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If we examine the source of social wealth, we find that it resides exclusively in intelligence and labour. Indeed, it is through labour and intelligence that society lives and breathes, grows and develops, and if these two forces were to withdraw from it for even a single moment it would immediately dissolve and all its members would perish as if through a sudden catastrophe.

But these two forces can only act on the condition that a third element, inert in itself, serves as an instrument to sustain the life of society in the hands of the men of intelligence and labour. This element is the land. It would seem, then, that the land should belong to all members of society equally, who, through their combined efforts, would be able to exploit the wealth it holds in its depths. But this is not the case. Through deceit and violence, some individuals seized this common land that we walk upon. Declaring themselves to be the exclusive owners of this land, they established through law that it will forever remain their property and that this right to property shall form the basis of the social order. They declare that their

right to property shall dominate all the rights of humanity, and that, if need be, it may absorb them all – so that, for example, it may infringe upon the right to life that every man acquires at birth, if this right, which is the right of all men, in any way conflicts with the right to property of a privileged few. After the land, this right to property was then applied to other instruments of labour linked to the land without being an integral part of it, to which we can give the generic name of capital [capitaux]. Now since land and capital are sterile in themselves and only acquire value [de valeur] through labour, and since they are also the raw materials that the active forces of society must put to work, the result is that the immense majority of citizens, who are completely excluded from the distribution [partage] of these materials, find themselves forced to toil on land whose produce they do not reap, and to enrich through their labour an idle minority that gathers up everything. And so neither the instruments nor the fruits of labour belong to the working masses but to a usurping aristocracy that consumes and does not produce. The sap of the trees is absorbed by an abundance of gluttonous leaves and twigs to the detriment of the fertile branches that languish and wither. The honey produced by the bees is devoured by hornets.

Such is our social order, an order founded on conquest and which divided the population into two categories, the victors and the vanquished, reserving the exclusive ownership of the land for the former while transforming the latter into vile cattle destined solely to work and manure the land of these monsters. The logical consequence of such an organisation is slavery, and we can see that the principle of property, established in accordance with it, has not failed to bring about that very consequence. Indeed, since land only derives its value from labour, the result has been that from the right to own land the privileged have also assumed the right to own those who make it fertile, considering them to be, in the first instance, the complement to their material property, and, in the final analysis,

essarily retreat back up all the degrees of privilege right until personal slavery – the ultimate expression of personal right, and the ultimate expression of the right to property. In order to return to such a point, we would have to pretend that the long existence of Christianity had never come to pass; the Gospels would have to be erased from the memory of man, and European civilization would have to be buried in the night of some sort of universal catastrophe. Fortunately, none of these things are to be foreseen, and we can, without any illusions, rest assured that all nations are advancing, with the French leading the way, towards the definitive conquest of absolute equality.

Moreover, it should be clear that by absolute equality we do not mean the equal distribution of the land among all members of society. Something similar has already been attempted, and it did not even offset the underlying problem. It would lead only to an extreme division of property that would, at bottom, change nothing of the right to property itself. Since wealth always stems from possession of the instruments of labour and not from labour itself, the spirit of individualism, if all its force is left intact, would imperceptibly tend toward the reconstruction of large-scale properties and would promptly re-establish the inequality of social conditions. Equality, therefore, should only be realised through a regime of association, substituted in place of the reign of individual property. This is why we see all the men of the future working fervently to clarify the elements of this association. We expect to make our contribution to this labour of devotion at a later date.

as personal property completely independent of the land. However, the principle of equality, which slowly works to destroy all forms of exploitation of man by man, dealt the first blow to this sacrilegious right to property by bringing an end to domestic slavery. Privilege thus had to limit itself to no longer owning men as chattel but merely as an immovable good or asset that belonged to the property and not to the property owner, to be passed on with the property and not separated from it. Even so, we saw the right to property reappear in the fifteenth century in all its barbarism with the reestablishment of absolute slavery for Negroes, and it has been maintained ever since as a permanent affront to humanity. For today the inhabitants of a territory, which is said to be French, own men in the same way they own a horse or a coat – that is, by virtue of the right to property.

Moreover, there is not as great a contradiction as first appears between the social conditions of the colonies and our own. After eighteen centuries of a constant struggle undertaken against privilege and for the principle of equality, slavery could certainly not be re-established in all its naked brutality at the very heart of the country that bears the brunt of this struggle. But if it does not exist in name, it exists in fact, and the right to property, while more hypocritical in Paris than in Martinique or ancient Rome, is neither less insolent nor less aggressive. Servitude does not mean being the transferable slave of a man, or being a serf attached to his land [glèbe]; it means being completely dispossessed of the instruments of labour, and then being put at the mercy of those privileged groups who usurped them, and who retain through violence their exclusive ownership of these instruments that are indispensable to the workers. This monopolisation [accaparement] is thus a permanent despoilment. From this it becomes clear that it is not one or another political form of government that maintains the masses in a state of slavery, but rather the usurpation of property presented as the fundamental basis of the existing social order. For

from the moment a privileged caste passes on land and capital through inheritance, all other citizens, though not condemned to remain slaves of any given individual, nevertheless become absolutely dependent on that caste, since their only remaining freedom is the choice of which master will rule over them.

It is apparently in this sense that today the rich are said to provide workers with employment. Yes, undoubtedly they employ them, just as the Romans employed their slaves and the colonisers employ their Negroes, so as to nourish their all-consuming idleness from the sweat of these workers. Even if they agree to leave their victims just enough bread to spare them from death they do so only out of self-interest, just as one might add a few drops of oil onto the cogs of a mechanism to prevent rust from causing it to break down. Moreover, it is in the interest of the wealthy that the workers are able to perpetuate their miserable flesh so as to bring into the world the children of the slaves who are destined one day to serve the children of the oppressors, and thereby continue from one generation to the next this dual, parallel inheritance of opulence and poverty, of pleasure and pain, that constitutes our social order. When the proletarian has suffered enough and has provided replacements to suffer after him his only remaining task it to go and die in a hospital so that his desiccated corpse can serve to teach doctors the art of healing the wealthy.

From where, I ask, does this horrific degradation of a great people originate, if not from the principle of property that confers on an idle aristocracy the exclusive and hereditary ownership of the instruments of labour which should belong only to those who use them to work? Even the most laborious work barely provides the masses with what they need to live from one day to the next, and never enough to make provision for the days ahead. For if through a surge of anger or fear the property owners decide to prevent them from using the instruments of labour their lives immediately suffer. And what does it matter to the privileged! They lack for nothing; they can wait.

luxury, unless they quickly deserted their old salons and removed their beautiful attire, so as to dirty their hands by cultivating a plot of land, one that would be large enough for all of them, as large as their own district. But, given that a country of thirty three million men can no longer retreat to the Aventine Hill, let us imagine the opposite and more likely hypothesis, that the entire caste feeding off the labour of the proletariat [also] leaves France, taking with it nothing but its own arms [...]. Who would notice their absence, other than by noticing the well-being and prosperity that would spread among the working population, who will own the land and be rid of the parasites who previously devoured it? For if the country is impoverished by the loss of a single worker, it is enriched by the loss of an idler. When a man who has nothing but wealth dies, nothing is lost. On the contrary, if he has no heir to inherent his wealth and his property is returned to the state, his death benefits the country.

Today it is easy to see that the principle of property is in decline. The best minds prophesy its imminent fall, at the same time as they hope and pray for it. Its decline dates back to the advent of Christ, who introduced into European society the principle that was fatally destructive of the right to property, by which I mean the right to equality, which for eighteen centuries has been invading its enemy's terrain more and more with every passing day. In this long struggle the right to property has been weakened by the successive abolition of all previously acquired privileges, for which it was the common origin, and the source of its strength. It will end up disappearing altogether along with the final privileges that are still in place, and in which it has taken refuge. This is the least one could expect from studying the history of the past and observing the march of the present. For if the right to property were destined to triumph, a bleak future indeed would appear before us. Humanity is not stationary; it either advances or it retreats. And the road forward goes towards equality. If it goes backwards it must nec-

ier, the latter strive to free themselves from the yoke. What we have here is not a community, but rather a conflict of interests. There is no other relation between the two unequal halves of society than that of struggle, and their only need is to cause the other as much harm as possible – in a word, it is organised war. We know that the lynxes of monopoly wage this war more through treachery than violence. They are free to declare that it is for the sheep's own benefit that they so closely shear the wool from their backs. Contrived words of concord and fraternity that mask an insatiable thirst for exploitation may fool some dupes. But facts are also eloquent, and they are ultimately far more persuasive and far more consequential. The facts show that there is a struggle, and that in this struggle one of the parties must succumb, for there can be no fusion between two contradictory principles, between good and evil. To know who must succumb one need only see on which side justice lies.

For it seems that no-one thinks that any form of society can exist without labour, nor, consequently, that the idle landowners can live in any way other than by the labour of those who make their land fertile. But why do the workers need a caste of lazy landowners who devour the fruits of the land without creating them? Why should they need the land to belong to anyone but themselves, who give the land all its value?

Let us imagine that all the people who live by the sweat of their brow one day leave France's harsh and difficult land, and emigrate en masse to some distant land where they might found an association of free men, where the right to live belong to those who work. Would we see them forced to create an aristocracy from within their midst and to put it in possession of all the instruments of social wealth? Would this new people be unable to live without all this? And what would our proud lords of the land and of finance do, I wonder, if suddenly abandoned along with their houses, their vast fields, and their horses and carriages? They would die of hunger amid all this

The working population would have died of hunger ten times over before the privileged could be forced to go to its aid. This could be seen after the July Revolution, when through either a spirit of vengeance or through selfish fear the capitalists suddenly tightened their grip on their capital, thereby sacrificing the enormous profits they draw from the worker's labour simply for the pleasure of depriving him of even that meagre share of the fruits of his labour that must otherwise be relinquished to him. We saw these new barons of hoarded wealth [ces féodaux du coffre-fort] withdraw into their Dutch cheese to contemplate impassively the anguish of the people they decimated through hunger, as recompense for the selflessness with which the people had devoted themselves to serving their own hatred and envy against the nobility and clergy.

Non-violent reprisals and a war of deferral [une guerre de temporisation] are impossible against an enemy who has such abundant resources behind it. To appreciate the incapacity of the workers to fight against the allied forces of capital one need only consider the findings of the most recent experiment carried out in Lyon, where sixty thousand men were forced to submit to the will of a few hundred manufacturers who subdued them through famine. It is indeed a miracle that there were writers who so much as considered serious resistance to oppression, and that the workers attacked their true enemies en masse. No small amount of misery was necessary before these simple men were able to grasp its real cause. However, this is not a typical case; most of the impoverished classes still misunderstand the source of their ills. Profound ignorance is the first and most deplorable consequence of their enslavement; it almost always makes them the docile instruments of the wicked passions of the privileged. How could the destitute, eternally bent beneath an exhausting task, with no guarantee of a piece of bread at the end of their daily fatigue, cultivate their intelligence, enlighten their reason, and reflect on social phenomena in which they play only a passive role?

Doomed to a bestial existence, and all too happy to receive what their masters deign to leave them of the products of their own labour, as if this were an act of charity, all they see in the hand that exploits them is the hand that feeds them, and they are ready to persecute at their master's signal the men of devotion who attempt to show them a better future. Alas! Humanity has always marched with a blindfold over its eyes, and only briefly raises it, from time to time, in order to discern and rejoin the road it most often blindly follows. Every step humanity takes on the path of progress crushes the guide who clears the way, and it must first make victims of those it will later consider heroes. The Gracchi were torn to pieces on the streets of Rome by a mass of plebeians stirred up by the words of patrician families. Jesus Christ atoned on the cross amidst the joyous cries of a Jewish mob incited by priests and Pharisees. The most generous defenders of freedom in our first Revolution climbed the scaffold because of the ingratitude and cowardice of the people. The people allowed its cruellest enemies to condemn the memory of these defenders to be cursed through an execrable concert of calumnies and, still today, every morning, wretches teach the French to spit on the tombs of these martyrs.

What combination of circumstances is required for the masses to open their eyes to the truth and learn to distinguish between their friends and their oppressors? If they rose up with such impressive unanimity in Lyon [in November 1831], it is because the conflict of interests was so obvious, the division between the opposing camps so sharp, that it became impossible even for the most stupid of people not to see clearly that they were the victims of insatiable greed. Unanimity also stemmed from the fact that, when these poor wretches attempted to resist, they became all too familiar with the store of hatred and ferocity that lies hidden away in the hearts of those factious merchants, to whom they are handed over like prey. The working population of Lyon was dealt with like an invasion of locusts. While bloodthirsty dealers and traders once again prophesied of destruction and massacre with a sinister glee, artillery, arms and grapeshot were being readied from all sides, and soldiers, horses and caissons rushed to exterminate the workers to the last man, and to swell the ranks of their enemies with all these new martyrs. Extermination or humble acceptance of their duty – this is the only alternative offered to the workers. The duty of the workers is to consider themselves as machines that operate in order to create the pleasures enjoyed by the privileged. The duty of the workers is to die of poverty upon the silk fabrics they weave for the rich; the duty of the workers is to suffer Ugolino's torment; it is to see their wives and children slowly perish, consumed by famine, and then to expire themselves while blessing the successors of Archbishop Roger who, in the meanwhile, danced gaily to the sound of voluptuous music while displaying in sparkling salons the gold and silver brocades made by their victims.

Such are the disastrous extremities to which society has been led by the monopoly of property. How might it be possible to escape the disastrous consequences of a social law that concentrates all wealth in the hands of a few and that confers on a privileged caste the vast majority of the population's right to life or death? The spokesmen of this caste seek to instil the idea that, since neither one can do anything in isolation, owners and workers have equal need of the other, and, as a result, they share the same common interests. In the current state of things, it is certainly all too clear that the proletarians cannot survive twenty-four hours without the instruments of labour that the privileged control. But it is a strange form of reasoning to conclude from this that there is a community of interests between the two classes. We see nothing in this coupling but the union of the lion with the lamb. The classes only subsist on condition of boundless tyranny on the one hand and absolute submission on the other. But if the master [le maître] strives constantly to make the chains that bind the oppressed heav-