicious avarice-marking off every meter you have pushed you line forward, and once the railway is completed you will see it becoming a highway for the cannon of invaders.

Perhaps you have devoted your youth to a discovery that will simplify production and, after many efforts and many sleepless nights, you have finally completed and confirmed this precious discovery. You set out applying it, and the result exceeds all your hopes. Ten thousand, twenty thousand workers are thrown out on the streets. Those who remain, mostly children, are reduced to the condition of machines. Three, four, perhaps ten employers will make fortunes and celebrate with brimming glasses of champagne! Is this what you have dreamed about?

Finally you make a study of recent industrial advances and you find that the dressmaker has gained nothing, absolutely nothing, through the discovery of the sewing machine; that the worker on the Gothard dies of ankolyosis in spite of diamond drills;13 that the mason and the laborer are unemployed as before despite the introduction of Giffard lifts. If you discuss social problems with the independence of mind which has guided you in your technical problems, you will arrive inevitably at the conclusion that, under the regime of private property and the wages system, each new discovery, even when it augments slightly the worker's well being, also makes his servitude all the heavier, his work all the more brutalizing, unemployment more frequent and crises sharper, and that he who already possesses all the luxuries is the only one who will seriously benefit.

What will you do then, once you have reached that conclusion? Perhaps you will begin to silence your conscience with sophistries; then, one fine day, you will say goodbye to your honest dreams of youth and set out to gain for yourself the right to
luxuries, and then you will find your way into the camp of the exploiters. Or perhaps, if you have a good heart, you will say to yourself: "No, this is not the time to make discoveries! Let us work first to transform the mode of production; when individual property is abolished then each new industrial progress will be made for the benefit of all humanity; and the mass of workers, who today are mere machines, will become living beings and will apply to industry and intuition sustained by study and informed by manual skill. Technical progress will take on in the next fifty years an impetus we dare not dream of today."

And what can one say to the schoolteacher—not to the one who sees his profession as a tedious trade—but to the other who, surrounded by a happy band of kids, feels at ease among their animated looks, their happy smiles, and seeks to awaken in their little heads the humanitarian idea he cherished when he was young?

Often, I see that you are sad and knit your brows. Today, your favorite student, who indeed is not so good in Latin but is good-natured nonetheless, told with enthusiasm the tale of William Tell. His eyes shining, he seemed to wish to kill every tyrant on the spot, as he recited with fire in his voice these passionate lines of Schiller:

*Before the slave as he breaks his chains, before the free man, do not tremble!*

But when he went home, his mother, his father and his uncle reprimanded him severely for his lack of respect for the parson and the policeman. They lectured him by the hour on "prudence, respect for authority, submission," and so he put aside his Schiller to read "The Art of Making Your Way in the World."

And yesterday you learned how badly some of your best students had turned out: one does nothing but dream of military glory, and another collaborates with his employer in embezzling the wretched pay of the workers. And you, having put so much hope in these young people, now reflect on the sad contradiction that exists between real life and the idea.

You are still reflecting on it, but I foresee that in two years, having experienced
disillusion after disillusion, you will abandon your favorite authors, and you will end up saying that Tell may have been an impeccable father, but he was also a bit of a fool; that poetry is an excellent thing for reading by the fireside, particularly when one has spent a whole day teaching the rules of compound interest, but that-after all-poets always soar in the clouds and their verses have nothing to do either with life or with the next visit of the school inspector.

Alternatively, your youthful dreams develop into the firm convictions of your mature years. You would like to see a broad humanitarian education for all, in the school and outside it, and seeing that this is impossible in present conditions, you set about attacking the very foundations of bourgeois society. Then, suspended by the minister, you will quit schooling and join us in showing adults who are less educated than you, what is important in knowledge, what humanity should be, what it could be. You will come to work with the socialists in the complete transformation of present-day society and its redirection towards equality, solidarity and freedom.

And now for you, young artist, whether you are a sculptor, a painter, a poet or a musician! Are you not aware that the sacred fire which inspired so many of your predecessors is lacking today among you and your kind? That art is banal? That mediocrity reigns?

And could it be any different? The joy of having rediscovered the antique world, of having turned back to the forces of nature, that inspired the masterpieces of the Renaissance, no longer exists in contemporary art: the revolutionary idea has not yet inspired it, and in its absence artists today think they have found something as good in realism' which strives to represent a drop of dew on a leaf like a photograph but in color, to imitate the muscles of a cow's rump, or to represent meticulously, in prose or verse, the suffocating mud of a sewer or the boudoir of a lady of love.

"But if this is really the situation," you ask, "what can be done?"

If the sacred fire you claim to possess is no more than a snuffed and smoking candle, then you will continue to do as you have done, and your art will soon
degenerate into a craft to decorate the parlors of shopkeepers, into the scribbling of librettis for operettas and of journalistic frivolities like those of Emile de Girardin; most of you in fact are already making your way fast down the fatal slope.

But if your heart truly beats in unison with that of humanity, if, as a true poet, you have the ear to listen to life, then, confronting the sea of suffering whose tide rises around you, the peoples dying of hunger, the corpses piled in the mines and lying mutilated in heaps at the feet of the barricades, the convoys of exiles who will be buried in the snows of Siberia and on the beaches of tropical islands; confronting that supreme struggle which is now going on, echoing with the sorrowful cries of the defeated and the orgies of the victors, with heroism at grips with cowardice, enthusiasm fighting against baseness—you can no longer stay neutral! You will come to stand beside the oppressed, because you know that the beautiful, the sublime and life itself are on the side of those who fight for light, for humanity, for justice!

But now you interrupt me. "If the abstract science is a luxury," you ask, "and the practice of medicine a sham, if law is injustice and technical advances are instruments of exploitation; if education is defeated by the self-interest of the educators and if art, lacking a revolutionary ideal, can only degenerate, what is there left for me to do?"

And my answer is this. "An immense task awaits which can only attract you, a task in which action will accord completely with conscience, a task that can win over the most noble natures and the most vigorous characters."

"What is this task," you ask. I propose to tell you.

3.

Either you compromise constantly with your conscience and end up one fine day saying: "To Hell with humanity, so long as I can gain and profit from all the advantages, and the people are stupid enough to let me do so!" Or you take your place on the side of the socialists and work with them for the complete transformation of society. Such is the inevitable conclusion of the analysis we have made; and such will be the logical decision which all intelligent people will
inevitably reach if only they reason wisely and resist the sophisms whispered in their ears by their bourgeois education and the self-interested views of those around them. And once that conclusion has been reached, the question, "What to do?" naturally offers itself.

The answer is easy.

Merely shake yourself free of your world in which it is customary to say that the people are no more than a heap of brutes, go out to meet those very people, and the answer will emerge of its own accord.

You will see that everywhere, in France as in Germany, in Italy as in the United States, and in all places where there are privileged and oppressed, a gigantic development is taking place in the heart of the working class, whose aim is to break for ever the servitudes imposed by capitalist feudalism and lay the foundations of a society based on justice and equality. It is no longer enough today for the people to express their woes in those laments sung by the seventeenth century serfs and still by Russian peasants, whose melody breaks one's heart. They work now, with full consciousness of what they are doing, and fight against all obstacles to their liberation.

Their thought is constantly engaged in divining what needs to be done so that life, instead of being a curse for three quarters of humanity, shall be a joy for all. They approach the most challenging problems of sociology, and seek to resolve them with their own good sense, their powers of observation, their hard experience. To make common cause with other unfortunate people, they group together and organize. They form societies sustained with difficulty by tiny contributions; they seek to make contact over the frontiers and, more effectively than the philanthropical rhetoricians, they prepare for the day when wars between peoples will become impossible. To know what their brothers are doing, and to become better acquainted with them, as well as to elaborate and propagate ideas, they maintain at great cost in sacrifice and effort their working class press. Finally, when the time comes, they rise up and, staining the paving stones of the barricades with their blood, they leap forward to the conquest of those liberties which later on the rich and the powerful will corrupt into privileges and turn against the workers who
What continual efforts are demanded, what unceasing struggles! What tasks begun again and again, sometimes to fill the gaps created by weariness, by corruption, by persecution; sometimes to resume the studies that were rudely interrupted by mass exterminations!

Their journals are created by men who have been forced to steal their scraps of education by depriving themselves of sleep and food; the agitation is sustained by pennies wrung out of scanty necessities, sometimes out of dry bread; and all that goes on in the continual fear of seeing one's family reduced to the starkest poverty as soon as the employer realizes that "his worker, his slave, is playing with socialism!"

This is what you will see, if you go among the people.

And in that endless struggle, how often the worker, as he sinks under the weight of obstacles, has said to himself in vain: "Where are these young people who have been educated at our expense, whom we have fed and clothed while they studied, and for whom, our backs bent under burdens and our bellies empty, we have built these mansions, these colleges and museums, and for whom, with our wan faces, we have printed their fine books which we cannot even read? Where are they, these professors who claim to possess humanitarian knowledge and for whom humanity is not worth as much as a rare species of caterpillar? These men who talk of freedom and never defend ours which day by day is trampled under foot? These writers, these poets, these painters, this whole gang of hypocrites, who speak of the people with tears in their eyes yet are never to be found among us, helping in our endeavors!"

Occasionally a young man does turn up who has been dreaming of drums and barricades and who is on the lookout for sensational scenes; he will desert the cause of the people as soon as he sees that the way of the barricades is long, that the work to be done on the way is onerous, and that the laurel crowns he may win are mingled with thorns. More often they are individuals of unfulfilled ambition who, having failed in their first ventures, attempt to capture the voice of the people, but
later will be the first to thunder against them as soon as the people wish to apply the principles they themselves have professed; it may be they who will have the cannon aimed at the "vile multitude," should it dare to step beyond the point which they, the leaders, have indicated.

Add the stupid insults, the haughty contempt, the cowardly calumnies expressed by the greater number, and you will see what the people can expect from bourgeois youth to help them in their social revolution.

Lover of pure science, if you have opened your minds to the principles of socialism and understand the full significance of the approaching revolution, do you not recognize that the whole of science must be reorganized to suit the new principles; that we will have to carry out in this domain a revolution whose importance will vastly surpass that accomplished in the sciences during the eighteenth century? Do you not understand that history, today a convenient mythology regarding the greatness of kings, of notable personalities, of parliaments-must be entirely recast from the popular point of view, from the viewpoint of the work accomplished by the masses in the phases of human revolution? That social economics-hitherto concentrated on capitalist exploitation-must be entirely re-elaborated, both in its fundamental principles and in its innumerable applications? That anthropology, sociology and ethics must be completely revised and that the natural sciences themselves, seen from a new point of view, must undergo a profound modification both in their concepts of natural phenomena and in their methods of exposition? If you do understand these things, why don't you start making these changes and devote your insights to a good cause? But above all come to our aid with your rigorous logic in combatting secular prejudices and elaborating through synthesis the foundations of a better organization; above all, teach us to apply to our reasoning the boldness of true scientific investigation, and, teaching by example, show us how one must sacrifice one's life for the triumph of truth!

And you, physician, whom hard experience has led to understand socialism, do not tire of telling us-today, tomorrow, every day in every occasion-that humanity is doomed to degenerate if it remains in the present condition of living and work; that your drugs will remain powerless against sickness while 99 per cent of humanity vegetate in conditions absolutely opposed to those that science teaches; that it is
the causes of sickness which must be eliminated-and how are we to eliminate those causes? Come then with your scalpel to dissect with a meticulous hand this society on its way to collapse, tell us what a rational way of life could and should be, and, as a true doctor, repeat to us untiringly that one does not hesitate to amputate a gangrenous limb when it might infect the whole body.

And you who have worked on the applications of science to industry, tell us frankly what has been the result of your discoveries; reveal to those who dare not yet stride boldly into the future what possibilities of new inventions are carried within the knowledge we have already acquired, what industry could be under the best conditions, what humanity could produce if it produced always in such a way as to augment its productivity. Offer the people the support of your intuitions, or your practical spirit, of your talents of organization, instead of putting them at the service of the exploiters.

And you, poets, painters, sculptors, musicians, if you have understood your true missions and the interests of your art as well, come and put your pen, your brush, your chisel at the service of the revolution. Retell, in your prose rich with images or on your gripping canvases, the titanic struggles of the peoples against their oppressors; inflame the hearts of the young with the marvelous revolutionary breath which inspired our ancestors; tell the woman how splendid her husband's actions will be if he gives his life to the great cause of social emancipation. Show the people what is ugly in present-day life, and put your finger on the causes of that ugliness; tell us what a rational life might be if it did not have to stumble at every pace because of the ineptitude and the ignominies of the present social order.

All of you who possess knowledge and talents and good heart as well, come with your companions to put them at the service of those who have the greatest need of them. And be confident that if you come, not as masters, but as comrades in the struggle; not to govern but to seek your inspiration in a new setting; less to teach than to understand and formulate the aspirations of the masses and then work unslackeningly and with all the energy of youth to introduce them into daily life: be confident that then, but then only, you yourselves will be living complete and rational lives. You will see that every one of your efforts made in this direction will
bear fruit amply; and this feeling of accord established between your acts and the commands of your conscience will give you energies which you would not suspect existed if you were working for yourself alone.

To struggle in the midst of the people for truth, justice, equality- what could you find more splendid in the whole of life?

4.

I have taken up three long chapters demonstrating to well-to-do young people that when they face the dilemma that life offers them, they will be forced, if they are brave and honest, to take their places in the ranks of the socialists and embrace with them the cause of the social revolution. This might appear to be a simple truth. Yet in speaking to those who have been subjected to the influence of their middle class environment, what sophistries one has to counteract, what prejudices one must try to overcome, what mercenary motives one must seek to push aside!

But I can be more direct in speaking to you, the young people who yourselves come out of the populace. The very force of circumstances makes you willing to become socialists, so long as you have the courage to reason and to act according to your conclusions. In fact, modern socialism has emerged out of the depths of the people's consciousness. If a few thinkers emerging from the bourgeoisie have given it the approval of science and the support of philosophy, the basis of the idea which they have given their own expression has nonetheless been the product of the collective spirit of the working people. The rational socialism of the International is still today our greatest strength, and it was elaborated in working class organization, under the first influence of the masses. The few writers who offered their help in the work of elaborating socialist ideas have merely been giving form to the aspirations that saw their first light among the workers.

To have emerged from the ranks of the working people and not to dedicate oneself to the triumph of socialism, is to misunderstand your own true interests, to deny your own cause and your historic mission at the same time.

Have you forgotten the times when you were still a child and would go on a winter's
day to play in your dark alley? The cold bit into your shoulders through your thin clothes and the mud filled your broken down shoes. Sometimes you would see passing by at a distance plump and richly clothed children who looked haughtily down on you, but you knew perfectly well that these spoiled brats, so spick and span, were not worth as much as you and your comrades, either in intelligence, or good sense, or energy. But later, when you let yourself be shut up in a dirty workshop from five to six in the morning, and for twelve hours had to stand beside a noisy machine, and became a machine yourself in following day by day and years on end the pitiless cadence of its movements, during all this time they-the others-were going happily to their lessons in colleges, in fine schools, in universities And now these same children, less intelligent but more educated than you, have become your bosses, and enjoy all the pleasures of life, all the benefits of civilization. And you-what expectations do you have?

You go home to a tiny apartment, dark and damp, where five or six human beings swarm in a few square meters, where your mother, exhausted by life and grown old from cares rather than from age, offers you as your meal some bread, potatoes and a blackish liquid which ironically passes as coffee; for your only distraction you have always the same question on the order of the day, that of knowing how you will pay the baker and the landlord tomorrow!

But must you really follow the same wretched way of life that your father and your mother have endured for the past thirty or forty years? Must you work all your life to obtain for a few the pleasures of wellbeing, of knowledge and of art, and keep for yourself the continual anxiety over that scrap of bread? Must you renounce for ever everything that makes life good so that you can devote yourself to providing all the advantages that are enjoyed by a handful of idlers? Must you wear yourself out, and know only poverty and starvation when unemployment comes close? Is that what you expect from life?

Maybe you will resign yourself. Seeing no way out of the situation, perhaps you will say to yourself: "Whole generations have suffered the same fate, and since nothing can be changed, I must endure it too! So let us work and try to live as best we can."

So be it! But if you do this, life itself will take on the task of enlightening you.
One day the crash will come, a crisis that is no longer temporary like those in the past, but one that will kill off whole industries, that will reduce to poverty thousands of workers and decimate their families. You will struggle, like the rest, against that calamity. But you will soon see for yourself how your wife, your child, your friend, are succumbing gradually to their privations, weakening before your eyes, and, for want of food and care, dying on some wretched pallet, while life, careless of those who perish, rolls on in its joyous multitudes down the streets of the great city, brilliant with sunshine. Then you will understand how repulsive this society is, you will think about the causes of the crisis, and you will plumb the depths of that inequity which exposes thousands of men to a handful of idlers; you will realize that the socialists are right when they say that society could and should be transformed from top to bottom.

Another day, when your employer makes yet another reduction in wages, to rob you of a few pence to augment his fortune even farther, you will protest, but he will answer arrogantly: "Go and eat grass if you do not want to work for that rate." You will then understand that your employer is not only seeking to shear you like a sheep, but that he also thinks of you as belonging to an inferior race; not content with holding you in his claws through the wages system, he seeks to make you a slave in every other respect. Then you will either bend your back, renouncing any feeling of human dignity and end up suffering all kinds of humiliation; or the blood will rise to your head, you will see with horror the slope down which you are sliding, you will resist and, thrown out on the street, you will understand when the socialists say: "Revolt! Revolt against economic slavery, for that is the cause of all slaveries!" Then you will come to take your place in the ranks of the socialists, and will work with them for the abolition of all slaveries: economic, political and social.

One day you may hear the story of the young girl whom you once liked so much for her open gaze, her slender figure and her animated conversation. Having struggled year after year against poverty, she left her village for the city. She knew life there would be hard, but at least she hoped to earn her bread honestly. But by now you can guess the fate that overtook her. Courted by a young bourgeois, she let herself be trapped by his fine words, and gave herself to him with the passion of youth, to find herself abandoned at the end of a year, with a baby in her arms. Ever brave, she did not cease struggle, but she succumbed in the unequal fight against hunger.
and cold and ended up dying in some hospital or other. What can you do about it?
Perhaps you will push aside your painful memories with a few stupid words: "She isn't the first or the last!" you will say, and one evening we will hear you in some cafe, seated among other brutes of your kind, soiling the young woman's name with filthy slanders. Or perhaps your memories will move your heart; you will seek out the contemptible seducer to throw his crime in his face. You will think about the causes of these incidents of which you hear every day, and you will understand that they cannot cease while mankind is divided into two camps; the poor on one side and on the other the idlers and the playboys with their fine words and brutal appetites. You will understand that it is time to level out this gulf of separation, and you will hasten to range yourself among the socialists.

And you, women of the people, has this story left your cold? As you caress the blond head of that child which crouches beside you, do you never think of the fate that awaits it if the present social order does not change? Do you never give a thought to the future that is in store for your young sister, for your children? Do you want your son to vegetate as your father vegetated, with no care but the need for bread, no pleasures but those of the tavern? Do you want your husband and your boy to be for ever at the mercy of the first comer who may chance to have inherited from his father an interest to exploit? Would you like to see them always remaining the slaves of the employer, the cannon fodder of the powerful, the dung that serves to fatten the fields of the rich?

No, a thousand times no! I know very well that your blood boiled when you heard that your husband, after loudly proclaiming a strike, ended up accepting—cap in hand—the conditions contemptuously dictated in a haughty tone by the big business men! I know that you admired those Spanish women who went into the first ranks to present their breasts to the soldiers' bayonets during a popular uprising!

I know that you repeat with respect the name of the woman who lodged a bullet in a satrap's breast when he chose one day to outrage a socialist held in prison. And I know also that your hearts beat when you read how the women among the people of Paris gathered together under a rain of shells to encourage "their men" in heroism.
I know all this, and that is why I do not doubt that you also will end by coming to join those who work for the conquest of the future.

All of you, sincere young people, men and women, peasants, workers, clerks and soldiers, will understand your rights and come to us; you will come to work with your brothers in preparing the revolution which, abolishing every kind of slavery, shattering all chains, breaking with the old traditions and opening new horizons to all humanity, will finally succeed in establishing in human societies the true Equality, the true Liberty, work for all, and for all the full enjoyment of the fruits of their labor, the full enjoyment of all their faculties; a life that is rational, humane and happy!

Do not let anyone tell you that we are only a tiny handful, too weak ever to attain the grand objective at which we aim. Let us count ourselves and see how many of us there are who suffer from injustice. We peasants who work for another and eat oats to leave the wheat for the master—we are millions of men; we are so numerous that we alone form the mass of the people. We workers who wear rags and weave silks and velours, we too are multitudes, and when the factory whistles allow us our brief period of rest we flood the streets and squares like a roaring sea. We soldiers who follow the beat of the drum and receive bullets so that our officers can win medals and ranks, we poor fools who up to now have known nothing better than to shoot our brothers, it would be enough for us to turn our rifles for the faces of those decorated personages who command us to turn pale. All we who suffer and who are outraged, we are an immense crowd; we are an ocean in which all could be submerged. As soon as we have the will, a moment would be enough for justice to be done.

• Chapter 7 : War!

Words of a Rebel
Peter Kropotkin

War

THE spectacle offered by Europe at the present moment is very sad to see, but it is also very edifying. On the one side, there is a coming and going of diplomats and statesmen which increases visibly whenever the air of the old continent begins to smell of gunpowder. Alliances are made and dismantled; human beings are traded and sold like cattle to make sure of alliances. "So many millions of heads guaranteed by our house to yours; so many acres to feed them, so many ports to export their wool," and he who can best dupe the others in such trafficking comes out the winner. This is what in political jargon is called diplomacy.

On the other side there is no ending the flow of armaments. Every day brings us new inventions for the better extermination of our fellows, new expenditures, new borrowings, new taxes. Crying up patriotism, promoting chauvinism, fanning the hatreds between nations, become the most lucrative lines in politics and journalism alike. Childhood has not been spared; children are enrolled in battalions, and taught to hate the Prussians, the English, the Italians; they are trained in blind obedience to the governments of the moment, whether they be blue, white or black. And when the age of twenty-one had sounded for them, they will be loaded down like mules with ammunition, rations and tools, guns will be thrust into their hands, and they will be told to march to the sound of the trumpet, and to fight like savage beasts without ever asking why or for what purpose. Whether they face Germans or Italians who are starving to death—or their own brothers who have rebelled against need—the trumpet sounds, and men must be killed!

This is the conclusion of all the wisdom of our governments and our teachers! This is all they have been able to offer us as an ideal, in an age when the poor of all countries stretch out their hands to each other across the frontiers!

"Ah! you did not want socialism? Very well, you shall have war, war for thirty years, war for fifty years!" said Alexander Herzen(14) after 1848. And you have it! If the
cannon ceases to thunder for a while in the world, it is just to take breath, to start again somewhere else with renewed vigor, while the European war—the grand tournament of the peoples—has been a threat for the past ten years, without anyone knowing why we shall be fighting, or beside whom, or against whom, or in the name of what principles, or to safeguard what interests!

In the old days, if there was a war, at least one knew why people were killing each other. "Another king has insulted ours; let us overwhelm his subjects." "Some emperor wants to take away one of our provinces! Let us die to keep it for His Most Christian Majesty!" People fought to sustain the rivalries of kings. It was stupid, but at least in such cases the kings could enroll only a few thousand men. But these days whole peoples throw themselves upon each other, and why the Devil do they do it?

Kings no longer count in matters of war. Victoria does not take offense at the insults that are showered on her in France; the English would not stir to avenge her. But can you guarantee that within two years French and English soldiers will not be at each other's throats over supremacy in Egypt?(15) It is the same in the East. However autocratic and ill-natured a monarch he may be, Alexander-of-all-the Russias will swallow all the insolences of Andrassy and Salisbury without budging from his den in Gatchina,(l6) so long as the bankers of Petersburg and the industrialists of Moscow—who these days call themselves "patriots"—have not given him the order to set his armies in motion.

In Russia, as in England, in Germany as in France, men no longer fight for the good pleasure of kings; they fight for the integrity of revenueS and for the growing wealth of the Three Powerful Ones, Rothschild, Schneider, Anzin;(17) for the benefit of the barons of high finance and industry. The rivalries between kings have been superseded by the rivalries between bourgeois societies.

Indeed, people do still speak of "political preponderance," but try to translate that metaphysical entity into material facts; examine how the political preponderance of Germany, for example, makes itself manifest at this moment, and you will see that it is quite simply a matter of economic preponderance in international markets. What Germany, France, Russia, England, and Austria are all trying to win at this
moment is not military preponderance; it is economic domination. It is the right to impose their goods and their customs tariffs on their neighbors; the right to exploit industrially backward peoples; the privilege of building railways in countries that do not have them and in this way becoming masters of the frontiers; the right, in the last resort, to appropriate from a neighbor either a port that will activate commerce, or a province where surplus merchandise can be unloaded.

When we fight today, it is to guarantee our great industrialists a profit of 30%, to assure the financial barons their domination at the Bourse, and to provide the shareholders of mines and railways with their incomes of tens of millions of dollars. This is so evident that if we were just a little more consistent, we would replace the birds of prey on our flags by golden calves and other ancient emblems by bags of gold, and change the names of our regiments, hitherto borrowed from the princes of the blood, to those of the princes of industry and finance; a Third Schneider regiment, a Tenth Anzin, a Twentieth Rothschild. We would know at least for whom we were doing the slaughtering.

Opening new markets, imposing one's own merchandise, whether good or bad, is the basis of all present-day politics-European and continental-and the true cause of nineteenth century wars.

In the last century England was the first to inaugurate the system of large industry for export. It piled its workers into the cities, yoked them to rationalized work patterns, multiplied production and began to accumulate mountains of products in its warehouses. But these goods were not intended for the ragged folk who made the cotton and woolen fabrics and were paid just enough to survive and multiply. The ships of England plowed their way through the oceans, seeking buyers on the European continent, in Asia, in Oceania, in America, certain of not finding competitors. A black poverty reigned in the towns, but the manufacturer and the merchant grew visibly rich; the wealth drawn from abroad accumulated in the hands of a few, and the economists applauded and urged their compatriots to follow suit.

Already, at the end of the last century, France was beginning on the same evolution. By transferring power, by attracting the bare-footed peasants to the
towns and by enriching the bourgeoisie, the revolution gave a new impulse to economic evolution. At this point the English bourgeoisie became alarmed, even more than they had been by the republican declarations and the blood spilled in Paris; supported by the aristocracy, they declared a war to the death on the French bourgeoisie who threatened to close the European markets to English products.

We know the outcome of that war. France was defeated, but it had won its place in the markets. The two bourgeoisies-English and French -even at one time made a touching alliance; they recognized each other as brothers.

But France, on her side, soon went beyond the limit. Through production for export, she tried to monopolize the markets, without taking into account the industrial progress that was moving slowly from the West into the East and dominating new countries. The French bourgeoisie sought to broaden the circle of its profits. For eighteen years it placed itself under the heel of the Third Napoleon, always hoping that the usurper would impose economic rule over the whole of Europe; it only abandoned him when he showed himself incapable of this.

Now it was a new nation, Germany, that introduced into its territory the same economic regime. She also depopulated her fields and piled the hungry people into the towns, which doubled their population in a few years. She also began mass production. A formidable industry, armed with the latest equipment, supported by technical and scientific education lavishly provided, in its turn piled up products destined not for those who made them, but for export and the enrichment of the masters. Capital accumulates and seeks advantageous places of investment in Asia, Africa, Turkey, Russia; the stock exchange in Berlin rivals that in Paris and seeks to dominate it.

At this point a common cry burst out from the heart of the German bourgeoisie let us unify under no matter what flag, even that of Prussia, and profit from that power to impose our products and our tariffs on our neighbors, end lay hold of a good port on the Baltic and on the Adriatic as Soon as possible! They wished to break the military power of France which had been threatening for twenty years to lay down the economic law of Europe and to dictate its commercial treaties.
The war of 1870 was the consequence of these developments. France no longer dominates the markets; it is Germany that seeks to dominate them, and she also, through the thirst for gain, seeks always to extend her exploitation, without regard for the crises and crashes, the insecurity and poverty that eat away at her economic structure. The coasts of Africa, the paddies of Korea, the plains of Poland, the steppes of Russia, the pusztas of Hungary, the Bulgarian valleys filled with roses—all excite the greed of German speculators. And every time such a speculator travels over these sparsely cultivated plains, and through their towns which have so little industry, and beside their quiet rivers, his heart bleeds at the spectacle. His imagination tells him how he might extract whole sacks of gold from these untouched riches, how he would bend these uncultivated people under the yoke of his capital. He swears that one day he will carry "civilization," which is what he calls exploitation, into the East. While he waits for this, he will try to impose his merchandise and his railways on Italy, on Austria and on Russia.

- But these countries in their turn are freeing themselves from the economic tutelage of their neighbors. They also are slowly entering the orbit of the "industrial" countries, and their newly born bourgeoisies ask nothing better than to enrich themselves through export. In only a few years Russia and Italy have made a prodigious leap forward in the extension of their industries, and since the peasants, reduced to the blackest of poverty, can buy nothing, it is for export that the Russian, Italian and Austrian industrialists are striving. They need markets now, and as those of Europe are already taken up, it is on Asia and Africa that they are forced to concentrate their efforts, condemned inevitably to come to blows because they have failed to agree on sharing out the spoil.

What alliances could stand firm in such a situation, created by the very character given to industry by those who direct it? The alliance of Germany and Russia is a matter of pure formality; Alexander and William may embrace as much as they choose, but the bourgeoisie emerging in Russia cordially detests the German bourgeoisie, which repays it in the same coin. We remember the general outcry raised in the German press when the Russian government augmented the tariffs by a third. "A war against Russia—say the German bourgeoisie and the workers who follow them—would be even more popular than the war of 1870."
So what? Is not the famous alliance between Germany and Austria also written in sand, and are these two powers-which means their respective bourgeoisies-very far off a serious dispute over tariffs? And those twin siblings, Austria and Hungary, are they not also on the point of declaring a tariff war-their interests being diametrically opposed on the matter of exploiting the southern Slavs? And even France, is it not itself divided on matters of tariffs?

Indeed, you did not want socialism, and you shall have war! You are in for thirty years of war, if the revolution does not put an end to this situation which is as absurd as it is ignoble. But this you must also know. Arbitration, equilibrium, the suppression of permanent armies, disarmament, all are beautiful dreams with no practical meaning. Only the revolution, having put instruments and machines, raw materials and the whole wealth of society in the hands of the worker and reorganized the whole of production so as to satisfy the needs of those who produce everything, can put an end to wars over markets.

Each working for all, and all for each-that is the only condition which can lead to peace among nations, who demand it loudly but are frustrated by those who hold the monopoly of social wealth.

• Chapter 8 : Revolutionary Minorities

Words of a Rebel

Peter Kropotkin

Chapter 8: Revolutionary Minorities

"All that you say is very true," our critics often say to us.] "Your ideal of anarchist
communism is excellent, and its realization would in fact lead to well-being and peace on earth; but so few want it, and so few understand it, and so few have the devotion that is needed to work for its achievement! You are only a tiny minority, your feeble groups scattered here and there, lost in the middle of an indifferent mass, and you face a terrible enemy, well-organized and in control of armies, of capital, of education. The struggle you have undertaken is beyond your powers." This is the objection we hear constantly from many of our critics and often even from our friends. Let us see what truth there is in it.

That our anarchist groups are only a small minority in comparison with the tens of millions who populate France, Spain, Italy and Germany -nothing could be more true. Groups who represent a new idea have always begun by being no more than a minority. But is that really against us? Just now, it is the opportunists who are the majority: must we then, by chance, become opportunists? Up to 1790 it was the royalists, the constitutionalists, who formed the majority in France; should the republicans, then, have renounced their republican ideas and joined the royalists, when France was making great strides towards the abolition of royalty?

It is not important that numerically we are a minority; that is not the real question. What is important is to know whether the ideas of anarchist communism are in harmony with the evolution which is taking place in human consciousness, especially among peoples of the Latin race. But on this subject it is clear that revolution is not taking the direction of authoritarianism; it is taking the direction of the most complete freedom of the individual, of the producing and consuming group, of the commune, of the collective, of free federation. Evolution is being produced, not in the direction of proprietary individualism, but in the direction of production and consumption arranged in common. In the large cities communism scares no one, of course, so long as it is a question of anarchist communism. In the villages the same inclination prevails, and apart from a few areas of France where special circumstances exist, the peasant is now progressing in many ways towards the common use of the implements of work. That is why, each time we expose our ideas to the great masses, each time we speak to them of the revolution as we understand it in simple and comprehensible terms, giving practical examples, we are always greeted by their applause, in the industrial centers as well as in the villages.
And could it be otherwise? If anarchy and communism had been the product of philosophic speculations, created by savants in the dim lights of their studies, these two principles would have found no echo. They are the statements of those who understand what the workers and peasants are saying when they are released for a day or so from the daily routine and set themselves thinking about a better future. They are the statements of the slow evolution that has occurred in people's minds during the course of this century. They project the popular conception of the transformation that must soon begin to carry justice, solidarity and brotherhood into our towns and our countryside. Born of the people, these ideas are acclaimed by the people every time they are exposed to them in a comprehensible manner.

There in fact lies the true power of the ideas of anarchism and communism, and not in the number of active adherents, organized in groups, who are courageous enough to incur the danger of the struggle, the consequences to which one exposes oneself in fighting for the popular revolution. Their number grows from day to day and it continues to grow, but it will only be on the very eve of the uprising that it will become a majority in place of the minority it now is.

History is there to tell us that those who have been a minority on the eve of the revolution, become the predominant force on the day of the revolution, if they truly express popular aspirations and if-the other essential condition—the revolution lasts long enough to allow the revolutionary idea to spread, to germinate and to bear its fruit. For we must not forget that it is not by a revolution lasting a couple of days that we shall come to transform society in the direction posed by anarchist communism. An uprising of short duration can overthrow a government to put another in its place; it can replace a Napoleon by a Jules Favre(18) but it changes nothing in the basic institutions of society.

It is a whole insurrectionary period of three, four, perhaps five years that we must traverse to accomplish our revolution in the property system and in social organization. It took five years of continual insurrection, from 1788 to 1793, to batter down the feudal landholding system and the omnipotence of the crown in France; it would take three or four to batter down bourgeois feudalism and the omnipotence of me plutocracy.
It is above all in that period of excitement, when people's minds work with accelerated vitality, when everyone, in the sumptuous city home as in the darkest cabin, takes an interest in communal things, discusses, talks and seeks to convert others, that the anarchist idea, now being spread slowly by the existing groups, will germinate, bear its fruit and plant itself in the broad mass of human minds. It is then that the indifferent ones of today will become partizans of the new idea. Such has always been the progress of ideas, and the great French Revolution can serve as an example.

Of course, that revolution never went so deeply as the one of which we dream. It did no more than overthrow the aristocracy, to replace it by the bourgeoisie. It did not touch the system of individual property; on the contrary, it strengthened it by introducing bourgeois exploitation. But it achieved an immense result of its own through the final abolition of serfdom, and it abolished that serfdom by force, which is far more effective than the abolition of anything by means of laws. It opened the era of revolutions, which since then have followed at short intervals, drawing nearer and nearer to the true social revolution. It gave the French the revolutionary impulse without which peoples can stagnate for centuries under the most abject oppression. It bequeathed to the world a stream of fertile ideas for the future; it awakened the spirit of revolt; and it gave a revolutionary education to the French people. If in 1871 France created the Commune, if today it willingly accepts the idea of anarchist communism while other nations are still in the authoritarian or constitutionalist phase (which France traversed before 1848, or even before 1789), it is because, at the end of the eighteenth century, she passed through four years of great revolution.

Yet remember what a sad picture France offered only a few years before that revolution, and what a feeble minority were those who dreamed of the abolition of royalty and feudalism!

The peasants were plunged in a poverty and an ignorance of which today it is hard even to form an idea. Lost in their villages, without regular communications, not knowing what was happening fifty miles away, these beings yoked to the plow and living in pest-ridden hovels seemed doomed to eternal servitude. Any common action was impossible, and at the least sign of insurrection the soldiers were there
to cut down the insurgents and hang the leaders above the village fountain on a gibbet eighteen feet high. At most a few inspired propagandists wandered through the villages, fanning the hatred against the oppressors and reawakening hope among a few individuals who dared to listen. At most a peasant risked himself to ask for bread or a little reduction in taxes. We only have to read through the village records to become aware of this.

As for the bourgeoisie, its leading characteristic was cowardice. A few isolated individuals occasionally took the risk of attacking the government and reawakening the spirit of revolt by some audacious act. But the great mass of the bourgeoisie bowed down shamefully before the king and his court, before the noblemen and even before the nobleman's lackey. Only read the municipal records of the period, and you will be aware of the vile servility that impregnated the words of the bourgeoisie in the years before 1789. Their words ooze with the most ignoble servitude, with all due deference to M. Louis Blanc(19) and other adulators of that prerevolutionary bourgeoisie. A deep despair inspired the few real revolutionaries of the period when they cast an eye around them, and Camille Desmoulins was justified in making his famous remark: "We republicans were hardly a dozen in number before 1789."(20)

But what a transformation three or four years later! As soon as the power of royalty was even slightly eroded by the current of events, the people began to rebel. During the whole year of 1788 there were only half-hearted riots among the peasantry. Like the small and hesitant strikes today, they broke out here and there across France, but gradually they spread, became more broad and bitter, more difficult to suppress.

A year earlier people hardly dared to demand a reduction of taxes (as nowadays one hardly dares demand an increase in wages). A year later, in 1789, the peasants were already going far ahead. A great idea rose to the surface: that of shaking off completely the yoke of the nobleman, of the priest, of the landowning bourgeois. As soon as the peasant saw that the government no longer had the strength to resist a rebellion, he rose up against his enemies. A few brave men set fire to the first chateaux, while the mass of people, still full of fear, waited until the flames from the conflagration of the great houses rose over the hills towards the clouds to
illuminate the fate of those tax farmers who had placidly witnessed the torturing of the precursors of the peasant revolt. This time the soldiers did not come to suppress the insurrections, for they were otherwise occupied, and the revolt spread from village to village, and overnight half of France was on fire.

While the future revolutionaries of the middle class were still falling over themselves before the king, while the great personages of the coming revolution sought to take control of the uprising through bribes and concessions, villages and towns rebelled, long before the gathering of the States General and the speeches of Mirabeau. Hundreds of riots (Taine knew of at least three hundred) broke out in the villages, before the Parisians, armed with their pikes and a few unreliable cannon, stormed the Bastille.

From this point, it became impossible to control the revolution. If it had broken out only in Paris, if it had been just a parliamentary revolution, it would have been drowned in blood, and the hordes of the counter-revolution would have carried the white flag from village to village, from town to town, massacring the peasants and the poor. But fortunately from the beginning the revolution had taken on another shape. It had broken out almost simultaneously in a thousand places; in each village, in each town, in each city of the insurgent provinces, the revolutionary minorities, strong in their audacity and in the unspoken support they recognized in the aspirations of the people, marched to the conquest of the castles, of the town halls and finally of the Bastille, terrorizing the aristocracy and the upper middle class, abolishing privileges. The minority started the revolution and carried the people with it.

It will be just the same with the revolution whose approach we foresee. The idea of anarchist communism, today represented by feeble minorities' but increasingly finding popular expression, will make its way among the mass of the people. Spreading everywhere, the anarchist groups, however slight they may be, will take strength from the support they find among the people, and will raise the red flag of the revolution. And this kind of revolution, breaking out simultaneously in a thousand places, will prevent the establishment of any government that might hinder the unfolding of events, and the revolution will burn on until it has accomplished its mission: the abolition of individual propertyowning and of the
On that day, what is now the minority will become the People, the great mass, and that mass rising up against property and the State, will march forward towards anarchist communism.

Chapter 9: Order

We are often reproached with having taken as our slogan word *anarchy* which stirs up fear in so many minds. *Your ideas are excellent*; *we are told*; *but you must admit that you have made an unfortunate choice in naming your party. Anarchy, in current speech, is the synonym for disorder, for chaos; that word awakens in the mind the idea of colliding interests, of individuals at war with each other, who cannot succeed in establishing harmony.*

Let us begin by observing that an activist party, a party which represents a new tendency, rarely has the chance of itself choosing its name. *It was not the Beggars of Brabant* who invented that name which later became so popular. *But, from being a nickname*; *and an almost inspired one*; *it was taken up by the movement, generally accepted, and soon became its glorious title. In the end the word seemed to contain a whole idea.*

*And the sans-culottes of 1793* It was the enemies of the popular
revolution who invented that name; but did it not condense a whole idea, that of
the revolt of the people, ragged and tired of poverty, against all these royalists,
self-styled patriots and Jacobins, well-dressed and spick-and-span, who in spite of
their pompous speeches and the incense burnt before them by middle-class
historians, were the true enemies of the people, because they despised the
populace deeply for its poverty, for its libertarian and egalitarian spirit, for its
revolutionary ardor?

It was the same with the word *nihilists*,#footnote3 which has so intrigued the
journalists, and which led to such games with words, in both the good and the bad
sense, until it was finally understood that here was not a question of a baroque and
almost religious sect but of a true revolutionary force. Launched by Turgenev in his
novel, *Fathers and Sons*, it was taken up by the('#147;fathers&#148; who used
the nickname to take revenge for the disobedience of the('#147;sons&#148;:. The
sons accepted it, and when later they found that it led to misunderstandings and
tried to shed it, it had become impossible. The press and the people in Russia did
not want to describe the Russian revolutionaries by any other name. Besides, the
name was not entirely inappropriate, since it embraced an idea: it expressed a
negation of all the features of present-day civilization that are based on the
oppression of one class by another; the negation of the existing economic system,
the negation of governmentalism and power, of bourgeois politics, of routine
science, of bourgeois morality, or art put at the service of exploiters, of customs
and habits made grotesque and detestable by hypocrisy which past centuries have
bequeathed to present day society &#150; in brief, the negation of all that
bourgeois society now loads with veneration.

It was the same with the anarchists. When in the heart of the International there
rose up a party that fought against authority in all its forms, that party first took on
the name of the federalist party, then called itself *anti-statist* or
*anti-authoritarian*. At that epoch it even avoided assuming the name of
anarchist. The word *an-archy* (as it was written then) might have attached the
party too closely to the Proudhonians,#footnote4 whose ideas of economic reform
the International then combated. But it was precisely to create confusion that the
adversaries of the anti-authoritarians took pleasure in using the name; besides, it
enabled them to say that the very name of the anarchists proved that their sole
ambition was to create disorder and chaos, without thinking of the result.

The anarchist party hastened to accept the name that was given to it. It insisted first of all on the hyphen uniting an and archy, explaining that under that form, the word anarchy, of Greek origin, signified no power, and not & disorder; but soon it accepted the word as it was, without giving a useless task to proof-readers or a lesson in Greek to its readers.

The word was thus returned to its primitive, ordinary and common meaning, expressed in 1816 in these words by the English philosopher Jeremy Bentham. 

#footnote5 The philosopher who wants to reform a bad law does not preach insurrection against it. The character of the anarchist is quite different. He denies the existence of the law, he rejects its validity, he incites men to ignore it as a law and to rise up against its implementation. The meaning of the word has become even broader today: the anarchist denies not only existing laws, but all established power, all authority; yet the essence remains the same; the anarchist rebels and this is where he begins against power, authority, under whatever form it may appear.

But this word, we are told, awakens in the mind the negation of order, and hence the idea of disorder, of chaos!

Let us try to understand each other. What kind of order are you talking about? Is it the harmony of which we dream, we anarchists? The harmony that will establish itself freely in human relations once humanity ceases to be divided into two classes, on sacrificed to the other? The harmony that will arise spontaneously from the solidarity of interests, when all men will form the same single family, when each will work for the well-being of all and all for the well-being of each? Evidently not! Those who reproach anarchism for being the negation of order are not speaking of that future harmony; they speak of order as it is conceived in our present society. So let us take a look at this order which anarchy wishes to destroy.

Order, as it is understood today, means nine-tenths of humanity working to procure luxury, pleasure and the satisfaction of the most execrable of passions for a handful of idlers.
Order is the deprivation for this nine-tenths of humanity of all that is necessary for a healthy life and for the reasonable development of the intellectual qualities. Reducing nine-tenths of humanity to the condition of beasts of burden living from day to day, without ever daring to think of the pleasures man can gain from the study of science, from artistic creation — that is order!

Order is poverty; it is famine become the normal order of society. It is the Irish peasant dying of hunger; it is the peasant of a third of Russia dying of diphtheria, of typhus, of hunger as a result of need in the midst of piles of wheat destined for export. It is the people of Italy reduced to abandoning their luxuriant countryside to wander over Europe seeking some tunnel or other to excavate, where they will risk being crushed to death after having survived a few months longer. It is land taken from the peasant for raising animals to feed the rich; it is land left fallow rather than being given back to those who ask nothing better than to cultivate it.

Order is the woman selling herself to feed her children; it is the child reduced to working in a factory or dying of starvation; it is the worker reduced to the state of a machine. It is the phantom of the worker rising up at the doors of the rich. It is the phantom of the people rising up at the gates of the government.

Order is a tiny minority, elevated into the seats of government, which imposes itself in that way on the majority and prepares its children to continue the same functions in order to maintain the same privileges by fraud, corruption, force and massacre.

Order is the continual war of man against man, of trade against trade, of class against class, of nation against nation. It is the cannon that never ceases to roar over Europe; it is the devastation of countryside, the sacrifice of whole generations on the battlefield, the destruction in a single year of wealth accumulated by centuries of hard toil.

Order is servitude, it is the shackling of thought, the brutalizing of the human race, maintained by the sword and the whip. It is the sudden death by fire-damp, or the slow death by suffocation, of hundreds of miners blown up or buried each year by the greed of the employers, and shot down and bayoneted as soon as they dare
complain.

Order, finally, is the drowning in blood of the Paris Commune. It is the death of thirty thousand men, women and children, torn apart by shells, shot down, and buried alive, under the streets of Paris. It is the destiny of Russian youth, immured in prisons, isolated in the snows of Siberia, the best and purest of them dying by the hangman’s rope.

That is order.

And disorder? What is this you call disorder?

It is the uprising of the people against this ignoble order, breaking its fetters, destroying the barriers, and marching towards a better future. It is humanity at the most glorious point in history. It is the revolt of thought on the eve of the revolution; it is the overthrowing of hypotheses sanctioned by the immobility of preceding centuries; it is the opening out of a whole flood of new ideas, audacious inventions, it is the solution of the problems of science.

Disorder is the abolition of ancient slaveries, it is the uprising of the communes; it is the destruction of feudal serfdom, the effort to make an end to economic servitude.

Disorder is the insurrection of peasants rising up against priests and lords, burning castles to give place to farmsteads, emerging from their hovels to take their place in the sun. It is France abolishing royalty, and delivering a mortal blow to serfdom in all of Western Europe.

Disorder is 1848, making the kings tremble and proclaiming the right to work. It is the people of Paris who fight for a new idea and who, while succumbing to massacre, bequeath to humanity the idea of the free commune, and open for it the way towards that revolution whose approach we foresee and whose name will be the social revolution.

Disorder is all the ages during which whole generations sustained an incessant struggle and sacrificed themselves to prepare a
better existence for humanity by freeing it from the servitude of the past. It is the ages during which the popular genius took its free way and in a few years made gigantic steps forward, without which men would have remained in the condition of the slave of antiquity, cringing and debased by misery.

Disorder is the blossoming of the most beautiful passions and the greatest of devotions, it is the epic of supreme human love.

The word *anarchy*, implying the negation of order, and invoking the memory of the most beautiful moments in the life of the peoples is it not well chosen for a party that marches towards the conquest of a better future? The true beginnings of the resistance to Austrian rule in Belgium, which ended in its independence in 1830, was the rebellion of 1789 to 1790, inspired by the French Revolution, which was defeated at the time but left a lasting heritage of resistance to Hapsburg rule.

2 The word sans-culotte; was actually first used in 1789. It did not mean bare-bottomed, but referred to those more radical and usually lower middle class revolutionaries who chose to wear *pantaloons* (trousers) in preference to the *culottes* (knew breeches) favored by the aristocrats.

3 The word nihilists; was certainly not launched by Turgenev, though he popularized it in *Fathers and Sons*. (1861). The Oxford English Dictionary cites a use in 1817 by an American theologian, and the concept of nihilism cropped up in the religious word battles of the Reformation period.

4 The word *anarchist* was first used in a positive way by Proudhon himself, in *What is Property?* (1840), but it had already been used in a derogatory way against the Levelers during the English Civil War of the 17th century (they were called Switzerising anarchists;) and by the Girondins against the *enragés* during the French Revolution.

5 Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) was the founder of Utilitarianism and famous for his declaration that the only true criterion of political action was that it should promote the greatest happiness for the greatest number. He was an influential penal and legislative reformer.
When we say that the social revolution must be achieved by the liberation of the Communes, and that it is the Communes, absolutely independent, liberated from the tutelage of the State, that alone can give us the necessary setting for a revolution and the means of accomplishing it, we are reproached with wanting to recall to life a form of society that has already outlived its time. "But the Commune," they say, "belongs to another age! In setting out to destroy the State and put free communes in its place, you are looking to the past; you want to lead us back into the heart of the middle ages, to reignite the old communal wars, and destroy the national unities that have been so painfully achieved in the course of history.

Very well, let us consider this criticism.

First, we must understand that comparisons with the past have only a relative value. If, in fact, the Commune as we envisage it were really a mere return towards the Commune of the Middle Ages, must we not recognize that the Commune today cannot possibly clothe itself again in the forms it assumed seven centuries ago?
And is it not evident that if it were established in our days, in our century of railways and telegraphs, of cosmopolitan science and research into pure truth, the Commune would have an organization so different from that which it had in the twelfth century that we would be in the presence of an absolutely new fact, emerging in new conditions and leading inevitably to absolutely different consequences.

Besides, our adversaries, the defenders of the State, under its various forms, should remember that we can raise against them, objections as good as theirs. We in our turn can say to them and with much more reason, that it is they who have their eyes turned towards the past, since the State is a form just as old as the Commune. Only there is this difference; while the State in history represents the negation of all freedom, the triumph of the absolute and the arbitrary, the ruin of its subjects, torture and the scaffold, it is precisely in the liberties of the Commune and in the uprisings of peoples and Communes against the State that we rediscover the most beautiful pages of history. Certainly, in transporting ourselves into the past, it is not towards Louis XI, a Louis XV, a Catherine II that we turn our attention; it is rather towards the communes or republics of Amalfi and Florence, those of Toulouse and Laon, of Liege and Courtray, of Augsburg and Nuremberg, of Pskov and Novgorod.

It is not a matter on which we should be satisfied with mere words and sophistries; it is important to study and analyze closely, and not to imitate M. de Laveleye29 and his zealous students who confine themselves to telling us, "But the Commune belongs to the middle ages! In consequence it must be condemned!" "The State is a whole past of crime," we answer, "and therefore it is condemned with much more justification."

Between the Commune of the middle ages and that which might be established today, and probably will be established soon, there will be plenty of essential differences: a veritable abyss opened up by the six or seven centuries of human development and harsh experience. Let us examine the principal differences.

What was the purpose of that "conjuration" or "communion" made by the burgesses in such and such a city? It was a very modest one: to liberate
themselves from the lords. The inhabitants, merchants and artisans, came together and swore not to allow "anyone whatever to do harm to one among them or to treat him from this time onward as a serf"; it was against the long-established masters that the Commune rose in arms. "Commune," said an author of the 12th century, quoted by Augustin Thierry,30 "is a new and detestable word, and this is how it must be understood: taxable people shall pay once only a year the rent they owe their lords. If they commit an offense, it shall be discharged by a legally fixed penalty; and the peasants shall be entirely exempt from the levies of money it has been customary to impose on them."

Thus it was actually against the lords that the Commune rose up in the middle ages. It is from the State that the Commune of today is seeking to liberate itself. This is an essential difference, for we must remember that it was actually the State, represented by the king who, later on, realizing that the Communes wished to make themselves independent of the lords, sent its armies "to punish," as the Chronicle says, "the presumption of these ne'er-do-wells, who, in the name of the Commune, make a show of rebelling against the crown."

The Commune of tomorrow will know that it cannot admit any higher authority; above it there can only be the interests of the Federation, freely accepted by itself as well as the other communes. It will know that there can be no middle way: either the Commune will be absolutely free to adopt all the institutions it wishes and to make all the reforms and revolutions it finds necessary, or it will remain what it has been up to today, a mere branch of the State, restricted in all its movements, always on the point of entering into conflict with the State and sure of succumbing in the struggle that will follow. The Commune will know that it must break the State and replace it by the Federation, and it will act in that way. More than that, it will have the means to do so. Today it is not only small towns that raise the banner of communal insurrection, it is Paris, Lyon, Marseille, Cartagena,31 and soon all the great cities will unfurl the same flag. This will mean an essential difference from the Commune of the past.

In freeing itself from the lords, did the Commune of the middle ages free itself also from those rich merchants who, by the sale of merchandise and capital goods, had gained private wealth in the heart of the city? Not at all! Having demolished the
towers of the overlord, the inhabitant of the town very soon saw within the Commune itself the citadels of the rich merchants who sought to subdue him being built, and the internal history of the Communes in the middle ages was that of bitter struggle between the rich and the poor, a struggle that ended inevitably with the king's intervention. As a new aristocracy took shape in the very heart of the Commune' the people, having fallen into the same kind of servitude to the lord within the city as it had hitherto suffered to the lord outside, understood that it had nothing to defend in the Commune; its members deserted the walls they had built to gain their liberty and which the regime of individualism had turned into the ramparts of a new servitude. Having nothing to lose, the people let the rich merchants defend themselves, and these relations were usually limited to a treaty for the defense of urban rights against the lords, or perhaps a pact of solidarity for the mutual protection of the citizens of the communes on their distant journeys. And when real leagues were formed among the towns, as in Lombardy, Spain and Belgium, these leagues were too lacking in homogeneity and too fragile because of the diversity of privileges, and soon broke up into isolated groups or succumbed under the attacks of the neighboring states.

How different from the groups that might come into existence today! A small commune could not survive a week without being forced by circumstances to establish stable relations with industrial, commercial and artistic centers, and these centers, in their turn, would feel the need to open their doors wide to the inhabitants of nearby villages, of the surrounding communes, and of the more distant cities.

If one of these cities were to proclaim the Commune tomorrow, were to abolish within itself all individual property, were to introduce complete communism, i.e. the collective enjoyment of social capital, of the tools of work and the products of that work, in a mere few days- provided it were not surrounded by hostile armies-the convoys of carts would arrive at the markets. The traders would send to the city from distant ports their cargoes of raw materials. The products of the city's industries, having satisfied the needs of the population, would go to seek buyers in the four corners of the earth. Visitors would arrive in crowds, peasants, citizens of nearby towns, and foreigners, and they would depart to tell in their own homes of the marvelous life of the free city where everyone worked, where nobody was any
longer poor or oppressed, where all enjoyed the fruits of their labor, without anyone seizing a lion's share. There would be no fear of isolation; if the communists in the United States had reason to complain in their communal colonies, it was not because of isolation, but rather because of the intrusion of the surrounding bourgeois world in their communal affairs.

The fact is that today commerce and exchange, while overflowing the bounds of national frontiers, have also destroyed the walls of the ancient cities. They have established a cohesion that did not exist in the middle ages. All the inhabited places of western Europe are so intimately linked with each other that isolation has become impossible for any of them; there is not a village, however highly perched it may be on its mountain ridge, that has not an industrial and commercial center towards which it gravitates, and with which it cannot break its links.

The development of the great industrial centers has done even more. Even today, of course, parochialism can create many jealousies between neighboring communes, delaying their alliance and even inflaming fratricidal struggles. But even if such jealousies may at first hinder the direct federation of two communes, their federation can in fact be established by the mediation of the great centers. Today, two small neighboring municipalities may have nothing that really links them directly; the scantiness of the relations they maintain serves rather to create conflicts than to link them in the bonds of solidarity. But the two of them have already a common center with which they are in constant communication and without which they could not survive; and whatever may be their local jealousies they will see themselves obliged to come together through the mediation of the large town where they get their provisions and to which they take their products; each of them will have to become part of the same federation so as to maintain their relations with the urban focus and group themselves around it.

Yet this center will not be able to establish an intrusive preponderance of its own over the communes in its environment. Thanks to the infinite variety of the needs of industry and commerce, all inhabited places have already several centers which they are attached, and as their needs develop, they will enter into relations with further places that can satisfy new needs. Our needs are in fact so various, and they emerge with such rapidity, that soon a single federation will not be sufficient
to satisfy them all. The Commune will then feel the need to contract other alliances, to enter into other federations. Belonging to one group for the acquisition of food supplies, it will have to join a second group to obtain other goods, such as metals, and then a third and a fourth group for textiles and works of art. Take up an economic atlas of any country, and you will see that economic frontiers do not exist: the zones of production and exchange of various products interpenetrate each other, tangle with each other, impose themselves on each other. In the same way the federations of Communes, if they were to follow their free development, would very soon start to mingle and intersect, and in this way form a network that would be compact, "one and indivisible," in quite a different way from these statist groupings whose parts are no more than juxtaposed, like the rods bundled around the lictor's ax.

Thus, let us repeat, those who come and say to us that the Communes, once they are freed of the tutelage of the State, will clash together and destroy each other in internecine wars, forget one thing: the intimate pattern of linking that exists already between various localities, thanks to the centers of industrial and commercial gravitation, thanks to the multitude of these centers, thanks to their incessant intercourse. They do not take into account what the middle ages actually were, with their closed cities and their caravans trailing slowly over difficult roads under the eyes of the robber barons; they forget those currents of men, of merchandise, of telegrams, of ideas and feelings, that now circulate among our cities like the waters of rivers that never dry up; they have no real idea of the difference between the two epochs they seek to compare.

Besides, is not history there to prove to us that the instinct for federation has already become one of the most pressing needs of humanity? It will be enough one day if the State becomes disorganized for one reason or another, if the machine of oppression fails in its operations, for the free alliances to appear of their own accord. Let us remember the spontaneous federations of the armed bourgeoisie during the Great Revolution. Let us remember the federations that surged up spontaneously in Spain and saved the independence of the country when the State was shaken to its foundations by the conquering armies of Napoleon. As soon as the State is no longer in a position to impose a forced union, union rises up of its own accord, according to natural needs. Overthrow the State, and the federal
society will surge out of its ruins, truly one, truly indivisible, but free and growing in solidarity because of its freedom.

But there is another thing to be considered. For the burgesses of the middle ages the Commune was an isolated State, clearly separated from others by its frontiers. For us, "Commune" no longer means a territorial agglomeration; it is rather a generic name, a synonym for the grouping of equals which knows neither frontiers nor walls. The social Commune will soon cease to be a clearly defined entity. Each group in the Commune will necessarily be drawn towards similar groups in other communes; they will come together and the links that federate them will be as solid as those that attach them to their fellow citizens, and in this way there will emerge a Commune of interests whose members are scattered in a thousand towns and villages. Each individual will find the full satisfaction of his needs only by grouping with other individuals who have the same tastes but inhabit a hundred other communes.

Today already free societies are beginning to open up an immense field of human activity. It is no longer merely to satisfy scientific, literary or artistic interests that humanity constitutes its societies. It is no longer merely to pursue the class struggle that men enter into leagues.

One would have difficulty nowadays finding one of the multiple and varied manifestations of human activity that is not already represented by freely constituted societies, and their number keeps on growing unceasingly, each day invading new fields of action, even among those that were once considered the preserve of the State. Literature, arts, sciences, education, commerce, industries, transport, amusements, public health, museums, far off enterprises, polar expeditions, even territorial defense against aggressors, care for the wounded, and the very courts of law: everywhere we see personal initiative emerging and assuming the form of free societies. This is the tendency, the distinctive trait of the second half of the 19th century.

Taking free flight, and finding an immense new field of application, that tendency will serve as the basis for the society of the future. It is by free groupings that the social Commune will be organized, and these groupings will overthrow walls and
frontiers. There will be millions of communes, no longer territorial, but extending their hands across rivers, mountain chains and oceans, uniting individuals and peoples in the four corners of the earth into the same single family of equals.

• Chapter 11 : The Paris Commune

Words of a Rebel

Peter Kropotkin

The Paris Commune

I.

ON the 18th of March, 1871, the people of Paris rose against a rule that was generally detested and despised, and proclaimed the city of Paris independent, free, and belonging only to itself.

This overthrow of central power was made without the usual scenes of a revolutionary uprising: on that day there were neither volleys of shot nor floods of blood shed behind the barricades. The rulers were eclipsed by an armed people going out into the streets; the soldiers evacuated the city, the bureaucrats hastened towards Versailles, taking with them everything they could carry. The government evaporated like a puddle of stinking water under the breath of a spring wind, and by the 19th, having shed hardly a drop of its children's blood, Paris found itself free of the past that had contaminated the great city.

At the same time, the revolution that had been accomplished in this way opened up a new era in the series of revolutions, by which the people march forward from
slavery to freedom. Under the name of The Paris Commune a new idea was born, destined to become the point of departure for future revolutions.

As is always the case with great ideas, it was not a product of the conceptions of an individual philosopher. It was born of the collective intelligence; it sprang from the heart of an entire people. But it was vague in the beginning, and many among those who helped to realize it and who even gave their lives for it, did not imagine the event as we conceive it today; they did not fully understand the revolution they were inaugurating nor the fecundity of the new principle which they were seeking to put into execution. It was only with practical application that one began to perceive its future importance; it was only in the working out of the thought from this time onwards that the new principle became more and more specific and clear, and appeared in all its lucidity, all its beauty, its justice and the importance of its results.

As soon as socialism had taken a new impetus in the five or six years preceding the Commune,(33) one question above all preoccupied the elaborators of the coming social revolution: the question of knowing what form of political grouping among societies would be the most propitious for that great economic revolution which current industrial development imposes on our generations, and which must lead to the abolition of individual property and the communalizing of all the capital accumulated by preceding generations.

The International Workingmen's Association gave that response. Association, it said, should not be restricted to one nation; it should extend beyond all the artificial frontiers. And soon that great idea would penetrate the hearts of the people and capture their minds. Hounded since then by an alliance of all the reactionaries, it has nonetheless survived, and as soon as the obstacles raised to its development are destroyed to the cheers of the insurgent people, it will be reborn stronger than ever.

But it remained to be seen what would be the integral parts of that vast Association. At that time two great currents of ideas confronted each other with their solutions to that great question: the Popular State on the one hand, and Anarchy on the other.
According to the German socialists, the State should take possession of all accumulated wealth and give it to workers' associations; it should organize production and exchange, and keep watch over public life, over the functioning of society.

To this the majority of socialists of Latin race, replied that such a State -even admitting that by some impossible chance it could exist-would be the worst of tyrannies, and they opposed this ideal with a new ideal copied from the past; *an-archy*, that is to say, the complete abolition of States, and reorganization from the simple to the complex through the free federation of the popular forces of producers and consumers.

It was soon admitted, even by "Statists" less imbued with government prejudices, that Anarchy indeed represented a greatly superior form of organization than that envisaged in the popular State; but, they declared, the anarchist ideal is so far beyond us that we cannot concern ourselves with it at the present time. At the same time, anarchist theory lacked a concrete and simple formula with which to define its point of departure, to give body to its aims, and to show that they were based on a conception that had a real existence among the people. The federation of workers' corporations and groups of consumers across the frontiers and apart from the existing States, still seemed too vague a concept; and at the same time, it was easy to perceive that they could not comprehend the whole diversity of human manifestations. A clearer formula, one that was easier to comprehend, and which had its basic elements in the reality of things, was needed.

If it had been merely a matter of elaborating a theory, we might well ask how important theories are. But until a new idea has found a form of expression that is clear, precise and derived from actual existence, it will not seize on people's minds or inspire them to the point of embarking on a decisive struggle. The people do not plunge into the unknown without gaining the support of a reliable and clearly formulated idea which serves, so to speak, as a springboard from which to take off. And this takeoff point, life itself will indicate.

For five months while it was isolated by the siege, Paris had lived its own life and it had come to understand the vast economic, intellectual and moral powers at its
disposal; it had glimpsed and understood the strength of its initiatives. At the same

time, it had seen that the band of brigands who had seized power did not know

how to organize anything -either the defense of France or the development of the

interior. It had seen how this central government had set itself against all that the

intelligence of a great city might bring to fruition. It had seen more than that: the

powerlessness of any government to ward off great disasters or to assist positive

evolution when it is ripe for fulfillment. During the siege it had suffered frightful

poverty, the poverty of the workers and defenders of the town, beside the indolent

luxury of the idlers. And it had seen the failure, thanks to the central power, of all

its attempts to put an end to this scandalous regime. Each time the people wished

to take a free initiative, the government doubled its fetters, and the idea was born

quite naturally that Paris should turn itself into an independent Commune, able to

realize within its wails the will of the people.

Suddenly, the word Commune, began to emerge from every mouth.

The Commune of 1871 could not be any more than a first sketch. Born at the end

of a war, surrounded by two armies ready to give a hand in crushing the people, it

dared not declare itself openly socialist, and proceeded neither to the expropriation

of capital nor to the organization of work, nor even to a general inventory of the

city's resources. Nor did it break with the tradition of the State, of representative

government, and it did not attempt to achieve within the Commune that

organization from the simple to the complex it adumbrated by proclaiming the

independence and free federation of Communes. But it is certain that if the

Commune of Paris had lived a few months longer, the strength of events would

have forced it towards these two revolutions. We should not forget that [in the

French Revolution] the bourgeoisie devoted four years of the revolutionary period

to proceed from a moderate monarchy to a bourgeois republic; it should not

surprise us that the people of Paris could not overleap in a single day the gulf that

separated the anarchist Commune from the rule of bandits. But we must also

realize that the revolution, which in France and certainly also in Spain, will be

communalist. It will take up the work of the Paris Commune where it was halted by

the assassinations perpetrated by the men of Versailles.

The Commune succumbed, and the bourgeoisie took its revenge in the way we
know, because of the fear the people had created among their rulers by shaking off the yoke of government. Events proved that there were indeed two classes in modern society: on the one hand, the man who works, who gives to the owner more than half of what he produces, and who in the meantime accepts too easily the crimes of his masters; on the other hand the idler, the glutton, animated by the instincts of the wild beast, hating his slaves and ready to massacre them like wild beasts.

After having surrounded the people of Paris and cut off all their exits, the rulers released on them soldiers brutalized by barrack life and wine, and said to them openly in the Assembly: "Kill the wolves, the she-wolves, and the cubs!" And to the people they said:

Whatever you do, you will perish! If you are taken with arms in your hands-death! If you beg for mercy-death! To whatever side you turn your eyes, left, right, before, behind, above, below-death! You are not only outside the law; you are outside humanity. Neither age nor sex will be able to save you, either you or yours. You will die, but before that you will savor the agony of your wife, of your sister, of your mother, of your daughter, of your son, even down to the cradle! Before your eyes they will drag the wounded from the ambulances to slash them with sword bayonets and bludgeon them with rifle butts. They will drag them, still alive, by their broken legs or bleeding arms, and throw them into the river like bags of ordure that scream and suffer.

Death! Death! Death!

And after this frantic orgy upon a pile of corpses, after the mass exterminations, a vengeance both mean and atrocious was to continue-floggings, thumbscrews, unendurable fetters, blows of prison guards, insults, hunger, all the refinements of cruelty.

Are the people likely to forget these great deeds?

"Down, but not out," the Commune is being reborn today. This is not merely a dream of the conquered caressing in their imagination a beautiful mirage of hope.
No! The Commune today becomes the precise and visible aim of the revolution that already rumbles near us. The idea penetrates the masses, gives them a flag to march behind, and we firmly count on the present generation to accomplish the social revolution of the Commune, and in this way put an end to the ignoble exploitation by the bourgeoisie, rid the people of the tutelage of the new State, and inaugurate in the evolution of the human species a new era of liberty, equality and solidarity.

2.

Ten years separate us already from the day on which the people of Paris, overthrowing the government of traitors which had seized power on the fall of the Empire, constituted itself a Commune and proclaimed its absolute independence. Yet it is still towards that date of the 18th of March, 1871 that we turn our glance, and from which we retain our best memories; it is the anniversary of that memorable day which the proletariat of the two worlds proposed to celebrate solemnly, and tomorrow evening, hundreds of thousands of workers' hearts will beat in unison' fraternizing across frontiers and oceans, in Europe, in the United States, in South America, in memory of the revolt of the Paris proletariat.

This is because the idea for which the French proletariat shed its blood in Paris, and for which it suffered on the beaches of New Caledonia, is one of those ideas which embraces within itself a whole revolution, a broad idea which can gather under the folds of its banner all the revolutionary tendencies of the people marching towards their liberation.

It is true that if we limit ourselves merely to observing the actual and palpable deeds accomplished by the Paris Commune, we have to admit that this idea was not vast enough, that it embraced only a minute part of the revolutionary program. But if, on the other hand, we observe the spirit that inspired the masses of the people after the action of the 18th of March, the tendencies that tried to emerge and did not have the time to reach the domain of reality because, before flowering, they were already stifled under the mounds of corpses, we will then understand the scope of the movement and the sympathies that it inspired in the hearts of the working masses of the two worlds. The Commune gladdens our hearts, not for what
it achieved, but for what it has promised one day to achieve.

Whence comes this irresistible fascination which draws towards the movement of 1871 the sympathies of all the oppressed masses? What idea does the Paris Commune represent? And why is that idea so attractive to the proletarians of all countries, of all nationalities?

The answer is an easy one. The revolution of 1871 was a strikingly popular movement. Made by the people itself, born spontaneously in the heart of the masses, it is within the great mass of the people that it found its defenders, its heroes, its martyrs, and it was above all because of this "rabble" character that the bourgeoisie never forgave it. At the same time, the basic idea of that revolution, certainly vague, perhaps even unconscious, but nonetheless very pronounced and penetrating all its actions, is the idea of the social revolution, seeking to establish at last, after so many centuries of struggle, true liberty and true equality for all.

It was the revolution of the "rabble" marching to conquer its rights.

It is true that people have sought and still seek to distort the true meaning of that revolution, and to represent it as a simple attempt to conquer independence for Paris and turn it into a petty State within France. Yet nothing is less true. Paris did not seek to isolate itself from France, just as it did not seek to conquer it by arms; it made no attempt to enclose itself within its walls like a Benedictine within his cloister; it was not inspired by a narrow parochial outlook. If it demanded its independence, and sought to prevent the intrusion into its affairs of any kind of central power, it was because it saw in that independence a means of quietly elaborating the bases of future organization and of developing within itself a social revolution that would completely transform the system of production and exchange by basing it on justice; would completely modify human relations by establishing them on a foundation of equality; and reform our social morality by giving it as a basis, the principles of equity and solidarity.

Thus, communal independence was only a means for the people of Paris, and the social revolution was its end.
This end would certainly have been accomplished if the revolution on the 18th of March had been able to follow its free course, and if the people of Paris had not been mowed down, sabered, shot and disemboweled by the assassins of Versailles. To find a simple idea comprehensible to everyone and expressing in a few words what must be done to accomplish the revolution was, in fact, the preoccupation of the people of Paris from the first days of their independence. But a great idea is not developed in a day, no matter how rapid may be the elaboration and propagation of ideas during a revolutionary period. It always takes a certain time to develop, to permeate the masses and to be translated into action, and this time was lacking for me Paris Commune.

It was lacking all the more because, for the last ten years, the idea of modern socialism has been going through a transition period. The Commune was born, indeed, between two epochs in the development of modern socialism. In 1871 the authoritarian, governmental, and more or less religious socialism of 1848 no longer retained its influence over the more practical and libertarian minds of our own epoch. Where will you find today a Parisian who would agree to shut himself up in a phalansterian barracks? On the other hand, collectivism, which wanted to harness to the same chariot both the wage system and collective property, remained incomprehensible, unattractive and beset with practical difficulties of application. And free communism, anarchist communism, had barely seen the light of day and hardly dared confront the attacks of the worshipers of government.

Indecision reigned in people's minds, and the socialists themselves did not feel audacious enough to hasten to the destruction of individual property, since they did not have a well defined objective in view. So everyone let themselves be lulled by the reasoning that the somnolent have been repeating for centuries: "Let us make sure of victory first! Then we will see what can be done."

Make sure of victory first! As if there was any way of transforming society into a free commune without laying a hand on property! As if there could be any real way of defeating the enemy so long as the great mass of the people was not directly interested in the triumph of the revolution, in witnessing the arrival of material, moral and intellectual well-being for all! They sought to consolidate the Commune first of all while postponing the social revolution for later on, while the only effective
way of proceeding was to consolidate the Commune by the social revolution!

It was the same with the governmental principle. In proclaiming the free Commune, the people of Paris proclaimed an essential anarchist principle; but as this principle had only feebly penetrated people's minds at this time, they stopped in mid-course, and in the heart of the Commune the people continued to declare themselves in favor of the old governmental principle by giving themselves a Communal Council copied from the old municipal councils.

If we admit, in fact, that a central government is absolutely useless to regulate the relations of Communes between each other, why do we grant the necessity to regulate the mutual relations of the groups that constitute the Commune? And if we concede to the free initiative of the communes the task of coming to an understanding between themselves on enterprises that concern several cities at once, how can we refuse this same initiative to the groups of which a Commune is composed? A government within the Commune has no more right to exist than a government over the Commune.

But in 1871 the people of Paris, which had overthrown so many governments, was only involved in its first attempt at revolt against the governmental system itself: it submitted to governmental fetichism and gave itself a government. We know the consequence. It sent its devoted sons to the Hotel-de-Ville. Indeed, immobilized there by fetters of red tape, forced to discuss when action was needed, and losing the sensitivity that comes from continued contact with the masses, they saw themselves reduced to impotence. Paralyzed by their distancing from the revolutionary center-the people-they themselves paralyzed the popular initiative.

Brought into being during a transitory period when the ideas of socialism and authority were suffering a profound modification; born at the end of a war, in an isolated situation and under the threat of Prussian cannon, the Paris Commune was doomed to succumb.

But, thanks to its eminently popular character, it started off a new era in the series of revolutions, and through its ideas was the precursor of the great social revolution. The unprecedented massacres, cowardly and ferocious at the same
time, by which the bourgeoisie celebrated its fall, the ignoble vengeance which the executioners have exercised for the past nine years on their prisoners, these cannibalistic orgies have driven an abyss between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat that can never be closed. When the next revolution comes, the people will know what they have to do; they will know what awaits them if they do not carry off a decisive victory, and they will act accordingly.

In fact, we know now that the day when France bristles with insurgent Communes the people will no longer feel the need to give themselves a government and expect revolutionary initiatives from that government. After having swept out the parasites that feed upon them, they will seize hold of all social wealth to own it together according to the principles of anarchist communism. And when they have completely abolished property, the government and the State, they will freely constitute themselves according to the necessities dictated by life itself. Breaking its chains, and overthrowing its idols, humanity will then march towards a better future, no longer recognizing either masters or slaves, and holding in veneration only the noble martyrs who paid with their blood and sufferings for those first attempts at emancipation that have lightened us on our path towards the conquest of liberty.

3.

The fêtes and public meetings organized on the 18th of March in all the towns where there are organized socialist groups, deserve our attention, not merely as a demonstration by the army of the working class, but even more as an expression of the feelings that animate the socialists of the two worlds. Our numbers can better be counted in this way than by any kind of bulletin, for they show aspirations that have developed in full freedom without the influence of electoral tactics.

In fact, the workers, when they gather on this day, do not limit themselves in their meetings to praising the heroism of the Parisian proletariat or to demanding vengeance for the May massacres. While they reinvigorate themselves by memories of the heroic struggle in Paris, they are already forging an alliance that extends into the future. They discuss the lessons that must be drawn for the forthcoming revolution from the Commune of 1871; they ask each other what were
the mistakes of the Commune, not to criticize individual men, but to emphasize how the presumptions about property and authority among the workingclass organizations of the time hindered the revolutionary idea from opening out, developing, and illuminating the whole world with its vivifying light.

The lessons of 1871 have profited the workers of the whole world so that, breaking with old prejudices, they have been able to state clearly and simply how they understand their revolution. From now onwards it is certain that the next uprising of the Communes will not be a simple communalist movement. Those who still think that an independent Commune must be elected to try out economic reforms are lagging behind the development of the popular mind. It is by revolutionary socialist actions, by abolishing individual property, that the Communes of the next revolution will affirm and constitute their independence.

The day on which, in consequence of the development of the revolutionary situation, the governments are swept out by the people and disorganization is created in the ranks of the bourgeoisie who can only survive through the protection of the State, the insurgent people will not wait for any old government in its marvelous wisdom to decree economic reforms. They will abolish individual property by themselves taking possession, in the name of the whole people and by violent expropriation of the whole of social wealth which had been accumulated by the work of past generations. They will not stop short at expropriating the owners of social capital by a decree that will remain a dead letter; they will take possession and establish their rights of usufruct immediately. They will organize the workshops so that they continue production. They will exchange their hovels for healthy habitations in the houses of the well-todo; they will immediately find ways of utilizing the riches accumulated in the cities; they will take possession of it as if all this wealth had never been stolen from them by the bourgeoisie. Once the industrial baron who seized his booty from the worker has been evicted, production will continue, shaking off the fetters that hinder it, abolishing the speculations that kill it, getting rid of the muck that hinders its development, and changing it according to the needs of the moment under the impetus provided by freedom of work. "Never did people work in France as in 1793, after the land was torn out of the hands of the lords," said Michelet.(36) Never have people worked as they will work on the day work becomes free, the day on which every kind of progress
achieved by the worker will contribute to the well-being of the whole Commune.

On the subject of social wealth a distinction has been made that has divided the socialist party. The school that nowadays calls itself collectivist, substituting a kind of doctrinaire collectivism for the collectivism of the former International (which was nothing more than antiauthoritarian communism), tried to establish a distinction between the capital used in production and the wealth that sustained the necessities of living. Machines, factories, means of transport and communication, and the land itself, were distinguished as one type, while housing, manufactured products, clothing, provisions were distinguished as another. One class should become collective property; the other was destined, according to the learned representatives of that school, to remain private property.

They have tried to establish that distinction. But the good sense of the people has quickly seen through it all, understanding that the distinction is illusory and impossible to establish. Defective theoretically, it falls down before the practice of life. The workers have realized that the houses they inhabit, the coal and gas they burn, the food which the human body burns to sustain its life, the clothes with which people cover themselves to sustain their existence, the books they read to instruct themselves, not to speak of the pleasure they gain from living, are all of them integral parts of life, as necessary for the success of production and the progressive development of humanity, as the machines, manufacturers, raw materials and other factors in production. They have understood that to sustain property for the sake of its riches would be to maintain inequality, oppression, exploitation, and to paralyze in advance the results of partial expropriation. Clambering over the obstacles put in their way by the collectivism of the theoreticians, they proceed directly towards the more simple and more practical pattern of anti-authoritarian communism.

In fact, in their gatherings, the revolutionary workers have clearly affirmed their right to the whole of social wealth and the need to abolish individual property, as much to defend the values of consumption as those of production. "On the day of the revolution, let us seize hold of all wealth, of all the resources accumulated in the towns and cities, and we will hold them in common"-so say the spokesmen of the working mass, and the hearers confirm it by their unanimous assent.
"Let everyone take from the heap what he needs, and be sure that in the storehouses of our cities there will be enough provisions to feed everyone until free production gets into its stride. In the shops of our cities there are enough garments to clothe everybody, lying there unsold in the midst of general poverty. There are even enough objects of luxury for everyone to pick and choose according to his taste."

That is how the working mass envisages the revolution: The immediate introduction of anarchist communism and the free organization of production. These are two established points, and in this respect the Communes of the revolution that growls at our doors will not repeat the errors of their predecessors who, by shedding their blood so generously, have cleared the path to the future.

The same kind of agreement has not yet been established—though that agreement is not far off—on another, no less important point: the question of government.

We know that the two schools are facing each other, completely divided on this question. "On the very day of the revolution," says one group, "we must constitute a government to assume power. Strong and resolute, this government will make the revolution by decreeing this and that and coercing people to obey its decrees."

"What a sad illusion!" say the others. "Any central government, setting out to rule a nation, will inevitably be formed of disparate elements, conservative in its essence, and nothing more than a hindrance to the revolution. It will merely hobble the Communes which are ready to march forward, without being able to inspire the backward Communes with a revolutionary urge. The same will happen in the heart of an insurgent Commune. Either the communal government will do no more than sanction what has already been done, and it will then be a useless and potentially dangerous mechanism; or it will attempt to act with prudence and regulate what should be elaborated freely by the people themselves if it is to be viable; it will apply theories where society should be elaborating new forms of communal life with the creative force that rises up in the social organism when it breaks its chains and sees new and broad horizons opening out before it. Men who hold power will hinder that impulse, without producing anything on their own of which they might be capable if they remained in the heart of the people, working beside them in
elaborating a new organization instead of closing themselves up in offices and exhausting their energies in idle debate. That will be a hindrance and a peril; powerless to do good but formidable in its possibilities of evil; thus, it has no reason to exist."

No matter how just and natural this reasoning may be, it still clashes with secular prejudices, accumulated and approved by those who have an interest in maintaining the religion of government alongside the religion of property and godly religion.

This prejudice, the last of the series: God, Property, Government, still exists and it is a danger to the forthcoming revolution. But one can already see it crumbling away. "We will see to our own affairs," the workers are saying, "without awaiting the orders of a government, and we will go over the heads of those who seek to impose themselves in the guise of priest, proprietor or ruler. And for this reason we must hope that the anarchist party will continue to fight vigorously against the religion of governmentalism, and that it will not be diverted from its own path by letting itself be dragged into power struggles; in our view, we can all hope that in the few years left before the revolution, the prejudice in favor of government will be sufficiently broken down and will no longer have the power of leading the working masses in the wrong direction.

At the same time there has been one regrettable deficiency in the recent popular gatherings. Nothing, or almost nothing, has been done in the countryside. Activity has been restricted to the towns. The country does not seem to exist for the urban workers. Even the orators who speak of the character of the coming revolution avoid mentioning the rural areas and the land. They are familiar neither with the peasant nor with his desires, and so they take no chances of speaking in his name. Need one dwell at length on the perils that result from this? The emancipation of the proletariat will not even be possible while the revolutionary movement fails to embrace the countryside. The insurgent communes will be unable to maintain themselves for a single day, if the insurrection does not spread at the same time among the villages. When taxes, mortgages and rents are abolished, when the institutions that protect them are scattered to the four winds, it is certain that the villages will understand the advantages of that revolution. At the same time it
would be imprudent to count on the diffusion of revolutionary ideas in the villages without advance preparation. We must first find out what the peasant needs, how the revolution is understood in the villages, and how they think of resolving the thorny question of landed property. We must let the peasant know in advance what the workers of the towns-their natural allies- are thinking, and we must assure them that there is nothing to fear in the way of measures that may be harmful to agriculture. As for the workers in the cities, they must accustom themselves to respecting the peasant and marching in a common accord with him.

But for that to happen the worker must accept the obligation to help the propaganda in the villages. In each town there must appear a small but special organization, a branch of the Agrarian League, to carry on propaganda among the peasants. This kind of propaganda must be considered a duty, in the same way as propaganda in the industrial centers.

The beginnings will be hard, but therein lies the success of the revolution. It will be victorious only on the day when the workers in the factories and the cultivators in the fields march hand in hand to the conquest of equality for all, carrying happiness into the cottage as well as into the buildings of the great industrial agglomerations.

**Chronology :**

**November 30, 1884** : Words of a Rebel -- Publication.


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