

# Further thoughts on REVOLUTION IN PRACTICE

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My latest article on this topic drew the attention of many comrades and procured me numerous questions and remarks.

Perhaps I was not clear enough; perhaps I also disturbed the mental habits of some, who love to rest on traditional formulas more than tormenting their brain, and are bothered by anything that forces them to think.

In any case I will try to make myself clearer, and I will be happy if those who consider what I say quite heretical will enter the discussion and contribute to define a practical program of action, which can be used as a guide in the next social upheavals.

So far our propagandists have been mainly concerned with criticizing the present society and demonstrating the desirability and possibility of a new social order based on free agreement, in which everyone could find the conditions for the greatest material, spiritual and intellectual development, in brotherhood and solidarity and with the fullest freedom.

They strove above all to inflame with the idea of a condition of individual and social perfection, called 'utopia' by some and 'ideal' by us; they did a good and necessary work, because they set the goal to which our efforts must aim, but they (we) were insufficient and almost indifferent with respect to the search of ways and means that can lead us to that goal. We were very much concerned with the necessity of radically destroying the bad social institutions, but we did not pay enough attention to the positive actions that we needed to take, or let others take, on the day and the morrow of the destruction, in order for individual and social life to be able to continue in the best possible way. We thought, or we acted as we thought, that things would fix themselves, by natural law, without any will consciously intervening to direct the efforts towards the goal previously set. This is probably the reason of the relative unsuccess of our work.

It is about time to look upon the problem of social transformation in all its broad complexity, and try to examine more closely the practical side of the issue. The revolution could happen tomorrow, and we must enable ourselves to act within it in the most effective possible way.

Since at this transitory time the triumphant reaction prevents us from doing much to broaden our propaganda among the masses, let us use our time to examine more closely and clarify our ideas about what is to be done, while we try, by wishes and deeds, to hasten the time of acting and accomplishing.

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I based my remarks upon two principles:

First: Anarchy cannot be made by force. Anarchist communism, applied in its full breadth and with all its beneficial effects, is only possible when it is understood and wanted by large popular masses that embrace all the elements necessary to creating a society superior to the present one. One can conceive selected groups, whose members live in relationships of voluntary and free association among them and with similar groups, and it will be good that such groups exist, and it will be our task to create them as experiments and examples; however, such groups will not constitute the anarchist communist society, yet, rather they will be cases of devotion and sacrifice for the cause, until they succeed in involving all or large part of the population. Therefore, on the morrow of the violent revolution, if it has to come to a violent revolution, it will not be a matter of accomplishing anarchist communism, but one of setting off towards anarchist communism.

Second: the conversion of the masses to anarchy and communism — and even to the mildest form of socialism — is not possible as long as the present social and economic conditions last. Since such conditions, which keep workers slave for the benefit of those privileged, are preserved and perpetuated by brutal force, it is necessary to change them violently through the revolutionary action of conscious minorities. Hence, if the principle is granted that anarchy cannot be made by force, without the conscious will of the masses, the revolution cannot be made to accomplish anarchy directly and immediately, but rather to create the conditions that make a rapid evolution towards anarchy possible.

The following sentence is often repeated: “The revolution will be anarchist or will not be at all”. This claim may look very “revolutionary”, very “anarchist”; however, it is actually nonsense, when it is not a means, worse than reformism itself, to paralyze good will and induce people to keep quiet, to peacefully put up with the present, waiting for the forthcoming heaven.

Evidently, either “the anarchist revolution” will be anarchist or it will not be at all. However, did not revolutions happen in the world, when the possibility of an anarchist society was yet to be conceived? Won’t any revolution ever happen again until the masses are converted to anarchism? As we fail to convert to anarchism the masses brutalized by their life conditions, should we give up any revolution and submit to living in a monarchical and bourgeois regime?

The truth is that the revolution will be what it may be, and our task is to speed it up as much as possible and strive to make it as radical as possible.

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However, let us be quite clear.

The revolution will not be anarchist if the masses are not anarchist, as unfortunately it is presently the case. However, we are anarchists, we must remain anarchists and act like anarchists before, during and after the revolution.

Without the anarchists, without the anarchists’ activity, if the anarchists accepted any kind of government whatsoever and any so called transition constitution, the next revolution would bear new forms of oppression and exploitation even worse than the present, instead of marking a progress of freedom and justice and the start of a complete liberation of mankind. At best, it would only bring about a shallow improvement, largely delusive and by no means adequate to the effort, the sacrifices, the pain of a revolution, such as expected in a more or less near future.

After contributing to overthrow the present regime, our task is to prevent, or try to prevent a new government form arising; failing to do that, at least we must struggle to prevent the new government from being exclusive and concentrating all social power in its hands; it must remain weak and unsteady, it must not be able to have enough military and financial strength, and it must be acknowledged and obeyed as little as possible. In any case, we anarchist should never take part in it, never acknowledge it, and always fight against it as we fight against the present government.

We must stay with the masses, encourage them to act directly, to take possession of the production means and organize the work and the product distribution, to occupy housing, to perform public services without waiting for resolutions or commands from higher-ranking authorities. We must contribute to such work with all our forces, and to that end we must immediately start to engage in acquiring as many skills as possible.

However, as we must uncompromisingly oppose all restraining and repressing bodies and everything that tends to forcibly hinder the will of the people and the freedom of minorities, so we must take care not to destroy those things and disorganize those useful services that we cannot replace in a better way.

We must remember that violence, unfortunately necessary to resist violence, is no use to build anything good: it is the natural enemy of freedom, the procreator of tyranny, therefore it must be kept within the limits of strict necessity.

Revolution is useful, necessary to tear down the violence of governments and privileged people; however, the establishment of a society of free people can only result from a free evolution.

It is the task of the anarchists to watch over the freedom of evolution, which is always at risk as long as men are thirsty for domination and privileges.

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A question of great, vital importance, nay, the question that must stand out on the revolutionaries' minds, is food.

There was a time when the prejudice spread out that industrial and farm products were so abundant that it would be possible to live on stockpiles for long, postponing the organization of production to a later time, after the accomplishment of the social transformation. It made an inviting propaganda item to be able to say: "People are out of everything, while everything abounds and the warehouses overflow with every good; people die of starvation and wheat rots in the granaries". Things were made so much simpler. An expropriation was enough to secure the well-being of everyone: there would be plenty of time to deal with all the rest.

Unfortunately, quite the opposite is true.

Everything is running out, and a bad harvest, or some major disaster, is enough to cause a complete shortage and the impossibility to provide to everyone's needs, even within the limits imposed by capitalism to the popular masses.

It is true that the production capacity has become almost unlimited, thanks to the means nowadays provided by mechanics, chemistry, scientific work organization, etc.

However, it's one thing to be able to produce and another to have produced. Owners and capitalists do not sufficiently exploit the means of production they own, and prevent other from exploiting them, partly for incompetence and indifference, and largely because of a system that often makes profits decrease with abundance and increase with shortage.

Because of the disorder inherent in the individualistic economy, there are unbalances between one place and the other, overproduction crises, etc., but all in all the general production is always on the verge of famine.

As a consequence, we must bear in mind that on the morrow of the revolution we shall be faced with the danger of hunger. This is not a reason for delaying the revolution, because the state of production will, with minor variations, remain the same, so long as the capitalist system lasts.

But it is a reason for us to pay attention to the problem and of how in a revolutionary situation, to avoid all waste, to preach the need for reducing consumption to a minimum, and to take immediate steps to increase production, especially of food.

This is a topic about which some essays already exist, but which needs to be investigated more thoroughly, mainly focusing on the technical means to bring the quantity of food to the level of needs.<sup>1</sup>

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## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> I will soon come back to the issue of money.