

Federalism, Socialism, Anti-Theologism

Michail Bakunin

1867

Contents

Federalism	4
Rousseau's Theory of the State	18

“Federalism, Socialism, Anti-Theologism” was presented as a “Reasoned Proposal to the Central Committee of the League for Peace and Freedom”, by Bakunin at the first congress held in Geneva. The text was either lost or destroyed and Bakunin wrote this work in the form of a speech, never finished, like most of his works. It was divided into three parts. The first and second parts, which follow, deal with federalism and socialism, respectively; the third part, on “anti-theologism,” is omitted here, except for the diatribe against Rousseau’s theory of the state. Bakunin analyzes Rousseau’s doctrine of the social contract, makes distinctions between state and society, and discusses the relationship between the individual and the community, and the nature of man in general.

The Central Committee of the League accepted Bakunin’s thesis, but the congress rejected it and Bakunin and Bakunin’s supporters resigned in 1868.

Federalism

We are happy to be able to report that the principle of federalism has been unanimously acclaimed by the Congress of Geneva... Unfortunately, this principle has been poorly formulated in the resolutions of the congress. It has not even been mentioned except indirectly... while in our opinion, it should have taken first place in our declaration of principles.

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

1. That there is but one way to bring about the triumph of liberty, of justice, and of peace in Europe's international relations, to make civil war impossible between the different peoples who make up the European family; and that is the formation of the *United States of Europe*.
2. That the United States of Europe can never be formed from the states as they are now constituted, considering the monstrous inequality which exists between their respective forces.
3. That the example of the now defunct Germanic Confederation has proved once and for all that a confederation of monarchies is a mockery, powerless to guarantee either the peace or the liberty of populations.
4. That no centralized state, being of necessity bureaucratic and militarist, even if it were to call itself republican, will be able to enter an international confederation with a firm resolve and in good faith. Its very constitution, which must always be an overt or covert negation of enduring liberty, would necessarily remain a declaration of permanent warfare, a threat to the existence of its neighbors. Since the State is essentially founded upon an act of violence, of conquest, what in private life goes under the name of housebreaking — an act blessed by all institutionalized religions whatsoever, eventually consecrated by time until it is even regarded as an historic right — and supported by such divine consecration of triumphant violence as an exclusive and supreme right, every centralized State therefore stands as an absolute negation of the rights of all other States, though recognizing them in the treaties it may conclude with them for its own political interest...
5. That all members of the League should therefore bend all their efforts toward reconstituting their respective countries, in order to replace their old constitution — founded from top to bottom on violence and the principle of authority — with a new organization based solely upon the interests, the needs, and the natural preferences of their populations — having no other principle but the free federation of individuals into communes, of communes into provinces, of the provinces into nations, and, finally, of the nations into the United States of Europe first, and of the entire world eventually.
6. Consequently, the absolute abandonment of everything which is called the historic right of the State; all questions relating to natural, political, strategic, and commercial frontiers shall henceforth be considered as belonging to ancient history and energetically rejected by all the members of the League.

7. Recognition of the absolute right of each nation, great or small, of each people, weak or strong, of each province, of each commune, to complete autonomy, provided its internal constitution is not a threat or a danger to the autonomy and liberty of neighboring countries.
8. The fact that a country has been part of a State, even if it has joined that State freely and of its own will, does not create an obligation for that country to remain forever so attached. No perpetual obligation could be accepted by human justice, the only kind of justice that may have authority amongst us, and we shall never recognize other rights or duties than those founded upon liberty. The right of free union and of equally free secession is the first, the most important, of all political rights, the one right without which the federation would never be more than a centralization in disguise.
9. From all that has been said, it follows that the League must openly prohibit any alliance of any national faction whatsoever of the European democracy with the monarchical State, even if the aim of such an alliance were to regain the independence or liberty of an oppressed country. Such an alliance could only lead to disappointment and would at the same time be a betrayal of the revolution.
10. On the other hand, the League, precisely because it is the League for Peace and Freedom, and because it is convinced that peace can only be won by and founded upon the closest and fullest solidarity of peoples in justice and in liberty, should openly proclaim its sympathy with any national insurrection, either foreign or native, provided this insurrection is made in the name of our principles and in the political as well as the economic interests of the masses, but not with the ambitious intent of founding a powerful State.
11. The League will wage a relentless war against all that is called the glory, the grandeur, and the power of States. It will be opposed to all these false and malevolent idols to which millions of human victims have been sacrificed; the glories of human intelligence, manifested in science, and universal prosperity founded upon labor, justice, and liberty.
12. The League will recognize *nationality* as a natural fact which has an incontestable right to a free existence and development, but not as a principle, since every principle should have the power of universality, while nationality, a fact of exclusionist tendency, separates. The so-called *principle of nationality*, such as has been declared in our time by the governments of France, Russia, Prussia, and even by many German, Polish, Italian, and Hungarian patriots, is a mere derivative notion born of the reaction against the spirit of revolution. It is aristocratic to the point of despising the folk dialects spoken by illiterate peoples. It implicitly denies the liberty of provinces and the true autonomy of communes. Its support, in all countries, does not come from the masses, whose real interests it sacrifices to the so-called public good, which is always the good of the privileged classes. It expresses nothing but the alleged historic rights and ambitions of States. The right of nationality can therefore never be considered by the League except as a natural consequence of the supreme principle of liberty; it ceases to be a right as soon as it takes a stand either against liberty or even outside liberty.

13. Unity is the great goal toward which humanity moves irresistibly. But it becomes fatal, destructive of the intelligence, the dignity, the well-being of individuals and peoples whenever it is formed without regard to liberty, either by violent means or under the authority of any theological, metaphysical, political, or even economic idea. That patriotism which tends toward unity without regard to liberty is an evil patriotism, always disastrous to the popular and real interests of the country it claims to exalt and serve. Often, without wishing to be so, it is a friend of reaction — an enemy of the revolution, i.e., the emancipation of nations and men. The League can recognize only one unity, that which is freely constituted by the federation of autonomous parts within the whole, so that the whole, ceasing to be the negation of private rights and interests, ceasing to be the graveyard where all local prosperities are buried, becomes the confirmation and the source of all these autonomies and all these prosperities. The League will therefore vigorously attack any religious, political, or economic organization which is not thoroughly penetrated by this great principle of freedom; lacking that, there is no intelligence, no justice, no prosperity, no humanity.

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

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

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

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

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

the upper bourgeoisie from the petty bourgeoisie, the latter from the proletariat of factories and cities, just as one can distinguish the great landowner, the man who lives on his income, from the peasant landowner who himself tills the soil, or the farmer from the landless agricultural laborer.

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

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

It is in vain, too, that we would try to persuade ourselves that the abyss could be bridged by the simple diffusion of light among the masses. It is well enough to set up schools among the masses. It is well enough to set up schools for the people. But we should also question whether the man of the people, feeding his family by the day-to-day labor of his hands, himself deprived of the most elementary schooling and of leisure, dulled and brutalized by his toil — we should question whether this man has the idea, the desire, or even the possibility of sending his children to school and supporting them during the period of their education. Would he not need the help of their feeble hands, their child labor, to provide for all the needs of his family? It would be sacrifice enough for him to send to school one or two of them, and give them hardly enough time to learn a little reading and writing and arithmetic, and allow their hearts and minds to be tainted with the Christian catechism which is being deliberately and profusely distributed in the official public schools of all countries — would this piddling bit of schooling ever succeed in lifting the working masses to the level of bourgeois intelligence? Would it bridge the gap?

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

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

England, Belgium, France, and Germany are those European countries where commerce and industry enjoy comparatively the greatest liberty and have attained the highest degree of development. And it is precisely in these countries where poverty is felt most cruelly, where the abyss

between the capitalist and the proprietor on the one hand and working classes on the other seems to have deepened to a degree unknown elsewhere. In Russia, in the Scandinavian countries, in Italy, in Spain, where commerce and industry have had but slight development, people seldom die of hunger, except in cases of extraordinary catastrophe. In England, death from starvation is a daily occurrence. Nor are those isolated cases; there are thousands, and tens and hundreds of thousands, who perish. Is it not evident that in the economic conditions now prevailing in the entire civilized world — the free development of commerce and industry, the marvelous applications of science to production, even the machines intended to emancipate the worker by facilitating his toil — all of these inventions, this progress of which civilized man is justly proud, far from ameliorating the situation of the working classes, only worsen it and make it still less endurable?

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

Since this possibility is always open as a way out for all the workers of America, it naturally keeps wages high and affords to each an independence unknown in Europe. This is an advantage; but there is also a disadvantage. As the good prices for industrial goods are largely due to the good wages received by labor, American manufacturers are not in a position in most cases to compete with the European manufacturers. The result is that the industry of the Northern states finds it necessary to impose a protectionist tariff. This, however, first brings about the creation of a number of artificial industries, and particularly the oppression and ruination of the nonmanufacturing Southern states, which drives them to call for secession. Finally, the result is the crowding together in cities such as New York, Philadelphia, Boston, and others of masses of workers who gradually begin to find themselves in a situation analogous to that of workers in

the great manufacturing states of Europe. And, as a matter of fact, we now see the social question confronting the Northern states just as it has confronted us a great deal earlier.

We are thus forced to admit that in our modern world the civilization of the few is still founded, though not as completely as in the days of antiquity, upon the forced labor and the comparative barbarism of the many. It would be unjust to say that the privileged class is a stranger to labor. On the contrary, in our time they work hard and the number of idle people is diminishing appreciably. They are beginning to hold work in honor; those who are most fortunate realize today that one must work hard in order to remain at the summit of the present civilization and even in order to know how to profit by one's privileges and retain them. But there is this difference between the work done by the comfortable classes and that done by the laboring classes: the former is rewarded in an incomparably greater proportion and affords the privileged the opportunity for *leisure*, that supreme condition for all human development, both intellectual and moral — a condition never attained by the working classes. Also, the work done in the world of the privileged is almost exclusively *mental* work — the work involving imagination, memory, the thinking process. The work done by millions of proletarians, on the other hand, is *manual* work; often, as in all factories, for instance, it is work that does not even exercise man's entire muscular system at one time, but tends to develop one part of the body to the detriment of all the others, and this labor is generally performed under conditions harmful to his health and to his harmonious development. The laborer on the land is in this respect much more fortunate: his nature is not vitiated by the stifling, often tainted atmosphere of a factory; it is not deformed by the abnormal development of one of his powers at the expense of the others; it remains more vigorous, more complete. On the other hand, his mind is almost always slower, more sluggish, and much less developed than that of the worker in the factories and in the cities.

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

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

But what of the objection that this contrast, this gulf between the small number of the privileged and the vast numbers of the disinherited has always existed and still exists; just what has changed? It is only that this gulf used to be filled with the great fog banks of religion, so that the masses were deceived into thinking there was a common ground for all. Nowadays, the Great Revolution has begun to sweep the mists away; the masses, too, are beginning to see the abyss and to ask the reason why. This is a stupendous realization.

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

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

The second question for the people is that of leisure after labor, a condition *sine qua non* for humanity. But bread and leisure can never be made secure for the masses except through a radical transformation of society as presently constituted. That is why the Revolution, impelled by its own logical insistency, has given birth to *socialism*.

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

oped, transformed, and established as a quasi-practical system, as a church, by Le Pere Enfantin, with many of his friends who have now become financiers and statesmen, singularly devoted to the Empire. Fourierism found its commentator in *Democratie Pacifique*, edited until December by M. Victor Considerant.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Socialism, we have said, was the latest offspring of the Great Revolution; but before producing it, the revolution had already brought forth a more direct heir, its oldest, the beloved child of Robespierre and the followers of Saint-Just — *pure republicanism*, without any admixture of

socialist ideas, resuscitated from antiquity and inspired by the heroic traditions of the great citizens of Greece and Rome. As it was far less humanitarian than socialism, it hardly knew man, and recognized the citizen only. And while socialism seeks to found a *republic of men*, all that republicanism wants is a *republic of citizens*, even though the citizens — as in the constitutions which necessarily succeeded the constitution of 1793 in consequence of that first constitution's deliberately ignoring the social question — even though the citizens, I say, by virtue of being *active citizens*, to borrow an expression from the Constituent Assembly, were to base their civic privilege upon the exploitation of the labor of *passive citizens*. Besides, the political republican is not at all egotistic in his own behalf, or at least is not supposed to be so; he must be an egotist in behalf of his fatherland which he must value above himself, above all other individuals, all nations, all humanity. Consequently, he will always ignore international justice; in all debates, whether his country be right or wrong, he will always give it first place. He will want it always to dominate and to crush all the foreign nations by its power and glory. Through natural inclination he will become fond of conquest, in spite of the fact that the experience of centuries may have proved to him that military triumphs must inevitably lead to Caesarism.

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

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

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

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

In a word, between the political republican and the socialist republican there is an abyss; the one, as a *quasi-religious phenomenon*, belongs to the past; the other, whether *positivist* or *atheist*, belongs to the future.

The natural antagonism of these two kinds of republican came plainly into view in 1848. From the very first hours of the Revolution, they no longer understood each other; their ideals, all their instincts, drew them in diametrically opposite directions. The entire period from February to June was spent in skirmishes which, carrying the civil war into the camp of the revolutionaries and paralyzing their forces, naturally strengthened the already formidable coalition of all kinds of reactionaries; fear soon welded them into one single party. In June the republicans, in their turn, formed a coalition with the reaction in order to crush the socialists. They thought they had won a victory, yet they pushed their beloved republic down into the abyss. General Cavaignac, the flagbearer of the reaction, was the precursor of Napoleon III. Everybody realized this at the time, if not in France then certainly everywhere else, for this disastrous victory of the republicans against the workers of Paris was celebrated as a great triumph in all the courts of Europe, and the officers of the Prussian Guards, led by their generals, hastened to convey their fraternal congratulations to General Cavaignac.

Terrified of the red phantom, the bourgeoisie of Europe permitted itself to fall into absolute serfdom. BY nature critical and liberal, the middle class is not fond of the military, but, facing the threatening dangers of a popular emancipation, it chose militarism. Having sacrificed its dignity and all its glorious conquests of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, it fancied that it had at least the peace and tranquillity necessary for the success of its commercial and industrial transactions. "We are sacrificing our liberty to you," it seemed to be saying to the military powers who again rose upon the ruins of this third revolution. "Let us, in return, peacefully exploit the labor of the masses, and protect us against their demands, which may appear theoretically legitimate but which are detestable so far as our interests are concerned." The military, in turn, promised the bourgeoisie everything; they even kept their word. Why, then, is the bourgeoisie, the entire bourgeoisie of Europe, generally discontented today?

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

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

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

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

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

Socialism lost this first battle for a very simple reason. Although it was rich in instincts and in negative theoretical ideas, which gave it full justification in its fight against privilege, it lacked the necessary positive and practical ideas for erecting a new system upon the ruins of the bourgeois order, the system of popular justice. The workers who fought in June 1848 for the emancipation of the people were united by instinct, not by ideas — and such confused ideas as they did possess formed a tower of Babel, a chaos, which could produce nothing. Such was the main cause of their defeat. Must we, for this reason, hold in doubt the future itself, and the present strength of socialism? Christianity, which had set as its goal the creation of the kingdom of justice in heaven, needed several centuries to triumph in Europe. Is there any cause for surprise if socialism, which has set itself a more difficult problem, that of creating the kingdom of justice on earth, has not triumphed within a few years?

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

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

In France, as in Germany, as socialism quietly proceeded along the road of private economic associations, it has already achieved so high a degree of power among the working classes that Napoleon III on the one side and Count Bismarck on the other are beginning to seek an alliance with it. In Italy and in Spain, after the deplorable fiasco of all their political parties, and in the face of the terrible misery into which both countries are plunged, all other problems will soon be absorbed in the economic and social question. As for Russia and Poland, is there really any other question facing these countries? It is this question which has just extinguished the last hopes of the old, noble, historic Poland; it is this question which is threatening and which will destroy the pestiferous Empire of All the Russias, now tottering to its fall. Even in America, has not socialism been made manifest in the proposition by a man of eminence, Mr. Charles Sumner, Senator from Massachusetts, to distribute lands to the emancipated Negroes of the Southern states?

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

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

Is it not enough to say, gentlemen, that we may not exclude socialism from our program, and that we could not leave it out without dooming all our work to impotence? By our program, by declaring ourselves federalist republicans, we have shown ourselves to be revolutionary enough to alienate a good part of the bourgeoisie, all those who speculate upon the misery and the misfortunes of the masses and who even find something to gain in the great catastrophes which beset the nations more than ever today. If we set aside this busy, bustling, intriguing, speculating section of the bourgeoisie, we shall still keep the majority of decent, industrious bourgeois, who occasionally do some harm by necessity rather than willfully or by preference, and who would want nothing better than to be delivered from this fatal necessity, which places them in a state of permanent hostility toward the working masses and, at the same time, ruins them. We might truthfully say that the petty bourgeoisie, small business, and small industry are now beginning to suffer almost as much as the working classes, and if things go on at the same rate, this respectable bourgeois majority could well, through its economic position, soon merge with the proletariat. It is being destroyed and pushed downward into the abyss by big commerce, big industry, and especially by large-scale, unscrupulous speculators. The position of the petty bourgeoisie, therefore, is growing more and more revolutionary; its ideas, which for so long a time had been reactionary, have been clarified through these disastrous experiences and must necessarily take the opposite course. The more intelligent among them are beginning to realize that for the decent bourgeoisie the only salvation lies in an alliance with the people — and that the social question is as important to them, and *in the same way*, as to the people.

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

it also lacks the faith and the passion. This passion, which annihilates obstacles and creates new worlds, is to be found in the people only. Therefore, the initiative for the new movement will unquestionably belong to the people. And are we going to repudiate the people? Are we going to stop talking about socialism, which is the new religion of the people?

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

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

This justice, which is so universal but which nevertheless, owing to the encroachments of force and to the influence of religion, has never as yet prevailed in the world of politics, of law, or of economics, should serve as a basis for the new world. Without it there is no liberty, no republic, no prosperity, no peace! It should therefore preside at all our resolutions in order that we may effectively cooperate in establishing peace.

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

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

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

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

We hasten to add that we energetically reject any attempt at a social organization devoid of the most complete liberty for individuals as well as associations, and one that would call for the establishment of a ruling authority of any nature whatsoever, and that, in the name of this liberty — which we recognize as the only basis for, and the only legitimate creator of, any organization, economic or political — we shall always protest against anything that may in any way resemble communism or state socialism.

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

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

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

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

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

Now therefore, the League highly proclaims the need for a radical social and economic reform, whose aim shall be the deliverance of the people's labor from the

yoke of capital and property, upon a foundation of the strictest justice — not juridical, not theological, not metaphysical, but simply human justice, of positive science and the most absolute liberty.

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

Rousseau's Theory of the State

... We have said that man is not only the most individualistic being on earth — he is also *the most social*. It was a great mistake on the part of Jean Jacques Rousseau to have thought that primitive society was established through a free agreement among savages. But Jean Jacques is not the only one to have said this. The majority of jurists and modern publicists, either of the school of Kant or any other individualist and liberal school, those who do not accept the idea of a society founded upon the divine right of the theologians nor of a society determined by the Hegelian school as a more or less mystical realization of objective morality, nor of the naturalists' concept of a primitive animal society, all accept, *nolens volens*, and for lack of any other basis, *the tacit agreement or contract* as their starting point.

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

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

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

One might rejoin that the State, representing as it does the public welfare or the common interest of all, curtails a part of the liberty of each only for the sake of assuring to him all the remainder. But this remainder may be a form of security; it is never liberty. Liberty is indivisible; one cannot curtail a part of it without killing all of it. This little part you are curtailing is the very

essence of my liberty; it is all of it. Through a natural, necessary, and irresistible movement, all of my liberty is concentrated precisely in the part, small as it may be, which you curtail. It is the story of Bluebeard's wife, who had an entire palace at her disposal, with full and complete liberty to enter everywhere, to see and to touch everything, except for one dreadful little chamber which her terrible husband's sovereign will had forbidden her to open on pain of death. Well, she turned away from all the splendors of the palace, and her entire being concentrated on the dreadful little chamber. She opened that forbidden door, for good reason, since her liberty depended on her doing so, while the prohibition to enter was a flagrant violation of precisely that liberty. It is also the story of Adam and Eve's fall. The prohibition to taste the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for no other reason than that such was the will of the Lord, was an act of atrocious despotism on the part of the good Lord. Had our first parents obeyed it, the entire human race would have remained plunged in the most humiliating slavery. Their disobedience has emancipated and saved us. Theirs, in the language of mythology, was the first act of human liberty.

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

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

From the standpoint of the system we have under examination, the distinction between good and evil did not exist before the conclusion of the contract, when each individual stayed deep in the isolation of his liberty or of his absolute rights, having no consideration for his fellowmen except those dictated by his relative weakness or strength; that is, his own prudence and self-interest. At that time, still following the same theory, egotism was the supreme law, the only right. The good was determined by success, failure was the only evil, and justice was merely the consecration of the *fait accompli*, no matter how horrible, how cruel or infamous, exactly as things are now in the political morality which prevails in Europe today.

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

We shall now examine what the State, thus constituted, should be in relation to other states, its peers, as well as in relation to its own subject populations. This examination appears to us all the more interesting and useful because the State, as it is here defined, is precisely the modern State

insofar as it has separated itself from the religious idea — the *secular* or *atheist State* proclaimed by modern publicists. Let us see, then: of what does its morality consist? It is the modern State, we have said, at the moment when it has freed itself from the yoke of the Church, and when it has, consequently, shaken off the yoke of the universal or cosmopolitan morality of the Christian religion; at the moment when it has not yet been penetrated by the humanitarian morality or idea, which, by the way, it could never do without destroying itself; for, in its separate existence and isolated concentration, it would be too narrow to embrace, to contain the interests and therefore the morality of all mankind.

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

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

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

War would still remain the supreme law, an unavoidable condition of human survival.

Every state, federated or not, would therefore seek to become the most powerful. It must devour lest it be devoured, conquer lest it be conquered, enslave lest it be enslaved, since two powers, similar and yet alien to each other, could not coexist without mutual destruction.

The State, therefore, is the most flagrant, the most cynical, and the most complete negation of humanity. It shatters the universal solidarity of all men on the earth, and brings some of them

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

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

This explains why, since the birth of the State, the world of politics has always been and continues to be the stage for unlimited rascality and brigandage, brigandage and rascality which, by the way, are held in high esteem, since they are sanctified by patriotism, by the transcendent morality and the supreme interest of the State. This explains why the entire history of ancient and modern states is merely a series of revolting crimes; why kings and ministers, past and present, of all times and all countries — statesmen, diplomats, bureaucrats, and warriors — if judged from the standpoint of simple morality and human justice, have a hundred, a thousand times over earned their sentence to hard labor or to the gallows. There is no horror, no cruelty, sacrilege, or perjury, no imposture, no infamous transaction, no cynical robbery, no bold plunder or shabby betrayal that has not been or is not daily being perpetrated by the representatives of the states, under no other pretext than those elastic words, so convenient and yet so terrible: "***for reasons of state.***"

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

The great Italian political philosopher Machiavelli was the first to use these words, or at least the first to give them their true meaning and the immense popularity they still enjoy among our rulers today. A realistic and positive thinker if there ever was one, he was the first to understand that the great and powerful states could be founded and maintained by crime alone — by many great crimes, and by a radical contempt for all that goes under the name of honesty. He has written, explained, and proven these facts with terrifying frankness. And, since the idea of humanity was entirely unknown in his time; since the idea of fraternity — not human but religious — as preached by the Catholic Church, was at that time, as it always has been, nothing but a shocking irony, belied at every step by the Church's own actions; since in his time no one even suspected that there was such a thing as popular right, since the people had always been considered an inert and inept mass, the flesh of the State to be molded and exploited at will, pledged to eternal obedience; since there was absolutely nothing in his time, in Italy or elsewhere, except for the State — Machiavelli concluded from these facts, with a good deal of logic, that the State was the supreme goal of all human existence, that it must be served at any cost and that, since the interest of the State prevailed over everything else, a good patriot should not recoil from any crime in order to serve it. He advocates crime, he exhorts to crime, and makes it the *sine qua non* of political intelligence as well as of true patriotism. Whether the State bear the name of a monarchy or of a republic, crime will always be necessary for its preservation and its triumph. The State will doubtless change its direction and its object, but its nature will remain the same: always the energetic, permanent violation of justice, compassion, and honesty, for the welfare of the State.

Yes, Machiavelli is right. We can no longer doubt it after an experience of three and a half centuries added to his own experience. Yes, so all history tells us: while the small states are virtuous only because of their weakness, the powerful states sustain themselves by crime alone. But our conclusion will be entirely different from his, for a very simple reason. We are the children of the Revolution, and from it we have inherited the religion of humanity, which we must found upon the ruins of the religion of divinity. We believe in the rights of man, in the dignity and the necessary emancipation of the human species. We believe in human liberty and human fraternity founded upon justice. In a word, we believe in the triumph of humanity upon the earth. But this triumph, which we summon with all our longing, which we want to hasten with all our united efforts — since it is by its very nature the negation of the crime which is intrinsically the negation of humanity — this triumph cannot be achieved until crime ceases to be what it now is more or less everywhere today, *the real basis of the political existence of the nations absorbed and dominated by the ideas of the State*. And since it is now proven that no state could exist without committing crimes, or at least without contemplating and planning them, even when its impotence should prevent it from perpetrating crimes, we today conclude in favor of the *absolute need of destroying the states*. Or, if it is so decided, their radical and complete transformation so that, ceasing to be powers centralized and organized from the top down, by violence or by authority of some principle, they may recognize — with absolute liberty for all the parties to unite or not to unite, and with liberty for each of these always to leave a union even when freely entered into — from the bottom up, according to the real needs and the natural tendencies of the parties, through the free federation of individuals, associations, communes, districts, provinces, and nations within humanity.

Such are the conclusions to which we are inevitably led by an examination of the external relations which the so-called free states maintain with other states. Let us now examine the rela-

tions maintained by the State founded upon the free contract arrived at among its own citizens or subjects.

We have already observed that by excluding the immense majority of the human species from its midst, by keeping this majority outside the reciprocal engagements and duties of morality, of justice, and of right, the State denies humanity and, using that sonorous word patriotism, imposes injustice and cruelty as a supreme duty upon all its subjects. It restricts, it mutilates, it kills humanity in them, so that by ceasing to be men, they may be solely citizens — or rather, and more specifically, that through the historic connection and succession of facts, they may never rise above the citizen to the height of being man.

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

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

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

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

already evil, and undertakes to make him good, that is, to transform the natural man into the citizen.

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

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

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

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

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

The best citizens, would be the answer, the most intelligent and the most virtuous, those who understand better than the others the common interests of society and the need, the duty, of everyone to subordinate his own interests to the common good. It is, in fact, necessary for these men to be as intelligent as they are virtuous; if they were intelligent but lacked virtue, they might very well use the public welfare to serve their private interests, and if they were virtuous but

lacked intelligence, their good faith would not be enough to save the public interest from their errors. It is therefore necessary, in order that a republic may not perish, that it have available throughout its duration a continuous succession of many citizens possessing both virtue and intelligence.

But this condition cannot be easily or always fulfilled. In the history of every country, the epochs that boast a sizable group of eminent men are exceptional, and renowned through the centuries. Ordinarily, within the precincts of power, it is the insignificant, the mediocre, who predominate, and often, as we have observed in history, it is vice and bloody violence that triumph. We may therefore conclude that if it were true, as the theory of the so-called rational or liberal State clearly postulates, that the preservation and durability of every political society depend upon a succession of men as remarkable for their intelligence as for their virtue, there is not one among the societies now existing that would not have ceased to exist long ago. If we were to add to this difficulty, not to say impossibility, those which arise from the peculiar demoralization attendant upon power, the extraordinary temptations to which all men who hold power in their hands are exposed, the ambitions, rivalries, jealousies, the gigantic cupidities by which particularly those in the highest positions are assailed by day and night, and against which neither intelligence nor even virtue can prevail, especially the highly vulnerable virtue of the isolated man, it is a wonder that so many societies exist at all. But let us pass on.

Let us assume that, in an ideal society, in each period, there were a sufficient number of men both intelligent and virtuous to discharge the principal functions of the State worthily. Who would seek them out, select them, and place the reins of power in their hands? Would they themselves, aware of their intelligence and their virtue, take possession of the power? This was done by two sages of ancient Greece, Cleobulus and Periander; notwithstanding their supposed great wisdom, the Greeks applied to them the odious name of tyrants. But in what manner would such men seize power? By persuasion, or perhaps by force? If they used persuasion, we might remark that he can best persuade who is himself persuaded, and the best men are precisely those who are least persuaded of their own worth. Even when they are aware of it, they usually find it repugnant to press their claim upon others, while wicked and mediocre men, always satisfied with themselves, feel no repugnance in glorifying themselves. But let us even suppose that the desire to serve their country had overcome the natural modesty of truly worthy men and induced them to offer themselves as candidates for the suffrage of their fellow citizens. Would the people necessarily accept these in preference to ambitious, smooth-tongued, clever schemers? If, on the other hand, they wanted to use force, they would, in the first place, have to have available a force capable of overcoming the resistance of an entire party. They would attain their power through civil war which would end up with a disgruntled opposition party, beaten but still hostile. To prevail, the victors would have to persist in using force. Accordingly the free society would have become a despotic state, founded upon and maintained by violence, in which you might possibly find many things worthy of approval — but never liberty.

If we are to maintain the fiction of the free state issuing from a social contract, we must assume that the majority of its citizens must have had the prudence, the discernment, and the sense of justice necessary to elect the worthiest and the most capable men and to place them at the head of their government. But if a people had exhibited these qualities, not just once and by mere chance but at all times throughout its existence, in all the elections it had to make, would it not mean that the people itself, as a mass, had reached so high a degree of morality and of culture that it no longer had need of either government or state? Such a people would not drag out a

meaningless existence, giving free rein for all its instincts; out of its life, justice and public order would rise spontaneously and naturally. The State, in it, would cease to be the providence, the guardian, the educator, the regulator of society. As it renounced all its repressive power and sank to the subordinate position assigned to it by Proudhon, it would turn into a mere business office, a sort of central accounting bureau at the service of society.

There is no doubt that such a political organization, or rather such a reduction of political action in favor of the liberty of social life, would be a great benefit to society, but it would in no way satisfy the persistent champions of the State. To them, the State, as providence, as director of the social life, dispenser of justice, and regulator of public order, is a necessity. In other words, whether they admit it or not, whether they call themselves republicans, democrats, or even socialists, they always must have available a more or less ignorant, immature, incompetent people, or, bluntly speaking, a kind of *canaille* to govern. This would make them, without doing violence to their lofty altruism and modesty, keep the highest places for themselves, so as always to devote themselves to the common good, of course. As the privileged guardians of the human flock, strong in their virtuous devotion and their superior intelligence, while prodding the people along and urging it on for its own good and well-being, they would be in a position to do a little discreet fleecing of that flock for their own benefit.

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

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

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

would be profound in far other ways than all the revolutions that have thus far overwhelmed the ancient world and the modern.

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

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

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

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

Here then is a society already divided into two categories, if not yet two classes. One is composed of the immense majority of its citizens who freely submit themselves to a government by those they have elected; the other is composed of a small number of men endowed with exceptional attributes, recognized and accepted as exceptional by the people and entrusted by them with the task of governing. As these men depend on popular election, they cannot at first be distinguished from the mass of citizens except by the very qualities which have recommended them for election, and they are naturally the most useful and the most dedicated citizens of all.

They do not as yet claim any privilege or any special right except that of carrying out, at the people's will, the special functions with which they have been entrusted. Besides, they are not in any way different from other people in their way of living or earning their means of living, so that a perfect equality still subsists among all.

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

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

"The masses, on admitting their own incapacity to govern themselves, have elected me as their head. By doing so, they have clearly proclaimed their own *inferiority* and my *superiority*. In this great crowd of men, among whom I hardly find any who are my equals, I alone am capable of administering public affairs. The people need me; they cannot get along without my services, while I am sufficient unto myself. They must therefore obey me for their own good, and I, by deigning to command them, create their happiness and well-being." There is enough here to turn anyone's head and corrupt the heart and make one swell with pride, isn't there? That is how power and the habit of commanding become a source of aberration, both intellectual and moral, even for the most intelligent and most virtuous of men.

All human morality — and we shall try, further on, to prove the absolute truth of this principle, the development, explanation, and widest application of which constitute the real subject of this essay — all collective and individual morality rests essentially upon *respect for humanity*. What do we mean by respect for humanity? We mean the recognition of human right and human dignity in every man, of whatever race, color, degree of intellectual development, or even morality. But if this man is stupid, wicked, or contemptible, can I respect him? Of course, if he is all that, it is impossible for me to respect his villainy, his stupidity, and his brutality; they are repugnant to me and arouse my indignation. I shall, if necessary, take the strongest measures against them, even going so far as to kill him if I have no other way of defending against him my life, my right, and whatever I hold precious and worthy. But even in the midst of the most violent and bitter, even mortal, combat between us, I must respect his human character. My own dignity as a man depends on it. Nevertheless, if he himself fails to recognize this dignity in others, must we recognize it in him? If he is a sort of ferocious beast or, as sometimes happens, worse than a beast, would we not, in recognizing his humanity, be supporting a mere fiction? NO, for whatever his present intellectual and moral degradation may be, if, organically, he is neither an idiot nor a madman — in which case he should be treated as a sick man rather than as a criminal — if he is in full possession of his senses and of such intelligence as nature has granted him, his humanity, no matter how monstrous his deviations might be, nonetheless really exists. *It exists as a lifelong potential capacity to rise to the awareness of his humanity, even if there should be little possibility for a radical change in the social conditions which have made him what he is.*

Take the most intelligent ape, with the finest disposition; though you place him in the best, most humane environment, you will never make a man of him. Take the most hardened criminal or the man with the poorest mind, provided that neither has any organic lesion causing idiocy or insanity; the criminality of the one, and the failure of the other to develop an awareness of his

humanity and his human duties, *is not their fault, nor is it due to their nature; it is solely the result of the social environment in which they were born and brought up.*

The Anarchist Library
Anti-Copyright



Michail Bakunin
Federalism, Socialism, Anti-Theologism
1867

Retrieved on February 23rd, 2009 from www.marxists.org

theanarchistlibrary.org