

Mikhail Bakunin 1873

Statism and Anarchy

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Source: *Bakunin on Anarchy*, translated and edited by Sam Dolgoff, 1971.

Statism and Anarchy is the first completed volume of a larger projected work by Bakunin. Written in Russian, with special emphasis on Slavic problems, this work tremendously influenced Russian revolutionary thought.

In the first extract, “[Critique of the Marxist Theory of the State](#),” Bakunin, without specifically naming Marx, nevertheless lays the groundwork for attacking what he saw as Marx’s “statism”.

“The theory of statism as well as that of so-called ‘revolutionary dictatorship’ is based on the idea that a ‘privileged elite,’ consisting of those scientists and ‘doctrinaire revolutionists’ who believe that ‘theory is prior to social experience,’ should impose their preconceived scheme of social organization on the people. The dictatorial power of this learned minority is concealed by the fiction of a pseudo-representative government which presumes to express the will of the people.”

Bakunin’s predictions about state-dominated economy and regimentation of labor were based on measures advocated in the [Communist Manifesto](#): centralization of credit and transportation by the State, obligatory work for all, the establishment of industrial armies, particularly in agriculture, etc.

The second excerpt, “[Some Preconditions for a Social Revolution](#),” discusses two main questions: the subjective (psychological) and the objective (material) preconditions for a social revolution, and whether the Slavic peoples can

achieve the Social Revolution through the establishment of a pan-Slavic or any other form of state. This naturally leads to a discussion of the nature of the State; and Bakunin proceeds to expound his view that the State is more than just “the executive committee of the capitalist class.” To this end he cites the example of the Serbia of his time, to show how the State can become a self-perpetuating dictatorship dominating both the people and the economy; how an immense army of government officials can create, under certain conditions, its own state, and “exploit the ... people in order to provide the bureaucrats with all the comforts of life.” This description will bring readily to mind the fate of various modern national minorities who have freed themselves from their colonial masters and established their own states.

The [final excerpt](#), taken from the appendix to *Statism and Anarchy*, deals primarily with the pre-conditions for a social revolution in Russia. Bakunin does not idolize the Russian peasant, nor does he, like so many of his contemporaries, uncritically accept the *Mir* (peasant community) as the ideal unit of the future society. In discussing the program of the moderate liberals and the Populists, Bakunin gives his views on the efficacy of cooperatives, and the establishment of colonies (communes) and other reformist measures to bring about fundamental social changes. He also outlines what intelligent and dedicated Russian youth from upper and middle classes could do to promote social revolution.

See Also: [Marx and Engels on Russia](#).

Statism and Anarchy represents among other things Bakunin’s opposition to the argument of [Auguste Comte](#) (1798-1857), that social life must be regulated in accordance with the immutable laws of the physical sciences. In opposition to the Comtean positivists, Bakunin contended that the scientific laws governing inanimate objects could not apply to the behavior of living beings endowed with the faculty of choice and the ability to modify their conduct as the situation demanded. Bakunin objected to positivism as a “religion of humanity” under the aegis of a scientific church, and to any form of philosophic idealism or metaphysics,

even if couched in scientific terms, as fundamentally reactionary because inclined “to force future generations into the narrow mold of ... necessarily tentative theories.”

Critique of the Marxist Theory of the State

There is no road leading from metaphysics to the realities of life. Theory and fact are separated by an abyss. It is impossible to leap across this abyss by what Hegel called a “qualitative jump” from the world of logic to the world of nature and of real life.

The road leading from concrete fact to theory and vice versa is the method of science and is the true road. In the practical world, it is the movement of society toward forms of organization that will to the greatest possible extent reflect life itself in all its aspects and complexity.

Such is the people’s way to complete emancipation, accessible to all — the way of the anarchist social revolution, which will come from the people themselves, an elemental force sweeping away all obstacles. Later, from the depths of the popular soul, there will spontaneously emerge the new creative forms of social life.

The way of the gentlemen metaphysicians is completely different. Metaphysician is the term we use for the disciples of Hegel and for the positivists, and in general, for all the worshippers of science as a goddess, all those modern Procrustians who, in one way or another, have created an ideal of social organization, a narrow mold into which they would force future generations, all those who, instead of seeing science as only one of the essential manifestations of natural and social life, insist that all of life is encompassed in their necessarily tentative

scientific theories. Metaphysicians and positivists, all these gentlemen who consider it their mission to prescribe the laws of life in the name of science, are consciously or unconsciously reactionaries.

This is very easy to demonstrate.

Science in the true sense of that word, real science, is at this time within reach of only an insignificant minority. For example, among us in Russia, how many accomplished savants are there in a population of eighty million? Probably a thousand are engaged in science, but hardly more than a few hundred could be considered first-rate, serious scientists. If science were to dictate the laws, the overwhelming majority, many millions of men, would be ruled by one or two hundred experts. Actually it would be even fewer than that, because not all of science is concerned with the administration of society. This would be the task of sociology — the science of sciences — which presupposes in the case of a well-trained sociologist that he have an adequate knowledge of all the other sciences. How many such people are there in Russia — in all Europe? Twenty or thirty — and these twenty or thirty would rule the world? Can anyone imagine a more absurd and abject despotism?

It is almost certain that these twenty or thirty experts would quarrel among themselves, and if they did agree on common policies, it would be at the expense of mankind. The principal vice of the average specialist is his inclination to exaggerate his own knowledge and deprecate everyone else's. Give him control and he will become an insufferable tyrant. To be the slave of pedants — what a destiny for humanity! Give them full power and they will begin by performing on human beings the same experiments that the scientists are now performing on rabbits and dogs.

We must respect the scientists for their merits and achievements, but in order to prevent them from corrupting their own high moral and intellectual standards, they should be granted no special privileges and no rights other than those possessed by everyone — for example, the liberty to express their convictions, thought, and knowledge. Neither they nor any other special group should be given power over others. He who is given power will inevitably become an oppressor and exploiter of society.

But we are told: “Science will not always be the patrimony of a few. There will come a time when it will be accessible to all.” Such a time is still far away and there will be many social upheavals before this dream will come true, and even then, who would want to put his fate in the hands of the priests of science?

It seems to us that anyone who thinks that after a social revolution everybody will be equally educated is very much mistaken. Science, then as now, will remain one of the many specialized fields, though it will cease to be accessible only to a very few of the privileged class. With the elimination of class distinctions, education will be within the reach of all those who will have the ability and the desire to pursue it, but not to the detriment of manual labor, which will be compulsory for all.

Available to everyone will be a general scientific education, especially the learning of the scientific method, the habit of correct thinking, the ability to generalize from facts and make more or less correct deductions. But of encyclopedic minds and advanced sociologists there will be very few. It would be sad for mankind if at any time theoretical speculation became the only source of guidance for society, if science alone were in charge of all social administration. Life would wither, and human society would turn into a voiceless and servile herd. The domination of life by science can have no other result than the brutalization of mankind.

We, the revolutionary anarchists, are the advocates of education for all the people, of the emancipation and the widest possible expansion of social life. Therefore we are the enemies of the State and all forms of the statist principle. In opposition to the metaphysicians, the positivists, and all the worshippers of science, we declare that natural and social life always comes before theory, which is only one of its manifestations but never its creator. From out of its own inexhaustible depths, society develops through a series of events, but not by thought alone. Theory is always created by life, but never creates it; like mile-posts and road signs, it only indicates the direction and the different stages of life's independent and unique development.

In accordance with this belief, we neither intend nor desire to thrust upon our own or any other people any scheme of social organization taken from books or concocted by ourselves. We are convinced that the masses of the people carry in themselves, in their instincts (more or less developed by history), in their daily necessities, and in their conscious or unconscious aspirations, all the elements of the future social organization. We seek this ideal in the people themselves. Every state power, every government, by its very nature places itself outside and over the people and inevitably subordinates them to an organization and to aims which are foreign to and opposed to the real needs and aspirations of the people. We declare ourselves the enemies of every government and every state power, and of governmental organization in general. We think that people can be free and happy only when organized from the bottom up in completely free and independent associations, without governmental paternalism though not without the influence of a variety of free individuals and parties.

Such are our ideas as social revolutionaries, and we are therefore called anarchists. We do not protest this name, for we are indeed the enemies of any governmental power, since we

know that such a power depraves those who wear its mantle equally with those who are forced to submit to it. Under its pernicious influence the former become ambitious and greedy despots, exploiters of society in favor of their personal or class interests, while the latter become slaves.

Idealists of all kinds — metaphysicians, positivists, those who support the rule of science over life, doctrinaire revolutionists — all defend the idea of state and state power with equal eloquence, because they see in it, as a consequence of their own systems, the only salvation for society. Quite logically, since they have accepted the basic premise (which we consider completely mistaken) that thought precedes life, that theory is prior to social experience, and, therefore, that social science has to be the starting point for all social upheavals and reconstructions. They then arrive unavoidably at the conclusion that because thought, theory, and science, at least in our times, are in the possession of very few, these few ought to be the leaders of social life, not only the initiators, but also the leaders of all popular movements. On the day following the revolution the new social order should not be organized by the free association of people's organizations or unions, local and regional, from the bottom up, in accordance with the demands and instincts of the people, but only by the dictatorial power of this learned minority, which presumes to express the will of the people.

This fiction of a pseudo-representative government serves to conceal the domination of the masses by a handful of privileged elite; an elite elected by hordes of people who are rounded up and do not know for whom or for what they vote. Upon this artificial and abstract expression of what they falsely imagine to be the will of the people and of which the real living people have not the least idea, they construct both the theory of statism as well as the theory of so-called revolutionary dictatorship.

The differences between revolutionary dictatorship and statism are superficial. Fundamentally they both represent the same principle of minority rule over the majority in the name of the alleged “stupidity” of the latter and the alleged “intelligence” of the former. Therefore they are both equally reactionary since both directly and inevitably must preserve and perpetuate the political and economic privileges of the ruling minority and the political and economic subjugation of the masses of the people.

Now it is clear why the dictatorial revolutionists, who aim to overthrow the existing powers and social structures in order to erect upon their ruins their own dictatorships, never were or will be the enemies of government, but, to the contrary, always will be the most ardent promoters of the government idea. They are the enemies only of contemporary governments, because they wish to replace them. They are the enemies of the present governmental structure, because it excludes the possibility of their dictatorship. At the same time they are the most devoted friends of governmental power. For if the revolution destroyed this power by actually freeing the masses, it would deprive this pseudo-revolutionary minority of any hope to harness the masses in order to make them the beneficiaries of their own government policy.

We have already expressed several times our deep aversion to the theory of Lassalle and Marx, which recommends to the workers, if not as a final ideal at least as the next immediate goal, the *founding of a people's state*, which according to their interpretation will be nothing but “the proletariat elevated to the status of the governing class.”

Let us ask, if the proletariat is to be the ruling class, over whom is it to rule? In short, there will remain another proletariat which will be subdued to this new rule, to this new state. For instance, the peasant “rabble” who, as it is known, does not enjoy the sympathy of the Marxists who consider it to represent a lower

level of culture, will probably be ruled by the factory proletariat of the cities. Or, if this problem is to be approached nationalistically, the Slavs will be placed in the same subordinate relationship to the victorious German proletariat in which the latter now stands to the German bourgeoisie.

If there is a State, there must be domination of one class by another and, as a result, slavery; the State without slavery is unthinkable — and this is why we are the enemies of the State.

What does it mean that the proletariat will be elevated to a ruling class? Is it possible for the whole proletariat to stand at the head of the government? There are nearly forty million Germans. Can all forty million be members of the government? In such a case, there will be no government, no state, but, if there is to be a state there will be those who are ruled and those who are slaves.

The Marxist theory solves this dilemma very simply. By the people's rule, they mean the rule of a small number of representatives elected by the people. The general, and every man's, right to elect the representatives of the people and the rulers of the State is the latest word of the Marxists, as well as of the democrats. This is a lie, behind which lurks the despotism of the ruling minority, a lie all the more dangerous in that it appears to express the so-called will of the people.

Ultimately, from whatever point of view we look at this question, we come always to the same sad conclusion, the rule of the great masses of the people by a privileged minority. The Marxists say that this minority will consist of workers. Yes, possibly of former workers, who, as soon as they become the rulers of the representatives of the people, will cease to be workers and will look down at the plain working masses from the governing heights of the State; they will no longer represent the people, but only themselves and their claims to rulership over the

people. Those who doubt this know very little about human nature.

These elected representatives, say the Marxists, will be dedicated and learned socialists. The expressions “learned socialist,” “scientific socialism,” etc., which continuously appear in the speeches and writings of the followers of Lassalle and Marx, prove that the pseudo-People’s State will be nothing but a despotic control of the populace by a new and not at all numerous aristocracy of real and pseudo-scientists. The “uneducated” people will be totally relieved of the cares of administration, and will be treated as a regimented herd. A beautiful liberation, indeed!

The Marxists are aware of this contradiction and realize that a government of scientists will be a real dictatorship regardless of its democratic form. They console themselves with the idea that this rule will be temporary. They say that the only care and objective will be to educate and elevate the people economically and politically to such a degree that such a government will soon become unnecessary, and the State, after losing its political or coercive character, will automatically develop into a completely free organization of economic interests and communes.

There is a flagrant contradiction in this theory. If their state would be really of the people, why eliminate it? And if the State is needed to emancipate the workers, then the workers are not yet free, so why call it a People’s State? By our polemic against them we have brought them to the realization that freedom or anarchism, which means a free organization of the working masses from the bottom up, is the final objective of social development, and that every state, not excepting their People’s State, is a yoke, on the one hand giving rise to despotism and on the other to slavery. They say that such a yoke — dictatorship is a transitional step towards achieving full freedom for the people: anarchism or freedom is the aim, while state and dictatorship is

the means, and so, in order to free the masses of people, they have first to be enslaved!

Upon this contradiction our polemic has come to a halt. They insist that only dictatorship (of course their own) can create freedom for the people. We reply that all dictatorship has no objective other than self-perpetuation, and that slavery is all it can generate and instill in the people who suffer it. Freedom can be created only by freedom, by a total rebellion of the people, and by a voluntary organization of the people from the bottom up.

The social theory of the anti-state socialists or anarchists leads them directly and inevitably towards a break with all forms of the State, with all varieties of bourgeois politics, and leaves no choice except a social revolution. The opposite theory, state communism and the authority of the scientists, attracts and confuses its followers and, under the pretext of political tactics, makes continuous deals with the governments and various bourgeois political parties, and is directly pushed towards reaction.

The cardinal point of this program is that the State alone is to liberate the (pseudo-) proletariat. To achieve this, the State must agree to liberate the proletariat from the oppression of bourgeois capitalism. How is it possible to impart such a will to the State? The proletariat must take possession of the State by a revolution — an heroic undertaking. But once the proletariat seizes the State, it must move at once to abolish immediately this eternal prison of the people. But according to Mr. Marx, the people not only should not abolish the State, but, on the contrary, they must strengthen and enlarge it. and turn it over to the full disposition of their benefactors, guardians, and teachers — the leaders of the Communist party, meaning Mr. Marx and his friends — who will then liberate them in their own way. They will concentrate all administrative power in their own strong hands, because the ignorant people are in need of a strong guardianship; and they will

create a central state bank, which will also control all the commerce, industry, agriculture, and even science. The mass of the people will be divided into two armies, the agricultural and the industrial, under the direct command of the state engineers, who will constitute the new privileged political-scientific class.

Some Preconditions for a Social Revolution

The propaganda and organization of the International is directed exclusively to the working class, which in Italy, as in the rest of Europe, embodies all the life, power, and aspirations of the future society. The International attracted only a handful of adherents from the bourgeois world who, having learned to passionately hate the existing social order and all its false values, renounced their class and dedicated themselves body and soul to the cause of the people.

If they can root out the last vestiges of subjective loyalty to the bourgeois world, and those of personal vanity, these men, though few in number, could render priceless services to the revolutionary movement. They draw their inspiration from the movement of the people. But in exchange they can contribute expert knowledge, the capacity for abstract thought and generalization, and the ability to organize and coordinate — qualities which constitute the creative force without which any victory is impossible. In Italy and Russia there are more such young men than there are in other countries. But what is a much more important asset for the Revolution is that there is in Italy an enormous proletariat, unusually intelligent by nature but very often lacking education and living in great poverty. This proletariat comprises two or three million urban workers, mainly in factories and small workshops, and approximately twenty million totally deprived peasants. This huge class has been

reduced to such desperation that even the defenders of this terrible society are beginning to speak out openly in parliament and in the official press, admitting that things have reached the breaking point, and that something must immediately be done to avoid a popular holocaust which will destroy everything in its path.

Nowhere are there more favorable conditions for the Social Revolution than in Italy. There does not exist in Italy, as in most other European nations, a special category of relatively affluent workers, earning higher wages, boasting of their literary capacities, and so impregnated by a variety of bourgeois prejudices that, excepting income, they differ in no way from the bourgeoisie. This class of bourgeois workers is numerous in Germany and in Switzerland; but in Italy, on the contrary, they are insignificant in number and influence, a mere drop in the ocean. In Italy it is the extremely poor proletariat that predominates. Marx speaks disdainfully, but quite unjustly, of this *Lumpenproletariat*. For in them, and only in them, and not in the bourgeois strata of workers, are there crystallized the entire intelligence and power of the coming Social Revolution.

A popular insurrection, by its very nature, is instinctive, chaotic, and destructive, and always entails great personal sacrifice and an enormous loss of public and private property. The masses are always ready to sacrifice themselves; and this is what turns them into a brutal and savage horde, capable of performing heroic and apparently impossible exploits, and since they possess little or nothing, they are not demoralized by the responsibilities of property ownership. And in moments of crisis, for the sake of self-defense or victory, they will not hesitate to burn down their own houses and neighborhoods, and property being no deterrent, since it belongs to their oppressors, they develop a passion for destruction. This negative passion, it is true, is far from being sufficient to attain the heights of the revolutionary cause; but

without it, revolution would be impossible. Revolution requires extensive and widespread destruction, a fecund and renovating destruction, since in this way and only this way are new worlds born...

Not even the most terrible misery affecting millions of workers is in itself enough to spur them to revolution. Man is by nature endowed (or cursed) by marvelous patience, and only the devil knows how he can patiently endure unimaginable misery and even slow death by starvation; and even the impulse to give way to despair is smothered by a complete insensibility toward his own rights, and an imperturbable obedience...

People in this condition are hopeless. They would rather die than rebel. But when a man can be driven to desperation, he is then more likely to rebel. Despair is a bitter, passionate feeling capable of rousing men from their semiconscious resignation if they already have an idea of a more desirable situation, even without much hope of achieving it. But it is impossible to remain too long in a state of absolute despair: one must give in, die, or do something about it — fight for a cause, but what cause? Obviously, to free oneself, to fight for a better life...

But poverty and desperation are still not sufficient to generate the Social Revolution. They may be able to call forth intermittent local rebellions, but not great and widespread mass uprisings. To do this it is indispensable that the people be inspired by a universal ideal, historically developed from the instinctual depths of popular sentiments, amplified and clarified by a series of significant events and severe and bitter experiences. It is necessary that the populace have a general idea of their rights and a deep, passionate, quasi-religious belief in the validity of these rights. When this idea and this popular faith are joined to the kind of misery that leads to desperation, then the Social Revolution is near and inevitable, and no force on earth will be able to resist it.

This is exactly the situation of the Italian proletariat. The sufferings they are forced to endure are scarcely less terrible than the poverty and misery that overwhelm the Russian people. But the Italian proletariat is imbued with a greater degree of passionate revolutionary consciousness than are the Russian masses, a consciousness which daily becomes stronger and clearer. By nature intelligent and passionate, the Italian proletariat is at last beginning to understand what it wants and what must be done to achieve its complete emancipation. In this sense the propaganda of the International, energetically and widely diffused during the last two years, has been of great value. This profound sentiment, this universal ideal, without which (as we have already said) every mass insurrection, however great the sacrifices made, is absolutely impossible, has been stimulated by the International, which at the same time pointed out the road to emancipation and the means for the organization of the people's power.

At first this ideal naturally manifests itself in the passionate desire of the people to put an end to their poverty and misery and to satisfy all their material needs by collective labor, equally obligatory for all. Later it will come to include the abolition of all domination, and the free organization of the life of the country in accord with the needs of the people. This will mean the rejection of the State's form of control from the top in favor of organization from the bottom up, created by the people themselves, without governments and parliaments. This would be organization achieved by the free participation of associations, of the agricultural and industrial workers, of the communes and the provinces. Ultimately, in the more distant future, it would erect on the ruins of all states the fraternity of peoples.

It is worth noting that in Italy, as in Spain, the program of Marxist state communism has had absolutely no effect, while the program of the famous Alliance of revolutionary socialists

[anarchist vanguard organization], which proclaimed uncompromising war against all domination, all tutelage and governmental authority, was overwhelmingly and enthusiastically accepted by the workers.

A people inspired with such ideas can always win its own freedom and ground its own life on the most ample freedom for everyone, while in no way threatening or infringing on the freedom of other nations. This is why neither Italy nor Spain will embark on a career of conquest but will, on the contrary, help all peoples to accomplish their own social revolutions...

Modern capitalist production and bank speculation inexorably demand enormous centralization of the State, which alone can subject millions of workers to capitalist exploitation. Federalist organization from the bottom upward, of workers' associations, groups, communes, cantons [counties], regions, and finally whole peoples, is the sole condition for true, non-fictitious freedom, but such freedom violates the interests and convictions of the ruling classes, just as economic self-determination is incompatible with their methods of organization. *Representative democracy*, however, harmonizes marvelously with the capitalist economic system. This new statist system, basing itself on the alleged *sovereignty of the so-called will of the people*, as supposedly expressed by their alleged representatives in mock popular assemblies, incorporates the two principal and necessary conditions for the progress of capitalism: state centralization, and the actual submission of the sovereign people to the intellectual governing minority, who, while claiming to represent the people, unfailingly exploits them.

The exploitation of human labor cannot be sugar-coated even by the most democratic form of government ... for the worker it will always be a bitter pill. It follows from this that no government, however paternalistic, however bent on avoiding

friction, will tolerate any threat to its exploitative economic institutions or its political hegemony: unable to instill habitual obedience to its authority by cajolery and other peaceful methods, the government will then resort to unceasing coercion, to violence, i.e., to political control, and the ultimate weapon of political control is military power.

The modern State is by its very nature a military State; and every military State must of necessity become a conquering, invasive State; to survive it must conquer or be conquered, for the simple reason that accumulated military power will suffocate if it does not find an outlet. Therefore the modern State must strive to be a huge and powerful State: this is the indispensable precondition for its survival.

And just as capitalist production must, to avoid bankruptcy, continually expand by absorbing its weaker competitors and drive to monopolize all the other capitalist enterprises all over the world, so must the modern State inevitably drive to become the only universal State, since the coexistence of two universal states is by definition absolutely impossible. Sovereignty, the drive toward absolute domination, is inherent in every State; and the first prerequisite for this sovereignty is the comparative weakness, or at least the submission of neighboring states...

A strong State can have only one solid foundation: military and bureaucratic centralization. The fundamental difference between a monarchy and even the most democratic republic is that in the monarchy, the bureaucrats oppress and rob the people for the benefit of the privileged in the name of the King, and to fill their own coffers; while in the republic the people are robbed and oppressed in the same way for the benefit of the same classes, in the name of "the will of the people" (and to fill the coffers of the democratic bureaucrats). In the republic the State, which is supposed to be the people, legally organized, stifles and will

continue to stifle the real people. But the people will feel no better if the stick with which they are being beaten is labeled “the people’s stick.”

... No state, however democratic — not even the reddest republic — can ever give the people what they really want, i.e., the free self-organization and administration of their own affairs from the bottom upward, without any interference or violence from above, because every state, even the pseudo-People’s State concocted by Mr. Marx, is in essence only a machine ruling the masses from above, through a privileged minority of conceited intellectuals, who imagine that they know what the people need and want better than do the people themselves...

We are as unalterably opposed to any form of pan-Slavism as we are to any form of pan-Germanism. It is the sacred and urgent duty of the Russian revolutionary youth to counteract in every possible way the pan-Slavic propaganda inside Russia itself, and particularly that spread in other Slavic lands, officially and unofficially by government agents, and voluntarily by fanatical Slavophiles, which strives to convince the unfortunate Slavs that the Slavic Tsar deeply loves his Slavic brothers, and that the dastardly pan-Russian Empire, which throttled Poland and Little Russia [Ukrainia?] can, if only the Tsar wishes, free the Slavic lands from the German yoke. [Bakunin includes as Slavs those in the now defunct Austro-Hungarian Empire — Hungary, Austria, Bulgaria, Serbia, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, etc.]

This illusion is widespread among Austrian Slavs. Their fanatical though understandable hatred of their oppressor has driven them to such a state of madness that, forgetting or ignoring the atrocities committed against Lithuania, Poland, Little Russia and even Great Russia by Tsarist despotism, they still await deliverance by our pan-Russian slave driver.

One should not be surprised that the Slavic masses harbor such illusions. They do not know history or the internal situation in Russia: all they are told is that an all-Slavic empire has been created to defy the Germans; an empire so mighty that the Germans tremble in fear and what the Germans hate, the Slavs must love.

All this is to be expected. But what is sad, hard to understand, and inexcusable is that people who should know better, the educated Austrian Slavs, experienced, wise, and well informed, have organized a party that openly preaches pan-Slavism. According to some, this would involve the creation of *a great Slavic empire* under the domination of the Tsar, and according to others it would consist in the emancipation of the Slavic peoples by the Russian Empire...

But what benefits would the Slavic people derive by the formation of a mighty Slavic empire? — This would indeed be advantageous for the states [composing the empire] but not for the proletariat, only for the privileged minority — the clergy, the nobility, the bourgeoisie — and probably for some intellectuals, who because of their diplomas and their alleged mental superiority feel called upon to lead the masses. In short, there is an advantage for some thousands of oppressors, hangmen, and other exploiters of the proletariat. As far as the great masses of the people are concerned, the vaster the State, the heavier are the chains and the more crowded the prisons.

We have demonstrated that to exist, a state must become an invader of other states. just as the competition which in the economic sphere destroys or absorbs small and even medium-sized enterprises — factories, landholdings. businesses — so does the immense State likewise devour small and medium-sized states. Therefore every state. to exist not on paper but in fact, and not at the mercy of neighboring states, and to be independent,

must inevitably strive to become an invasive, aggressive, conquering state. This means that it must be ready to occupy a foreign country and hold many millions of people in subjection. For this it must exercise massive military power. But wherever military power prevails, it is goodbye to freedom! Farewell to the autonomy and well-being of the working people. It follows from this that the construction of a great Slavic empire means only the enslavement of the Slavic people.

Yet the Slavic statist tell us, “we don’t want a single great Slav state; we want only a number of middle-sized Slavic states, thereby assuring the independence of the Slavic peoples.” But this viewpoint is contrary to logic and historic facts and to the very nature of things; no middle-sized state, in our times, can exist independently. There will therefore be either no state at all, or there will be a single giant state which will devour all the weaker states — a despotic, absolutist Russian state.

Could a smaller Slavic state defend itself against the new pan-Germanic empire, without itself becoming just as great and just as powerful? Could it depend upon the assistance of countries united by self-interest? In both cases the answer is no. In the first place, because an alliance of various smaller heterogeneous powers, even when equal or numerically superior, remains weaker because their enemy is consolidated, homogeneous, responsive to a single command, and therefore much stronger. Secondly, one cannot depend on the friendly cooperation of other states, even when their own interests are involved. Statesmen, like ordinary mortals, are often so preoccupied with momentary interests and passions that they cannot see when their vital interests are threatened...

But could not the centralized pan-Germanic state be neutralized by a pan-Slavic federation, i.e., a union of independent Slavic nations patterned after Switzerland or North America? We reply in the negative. Because to form such a federation, it will first be

absolutely necessary to break up the pan-Russian Empire into a number of separate, independent states, joined only by voluntary association, and because the coexistence of such independent federated and medium or small states, together with so great a centralized empire, is simply inconceivable...

This federation of states could to some extent safeguard bourgeois freedom, but it could never become a military state for the simple reason that it is a federation. State power demands centralization, But it will be contended that the example of Switzerland and the United States refutes this assertion. But Switzerland, in order to increase its military power, tends toward centralization; and federation is possible in the United States only because it is not surrounded by highly centralized, mighty states like Russia, Germany, or France. Switzerland retains

federation only because of the indifference of the great international powers, and because its people are roughly divided into three zones speaking the language of its neighboring states, France, Germany, and Italy. To resist triumphant pan-Germanism on the legalistic and statist field — by founding an equally powerful Slavic state — would be disastrous for the Slavs, because it would inevitably expose them to pan-Russian tyranny...

The progressive Slavic people should realize by now that the time for flirting with Slavic ideology is over, and that there is nothing more absurd and harmful than to compress all the aspirations of the people into the narrow mold of a spurious nationalism. Nationality is not a humanitarian principle; it is an historical, local fact which should be generally tolerated along with other real and inoffensive facts.

Every people, however tiny, has its own specific character, style of life, speech, way of thinking and working; and precisely this character, this style of life, constitutes its nationality, which is

the sum total of its historic life, aspirations, and circumstances. Every people, like every individual, are perforce what they are and have the incontestable right to be themselves. This constitutes the alleged national right. But if a people or an individual lives in a certain way, it does not by any means give them the right, nor would it be beneficial, to regard this nationality and individuality as absolute, exclusive principles, nor should they be obsessed by them. On the contrary, the less preoccupied they are with themselves and the more they are imbued by the general idea of humanity, the more life-giving, the more purposeful, and the more profound becomes the feeling of nationality and that of individuality.

The same applies to the Slavs. They will remain insignificant as long as they are obsessed with their narrow-minded, egotistical ... Slavism, an obsession which by its very nature is contrary to the problems and the cause of humanity in general. They will attain their rightful place in the free fraternity of nations when, together with all other peoples, they are inspired by a wider, more universal interest...

In all historical epochs we find one universal interest which transcends all exclusively national and purely local boundaries, and those nationalities who have sufficient understanding, passion, and strength to identify themselves wholeheartedly with this universal interest become historical peoples [play major historic roles]. The great revolution at the close of the eighteenth century again placed France in a preeminent place among the nations of the world. She created a new objective for all humanity — the ideal of absolute freedom for all men — but only in the exclusively political field. This ideal could never be realized because it was afflicted with an insoluble contradiction: political freedom despite economic servitude. Moreover, political freedom within the State is a fraud.

The French Revolution thus produced two diametrically opposed trends which finally coalesced into one — the systematic exploitation of the proletariat for the benefit of a diminishing and increasingly wealthy minority of monopolists. Upon this exploitation of the laboring masses, one party erects a democratic republic and the other, being more consistent, tries to erect a monarchistic, i.e., openly despotic, centralized, bureaucratic police State. In the latter, a dictatorship is thinly masked by innocuous constitutional forms.

From out of the depths of the proletariat there emerged a new and opposing tendency, a new universal objective: the abolition of all classes and their main base of support, the State, and the self-administration of all property by the workers... .

Such is the program of the Social Revolution. There is only one main question confronting all nations, one universal problem: how to achieve economic and political emancipation from the yoke of the State. And this problem cannot be solved without a bloody, terrifying struggle...

Is it not evident that the Slavs can find their rightful place in the fraternal union of peoples only through the Social Revolution?

But a social revolution cannot be confined to a single isolated country. It is by its very nature international in scope. The Slavs must therefore link their aspirations and forces with the aspirations and forces of all other countries. The Slavic proletariat must join the International Workingmen's Association en masse... After joining the International the Slavic proletariat must form factory, crafts, and agricultural sections, uniting these into local federations, and if expedient unite the local federations into an all-Slavic federation. In line with the principles of the International, and freed from the yoke of their respective states, the Slavic workers should and can — without in the least endangering their

own independence — establish fraternal relations with the German workers, since an alliance with them on any other basis is entirely out of the question.

Such is the only road to the emancipation of the Slavs. But the path at present followed by the great majority of the young western and southern Slavs, under the influence of their respected and venerable patriots, is a statist path involving the establishment of separate Slavic states and entirely ruinous for the great masses of the people.

The Serbian people shed their blood in torrents and finally freed themselves from Turkish slavery, but no sooner did they become an independent principality than they were again and perhaps even more enslaved by what they thought was their own state, the Serbian nation. As soon as this part of Serbia took on all the features — laws, institutions, etc. — common to all states, the national vitality and heroism which had sustained them in their successful war against the Turks suddenly collapsed. The people, though ignorant and very poor, but passionate, vigorous, naturally intelligent, and freedom-loving, were suddenly transformed into a meek, apathetic herd, easy victims of bureaucratic plunder and despotism.

There are no nobles, no big landowners, no industrialists, and no very wealthy merchants in Turkish Serbia. Yet in spite of this there emerged a new bureaucratic aristocracy composed of young men educated, partly at state expense, in Odessa, Moscow, St. Petersburg, Vienna, Paris, Germany, and Switzerland. Before they were corrupted in the service of the State, these young men distinguished themselves by their love for their people, their liberalism, and lately by their democratic and socialistic inclinations. But no sooner did they enter the state's service than the iron logic of their situation, inherent in the exercise of certain hierarchical and politically advantageous prerogatives, took its

toll, and the young men became cynical bureaucratic martinets while still mouthing patriotic and liberal slogans. And, as is well known, a liberal bureaucrat is incomparably worse than any dyed-in-the-wool reactionary state official.

Moreover, the demands of certain positions are more compelling than noble sentiments and even the best intentions. Upon returning home from abroad, the young Serbs are bound to pay back the debt owed to the State for their education and maintenance; they feel that they are morally obliged to serve their benefactor, the government. Since there is no other employment for educated young men, they become state functionaries, and become members of the only aristocracy in the country, the bureaucratic class. Once integrated into this class, they inevitably become enemies of the people...

And then the most unscrupulous and the shrewdest manage to gain control of the microscopic government of this microscopic state, and immediately begin to sell themselves to all corners, at home to the reigning prince or a pretender to the throne. In Serbia, the overthrow of one prince and the installation of another one is called a "revolution." Or they may peddle their influence to one, several, or even all the great domineering states — Russia, Austria, Turkey, etc.

One can easily imagine how the people live in such a state! Ironically enough, the principality of Serbia is a constitutional state, and all the legislators are elected by the people. It is worth noting that Turkish Serbia differs from other states in this principal respect: there is only one class in control of the government, the bureaucracy. The one and only function of the State, therefore, is to exploit the Serbian people in order to provide the bureaucrats with all the comforts of life.

Preconditions for a Social Revolution in Russia

Ways and means to make the Social Revolution can be of two sorts: one purely revolutionary and leading directly to the organization of a general uprising of the people; the other, more peaceful, way leads to the emancipation of the people by a gradual, systematic, but at the same time radical transformation of the conditions of existence ... it is the formation of associations of craftsmen and consumers and, above all, producers' cooperatives, because they lead more directly to the emancipation of labor from the domination of capitalism... The experience of the last twenty years in different lands has shown conclusively that this is impossible.

For the last several years the question of cooperative associations has stirred lively debates in the International; based on numerous arguments, the International has come to the following conclusions, formulated at the Congress of Lausanne (1868) and adopted at the Congress of Brussels (1868).

The various forms of cooperation are incontestably one of the most equitable and rational ways of organizing the future system of production. But before it can realize its aim of emancipating the laboring masses so that they will receive the full product of their labor, the land and all forms of capital must be converted into collective property. As long as this is not accomplished, the cooperatives will be overwhelmed by the all-powerful competition of monopoly capital and vast landed property; ... and even in the unlikely event that a small group of cooperatives should somehow surmount the competition, their success would only beget a new class of prosperous cooperators in the midst of a poverty-stricken mass of proletarians. While cooperatives cannot achieve the emancipation of the laboring masses under the present

socioeconomic conditions, it nevertheless has this advantage, that cooperation can habituate the workers to organize themselves to conduct their own affairs (after the overthrow of the old society)

...

The Russian people possess to a great extent two qualities which are in our opinion indispensable preconditions for the Social Revolution ... Their sufferings are infinite, but they do not patiently resign themselves to their misery and they react with an intense savage despair which twice in history produced such popular explosions as the revolts of Stenka Razin and Pugachev, and which even today expresses itself in continuous peasant outbreaks.

What then prevents them from making a successful revolution? It is the absence of a conscious common ideal capable of inspiring a genuine popular revolution... . [Fortunately,] there is no need for a profound analysis of the historic conscience of our people in order to define the fundamental traits which characterize the ideal of our people.

The first of these traits is the conviction, held by all the people, that the land rightfully belongs to them. The second trait is the belief that the right to benefit from the soil belongs not to an individual but to the rural community as a whole, to the *Mir* which assigns the temporary use of the land to the members of the community. The third trait is that even the minimal limitations placed by the State on the *Mir's* autonomy arouse hostility on the part of the latter toward the State.

Nevertheless, the ideal of the Russian people is overshadowed by three other traits which denature and retard the realization of this ideal; traits which we must combat with all our energy... . These three traits are: 1) paternalism, 2) the absorption of the individual by the *Mir*, 3) confidence in the Tsar... . The last two,

absorption of the individual by the *Mir* and the cult of the Tsar, are the natural and inevitable effects of the first, i.e., the paternalism ruling the people. This is a great historic evil, the worst of all...

This evil deforms all Russian life, and indeed paralyzes it, with its crass family sluggishness, the chronic lying, the avid hypocrisy, and finally, the servility which renders life insupportable. The despotism of the husband, of the father, of the eldest brother over the family (already an immoral institution by virtue of its juridical-economic inequalities), the school of violence and triumphant bestiality, of the cowardice and the daily perversions of the family home. The expression “whitewashed graveyard” is a good description of the Russian family...

[The family patriarch] is simultaneously a slave and a despot: a despot exerting his tyranny over all those under his roof and dependent on his will. The only masters he recognizes are the *Mir* and the Tsar. If he is the head of the family, he will behave like an absolute despot, but he will be the servant of the *Mir* and the slave of the Tsar. The rural community is his universe; there is only his family and on a higher level the clan. This explains why the patriarchal principle dominates the *Mir*, an odious tyranny, a cowardly submission, and the absolute negation of all individual and family rights. The decisions of the *Mir*, however arbitrary, are law. “Who would dare defy the *Mir*!” exclaims the *muzhik*. But there are among the Russian people personages who have the courage to defy the *Mir* — the brigands. This is the reason brigandage is an important historical phenomenon in Russia; the first rebels, the first revolutionists in Russia, Pugachev and Stenka Razin, were brigands...

One of the greatest misfortunes in Russia is that each community constitutes a closed circle. No community finds it necessary to have the least organic connection with other

communities. They are linked by the intermediary of the Tsar, the “little father,” and only by the supreme patriarchal power vested in him. It is clear that disunion paralyzes the people, condemns its almost always local revolts to certain defeat and at the same time consolidates the victory of despotism. Therefore, one of the main tasks of revolutionary youth is to establish at all costs and by every possible means a vital line of revolt between the isolated rural communities. This is a difficult, but by no means impossible, task.

The Russian rural community, already sufficiently weakened by patriarchalism, is hopelessly corrupted and crushed by the State. Under its yoke the communal elections are a mockery, and the persons elected by the people become the tools of the oppressors and the venal servants of the rich landlords. In such circumstances the last vestiges of justice, of truth, and of elemental humanity vanish from the rural community, ruined by the authorities. More than ever brigandage becomes the only way out for the individual, and a mass uprising — the revolution for the populace.

Amid the general confusion of ideas, two diametrically opposed trends emerge. The first, of a more pacific character, inclines toward gradual action; the other, favoring insurrectionary movements, tends directly to prepare the people for revolutionary warfare. The partisans of the first trend do not believe that the revolution is really possible; but as they do not want to remain passive spectators of the misfortunes of the people, they are determined to go to the people, like brothers, suffer with them and at the same time teach and prepare them for action, not theoretically but practically, by example. They will go among the factory workers, and toiling side by side with them awaken in them the desire to organize.

Others try to found rural colonies where all will enjoy the land in common ... in accordance with the principle that the product of

collective labor shall be distributed on the basis of “from each according to his ability; to each according to his need.” The same hope inspired Cabet, who, after the defeat of the 1848 revolution, left with his Icarians for America where he founded the colony of New Icaria, whose existence was brief. If this kind of experiment could not last very long in America, where the chances of success were much greater ... it follows that it could never succeed in Russia.

But this does not discourage those who want to prepare the people for peaceful social change. By organizing their own domestic life on the basis of full liberty, they hope to combat the shameful patriarchal regime... By their example they hope to imbue the people with practical ideas of justice, of liberty, and of the means of emancipating themselves... All these plans are very fine, extremely magnanimous and noble, but are they realizable? It will be only a drop in the ocean ... never sufficient to emancipate our people.

The other tendency is to fight, to revolt. We are confident that this alone will bring satisfactory results. Our people have shown that they need encouragement. Their situation is so desperate that they find themselves ready to revolt in every village. Every revolt, even if it fails, still has its value, yet isolated actions are insufficient. There must be a general uprising embracing the whole countryside. That this is possible has been demonstrated by the vast popular movements led by Stenka Razin and Pugachev.

The struggle against the patriarchal regime is at present raging in almost every village and in every family. In the rural community, the *Mir* has degenerated to the point where it has become an instrument of the State. The power and the arbitrary bureaucratic will of the State is hated by the people and the revolt against this power and this arbitrary will is at the same time a

revolt against the despotism of the rural community and of the *Mir*.

But this is not all. The principal evil which paralyzes the Russian people, and has up till now made a general uprising impossible, is the closed rural community, its isolation and disunity. We must at all costs breach these hitherto impregnable communities and weld them together by the active current of thought, by the will, and by the revolutionary cause. We must contact and connect not only the most enlightened peasants in the villages, the districts, and the regions but also the most forward-looking revolutionary individuals naturally emerging from the rural Russian environment; and above all, wherever possible, we must establish the same vital connections between the factory workers and the peasants. These connections can be only between individuals. The most advanced and active peasants in each village, district, and region must be put in contact with like-minded peasants in other villages, districts, and regions, though obviously this must be done with extreme caution.

Above all, we must convince these advanced elements, and through them all, or at least the majority of, the most energetic people, that ... all over Russia and outside its frontiers there exists a common evil and a common cause. We must convince the people that they are an invincible force ... and that if this force has not yet freed the people, it is only because they have not acted in unison to achieve a common aim... In order to achieve unity, the villages, districts, and regions must establish contact and organize according to an agreed and unified plan... We must convince our peasant and our worker that they are not alone, that on the contrary there stand behind them, weighed down by the same yoke but animated by the same enthusiasm, the innumerable mass of proletarians all over the world who are also preparing a universal uprising... . Such is the main task of revolutionary

propaganda. How this objective should be concretized by our youth will be discussed on another occasion. We may say here only that the Russian people will accept the revolutionary intellectual youth only if they share their life, their poverty, their cause, and their desperate revolt.

Henceforth this youth must be present not as witnesses but as active participants in the front ranks of action and in all popular movements, great or small, anytime, anywhere, and anyplace. The young revolutionist must act according to a plan rigorously and effectively conceived and accept strict discipline in all his acts in order to create that unanimity without which victory is impossible... He must never under any circumstances lie to the people. This would not only be criminal, but also most disastrous for the revolutionary cause... . The individual is most eloquent when he defends a cause that he sincerely believes in and when he speaks according to his most cherished convictions... . If we try to emancipate the people by lies we will mislead not only them but ourselves as well, deviating from and losing sight of our true objective.

A word in conclusion: The class that we call our “intellectual proletariat,” which in Russia is already in a social-revolutionary situation, i.e., in an impossible and desperate situation, must now be imbued with revolutionary ideas and the passion for the Social Revolution. If the intellectual proletariat does not want to surrender they face certain ruin; they must join and help organize the popular revolution.

Mikhail Bakunin 1873

Letter to the Comrades of the Jura Federation

Written: October 12, 1873;

Source: *Bakunin on Anarchy*, translated and edited by Sam Dolgoff, 1971.

The “Letter to the Comrades of the Jura Federation” belongs to the twilight of Bakunin's career. It should not to be judged by its optimistic tone. Bakunin knew his health was in decline, and he was becoming increasingly pessimistic about the possibilities for revolution, but he did not want to discourage his comrades. Between October 1873 and February 1875, when he wrote his letter to Élisée Reclus, his health became even worse, and his pessimism found expression in this letter, which ends on a sad note. But the growing reaction then enveloping Europe together with the colossal indifference of the masses had indeed given Bakunin solid grounds for his despair.

October 12, 1873

I cannot retire from public life without addressing to you these few parting words of appreciation and sympathy.

... in spite of all the tricks of our enemies and the infamous slanders they have spread about me, your esteem, your friendship, and your confidence in me have never wavered. Nor have you allowed yourselves to be intimidated when they brazenly accused you of being “Bakuninists,” hero-worshippers, mindless followers...

You have to the highest degree always conscientiously maintained the independence of your opinions and the spontaneity of your acts; the perfidious plots of our adversaries were so transparent that you could regard their infamous insinuations only with the most profound disgust...

Powerfully supported by your fellow workers of Italy, Spain, France, Belgium, Holland, and America, you have once again repulsed the dictatorial attempts of Mr. Marx and placed the great International Workingmen's Association back on the right road...

Your victory, the victory of freedom and of the International against authoritarian intrigues, is complete. Yesterday, when victory seemed to hang in the balance — although I for my part never doubted it — it would have been impermissible for anyone to leave your ranks. But now that it is a fait accompli, everyone has the freedom to act according to his personal convenience.

I therefore take this opportunity, my dear comrades, to beg you to accept my resignation as a member of the Jura Federation and of the International.

... Do not believe that I resign mainly because of the personal disgust and disappointments that I have suffered during the last few years. Although I have not been altogether insensitive to these indignities, I would have continued to endure them if I thought that my participation in your struggles would help the cause of the proletariat. But I do not think so any longer.

By birth and personal status — though certainly not by sympathy or inclination — I am a bourgeois and, as such, the only useful work that I can do among you is propagandize. But I am now convinced that the time for grand theoretical discourses, written or spoken, is over. During the last nine years more than enough ideas for the salvation of the world have been developed in the International (if the world can be saved by ideas) and I defy anyone to come up with a new one.

This is the time not for ideas but for action, for deeds. Above all, now is the time for the organization of the forces of the proletariat. But this organization must be the task of the proletariat itself. If I were young, I would live among the workers and share their life of toil, would together with them participate in this necessary work of proletarian organization.

But neither my age nor my health allows this. I must, on the contrary, have privacy and repose. Any effort, even a short journey, becomes for me a very serious undertaking. I feel sufficiently strong morally, but physically I tire too quickly, and I no longer have the necessary strength for struggle. In the camp of the proletariat I can be only an obstacle, not a help.

You see then, my friends, that I am obliged to offer my resignation. Living far from you and from everyone, of what use would I be to the International in general and the Jura Federation in particular? Your great association in its militant and practical activities cannot permit sinecures or honorary positions.

I will retire then, dear comrades, full of gratitude to you and sympathy for your great and holy cause, the cause of humanity. With brotherly concern I will avidly watch your progress, and salute with joy each of your new triumphs. Until death I will be yours...

But before parting, permit me again to add these few words. The battle that you will have to sustain will be terrible. But do not allow yourselves to be discouraged and know that in spite of the immense material resources of our adversaries, your final triumph is assured if you faithfully fulfill these two conditions: adhere firmly to the great and all-embracing principle of the people's liberty, without which equality and solidarity would be falsehoods, Organize ever more strongly the practical militant solidarity of the workers of all trades in all countries, and remember that infinitely weak as you may be as individuals in isolated localities or countries, you will constitute an immense irresistible force when organized and united in the universal collectivity.

*Farewell,
your brother,
M. Bakunin*

Letter to Élisée Reclus

Written: February 15, 1875;

Source: *Bakunin on Anarchy*, translated and edited by Sam Dolgoff, 1971.

February 15, 1875

YOU are right, the revolutionary tide is receding and we are falling back into evolutionary periods — periods during which barely perceptible revolutions gradually germinate... The time for revolution has passed not only because of the disastrous events of which we have been the victims (and for which we are to some extent responsible), but because, to my intense despair, I have found and find more and more each day, that there is absolutely no revolutionary thought, hope, or passion left among the masses; and when these qualities are missing, even the most heroic efforts must fail and nothing can be accomplished.

I admire the valiant persistence of our Jura and Belgian comrades, those “Last Mohicans” of the International, who in spite of all the obstacles and in the midst of the general apathy, obstinately set themselves against the current of events and continue to act as they did before the catastrophes, when the movement was growing and even the least efforts brought results.

Their labor is all the more praiseworthy in that they will not see the fruits of their sacrifices; but they can be certain that their labor will not be wasted. Nothing in this world is ever lost; tiny drops of water form the ocean.

As for myself, my dear friend, I am too old, too sick, and shall I confess it? — too disillusioned, to participate in this work. I have definitely retired from the struggle and shall pass the rest of my days in intense intellectual activity which I hope will prove useful.

One of the passions which now absorb me is an insatiable curiosity; having recognized that evil has triumphed and that I cannot prevent it, I am determined to study its development as objectively as possible...

Poor humanity! It is evident that it can extricate itself from this cesspool only by an immense social revolution. But how can this revolution come about? Never was international reaction in Europe so formidably organized against any movement of the people. Repression has become a new science systematically taught in the military schools of all countries. And to breach this well-nigh impregnable fortress we have only the disorganized masses. But how to organize them, when they do not even care enough about their own fate to know or put into effect the only measures that can save them? There remains propaganda; though doubtlessly of some value, it can have very little effect [in the present circumstances] and if there were no other means of emancipation, humanity would rot ten times over before it could be saved.

There remains another hope: world war. These gigantic military states must sooner or later destroy each other. But what a prospect!

James Guillaume (1844-1916)

Michael Bakunin

A Biographical Sketch

James Guillaume 1876

Ideas on Social Organization

Written: August 1874;

Source: *Bakunin on Anarchy*, translated and edited by Sam Dolgoff, 1971.

Bakunin was above all preoccupied with the theory and practice of revolution and wrote very little about how the everyday practical problems of social reconstruction would be handled immediately following a successful revolution. Nevertheless, these problems were intensively discussed in Bakunin's circle and among the anti-authoritarian sections of the International. In "Ideas on Social Organization", Guillaume discusses the transition from capitalism to anarchism — a synthesis of "Bakuninist" ideas on how this transition could be effected without the restoration of authoritarian institutions."

Its value lies not in the specific recommendations (most of them outdated, some rather naive, although a number of them are remarkably similar to measures adopted by anarchist collectives in Spain during the late thirties) but in its formulation of the fundamental principles of anarchism. Guillaume's essay was written in 1874 and published in 1876, the year of Bakunin's death.

I

The ideas outlined in the following pages can be effectively achieved only by means of a revolutionary movement. It takes more than a day for the great flood to break the dyke; the floodwaters mount slowly, imperceptibly. But once the crest of the flood is reached, the collapse is sudden, the dyke is washed away in the winking of an eye. We can distinguish, then, two successive acts, the second being the necessary consequence of the first. At first there is the slow transformation of ideas, of needs, of the motives for action germinating in the womb of society; the second begins when this transformation is sufficiently advanced to pass into action. Then there is a brusque and decisive turning point — the revolution — which is the culmination of a long process of evolution, the sudden manifestation of a change long prepared for and therefore. inevitable.

No serious-minded man would venture to predict exactly how the Revolution, the indispensable condition for social renovation, will come about. Revolution is a natural fact, and not the act of a few persons; it does not take place according to a preconceived plan but is produced by uncontrollable circumstances which no individual can command. We do not, therefore, intend to draw up a blueprint for the future revolutionary campaign; we leave this childish task to those who; believe in the possibility and the efficacy of achieving the emancipation of humanity through personal dictatorship. We will confine ourselves, on the contrary, to describing the kind of revolution most attractive to us and the ways it can be freed from past errors.

The character of the revolution must at first be negative, destructive. Instead of modifying certain institutions of the past, or adapting them to a new order, it will do away with them altogether. Therefore, the government will be uprooted, along with the Church, the army, the courts, the schools, the banks, and all their subservient institutions. At the same time the Revolution has a positive goal, that the workers take possession of all capital and the tools of production. Let us explain what is meant by the phrase “taking possession.”

Let us begin with the peasants and problems concerning the land. In many countries, particularly in France, the priests and the bourgeoisie try to frighten the peasants by telling them that the Revolution will take their land away from them. This is an outrageous lie concocted by the enemies of the *people*. The Revolution would take an exactly opposite course: it would take the land from the bourgeoisie, the nobles, and the priests and give it to the landless peasants. If a piece of land belongs to a peasant who cultivates it himself, the Revolution would not touch it. On the contrary, it would guarantee free possession and liquidate all debts arising from the land. This land which once enriched the treasury and was overburdened with taxes and weighed down by mortgages would, like the peasant, be emancipated. No more taxes, no more mortgages; the land becomes free, just like the man!

As to the land owned by the bourgeoisie, the clergy, and the nobles — land hitherto cultivated by landless laborers for the benefit of their masters — the

Revolution will return this stolen land to the rightful owners, the agricultural workers.

How will the Revolution take the land from the exploiters and give it to the peasants? Formerly, when the bourgeois made a political revolution, when they staged one of those movements which resulted only in a change of masters dominating the people, they usually printed decrees, proclaiming to the people the will of the new government. These decrees were posted in the communes and the courts, and the mayor, the gendarmes, and the prosecutors enforced them. The real people's revolution will not follow this model; it will not rule by decrees, it will not depend on the services of the police or the machinery of government. It is not with *decrees*, with words written on paper, that the Revolution will emancipate the people but with *deeds*.

II

We will now consider how the peasants will go about deriving the greatest possible benefit from their means of production, the land. Immediately after the Revolution the peasants will be faced with a mixed situation. Those who are already small proprietors will keep their plots of land and continue to cultivate it with the help of their families. The others, and they are by far the most numerous, who rented the land from the big landowners or were simply agricultural wage laborers employed by the owners, will take collective possession of the vast tracts of land and work them in common.

Which of these two systems is best?

It is not a matter of what is theoretically desirable but of starting with the facts and seeing what can be immediately achieved. From this point of view, we say first that in this mixed economy the main purpose of the Revolution has been achieved: the land is now the property of those who cultivate it, and the peasants no longer work for the profit of an idle exploiter who lives by their sweat. This great victory gained, the rest is of secondary importance. The peasants can, if they wish, divide the land into individual parcels and give each family a share. Or else, and this would be much better, they can institute

common ownership and cooperative cultivation of the land. Although secondary to the main point, i.e., the emancipation of the peasant, this question of how best to work the land and what form of possession is best also warrants careful consideration.

In a region which had been populated before the Revolution by peasants owning small farms, where the nature of the soil is not very suitable for extensive, large-scale cultivation, where agriculture has been conducted in the same way for ages, where machinery is unknown or rarely used — in such a region the peasants will naturally conserve the form of ownership to which they are accustomed. Each peasant will continue to cultivate the land as he did in the past, with this single difference: his former hired hands, if he had any, will become his partners and share with him the products which their common labor extracts from the land.

It is possible that in a short time those peasants who remain small proprietors will find it advantageous to modify their traditional system of labor and production. If so, they will first associate to create a communal agency to sell or exchange their products; this first associated venture will encourage them to try others of a similar nature. They would then, in common, acquire various machines to facilitate their work; they would take turns to help each other perform certain laborious tasks which are better accomplished when they are done rapidly by a large team; and they would no doubt finally imitate their brothers, the industrial workers, and those working on big farms, and decide to pool their land and form an agricultural association. But even if they linger for sonic years ill the same old routine, even if a whole generation should elapse before the peasants ill some communes adopt the system of collective property, it would still not constitute a serious hindrance to the Revolution. The great achievements of the Revolution will not be affected; the Revolution will have abolished agricultural wage slavery and peonage and the agricultural proletariat will consist only of free workers living ill peace and plenty, even in the midst of the few remaining backward areas.

On the other hand, in large-scale agricultural operations, where a great number of workers are needed to farm vast areas, where coordination and

cooperation are absolutely essential, collective labor will naturally lead to collective property. An agricultural collective may embrace an entire commune [autonomous regional unit] and, if economically necessary for efficiency and greater production, many communes.

In these vast communities of agricultural workers, the land will not be worked as it is today, by small peasant owners trying without success to raise many different crops on tiny parcels of unsuitable land. There will not be growing side by side one acre a little square of wheat, a little square of potatoes, another of grapes, another of fodder, another of fruit, etc. Each bit of land tends, by virtue of its physical properties, its location, its chemical composition, to be most suitable for the successful cultivation of certain specific crops. Wheat will not be planted on soil suitable for grapes, nor potatoes on soil that could best

be used for pasture. The agricultural community, if it has only one type of soil, will confine itself to the cultivation of crops which can be produced in quantity and quality with less labor, and the community will prefer to exchange its products for those it lacks instead of trying to grow them in small quantity and poor quality on unsuitable land.

The internal organization of these agricultural communities need not necessarily be identical; organizational forms and procedures will vary greatly according to the preferences of the associated workers. So long as they conform to the principles of justice and equality, the administration of the community, elected by all the members, could be entrusted either to an individual or to a commission of many members. It will even be possible to separate the different administrative functions, assigning each function to a special commission. The hours of labor will be fixed not by a general law applicable to an entire country, but by the decision of the community itself; but as the community contracts relations with all the other agricultural workers of the region, an agreement covering uniform working hours will probably be reached. Whatever items are produced by collective labor will belong to the community, and each member will receive remuneration for his labor either in the form of commodities (subsistence, supplies, clothing, etc.) or in currency.

In some communities remuneration will be in proportion to hours worked; in others payment will be measured by both the hours of work and the kind of work performed; still other systems will be experimented with to see how they work out.

The problem of property having been resolved, and there being no capitalists placing a tax on the labor of the masses, the question of types of distribution and remuneration become secondary. We should to the greatest possible extent institute and be guided by the principle *From each according to his ability, to each according to his need*. When, thanks to the progress of scientific industry and agriculture, production comes to outstrip consumption, and this will be attained some years after the Revolution, it will no longer be necessary to stingily dole out each worker's share of goods. Everyone will draw what he needs from the abundant social reserve of commodities, without fear of depletion; and the moral sentiment which will be more highly developed among free and equal workers will prevent, or greatly reduce, abuse and waste. In the meantime, each community will decide for itself during the transition period the method they deem best for the distribution of the products of associated labor.

III

We must distinguish different types of industrial workers, just as we distinguished different kinds of peasants. There are, first of all, those crafts in which the tools are simple, where the division of labor is almost nonexistent, and where the isolated worker could produce as much alone as he would by associated labor. These include, for example, tailors, shoemakers, barbers, upholsterers, and photographers. It must, however, be remarked that even in these trades, large-scale mass production can be applied to save time and labor. What we say, therefore, applies primarily to the transitional period.

Next in order are the trades requiring the collective labor of numerous workers using small hand-operated machinery and generally employed in workshops and foundries, printing plants, woodworking plants, brickworks, etc.

Finally, there is the third category of industries where the division of labor is much greater, where production is on a massive scale necessitating complicated and expensive machinery and the investment of considerable capital; for example, textile mills, steel mills, metallurgical plants, etc.

For workers operating within the first category of industry, collective work is not a necessity; and in many cases the tailor or the cobbler may prefer to work alone in his own small shop. It is quite natural that in every commune there will be one or perhaps several workers employed in each of these trades. Without, however, wishing to underestimate in any way the importance of individual independence, we think that wherever practical, collective labor is best; in a society of equals, emulation stimulates the worker to produce more and heightens morale; further, work in common permits each worker to learn from the experience and skill of the others and this redounds to the benefit of the unit as a whole.

As to the workers in the remaining two categories, it is evident that collective labor is imposed by the very nature of the work and, since the tools of labor are no longer simple individual tools but machines that must be tended by many workers, the machines must also be collectively owned.

Each workshop, each factory, will organize itself into an association of workers who will be free to administer production and organize their work as they think best, provided that the rights of each worker are safeguarded and the principles of equality and justice are observed. In the preceding chapter, while discussing the associations or communities of agricultural workers, we dealt with management, hours of labor, remuneration, and distribution of products. The same observations apply also to industrial labor, and it is therefore unnecessary to repeat them here. We have just said that particularly where an industry requires complicated machinery and collective labor, the ownership of the machinery of production should also be collective. But one point remains to be clarified. Will these tools belong to all the workers in each factory, or will they belong to the corporation comprising all the workers in each particular industry? [Corporation here is equivalent to industrial union.]

Our opinion is that the second of these alternatives is preferable. When, for example, on the day of the Revolution, the typographical workers of Rome take possession of all the print shops of Rome, they will call a general meeting and proclaim that all the printing plants in Rome are the property of the Roman printers. Since it will be entirely possible and necessary, they will go a step further and unite in a pact of solidarity with all the printing workers in every city of Italy. The result of this pact will be the organization of all the printing plants of Italy as the collective property of the typographical federation of Italy. In this way the Italian printers will be able to work in any city in their country and have full rights and full use of tools and facilities.

But when we say that ownership of the tools of production, including the factory itself, should revert to the corporation, we do not mean that the workers in the individual workshops will be ruled by any kind of industrial government having the power to do what it pleases with the tools of production. No, the workers in the various factories have not the slightest intention of handing over their hard-won control of the tools of production to a superior power calling itself the “corporation.” What they will do is, under certain specified conditions, to guarantee reciprocal use of their tools of production and accord to their fellow workers in other factories the right to share their facilities, receiving in exchange the same right to share the facilities of the fellow workers with whom they have contracted the pact of solidarity.

IV

The commune consists of all the workers living in the same locality. Disregarding very few exceptions, the typical commune can be defined as the local federation of groups of producers. This local federation or commune is organized to provide certain services which are not within the exclusive jurisdiction or capacity of any particular corporation [industrial union] but which concerns all of them, and which for this reason are called *public services*. The communal public services can be enumerated as follows:

A. Public works (housing and construction)

All houses are the property of the commune. The Revolution made, everyone continues for the time being to live in the same quarters occupied by him before the Revolution, except for families which had been forced to live in very dilapidated or overcrowded dwellings. Such families will be immediately relocated at the expense of the commune in vacant apartments formerly occupied or owned by the rich.

The construction of new houses containing healthy, spacious rooms replacing the miserable slums of the old ghettos will be one of the first needs of the new society. The commune will immediately begin this construction in a way that will not only furnish work for the corporations of masons, carpenters, ironworkers, tilers, roofers, etc., but will also provide useful work for the mass of people who, having no trade, lived in idleness before the revolution. They would be employed as laborers in the immense construction and road-building and paving projects which will then be initiated everywhere, especially in the cities.

The new housing will be constructed at the expense of the commune, which means that in exchange for the work done by the various building corporations these corporations will receive from the commune vouchers enabling them to acquire all commodities necessary for the decent maintenance and well-being of their members. And since the new housing has been constructed at public expense, this system will enable and require free housing to be available for all.

Free housing might well cause serious disputes because people living in bad housing will compete with each other for the new accommodations. But we think that it would be a mistake to fear serious friction, and for the following reasons: First we must concede that the desire for new and better housing is a legitimate and just demand; and this just demand will stimulate the building workers to make even greater efforts to speed construction of good housing.

But while awaiting new construction people will have to be patient and do the best they can with the existing facilities. The commune will, as we have said, attend to the most pressing needs of the poorest families, relocating them

in the vast palaces of the rich; and as to the rest of the people, we believe that revolutionary enthusiasm will stimulate and inspire them with the spirit of generosity and self-sacrifice, and that they will be glad to endure for a little longer the discomforts of poor housing; nor will they be inclined to quarrel with a neighbor who happens to have gotten a new apartment a little sooner. In a reasonably short time, thanks to the prodigious efforts of the building workers powerfully stimulated by the demand for new housing, there will be plenty of housing for all and everyone will be sure to find satisfactory accommodations.

All this may seem fantastic to those whose vision goes no further than the horizon of bourgeois society; these measures are, on the contrary, so simple and practical that it will be humanly impossible for things to go otherwise. Will the legions of masons and other building workers be permanently and incessantly occupied with the construction of new housing worthy of a civilized society? Will it take many years of incessant labor to supply everyone with good housing? No, it will take a short time. And when they will have finished the main work, will they then fold their arms and do nothing? No, they will continue to work at a slower pace, remodeling existing housing; and little by little the old somber quarters, the crooked filthy streets, the miserable houses and alleys that now infest our cities will disappear and be replaced by mansions where the workers can live like human beings.

B. Exchange

In the new society there will no longer be *communes in the sense that this word is understood today*, as mere political-geographical entities. Every commune will establish a *Bank of Exchange* whose mechanics we will explain as clearly as possible.

The workers' association, as well as the individual producers (in the remaining privately owned portions of production), will deposit their unconsumed commodities in the facilities provided by the Bank of Exchange, the value of the commodities having been established in advance by a contractual agreement between the regional cooperative federations and the

various communes, who will also furnish statistics to the Banks of Exchange. The Bank of Exchange will remit to the producers negotiable *vouchers* representing the value of their products; these vouchers will be accepted throughout the territory included in the federation of communes.

Goods of prime necessity, i.e., those essential to life and health, will be transported to the various communal markets which, pending new construction, will use the old stores and warehouses of the former merchants. Some of the markets will distribute foodstuffs, others clothes, others household goods, etc.

Goods destined for export will remain in the general warehouses until called for by the communes.

Among the commodities deposited in the facilities of the Bank of Exchange will be goods for consumption by the commune itself, such as food, lumber, clothes, etc., and goods to be exchanged for those produced by other communes.

At this point we anticipate an objection. We will probably be asked: “the Bank of Exchange in each commune will remit to the producers, by means of vouchers, the value of their products, before being sure that they are in demand; and if these products are not in demand, and pile up unused, what will be the position of the Bank of Exchange? Will it not risk losses, or even ruin, and in this kind of operation is there not always the risk that the vouchers will be overdrawn?”

We reply that each Bank of Exchange makes sure in advance that these products are in demand and, therefore, risks nothing by immediately issuing payment vouchers to the producers.

There will be, of course, certain categories of workers engaged in the construction or manufacture of immovable goods, goods which cannot be transported to the repositories of the Bank of Exchange, for example, buildings. In such cases the Bank of Exchange will serve as the intermediary; the workers will register the property with the Bank of Exchange. The value of

the property will be agreed upon in advance, and the bank will deliver this value in exchange vouchers. The same procedure will be followed in dealing with the various workers employed by the administrative services of the communes; their work resulting not in manufactured products but in services rendered. These services will have to be priced in advance, and the Bank of Exchange will pay their value in vouchers.

The Bank of Exchange will not only receive products belonging to the workers of the commune; it will correspond with other communes and arrange to procure goods which the commune is obliged to get from outside sources, such as certain foodstuffs, fuels, manufactured products, etc. These outside products will be featured side by side with local goods. The consumers will pay for the commodities in the various markets with vouchers of different denominations, and all goods will be uniformly priced.

It is evident from our description that the operations of the Bank of Exchange do not differ essentially from the usual commercial procedures. These operations are in effect nothing but buying and selling; the bank buys from the producers and sells to the consumers. But we think that after a certain length of time the functions of the Banks of Exchange will be reduced without inconvenience and that a new system will gradually replace the old system: exchange in the traditional sense will give way to *distribution*, pure and simple. What do we mean by this?

As long as a product is in short supply it will to a certain extent have to be rationed. And the easiest way to do this would be to sell these scarce products at a price so high that only people who really need them would be willing to buy them. But when the prodigious growth of production, which will not fail to take place when work is rationally organized, produces an oversupply of this or that product, it will not be necessary to ration consumption. The practice of selling, which was adopted as a sort of deterrent to immoderate consumption, will be abolished; the communal banks will no longer sell commodities, they will distribute them in accordance with the needs of the consumers.

The replacement of exchange by distribution will first, and in a comparatively short time, be applied to articles of prime necessity, for the workers will concentrate all their efforts to produce these necessities in abundance. Other commodities, formerly scarce and today considered luxuries, will in a reasonable length of time be produced in great quantity and will no longer be rationed. On the other hand, rare and useless baubles, such as pearls, diamonds, certain precious metals, etc., will cease to have the value attributed to them by public opinion and will be used for research by scientific associations, as components of certain tools, e.g., industrial diamonds, or displayed as curios in museums of natural history.

C. Food Supply

The question of food supply is a sort of postscript to our discussion of exchange. What we said about the organization of the Bank of Exchange applies in general to all products, including foodstuffs. However, we think it useful to add in a special section a more detailed account of the measures dealing with distribution of the principal food products.

At present the bakeshops, meat stores, wine and liquor shops, imported food stores, etc., are all surrendered to private industry and to speculators and these, by all kinds of fraud, enrich themselves at the expense of the consumers. The new society must immediately try to correct this situation by placing under communal public service the distribution of all the most essential foodstuffs.

This must be borne in mind: we do not mean to imply that the commune will take possession of certain branches of *production*. No. Production in the true sense of the term will remain in the hands of the associations of producers. But, for example, what is involved in the production of bread? Nothing beyond the growing of wheat. The farmer sows and reaps the grain and transports it to the warehouses of the Bank of Exchange; his function as producer ends at this point. Grinding grain into flour or changing flour into bread is not production; it is work similar to that performed by various employees in the communal markets, work designed to put a food product, bread, at the disposal of the consumer. The same goes for meat, etc.

Thus viewed, it is only logical that the processing and distribution of foodstuffs — baking, slaughtering, winemaking, etc. — should be performed by the commune. Thus, wheat from the warehouses of the commune will be ground into flour in the communal flour mill (which will be shared with several communes); the flour will be transformed into bread in the communal bakeries and delivered to the consumers in the communal markets. It will be the same for meats: the animals will be slaughtered in the communal slaughterhouse and cut up in the communal butcher shops. Wines will be preserved in the communal wine cellars and bottled and distributed by special employees. Finally, all the other perishable food commodities will be kept fresh in communal warehouses and kept in glass enclosures in the communal markets.

Above all, immediate efforts must be made to institute the free distribution of certain essential foods, such as bread, meat, wine, dairy products, etc. When abundant food is available and free for all, civilization in general will have taken a giant step forward.

D. Statistics

The main function of the Communal Statistical Commission will be to gather and classify all statistical information pertaining to the commune. The various corporations or associations of production will constantly keep up-to-date records of membership and changes in personnel so that it will be possible to know instantly the number of employees in the various branches of production.

The Bank of Exchange will provide the Statistical Commission with the most complete figures and all other relevant facts on the production and consumption of goods. By means of statistics gathered from all the communes in a region, it will be possible to scientifically balance production and consumption. In line with these statistics, it will also be possible to add more help in industries where production is insufficient and reduce the number of men where there is a surplus of production. Statistics will also make it easy to fit working hours to the productive needs of society. It will be equally possible

to estimate, not perfectly, but enough for practical purposes, the relative value of the labor time involved in the various products, which will serve as the criteria for the prices of the Banks of Exchange.

But this is not all. The Statistical Commission will be able to perform some of the functions that are today exercised by the civil state, for example, recording births and deaths. We do not include marriage because in a free society, the voluntary union of a man and a woman will no longer be an official but a purely personal matter, not subject to, or requiring, public sanction.

There are many other uses for statistics: in relation to diseases, weather phenomena, in short, all facts which regularly gathered and classified can serve as a guide to the development of science and learning in general.

E. Hygiene

Under the general heading Hygiene, we have assembled the various public services which are indispensable to the maintenance of public health. First, of course, are medical services, which will be free of charge to all the inhabitants of the commune. The doctors will not be like capitalists, trying to extract the greatest possible profits from their unfortunate patients. They will be employed by the commune and expected to treat all who need their services. But medical treatment is only the curative side of the science of health care; it is not enough to treat the sick, it is also necessary to prevent disease. This is the true function of hygiene....

F. Security

This service embraces the necessary measures to guarantee to all inhabitants of the commune the security of their person and the protection of their homes, their possessions, etc., against deprivation and accident (fire, floods, etc.).

There will probably be very little brigandage and robbery in a society where each lives in full freedom to enjoy the fruits of his labor and where almost all his needs will be abundantly fulfilled. Material well-being, as well as the

intellectual and moral progress which are the products of a truly humane education, available to all, will almost eliminate crimes due to perversion, brutality, and other infirmities. It will nevertheless still be necessary to take precautions for the security of persons. This service, which can be called (if the phrase has not too bad a connotation) the Communal Police, will not be entrusted, as it is today, to a special, official body; all able-bodied inhabitants will be called upon to take turns in the security measures instituted by the commune.

It will doubtless be asked how those committing murder and other violent crimes will be treated in the new equalization society. Obviously society cannot, on the pretext of *respect* for individual rights — and the negation of authority, permit a murderer to run loose, or wait for a friend of the victim to avenge him. The murderer will have to be deprived of his liberty and confined to a special house until he can without danger be returned to society. How is the criminal to be treated during his confinement? And according to what principles should his term be fixed? These are delicate questions on which opinions vary widely. We must learn from experience, but this much we already know: that thanks to the beneficent effects of education (see below) crimes will be rare. Criminals being an exception, they will be treated like the sick and the deranged; the problem of crime which today gives so many jobs to judges, jailers, and police will lose its social importance and become simply a chapter in medical history.

G. Education

The first point to be considered is the question of child support (food, clothes, toys, etc.). Today parents not only support their children but also supervise their education. This is a custom based on a false principle, a principle that regards the child as the personal property of the parents. The child belongs to no one, he belongs only to himself; and during the period when he is unable to protect himself and is thereby exposed to exploitation, it is society that must protect him and guarantee his free development. It is also society that must support him and supervise his education. In supporting him

and paying for his education, society is only making an advance “loan” which the child will repay when he becomes an adult producer.

It is society and not the parents who will be responsible for the upkeep of the child. This principle once established, we believe that we should abstain from specifying the exact manner in which this principle should be applied: to do otherwise would risk trying to achieve a Utopia. Therefore the application must be left to free experimentation and we must await the lessons of practical experience. We say only that vis-à-vis the child, society is represented by the commune, and that each commune will have to determine what would be best for the upbringing of the child; here they would have life in common, there they would leave children in care of the mother, at least up to a certain age, etc.

But this is only one aspect of the problem. The commune feeds, clothes, and lodges the children, but who will teach them, who will develop their best characteristics and train them as producers? According to what plan and principles will their education be conducted?

To these questions we reply: the education of children must be integrated; that is, it must at the same time develop both the physical and mental faculties and make the child into a whole man. This education must not be entrusted solely to a specialized caste of teachers; all those who know a science, an art, or a craft can and should be called upon to teach.

We must distinguish two stages in the education of children: the first stage, where the child of five or six is not yet old enough to study science, and where the emphasis is on the development of the physical faculties; and a second stage, where children twelve to sixteen years of age would be introduced to the various divisions of human knowledge while at the same time learning one or more crafts or trades through practice.

The first stage, as just mentioned, will be devoted to development of the physical faculties, to strengthening the body and exercising the senses. Today the powers of hearing, seeing, and manual dexterity are incompletely and

haphazardly developed: a rational education, on the contrary, will by special systematic exercises develop these faculties to the highest possible degree. And as to hands, instead of making children only right-handed, attempts will be made to render children equally proficient in the use of the left hand.

And while the senses are developed and bodily vigor is enhanced by intelligent gymnastic exercises, the culture of the mind will begin, but in a spontaneous manner; the child will naturally and unconsciously absorb a store of scientific knowledge. Personal observation, practical experience, conversations between children, or with persons charged with teaching — these will be the only form of instruction children will receive during this first period.

No longer will there be schools, arbitrarily governed by a pedagogue, where the children wait impatiently for the moment of their deliverance when they can enjoy a little freedom outside.

In their gatherings the children will be entirely free. They will organize their own games, their talks, systematize their own work, arbitrate disputes, etc. They will then easily become accustomed to public life, to responsibility, to mutual trust and aid. The teacher whom they have themselves chosen to give them lessons will no longer be a detested tyrant but a friend to whom they will listen with pleasure.

During the second stage, the children, being ages twelve to sixteen, will successively study in a methodical manner the principal branches of human knowledge. They will not be taught by professional teachers but by lay teachers of this or that science, who are also part-time manual workers; and each branch of knowledge will be taught not by one but by many men, all from the commune, who have both the knowledge and the desire to teach. In addition, good books on the subject studied will be read together, and intelligent discussion will follow, thereby lessening the importance attached to the personality of the teacher.

While the child is developing his body and learning the sciences, he will begin apprenticeship as a producer. In the first stage of his education, the need to repair or modify toys will introduce the child to the use of simple tools. During the second stage, he will visit different factories and, stimulated by his liking for one or more trades, will soon finally choose the trade in which he will specialize. The apprentices will be taught by men who are themselves working in the factories, and this practical education will be supplemented by lessons dealing with theory.

In this way, by the time a young man reaches the age of sixteen or seventeen he will have been introduced to the range of human knowledge, learned a trade, and chosen the discipline he likes best. Thus he will be in a position to reimburse society for the expenses involved in his education, not in money but by useful work and respect for the rights of his fellow human beings.

In conclusion, we should make a few remarks on the relationship between the child and his family. There are people who assert that the program of placing the child in the custody of society means “the destruction of the family.” This doctrine is devoid of sense. As long as the concurrence of two individuals of different sexes is necessary for procreation, as long as there are fathers and mothers, the natural connection between the parents and the child can never be obliterated by social relations.

Only the character of this connection will be modified. In antiquity the father was the absolute master of the child. He had the power of life and death over him. In modern times paternal authority has been subject to certain restrictions. What, then, could be more natural, than that a free egalitarian society should obliterate what still remains of this authority and replace it with relations of simple affection?

We do not claim that the child should be treated as an adult, that all his caprices should be respected, that when his childish will stubbornly flouts the elementary rules of science and common sense we should avoid making him feel that he is wrong. We say, on the contrary, that the child must be trained and guided, but that the direction of his first years must not be exclusively

exercised by his parents, who are all too often incompetent and who generally abuse their authority. The aim of education is to develop the latent capacities of the child to the fullest possible extent and enable him to take care of himself as quickly as possible. It is painfully evident that authoritarianism is incompatible with an enlightened system of education. If the relations of father to son are no longer those of master to slave but those of teacher to student, of an older to a much younger friend, do you think that the reciprocal affection of parents and children would thereby be impaired? On the contrary, when intimate relations of these sorts cease, do not the discords so characteristic of modern families begin? Is not the family disintegrating into bitter frictions largely because of the tyranny exercised by parents over their children?

No one can therefore justly claim that a free and regenerated society will destroy the family. In such a society the father, the mother, and the children will learn to love each other and to respect their mutual rights; at the same time their love will be enriched as it transcends the narrow limits of family affection, thereby achieving a wider and nobler love: the love of the great human family.

V

Social organization cannot be restricted to the local commune or the local federation of producers' groups. We will see how social organization is expanded and completed, on the one hand by the establishment of *regional corporative federations* comprising all the groups of workers in the same industry; and on the other by the establishment of a federation of communes.

We have already indicated in Section III what a corporative federation is. Such organizations in a rudimentary form exist in present society. All workers in a given trade or craft belong to the same organization, for example, the federation of typographical workers. But these organizations are a very crude sketch of what they will become in the new society. The corporative federations will unite all workers in the same industry; they will no longer unite to protect their wages and working conditions against the onslaughts of their employers, but primarily to guarantee the mutual use of the tools of

production which are the property of each of these groups and which will by a reciprocal contract become the collective property of the whole corporative federation. In this way, the federation of groups will be able to exercise constant control over production, and regulate the rate of production to meet the fluctuating consumer needs of society.

The corporative federation will operate in a very simple fashion. On the morrow of the revolution, the producers' groups [local unions] belonging to the same industry will find it necessary to send delegates from city to city to exchange information and learn from each other's experience. These partial conferences will prepare the way for a general congress of the corporative federation to be held at some central point. This congress will formulate a federative contract which will be submitted for the correction and approval of all the groups of the corporative federation. A permanent bureau, elected by the congress and responsible to it, will serve as the intermediary link between the groups of the federation and between the federation and all the other corporative federations.

When all the branches [industries], including the agricultural organizations, have been organized in this manner, they will constitute a vast federative network spanning the whole country and embracing all the producers, and therefore all the consumers. The statistics of production, coordinated by the statistical bureaus of every corporative federation, will permit the determination in a rational manner of the hours of labor, the cost price of products and their exchange value, and the quantities in which these products should be produced to meet the needs of the consumers.

People impressed by the hollow declamations of the so-called democrats will perhaps demand that all these details should be settled by a direct vote of all the members of the corporative federations. And when we reply in the negative they will accuse us of despotism; they will protest against what they consider to be the *authority* of the bureaus, arguing that the bureaus should not be invested with the exclusive power to deal with such grave problems and to make decisions of the greatest importance. Our answer will be that the tasks performed by the permanent bureaus do not involve the exercise of any

authority whatsoever. They concern only the gathering and classification of information furnished by the producers' groups. Once this information is combined and *made public*, it will be used to help fix prices and costs, the hours of labor, etc.

Such operations involve simple mathematical calculations which can yield only one correct result, verifiable by all who have access to the figures. The permanent bureau is simply charged to ascertain and make the facts known to everyone. Even now, for example, the postal service performs a somewhat similar service to that which the bureaus of the corporative federations will render in the future; and we know of no person who complains that the post office abuses its authority because it collects, classifies, and delivers the mail without submitting every operation to universal suffrage.

Furthermore, the producers' groups forming the federation will intervene in the acts of the bureau in a far more effective and direct manner than simply by voting. For it is they who will furnish all the information and supply the statistics, which the bureau only coordinates. The bureau is merely the passive intermediary through which the groups communicate and publicly ascertain the results of their own activities. The vote is a device for settling questions which cannot be resolved by means of scientific data, problems which must be left to the arbitrary decision of numbers. But in questions susceptible to a precise scientific solution there is no need to vote. The truth cannot be decided by vote; it verifies and imposes itself by the mighty power of its own evidence.

But we have only dealt with one half of the extracommunal organization; the federative corporations will be paralleled by the establishment of the Federation of Communes.

VI

The revolution cannot be confined to a single country: it is obliged under pain of annihilation to spread, if not to the whole world, at least to a considerable number of civilized countries. In fact, no country today can be self-sufficient; international links and transactions are necessary for production

and cannot be cut off. If a revolutionary country is blockaded by neighboring states the Revolution, remaining isolated, would be doomed. just as we base ourselves on the hypothesis of the triumph of the Revolution in a given country, we must also assume that most other European countries will make their revolutions at the same time.

In countries where the proletariat has managed to free itself from the domination of the bourgeoisie, the newly initiated social organizations do not have to conform to a set pattern and may differ in many respects. To this day there are many disagreements between the socialists of the Germanic nations (Germany and England) and those of the Latin and Slavic countries (Italy, Spain, France, and Russia). Hence, it is probable that the social organization adopted by the German revolutionists, for example, will differ on some or many points from what is introduced by the Italian or French revolutionaries. But these differences are not important insofar as international relations are concerned; the fundamental principles of the Revolution (see Sections I and II above) being the same, friendly relations and solidarity will no doubt be established between the emancipated peoples of the various countries.

It goes without saying that artificial frontiers created by the present governments will be swept away by the Revolution. The communes will freely unite and organize themselves in accordance with their economic interests, their language affinities, and their geographic circumstances. And in certain countries like Italy and Spain, too vast for a single agglomeration of communes and divided by nature into many distinct regions, there will probably be established not one but many federations of communes. This will not be a rupture of unity, a return to the old fragmentation of petty, isolated, and warring political states. These diverse federations of communes, while maintaining their identity, will not be isolated. United by their intertwining interests, they will conclude a pact of solidarity, and this voluntary unity founded on common aims and common needs, on a constant exchange of informal, friendly contacts, will be much more intimate and much stronger than the artificial political centralization imposed by violence and having no

other motive than the exploitation of peoples for the profit of privileged classes.
