

## WHERE IS THE WAY OUT?

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### ON THE CONDITION OF THE LABOURING CLASSES

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A boy is born in the country ; he grows up and works with his father, his grandfather, his mother.

And the boy sees that from the field which he ploughed, harrowed, and seeded with his father, which his mother and the girl cut with the sickle and harvested, the sheaves which he himself pulled down from the rick, to help his mother, – the boy sees that his father does not take the first ricks to his own house, but, past the garden, to the threshing-floor of the landed proprietor. Driving with the squeaky wagon, which he and his father had themselves fastened with ropes, past the manor, the boy sees on the balcony a dressed-up lady sitting near a shining samovar at a table, which is covered with dishes, pastry, and sweets, and on the other side of the road, in a cleared space, the proprietor's two boys, in embroidered shirts and shining boots, playing ball.

One boy throws the ball over the wagon.

" Pick it up, boy ! " he shouts.

"Pick it up, Vaska! " Vaska's father, walking beside the wagon, with the reins in his hand, and taking off his hat, cries out to his son.

" What is this ? " thinks the boy. " I am worn out from work, and they play, and I am to pick up their ball." But he picks up the ball, and the young lord, without looking at the boy, takes the ball with his white hand out of the sunburnt black hand of the boy, and goes back to his game.

The father has walked on with the wagon. The boy catches up with him on a run, shuffling his tattered low boots in the dust of the road, and they drive into the manorial threshing-floor, which is full of wagons with sheaves. The busy steward, in linen frock coat, which is wet from perspiration in the back, and with a rod in his hand, meets the boy's father, whom he scolds for not having driven to the right spot. His father makes excuses, walks as though fatigued, jerks the tired horse by the rein, and drives the wagon on the other side.

The boy goes up to his father and asks :

"Father, why do we take our rye to him? We harvested it ? "

" Because the land is theirs," the father answers, angrily.

" Who gave them the land ?"

"Ask the steward. He will show you who. Do you see their rod ? "

"Where will they put all this corn ?"

"They will thresh it, and then they will sell it."

"And what will they do with the money ?"

" They will buy those cakes that you saw on the table as we drove by." The boy grows silent and falls to musing. But he has no time for that. They are shouting to his father to move the wagon closer to the barn. The father moves the wagon, climbs upon it, and, having with difficulty loosened the ropes, straining his rupture more and more, throws the sheaves into the mow, while the boy holds the old mare, which he has for two years been driving to pasture, keeping the flies away from her, as his father commands him to do. He thinks and thinks, and cannot understand why the land does not belong to those who work upon it, but to those sons of the lord, who in embroidered shirts play ball and drink tea and eat cakes.

The boy continues to think about it at work, and when he goes to bed, and when he pastures the horses, – and can find no answer for it. All say that it must be so, and all live in that manner.

And the boy grows up, and he is married off, and children are born to him, and his children ask the same question of him, and he answers them in the same way that his father answered him. And, living like him in want, he works submissively for other, idle people.

And thus he lives, and thus live all around him. Wherever he may go or travel, – so a pilgrim tells him, – it is the same. Everywhere peasants work above their strength for other, idle people, by overwork get ruptures, asthma, consumption, take to drinking from grief, and die before their time ; the women exhaust their last strength in cooking, attending to the cattle, washing for the peasants, and making their clothes, and also age before their time, and waste away from overwork and untimely labour.

And everywhere those they work for provide themselves with buggies, carriages, trotters, horses, build arbours, arrange games, and from Easter to Easter, from morning until evening, dress themselves up as for a holiday, play and eat and drink every day as even on the greatest holiday is not the case with him who works for them.

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Why is that so ?

The first answer which presents itself to the labouring farmer is

this, that it is so, because the land was taken from him and was given to those who do not work it.

lie and his family have to eat,

has either no land at all, or so little of it that it will not support his family. Thus he must starve or else take the land which is not far from the farms, but which does not belong to those who work; he has to take the land, agreeing to those conditions which are offered to him.

At first it seems to be so, but that is not all of it : there are peasants who have enough land, and who may be able to support themselves by it.

But it turns out that even such peasants, all of them or a part, again sell themselves into slavery. Why is that so ? Because the peasants have to buy for money ploughshares, scythes, horseshoes, materials for buildings, kerosene, tea, sugar, liquor, ropes, salt, matches, cottons, tobacco ; but the money which a peasant earns by the sale of his products is all the time taken away from him in the form of direct and indirect imposts, and the price of those articles which he needs is raised. Thus the majority of the peasants are unable to provide themselves with the necessary money except by selling themselves into slavery to those who have the money.

This the peasants and their wives and daughters do.

Some sell themselves in their neighbourhood ; others sell themselves a distance away, in the capitals, – hiring themselves out as lackeys, coachmen, nurses, wet-nurses, chambermaids, bath servants, waiters, and, above all, as factory hands, going to the cities by whole families.

Having sold themselves into these occupations in the cities, the country people become unaccustomed to farm labour and simplicity of life, and get used to city food, dress, beverages, and through these habits still more confirm their slavery.

Thus it is not merely the lack of land that causes the labouring man to be in the slavery of the rich ; the cause of it is also to be found in the taxes, the raised price of commodities, and the luxurious city habits, which the country workers get used to, when they go away from their villages.

The slavery began with the land, with the land being taken away from the workers, but this slavery has been strengthened and confirmed by this, that the country people have become unaccustomed to labour and have become used to city luxury, which cannot be satisfied in any other way than by selling themselves into slavery to those who have money ; and this slavery is growing and becoming more and more confirmed.

In the country people live on semi-starvation rations, in constant labour and want, enslaved to the landowners ; in the cities, in the factories and plants, the labourers live in slavery to the

manufacturers, for generations physically and morally corrupted by the monotonous, tedious, unhealthy work, which is not proper for a man. And with the years the situation of either class of men is getting worse and worse. In the country the people are getting poorer and poorer, because an ever growing number of people are going to the factories. In the cities the people are not getting poorer, but seemingly richer, but at the same time more and more incontinent, and more and more unable to do any other work than the kind they are used to, and so they are more and more in the power of the manufacturers.

Thus the power of the landowners and the manufacturers, of the rich in general, is getting stronger and stronger, while the condition of the labourers is getting worse and worse. What, then, is the way out of this situation ? Is there one ?

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It would seem that the liberation from the slavery of the land is very easy. For this liberation all that is needed is to recognize what is self-understood, and what people would never have doubted, if they were not deceived, namely, that every man born has the right to gain his sustenance from the land, just as every man has a right to the air and the sun, and that, therefore, no one who does not work the land has the right to regard the land as his own and to keep others from working it.

But the government will never permit this liberation from the slavery of the land to take place, because the majority of the men who constitute the government own lands, and upon this ownership all their existence is based.

They know this, and so they try with all their forces to hold on to this right, and defend this right.

About thirty years ago Henry George proposed, not only a rational, but a very practicable project for the emancipation of the land from ownership. But neither in America nor in England (in France they do not even speak of it) was this project accepted, and they tried in every way to overthrow it; but, as it is impossible to overthrow it, they passed it in silence.

If this project has not been accepted in America and in England, there is still less hope that this project will be accepted in monarchical countries, such as Germany, Austria, or Russia.

In Russia vast expanses of territory have been seized by private individuals and by the Tsar and the imperial family, and so there is no hope that these men, feeling themselves as helpless without the right to the land as the birds feel without their nest, will give up their right and will refrain from fighting for this right with all their strength. And so, as long as the power shall be on the side of the government, which is composed of landowners, there will be no emancipation from the ownership of the land.

Just as little, and even less, will there be a liberation from the taxes. The whole government, from the head of the state, the Tsar, down to the last policeman, lives by the taxes. And so the abolition of the taxes by the government is as unthinkable as that a man should take from himself his only means of existence.

It is true, some governments seem to be trying to relieve their people from the burden of the taxes by transferring them to the income, by increasing the taxes in accordance with the income. But such a transference of the taxes from a direct levy to the income cannot deceive the masses, because the rich, that is, the merchants, landowners, and capitalists will, in proportion with the increase of the taxes, increase the price of commodities which are needed by the labourers and the price of the land, and will lower the wages of labour.

Thus the whole burden of the taxes will again be borne by the labourers.

For the labourers to be freed from the slavery which is due to this, that the implements of production are owned by the capitalists, the learned have proposed a whole series of measures, in consequence of which, according to their assumption, the wages of the labourers are to increase all the time, while the hours of labour must diminish, and finally all the implements of labour have to pass from the possession of the masters into the hands of the labourers, so that the labourers, possessing all the factories and plants, will not be compelled to give up a part of their labours to the capitalists, but will have for their labours the necessary commodities. This method has been advocated in Europe, in England, France, and Germany, for more than thirty years, but so far there has not only been no realization of this method, but not even any approach to it.

There exist labour unions, strikes are inaugurated, by means of which the labourers demand fewer working hours and greater pay ; but since the governments, who are united with the capitalists, do not allow, and never will allow, away from the capitalists, the essence of the matter remains the same.

Receiving better pay and doing less work, the labourers increase their needs and so remain in the same slavery to the capitalists.

Thus the slavery in which the working people are can obviously not be destroyed so long as the governments, in the first place, will secure the ownership of land to the non-working landowners ; in the second, will collect direct and indirect taxes ; in the third, will defend the property of the capitalists.

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The slavery of the working people is due to this, that there are governments. But if the slavery of the labourers is due to the government, the emancipation is naturally conditioned by the abolition of the existing governments and the establishment of new

governments, – such as will make possible the liberation of the land from ownership, the abolition of taxes, and the transference of the capital and the factories into the power and control of the working people.

There are men who recognize this issue as possible, and who are preparing themselves for it.  
(since such an action, which is always connected with violence and murder, is immoral and ruinous for the cause itself, as has frequently been repeated in history) such actions are impossible in our time.

The time has long ago passed, when the governments naïvely believed in their beneficent destiny for humanity and did not take any measures for securing themselves against rebellions (besides, there were no railways and no telegraphs then), and they were easily overthrown, as was the case in England in 1740, in France during the great Revolution and later, and in Germany in 1848. Since then there has been but one revolution, in 1871, and that one happened under exceptional conditions. In our day revolutions and the overthrow of governments are simply impossible. They are impossible, because in our time the governments, knowing their uselessness and harmfulness, and that in our time no one believes in their sanctity, are guided by nothing but a feeling of self-preservation, and, making use of all the means at their command, are constantly on the lookout for everything which may not only impair their power, but even shake it.

Every government has in our time an army of officials, which is connected by means of railways, telegraphs, telephones ; it has fortresses and prisons with all the most modern appliances, – photography, anthropometric measurements, mines, cannon, guns, all the most perfect instruments of violence that can be had, – and the moment something new appears, it is at once applied to purposes of self-preservation. There is the organization of espionage, a venal clergy, venal scholars and artists, and a venal press. Above all else, every government has a body of officers, who are corrupted by patriotism, bribery, and hypnotism, and millions of physically sound and morally undeveloped children of twenty-one years of age, – the soldiers, or a rabble of immoral hirelings, who are stultified by discipline and are ready for any crime which they are ordered by their superiors to commit.

And so it is impossible in our time by force to destroy the government, which is in possession of such means, and which is all the time on guard. No government will allow this to be done to itself. And so long as there shall be a government, it will maintain the ownership of the land, the collection of the taxes, and the possession of capital, because the larger landowners and the officials, who receive their salaries from the taxes, and the capitalists form parts of the government. Every attempt of the labourers to get possession of the land, which is in the hands of private owners, always ended, – in that the soldiers will come, will beat and drive away those who want to seize the land, and will give it back to the owner. In the same way will end every attempt at not

paying the taxes demanded, – the soldiers will come, will take away as much as the taxes amount to, and will beat him who refuses to pay what is demanded of him. The same will happen to those who will try, not so much to seize the implements of production, the factory, but simply to institute a strike, to keep other workmen from lowering the wages for work. The soldiers will come and will disperse the participants, as has constantly happened in every place, in Europe and in Russia. So long as the soldiers are in the hands of the government, which lives on taxes and is connected with the owners of land and of capital, a revolution is impossible. And so long as the soldiers are in the hands of the government, the structure of life will be such as those who have the soldiers in their hands will want it to be.

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And so there naturally arises the question : Who are these soldiers ?

These soldiers are the same people whose land has been taken away, from whom the taxes are being collected, and who are in slavery to the capitalists.

Why do these soldiers act against themselves ?

They do so because they cannot do otherwise. They cannot do otherwise, because by a long, complex past – of their education, of their religious instruction, of hypnotization – they have been brought to such a state that they cannot reflect, and are able only to obey. The government, having in its hands the money, which it has taken from the masses, with this money bribes all kinds of chiefs, who have to enlist soldiers, and then military chiefs, who have to teach, that is, deprive the men of their human consciousness ; but above all, the government with this money bribes the teachers and the clergy', who have to use every effort for impressing adults and children with the idea that militarism, that is, the preparation for murder, is not only useful for men, but also good and pleasing to God. And year after year, though they see that they and their like are enslaving the masses to the rich and the government, they submissively enter the army, and, having entered, without a murmur do everything prescribed to them, though that not only may be the obvious detriment of their brothers, but may even be the killing of their own parents.

The bribed officials, military teachers, and the clergy prepare the soldiers, by stupefying them.

The soldiers, at the command of their superiors and with threats to deprive of liberty, to inflict wounds and death, take the income from the land, the taxes, and the income from the factories, from commerce, for the benefit of the ruling classes. But the ruling classes use a part of this money for bribing the chiefs, the military teachers, and the clergy.

Thus the circle is closed, and there does not seem to be any way out.

The issue suggested by the revolutionists, which consists in using force in the struggle with force, is obviously impossible. The governments, who are already in possession of a disciplined force, will never permit the formation of another disciplined force. All the attempts of the past century have shown how vain such attempts are. Nor is there a way out, as the socialists believe, by means of forming a great economic force which would be able to fight successfully—against the consolidated and ever more consolidating force of the capitalists. Never will the labour unions, who may be in possession of a few miserable millions, be able to fight against the economic power of the multi-millionaires, who are always supported by the military force. Just as little is there a way out, as is proposed by other socialists, by getting possession of the majority of the parliament. Such a majority in the parliament will not attain anything, so long as the army shall be in the hands of the governments. The moment the decrees of the parliament shall be opposed to the interests of the ruling classes, the government will close and disperse such a parliament, as has been so frequently done and as will be done so long as the army is in the hands of the government. The introduction of socialistic principles into the army will not accomplish anything.

The hypnotism of the army is so artfully applied that the most free-thinking and rational person will, so long as he is in the army, always do what is demanded of him.

Thus there is no way out by means of revolution or in socialism.

If there is a way out, it is the one which has not been used yet and which alone incontestably destroys the whole consolidated, artful, and long-established governmental machine for the enslavement of the masses. This way out consists in refusing to enter into the army, before one is subjected to the stupefying and corrupting influence of discipline.

This way out is the only one which is possible and which at the same time is inevitably obligatory for every individual person. It is the only possible one, because the existing violence is based on three actions of the government, — on the robbery of the masses, on the distribution of money thus taken to those who commit the robbery, and on the drafting of the masses into the army.

A private individual cannot keep the government from practising robbery on the masses by means of the drafted army, nor can it keep it from distributing the money collected from the masses to those who are needed by the government for the drafting of the army and their stultification ; but he can keep the masses from entering into the army, by not joining it himself and by explaining to others the essence of the deception to which they fall a prey when they enter into the army.

Not only can every man do so, – every private individual must do so. Every private individual must do so, because the entrance into military service is a renunciation of every religion, (every one of them prohibits murder), and a renunciation of human dignity, – a voluntary entrance into slavery having for its purpose nothing but murder.

In this is the only possible, necessary, and inevitable way out from that enslavement in which the ruling classes keep the working people.

The way out does not consist in destroying violence by means of violence, not in seizing the implements of production or in fighting the governments in the parliaments, but in every man's recognition of the truth for himself, in practising it, and in acting in accordance with it. But the truth that a man must not kill his neighbour has been so universally cognized by humanity that it is known to everybody.

Let only men apply their forces, not to external phenomena, but to the causes of the phenomena, to their own lives, and like wax before the fire will all that power of violence and evil melt, which now holds and torments people.

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