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The Development of Liberty in the World

An Unpublished Study

Elisée Reclus

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1850

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land lightened of some sailors, well! let us be thrown into the sea and later, in a joyous song, let them speak of the men of heart who perished in the waves.

What do your clamors matter to us, little men whom the sun blinds and who insult it in order to be avenged? A day will come when we will say to you: Return to the dust, and you will return to the dust and we will ask ourselves if you have only been a dream.

Yes, you have only been a dream. What use are your convulsive shudders, your dreads, your prayers, your threats? Master of canons, you shiver at the sound of a mocking laugh; a book, a little book makes your citadels tremble. You no longer have but a few days to live, days full of sadness and anguish.

Men of the past, submerged people, I invite you to the great day that you foresee and that you sing in your naive epics. Lined up with the clouds of the horizon, you could see on the plain the dragon of the past, with its rusty scales, and the angel of the future piercing it with its lance of gold.

End.

affirms itself; these two things are the conditions of its existence. As for the old idea, it has no positive side: so it does not exist, and it is a vain appearance.

But it is not in the material satisfaction of the needs of man that our ideal lies. We have a very otherwise elevated aim, and this aim, it is God, the highest liberty. Each must march towards it, free and independent of the will of others, for love goes from each man to God and does not need to be offered by another than him, or to be enclosed in a narrow barrier raised by the hand of man and guarded by human anathemas. Isn't it shameful, when it is a question of the powerful God, of the God who fills everything, to see religious nationalities enemies of one another, to see in these nationalities different castes of masters or oppressed? Isn't it shameful to see these things in the domain of the Eternal, as if he were a common king? So when will come the day of the Christian Republic, the day when all the brothers of Jesus Christ will be equal and free, when the conscience of each will be the rule of religion, when there will no longer be priests, nor fetters, nor limits, but only and always love? It is then that man could again warm his heart in the rays of the eternal sun, and water it with the celestial harmonies; for the soul of man is a harp more sonorous than all the harps of Aeolus, beautiful now that death walks its fingers across it, splendid with harmonies when life itself will make it resound! For the supreme aim of man is a hymn of love in honor of the all-loving God!

V.

So is it necessary to fear these Revolutions that raise up peoples against peoples and often sweep men away one day as if by a hurricane? No, if the salvation of humanity comes at this price, I invoke them, I demand them with loud cries: choose your victims, reap to right and left some harvests of corpses, provided that our descendants are happy! If the boat where we are can only reach

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varieties, in reaction against the present society, have the air of believing that men must be absorbed into the mass and no longer be anything but something like one of the innumerable arms of a polyp that moves on its reef or like the drops of water lost in the sea and raised by the hurricane in a single wave. They are greatly mistaken: man is not an accident, but a free, necessary and active being, who unites, it is true, with his fellows, but is not mixed up with them.

It is against socialism especially that the furors of reaction are directed, but their cannonades are as senseless as if they launched them against the passing air, against the wind that blows, for socialism, before being a system, is above all a tendency; it does not live in the books of Proudhon or L. Blanc, but in the heart of the people; this vibrant heart that beats for the moment of its deliverance, it lives in the hearts of these poor peasants, naive and artless, whom we deceive with treacherous lies and who make a weapon of universal suffrage to postpone their own happiness; socialism floats in the atmosphere, it enters into the house of the resentful bourgeois and sits down at his table. It is in vain that the immobilists conjure away an invisible, untouchable enemy that glides from mind to mind. Even when they will burn the world in order to burn at the same time the new idea that shakes it, the sons of their own wombs will rise and curse them in the name of the idea that they have hated.

We have seen a vague semblance of a league formed against socialism, a vain semblance since everyone laughed at it, even the promoters. How is the old system not dead, since even its defenders no longer believe in it, since they no longer have the vivifying faith that passes over all obstacles? How is the old system not dead, since its defenders only know how to launch powerless accusations, in order to obscure the difficulties of the defense? They deny the truth of socialism, but they do not know how to affirm the perfection of their own society, since it is only a heap of ruins and lies. The new idea, on the contrary, denies the old idea and

dying of hunger? Can the right to go once a year to carry a bit of paper to the city hall of his canton compensate them for the right to live? We will not repeat everything that has already been said about competition, which transforms the world into one vast arena, an arena where the gladiators fight to the death, where the avid spectators descend from their bleachers to also plunge their furious arms into a palpitating chest, to press under their triumphant knee a life that slips away. This world, whose ideal would be the perfect love of all for all, is transformed into a bloody drama where the happiness of one alone is composed of the tears of several, where the food of the rich man is torn from the tears of the widow.

Defenders of competition, do not respond when you are attacked, for your defenses themselves must lead to socialism. You make liberty the support of competition, but all men have an equal right to liberty: that is socialism. Despite yourselves, the conclusions of all your harangues are themselves their own refutation and the inevitable refrain of all your pamphlets is: Associate yourselves! Associate! For, in invoking liberty, you work toward the slavery of the worker. Would the aim of liberty then be servitude? Associate yourselves! Associate!

For a long time already, a mass of socialist systems have come to light in the world of ideas, all based on the theoretical equality of men, all leading more or less to practical equality. All these systems are true, to the extent that they rest on that true principle, but false as soon as they distance themselves from it in their consequences. They will all be false to the extent that they have not been modified by practice; that is inevitable in human affairs.

In order for socialism to arrive at its perfect expression, in order for it to really be the human ideal of society, it must safeguard at once the rights of the individual and the rights of all; each individual in the human association must develop freely according to their means and faculties, without being hindered in it in any way by their brothers; it is necessary, at the same time, that the well-being of all profits from the labor of each. Some communist

I.

In past centuries, peoples only fought for their passions or their immediate interests; it was without remorse, it was even with gladness that, in order to satisfy their ambition or greed, they exterminated entire nations and dragged behind them multitudes of slaves. Without any link of solidarity between them, men stole their selfish well-being from the well-being of their neighbors, and the world, given over to chance, was sometimes the prey of the stronger, sometimes that of the most skillful.

However, from the beginnings of humanity, some noble spirits rose up, discontented with reality and dreaming of a better future; some, like the old patriarch Abraham, left their country and their kin to live in isolation far from the selfishness of everyone; others, coming later, badly published the idea that truth had still not descended to the earth, and that it was necessary to follow more just and humane laws: but those aroused all manner of bad passions against themselves, they encountered only indifference or anger, and they died, not in isolation, but they died on a gibbet, tortured by the joyous cries of the populace. Sometimes, one among them succeeded in leading some millions of wills along behind them, enlivening them with their will, but it was necessary for them to fight hard to overturn the heavy mass of humanity with the powerful lever of their genius.

Now, men desirous of the future can count on some support from the past: from day to day their mass grows, their speed accelerates like that of a rock that is dashed into the ground more and more violently. The struggle has taken colossal proportions, classes after classes, nations after nations, have stepped into its gigantic gears; slaves and barbarians, previously hardly men, have been caught up in its immense arms and fought for what they were previously unaware of, for an idea. In the past, the conquerors raised nations in the name of their might, in the name of individual glory and interests; now, the peoples rise up, not for a man, for men deceive,

not for glory, for it is false without liberty, nor for their interest alone, but for the interest of all.

In the past, the idea drove the barbarians before it, without them knowing it. The Goths who destroyed the Roman Empire had only wanted to trade their foggy North for the golden countries of the South. To pillage the temples full of gold and precious stones, replace their coarse food with the delicate dishes assembled from all the countries of the world, enjoy some Roman pleasures, to satisfy their desire for blood and massacres, that was the whole of their ambition. They marched blindly toward the future, and it is hardly as if one among them felt the fatal hand of God push them towards the South and an internal voice cry to them: Go, go!

But when our brothers descended triumphant from their barricades and marched on the Tuilleries, already empty of their King, crying: Long live the Republic! they knew their aim, their thoughts were as clear as their shouts and in their hearts, as well as on their flags, were proudly written the words liberty and fraternity.

So today it is necessary that the Master deal with those who yesterday were only a herd of slaves, for the crowd, once the lever for a few isolated thinkers, made itself a thinker in its turn, and the chorus that was swept from the scene has become the great actor in the theater of the world. Against it, all the men of the past stiffen their resistance; they withdraw into a repulsive selfishness, they make their Tower of Babel bristle with cannons, awakening in their tombs all the creaking specters that the dawn had evaporated; in vain, their cannons cannot pierce the idea that lives in us, their nocturnal specters cannot withstand the radiance of our sun, their past cannot defeat our future.

They will be vanquished, I swear it. Already, the defections are numerous among them, for it is difficult to fight when you have the sun and dust in your face. We already count among our ranks many men of heart, who use their time and their wealth to prove that they were wrong to be rich as a result of the misery of the

your mountain passes; with you, fine Italians who strip the robe from the priest for whom they had twisted your body, lacerated by bayonets; with you, exiles of all peoples, oppressed of all nations, wretches of all climates, with you against your German oppressors, against your French oppressors. We will defeat all these tyrants ranged in close lines and when we have struck them dead we will grasp your fraternal hands and we will establish the Republic of men.

So the provisional government had an intuition of the truth when it declared the treaties of 1815 and launched its manifesto to Europe. Since Richelieu, the pen of the Minister bled the nationalities as in the past the sword of the conqueror had done and what we call European equilibrium was simply a system of colossal jealousy, which gathered all the powers against the strongest among them and sought as much as possible to weaken each nation individually. For the first time morality has been regarded as the finest of politics and relations between peoples have been assimilated to relations between men. It is true that we have fallen back into the diplomatic past, but it is only for a time; when we exit from it anew, it will be for always.

Thus, to summarize, our political aim in each individual nation is to abolish the aristocratic privileges and in the entire earth it is the fusion of all the peoples. Our destiny is to arrive at that state of ideal perfection where the nations will no longer need to be under the tutelage of a government or of another nation; it is the absence of government, it is anarchy, the highest expression of order. Those who do not think that the earth can ever pass from tutelage, those who do not believe in progress, are reactionaries.

But political liberty is nothing without the other liberties; it is nothing without the social liberties. Can this word liberty have meaning for those whose sweat is not enough to buy bread for the family, for those workers who obtain new woes in the revolutions they make themselves? Isn't the sovereignty of the people a subject for laughter when it is exercised by men covered in tatters and

is really free from man only when he is free from error. It is the truth that makes us free.

We will not discuss all the events that have followed one another in France and abroad since the Revolution of 48; it is the work of a historian, that of the critic is to deduce the consequences of the principles laid down. And we will only note the political, social and religious aims of the great reversal that has been accomplished.

Our political goal is not secret to anyone; it is, after the religious ideal, the first one we have fought for. We will only end our incessant struggles when we have attained the complete liberation of all people. So it is not enough to emancipate each nation individually from the tutelage of its kings; it is still necessary to liberate it from the supremacy of other nations, and it is necessary to abolish these limits, these frontiers that make enemies of sympathetic men. It is to us that is reserved the splendid glory of removing all these impious limits and of baptizing the rivers and mountains that separate two homelands with the name of the universal homeland.

Our rallying cry is no longer: Long live the Republic! The Republic is already almost an accomplished fact, since it is already sixty years ago that we proclaimed it; our cry is Long live the Universal Republic, that future Republic where the Greeks will have the same rights as the French, where the Samoyed will speak in the same assembly as the Parisian. Do you not already see that the national hatreds are being erased and that we designate men by their opinions rather than their homelands? There are now in the world only men of the future and men of the past, and each of these two immense parties forms a gigantic confederation that continues in all countries without distinction of race or language. We democrats are united at heart, not you French egoists who sell the flesh of the people and who selfishly clip the coins with which you pay for the widow's blood; not with you blazoned French, who would like so much to bring back the century when we, *villeins*, were only game for the nobles; but with you we are united at heart, proud Hungarians who have sowed the corpses of four enemy armies in

poor, well fed as a result of their hunger, happy as a result of their misfortune.

For a long time already the war cry has soared above the battlefield, for a long time the weapons have been prepared, and already the first victims have fallen. Today the combat, and tomorrow the victory!

II.

So what is this idea that has so often raised up men against men and that, now, separates the world into two great factions? It is the idea of liberty, of complete and absolute liberty. It is for this idea that 70,000 Huguenots are dead in a single night; it is for it that, for ten long years, our fathers have reddened with their blood all the scaffolds and all the fields of battle. It is for it that all the precursors have been hated, from Socrates, who would liberate philosophy, to Louis Blanc, who could not liberate the people.

Let us not believe, nonetheless, that liberty should be the only aim of man here below: all its hopes would then lead only to a gigantic egoism. But there is another idea, that of love, an idea that develops in parallel to the first. For each man in particular, liberty is an aim, but it is only a means for love, for universal brotherhood, efficacious and all-powerful means, for the free man alone can, without ulterior motive, clasp his free brother to his breast and say to him: "I love you."

The Declaration of the Rights of Men misleads then, when it accords to the citizen the right to liberty, insofar as that liberty is not limited by love, by duties. Instead of struggling against one another, the right and the duty agree in their highest sense; instead of limiting one another, they multiply one another and continue one another, from man up to God, where right and duty, love and liberty are one single thing.

This progress of which we speak does not develop uniformly, either in hearts or especially in facts. In the history of the world we can apply to it the philosophical formula of action and reaction, but in so far as the reaction is always less than the action. It is in this way that in its olden days, Rome, defeated by the apostles of Jesus, declined towards fetishism; triumphant Catholicism is a pagan reaction mixed with Christian elements, Protestantism is a disguised Catholicism, and the political reaction boasts of the barricades that it has conquered in its turn, forgetting that all the reactions are condemned to death, that all are swallowed in the void, forgetting that the future marches on the remains of its adversaries. Humanity is the wave dashing deliriously on the rocks, thrown back into the ocean, which roars in a deep voice, returns with fury to the determined rock, digs more before its savage bites and subsides only on the ruins of its enemy.

The world of facts may still be in its period of reaction, but already progress installs itself in minds with new promises and hopes unknown to the previous centuries; but it is not without combat that this progress is carried into institutions, for it must overturn all the force of inertia opposed to it by habit, selfishness and the past. Also, every progress is a sorrow and is inevitably accompanied by a Revolution; each truth that is affirmed has its cost in blood and tears. Christianity, the bourgeoisie, religious reform set their feet in the blood and we see that it is the same for the Republic. Humanity, like a young man, has its critical years and its maladies, but it comes out of them stronger, hardier and finer.

Apart from some pessimists and some refined orthodox types who believe the world has arrived at its decrepitude, the majority of men acknowledge, in fact, that humanity advances; but some want this progress to be solely inevitable and the will of man not to enter into it at all; others think, on the contrary, that all the steps of humanity are completely independent of the will of God. These two opinions are false; all the movements of the human race are produced by a double influence, which necessarily contributes to

IV.

But they were the victors. The bronze cannons and soldiers with long bayonets retreated before a flood of people grown pale with hunger and tattered with poverty. It is in vain that the royal rifles sought chests, behind each attacked pressed a wave of attackers and from each window tumbles a paving stone. Oh! It was a fine day indeed when thousands of combatants, proud of having paid for the victory with their wounds, unfurled to the wind a torn scrap, symbol of the Republic, or piously escorted the corpse of a brother, crying at once tears of sadness and enthusiasm. It was a fine day when we saw a king, who flattered himself with imprisoning the rioters once more, pale at the approach of the people and seek a dank cellar in his splendid castle. It was a fine day for us, men of the provinces who learned at the same time of the struggle and the victory, for the old men of 89 who would hardly find a tear of pleasure in their weary eyes; for the martyrs of the Republic, who we congratulated because they were free, but who were pleased with what France was. On that day many hopes were born in hearts, vain hopes that would change into dread for those who have made them lie. Whatever the case, all the reforms would take place, political, social and religious.

For all the reforms simultaneously correspond with and continue one another in the course of the centuries. In a historical work it would be easy to prove that the paganism of a thousand gods all foreign to one another is necessarily united with the exclusive citizenship of the ancient republics, with the slavery of the vanquished nations; just so, catholicism responds in the political order to feudalism, in the social order to servitude. Moreover, there is no need for recourse to proofs to know that when a principle governs it is manifested everywhere and that one liberty calls out to all the other liberties. We are also firmly assured that the true sovereignty of all, the true socialism, the true Christianity will only reach their ideal together, for all the slaveries se tiennent and man

political eclecticism as absurd as philosophical eclecticism, as transitory, as impossible, for there the elective principle and Royalty find themselves in open war. It is because of the elective principle that the Royalties of 1815 and 1830 have capsized; it is because of that principle that they will all be overturned, even when, as in England, the three powers will be at the same time the representatives of the aristocracy. There is no middle ground possible between the people and Caesar; let the State be gobbled up in the person of a single man, or let all take part in the government of all. If one does not want the sovereignty of the people, let them open wide the doors of the Republic to Nicholas!

Besides, the question has been judged: the constitutional monarchy is dead; might it have pleased God if our shame and our sorrows were dead with it! Might it have pleased God that the bourgeoisie that reigned under the name of Louis-Philippe had ended its reign! For eighteen years we have seen it in the work of the royal cabinets and under the pillars of the Bourse: we have seen for eighteen years how its Coryphaeuses invite the foreign kings to spit on our flag, provided that they are given a moment of rest and their merchandise is allowed to sail freely across the oceans. When our soldiers forget the route to the border, we have seen them, with sadness, learn that of our roads; we have often heard the noise of the fusillade and the dying gasp of those guilty of having been hungry. We have seen, and still see, the rich crush the poor for their wealth; we have seen them, and still see them, nourish themselves each day with the bread of the unfortunate, a bread soaked with tears, a bread soaked with blood.

For eighteen years a hideous breath of interest and selfishness has crept over France: finally has come the Revolution of scorn, the throne has disappeared and the bourgeois had begun once again to celebrate the magnanimous people, the magnanimous people whom they would have mowed down if they had been defeated.

their aim; the will of man and the will of God, otherwise known as fatality, for the will of God is immutable and nothing could change it. Liberty and fatality, instead of mutually destroying one another, march harmoniously toward a single end, it is duality tending towards unity.

So it is ridiculous to concede, as so many weak minds do, that the hand of God directs the universe, so that there is in men themselves no cause of the acts they accomplish. All events flow from the free development of man, all from irrevocable destiny. I firmly believe in the restoration of the human race, in the final rehabilitation, but I would find it impious and contrary to the sanctity of God if man counted for nothing in the perfection that he will attain. Man and God each have a real existence, so let us be neither fatalists nor atheists.

Whatever the case, it is incontestable that humanity advances on a path of progress, and that is so true that our more declared enemies draw from it one of their old arguments, saying that we compromise the future by wishing to hurry it too much. For themselves, they willingly follow the opposite march and would bring us back to that false unity that consists of dissolving all men into one, whose omnipotence nothing could justify. Our aim is indeed to come to unity, but to true unity, that in which all become free, united with all and with God, whose infinity alone can contain them. Starting from the single principle of authority, we tend to a single principle as well, but one opposed; each point that separates the two extreme limits is a struggle between authority, powerful at first, but always diminishing, and the liberty destined to one day cover the whole earth.

It is to that great idea of liberty that all the human ideas that the different civilizations have produced lead, and this is why all the countries should share the portion of truth that they have won. It has been necessary that, across oceans and mountains, Bénarés spoke to Memphis, Babylon to Alexandria; now it is necessary that all peoples unite in one vast concert and sing, one after another,

the note that they have discovered in the harmony of the heavens. When all the ways will be united in one single symphony, when the civilizing wave come from the East will be impregnated with all the sap of the countries that it covers, then it will flow back towards its native soil and reinvigorate the countries that are now desolate. It is in this way that all human things will end in the flood that glides over the sand and returns to the heart of the sea; the peoples rotting in neglect, the bloody hordes of the barbarians, the anger of the powerless slave, all that is equal to God.

That is a great and sublime equation for which, if it was necessary, we would spill our blood; for, tomorrow is the great day of the battle, it is the great day of victory, the day when Jesus will return to reign over his enemies and impose on them brotherhood and the worship of his God.

III.

If we seek in the past for the development of the idea of which we speak, it is necessary to recall that the various periods of the life of humanity are far from being as neatly defined as they appear to us, far off spectators. All these eras overlap, have a basis in one another, and the causes of the events that unfold today are to be found in the origins of the world. Nonetheless, in order not to lose ourselves in the labyrinth of history, the mind fixes willingly on the times when the idea was violently transported by the facts: it is with the aid of the pools of blood spread here and there that we recognize the route of humanity.

Everyone knows that liberty lived in a chrysalid state in the oriental world, that it shook in a lively manner in the greco-roman and sought to break from its envelope; all know as well that it manifests itself now and leaves behind it its dried out skin. The peoples of India and Egypt, fatalists in their philosophy, let themselves be quietly cooped up like herds of sheep; divided into castes,

do not return, like us, from facts to their causes, but in descending from their philosophical theories to see their application in the facts, they perceive that the facts and justice are in permanent contradiction. Now we see them descend into the arena of Revolution to attempt at once our Revolution of 1792 and our Social Revolution, a Revolution that we still await. If we have hastened to accomplish our work, they will outdistance us on the road of the future.

Everyone knows the history of the French Revolution, which began in 1789 and has continued until our times through many incidents and bloody dramas. The old order was violently abolished; the will of one alone gave place to the will of all, the links of official religion were broken, the *jurandes* and masters were replaced by free competition, which were after all only the freedom of monopoly, but which substituted despotism with chance and luck. This was the coming of the bourgeoisie.

We know how that bourgeoisie contributed to the fall of Napoleon, who did not leave it any moment of repose. Despotic reaction against the liberty and personification of the people at once, the Emperor fell under the blows of the bourgeoisie and some Cossacks leagued together for the good of commerce and of the Holy Alliance. Jealous of its acquired privileges, the aristocracy of finance was then for fifteen years a livid opposition to the nobles and to the priests who tried to regain their ancient rights; finally succeeded in bringing the people to its side, and the revolution of July struck one fine day, not for the profit of the poor who had made it, but for that of the rich who had hidden. This Revolution, we know, has preserved the word liberty on its flags, the word equality in its lying charter, but it has found no badge, no altar on which to engrave the word fraternity. Without concern for duties, this era of selfishness appeals only to rights, knowing well that without duty, right cannot even survive.

It is then that was manifested in all its splendor the constitutional monarchy, a sort of political pendulum on which three acrobats make at once some tightrope-walkers' turns. It is a sort of

What's more, the English pushed respect for the law to the highest point, extolling it among themselves as a rare quality. It would be necessary, on the contrary, to blame them for it. Like all human creations, the laws should appear before the tribunal of our conscience and we should only submit to them when they are in perfect harmony with the moral law that lives within us. If they are in disagreement with eternal justice, we must disobey them. So it is sad to see a proud and noble people, like the English, lean, when it is a question of their liberty, not on immutable right, but on an old Charter from times gone by; it is sad to see them still bow before all the old customs of the past, monstrous and barbaric customs perpetuated despite the passage of the centuries. Respect for the law is moral cowardice. The English cannot deny it: they develop, but it is from consequence to consequence, rather than from negation to negation. England, said M. Guizot in his youth, is the eagle with bent wings, which build, repairs and embellishes its nest, and neglects to take up again its flight toward the regions of the sun. However, the great day will also come for it, for the vengeance have been long accumulating.

We French, we perhaps owe the privilege of initiative to the fortunate mixture of races that came to melt together in our natal land. In France there collided and united the battling Gauls, the Franks with their intrepid souls, the intelligent Goths, the iron Huns, the bronze Romans, the fiery Arabs. All of these peoples, after clashing in our countrysides, were united, and from all of them that we descend, we the standard-bearers of the future!

Because we are the sons of all these nations, we have inherited that instinct of hospitality that we carry to shine around us. Before our 19th century, it was necessary for a renowned foreigner, become European, that they pass through France, and now it is from France that all speak all these new ideas, even the intuition of which splits open the old world.

As for the Germans, they advance slowly, but they arrive; they do not have the lively, joyous form of the men of the south; they

that is into categories of more or less stupefied slaves, they adopt all the tyrannies as an irrevocable order of destiny, their religion. The caste of masters and savants itself, not being able to recruit in the move lively mass of the people, debased itself in its turn and deprived of its primitive energy, it became immobilized, proud to resemble the immovable pyramids that it had had built.

The Greeks, on the contrary, agitated a great deal to arrive at a perfect form of government they tried the despotism of a sort of tempered monarchy, oligarchy, republic, but this was always only in view of their own city; instead of spreading outside to propagate their spirit, they locked themselves away within the shelter of their walls and sullied with the name of barbarians all those who lived outside their mountains or shores. Plato himself, the great Plato, made his ideal republic, a Greek city, a city of free men and men enslaved. So it is not necessary to compare the Greek Republics based on inequality to our republics, which are based on the opposite idea, our republics where every voice is equal to another voice, where each life, in principle at least, has the same rights as another. The communism of the Spartans was based on the hatred of the foreigner and the socialism of our days has universal brotherhood as its point of departure.

Rome also was divided into patricians and plebeians, into free men and slaves, citizens and foreigners. From the times of Augustus, when twenty men passed, nineteen were only things for the twentieth; however, they vaguely recognized the equality of all, and during the feast of the Saturnalia, a feast that should recall the golden age, all were equal and the slave had the right to strike his master.

Alone in antiquity the Jews recognized that there should be no slaves and if they had faithfully executed the precepts of Moses, never would any among them have needed to sell themselves to feed their family. Through their institutions, but especially through their religion, descended from the Sinai, the Jews were the precursors of Christianity, of that Christianity that their prophets

had announced to them and that they had long awaited. But this Christianity that preached the renunciation of impious pleasures, which told the rich to live with the poor and like the poor, the Christianity of the communists St. Basil and St. Chrysostome was very strong food for the old Greek and Roman materialism, the empire of the world would have disappeared in the hands of its weak masters and would have been dead of starvation a century later, if the barbarian hordes had not come to ravage it.

It required a long period of time for the sweet spirit of the gospels to make the savage victors bend, these men of iron who died laughing. In the end, however, the lords would become accustomed to regard the serf as a man, for they encountered one another in the same church, and the priest, most often the son of a serf himself, spoke to them as equals before God. Our historians have recounted to us how the bourgeois of the cities, jealous of their wealth, revolted against the Lords; how the kings allied themselves with the villeins against the high and mighty barons; how the French aristocracy was brought down three times, so that it could never rise again. Then, the French royalty weighed with all the weight of the vanquished aristocracy on the bourgeoisie that had become powerful in its turn; revolt glided into hearts, then into minds. It broke out in a bloody manner. It is France that liberty had chosen for its cradle.

Why is Italy, why is England not more advanced in this new era of universal brotherhood? We will try to explain.

Italy was less profoundly devastated than the other parts of the Roman Empire; the fertilizing remains of the barbarians were deposited less there than among the Gauls and if civilization could flower again more rapidly there, it nevertheless lacked the vigor and energy that flowed in the blood of the men of the North. Two centuries had still not passed since the German race had already melted into the ancient Italic race; also, as soon as civilization could again begin its upward march in the shadow of the popes and exarchs, it was exclusively Italian; the old Roman distinctions of cit-

izens and barbarians reappeared, and the country was divided into an infinite number of little trading republics, all enemies of one another, all as aristocratic as Sparta and Athens. Neither Venice the beautiful, nor Genoa the rich, nor Florence the famous would understand the idea of freedom for all and the noble Rienzi himself, in his vast plans of regeneration, only wanted restore the ancient glory of Rome and establish the unity of Italy. Also, when all these little isolated states had spent their first vigor in intestine struggles, foreign tyrants would lay their hands of lead over the eyes of trembling Italy. It is then that the scepter passed from their hands into ours, for the royalty of civilization never dies in the world, and when a people is extinguished it called to its deathbed another people and tells it in a broken voice the secrets of life.

For its part, England, defeated by the Romans and converted to Christianity, developed rapidly, but in an exclusively English manner. Surrounded on all sides by the boundless sea, the English thought to make of themselves something like a new human species; for them, the homeland cannot exist if it is not covered with the fogs of the Thames or the Humber, if the sun is not hidden by a veil of dirty, black haze. In their hearts, the love of the homeland is at the same time hatred of the foreigner. It is by this fact especially that their Revolution distinguishes itself from our own, although both began with the death of a king and finally led to a tyrant, protector among them, emperor among us. Moreover, their revolution was in large part a vain quarrel of dogmas between some fanatical Presbyterians and stiff Anglicans, a quarrel that would have been much better worked out on the benches of a chapter [a religious meeting] than translated into bloody murders on the field of battle or the scaffold. How different was our beautiful French Revolution, which based itself on the rights, not of the French, but of man, and wished neither truce nor rest until it had made the tour of the world. The English Revolution was in full contradiction with itself, since its idea of liberty was exclusive.