

The Anarchist Library (Mirror)

Anti-Copyright



Carlo Cafiero  
Our Revolution  
1881, 1972

Chapter II from: Cafiero, Carlo, and Nestor McNab (Ed. & trans.).

2012. *Revolution*. 1<sup>st</sup> English ed. Edmonton: Black Cat Press.

First part originally published in French translation in “La Révolution sociale,” Paris on 20, 27 February; 6, 13, 27 March; 3, 10, 17, 24 April; 1, 8, 29 May; 6, 12, 19 June; 31 July 1881.

Translated to English by Nestor McNab (2011) from the Italian text contained in Carlo Cafiero, *Rivoluzione per la rivoluzione: raccolta di scritti a cura e con introduzione di G. Bosio*, Rome 1970. Second part translated to English by Nestor McNab (2011) from the Italian original contained in Gian Carlo Maffei (ed.), *Dossier Cafiero*, Bergamo 1972.

[usa.anarchistlibraries.net](http://usa.anarchistlibraries.net)

# Our Revolution

Carlo Cafiero

1881, 1972

***“The desire for destruction is a creative passion.”***

Mikhail Bakunin, articles published in Dresden in  
1841.

***“To rise to a new life, one must extinguish every  
last echo of the past”***

Carlo Pisacane, *Saggio storico*, p. 60.

Every age of human development has had its revolutionaries and its reactionaries; the former worked for the triumph of the revolution, while the latter's mission was to halt its course. However, they were not always acting in bad faith.

There have been some who simply intended to take advantage of the revolution, while others had no other aim than to take advantage of its conquests, giving them an official form, the sanction of authority — the guarantee of the State.

To affirm their principles, the early Christians founded the official Church; but in this way they halted the revolution and prepared the ground for the priest, who would exploit the Christian principle.

The priest, sure of having killed and buried the revolution for ever, wrote a sort of epitaph on its tomb: submission of the Christian to the pope, the vicar of God on earth; submission of the people to the king, invested on the authority of the pope; submission of the serf to his legitimate lord.

But if humanity is not dead, neither is the revolution; it rises up prouder than before and from the same rock of its supposed tomb, it extracts its programme for reconstruction; no more popes or kings: “with the bowels of the last priest, Let us strangle the last king.”<sup>1</sup>

“*War on the castles  
And peace on the shacks*”

The revolution took up its course once more; it is helped by the people who withstood centuries-long tyranny; it will carry out its programme for today, for tomorrow and every time it can develop itself freely among men.

No, it will not carry out its programme — cries the bourgeois capitalist excitedly; no, neither its programme for tomorrow, nor for today. The revolution has already been made; and now we need only order and work (from the proletarians, naturally) in order to guarantee its conquests; order, religion, the family, property!

This is the reactionary cry from the triumphant bourgeoisie, this is its entire programme for its entire life, which it writes on the tomb of where it imagines it has buried the revolution for ever.

But it is from that tomb that we, the revolutionaries of today, the sons of every past revolution, must take our inspiration in order to formulate our demands, the revolutionary programme of today, the ideal for human progress in the future.

Order is our irrefutable submission to their freedom of oppression and exploitation.

Religion is a moral bond to a faith of lies and deception, which seeks to facilitate our submission.

---

<sup>1</sup> Editor’s note: Denis Diderot, *Dithyrambe sur la fête des Rois*.

The family is the prime expression of a whole series of constituted authorities that end in the State, the supreme guarantor of human oppression and exploitation.

Property is the amassing of the materials and instruments of labour, that is to say of the sources of life, by a few privileged gluttons, who thus manage to dominate the labour force, allowing inequality to triumph, starving and torturing the people, transforming them into an army of serfs, the humblest valets of His Excellency, Capital!

So then, no order! Down with authority, both the authority of God and that of every single guard! Down with the authority of the family! Down with the State! Down with proprietors!

With the iron of their chains, gladiators in revolt fashioned their swords of freedom: from the centuries-old bonds of our servitude, we will forge the arms of human emancipation.

Liberation of the people, liberation of its instincts, liberation of its passions: liberation of that powerful god who does and undoes all things, because he can do and undo all things, because he has made all things!

Let the torrent of the people overflow its banks once more! Let it overflow, terrible and destructive, majestic and just! And let no sacrilegious hand rise up to attack the revolution!

O, revolution! Sublime law of nature, law of life and progress, law of justice and love, law of liberty and equality! Sainted revolution, come back to us! Resume your course among the people, and among the people establish your reign once and for all! Let thy will be done for ever!

The revolution will come: it is near, it is at hand. But it will no longer be the oil revolution, the revolution that is exploited only for the needs of the moment, that is needed to reach an extraneous end and is thus contrary to its very nature; it will no longer serve the transitory needs of a class whose emancipation means only the oppression and exploitation of another class.

Our Revolution has no end other than itself. It seeks to ensure the complete, definitive triumph of the Revolution among men: so that, starting from that moment, it can follow its path without meeting any obstacle and thus alone bring to completion, through its successive transformations, its eternal mission of progress without any more need for violence: to work for the well-being and happiness of men without ever interrupting the peace that exists among them.

The principle of struggle and the principle of sociability will undergo further extension, the last that will require the use of violence: this will be the last birthing by Revolution that requires intervention by the surgeon.

Humanity is so rigorously divided into two classes, made up of homogeneous, compact elements, that the Revolution will not be able to simplify any further, since by applying the principle of struggle among men, it will absorb the two classes into one. *No more capitalists and proletarians: every man free and equal.* It is the simplest expression of our revolutionary ideal.

This simplification of the principle of struggle is matched by an expansion of the principle of sociability.

But the force of expansion of the principle of struggle within humanity has been exhausted. From the times when man struggled, as we have seen, alone against all and all against one, until today when humanity is divided by the struggle into two great classes, each possible degree of expansion of the principle of struggle and the principle of sociability between men has lost its vitality. The confines of humanity have been reached; and the workings of the principle of struggle, that natural law that cannot be impeded or suspended, will be forced to remain within the truly vast field of nature. *No more struggle between men, reunited in order to conquer and take advantage of the greatest natural forces.*

*No longer one against all and all against one, but one for all and all for one.*

erty does not interfere with equality; one in which sentiment goes together with reason in every man and in which no-one is forced to operate against the dictates of one or stifle the impulses of another. In such a case, the life of man would manifest itself in all its fullness and could thus be said to be perfect.”<sup>18</sup>

“Human happiness must hinge on liberty and equality.”<sup>19</sup>

And the principle of sociability, having only one class to absorb, will necessarily have to extend itself to all of humanity. *The human sociability, the age of humanity*. This will be the inexorable consequence of the prerequisites; this the result, soon to come, of the natural law of Revolution, destined in our age to prepare for egoism, the noblest of satisfactions, with the conciliation of its two sons, the principle of struggle and the principle of sociability.

Certainly, egoism will still be the inspiration for human action, but the desire of our being, the demand of the *self* will be something noble, human: it will be the search for one’s betterment, it will be the search for one’s own good and one’s own happiness in the good and happiness of all men. Nor will this be a matter of philanthropy – it will be the inexorable law of the new age in history, which will make the good of each a necessary part of the good of all, and the good of all the essence of the good of each.

To sum up, then, we shall say:

The struggle of cannibalism and sociability of individualism.

The struggle of slavery and sociability of antiquity.

The struggle of servitude and sociability of the feudal age.

The struggle of waged labour and sociability of capitalism.

The struggle of nature and sociability of humanity.

This is the genealogical tree of humanity and Revolution at the same time.

---

[This point marks the end of the part originally published in French translation in “La Révolution sociale.” There follows the part published in 1972 in *Dossier Cafiero*.]

---

Our revolutionary ideal is the age-old ideal of all those who refuse to resign themselves to oppression and exploitation; for us,

---

<sup>18</sup> C. Pisacane, *op.cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 145.

as for our predecessors, it is summed up in two no less ancient terms: Freedom and Equality.

As ancient as human servitude, that is to say as humanity, this ideal has always had a limited, partial application thanks to the efforts of reactionaries, who in every age have hindered the revolution. However, despite all the past and present reactions, it [our ideal] has continued to spread and is about to realize its most complete application in our revolution.

Having learnt from past history, which shows us the endless deceptions practised by the reactionaries of every sort and every age in order to diminish, corrupt and misrepresent the true value of freedom and equality, that is to say of the revolution itself, we have been forewarned and now place alongside the face value of these two oft-counterfeited coins the exact value that they truly have, in order that we may accept them as genuine.

These two precious coins must pay for the eternal redemption of humanity and the transaction will never take place until such times as the true value exactly matches their face value.

Now, we express the true value of freedom and equality with the two terms, *Anarchy* and *Communism*.

Consequently, we will not accept as true any freedom that does not correspond exactly, that is not perfectly identical and perfectly equal to anarchy — anything else will be false and mendacious for us; nor will we accept as true equality anything that does not correspond exactly, that is not perfectly identical and perfectly equal to communism — any other purported equality will be false and mendacious for us.

So if freedom for us is anarchy and equality is communism, then our revolutionary formula will be:

(Revolution) = (Freedom and Equality) = (Anarchy and Communism).

text for injustice; the burden must be supported by all directly and never, ever, contrary to the forces of each; what generally happens in a workingman's family, no more nor less.

The father brings home five lire a day, the eldest son two or three and the boy only one lira. The mother keeps the home and prepares the repast. At the dinner table everyone helps himself at will; and those who eat most are the very ones who bring home least. But there comes the day when work is scarce and the repast consequently becomes rather meagre. The appetites and tastes of each can no longer be matched and it comes down to rationing. But you see, this division is not carried out according to merit: the boy, who brings home least of all, takes the largest share and the old lady, who brings home nothing, gets the best share. Thus, in the family the misfortune of all is withstood by each according to his forces and it is not made to weigh on the very ones who have the right to feel its effects the least given that they are the weakest. Now, can it be any different in the great human family of the future?

In conclusion, we can and we must be communists, because products will not be lacking, because through communism we shall achieve true equality, because the people — who do not understand the collectivists' sophistry — understand communism perfectly, and lastly because we are anarchists, and anarchy and communism are the two essential terms of the revolution.

We shall leave Carlo Pisacane to provide a worthy summary of our revolutionary ideal:

“What would be the ideal type for a perfect society? One in which everyone would find full enjoyment of their rights, where they could reach the fullest development that their physical and mental faculties are capable of and benefit from them without the need either to humiliate themselves in front of their equals or to dominate them; in other words, a society in which lib-

Thus, it is not an educational process that is needed, but revolution, which alone can transform today's interest in struggle between one man and another, into interest in the common struggle of all men for greater conquests and greater utilization of natural forces to the benefit of the human community, which alone can transform today's bourgeois age into the human age. By transforming private interests into public interests and vice versa, communism will be the only possible, real and effective educator of the people.

Far from starting us towards communism, the hermaphroditic individualism proposed by the collectivists, would really be the starting point for the counter-revolution, a return to outright individualism. It is madness to believe that in a system of individual attribution of products, once an exuberance of production emerges everyone will spontaneously renounce that part of their share that exceeds their needs, to the benefit of the community and that this accumulation of production can lead to communism. No, no-one will renounce even the slightest part of what is attributed to them, no matter how large it may be, as long as one can be richer or poorer. Quite the contrary: the richer will be irresistibly driven to seek greater ingeniousness or ability, which will naturally develop in them the principle of struggle between one man and another, but also and above all they will achieve it through deception, fraud and all the other dark arts that man can use when he is inexorably driven by reactionary circumstances to counter-revolution. And humanity will once again see men who, with the laudable notion of ensuring the conquests of the revolution, commit the error of halting its progress and end up themselves betraying the revolution that they set out to serve.

Lastly if, after all that has been said on the increase in production in the future society, there is still someone who doubts it, at least in the early stages, we say that even if we were obligated to introduce rationing, it would still need to be done according to needs and never according to merit. Public calamity must not be the pre-

Anarchy and communism, like force and matter, are two terms which should form a single term, since they jointly express a single concept.

The submission of the proletarians, the vast majority of humanity, to the accumulators of the materials and means of labour, a small minority, is the prime cause of all oppression and exploitation, of all inequality, despotism and human brutality. The human community laying claim to the materials and means of labour is a claim for the freedom and equality of all men. But guarding the treasure that has been stolen from us lies the State with all its constituted authorities and its armed might, obstacles that we must throw down if we are to have our goods returned to us. And consequently, while the two terms of our revolution are twins, anarchy is destined to emerge from the womb first, to pave the way for communism.

---

Anarchy means the absence of dominance, the absence of authority, the absence of hierarchy, the absence of pre-established order — order, that is, established by the few or by the first, which becomes law for the many or for the second.

Can one ever be free if one is subjected to any form of dominance or authority? Can the man who is commanded by another man ever be considered free? Where is our freedom, when we are constrained by law to conform to a pre-established order, which we already find unbearable simply because it is imposed on us? The true friend of freedom must be the true enemy of all domination, all authority, all command, all elevation of one man over others; he must be the enemy of all law, all pre-established order; he must be, in a word, an anarchist.

True freedom will not be obtained except through anarchy, which is thus the prime term required for the revolution. Today, anarchy demands that we attack, combat and destroy the State,

which is the organism of all the constituted powers — the great political machine that oppresses man and ensures his exploitation. But once the whole existing order has been swept clean, anarchy demands that we prevent any new establishment of authority, any new supremacy, any new despotism, any establishment of a new State.

Anarchy today is of an aggressive, destructive nature: tomorrow it will have a preservative, protective nature. Today it is direct revolution: tomorrow indirect revolution, the prevention of reaction.

Anarchy today is indignation, deadly hatred and eternal war against every oppressor and exploiter on the face of the earth; it is the indefeasible demand of the oppressed; it is their pact of alliance, their war cry — the bloodiest war as long as one boss, one exploiter remains in the world. Anarchy is incessant, permanent revolt against all constituted order, war on the State and all its authorities, waged in every way and under every possible form: with the word and with every other outward sign, with acts of defiance and hostility, and above all with arms. But tomorrow, once the obstacles have been overcome, anarchy will be solidarity and love — complete freedom for all. It will create the environment that is necessary for the development of human happiness, for the development of true freedom and true equality, so that the revolution can come and establish itself definitively among all men. Anarchy tomorrow will be the free and complete development of the individual, who driven only by his desires, by his tendencies and likings, will associate with others in the group, corporation, association or whatever one chooses to call it, which in turn will federate freely in the commune, the communes in the region, the regions in the nation and the nations in humanity.

The needs of the struggle against our common oppressors at first and thereafter the needs of life — the needs of production and consumption — will themselves bring men to unite in the great federation of human sociability.

You want to live and be healthy, strong and fair? Then work you want to be strong and good in spirit? Then work. You want to slake your thirst for the beautiful and the great? Then work. You want to conquer the affections of the woman you love? Then work.

You will not work? Then I will condemn you inexorably to vegetate like brutes, shunning the society of men, their works, which you will not comprehend, their affections, which you will not feel, their generosity, which will humiliate you, their greatness, which will crush you!

This is the stimulus that will be established by the revolution for human activity in the future society by means of communism.

And the enemy will cede at last. Our adversaries concede that in the end it will be necessary to move to communism; but *little by little* (it is a disease with them). And why? They themselves will tell you:

“First and foremost, because we are not convinced that, initially at least, there will not be a scarcity of products; secondly, because with your lightning-like communism you will give everyone the right to take at will, when individual interests have not yet disappeared, when everyone is not yet educated for work, a defect that cannot be righted without continuing to keep the greater or lesser earnings that can be had from work as its stimulus.”

Beginning with the second objection, we would reply that it is not a new type of education that will generate the new interests, but the new interests that will generate a new type of education. There was no need for anything moral or educational in order for man to move from cannibalism to slavery, no moral development or education for him to pass from slavery to servitude or likewise from servitude to waged labour.

Revolution has transformed interests and upon recognizing that it was more useful to preserve the man than eat him, slavery was born, in the same way that upon recognizing that slave labour was less profitable than that of a bonded colonus, servitude was born and later still waged labour, for the same reason.



barred, leaving only activity useful to humanity free, natural law can be fully applied: to make oneself useful to one's neighbour or wither from inaction. And the only means to close off all the paths of inaction or those that are harmful to humanity is communism of the instruments and materials of labour and not only that but also of the products of labour: complete communism, communism in its proper sense.

Each social age has its own particular stimuli for human activity, which pertain to their time; thus, wanting to adapt those of one age to those of another is the greatest absurdity. The stimuli for the warrior virtues of antiquity will not be the stimuli for the warring virtues of the Middle Ages, just as the latter cannot in turn stimulate the capitalist virtues of the present age; consequently it is foolishness to want to adapt "the thirst for interests" as the stimulus for activity in the coming human age.

Our revolution will replace individual interests with common interests or human interests and accordingly this will be the stimulus for activity that is useful to all, activity that is eminently human. This unbounded action will be the sole gymnasium in which human beings will wrestle bloodlessly and nobly for the good, the beautiful and the great.

By engaging in both physical and intellectual work, often diverse and manifold, man will gain in physical and mental goodness: a robust, well-formed body and a noble, human mind. He will run dauntlessly to distant unexplored regions, among savage peoples, to slake his thirst for greatness, to gather trophies, no longer of extermination but of true human glory. And if love, such an important part of life, was such a powerful stimulus for activity in past civilizations, think how much it will be in the future, whose conquests will be in the field of work alone!

Exerting oneself physically, intellectually and morally for the good of humanity will be the only work possible in the human age, which through natural law, without judgements and without guards, will say to men:

"Just as a hierarchy of individuals is an absurdity, so is a hierarchy between Communes. Every Commune can only be a free association of individuals and the Nation a free association of Communes."<sup>2</sup>

Anarchy is the federation of union, the organization of freedom. It fights against the popular State or the communist State, which would be the centralization of unity, the organization of common oppression

There are socialists who declare that it is necessary to create a new State in order to achieve the emancipation of the proletariat.

As the enemies of atheism wish to preserve God and belief in him for the "good of the people," so the socialist enemies of anarchy — atheism of the earth like that of the heavens — wish to preserve the institution of the State, in order to do the "good of the people," that is to say in order to continue to guide it.

Their pretensions are the last attempt on the part of the principle of authority to keep itself alive among men, and since last attempts are the most desperate and daring, we must arm ourselves from head to toe in order to fight them with all our power.

We cannot nor do we want to place their good faith in the slightest doubt; even if some of them were in bad faith, we must absolutely exclude it here; we are convinced that they act with the most proper sentiment, with the sole aim of achieving the emancipation of the proletariat in the emancipation of humanity; and that if they wish to give the new social order an official form, if they wish to build a new State, it is simply because they believe that they can thus assure those conquests of the revolution that are the goal of our common aspirations.

But did not, perhaps, the early Church fathers have the same aim in mind in giving an official form to the aspirations of the

---

<sup>2</sup> C. Pisacane, *Saggi storici-politici-militari sull'Italia*, Vol. III, *Terzo saggio*, *La Rivoluzione* cit., p. 94. Quoted in English translation in R. M. Roberts, *op. cit.*, p. cvii.

Christian ideal? And the great figures of the bourgeois revolution which, though great, is nothing when compared to the even-greater one being prepared today by the proletariat, whatever were they proposing by legislating, codifying and constituting an even more powerful State than the feudal monarchy they had overthrown? What were those men, in good faith as they were, proposing if not the consolidation of their revolutionary conquests?

We often encounter socialists who laugh at the “glorious conquests” of the bourgeois revolution: they have every reason to do if they are anarchists, but if they are authoritarians or supporters of the people’s State, they are quite wrong to deride people who did yesterday what they themselves propose to do tomorrow. In all their good faith, if they succeed in constituting their popular State, they will have strangled the revolution at the same time, they will have arrested its development; and beneficial revolutionary principles will become detrimental, because they in turn will have found their exploiters and their “glorious conquests” of the fourth estate will be ridiculed by some future fifth estate. With all their good faith, the authoritarian socialists will be no less reactionary than the priest was for the Christian revolution and the capitalist for the bourgeois revolution. How on earth can the State — an essentially noxious institution — acquire the virtue of doing good? Can good ever be the attribute of an oppressor or tyrant, a king or a god?

If God existed, every revolutionary would certainly conspire against him, as against kings, and unite with Satan — that splendid figure of revolt — to carry out audacious attacks against the cruellest and most villainous (being the most absolute and powerful) of tyrants.

They conspire against kings and the powerful of the earth: they attack and seek to overthrow the bourgeois State... but in order to put a new State in its place, one which will have the fine difference of calling itself... the peoples State!

“With your communism,” they say, there will be no stimulus to work, which we would preserve through individual attribution of produce. Anyone who can satisfy all his needs without working will certainly not work because work is burdensome.”

The supporters of the capitalist class speak no differently. But the first result of our revolution will be precisely to deprive work of all its burdensome nature. Irrespective of the multiple causes that make work burdensome in today’s society, of the conditions of misery and humiliation in which the worker finds himself, of the need to do a job which goes against ones inclinations or is too great for one’s forces, etc., it must be noted that the principle cause — coercion — will necessarily disappear along with the others. The obligation to work that is today imposed on the individual if he is not to starve, will be transferred onto humanity in its entirety in the future society. Consequently, as we have already indicated, work will cease to be an extrinsic need and will become an intrinsic need of the individual: in other words, it will cease to be an article of the human law of hunger and remain solely as a natural commandment of health.

He who does not work, does not eat, says the law of the collectivists, a law which then needs guards if it is to be enforced: he who does not work lives badly and withers, says the precept of hygienics of that natural law that we wish to see as regulator. It is impossible to break a law of nature and avoid paying the corresponding penalty laid down by it. “Gymnastics is useless exercise that is made in place of the useful exercise that has not been done.”<sup>17</sup> Even today, no-one is entirely inactive, be it by choice or by force. Bon vivants do useless exercise or exercise which serves to oppress and exploit others who suffer, it is true, but it is exercise nonetheless. Now, the principal end of our revolution must be to deny man every means of doing exercise that is useless or harmful to humanity. With every other road to physical, mental and intellectual activity

---

<sup>17</sup> Adolf Vogt, Professor of Hygiene at the University of Bern.

This is certainly not a theory that could serve to support the advocates of individual attribution of the products of labour. The only result it had was to spread alarm amongst anarchists who, fearing that it was intended to lessen the extent of revolutionary demands, saw the urgent need to declare themselves frankly and unequivocally to be communists.

Having unsaddled this not very scientific science, we are then assailed from the other side in the name of justice.

“It is not right,” they tell us, “that he who works more should receive as much as another who works less and who, if needs be receives even more than him, as the case may have it; the attribution of products must not be made according to needs or the wishes of the individual, but according to merit.”

“But how,” we reply, “will you distinguish the part that one produces from the part that the other produces, given the collective labour of large industry and the increasing tendency to make use of past work?”

“We will take an hour of work as the basis for the attribution of products. We will calculate how much is produced in an hour of average work or social work and that much will be distributed to everyone for every hour of work they do/”

“Well, don’t come talking to us any more in the name of justice! How can you ignore the fact that *average work* or *social work* can only be carried out through cooperation, for the capitalist who exploits a great many workers simultaneously<sup>15</sup> in today’s society and for the community in the society to come; how can you ignore the fact that ‘each individual labourer, be he Peter or Paul, differs from the average labourer’?<sup>16</sup> So what is this justice of yours reduced to? Abuse and injustice — no more, no less.”

A final, desperate assault is then launched by our adversaries, this time in the name of expediency.

---

<sup>15</sup> K. Marx, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, ch.13.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*.

Authority, in whatever form it presents itself, will always be a pest to humankind. Its will can only express itself through the law and the law cannot be applied without guards. If the authority calls itself popular, if the law calls itself popular, if the guards call themselves custodians, guardians of the peace or guardians of freedom, it makes no difference whatsoever.

We do not want authority, law or guards any more. We no longer wish to accept any yoke, be it painted red, white or tricolour.

“The class system and authority, being clear violations of the Laws of Nature, are to be abolished. The pyramid of God, King, upper classes and plebs will all be made equal.”<sup>3</sup>

To submit to authority one must have a religious faith. On the strength of what principle will you submit the masses to your authority? For as long as the staff of office was the rod of Moses or Charlemagne’s sceptre, it was worshipped; but when it becomes the arm of merchants, the people will snap it and throw it into the flames.

The so-called people’s State would be an infinitely greater oppressor than the bourgeois State because its despotism would be equal to the political despotism of the existing State plus the sum of the economic despotism of every capitalist, whose capital would pass into the hands of the people’s State; and all this would be multiplied by the increase in centralization which would necessarily be required by the new State — political and economic at one and the same time.

(Despotism of the popular State) = (Existing political despotism)  
+ (Economic despotism of all capitalists) × (X degrees of centralization).

---

<sup>3</sup> C. Pisacane, *op.cit.*, p. 93. Quoted in English translation in R. M. Roberts, *op.cit.*, P. cvii.

And in order to satisfy the needs of this new, terrifying monster, can you imagine what manner of new, monstrous bureaucratic mechanisms would need to be created? What army of clerks initiated into the complicated mysteries of government? A class that is distinct and superior to the people and thus tyrannical and hateful; these parvenus of the fourth estate would be the new and even more loathsome political oppressors and economic exploiters; as with those who handle honey, the holders of power and capital would not be able to keep their hands clean.

Farewell human emancipation, farewell liberty! Instead of the third estate we would have the domination of the fourth, which would oppress and exploit a fifth. And these workingmen come to power would be even more profligate and detestable than the bourgeoisie, even more than the bourgeoisie was with respect to the mediaeval nobility. Once again the course of the revolution would be halted and, whether it be in good faith in order to assure its conquests or whether it be in bad faith in order to exploit it it would once again be buried with a fine programme of reaction carved on its tombstone by way of epitaph.

One must not place any faith in those who say that they wish to take over the State in order to destroy it once the struggle is over: who “wish to take possession of the fortress in order to dismantle it.” No, no! They are either seeking to mislead us or are deceiving themselves.

All governments, calling themselves liberators, have promised to dismantle the fortresses erected by tyranny to hold the people in subjugation; but far from dismantling them, once installed they have only gone on to fortify them further, to continue to use them against the people. Bastilles are destroyed by the people: governments build them and maintain them. Suicide is not the natural order of things. No power, no authority in the world has ever destroyed itself. No tyrant has ever dismantled a fortress once he has entered it. On the contrary, every authoritarian organism, every tyranny tends always to spread, to establish itself even more, by its

ian communists; but underneath it all we were no more nor less than anti-authoritarian communists calling ourselves collectivists; we declared that everything must be placed and held in common, without discriminating between the instruments of labour and the products of labour.

Then one fine day we witnessed the emergence in the socialist camp of a new school of thought which, in resuscitating old errors, began to philosophize, to discriminate, and eventually become exponents of a form of collectivism that was neither authoritarian communism nor anarchist communism. The promoters had perhaps the praiseworthy idea of achieving a synthesis, but in actual fact they only succeeded in creating a centrist party, an upright, moderate means, an enervating eclecticism.

They reasoned as follows: there exist use goods and production goods. Use goods are those that we employ to satisfy our personal needs: the house we live in the food we consume, clothes, books, etc., whereas production goods are those that we make use of in order to produce: the workshop, barns, warehouses, machines and various sorts of tools, the soil, etc. — in a word, all the instruments of labour plus the materials of labour. The first sort of goods, those that serve to satisfy the needs of the individual, must be attributed individually, while the second, which are required by all in order to produce, must be collectively attributed.

In truth, this reasoning seems a little worn to us; and we ask our adversaries: you who accord the title of production goods to the coal which is needed to feed the machine, to the oil which is needed to grease it, to the lamp which lights the workshop, why do you not want to grant it also to the bread and meat that feed me, to the oil that I use to dress my salad, to the lamp that lights my chamber in other words, to everything that is needed for the development of the most perfect of all machines, the father of all machines — man? How can you establish a difference, one that even today is difficult but which will become absolutely impossible when the producer and the consumer are one and the same person?

sessors of labour-power themselves. It is the inequality of workers that reflects on work and marks it with its seal. If dissecting putrid corpses is a nobler job than dissecting cattle and sheep, it is because the anatomist is in a much superior material and mental condition than the poor butcher. The same operation, such as handling manure, for example, is noble or ignoble according to whether it is carried out by a poor day-labourer or a professor of agronomy.

One of the finest results of communism will be to render perfectly equal all the various types of work, by rendering equal the very condition of the worker, giving him all that is required to restore his strength, all that his needs demand. Opposed to this is the individual attribution of the products of labour which would only re-establish inequality between men thanks to the inequality between the different sorts of work. One would immediately see the re-appearance of “clean” work and “dirty” work, “noble” work and “ignoble” work, “light” work and “heavy” work: the former would be the care of the richest, while the latter would pertain to the poorest. So then, it would no longer be vocation and personal taste that determines which man dedicates himself to a certain sort of activity rather than another: it would be interests, the hope of earning more in one profession than in another. There would be a re-birth of slothfulness and diligence, merit and demerit, good and bad, vice and virtue, and consequently reward and punishment, the law and the judge, guards and gaols.

Finally, let us say that it is impossible to be an anarchist without being a communist. The mere idea of the distribution of products according to merit already contains within itself the seed of authoritarianism. It cannot manifest itself without immediately generating laws, judges and gendarmes.

---

In other times, we anarchists all called ourselves collectivists, especially in order to distinguish ourselves from the authoritar-

very nature. Power inebriates and even the best can become the worst once they are vested with authority. “The greatest lover of freedom, as soon as he assumes power, unless he is of little worth, wants everyone to bow to his wishes.”<sup>4</sup>

Power makes one giddy and brings madness. Mad, like Masaniello<sup>5</sup> when he donned the king’s clothes; mad, like Michele di Lando<sup>6</sup> who, when he had become a *n*, took up his sword against his former comrades in sedition; yet both, when barefoot, had been the bravest champions of popular revolt. They elevated themselves above the others, they took power and that was enough to transform them from rebels into dastardly tyrants.

The revolutionary principle must remain within the people if it is to be fertile. Once it passes into government and receives an official form, it is soon diverted, perverted and exploited, from revolution it becomes reaction: from liberty and equality, it is transformed into oppression and exploitation.

No, no! We must all attack the fortress together, dismantle it and raze it to the ground so that no-one can take possession of it; We want to destroy the State from top to toe, so that no-one can set themselves up as a new master or new oppressor.

As jealous advocates of freedom, we shall not lay down our arms until anarchy is an accomplished fact around the world; because contrary to what certain supporters of the peoples State would

---

<sup>4</sup> C. Pisacane, *op.cit.*, p. 137. Quoted in English translation in R. M. Roberts, *op.cit.* p. 141.

<sup>5</sup> *Editors note:* Tommaso Aniello was a fisherman from Naples who led a revolt against Habsburg rule in the Kingdom of Naples in 1647, leading to the short-lived Neapolitan Republic. Masaniello was corrupted by the viceroy and took over the city with the title Captain-General. He began to behave like a tyrant and was killed by a mob only a few days later.

<sup>6</sup> *Editors note:* Michele di Lando was a wool carder from Florence who led the Revolt of the *Ciampi* (or wool carders) in the city in 1378. The Ciampi forcibly took over the city’s government (di Lando became *Gonfaloniere* of Justice), but eventually failed to implement the demands of the lower classes.

have people believe of us, we have ample reason to fear for freedom, even where equality does exist.

For goodness sake! Are there not, perhaps, any number of religious communities in which the most perfect equality reigns, but in which there is not even a hint of freedom? And it is perfect equality; since the leader is subjected to the common rule and eats, dresses and lives in absolutely the same manner as all the other monks, from whom he is distinguished by the supremacy of his command. And those same supporters of the people's State, without our opposition would end up establishing a state of perfect equality, certainly, but with no less perfect oppression of all. At school, in the regiments, in prison too there is perfect equality: an equality of oppression and despotism, not greatly different to that which the people's State would bring us.

In human emancipation, man must rediscover the capacity to be able to satisfy fully all his needs, both physical and mental; the needs of the belly and those of the spirit, which are — and will be even more so in the new civilization — as impelling as the former. The question of human emancipation, then, cannot be reduced to a question of the belly, as some authoritarian socialists would have us believe, only then to conclude that with economic equality all our ills would be cured. The belly certainly has a good part to play, the principal part, but it is not everything. A well-filled through can keep a pig happy, but not a man; man needs that and much more; not only emancipation of the body, but also of the spirit: not only equality, but also freedom.

“Freedom alone can resolve the complicated problem by repealing law declaring every township, every citizen free and independent domestic fetters and differences are shaken off; the boundaries of the various states disappear and unity effectively arises from equality, and this will not be the effect of a new,

Transferring the need for working in order to live from the individual to the human community, will free individual labour of its burdensome, servile nature, leaving it only with the appeal of a physical and mental need, absolutely equal to all other needs for full human development: to study, to live with nature, to admire what is beautiful in works of art, to love, and so on.

---

But it is not enough for us to show that communism is possible; it is our task to prove that it is also necessary. Not only can one be communist — one must be, if the aim of the revolution is to be reached.

Indeed, if individual appropriation of the products of labour is maintained once the instruments of labour have been communized, then it will also be necessary to keep money, or its equivalent, in other words to permit an accumulation of wealth that will be greater or lesser according to the greater or lesser merit, or rather the ability, of individuals. Those who manage to possess more wealth will raise themselves above the level of the others and equality will disappear. It will only then remain for the counterrevolutionaries to make one step in order to re-establish hereditary rights and there will be no shortage of proposals for that.

Human labour is either realized or potential: it is either the product or the force of labour. In the first instance, it offers satisfaction of human needs; in the second, it requires satisfaction of the worker's needs: it requires the things that are necessary for the preservation of labour-force. In the first case, labour finds itself on a field of perfect equality, because all human usefulness, no matter how varied, is always equally worthy and respectable, because all satisfaction of our needs, no matter how varied, is equally necessary and just. But in the second case, when work is potential or labour-force, in other words when it requires the satisfaction of the worker's needs, it is as unequal as the conditions of the pos-

and sea and their repressive armaments; the construction and maintenance of forts, barracks, warships, arsenals, cannons and everything else that is required for war; the prisons and everything concerning the police and justice systems; the churches and everything concerning religion. And without going any further, is it not clear to everyone how much labour-power, how much by way of materials and instruments of labour is occupied by all these things which are so harmful to humanity? And how great will the production of things which are useful to all be, when to this alone humanity dedicates all its labour-power, all the materials and all the instruments of production?

This saving on labour-power, materials and instruments of labour will be achieved immediately, as soon as the revolution has begun; and for this fact alone there need be no fear that at the very beginning, before the number of machines has increased, production might be in short supply. If proof be needed, just glance at the consumption statistics of the dominant class.

An illustrious geographer has said:

“The earth is vast enough to gather us all into her bosom, rich enough for all to live in comfort She can provide enough fibrous plants so that we can all cloth ourselves, she has enough rock and clay to house us all. There is room for every brother at the table of life. This is the economic fact in all its simplicity.”<sup>14</sup>

Yes, communism can be achieved. It will be perfectly possible to allow everyone to take what they need at will, because there will be enough for all; there will be no need to ask for more work than each is willing to give, because there will always be enough products for the morrow.

---

<sup>14</sup> Élisée Reclus, Conference given in Geneva on 5<sup>th</sup> February 1880, published in *Rivista internazionale del Socialismo*, No. 1, vol. II.

imposed, pact but the natural consequence of the abolition of all pacts.”<sup>7</sup>

---

Some self-described revolutionaries believe they have fully justified their appellation by declaring themselves to be the champions of force or violent means. On the other hand, though we are ardent supporters of violence given that we believe in its unavoidable necessity, because since childhood we have been taught that *without the shedding of blood there is no redemption*, we believe that though revolution has thus far been and will for some time continue to be violence, violence has not been nor will ever be revolution. The violence of the insurgent masses is revolution, but violence at the hands of authority or constituted power is counterrevolution, reaction. The former unleashes and destroys, the latter obstructs and reconstitutes; the former, by its very nature, can produce only good, the latter has only the power of evil.

Regulating, prescribing, legislating and governing are diametrically opposed to revolution; the idea of a revolution that is regulated or governed is as contradictory as the idea that good can be generated by authority.

In a revolution one must concern oneself above all with demolishing, with destroying and continuing to destroy until such times as the revolution has been completely and definitively established and the revolution, no longer facing any obstacle, continues by itself alone with the task of unceasing transformation.

Together with Bakunin, we say:

“In revolution we are the enemies of everything that clings closely or remotely to the authoritarian system, of every pretension at the official direction of the

---

<sup>7</sup> C. Pisacane, *op.cit.*, p. 66.

people, and consequently of all that is known as revolutionary dictatorship or provisional government; we are convinced that governing power of any sort, no matter how revolutionary or transitory it calls itself, can have no other goal than that of perpetuating itself. Revolutions are made by the people, they can come only from within the people, and any power that sets itself up above the people is invariably contrary to the people. As our fullest confidence is in the instincts of the popular masses, our means of revolution is in the *organized outburst* of what are called evil passions and in the *destruction of that which*, in the same bourgeois language, is called *public order*. We invoke anarchy, that manifestation of the life and aspirations of the people from which must emerge, with and by means of liberty, the true equality of all, the new order founded on the full development and freely-organized labour of all, and the force of revolution itself.”<sup>8</sup>

Some of our adversaries often accuse us of not having a programme. If by programme they mean a new form elaborated every slightest detail, into which humanity is to be put by hook or by crook, then saying we do not have a programme does us the greatest justice and qualifies us as true friends of the revolution, as the anarchists<sup>9</sup> we proudly call ourselves.<sup>10</sup> But if by programme they mean a goal with a path to arrive there, an aim with the means des-

---

<sup>8</sup> Mikhail Bakunin — Programme of the *Revolutionary Socialist Brotherhood*. From the original text written entirely in Bakunin’s hand in September 1872.

<sup>9</sup> *Editor’s note*: Interestingly, Cafiero uses the term *anarchista* throughout, as many of his contemporaries did, unlike the more prevalent and later Italian usage of *anarchico*, whose derivation is more closely linked to the “chaotic” sense of anarchy.

<sup>10</sup> During the presentation of his mandate, an anarchist representative at the Congress of Le Havre declared that the only statute of his association was that it had no statute.

Machines today are not intended to lighten the workers’ load in the slightest, but only to create greater quantities of surplus value to enrich the capitalist ever further.<sup>12</sup> Thus it is benefit, an x% of profit, which is the only reason for making them acceptable today. How many machines remain without the minimum application because their use would cost the capitalist more than what it costs him to employ the labour-power that they are supposed to substitute! The basest and most miserable conditions of the workers who do the most excruciating sort of work — that is the reason that prevents the introduction of machines in those types of jobs. The capitalist thus buys his workforce at such a low price that he cannot find the slightest reason to have that work carried out by machines. “Hence nowhere do we find a more shameful squandering of human labour-power for the most despicable purposes than in England, the land of machinery.”<sup>13</sup>

From this one can see all the stupidity of those who come out and object with the air of a wit: Who will sweep the streets? Who will empty the privies?, etc. All this will be done by machines, which will no longer be invented and used in spite of but in place of the physical and mental effort of a given sort of work.

Today the worker himself is the enemy of machines and rightly so, since for him they are monsters who will starve him, whose arrival degrades him, who torture him and crush him. But think how great an interest he will have in increasing their number, when he works for himself and is no longer the servant of the machines, but has the machines at his service!

Lastly, one must calculate the immense savings that will be achieved on the three elements of labour: labour-power, materials and instruments, today horribly wasted on production that is entirely useless, if not downright harmful to humanity. The list would be long, but it will suffice us to mention the armies on land

---

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*



In the system of capitalist production today, everything is competition, struggle: relentless struggle between one capitalist and another, between one worker and another, between the worker and the capitalist: struggle between one individual and another, one region and another, one nation and another. It is a bloody war in which the death of one means life for another. One worker finds work where another loses it; the capitalist gets rich with the introduction of machines, thousands of workers are left on their uppers; one factory or several factories prosper while others falter; one capitalist gets rich in inverse proportion to another being bankrupted.

But in the future society, as we have already said: No more struggle between one man and another, but common struggle of all men together for the greatest conquest and the greatest utilization of natural forces. No longer each one for himself against all, and all against each one; but one for all and all for one. Everyone can imagine what immense change will be achieved with regard to production. Think how much production will increase when every man, far from struggling against the others, will be helped by them, no longer his enemies but his co-operators? If the simply cooperative work of 10 men can achieve results that are absolutely impossible for one man alone, how great will be the results that can be achieved from the wholesale co-operation of all men, who today work in a state of continual, reciprocal hostility? And what about machines? However great the appearance of these powerful instruments of labour may seem to us today, it is only the tiniest fraction of what will be in the future society.

The introduction of machines is often impeded today by the interests of the capitalist, to whom “the limit to his using a machine is fixed by the difference between the value of the machine and the value of the labour-power replaced by it.”<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>11</sup> K. Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I, ch.15, sec.2.

ignated to reach it, a flag of struggle for life and for death, an ideal for our existence, then we reply that the accusation is absolutely gratuitous, since we do have a programme, and a clear, lucid and precise one at that.

The first word of our programme is anarchy, which contains, so to speak, its quintessence and synthesizes it completely. As we have already said, while economic equality is anything but impossible without liberty, anarchy on the other hand requires the fullest equality between men.

Not only the ideal but our practice and our revolutionary morals too are contained in anarchy; anarchy thus forms our entire revolutionary being. It is for this reason that we invoke it as the complete, definitive result of the revolution: revolution for the revolution.

To us, the supporters of anarchy, is entrusted solely the mission of destruction. We will perhaps perish in a skirmish or during the first shots of the great day; some perhaps will be fortunate enough to see the first dawning of humanity’s great event. In all cases, we shall fall satisfied. Satisfied with having contributed to the certain ruin of this unjust, cruel and rotten world, whose collapse will bury us in the most glorious tomb ever made for a fighter.

Other men will be born from the very entrails of the fertile revolution and take on the task of carrying out the positive, organic part of anarchy.

For us — hatred, war and destruction; for them — love, peace and happiness.

---

Communism is the communion of goods: the appropriation in common of all the existing wealth, which is used in common both in production and in consumption.

Communism today, before the revolution, is the attack on property; tomorrow, in the revolution, it will mean the people appropriating whatever wealth exists in the world in the name of all hu-

manity; the day after tomorrow, once the movement has ended, communism will be the common enjoyment of all existing wealth by all men, according to the principle: *From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs*; that is to say: *From each and to each at will*.

Let us begin firstly by observing that taking possession of and enjoying all existing wealth must in our opinion, be done by the people themselves. But since the people, humanity, is not an individual who can take and hold all the existing wealth in his two hands, the State communists have concluded that it must be delegated to representatives, to depositaries of the common wealth in other words to create an entire class of directors of the common economy. We do not share this opinion. We do not want any intermediaries; we do not want representatives, who always end up representing themselves alone; we do not want moderators of equality or moderators of freedom; we do not want a new government; we do not want a new State, no matter how popular or democratic, revolutionary or provisional it calls itself.

Being spread all over the world, the common wealth — though belonging to humanity in its entirety — will be utilized in common by those who find themselves within its reach and who are in a position to utilize it. It is the natural delegation that humanity in its entirety gives to a part of itself, to exercise a part of its whole right over the existing wealth. The peoples of this country will use the land, the machines, the factories, the houses, and all the other goods of this country and all will make use of them in common. A part of humanity will exercise its right here, effectively and directly, over a part of humanity's wealth. But if an inhabitant of Peking comes to this country, he would find that his rights are those of the others: he would enjoy the wealth of the country in common with the others, just as he would do in Peking.

The agglomeration of individuals with the same trade, naturally required by the one great farm or the one great factory, will form the so-called trade corporation, society or branch, which will prob-

ably be the form with which work in the commune is organized. But while this trade corporation or branch will hold and use the part of capital that concerns it, this does not mean that it will own it. The right of property remains, undivided and indivisible, in all humanity and we will never be partisans of proprietor corporations nor of proprietor States. A fine exchange that would be, if we were to destroy the State only to substitute it with a multitude of little States! To kill the one-headed monster in exchange for a thousand-headed one! No; we have already said it and will never tire of repeating it: we do not want intermediaries, we do not want agents, brokers or obliging servants who always end up becoming the real masters: we want all the existing wealth to be *taken directly* by the people themselves, kept in the people's powerful hands, and the people themselves to decide the best way to use it, as far as both production and consumption are concerned.

But, some may ask, will it be possible to implement communism? Will we have enough products to allow each the right to take as much as they want, without requiring more work from individuals than they themselves are prepared to give?

Yes, we reply. It will certainly be possible to apply the principle: *From each and to each at will*; because in the future society, production will be so abundant that there will not be the slightest need to limit consumption nor to require more work from men than they can or wish to give.

This immense increase in production, which we cannot even imagine today, can be guessed if one examines the causes that will produce it, which can be reduced to three principal causes:

Harmony of cooperation in the various sectors of human activity, in place of the struggle of today's system of competition.

The widespread introduction of machines of all sorts.

The considerable savings in labour, work materials and instruments that will be achieved through the suppression of harmful and useless products.