Malatesta was placed under house arrest. Virtually imprisoned in his flat, he still managed to contribute articles to the anarchist press mainly *Le Reveil* of Geneva and *L'Adunata dei refrattari* of New York. Early in 1932 he became ill with a respiratory complaint and died in July 1932 at the age of 79 years.

David Poole

Errico Malatesta

Fra contadini

Elephant Editions

Original title: *Fra Contadini. Dialogo sull'anarchia.*
Edizioni 'La Fiaccola' , Ragusa 1972.

Elephant Editions / first English edition printed Catania 1981

nounce it. He was one of the signatories of the International Anarchist Manifesto against the war and responded to Kropotkin's position with such articles as *Pro-Government Anarchists* and *Have Anarchists Forgotten their Principles*.

In 1919 Malatesta returned for the last time to Italy, landing at Genoa where his arrival was greeted with great enthusiasm. At once he threw himself into the struggle. Settling in Milan he accepted the editorship of the newly founded daily *Umanita Nova* which soon had a circulation of 50,000. In July 1920 he participated in the second congress of the *Unione Anarchica Italiana* which enthusiastically adopted the programme he had written for it. The following month he supported the factory occupations in Turin and Milan. At the end of the year he was arrested together with 80 other militant anarchists and held in prison for almost a year before being brought to trial and acquitted.

On his release he moved to Rome and continued to edit *Umanita Nova* until it was forced to close down after Mussolini's 'March' on Rome (during which a portrait of Malatesta was burnt by the fascists in the Plaza Cavour).

With the closure of *Umanita Nova* Malatesta opened a small workshop undertaking mechanical repairs and electrical installations, but this was forced to close when the police started to molest his clients.

In 1924 he began to edit the bi-monthly review *Pensiero e Volonta* which contained some of his best writings until it was closed down in 1926 together with other anti-fascist publications.

At the end of 1926, after several months of police harassment,

island of Ustica he was later transferred to Lampedusa from which he made a dramatic escape, returning to London via Malta in 1899. That same year he spent several months in the USA, resuming the publication of *La Questione Sociale* in Paterson New Jersey. Later, while addressing a meeting in West Hoboten he was shot in the leg by an individualist anarchist who disagreed with him on his approach to organisation. From the USA Malatesta returned to London by way of Cuba.

Once in London again he resumed his trade of mechanic, running a small workshop in Islington. Between 1900 and 1913 he founded several newspapers, always in Italian, the most important of which were *Cause ed effetti* (1900), *L'Internazionale* (1900) and *La rivoluzione sociale* (1902). In 1907 he participated in the International Anarchist Congress in Amsterdam where he vigorously opposed Monatte on the question of revolutionary syndicalism. In 1912 Malatesta was sentenced to 3 months' imprisonment and recommended for deportation for criminal libel. Only a massive public outcry prevented the latter sentence from being carried out.

In 1913 Malatesta returned to Italy where he published *Volonta* in Ancona until the outbreak of war in August 1914 forced him to return to London. While in Italy though he met the future Fascist dictator, Mussolini, then editor of the socialist paper *Avanti*.

The war years brought much confusion to the anarchist movement with prominent figures, notably Kropotkin and Grave, openly supporting the allies. Malatesta, as always remaining loyal to his anarchist ideals vigorously opposed the war and never ceased to de-

INTRODUCTION

The numerous editions and translations of this pamphlet by Errico Malatesta all over the world have already demonstrated that its importance and relevance have been universally recognized.

Fra Contadini shares the modest tone of Malatesta's other writings, more obvious here through the use of dialogue. It is in fact a chat which two peasants, one more politicised than the other, could very well have had in the north of Italy at the end of the last century. It manages to avoid the affectation which often harms literary works which–like this one–do not conceal their intent to educate, because in reality this is a didactic piece of work. Malatesta's intention is to supply the anarchist movement (then the international socialist anarchist revolutionary party) with an agile instrument of propaganda for the peasants and small artisans, groups that were in the phase of proletarianisation. In other words for the starving masses who swelled the major Italian cities at the end of the last century drawn by the mirage of work in developing industry.

The Florence of 1884 had not changed much from that which had known the revolutionary work of Bakunin twenty years previously. Urbanisation had become a visible phenomenon, with a whole store of indescribable miseries for the poor people emarginated by the mechanism of capitalist exploitation. The phase of the building of the monopolies which the young Italian bourgeoisie accomplished

with ease immediately after the Unification, was followed by a period of deflation. Poverty increased and wealth assumed a demonic glare in the rebellious dreams of the hungry.

Among Malatesta's aims not the least is that of insurrection. The study of particular problems is never an end in itself. It is not a question of a utopian vision of what anarchist society will be after the social revolution, but of violent expropriation, the recurring question that Malatesta continually draws our attention back to: the taking of wealth by the poor and their management of it in common.

"... We shall kindle the fire that is smouldering among the masses, take advantage of the discontent, the movements, the revolts, and strike a vigorous blow. We are not afraid, and soon the bourgeois catastrophe will go up in smoke and the reign of wellbeing begin." These words mark the maximum point of Malatesta's analyses contained in the present pamphlet. The individual arguments faced, the various theoretical questions take on a different meaning and perspective in the light of this phrase. Taken individually problems such as production, machinery, work, planning, price mechanisms, Government, the State, the revolution considered in abstract terms, can each be treated with that detached perspective which so many comrades have substituted for the true meaning of anarchism. Here these problems take on a different hue. Malatesta's intent is not to convince a bourgeois liberal in the throes of his guilty conscience, he is not interested in getting into a learned argument with an economist who is still suffering indigestion from Marx, just as he is not interested in putting a sociologist in difficulty concerning the possibility of

with the Egyptians against the British colonialists. The following year he returned clandestinely to Italy. Settling in Florence he founded the weekly *La Questione Sociale*, the first serious propagandist anarchist newspaper to be published in Italy. It was in *La Questione Sociale* that Malatesta's most popular and widely read pamphlet *Fra Contadini* appeared in 1884. That same year he was arrested and sentenced to 3 years' imprisonment, and while waiting to serve his sentence he went to Naples and helped to nurse the victims of a cholera epidemic (as did many other anarchists and socialists).

Forced once again to flee Italy in order to avoid prison, Malatesta went to South America. From 1885 to 1889 he lived in Buenos Aires (apart from several trips to Montevideo) where he resumed the publication of *La Questione Sociale* and was instrumental in founding the Bakers Union, the first militant workers' union in Argentina.

Returning to Europe in 1889 he stayed for a while in Nice where he published a new newspaper *L'Associazione* before being forced to flee London. For the next 8 years he made London his base, making frequent clandestine trips to France, Switzerland and Italy, and undertaking two lecture tours of Spain with Tarrida del Marmol. While in London he wrote several important pamphlets including *In tempo di elezione* and *L'Anarchia*.

In 1897, thanks to an amnesty given to him by the Italian government Malatesta was able to return openly to Italy. Settling in Ancona he began a new newspaper *L'Agitazione*. The following year however he was arrested and sentenced to six months' imprisonment followed by 5 years' banishment to a penal island. Taken first to the

In April 1877 Malatesta, Cafiero, the Russian Stepniak and 30 other comrades began an insurrection in the province of Benevento. The armed group, with a large red and black flag at their head marched into the Matese mountains and soon took the village of Letino without a struggle where they were greeted with great enthusiasm. Arms and expropriated goods were distributed amongst the people, tax money was returned and official documents destroyed. The following day the village of Gallo was taken in similar fashion. Unfortunately, as they were leaving Gallo the Internationalists were surprised and surrounded by government troops and all were arrested. Held in prison for over a year before being brought to trial all the accused were eventually acquitted.

After his acquittal Malatesta returned to Naples, but constant surveillance by the police forced him to leave Italy. From Naples he went to Egypt only to be expelled after a short time by the Italian Consul. Working his passage on a French ship he finally landed at Marseille after being systematically refused entry into Syria, Turkey and Italy. From Marseille he made his way to Geneva where he helped Kropotkin to produce *La Revolte*. Expelled from Switzerland Malatesta worked for a while in Romania before traveling to London, via France and Belgium, where he arrived towards the end of 1880. In London he worked as an ice-cream seller and later as a mechanic, a trade he was to return to several times in later life. While in London he participated in the 1881 congress of the International which gave birth to the Anarchist International.

Leaving London in 1882 Malatesta went to Egypt where he fought

social organisation without government or State. His aim is to convince the peasant, the worker, the emarginated “lumpen” proletarian reader, of the mechanism of exploitation and repression, of the system of ideological and political swindling, with the aim of pushing them to rebel in the struggle against the class enemies, and, ultimately, to insurrection. Whoever does not bear this objective in mind falsifies the profound meaning of this pamphlet. It is not possible to read truly revolutionary literature in the same key as one would read a sociological treatise.

The importance of an argument based on the limitations of the solutions proposed by Malatesta diminishes in this way. Clearly his singularly acute and lucid analyses such of those of monopoly and inflation find themselves alongside others whose contradictions Malatesta was not able to overcome, such as that which concluded with the inevitability of an anarchist society, or where he foresees the need for planning, etc.. To “update” Malatesta’s work would be senseless, as would be any attempts of those who would highlight its contradictions in order to declare it “out of date”. Taken as a whole it is still functional and admirably suited to the aim for which it was written: to push the most backward strata of the exploited to insurrection. It is an instrument of struggle, not a manual of anarchist theory. The clarity of vision that emanates from this pamphlet should not culminate in more fruitless theorising, therefore, but in practical insurrection and expropriation.

Alfredo M. Bonanno

3 May 1981

ABOUT MALATESTA

Errico Malatesta has a special place amongst anarchist propagandists and theorists both for the remarkable lucidity and straightforwardness of his writings, and the practical aspect upon which his anarchism is founded. His importance also lies in the fact that he never fell into the trap of fatalism and over optimism that is all too evident in Kropotkin's anarchism. For Malatesta anarchism was not the philosophy for a future utopia that would one day happen, as if by magic, without any prior discussion or preparation. On the contrary, he was concerned throughout his life with practical ideas. His anarchism was something concrete, to be fought for and won, not in some distant future, but *here and now*.

***

Errico Malatesta was born in Capua near Naples in 1853. In his teens, while studying medicine at the University of Naples, he came under the influence of Mazzinian republicanism, and later, in 1871, partly through his enthusiasm for the Paris Commune and his friendship with Carmelo Palladino he joined the Naples section of the International Working Mens' Association. The following year he became acquainted with Bakunin and participated with him in the St Imer congress of the International.

Between 1872 and 1876, working closely with Bakunin, Cafiero and Costa, Malatesta helped spread Internationalist propaganda throughout Italy. For this he was imprisoned for 6 months in 1873 and again for a year between 1874 and 1875.

react upon each other in various ways.

But these new assertions, far from invalidating the need for a radical transformation of the social regime, demonstrate that it would be pointless to wait for bourgeois society to die by itself from the progressive worsening of the ills it produces, and that if the workers want to emancipate themselves and establish a society of wellbeing and freedom for all, they must expropriate in a revolutionary way the exploiters of other people's work, few or many as they may be.

(Author's note 1913)

(2) This forecast has already come true since the time this book was written. The motor car is already a means of traveling anywhere rapidly, without the need for a complicated organization, or the rigorous rules required for the running of the railways. And air navigation is already well under way, leaving greater independence to individuals and removing many of the inequalities caused today by the geographical positions of various localities.

Thus the invention of the electric engine with the possibility of carrying motor power anywhere and in any quantity, has resulted in the fact that the machine can also be used at home, and has to a large extent suppressed the need for large workshops with steam engines.

In the same way the wireless is tending to do away with the need for a complicated telegraph service. Progress in chemistry and farming techniques are enabling anything to be grown in any kind of soil, etc., etc.

(Author's note 1913)

FRA CONTADINI

Bert: Ah! George, is that you? I'm glad to see you. I've been wanting to talk to you for a while. O, George! George! I've been hearing so many things about you! When you lived in the country you were a good lad, quite an example to the young people of your age...If your poor father were alive...

George: Bert, what's wrong? What have I done to deserve this? And why would my poor father have been dissatisfied with me?

Bert: Don't be offended, George. I'm an old man, and I'm speaking for your own good. Besides, I was a close friend of old Andrew your father and it upsets me as though you were my own son to see you turned out so badly, especially when I think of the hopes your father had for you and the sacrifices he made to give you a good upbringing.

George: But what are you talking about? Am I not an honest worker? I've never done anyone any harm. On the contrary, I've always done what little good I could, so why would my father have been ashamed of me? I do my best to learn and improve, and try along with my comrades to do something about the evils that afflict us all. So why are you getting at me like this?

Bert: Ah, that's just it! I know quite well that you work and help your neighbours. You're a good lad, everybody in the area says

so. But haven't you been in prison several times, and it's said the police keep an eye on you and that only to be seen talking to you is enough to get one in to trouble. But I'm fond of you, and I'll speak to you in spite of that. George, take the advice of an old man: leave politics to the gentry who have nothing to do, and think about getting on in life. That's the only way to get on in peace and in the grace of God; if you don't you'll lose body and soul. Listen: stop hanging around in bad company. Everybody knows they're the ones that are leading the sons of the poor astray.

George: Believe me, Bert, my comrades are all honest people. The bread they eat is paid for in sweat and tears. Leave the bosses, men who would suck the last drop of our blood then call us hooligans if we as much as grumble, and criminals if we try to improve our situation and escape from their tyranny to speak ill of them. It's true that my companions and I have been in prison, but we were there for the right reasons. We'll end up there again, or perhaps even worse things will happen to us, but it will be for the good of everybody, because we want to destroy all the injustice and poverty. And you, who've worked all your life and gone hungry too—and who might end up in some hospice when you're old and no longer able to work—you at least ought not to put yourself on the side of the landlords and government that come down on those who are trying to improve the lot of the poor.

Bert: My dear boy, I know perfectly well that the world's not right, and that to put it in order would be well nigh impossible. So let's take

ing what they believe to be right. One cannot say they are not socialists and anarchists in idea, because they think like us: but it is certain that they must have little conviction and a listless soul, because when one sees the terrible ills that afflict oneself and one's fellows and believes one knows the remedy to put an end to these evils, how, if one has a heart, can one manage to remain inactive? He who ignores the truth is not guilty; but he who knows it and acts as though he doesn't is a guilty man indeed.

Bert: You're right, and as soon as I've thought carefully about all you've said and I'm quite sure, I want to join the party and put myself to propagating these holy truths, and then if the landlords call me a rogue and a criminal too, I'll tell them to come and work and suffer like I do, and then they'll have the right to talk.

(1) This was written in 1883, when Marx's theory of the concentration of wealth in the hands of an increasingly small number of people had still not been discussed among socialists. Later studies corroborated by fresh facts have shown that there are other tendencies which counterbalance that towards the concentration of capital, and that in reality the number of proprietors sometimes decreases, sometimes increases. The workers' conditions worsen or improve due to a thousand factors which are continually changing or which

social revolution, that is to the destruction of political power, i.e. government, and putting all existing wealth in common.

Whoever accepts this programme and wants to fight with others to carry it out belongs to the party. The party has no leaders or authority of any kind, and is founded on spontaneous and voluntary agreement between those fighters for the same cause. Each individual preserves full freedom to build more intimate ties with whoever he thinks fit, to practice the means he prefers and to propagate his particular ideas, so long as he in no way goes against the general tactic of the party, in which case he could no longer be considered a member of the party itself.

Bert: So all those who accept socialist-anarchist-revolutionary principles are members of this party?

George: No, because one can be perfectly in agreement with our programme, but for one reason or another prefer to struggle alone or along with a few comrades, without contracting bonds of solidarity and effective cooperation with the mass of those who accept the programme. This can also be a good method for certain individuals and for certain immediate ends one seeks to attain; but it cannot be accepted as a general method; because isolation causes weakness and creates antipathy and rivalry where what is needed is brotherhood and agreement. In any case we always consider friends and comrades all those who in some way are fighting for the ideas that we are fighting for.

There can be those who are convinced of the truth of the idea and nonetheless stay at home, without involving themselves in propagat-

things as they come and pray to God we never want for a crust of bread at least. There always have been rich and poor, and we who were born to work should be content with what God gives us. That's the only way to live in peace and save our honour.

George: You talk about honour! Look at the landowners. They've taken everything from us after making us work like beasts for a crust of bread, then, squandering in wealth and debauchery, they say that we, to be honest people, must put up with all this with a smile and watch them grow fat on our backs without even complaining. If we don't, and remind ourselves that we are men too and that whoever works has the right to eat, they say we're a bad, dishonest lot and get their police to throw us in prison, and their priests to send us to hell.

Hear me out Bert, you're a worker, and have never tried to exploit your fellow man. The scoundrels, the men of no honour, are those living off injustice after taking possession of everything under the sun and through poverty reducing people to a flock of sheep who calmly allow themselves to be shorn and slaughtered. And you join them in criticising us? It's not enough for them to have their own government made up of the gentry for the gentry. They also need the workers, our brothers, to turn against us because we want them to have bread and freedom as well.

Ah! if it wasn't for centuries of poverty and ignorance due to forced slavery, I'd say those with the least dignity of all are the poor who support the oppressors of humanity, and not us at all. We are risking the miserable crust of bread and shred of freedom we have so that

we can reach the stage where everybody will live well.

Bert: Yes, yes, these are fine words. But nothing can be done properly without the fear of God. You can't convince me. I've heard the parish priest say that you and your comrades are a bunch of heretics. Father Anthony, who has studied and reads the newspapers, says you're all mad hooligans, that you don't want to work for a living and that instead of doing the workers any good you're preventing the landlords from doing the best they can for us.

George: Now Bert, if we want to talk reasonably, let's leave God and the saints out of it, because the name of God is used as a pretext and justification by all those who want to deceive and oppress their fellow men. Kings say that God gave them the right to reign, and when two kings contest the same country, both say they have been sent by God. God is always on the side of those who have the most soldiers and the best weapons. The property owner, the profiteer, the monopolist, all speak of God. And the catholic, protestant, Jewish and Turkish priests and ministers each say they are God's representative, and in the name of God make war on each other and try to feather their own nests. No one bothers about the poor.

To hear them, God has given them everything and condemned us to poverty and grinding toil. They are to have paradise in this world and the next as well while we're condemned to hell on this earth and paradise only in the world of yonder, and only then if we've been obedient slaves...and if they allow us a place.

Listen: I don't want to go into problems of conscience, every-

solidarity and material independence. (2)

Bert: Very well. So you are a *socialist* and among socialists you are a *communist* and an *anarchist*. Why then do they call you an *Internationalist* as well?

George: The socialists have been called *internationalists* because the first great demonstration of modern socialism was the *International Working Men's Association*, which abbreviated became known as *The International*. This association, which began in 1864 with the aim of uniting the workers of all nations in the struggle for economic emancipation, had at the beginning a very indeterminate programme. Then in establishing itself it divided into various fractions and its most advanced part went as far as to formulate and advocate the principles of anarchist socialism which I have tried to explain to you.

Now this association is dead partly because it was persecuted and banished, partly because of the internal divisions and contrasting opinions. From this, though, was born the great workers' movement which agitates throughout the world, and the various socialist parties of different countries, and the *international socialist anarchist revolutionary party* which is now organizing itself in order to strike a mortal blow to the bourgeois world.

This party has the aim of propagating with all possible means the principles of anarchist socialism, combating every hope in the voluntary concessions of the bosses or the government or in gradual and pacific reforms, and re-awakening in the people the awareness of their rights and spirit of rebellion, urging them on to make the

or group wouldn't be able to procure, and which require the combined efforts of the whole of a large collectivity... but what do you want? The dissidents themselves couldn't claim that the will of the many be sacrificed to that of the few.

Believe me: beyond solidarity, brotherhood, love; beyond mutual aid and, when necessary, mutual tolerance, there is nothing but tyranny and civil war. Be sure, though, that as tyranny and civil war are things that damage everyone, people, no sooner were they arbitrators of their own destiny, would move towards solidarity, where our ideals can be realised and through them peace, wellbeing and universal freedom.

Note too that progress, while it tends to unite men, also tends to make them more independent and able to look after themselves. For example: today, to travel rapidly it is necessary to use the railway. This requires the concourse of a large number of people in order to build it and make it function so that each person is obliged, even in anarchy, to adapt themselves to the network, time-table and other rules that the majority think best. But if in the future a locomotive is invented that can be driven by one man alone on some kind of road without danger either to himself or others, then there will no longer be a need to pay attention to what others think, and each person could travel wherever he liked at the time he pleased.

And the same goes for a thousand other things that one can do now or that the means to be done will be found in the future, as one could say that the tendency of progress is towards a type of relationship between people that could be defined with the formula: *moral*

body is free to think what they like. But as far as I'm concerned, I don't believe in God or any of the stories the priests tell us, because whoever tells them always has a vested interest in doing so, and because there are so many religions, each one of whose priests claim to have the truth shows that no one has it. I too could invent a world of fairy stories and say that whoever didn't believe me would be condemned to eternal fire. If I did you'd say I was an imposter. But if I got hold of a child and told him the same thing without anyone else contradicting me, once he grew up he'd believe me just as you believe the priest.

In any case, you're free to believe what you like, but don't come telling me that your God wants you to go hungry, wants your children to grow up sick and stunted due to lack of food and medical care, and your daughters to be exposed to becoming the mistresses of your perfumed young masters. Because then I'd say your God's an assassin.

If there is a God, he's never told anyone what he wants. So let's get on with doing good for ourselves and others in *this* world. In the next, if there is a God and he is just, we'll find ourselves all the better off for having struggled to do good than if we caused suffering or continued to allow others to do so as, according to the parish priest, we're all brothers and God's creatures.

Take my word for it: today God condemns you to toil because you are poor. If in the future you were in some way to succeed in getting a lot of money together, no matter how you did it, you'd immediately acquire the right to do no work, ill-treat the peasants, usurp the hon-

our of poor girls...and God would let you carry on just as he lets your employers carry on.

Bert: Gracious me! Ever since you learned to read and write you could confuse a lawyer with your talk. You've said things that send shivers down my spine. I've seen the way the landlord's son's eyes light up when he looks at my daughter Rosina...Oh! if my Rosina...Ah! let's change the subject.

I'm old and I know that this is a vile, miserable world, but that's no reason to become rogues too. But tell me: is it true that you want to take property from everyone that has it?

George: You're right! That's just what we want! When you want to know something that concerns the poor, never ask the landowners. They'll never tell you the truth, because no one ever speaks against his own interests. If you want to know what anarchists want, ask me and my comrades, not priests like Father Anthony. Instead, when the priest starts to talk about such things, ask him why it is that you're eating potatoes (when there are any) and he, who spends the whole day doing nothing with a finger inside a half-shut book, is eating roast beef with his...niece. Ask him why he always keeps in with the landlords and only comes to us when there is something to swallow. Ask him why he always says the landlords and the police are right, and why, instead of taking bread from the mouths of the poor people with the excuse of praying for the souls of the dead, he doesn't do something to help the living a bit, and stop living at others expense. Next time you see Father Anthony, who is young and strong, and has studied and spends his time in the cafe playing cards or working out fiddles with the town council, tell him that before talking

ions they got on with best, and it would always be a question of deciding on clear things, which could be easily understood and which belong rather to the positive field of science than to the changing one of opinions. And the more one went forward, the more the vote would become something useless and antiquated, in fact quite ridiculous because when, through experience, the best solution to a problem was found, the one which best satisfied the needs of all, then it would be a question of demonstrating and persuading, not crushing the adverse opinion with a numerical majority. For example, wouldn't it make us laugh today if the peasants were called to vote on which would be the best season to sow their grain, when this is something they already know from experience?

The same thing would happen with everything concerning public and private utility.

Bert: But if nonetheless there were some who for one reason or another were opposed to a decision made in the interest of all?

George: Then of course it would be necessary to take forcible action, because if it is unjust for the majority to oppress the minority, it's no more just that the contrary should happen. And just as the minority have the right of insurrection, so do the majority have the right of defense, or if the word doesn't offend you, repression.

Don't forget though that everywhere and in all ways men have the inalienable right to raw materials and the tools of labour, so that they can always stay free and independent away from the others. It's true that it isn't a satisfactory solution, because the dissidents would be deprived of many social advantages which the isolated individual

you about the interests of your commune and your trade?

When then it's a question of more than one commune or trade reaching an agreement, the respective delegates would take their given mandates to the relative meetings and try to harmonise their various needs and desires. The deliberations would always be subject to the control and approval of those who delegated them, in such a way that there be no danger that the interest of the people be forgotten.

And so, gradually, one would go on to the agreement of the whole human race.

Bert: But if in a village or association people didn't all see things the same way, what would happen then? The greatest number would win wouldn't they?

George: By rights, no, because where truth and justice are concerned numbers don't count, and often one person alone can be right against one hundred or a hundred thousand. In practice one would do what one could; everything is done to reach unanimity, and when this is impossible, one would vote and do what the majority wanted, or else put the decision in the hands of a third party who would act as arbitrator, respecting the inviolability of the principles of equality and justice that the society is based on.

Note though that the problems that couldn't be agreed upon without being put to a vote or an arbitrator would be few indeed and of little importance. There would no longer be the division of interests there are today, as each person would choose their own area and association. In other words they'd choose to be with the compan-

about us, he'd better stop fooling about and learn a bit about hard work and poverty.

Bert: You're right there. But let's get back to what we were talking about. Is it or isn't it true that you want to take other people's property?

George: It's not true. We don't want to take anything for ourselves, we want the people to take the land back from the landowners and put it in common for the use of everyone.

If they did this, people wouldn't be taking other people's property but taking what belongs to them by right.

Bert: So the land really belongs to us?

George: Of course, it belongs to everybody. Who gave it to the landowners? What did they do to earn it? What right did they have to take possession of it and what right do they have to keep it?

Bert: Their ancestors left it to them.

George: And who gave it to their ancestors? Certainly, some men, stronger and more fortunate than others, took possession of everything that exists. They forced others to work for them and, not content with living in idleness, oppressing and starving the great mass around them, left the property they'd stolen to their children and their childrens' children, condemning the whole of future humanity to being the slaves of their descendants now weakened by idleness and able to do what they like without having to answer to anyone. If it wasn't for the fact that they've everything in hand and want to hold on to it by force as their fathers did, we'd almost feel sorry for them.

Does all that seem right to you?

Bert: If they took the land unjustly, yes. But the landlords say that they worked for the land, and it doesn't seem right to me to take away from someone what they've achieved by their own efforts.

George: Ah yes! the same old story! Those who don't work and who've never worked always speak in the name of work.

Now, you tell me where metal, coal, stone and so on come from. They were either made by God or were the spontaneous work of nature. Certainly, we all found them when we came into the world, so they should be available to everybody. What would you say if the landowners wanted to take the air for themselves and only allow us a little of the most putrid of it , making us pay for it with our sweat and toil? The only difference between the air and the earth is that they've found a way to divide up the earth and not the air. If they find a way, they'll do the same with the air as they've done with the earth.

Bert: True, that seems right to me. The earth and all the things of nature should belong to everyone...But not everything was found right there in front of us.

George: Of course, many things have been produced by the work of human beings, in fact the earth itself wouldn't be worth much if it hadn't been reclaimed and cultivated by human effort. By rights these things should belong to whoever produced them. How is it that they find themselves in the hands of precisely those who have done nothing at all to produce them?

other parasites have completely disappeared.

The same goes for the post, telephones, navigation, public instruction, and hospitals. These are all things that are carried out by workers of every kind, like post office workers, sailors, school teachers, doctors, and which the government comes into only to obstruct, break down and exploit.

Politics, as intended and carried out by the people of government, seem a difficult art to us, because they're concerned with things which, for we workers, are neither one thing nor the other, and because they've nothing to do with the real interests of the population and are only concerned with deceiving and dominating. If on the other hand it were a question of satisfying the needs of the people in the best possible way then things would be a lot more difficult for an M.P. than they'd be for us.

In fact, what do you expect M.P.s, who are always in parliament, to know about the needs of all the cities and towns of the country? How do you expect people who have wasted time studying Latin and Greek and continue to waste it with even more useless affairs, to understand the needs of the various trades? Things would be different if each one took care of the things he knew about, the needs he feels and shares.

The revolution achieved, it will be necessary to begin from the base and work to the top. The people divide themselves into communes, and in each commune there will be different trades which will immediately, through solidarity and the impulse of propaganda, constitute themselves into associations. Now, who knows more than

for instance someone would be given the task of organising the schools, or planning a road, or seeing about the exchange of produce, in the same way as you might entrust a shoemaker to make you a pair of shoes.

This is *anarchy*. Besides that, if I wanted to explain it all to you, I'd have to talk about it as long as I've done about all the rest. We'll speak about it at length some other time.

Bert: That's fine, but in the meantime explain a little about it to me. What is it that you want? Now you've made me curious to know. You must explain to me how on earth I, ignorant as I am, could ever understand all those things we call politics, and do by myself what all the ministers and members of parliament are doing.

George: But what are the ministers and members of parliament doing that is so good that you have to worry about not being able to do it? They make laws and organize the forces for repressing the people, guaranteeing the exploitation carried out by the bosses: that's all. We've no need for that science.

It's true that the ministers and M.P.s also do other things, which are good and necessary. But to get involved in something to manage it for the benefit of a given class of people or to obstruct its development with useless and repressive rules, isn't doing anything real. For example, these gentlemen interfere in the affairs of the railways; but in order to build and run a railway there's absolutely no need for them, just as there's no need for shareholders. The engineers, mechanics, workers and all categories of skills are all that are required, and they'll always be there, even when the ministers, M.P.s and

Bert: But the landlords say their ancestors worked and slaved.

George: But they should say that their ancestors forced others to work for them without pay exactly as they are doing today. History shows that the workers' conditions have always been miserable and that, just like now, whoever has worked without exploiting others, not only has never been able to save, but hasn't even had enough to satisfy his own hunger.

Look at the example you have before your very eyes. Doesn't everything the workers produce end up in the hands of the bosses who just stand looking on?

Today they buy a piece of marshland cheap. They put men on it and give them barely enough to prevent them from dying of hunger, then go and idle their time away in the city. A few years later, this useless piece of land becomes a garden worth a hundred times what it cost to start with. The sons who inherit this treasure will say they're benefiting from the work of their fathers, and the sons of those who really worked and suffered will continue to work and suffer. What do you think?

Bert: But...if the world really has always been as it is now, then nothing belongs to the landlords at all.

George: All right then, I'll try to see everything in favour of the landowners. Let's suppose they were all sons of men who, in the past had worked and saved, and the workers were all lazy squanderers. You can see that what I'm saying is absurd, but all the same, even if this was the case, would the present social organisation be any more fair? If you work and I'm a layabout, it's only right that I

should be punished for my laziness, but it's not right that my children should be punished as well or that they should have to kill themselves with work or die of hunger in order to keep your children in wealth and plenty.

Bert: These are fine thoughts, and I can't say you're wrong, but in the meantime the landlords have the land, and in the long run we should be grateful to them, for without them we wouldn't have the means to live.

George: Yes, they have the land because they took it with violence, and they've flourished by taking the fruit of others' labour for themselves.

But just as they took it, so they can give it back.

Up until now men have made war against each other. They've tried to snatch the bread from each others' mouths and done everything they could to keep their fellow down in order to use him like they would a beast. But it's time to put an end to this. Nothing can be gained by war and throughout time man has known poverty, slavery, crime, prostitution and, from time to time, blood-lettings called wars or revolutions. By getting on well and loving and helping each other, we would no longer have so many ills or those who have all and others who have nothing, and each one would do the best he could.

I know well enough that the rich, who are used to commanding and to living without working, don't want to change the system. We'll listen though to what they have to say. If they decide to understand, either through love or fear, that there's to be no more

and distribution of production, people will do what they want. It is only when one gets down to actually doing things that the best system is discovered. It is almost certain that communism will be established in some places, something else in others. And then gradually everyone will accept the system that is seen to work best.

The essential thing is, remember, that no one starts ordering others about or taking over the land and tools. It will be necessary to be careful about this and stop it if it should happen, even with arms. The rest will go by itself.

Bert: I got that too. Now tell me, what is *anarchy*?

George: *Anarchy* means no government. Didn't I tell you that government does nothing but defend the landlords, and that as far as our interests are concerned the best thing is to look after ourselves without anybody giving us orders? Instead of electing MPs and local councillors who go and make and unmake laws that oppress us, we'll look after our affairs ourselves and decide what to do about them. And when, to put our ideas into action, there is a need to put someone in charge of a project, we'll tell them to act in such and such a way and no other. If it's a question of things we don't know in advance, then we'll entrust the job to those who are capable of understanding, studying and making suggestions. In any case nothing would be done without our decision. So our delegates, instead of being individuals to whom we've given the right to order us about, would be people chosen specially: from among the most capable to deal with each single problem that may arise. They'd have no authority, only the duty to carry out what everyone involved wanted:

would give rise to a lot of problems and would lend itself to cheating which in the long run could take us back to square one.

Communism, on the other hand, doesn't produce any such problems. Everybody works and everybody benefits by the work of all. It would only be necessary for each one to be satisfied, and act in such a way that enough be produced.

Bert: So in *communism* there would be no need for money?

George: Neither for money nor for anything else in the place of it. Nothing more than a register of goods requested and goods produced, to try to always keep production at the level of needs.

The only difficulty would arise if there were many people who didn't want to work, but I've already said how work, such a serious problem today, would become a pleasure and at the same time a moral obligation which only a madman would refuse to fulfill. And I also said that, if the worst came to the worst, if due to our bad education and the deprivation we've had to put up with before the new society was organized properly and production increased in proportion to new needs, if, I say, there were some people who didn't want to work and there were enough of them to create difficulties, there would be nothing for it but to chase them out of the community, giving them the materials and tools to work on their own. That way, if they wanted to eat they'd set to work. But you'd see this wouldn't happen.

Moreover, what we want more than anything is to put the land in common, along with the raw materials, working tools, houses and all the wealth that exists today. As far as organizing is concerned then,

hatred and injustice among men and that everyone should take a share of the work, so much the better. On the other hand, if they want to hold us down so they can go on enjoying the results of their own and their ancestors' violence and theft, then so much the worse for them. They've taken all that they have by force, and by force we shall take it back from them. If the poor would only agree, it's we who are the strongest.

Bert: But if there were no landlords any more how would we live? Who'd give us work?

George: I can't believe it! Look! you see it every day. It's you who till the soil, sow the seeds, reap the harvest, grind and carry the wheat to the barn. It's you who make the wine, the oil, the cheese, and you ask how you could live without the landlords? Ask rather how the landlords would survive if it wasn't for us poor fools, workers of the land and city, who feed and clothe them and provide for their children so that they can have a good time.

A few minutes ago you wanted to thank your bosses because they give you the means to live. Don't you see that it's they who live off your toil, every piece of bread they put in their mouths has been stolen from our children, every present they give their women represents the poverty, hunger, cold, perhaps the prostitution of ours?

What do the landlords produce? Nothing. So everything they consume has been stolen from the workers.

Just imagine that tomorrow all the labourers were to disappear

from the fields: there would be nobody left working on the land and the landowners would go hungry. If the cobblers disappear, no more shoes will be made; if the builders disappear, no houses could be built, and so on. For each class of workers that disappears, a branch of production will disappear and people will have to go without all useful and necessary things.

But what damage would be done if the landlords were to disappear? It would be like a plague of locusts disappearing.

Bert: Yes, it's true that we are the ones that produce everything, but how can I grow corn if I have no land, animals, or seeds? I tell you, there's no way out, we have to work under the bosses.

George: Oh, Bert, do we agree or don't we? We must take what we need from the landowners—the land, the tools, the seeds and everything.

For as long as the land and the machinery for working it is in the hands of the landowners, the workers will always be held down and know nothing but poverty and slavery. So, remember, the first thing to be done is to take the land back from the landowners, otherwise nothing will ever change.

Bert: You're right, I've already said so. But what do you want, all this is so new to me, my head's reeling.

But explain to me what you want to do. What would be done with this land that's to be taken from the landlords? It would be a lot for one person wouldn't it?

George: No! when you hear it said that we want a share for ourselves, that we want half and so on, remember, whoever's saying so

more expense to be met. So it happens that in your family, instead of trying to take the bread from each other's mouths, you all try to help each other because the wellbeing of one is the wellbeing of all, just as one's pain is the pain of all. This way hatred and envy cannot exist, and reciprocal affection develops which never exists in a family with divided interests.

This is called *solidarity*. It is something to be established among all men, this relationship that exists within a family where all the members really love each other.

Bert: I see. Now to get back to the first question, tell me, are you a *communist* or a *collectivist*?

George: I personally am a *communist*, because it seems to me that when one has to be friends, its not worth doing it in half measures. *Collectivism* still leaves the seeds of rivalry and hatred. But there's more to it than that. If each one could live on what he produced himself, *collectivism* would still be inferior to *communism*, because it would tend to keep people isolated and therefore diminish their strength and solidarity, but it could still work. But because, for example, the cobbler can't eat shoes, the forger eat iron, nor can the farmer make all he needs himself or cultivate the land without the workers who mine the iron to make machinery, and so on, it would be necessary to organize exchange between the various producers, remembering what each one had done. So the cobbler would claim as much as he could in exchange for a pair of shoes, and the farm worker, on his side, would give as little as possible. Who on earth would be able to make anything of it? *Collectivism*, it seems to me,

themselves members of one large family, property must be in common. Because work, in order to be productive and to benefit from machines, must be done by the large workers' collectives. Because to benefit from all the varieties of soil and atmospheric conditions in such a way that each place produces what is most fitting for it, and to avoid competition and hatred between the different countries and people rushing off to the richest places, it is necessary to establish perfect solidarity between all the peoples of the world and because it would be the work of the devil to make out which part of a product was due to whom. Let's do one thing, instead of getting all mixed up trying to decide what you've done and what I've done, let's all work and put everything in common. That way *each would give to society all that their strength permitted until there was enough to go round for everyone; and each would take what they needed, limiting themselves of course in things that were scarce.*

Bert: Take it easy. First you must explain the meaning of the word *solidarity*, because you said there must be perfect *solidarity* between all men, and, to tell you the truth, I don't know what you mean.

George: Well, in your family for example, you put together everything you and your brothers and sons earn. Then you buy food and you all eat. If there's not enough, then you all eat a bit less.

Then if you have some luck or manage to earn a bit more, it's good for everyone. If on the other hand somebody is out of work, he eats at the table along with everyone else, and if someone is ill there is

is either ignorant or in bad faith.

Bert: But then? I don't understand at all.

George: Look, it's quite simple. We want to put everything in common, starting from the principle that everybody should do some work and all should live as well as possible. It's not possible to live in this world without working, so if one person doesn't do anything he has to live at the expense of others, which is unfair and harmful. Obviously when I say that everybody should work I mean all those that are able to, and do the amount suited to them. The lame, the weak and the aged should be supported by society, because it is the duty of humanity that no one should suffer. We'll grow old too, or could become crippled or weak, just as those dearest to us might.

Now, if you think carefully you'll see that all the wealth, everything that exists for the use of human beings, can be divided into two parts. One part, which includes the land, machinery, tools, means of transport, natural resources and so on, is indispensable and must be put in common for everybody to use. As far as the way of organising the way to use all this, i.e. work, is concerned, that is something that would be decided by all. The best solution would be to work in common, because more could be produced with less effort. In fact, work in common would be welcomed by everybody, because for each person to work for themselves would mean doing without the machines that reduce work to something light and pleasant, and because when people no longer need to snatch the bread from each others' mouths they'll stop acting like cats and dogs and will enjoy living together and doing things in common. In any

case, even if some people preferred working in isolation, there would be no problem about that. The essential thing is that nobody lives without working or by forcing others to work for them. This would no longer happen because each person, having the right to what he needs, would not need to work under somebody else.

The second part of social wealth includes the things that man consumes directly such as food, clothing and housing. Of these, what already exists must undoubtedly be put in common and distributed in such a way as to enable us to go ahead to a new harvest, and wait until new goods are produced by industry. What is produced after the revolution when there are no longer idle employers living off the toil of the hungry working people, will be distributed as the workers of each area desire. Working together and putting everything in common would be best: in that way production could be regulated so as to guarantee everyone the maximum enjoyment possible, and that would be that. Otherwise, an account could be kept of what each person produced, so that each one could take goods equivalent to the amount of work they did. This would be difficult to calculate. In fact I think it would be impossible. But because of that, when the difficulties of proportional distribution are understood, the idea of putting everything in common will be more easily accepted.

In any case everyone must be assured of basic needs such as bread, housing, water and so on, independently of the quality of work that each one is able to do. No matter what form of or-

club had been taken away.

So, when someone tells you he's a socialist, ask him to take the property from those who have it, to put it in common for all. If the answer is yes, embrace him as a brother, if it is no, be careful, because you have an enemy in front of you.

Bert: Therefore you are a socialist; I can see that. But what does communist or collectivist mean then?

George: The communists and collectivists are both socialists, but have different ideas about what should be done after property has been put in common, and I've already said something about that, remember. The collectivists say that every worker, or even better, every association of workers must have the raw materials and tools for working, and that each should own the product of his labour. For as long as they live they spend it or keep it, do what they like with it, anything except use it to make others work for them. Then when they die, if they have saved anything, this goes back to the community. Their children naturally also have the means to work, and to allow them to inherit would be the first step towards going back to inequality and privilege. As far as learning is concerned, and the upkeep of children, old people and the sick, the roads, water supply, lighting and public hygiene—all the things that everybody needs—each workers' association would give so much to compensate the people who did these tasks.

The communists, on the other hand, go more for the quick road. They say: because in order to go ahead well men must consider

Once this was something that was understood, and it was enough to say that one was a *socialist* to be persecuted and hated by the landlords who would rather there were a million murderers at large than only one socialist. But as I've already told you, when the landlords and those who want to become such see that in spite of all their persecution and slander, socialism went forward and the people began to open their eyes, then they thought it was necessary to try to confuse the question in order to cheat them more successfully; and many of them began to say that they too were socialists, because they too want the good of the people, they too understand that it is necessary to destroy or reduce poverty. First they said that the social question, that is the question of poverty and all the other evils that derive from it, do not exist. Today, now that socialism scares them, they say that whoever studies given social problems is a socialist, almost as if one could call a doctor someone who studies illness, not with the intention of healing it, but of making it last.

So today you'll find people who call themselves socialists among republicans, royalists, clergymen, usurers, judges, the police, in a word everybody, and their socialism consists of keeping people at bay, or of getting themselves nominated members of parliament making promises which they couldn't keep even if they wanted to.

Among those false socialists there are certainly some in good faith who really believe they're doing good; but so what? If someone, believing he's doing good starts beating you up, you'd first have to take the stick out of his hands, while his good intentions would at best serve to prevent him from having his head smashed in once the

ganisation be adopted, heredity should no longer exist because it's wrong that some people find every comfort at birth and others find hunger and want, that some be born rich and others poor. And even if the idea were accepted that each person own what he produced and could save, on his death all his savings would return to the community.

Meanwhile, the young should be brought up and taught at everybody's expense, in such a way as to ensure they develop to the height of their capabilities. Without this there would be neither justice nor equality, and the principle of each person having an equal right to the instruments of work would be violated because learning and moral strength are true instruments of work, and it wouldn't be enough to give everyone the land and machinery if they weren't able to use them to the best of their ability.

I shall say nothing of woman, because for us woman must be equal to man, and when we say man, we mean human being, without distinction of sex.

Bert: There is something though. To take property from the landlords who've robbed and starved the poor is fair enough. But if someone has managed through hard work and saving to put money aside and buy himself an acre or two, or a small shop, by what right could this be taken away from him?

George: That would be very difficult. Today, where the capitalists and government have taken the best of the product, it's impossible to save out of one's own labour. You know yourself, after years of hard work you are still as poor as before. Moreover I've already

said that each person has a right to raw materials and tools, so if someone had a small field that he'd earned himself with his own hands, he could very well hold on to it. Over and above that he'd be given good tools, manure and anything else he needed to get the best possible use out of the earth. Of course, it would be better for him to put everything in common, but there would be no need to force anyone to do this because self interest would indicate the advantage of a communal system to everyone. Each person would be so much better off working the land in common than doing so alone and, especially with the invention of new machinery, isolated work would become less and less fruitful.

Bert: Ah! machines. They should all be destroyed! They are what are ruining the labourers and taking away work from the poor people. Here in this area you can see. Each time a new machine arrives our pay is reduced and some of us are laid off and forced to go away and die of hunger somewhere. They're even worse in the town. At least if there weren't any machines the landlords would have more need of our labour, and we'd be a little better off.

George: You're right, Bert, to believe that machines are one of the causes of poverty and lack of work, but that is because they belong to the bosses. If they belonged to the workers on the other hand, it would be quite the opposite; they'd become the main source of human wellbeing. In fact, machines only work instead of us and more quickly than we do, basically. Thanks to them man will no longer have to work hours on end to serve his needs or be forced to make superhuman efforts! If machines were used in all branches of pro-

George: Ah! Right, you did well to ask me this, because words are necessary in order to agree and distinguish oneself from others, but when they're not fully understood they can give rise to great confusion.

You should know then that *socialists* are those who believe that poverty is the main cause of all social evil, and that until poverty is destroyed there will be no way to destroy either ignorance, slavery, political inequality, prostitution or any of the evils that hold the people down in such a horrible state, and which are nothing compared to poverty itself. Socialists believe that poverty depends on the fact that the land and all the raw materials, machines and all the tools of work belong to a few individuals who thereby regulate the lives and deaths of all the working class and find themselves in a continual state of struggle and competition, not only against the *proletarians*, that is those who have nothing, but also amongst themselves, snatching property from each other. Socialists believe that through abolishing individual property, in other words the cause, poverty, the effect, would be abolished at the same time. And this property can and must be abolished, because production and distribution must be done according to people's interests, without any respect for so-called inheritence, the privilege the landlords now pride themselves in with the excuse that their ancestors were stronger, or more fortunate, or more cunning, or even more laborious or virtuous than the others.

So, you see, *socialists* are those who want social wealth to serve all men and want no more owners or proletarians, rich or poor, employers or employed.

they too want revolution, but, in the meanwhile...they want to be nominated member of parliament.

When someone tells you that the revolution is not necessary, speaks to you of voting for parties or local councillors, or agreeing with whatever faction of the bourgeoisie, if he is one of your comrades who works like you, try to persuade him of his mistake. If on the contrary he is a bourgeois or someone who wants to find the way to becoming bourgeois, consider him an enemy and carry on your own way.

Well, that's enough for the time being. We can talk more about these problems some other time. Goodbye.

Bert: Goodbye; and I'm glad you've helped me to understand many things which, now you've told me, I can't understand why I didn't think of them before. Goodbye.

Bert: Wait! While we're here, just so as not to part with a dry throat, let's go for a drink, and at the same time I'll ask you a few more things.

I understand all that you've told me... and I'll think about it on my own and try to convince myself more. But you mentioned hardly any of these difficult words that I usually hear said when such things are being discussed and which confuse me because I don't understand them. For instance, I've heard you're *communists, socialists, internationalists, collectivists, anarchists*, and goodness knows what. Can you tell me exactly what those words mean and what you really are?

duction and belonged to everyone, all the requirements of consumption could be satisfied with a few hours of light, healthy and pleasant work, and each worker would have time to study and cultivate friendships, in a word, to live and enjoy life, benefiting from all the conquests of science and civilisation. So, remember, machines shouldn't be destroyed, but taken over. But, be warned, the landlords will defend their machines, or rather have them defended, just as much against those who want to take them over as from those who want to destroy them. So, the risk being equal, it would be really stupid to destroy them instead of taking them over. Would you destroy grain and houses because they mean so much poverty and slavery when in the hands of the landowners, while in our hands they'd be wealth and freedom?

Bert: But everybody would have to be willing to go ahead with this system if it were to work, wouldn't they?

George: Of course.

Bert: And if there are some who want to live for nothing without doing any work? Work is hard and nobody likes it.

George: You're confusing society as it is today with the one will exist after the revolution. You said nobody likes hard work. But would you be able to spend days on end doing nothing?

Bert: Not me, because I'm accustomed to hard work, and when I've got nothing to do I don't know what to do with my hands. But there are many people that spend the whole day in the pub playing cards or showing off.

George: Today, yes, but after the revolution it won't be like that

any longer, and I'll tell you why. Today work is heavy, badly paid and scorned by all. Whoever works at the present time has to wear himself out, go hungry and be treated like a beast. The working man has no hope, and knows he'll end up in hospital or even in prison. He can't care for his family as he'd like to. He gets no enjoyment out of life and suffers continual illtreatment and humiliation. Those who don't work, on the other hand, getting others to work for them, enjoy all possible ease and are highly esteemed. It even happens among the workers themselves that those who do the lighter cleaner jobs and earn more money are more highly thought of. What wonder then that people work against their will and try to avoid doing so as much as they can?

But when work is caried out in humane, hygienic conditions with the help of machines, and the worker knows he's working for his own good and that of his dear ones and the whole community, when it is the indispensable condition for being esteemed in society and idleness is scorned just as spies and pimps are scorned today, who then would give up the joy of knowing himself to be loved in order to live in idleness? Even today, apart from a few rare exceptions, everybody feels indescribable repugnance for the profession of the spy or the pimp. Yet in these abject trades, where little or no work is involved and where more or less direct protection is given by the authorities, more money can be earned than in tilling the soil! But these are vile occupations because they are a sign of profound moral degradation and only produce suffering and evil: and nearly everybody prefers poverty to shame. There are obviously exceptions, there

suspend work there would be such a breakdown, such a panic, that the revolution would immediately impose itself as the only possible solution. Think too that the soldiers usually come from the poor, forced to become the pigs and executioners of their brothers, and no sooner will they see and understand what is happening than they'll sympathize, first secretly, then openly with the people and you'd persuade them that the revolution is not as difficult as it might seem at first sight.

The essential thing is to remember that the revolution is necessary, always to be ready to carry it out, and to be continually preparing it... And don't doubt that the occasion, spontaneous or provoked, won't fail to present itself.

Bert: You say this, and I believe you're right. But there are also those who say that the revolution is no use, and that things mature by themselves. What do you think?

George: You should know that from the moment socialism has gained strength the *bourgeoisie*, that is the landlords, have really begun to be afraid and are trying everything in order to avert the storm and deceive the people. Now they are all socialists, even the emperors ...and you can imagine what kind of socialism they've put together. Alas, some traitors have emerged from among our own comrades, lured by the flattery of the bourgeoisie in order to attract them, and by advantages that they could gain through abandoning the revolutionary cause. They put themselves to preaching legal methods, elections, alliances with the parties—which they say are kindred—and so they get themselves a place amidst the bourgeoisie and treat those who want revolution as mad or worse. Many continue to say that

lem. We shall kindle the fire that is smouldering among the masses, take advantage of the discontent, the movements, the revolts, and strike a vigorous blow. We are not afraid, and soon the bourgeois catastrophe will go up in smoke and the reign of wellbeing begin.

Bert: That's fine, but let's be careful not to reckon without our host. It's easy to say take the land from the landlords, but there are the carabinieri, the police, the soldiers. And now that I think of it, I'm afraid that their handcuffs, swords and guns are made, more than anything else, for precisely that: to defend the landlords.

George: We know that, my dear Bert. The police and army are there to keep a brake on the people and assure the landowners' tranquility. But if they have guns and cannons, there's no reason why we have to fight empty-handed. We know how to use guns too, and can get hold of them with astuteness and courage. Then there is the powder, the dynamite and all the explosive materials, the incendiary materials and a thousand tools which if in the hands of the government serve to hold the people in slavery, in the hands of the people will serve to conquer freedom. Barricades, mines, bombs, fire, are the means with which we resist armies, and we'll not need to be pressed to use them. It is well known: the revolution can hardly be achieved with holy water and the litany.

On the other hand, if you consider that the poor are the immense majority, and if they manage to understand and taste the advantages of socialism, there will be no force in the world strong enough to make them stay as they are. The poor are those who work and produce everything, and if only a considerable part of them were to

are weak and corrupt men who prefer baseness, but it's always a question of choosing between shame and poverty. But who would ever choose a vile tormented life if by working he would be sure of wellbeing and the esteem of one's fellows? If that did happen, it would be quite contrary to man's normal character and would be considered and treated as a case of madness.

And have no doubt about it. Public resistence to idleness certainly wouldn't be lacking, because work is the basic need of every society. A lazy person would not only harm everybody by living off others' produce without contributing to it, but would break the harmony of the new society and be one of a few discontented people who might desire a return to the past. Collectivities are like individuals: they love and honour whoever is, or whom they believe to be, useful. They can make mistakes, but in our case error isn't possible because it's all too clear that whoever doesn't work is eating and drinking at the expense of others.

Try the test of joining with others to do a job of work and divide the product into equal parts. You'd make allowances for the weak and incapable, but for the unwilling you'd make life so hard they'd either leave you or decide to work. This is what would happen in society as a whole if the indifference of a few was able to cause noticeable damage.

And then, when everything was held up because of those who didn't want to work, the remedy would be easily found. They'd be expelled from the community and reduced to having only the right to raw materials and tools, so they'd have to work if they wanted to survive.

Bert: You're beginning to convince me...but tell me, would everybody have to work the land then?

George: Why? We don't only need bread, wine and meat. We need housing, clothes, roads, books, in fact everything that the workers of all trades produce. And no one can provide everything he needs alone. Apart from working the soil, isn't there a need for the smith to make the tools, the miner to mine the iron, the builder to build the house and barns and so on? So it's not a question of everybody working the land, but of everybody working to do something useful.

The variety of occupations would make it possible for each person to choose what best suited his inclinations and so, at least as far as possible, work would become a form of exercise, a much desired recreation.

Bert: So each person would be free to choose the job he wanted?

George: Yes, but taking care that there are not too many people working in one kind of job, and scarcity in others. Because the work is done in the interests of all it must be done in such a way that all needs are catered for, reconciling as far as possible the general interest with individual preference. You'd see that each would do for the best when there were no longer bosses making us work for a few crumbs.

Bert: You say everybody would make an effort, but I think that nobody would want to do the heavy jobs, they'd all want to become lawyers and doctors. Who'd till the land then? Who'd want to risk their health and life down the mines? Who'd want to get dirty in sewers and manure?

them back on the right road.

Bert: So, when there is anarchy, everyone will be happy and contented, there will be no more poverty, hatred, jealousy, prostitution, wars or injustice?

George: I don't know how far human happiness can go. But I'm convinced that we shall all be as well off as possible and will continually try to improve and go forward. And the improvements will no longer be as they are today, to the advantage of a few and the detriment of many, but will be for the good of all.

Bert: I wish it were so! But when will this be? I'm old and now that I know that the world won't always be like this, I don't want to die without having seen at least one day of justice.

George: When will it be? How do I know? It's up to us. The more we do to open people's eyes, the sooner it will be done.

A good step has already been made. Whereas years ago the few who preached socialism were treated as ignorant, mad or ruffians, today the idea is known to many, and the poor, who once suffered in silence or rebelled when they were pushed to by hunger, but without knowing the why or wherefore of their ills, were killed or made to kill each other for the landlords. Today there is agitation all over the world. People rebel with the idea of getting rid of bosses and governments and count only on their own strength, having finally begun to understand that all the parties that the landlords are divided into are equally their enemies.

Let us bring propaganda into action now that the moment is ripe, and draw close together, those of us who have understood the prob-

government was composed of intelligent people? If those of a higher capacity stay among the people, they use it to the people's advantage. If they go into government, they no longer feel the people's needs and are drawn into looking after the interests created by politics, the desire to hold on to power rather than look to the real needs of society. They are corrupted by lack of competition and control, often distracted from the field of activity in which they are really competent in order to dictate laws over things they had no interest in at first. Even the best and most intelligent of them end up believing in a higher nature, and form a caste who only look after the people as far as is necessary to exploit them and keep them down.

It would therefore be better and surer if we were to look after our own interests, starting from where we live and the jobs we know best, then gradually getting into agreement with all the other trades and areas, not only in Italy but all over the world. All men are brothers, and have an interest in loving and helping each other. Don't you think?

Bert: Yes, I'm beginning to think you're right. But the criminals, the thieves, the vandals? What would happen to them?

George: First of all, when there is no longer poverty and ignorance there won't be all those hooligans any more. But even supposing there were still some, is that a reason for having a government and a police force? Wouldn't we be capable of putting those who don't respect others in their place? We wouldn't torture them as is done now both with the guilty and the innocent, but we'd put them in a position of not being able to do any damage, and do everything to put

George: As far as lawyers are concerned, let's leave them aside. They are gangrene like the priests. The social revolution would get rid of them completely. Let's speak of useful work and not that done to harm one's neighbour. Even the street assassin, who often has to put up with great suffering, becomes a worker too if we don't.

Today we prefer one job to another, not because it's more or less suited to our faculties or corresponds more to what we want to do, but because it is easier for us to learn, we can earn more money doing it, and only secondly because the work is lighter than another kind. Especially when the choice is imposed from birth by chance and social prejudice.

For instance, no town dweller would stoop to till the soil, not even the poor among them. Yet there's nothing inherently repulsive about agriculture, and life in the fields is not devoid of pleasure.

On the contrary, if you read the poets you'll find they're full of enthusiasm for rural life. But the truth is that poets, who publish books, have never tilled the soil, and those who really till it kill themselves with fatigue, die of hunger, live worse than beasts and are considered worthless people, so much so that the last city tramp would consider it an offence to be referred to as a peasant. How do you want people to work the land willingly? We ourselves, who were born here, stop as soon as we can, because we are better off and more highly thought of no matter what else we do. But who of us would leave the fields if we worked for ourselves and found in working the land wellbeing, freedom and respect?

It would be the same for all trades. The way things are today, the

more a job is necessary the worse it is paid, the more tiring and inhuman the conditions, and the more it is treated with disdain. For instance, go into a goldsmith's workshop and you'll find that at least compared to the disgusting hovels we live in, the place is clean, well aired and heated in winter. The working day is not excessively long and the workers are reasonably well paid. The evenings are then spent relaxing, when they have taken off their working clothes they can go where they like without people staring at them and making a fool of them. On the other hand, go down a mine, you will see poor people working underground in pestilent air, consuming their lives in a few years for a derisory wage. And then, if after work the miner dared to frequent the same places as the gentry, he'd be lucky to get away with being mocked. Why should we be surprised then if someone prefers to be a goldsmith to a miner?

Not to mention those who know no tools but the pen. Think of it! someone who possibly knows nothing but puns and sugary sonnets earns ten times more than a farm worker and is considered to be above every honest labourer.

Journalists, for example, work in elegant offices, cobblers in filthy basements; engineers, doctors, artists, and teachers, when they have work and know their job well, live the life of the gentry while builders, nurses, artisans, and you could also add general practitioners and primary teachers, are going hungry and even killing themselves through overwork. Be careful, by this I don't mean that only manual labour is useful. On the contrary, study gives man the way to win over nature and civilise himself and gain more freedom and well-

been achieved and re-establishing privilege and tyranny. For people to become educated to freedom and the management of their own interests, they must be left to act for themselves, to feel responsibility for their actions in the good or bad which comes from them. They'd make many mistakes, but they'd understand from the consequences where they'd gone wrong and try out new ways. The harm a people can do themselves when left to their own resources is only a thousandth part of what the most benign government can do. For a child to learn to walk he must be left to it and not be afraid of a few bumps or falls.

Bert: Yes, but for a child to be put down to walk he must already have a certain amount of strength in his legs, or he must stay in his mother's arms.

George: That's true. But governments are not in the least like mothers, and they'll never improve and strengthen the people. In fact social progress is nearly always achieved against, or in spite of, governments. The latter increasingly translate the needs and will of the masses into law, so breaking them through the spirit of dominion or monopoly. Some peoples are more advanced than others, but no matter what stage of civilisation they're at, even if they are in the primitive state, people will always realise their interests better than any government they produced.

You believe what seems to be the case: that the government is made up of the most intelligent and capable men, but that's not in fact true. They are usually composed either directly or by delegation, of those who have most money. But even if it were so that the

calm down gradually and prepare the forces to keep a brake on the people, who will one day realise that they spilt their blood for others, and that they are worse off than before.

Instead, as it rarely happens that the people rebel and come out victorious, they must take the first opportunity and apply communism right away and not listen to promises. Take possession of property directly, occupying the houses, the land and the factories. And whoever speaks of republic should be treated as an enemy, otherwise the same thing will happen as happened in ‘59 and ’60.

Words don’t seem to matter, but it’s always with words that the people have been deceived and taken for a ride!

Bert: You’re right. We’ve been sacrificed so often, and now it’s time we opened our eyes.

But there will always be a need for a government. How would we get on with nobody in command?

George: Why must we take orders? Why can’t we manage our own affairs?

Whoever gives orders always does what he wants, and always, either through ignorance or villainy, betrays the people. Power goes to people’s heads, even the best of them. Besides, we must stop being sheep. The best reason for not wanting to take orders is that people must begin to think and learn to recognise their own dignity and strength. The command of a few educates others to obedience. And even if there was such a thing as a good government, it would be more corrupting and weakening than a bad one: a coup d’etat would be be easier than ever, destroying the improvements that had

being, and the doctors, engineers, chemists and schoolmasters are just as useful and necessary to human society as farm workers and other workers. I’m just saying that all useful jobs should be appreciated equally and be carried out in such a way that the workers feel equal satisfaction in doing them, and that intellectual work, which is in itself a great pleasure and gives man great superiority over whoever doesn’t work with his mind and remains ignorant, must be accessible to all and not the privilege of a few.

Bert: But if you yourself say that working with the mind is a great pleasure and gives advantage over those who are ignorant, obviously everyone would want to study, and I’d be the first. So who’d do the manual work then?

George: Everyone. Because everyone, at the same time as they cultivate letters and science, should do some manual work; everyone should work with their heads and their hands. Those two kinds of work, far from prejudicing each other, help each other because for a man to be healthy he needs to exercise all his organs, the brain as well as the muscles. Whoever has a developed intelligence and is used to thinking, also gets on better in manual work; and whoever is healthy, as one is when one exercises one’s strength in hygienic conditions, also has a more agile and penetrating mind.

Moreover, because the two kinds of work are necessary, and one is more pleasant than the other and is the road to awareness and dignity, it’s not right for some to be condemned to exclusively manual work, leaving others the privilege of science, and therefore of command. So I repeat, everybody should do some manual and some

intellectual work.

Bert: I can understand that, but there is manual work that is hard and manual work that is easy, some is unpleasant, some pleasant. Now who would be a miner, for instance, or a scavenger?

George: My dear Bert, if only you knew what inventions and research are going on every day, you'd see that even now, if the organisation of work didn't depend on people who are not working themselves and so don't care about the comfort of the workers, all manual labour could be carried out under decent conditions. So there would always be some workers who preferred them. And that is today. Just think what it'll be when, everybody having to work, the efforts and study of all are directed towards making work lighter and more pleasant!

And even if some jobs persisted in being harder than others, one would try to compensate the differences through special advantages. And we must take into account that when everyone is working together for the common good, a spirit of brotherhood and compliance is born, just like in a family, where each individual tries to take the heaviest jobs upon himself.

Bert: You're right. But if all this doesn't come about, what'll we do?

George: Well, if in spite of everything some necessary work remained undone and no one wanted to do it of their own free will, then we'd all do it, a bit each one, working for example one day a month, or a week out of every year, or some other way. And if something is really necessary for everyone, don't worry, a way to

George: So, you see. What do you want to know about universal suffrage then? The people would send the landlords to parliament, and once they were there they'd know to act so as to keep the people ignorant and enslaved as they are now. And when they saw they were not succeeding with the republic, they'd have everything in hand to send it crashing headlong.

So there's only one way: to expropriate the landlords and give everything to the people. When the people see that everything belongs to them, and they're responsible for their own wellbeing, then they'll know how to enjoy the land, and will also know how to look after it.

Bert: I believe that! But by republic the peasants don't mean what you're saying it is. In fact, now I understand that what we call republic is the same as what you call anarchy. But couldn't we call it republic instead? What does the name matter! The main thing is that things be done as they should be.

George: You're right. But there's one great danger. If the people continue to believe that the republic is good for them, when the day comes that they can't take any more and start the revolution, the republicans will content them right away by proclaiming the republic and saying that now they can go home and start nominating M.P.s, because soon everything will be under control.

The people, credulous as always, will abandon their guns and give vent to music and merrymaking. Meanwhile the landlords will all become republicans, they will all be heartily for the people, lash out money and organize great festivities. They'll pay the workers a little more, and get themselves put in power. Then they'll let the storm

the members of parliament who make the laws are elected by the people, so when the people are not happy, they send better M.P.s and everything gets sorted out; in fact the poor are the great majority, and in the last analysis it is they who command. But the truth is quite different. The poor, who precisely because they are poor are also ignorant and suspicious, vote as the priests and bosses want them to, and will continue to do so as long as they don't have economic independence and a clear awareness of their interests.

You and I, if we had had the extraordinary good luck of earning more and had been able to study a little, might be able to understand what our own interests are and have the strength to face the landlords' vengeance. But the great mass will never be able to do so as long as present conditions continue. No, facing the ballot box is not the same as a revolution, where one brave and intelligent man is worth a hundred timid ones, and draws along behind him so many who would never have had the energy to rebel alone. In the face of the ballot box what counts is number, and so long as there are priests, landlords and governments, the number will always be for the priests who dispense hell and paradise, for the landlords, who give and take bread as they please, and for the government who have policemen to intimidate people and employment to corrupt them. And don't you know? Today the majority of the electors are poor, yet what do they do when they have to vote? Do they nominate the poor, who know them and want to defend their interests?

Bert: What! They ask the landlord who they are to vote for and do what he says. On the other hand, if they didn't, they'd be sacked.

get it done will always be found. Don't we become soldiers today for the pleasure of others and don't we go and fight against other people whom we don't know and who've done us no harm, or against our own brothers and friends?

It would be better, it seems to me, to do work for our own pleasure and for the good of everyone.

Bert: Do you know, you're beginning to convince me? But there's something that I still can't get the hang of. That business about taking everything from the gentry? I don't know but...couldn't we avoid that?

George: And how would you like to do it? So long as the landowners have everything in hand it'll be they who command and look after their own interests without caring about us just as they've done since time began. But then, why shouldn't we take everything from the landowners? Maybe you think it would be unfair, an evil deed?

Bert: No. Really, after all you've told me, it seems to me rather that it would be a blessing, because if we took property from the landlords we'd be taking back our blood that they've been sucking for so long... And then, if we take it from them, it's not to take it for ourselves. It's to put it in common for the good of everyone, isn't it?

George: Of course. In fact, if you really think about it you'll see that the landowners themselves would benefit by it. Certainly, they'd have to give up commanding, being arrogant and lazy. They'd have to work, but the work, when done with the help of machines and taking great care of the workers' well-being, would be reduced to a light, pleasant exercise. Don't they go hunting? Don't they run, do

gymnastics and so many exercises demonstrating that muscular work is a necessity and a pleasure for all healthy well-fed men? So, it's a question of doing for production the work that they do today as a pastime. And how many advantages would the same gentlemen feel from the general wellbeing and improved civilisation! Look in our own village for instance: the few landowners there are are rich and act like little princes. But at the same time the roads are just as ugly and dirty for them as they are for us. The foul air from our houses and neighbouring swamps affects them too. Our ignorance is such that they are also brutalised. How could they improve the countryside, make roads and light them, with their private wealth? How can they avoid the adulteration of consumer goods? How can they benefit from all the progress of science and industry? All things that when done through the collaboration of all would be quite simple. And their very vanity, how can it be satisfied when their society is shrinking?

And all this without taking into account the constant danger of gunshots from behind a barricade and the fear of a revolution, the thought of a disaster which would reduce them to poverty and expose their families to hunger, crime or prostitution as ours are? By taking property from those who own it, not only would we be giving them their due, we'd also be doing them a great favour.

It's true that the landlords don't understand nor ever will, because they want to command, and that they believe that the poor are made of different stock. But what can we do? If they don't want to get on with good people, so much the worse for them: we shall get on with the bad.

and ministers who have the same powers. The king removed, the government is still called a republic, even if the inquisition, torture or slavery still exist! If you want a republic as they say they do in Italy, you will have to add the following changes: instead of two chambers, there would only be one, the deputies, and instead of the vote being only for those who have money or can read and write, would be for everyone.

And there's nothing more to it you know, because all the rest, such as putting an end to military service, or lowering taxes, or providing schools, or protecting the poor, are all promises that will be kept... if it suits the landlord deputies. And when it comes to promising we don't need republicans, because already now when candidates need to be elected they promise heaven and earth and then, after they are elected, no more is said on the subject.

However, that's all nonsense. So long as there are rich and poor, the rich will always command. Whether there is a republic or a monarchy, the consequences deriving from private property will always be the same. Competition regulates all economic relations, therefore property is concentrated in a few hands, machines take the place of workers, and the masses will be reduced, as we have said, to dying of hunger or living off charity.

We can see that now. There have been republics and many still exist, and they have never improved the conditions of the people.

Bert: Well I'm blowed! And I thought that the republic meant that everybody would be equal!

George: That's what the republicans say, and their argument is that

other works of charity.

If people don't want to be reduced to begging a plate of soup from the landlords' doors or from the municipality as they've done in the past at the doors of convents, there is only one way: to take possession of the land and machinery, and work for themselves. (1)

Bert: But if the government made new laws forcing the landlords not to make the poor people suffer?

George: We're back in square one. The government is made up of landlords, and they would never make laws against themselves. And if the poor reach command, why do things by half and leave the landlords with enough in hand as to allow them to dominate us again? Because, you see, wherever there are rich and poor, the poor can shout for a while, at a time of rebellion. But then it is always the rich who end up commanding. So, if for a moment we manage to be the strongest, we must take the property from the rich right away, and in such a way that they won't be able to put things back like before.

Bert: I understand everything. We must make a good republic. Everybody equal, and whoever works eats and who doesn't work goes hungry...Ah! I'm sorry I'm old. Lucky you youngsters who will see these great times.

George: Take it easy my friend. By *republic* you mean social revolution, and so to someone who knows what you're talking about, you'd be quite right. But you're expressing yourself badly, because republic doesn't actually mean anything like what you have in mind. Get it well into your head that a republic is a government just like what there is now, only instead of there being a king there's a president

Bert: That's all very well. But it wouldn't be easy to make it happen. Couldn't things be done gradually? Let's leave the land to those who have it, on condition that they increase wages and treat us like human beings. Then we could gradually save up and buy a piece of land too, and when we are all landowners we could put everything in common as you say. I once heard a fellow suggesting something like that.

George: Listen: there's only one way to put things right, and that's to persuade the landlords to give up their land, because when someone gives something there's no need to use force. But there's no chance of that happening, you know that as well as I do.

For as long as private property exists, as long as the land and everything else belongs to this or that person instead of belonging to everybody, there will always be poverty, in fact things will go from bad to worse. With private property each one tries to draw the water to his own mill, and the landowners don't only try to give the workers as little as possible, they are always fighting among themselves. Generally speaking each one tries to sell his goods for as much as he can get and buy for as little as possible. So what happens? As the landowners, manufacturers and large merchants, can produce and buy goods wholesale, provide themselves with machines and take advantage of favourable market conditions and wait for the right moment to sell, or even sell at a loss for a time, they end up ruining the weaker proprietors and shopkeepers. The latter gradually sink into poverty and they or their children are forced to do casual labour (this is something we see every day). In this way, the

men who work alone or with a few journeymen in small workshops are obliged, after a bitter struggle, to shut shop and go to look for work in the big factories. The small proprietors, who cannot even manage to pay their taxes, must sell their houses and fields to the large proprietors and so on. In this way, even if some good-hearted employer wanted to improve his workers' conditions, he'd only be ruined by competition and would most certainly go bankrupt.

On the other hand the workers, driven by hunger, must compete against each other, and as there are more hands available than demands for work (not because there isn't work that needs doing, but because the bosses only employ the number of men that suits them), so they have to snatch the bread from each others' mouths, and no matter how little you are prepared to work for, there will always be someone willing to work for less.

In this way, every step towards progress becomes a disaster. A new machine is invented: right away large numbers of workers are put out of work, stop earning, cannot consume and therefore indirectly also take work away from others. In America wide expanses of land are cultivated and much grain is produced. The landowners send their grain to Europe to get a higher price for it, without caring whether the people in America have enough to eat. Here the grain costs less, but the poor are worse off instead of better, because the European landlords stop cultivating the land as the price of grain is so low it's no longer worth it; or they cultivate only a small part of it where the earth is most fertile, so a large number of peasants are put out of work. Bread is cheap, that's true, but the poor people

more short-sighted and uncaring. Only when everyone would suffer equally from a food shortage could a voluntarily imposed limit succeed, which no human power could impose by force.

But let us go back to the question of the division of the product between owner and worker. What would you give to those who are not working? The bosses, for as long as they remain such, cannot be forced to employ people that they don't need.

The system of division, called *participation* or *metayage* (crop sharing system), once existed for work in the fields in many parts of southern Europe, and still exists today in some parts of Italy such as Tuscany. But this is gradually disappearing and will also disappear in Tuscany because the landlords find it more profitable to use casual labour. Today then, with machines, scientific agriculture and imports, it has become a real necessity for landowners to employ labour, and those who do not get there in time will be reduced to poverty through competition.

Finally, if we carry on with the present system we'll end up with property still in the hands of a few, and the labourer thrown into the gutter as a result of machines and accelerated production methods. In this way we'll have a few large landowning bosses in the world, with a few workers for the servicing of the machinery, then domestic servants and police serving to defend the landlords. The masses will either die of hunger or live off charity. We can see already. The small proprietor is disappearing, the number of unemployed workers is increasing and the landlords, through fear or pity for all those people who might die of hunger, are organizing soup kitchens and

see that in countries where there is much land and a sparse population, there is as much poverty as there is in the densely populated countries, often far more. In spite of all the obstacles deriving from private ownership, production grows more rapidly today than the population and the worsening of poverty is caused by overproduction in relation to the poor's means for consumption. The workers are unemployed because the warehouses are full of goods that have been produced and have not found buyers. Cultivated land is left to grow wild because there is too much grain. Prices are falling and the landlords are no longer finding it profitable to sow crops, caring nothing that the peasants are out of work and hungry.

So, first we need to change the social organization, cultivate all the land, organize production and consumption in the interest of all, leaving free reign to new methods and innovations, occupy all the immense part of the world that is still uninhabited. Then, when in spite of all the previsions the population is really seen to be too great, and only then, will it be the case for the people living in that moment to think of imposing a limit on their procreation. But this limitation should be observed by everyone, with no exception for a restricted number of people who, not content with living in abundance through the work of others, would like the exclusive right to have unlimited children. Moreover, for as long as there are poor people limits can never be imposed on procreation because they cannot think about the general scarcity of goods when they have the most immediate cause of poverty before their eyes: the boss taking the lion's share. The poorer one is, the more uncertain one is of tomorrow, and is naturally the

don't even earn the little necessary to buy it.

Bert: Ah! now I see. I've heard that they didn't want grain from abroad, and it seemed criminal to refuse God's blessing in that way. I thought the landlords wanted to starve the people, but now I see they had a good reason for what they were saying.

George: No, no, because if grain doesn't arrive it's bad from another point of view. The landlords then, not fearing competition from outside, sell the stuff when it pleases them and...

Bert: So?

George: So? I've already said: everything should be put in common for the good of everyone. Then, the more there is the better off we'll be. If new machines are invented or production increases, or less work is done, or whatever, it is always so much gained for everyone, and if they had too much grain in one village for instance and sent some to us, we'd send them some of what we produce. So everyone would gain something.

Bert: But...if we shared things with the landlords? If they contributed the land and capital and we did the work, then we'd share the produce. What do you think?

George: First, although you would be willing to share, your employer certainly wouldn't. It would be necessary to use force, and as much would be needed to make them share as to make them give everything up. So why do things by half and be satisfied with a system that allows injustice and parasitism to continue, and which blocks production?

Then I ask, what right have a few men to take half of what the

workers produce without doing any work themselves?

Besides, as I've already said, not only would half the produce go to the landlords, but the total product would be of a far inferior quality than what would be achieved if the work was done in common and guided by the common interest of the producers and consumers. It's like trying to move a boulder: one hundred men try one after the other and don't get anywhere, nor would they if all tried together but each pulled for his own gain and tried to counteract the others' efforts. On the other hand three or four people combining efforts and using levers and other suitable tools would lift it up easily. If you set out to make a pin, who knows whether you'll finish it within the hour, whereas ten men working together could make thousands and thousands of pins per day. And as time goes on and more machines are invented more work will be done in common if progress is to be enjoyed.

While we're on the subject, I want to answer an objection that has often been made.

Economists (who put together in the name of science a lot of nonsense and lies to demonstrate that the gentry have the right to live off the sweat of others), and all the learned people with full stomachs often say that it's not true that poverty is caused by the bossesh taking everything for themselves, but that production is limited and there's not enough to go round. They end up saying that no one is responsible for poverty, so there's no point in rebelling against it. The priest keeps you docile and subjected, telling you everything is God's will; the economists say it's the law of nature. But don't believe a word of it. Of course it's true that what industry and agriculture

produce today isn't enough to supply everyone with the good food and comfort enjoyed by only a few. But this is because of the present system, where the bosses aren't concerned with the general interest and only produce when and what suits them, often destroying goods to keep prices up. In fact, at the same time as they're saying there's a shortage, they leave extensive land uncultivated and many labourers out of work.

But then they reply that even if all the land were cultivated and everyone worked using the best known methods, poverty would return all the same because the productivity of the land is limited. People would be in a condition to have more children so the production of foodstuffs would remain stationary, while the population would continue to grow indefinitely, and scarcity with it. So, they say, the only remedy for social ills is for the poor not to have children, or at least only have a few that they can bring up reasonably well.

So much could be said on the problem of the far distant future. There are those who maintain, and with good reason, that the increase in population finds a natural limit, without requiring artificial brakes, voluntary or otherwise. It seems that with racial development the heightening of intellectual faculties, the emancipation of woman and the increase in general wellbeing, the generative need gradually diminishes. But these are questions that are of no practical importance today, and are not related to the present cause of poverty.

Today it is not a question of population but of social organization. And the remedy of not having children would not cure anything. We