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Luigi Fabbri
Bourgeois influences on anarchism
1914

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Text by Italian anarchist communist Luigi Fabbri written around the time of the First World War, addressing problems arising from the stereotyping of anarchism in popular culture and the negative effect this had on actual anarchist movement. The original in Italian is available in: https://www.liberliber.it/online/autori/autori-f/luigi-fabbri/influenze-borghesi-sullanarchismo/

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Here is what Malato says in regard to the Russian Revolution, arguing with certain comrades who maintain, because of love of hyperbole, that things are worse in France than in Russia. This is an exaggeration which carries as consequences disinterest in the Russian movement and abstention from the protest carried on by intellectuals and workers in Paris in favor of the Russian revolutionaries. [These lines were written before the Bolsheviks seized control of and betrayed the Russian Revolution.] What should be said is that if the French government is more liberal than that in Russia it's not by its own merit, but because the French people knew how to make a revolution, a Commune, and consequently, have known how to resist reactionary violence. What should be said is: We desire that the Russian people will know what to do better than the French people, and will do it better…

Let us then leave to one side useless exaggerations, useless abuse and fratricidal polemics, and let us work toward something else, no matter how little it may be, instead of wasting time flapping our jaws.

Luigi Fabbri

nihilate? They would say that we are ignorant, malicious, and intolerant people who intend to strangle the voice of those who do not think as we do. They would say that we desire to defame rather than to convince them, because of an overriding spirit of supremacy and a desire to destroy their reputations.

And given that we're speaking of abusive language, let's also speak, before ending of that which is directed not against persons, but against ideas, and which we can term "rhetorical violence."

When we engage in propaganda, we have the custom, in order to cause the greatest impression, of speaking and writing in figurative manner, through means of contrast, hyperbole, simile. It's a natural method and one to which we must recur when we're directing ourselves to persons who are uncultivated or of simple spirit, and as such very impressionable, and in whom we can inculcate our ideas more. vividly and deep-seatedly through imagery rather than through cold and mathematical reasoning.

But this utility has a danger. While we all have a natural tendency to exaggerate arguments and images when writing or speaking about things which excite us, that same exaggeration at times neutralizes the effect of our words. Let's be clear. It appears to me that we anarchists shouldn't make too many distinctions: governments that are monarchic, theocratic, socialist, republican, are for us almost equal and we ought to combat them all. But if we make distinctions, we shouldn't make them in favor of the worst forms of government.

Because of this one can't say that the secular lie is worse than the religious lie. The religious lie is always the most potent and venomous of all, in a manner vastly more damaging than that of the secular lie, which, not because of intrinsic merit, but because of its inherent weakness, is less venomous. Let me explain: If you suffer from a toothache; you certainly would not seriously contend that it's worse than an attack of apoplexy. It's definitely not good to suffer from either of these things, but if some distinction need be made, frankly, we'd prefer the toothache. Wouldn't you agree?

Violent Literature and Anarchism

In order to avoid misunderstandings, we first need to clarify our terms. There is no theory of "violent anarchism." Anarchism is a combination of social doctrines which have as a common basis the elimination of coercive, human-over-human authority; and the majority of its partisans repudiate all forms of violence and consider it legitimate only as a form of self-defense. But, as there is no precise line separating defense and offense, and as the concept of defense can be understood in very diverse ways, there appear from time to time violent acts, committed by anarchists as a form of individual rebellion, directed against the lives of heads of state and the representatives of the ruling class.

We'll classify these manifestations of individual violence as "violent anarchism," and this solely for the sake of convenience, not because the name reflects the reality. In fact, all political movements, with no exceptions, have had periods in which violent acts of rebellion were committed in their names-generally when these movements found themselves at a point of extreme opposition to the dominant political or social institutions. At present, the movement which finds itself, or appears to find itself, in the forefront and in absolute opposition to the dominant institutions is anarchism; it's logical then that manifestations of violence against these dominant institutions assume the name and certain 'special characteristics of anarchism.

Having said this, I want to make brief note of something which appears to have gone unnoticed: the influence of literature upon

manifestations of violent rebellion, and the influence it receives from such acts.

Naturally, I'll leave to one side classic literature, though you'll certainly find justification for political crimes in Cicero, the bible, Shakespeare, Alfieri, and in all the historical works passed from hand to hand in youth. In the stories of Judith in the bible, and Brutus in ancient history, even with Orsini and Agesilao Milano in modem history, one finds a whole series of political crimes for which historians and poets have made at times unjustified apologies.

But I don't want to speak of these crimes, because to do so would carry me too far afield, because it would not be difficult to see in them the play of diverse circumstances which give them diverse characteristics. I only wish to refer to that literature which has a direct and open relation to the type of political act presently characterized as "anarchist."

Since 1880, acts of "violent anarchism" have continually occurred, with the largest number coming in the period 1891–1894, especially in France, Spain, and Italy, I don't know if anyone has noticed, but in precisely this period there flourished, especially in France, sensationalist literature which didn't shrink from glorifying to seventh heaven every violent "anarchist" act, including even the least understandable ,and justifiable; and its language was truly an instigation to propaganda by the deed.

The writers who dedicated themselves to this type of violent literary sport were almost all completely outside of the anarchist movement; writers were extremely rare in whom literary and artistic advocacy coincided with a true and natural theoretical persuasion, to a conscious acceptance of anarchist doctrines. Almost all of them worked in their private and public lives in complete contradiction to the terrible things and ideas they advocated in articles, in novels, in stories, or in poems. It happens with great frequency that one finds very violent "anarchist" declarations in the works of writers who are widely known to belong to parties diametri-

instead deserves our praise. Then, in order to appear superior, the propaganda becomes doubly damaging, because not only do we not convince the person we attack, but we also disgust those who hold him or her in esteem.

Another grave defect in polemicizing against or criticizing someone is the a priori presumption of bad faith. Naturally, when we deal with someone who does work treacherously, we shouldn't be afraid to say so. But to treat someone as dealing in bad faith, it's necessary to present proof evident to anyone. It will be enough to present such proof to decorously put an end to a polemic. And if the proof is not self-evident and there is no absolute certainty, it would be an error to base a rude polemic on vague and simple presumptions. It's preferable, even though one suspects the contrary, to suppose good faith in one's adversaries, while not hesitating to blast them when their bad faith later becomes evident.

In general, when one deals with proselytizing propaganda or polemics, it's necessary to construct the discussion upon a foundation of mutually admitted good faith, given that the purpose is to convince the greatest number of listeners who sympathize with one's opponent. If I discuss the conquest of public power with the head of a political party, I know well how difficult it will be to convince him, but what primarily interests me is to have those who follow him listen to what I say.

Additionally, we ought to treat the ideas of others and their persons with respect when we discuss them with people we don't know. Imagine if we had discussions with other anarchists in distant locations. What would they say if we treated them as if they were foolish and treacherous, basing ourselves upon an arbitrary interpretation of an isolated event, or upon a few phrases spoken about us, or upon an article in a periodical, etc.? What would they say if we attributed ideas to them which they didn't have, tending to think evil of them rather than good? What would they say, in sum, if we treated them not as sincere comrades, but rather as evilly intentioned adversaries whom we want to denigrate and an-

ciative adjectives serve equally to tar the priest, the monarchist, the republican, the socialist, and even those anarchists who have the misfortune not to think as we do — and this is a basic defect.

Without wanting to dwell upon the innumerable times that I've heard the terms "mystifiers," "clerics," "crazies," "cowards," and other similar niceties among good comrades, it will suffice to give an example I've found (and cite with disgust) in a periodical which calls itself "anarchist." In the letters column they have a correspondent called Fulano (not his real name) who promises that "during the next congress of social anarchists in Rome, I'll throw a bomb into them." That would appear a joke, a sick joke certainly, if the entire periodical hadn't been a testimonial to that rancorous, almost hateful phrase.

It's a commonplace that fights are most common between brothers… and that makes a miserable brotherhood. I would urge against these sad and painful methods. To me, the only adequate method appears to be not to resort to insults, or at most, limiting ourselves to exposing those who use abusive language or come to sow confusion and discord in our camp.

I still believe that it would be best that we get to know each other and above all to work without losing sight of the fact that we have before us our enemy, our true enemy who awaits the moment of our weakness in order to attack us. Never, in the manner of those parties in which action is the only reason for being. could it be said with more reason that laziness is the worst of the vices — and discord is the first.

Not always, especially from those adept at using the pen, is abuse against comrades or against our friends in parties with similar ends, the rudest type, which perhaps, is not the worst. How many slashes given with knowing malignity, how many elegant ironies, how much sarcasm, how much ridicule we use at times in order to tumble an adversary! These weapons are used especially when we know we're not right, when our consciences tell us that we're attacking someone who doesn't merit it and

cally opposed to anarchism. Even among those who for a moment appeared to have seriously embraced anarchist ideas, only one or two later maintained that intellectual direction. (The only ones I can recall are Mirbeau and Eekhoud.) The others, after only two or three years, came to support ideas totally contrary to those which they had earlier promoted with such virulence.

Ravachol, who even among anarchists is the type of violent rebel who receives the least sympathy, found numerous apologists among the literati, from Mirbeau to Paul Adam, in later years a militaristic mystic, who spoke of the terrible dynamiter in the most paradoxical way possible: "At last," to paraphrase Paul Adam, "in these times of skepticism and baseness a saint has been born to us." But he wasn't a saint like the "saint of Fogazzaro" for whom today Paul Adam might be inclined to write an apology. The most curious thing is that the literary types had a propensity to most approve those acts of rebellion which anarchist militants least approved of because of their extremely obvious antisocial character.

Who doesn't remember the inhuman expression, esthetically pleasing though it may have been, of Laurent Tailhade (who later became a militaristic nationalist) at a banquet given by "La Plume", the notable Parisian intellectual periodical, during the epidemic of dynamite explosions in 1893? At that banquet for poets and writers, Tailhade, in reference to bombing attacks, spouted the well known phrase; "What matter the victims if the gesture is beautiful?" Needless to say, anarchist militants disapproved of this esthetic theory of violence in the name of their philosophy and movement; but the phrase was spoken and had its effect.

The nationalist Maurice Barrès, who had written a markedly individualist novel, L'Ennemi des lois ["The Enemy of the Law"], which anarchists circulated as propaganda, wrote an article shortly after the decapitation of Émile Henry (whose act was severely judged by Élisée Reclus) filled with admiration and enthusiasm. I don't dare to reproduce even a small fragment of it because

in Italy certain things can't be said, even under the auspices of literary documentation; but whoever wants to satisfy his curiosity can read the "Journal" of Paris, May 28, 1894 and come away fully enlightened on the matter.

In regard to Vaillant, who was an anarchist who threw a bomb in the French parliament, we can't forget what was written the day after his execution by François Coppée, the celebrated nationalist poet, an ally and candidate of the clerics: "After having read the details of the decapitation of Vaillant, I have remained pensive … Despite myself, another spectacle has surged brusquely before my spirit. I've seen a group of men and women pressing one against another in the middle of a circus, under the gaze of the multitude, while from all sides of the immense amphitheater roared the fearful cry: 'To the lions!'; and near the group the lion keepers open the cage of the beasts. Oh! Pardon me sublime christians of the era of persecution, you who died to affirm our sweet faith of sacrifice and goodness, pardon me that I bring your memory before the melancholy men of our times! … but in the eyes of the anarchist walking to the guillotine shined, oh pain!, the same flame of intrepid madness which illuminated your eyes!"

Something similar would be said later in regard to assassins by the celebrated psychologist and literatus Henri Leyret in the book En plein faubourg ["On the Outskirts"]. Not much later Leyret gathered in a volume and presented to the public the sentences of the "good judge" Magnaud. I could go much further in reproducing enthusiastic defenses of and apologies for anarchist violence by writers such as Edward Conte, Séverine, [Lucien] Descaves, [Victor] Barrucand, etc.

At the end of 1897 the drama Les Mauvais bergers ["The Bad Shepherds"], by Octave Mirbeau, in which the most violent and revolutionary rhetoric flowed in rivers, was produced in Paris. It was received with great enthusiasm by the intellectuals of that city. As on the eve of the taking of the Bastille, when the sycophant poets and the queen herself, the literati and all the intelligent spirits of

composed of the oppressed and exploited like ourselves, people like us who desire to bring about positive changes in the present socio-political situation. Those parties which aspire to power will undoubtedly, when they achieve it, become enemies of the anarchists. But as this is yet distant, as their intentions can be good and we would also like to get rid of many evils which they want to eliminate, and as we have many enemies in common against whom we might, perhaps, launch more than one battle, it's useless, when it's not prejudicial to our interests, to treat them abusively, given that what now divides us is a difference of opinion; and to treat someone abusively because s/he doesn't think or work like us is a grand presumption, an antisocial act.

The propaganda and polemics directed at elements of the other parties should, in order to attract them, persuade them of the worthiness of our reasoning. What we've already said along general lines, that those who are treated as evil persuade themselves that they are evil, is very applicable to assimilable elements — youths, workers, already awakened minds, those already on the road to the truth. The impact of abuse delays them on this path rather than pushing them forward. Some of their leaders may be treacherous, but tell me, are we certain that there aren't persons working in the same manner among ourselves? Should we attack them all, gather them all in the same net, when what we want is to attack those who work treacherously, and not everyone in the entire party? Certainly many of their doctrines are in error, but to demonstrate their error it's not necessary to insult them; certain of their methods are harmful to the revolutionary cause, but working differently, in our own manner, and by using example and reasoned demonstration, we'll show them that our methods are better.

All of the comments in this pamphlet have suggested themselves to me because of a phenomenon which I've observed in our own camp. We have become so accustomed to shouting about everything, that we've been gradually losing our appreciation of the value of words and their differences in meaning. The same depre-

In propaganda it's always necessary to strike a chord which resonates in the human heart, and this will be impossible if you habituate your spirit to violence. After the first impression, habit takes over. It's like a person who is at first enormously impressed upon simply hearing the discharge of a revolver, but later doesn't become the least bit agitated when at a firing range. And we need to agitate incessantly in order to call attention to our arguments.

It could be objected, and with reason, that we live in an atmosphere of such violence and evil that it's not always possible to preserve the desirable serenity. No one would dispute this; my observations only have suggestive value for those who dedicate themselves to propaganda. Similarly, it's true that there are institutions and persons toward which it is not possible to be tolerant, toward which we have the sacrosanct duty, as our poet says, to combat them "without respect and without courtesy." For example, when one speaks of the government it would be stupid to search for euphemisms.

The truth is that when one speaks badly of trashy people it's necessary to be very careful not to attribute actions to them which they have not committed, in order not to give them a pretext to protest and proclaim their goodness and honor. Through excessive indulgence in this type of exaggeration, we've given rise among our adversaries to the ironic phrase, "It's raining. It's the government's fault!" But all governments, even though they're not responsible for the rain, cause much graver damage, and it's not necessary to have fears about attacking them. One can never attack governments, priests, and bosses enough, and if harsh polemic and propaganda is employed solely against them, nothing need be said, save what I've already mentioned.

But the "violence" of language in polemics and propaganda, "violence" in word and writing, which at times has sadly resulted in physical violence against persons, the "violence" which I deplore above all, is that which is employed against other progressive parties, more or less revolutionary, not that that matters, which are

the aristocracy and nobility enthused over the brilliant paradoxes of the Encyclopedists, and the fashionable ladies voluntarily lent themselves to reciting the biting satire of Beaumarchais and delighted in the anarchistic fantasies of Rabelais, so the bourgeois intellectuals of our day delight in immersing themselves in poetry and in exaggerating the explosions of anger which at times spring from the profound mysteries of human suffering.

Émile Zola himself, after having entered the fray with a warning shot, his Germinal, a gloomy novel of destruction, glorified anarchists in Paris, and even poeticized the figure of Salvat, the dynamiter, in whose character it's easy to recognize — painted as even more violent than he actually was — Vaillant. Read Melée Sociale, by Clemenceau, Pages Rouges, by Séverine, Sous le sabre, by Jean Ajalbert, Soleil des Morts, by Mauclair, Chanson des Gueux and Les Blasphèmes, by Jean Richepin, and Idylles Diaboliques, by Adolphe Retté; leaf through aristocratic literary magazines like "Mercure de France", "La Plume", "La Revue blanche", "Entretiens politiques et littéraires" and you'll find, in prose or poetry, in art criticism as in theater and book reviews, literary expressions of such violence that you'd never find them in actual anarchist magazines, just as you'd never hear them on the lips of actual anarchists.

It's understandable that the literati came to voice expressions in such contradiction to their actual beliefs. The artist searches for beauty over usefulness in an attitude; because of this approach that which the social anarchist can understand but not approve arouses enthusiam in the poet or writer. The act of rebellion for which complete account of its effects is not taken is morally condemnable like any other act of cruelty, even though committed with the best of intentions; the act of a surgeon who cuts off a leg when only the amputation of a toe is necessary would be similarly reprehensible. But these types of social and humane considerations, these distinctions, are scorned by individuals who love rebellion not for its objectives, but for its own sake and for its esthetic beauty.

These individuals are above all artists and writers educated in the school of Nietzsche (who was never an anarchist) who look upon all actions, however tragic or sublime they might be, solely from an esthetic point of view and disregard concepts such as good and bad, useful and harmful.

Of anarchist thought they've glimpsed nothing beyond individual emancipation; they've neglected the social problem, that is, the humanitarian side of anarchism. In that way they've come to conceive of an implacable "anarchy" in which one can worship an Émile Henry, but along with him a Passatore, a Nero, or an Ezzelino da Romano. It should be understood that acts by such individuals have importance solely because prose and poetry, drama or the novel, the pen or the brush, find in them a source of beauty and form. It's well known how much the love of a beautiful phrase, an original expression or a vibrant verse can falsify and deform the innate and true thoughts of a writer. Leopardi, who poetically cried: "To arms, take them up here," was in practice little disposed and had little aptitude to actually take them up. like Paul Adam he would have called anyone crazy who would have asked him in seriousness if he approved of the cold-blooded murder of a hermit by Ravachol (whom, however, he qualified as a "saint").

In the appreciation of a deed the esthetic element is completely different than the social and political element. Well then, to a doctrine (anarchism) which is based in scientific reasoning and which is eminently socio-political, they erroneously attribute that paradoxical esthetic which is solely and purely applicable to poetry and art. In all theories of renovation and revolution art and poetry are certainly factors of very secondary importance, and never, absolutely never, should they impose themselves on or have the right to guide individual or collective action solely for the sake of esthetic effects.

Independently of the inherent worth of an idea, art seizes it and embellishes it at whim, even at the risk of totally altering it in search of new forms of expression. It's the fate of all new and au-

a force which threatens or oppresses us places a material obstacle in our path, an obstacle which we can't overcome without resorting to violence — be it opposition to our propaganda, an obstacle to our movement, or brutal limitation of our liberty and well-being — only then is violence logical; but then to be "violent" in words would be very ridiculous. To present an example, I would say that it's ridiculous to attempt to convince people with violence, just as it would be ridiculous to attempt to win an insurrection with simple written or spoken arguments.

In accord with what I've said before, not all those who scream most violently are cowards, just as not all those who speak moderately are made of the metal of heroes, but the damage to our propaganda from the habits of the former are immeasurably greater than the damage from the habits of the latter. If tomorrow, in the material struggle, those who do not preach and posture as macho tough guys would show themselves to be cowards, it would be bad, but it would be an unobserved evil. But if those who mouth off about terrible things, and attract the antipathy of those who disagree with them, would show themselves to be cowards, the effect would be disastrous. And the people and our adversaries would have plausible reasons, at first glance, not to take us seriously.

The truth is that in times of calm, the rude word which is a moral slap in the face practically becomes a necessity when we find ourselves faced with a fact which makes us indignant or opponents of recognized dishonesty. But the harsh word of protest and the moral slap in the face are much more efficacious the less they are employed.

Try, rather, to use language which is moderate in form, but which in substance expresses what you want to say completely and without compromise; and try to habituate your readers to the polite form of the polemic. Then, when for good reason you have to raise the tone of your voice, see if you aren't better understood than you would be if you constantly screamed like a demon.

yet, become figures of ridicule, like some of the most strident editors of "Sempre Avanti" of Livorno, and of "Ordine" of Turin, who in the years 1893–1894 wrote with a dynamite bomb on the editor's desk, but who when brought to trial renounced anarchism, called upon the parish priest to testify to their good characters after devoutly recieving communion, called themselves evolutionary Spencerian anarchists, and other things even worse. It's less damaging when abusive language has artistic merit or embodies a substantially correct concept; but in the immense majority of cases, the most abusive statements are expressed in a vocabulary which causes laughter or pain.

Naturally, the foregoing should be taken with a grain of salt, since, unfortunately, in certain circles strident language in propaganda and polemics has become so habitual that many believe it indispensable and will be offended by my words. But I don't speak of these valiant and loyal comrades, or better said, yes, I am speaking of them, but in order to convince them of the foregoing facts — that it's damaging to the propagation of our ideas to persist in inadequate methods, methods which are injurious. If those who read what I say are evolved reasonable persons, it won't bother them that I'm poking a sore spot. It will undoubtedly irritate those few who know they're doing evil work for the unconfessable ends of personal vanity or success, or pseudo-revolutionary glory.

The truth is that many who speak loudly and strongly also know how to work effectively; and there are those who don't limit themselves to using moderate terms, but are also moderate in substance, in deeds. I admire the former and deplore the latter, and feel closer to the first even though we might be separated by doctrinal or tactical differences. But the truth remains the same — things should be done keeping the end in mind.

The goal of propaganda and polemics is to convince and persuade. Well then, we can't convince and we can't persuade with abusive language, insults, and invective, but rather with courtesy and the educational effects of our bearing and actions. Only when

dacious ideas — which, by their nature, lend themselves to artistic fantasy. The history of literature is proof that art is by nature rebellious and innovative. All the poets, all the novelists, all the dramatists, were originally rebels, even though they later exchanged their bohemian garb for the frock of the academic or the courtesan.

But, returning to the subject, I'll repeat that there is minimal or no relation, outside of certain expressions and artistic forms, between the social anarchist movement with its sociologic and political bases and the flourishing of "anarchist" literature; and you'll find the proof in that anarchist militants are frequently scientists and philosophers, and only in rare cases writers and poets. [This is certainly not the case today.] As we have seen, apologists for anarchist violence have often been political reactionaries. And notwithstanding the fact that for a moment they call themselves anarchists, sooner or later they'll return to another camp and become nationalists like Paul Adam, militarists like Tailhade, or socialists like Mauclair.

If it's true that art is the expression of life in a pleasing form, present day literature, so saturated with the anarchist spirit, is a consequence of the social situation in which we find ourselves and of the rebellious period in which we live.

But in their turn certain types of violent "anarchist" literature exercise an influence upon the movement which we cannot neglect to examine. The paradoxical esthetics of this literature have had enormous repercussions in the anarchist world in that they have contributed much to the occultation of the socialist and humanitarian aspects of anarchism and have also influenced not a little the development of the terrorist tendency.

But let this be understood: I'm dealing with something specific, and I do not pretend that we should put the brakes on art and literature even with the goal of defending society or of improving the course of the revolutionary movement.

Let me recall an incident. When Émile Henry threw a bomb into a cafe in 1894, almost all of the anarchists I then knew realized

that it was an illogical and uselessly cruel act, and they didn't hide their disgust and disapproval of it. But during the course of his trial Henry gave his celebrated self-defense, which is a true literary jewel -admitted even by Lombroso himself [Cesare Lombroso, a reactionary criminologist] — and after his decapitation so many non-anarchist writers praised the executed man, his logic and his ingenuity, that the opinion of the anarchists changed (generally, at any rate), and Henry's act found apologists and imitators. As can be seen, the literary esthetic in the end ignored the social aspect, or, more accurately, the antisocial aspect, of the act, and the actual anarchist doctrine had nothing to be thankful for in the slight service lent it by literature.

This type of literature is the best terrorist propaganda, a propaganda for which one would search in vain, in any of the publications, books, pamphlets and periodicals which are the true expression of the anarchist movement. Who doesn't remember, to cite just one more case, the magnificent article by Rastignac about Angiolillo (published in the conservative "Tribuna" in Rome)? Despite the fact that the author in this case stated many truths, to these he added many misconceptions, and Errico Malatesta, who is commonly thought to be one of the most violent anarchists, but in reality is one of the most calm and reasonable, entered the fray to combat these mistaken ideas. Due to the influence of this type of violent literature, and for no other reason, there was no lack of a person to put in practice one of the most violent invectives written by the poet Rapisardi after it was printed in several issues of the terrorist periodical "Pensiero e Dinamite" [Thought and Dynamite]; and this person was a cultured and comfortable Sicilian youth who suffered 12 years in prison because of it. What a waste.

Certainly Rastignac, like Rapisardi, could protest, and have reason to, against accusations of complicity, even though indirect. But this doesn't contradict my claim that literary and artistic suggestion can be — and I'm not the first to say this — the determinant not only of certain already accomplished acts, but also of the men-

In certain circumstances it would be vile and dangerous to quiet one's indignation. But to always be indignant, come what may, even when speaking of historical materialism, of individualism, or of concentration of capital, is puerile and involves the risk that our adversaries won't take us seriously, having become accustomed to hyperbolic words and phrases which eventually lose their efficacy completely.

I know of relatively free lands where there are no obstacles to written propaganda, where the most unbridled fantasy can be used to attack the entire universe with the most violent literary dynamite and firebombs available to anyone who wishes to attack the "vile bourgeoisie." The police in these countries have no cause for alarm, because those who write with such fury soon exhaust their entire repertoire of harsh rhetoric and have no effect upon their readers. What's worse is that when the day arrives in which it's really necessary to raise the tone of voice in articles and discourses, writers and orators are impotent to produce the slightest impression upon a public already tired of their virulence. And then propaganda loses three-fourths of its value.

We're frequently strident in propaganda not to convince, but rather to put down our adversaries, or to produce a "pretty" literary gesture. This was the case with Tailhade, who wrote admirable apologies in prose and verse for every physically violent political attack, but who folded his tents after a year in jail and joined the nationalist party because it would have had bad consequences for him had he continued anarchist apologetics.

The "pretty gesture" can be good and useful — but only when it's done with valor and dignity, when the insolence is openly thrown in the face of the enemy and when responsibility for it is accepted. Then the word is made flesh and results in propaganda of the deed. More than once we've seen those thought among anarchists to be timid, who when presented with the occasion were heroes before bayonets or tribunals; and, in contrast, we've seen many terrible loudmouths become silent when danger presented itself, or, worse

And I'm pleased that my attitude is exhibited by all of the most notable scientific and cultural anarchists, and is demonstrated by the efficacy of their propaganda. Peter Kropotkin, recalling the founding of "La Révolté", notes:

"Our periodical was moderate in form but revolutionary in substance… The socialist periodicals frequently tend to submerse themselves in a jeremiad over existing conditions … misery and suffering, etc., are described in vivid colors. In order to counter the depressing effect these lamentations produce, they then recur to the magic of violent words, with which they attempt to incite their readers… I believe, on the contrary, that a revolutionary periodical ought to dedicate itself, above all, to welcoming the signs which everywhere are the prelude to the advent of a new era, the germination of new forms of social life, the growing rebellion against the old institutions … That which makes the worker feel that his heart beats in unison with the heart of humanity throughout the entire world, that which takes part in rebellion against secular injustice, in attempts to create new social conditions … I hold that that should be the primary mission of a revolutionary periodical."

Given that the objective of propaganda is to persuade, it's necessary to know how to employ appropriate language. I remember a French anarchist who in articles, conferences, and even in personal conversation, would begin by calling his adversaries "bestial," be they priests or businessmen, republicans or socialists, or even anarchists who didn't share his opinions. Imagine an opponent who treated us so grossly. If the matter didn't end in a fist fight, it's at least certain that he would never persuade us even if he had all the reason in the world on his side.

Should we then put on gloves to contend with our enemies and with those who decieve the public? Certainly not, but it's still preferable that abuse be employed in verbal arguments, rather than in nonverbal forms. Clearly the people have to some degree opened their eyes and hate those who dominate them, so it's not necessary to be afraid to speak.

tal direction of "anarchist" terrorists who have never appreciated the inductions of Reclus or Kropotkin, or the skeletal but humanitarian logic of Malatesta.

Bourgeois Influences on Anarchism

We said in the preceding chapter that bourgeois literature, that literature which finds in anarchism reason for a new and violent esthetic attitude, undoubtedly contributes to producing an individualist and antisocial mentality in anarchists.

The literati and artists, without bothering to consider whether it can be applied to everyday life, have found an element of beauty in the acts of individuals who, with the power of their intelligence and with sovereign disregard for their own lives and the lives of others, put themselves, with a violent act of rebellion, outside the common run of humanity. For these artists and writers, the beauty of the gesture takes the place of social utility, with which they don't concern themselves. So, they've idealized the figure of the anarchist dynamiter because even in its most tragic manifestations it presents undeniable characteristics of originality and attractiveness. This literary and artistic idealization has exercised its influence among many anarchists, who, for lack of knowledge, or unfamiliarity with reason and logic, or by temperament, have taken it as propagation of ideas even though it's nothing more than an artistic manifestation.

In certain anarchist circles, the most impulsive and the least knowledgeable, it has not been understood that these writers, who seem to compete in emitting the most extravagant paradoxes, have no doctrinal or theoretical anarchist convictions. They make apologies for Ravachol and Émile Henry in the same manner that in other times they would have made apologies for highway

Violent Language in Polemics and Propaganda

One of the reasons revolutionary, and especially anarchist, propaganda is so difficult to listen to and is so unpersuasive is that it employs a form and language that are so abusive that instead of garnering sympathy, it repels it — along with the interest of those who listen to it.

I remember the first time that anarchist periodicals fell beneath my gaze; their style, rather than persuading me, offended me, and I probably never would have become an anarchist if, beyond reading periodicals, I hadn't had my interest perked by good-natured discussion with a friend and the attentive reading of calm, serious, nonvirulent books and pamphlets. And I also remember that what called my attention to, and elicited my sympathy for, anarchism was precisely the abusive language with which it was attacked by bourgeois writers of all shades during the period 1892–1893.

In reading those violent attacks I sensed the weakness of the authoritarian arguments; it was precisely the miserableness of the arguments against anarchism which persuaded me, on the one hand, of the reasonableness of libertarianism, and on the other, that when the aim in propaganda is to convince rather than crush, that the poorer the argument the more abusive the language. Since then, every time I've undertaken a polemic, I've never felt so certain of myself as when I've been grossly attacked: "You're enraged? It's because you're wrong," I'm wont to say to myself when thinking of my opponent.

"The new society should not commence with a vile act," said Nicola Barbato in his memorable declaration before a military tribunal. It would be vile to sin through an excess of sentimentality when revolutionary action is required; but it would likewise be mistaken to hope for the triumph of a violent revolution guided by hate, which, as Malatesta pointed out in an article twelve or fourteen years ago, would conduct us to a new tyranny even if it covered itself with the mantle of anarchy.

robbers. There can be no doubt that the bandit who assaults and kills a traveler provides a more useful literary subject than the petty thief or the pickpocket in the streets; the first can provide the subject for a drama or novel, while the second solely lends itself to comedy or farce. No sane individual, however, can deny that the ambushing bandit is a thousand times worse than the petty thief.

These literary poseurs, perhaps without intending it, offend fallen anarchists even in the eulogies they make to them, because their eulogies draw their force and motive precisely from that which, according to anarchist principles, is painful and deplorable even though perhaps a historical necessity. The bourgeois mentality sees in them [anarchist terrorists] an attitude which later diffuses in the anarchist milieu and tends to form a [bourgeois] mentality there like itself.

Similarly, among the bourgeoisie you'll find more forgiveness for the murderer who takes a life from the human community than for the thief who, in the last analysis, takes nothing from the vital patrimony of society, but simply changes the place and ownership of things. Equally, changing the terms and setting aside injurious comparisons, there are some anarchists who value those who kill in a moment of violent rebellion much more than they value the obscure militant who through a life of constant work produces much more radical changes in consciousness and in events.

I'll repeat what I've said at other times: anarchists aren't Tolstoyans — they recognize that violence (which is always an ugly thing, be it individual or collective) is frequently necessary, and that no one should condemn those who have sacrificed their lives to this necessity. But we're not dealing with this, but with the tendency, derived from bourgeois influences, of ignoring goals and making actions the primordial preoccupation.

According to my understanding, those anarchists who place an overriding importance on acts of rebellion are perhaps revolutionaries and anarchists, but they're much more revolutionary than

they are anarchist. I've known many anarchists who bother themselves little or not at all with anarchist theory and don't even try to learn about it, but are flaming revolutionaries whose critiques and propaganda have no end other than the revolutionary, that of rebellion for rebellion's sake. And ' the more fiery and the more intransigent they are, the sooner they abandon our camp and cross to that of the law-based and authoritarian parties-their faith in a rapidly approaching revolution evaporates through contact with reality and their energy is dissipated in far too violent conflicts in their social surroundings.

The influence of bourgeois ideology upon these individuals is undeniable. The maximal importance conceded to an act of violence or rebellion is the daughter of the maximal importance conceded by bourgeois political doctrine to a few "great men" in comparison with that conceded to society as a whole. And this pernicious influence annihilates in many anarchists the sense of relativity through which we accord everything its actual importance, so that no revolutionary method will be discarded a priori, but each will be considered in relation to the desired end without confusing its special character, functions and effects.

We have then determined two forms of bourgeois influence on anarchism: one which shows itself in the great importance attached to revolutionary acts rather than to the goals such acts ought to have; the other is that of decadent bourgeois literature of recent times which idealizes the most antisocial forms of individual rebellion. There is very little separation between these two forms, and because of this I have not been able to consider them separately.

The bourgeoisie have exercised an extraordinary influence upon anarchism when it has taken upon itself the mission of producing anarchist propaganda. While it appears a paradox, it's true that much anarchist propaganda has been produced by the bourgeoisie. Unfortunately, though, what they've produced has been totally useless to the spread of truly libertarian ideas; but that doesn't alter

pain. It can impose itself through necessity, but if it would be unpardonable weakness to condemn it when it's necessary, it would also be reprehensible to employ it when it would be irrational, useless, or contrary to our interests.

In sum, and this applies to all revolutionaries, we should never abdicate our own judgment. If we want to publish a paper, edit a pamphlet, organize a conference or meeting, we always first measure if it's worth the trouble to spend the time and money, and we decide affirmatively when we conclude that the probable results are worth the effort necessary to obtain them. So why shouldn't we use the same decision-making process when the cost, as Malatesta aptly notes, is figured in human lives — to see if this cost will obtain, at the minimum, the same or equivalent effect which some other form of propaganda would obtain? Certainly, in questions of this type it's not possible to make a precise measurement of the pros and cons of all acts; but in the relative sense the previously mentioned considerations retain their importance: as a general rule, reason should be preferred to chance or to the irrational.

To present an example, if in any given moment it were necessary to the triumph of a revolution to set fire to a library, I who love books would consider it a crime to oppose the burning, even though I would consider the fire a misfortune. The violence of the innovator, no matter how implacable it might be, is always employed with loving thought: "He compassionately commits cruelties," says Giovanni Bovio. In equal manner love is the guide when surgery is performed upon a sick person. But what would we say of a surgeon who would operate simply for the pleasure of operating?

To provide a more fitting example, In Russia all attacks against the government, its representatives, and its supporters are considered justified even by our adversaries and our most moderate partisans — even when innocent people are wounded. But the same people would disapprove of these acts if they were blindly committed against passersby in the street, theater goers, or people sitting in a cafe.

which asked me about this matter obtained the response — which they chose not to print — that we do not deliberately choose violence for love of violence itself, but because particular conditions of the struggle force us to employ it. In present day society, violence is everywhere and we absorb its influence and provocation through every pore; and we frequently must devour in order to avoid being devoured.

This is certainly a painful thing which contradicts our anarchist sentiments. But what can we do? We do not yet have the power to choose certain forms of social life over others, to choose the types of human relations most in harmony with our ideas. From the moment in which we do not wish to be only a school of philosophical discussion, but also a revolutionary movement, we must employ the methods demanded of us by the situation and which our adversaries actions influence us to use, methods which they themselves employ.

In this sense we can say that anarchists and revolutionaries find themselves in a legitimate state of defense in their rebellion against oppression and exploitation. The oppressed and exploited are never the first to employ violence, because the original violence comes from those who oppress and exploit — precisely because exploitation and oppression are continuous forms of violence far more terrible than any impatient act of individual rebellion or even that of a people in rebellion. It's common knowledge that even the bloodiest of revolutions has not created as many victims as a single war of brief duration, or even of a single year of working class misery.

Can we conclude from this that anarchists always disapprove of violence except in cases of self-defense against isolated and passing personal or collective attacks? Not even in your dreams; and whoever would wish to attribute such a stupid idea to us is ignorant and ill-intentioned. But it would also be ignorant and ill-intentioned to argue that we're always and at any cost in favor of violence. Violence, besides being in itself in contradiction with the philosophy of anarchism, is a thing which saddens us because it causes tears and

the fact that they have zealously desired to attribute to the entire anarchist movement the effects of this spurious propaganda.

In times of the worst persecution of anarchists, it happens that all of the marginalized people of present day society, and among them many criminals, come to seriously believe that anarchy is as described in bourgeois papers, that is, something very well adapted to their antisocial habits. Though for different reasons, it's a fact that these individuals find themselves, like anarchists, in a state of continuous rebellion against constituted authority; that gives rise to this mistaken perception and encourages it. In jail and in forced exile we've come in contact many times with common criminals who call themselves anarchists, without, naturally, having ever read a single anarchist periodical or pamphlet, and having never heard anarchy spoken of outside of the bourgeois press.

And so they believe that anarchy is precisely that which is described in the most condemnatory reactionary periodicals, and as such they approve or disapprove of it. Think about it-to those who approve, the type of anarchy that would have to be! I recall knowing a man in jail convicted of · common crimes, an intelligent forger and a poet to boot, who seriously believed himself to be an anarchist and said so to his judges. One of these asked him how he managed to justify his crimes in light of the ideas he claimed to profess. He responded: "That which you call crime is a principle of anarchy. When all men deliver themselves to unbridled delinquency (these are his exact words), then will come or will be anarchy." As can be seen, he embraced anarchy, but in the sense given in bourgeois dictionaries, in the sense of disorder, confusion, chaos.

This bourgeois propaganda also has its effects even among those who want nothing to do with anarchists. In the holding tanks in Naples I encountered some camorristas [members of the Neapolitan mafia] who believed that the anarchists truly constituted a society of evil-doers, and, as such, were worthy of being at the side of the "honorable society of the camorra." In Tremiti, that city of exile, I was told of a modest banquet of anarchists and socialists

to which two or three camorristas were invited — the only nonpolitical exiles on the island — out of simple human decency having nothing to do with politics; and when they arrived at the toast, and to great surprise, one of the camorristas raised his cup to the union of "the three parties: camorra, anarchists, and socialists" — against the government!

The toast was received with uproarious laughter, as it's commonly known that the camorra easily allies itself with the government and against the socialists and anarchists. But this shows us how the mentality of common criminals has come to accept as true anarchy that which is circulated by papers on the take from the police. This treacherous propaganda explains why in the period 1889 to 1894 we have seen so many instances in which thieves and common forgers have declared themselves anarchists, giving their acts a pseudo-political gloss. They read that anarchy was the ideal of thieves of murderers and they said to themselves: "I'm a thief, therefore, I'm an anarchist."

This also explains the fact, which so impressed Lombroso, that many common criminals declare themselves anarchists upon being incarcerated — but not before, note it well. When they feel the heel of authority on their backs, they think of the anarchists, who in their minds are the most terrible criminals due to their hatred of authority, and when they enter their cells they grab the first nail which falls into their hands and write on the wall, "the paper of delinquents", "Viva l'anarchia!"

But this phenomenon doesn't last long. They soon realize that by calling themselves anarchists they run a greater risk than they run robbing and murdering, that the anarchist gloss influences the tribunals to increase their punishment without diminishing the antipathy their acts arouse. Additionally, they've found in the majority of anarchists a glacial indifference and an extraordinary distrust toward their improvised conversations about "the idea" — when someone or other doesn't thump them; and then they quit calling themselves anarchists.

even in this case we would be dealing with defensive, not offensive, violence, the necessity of which would demonstrate, in the final analysis, that anarchy had not yet triumphed.

I hold, in reference to a future libertarian and socialist society, that the minimum possible amount of violence should be used, and then only for defensive purposes, never for offensive purposes. I'm speaking of violence directed against human beings, given that the struggle for life will always contain a certain amount of violence, directed, if not against human beings, certainly against the blind forces of nature. As Gauthier, Kropotkin, Lannesan and others have shown, the struggle for life between men should be supplanted by association, by mutual aid, by the struggle against nature, in order that we obtain the maximum amount of well being possible.

In regard to the past, it will be necessary to make a complete historical study to determine which instances of social violence have been beneficial and which have been noxious, which have been useful and which have been harmful to human welfare and progress. Many wars certainly appear to have had beneficial effects, even though war in itself is an evil thing. But one could, by studying them well, also discover their harmful effects. given that historical events cannot be absolutely divided between good and evil, between useful and damaging. But we'll leave to one side the past, upon which my opinion, in general, is that the most useful instances of social violence have been overwhelmingly those of the various revolutions against tyrannies which have politically and economically oppressed their peoples.

No one has yet put in doubt the utility of certain instances of individual and collective violence from Harmodius or Felice Orsini, from the rebellion of Spartacus — even though plagued by lootings — to the infinite twists and turns of the great French Revolution. But, I repeat, we'll leave the past because what concerns us is the present, and especially that which concerns anarchism.

So, for instance, can it be said that today violence in the struggle is always condemnable? Certainly not. A newspaper in Rome

esta, in his pamphlet Fra Contadini ["Between Peasants"] outlined the question in the following terms:

"In these matters," said George, one of the characters in the dialogue, "what we want to do by means of force is to put in common ownership the primary materials of the soil, the instruments of labor, buildings, and all existing riches. Regarding the means of organizing production and distributing products, the people will do what they want… One can foresee almost with certainty that in some places communism will be established, in others collectivism, in others perhaps different systems; and later, when the results of the various systems have been seen and weighed, that which appears best will be commonly adopted. What is essential is that no one attempts to command the rest, nor appropriates to themselves the land and the means of production. We must be alert to this in order to impede it if it starts to occur…"

And to the questions of what we would do if someone opposed that which the rest had agreed to be in the common interest, or if some violated the liberties of others with force, or if some refuse to work and prejudice the interests of the rest, Malatesta responds:

"In the worst cases… if there were those who didn't want to work, we would be reduced to throwing them out of the community while giving them the materials and tools necessary for them to work separately … Then (when someone would attempt to violate the liberty of others) naturally it would be necessary to resort to force, given that if it's unjust for the majority to oppress the minority, neither is the contrary just; as minorities have the right to insurrection, majorities have the right to self-defense…"

In these cases individual liberty is not ignored because "always and in all areas human beings will have the undeniable right to materials and tools of work," which enable them, of course to separate. It should be understood that the same reasoning is valid for minorities, who will always have the right to rebel against a majority which would wish to violate their desires and freedom, since if this occurred anarchy would exist only in name, not in fact. But

Traces of this bourgeois propaganda, however, persist among actual anarchists. Some have taken the sophisms of some genial delinquent seriously and have ended up theorizing about the legitimacy of theft or of counterfeiting money. Others have gone in search of extenuating circumstances, talking of "robbery for the purpose of propaganda," thus producing the phenomena of Pini and Ravachol. These two were sincere men, but for this were no less victims of the sophistry which is the offspring of the perverse propaganda of the periodicals and of bourgeois calumny. The exception has never been the rule, because those anarchists who in good faith accepted the idea of robbery, were never in practice capable of stealing so much as a needle; while those who truly engaged in robbery guarded themselves well from doing it "for propaganda" and soon quit calling themselves anarchists — and continued being ordinary thieves.

This tendency has been disappearing among anarchists. But above all it shows what was possible due to an influence completely bourgeois in origin — an influence brought about by a campaign of lies and persecution against anarchists. "The anarchists," they say, "want to snatch property from those who possess it, and for that reason, anarchists are thieves."

It's not surprising, then, that some who call or believe themselves anarchists — above all those who have only heard anarchism spoken of by those who defame it — I repeat, it's not surprising that some, especially uneducated or impulsive individuals, or those deficient in reasoning capacity, have believed and admitted all the absurdities propagated about anarchism. But who can deny that if they're deceiving themselves, that the responsibility lies with the bad faith of the bourgeoisie, given that there is nothing in anarchist doctrines or programs that can justify such aberrations and deviations? In the end we'd say that it appears an exaggeration, even to those who have never lived in the anarchist ambient, that many would become anarchists due to the misleading propaganda from bourgeois writers and journalists.

The minds of men, especially of the young, thirsting for the mysterious and extraordinary, allow themselves to be easily dragged by the passion for the new toward that which, when coolly examined in the calm which follows initial enthusiasm, is absolutely and definitively repudiated. This fever for new things, this audacious spirit, this zeal for the extraordinary has brought to the anarchist ranks the most exaggeratedly impressionable types, and at the same time, the most empty headed and frivolous types, persons who are not repelled by the absurd, but who, on the contrary, engage in it. They are attracted to projects and ideas precisely because they are absurd, and so anarchism comes to be known precisely for the illogical character and ridiculousness which ignorance and bourgeois calumny have attributed to anarchist doctrines.

These persons are the elements who contribute most to discrediting the anarchist ideal, because from this ideal they extrapolate an infinity of false and ridiculous ramifications, gross errors, deviations and degenerations, believing that, on the contrary, they're defending "pure" anarchism. These individuals hardly enter the world of anarchism when they realize that anarchism as conceived by anarchist philosophers, economists, and sociologists is very different that that which they believe in and learned to love through reading the deceptive writings of bourgeois writers. They discover that the movement follows a course far different than they had imagined; in short, they observe that they have before them an idea, a program which is completely organic, coherent, positive and possible — because it was conceived with the appreciation of the relativity of things, without which life becomes impossible. The serious, positive, and logical character of anarchism irritates them, and they find quick comfort by joining that amorphous mass which doesn't know what it wants or what it thinks, but is relentless in demolishing and discrediting everything serious and good that others do, and in employing the abusive and authoritarian language proper to its temperament and the bourgeois origin of its mental state.

any other . person, except through persuasion, do what they do not want to do. We can't foresee if the elimination of moral authority will also be possible in the near future. Perhaps it's not possible that it will totally disappear, and I don't even know if it's desirable that it totally disappear — but it will certainly diminish in proportion to the importance and elevation of individual conscience in every sector of society.

There is a certain authority which comes from experience or from science which it is not possible to dismiss and which it would be crazy to dismiss, just as it would be crazy for a sick person to rebel against medical authority's methods of curing illness, for a bricklayer not to follow the architect's plans in building a house, or for a mariner not to follow the pilot's instructions in navigating a ship. The sick person, the bricklayer, and the mariner voluntarily obey the doctor, the architect, and the pilot because they have freely accepted technical direction from them. Well then, when a society is established in which there are no forms of authority other than those of technique, science, and moral influence, no one could deny that it's an anarchist society.

We're not playing with words. I intend to speak of actual violence, that of material force used against a person or persons violating or reducing their freedom, against their will(s) and causing damage or pain — or simply the threat to use such force. It can't be said that we'll ever secure perfect anarchy and perfect social peace — since nothing in this world is perfect — but it's undeniable that the absence of coercive violence is the sine qua non for anarchist social organization.

Naturally then, violence would only be possible and necessary as a form of self-defense against antisocial violence outside of the freely accepted social pact, violence intended to violate the liberty and the tranquility of the people. The suspicious and those who turn a deaf ear to the term "social pact" will cry to high heaven — as if we social anarchists want to establish a state or an obligatory system of living for everyone. This is totally mistaken. Errico Malat-

Anarchists and the Use of Violence

We'll quickly discuss the verbal "violence" currently much in vogue among revolutionary factions, especially that type of verbal abuse which has the demerit of wasting and deforming ideas, of dividing people and sowing rancor, of throwing up fences between those who, it would seem, would otherwise be in accord. This violent-sounding propaganda and polemic is more painful that the cut of a knife when it's used against comrades; and when it's used against opponents it has precisely the opposite effect of that intended. It causes the public to be alienated from our ideas and erects a wall which separates us and which reduces us to being eternal dreamers.

I'll now occupy myself with the question of violence — not only of the verbal variety — in relation to anarchism and the revolutionary struggle against the bourgeoisie and the state.

Speaking of the verbal degeneration of one sector of anarchism (or what passes for anarchism) under the influence of the bourgeoisie which influences certain suffering spirits to accept everything the bourgeoisie wish believed about anarchism — I have reason to repeat that which I've stated in many other places and which I'll never tire of repeating: Anarchy is the negation of violence, and its final object is peace among human beings. If I haven't employed exactly these words in other places, the sentiment is identical.

Anarchy is the negation of authority, inasmuch as it's possible to eliminate it in human society. An anarchic society will only be possible when no person will be able to, or have the means to, make

And even when their ideas and critiques are originally justified, they exaggerate and deform them in such a manner that a declared enemy could not do worse. They're like those who see that the bakers are badly baking bread and then maintain that it's necessary to destroy the ovens, or those who become convinced that a piece of arid ground needs water and then undertake to flood it with a river.

None of these individuals would have come to our camp but for the attraction exercised upon them by phony, bourgeois "anarchist" propaganda. The entire bourgeois campaign of invective, calumny and pure invention acts as a mirror for all of these marginalized types — marginalized intellectually, materially, psychologically, and physiologically — who always align themselves with the absurd, the unusual, the terrible, and the illogical.

To be convinced of this, it suffices to have the patience to leaf through collections of two or three of the most respectable, officially acceptable periodicals of 15 or 20 years ago. It suffices, likewise, to leaf through all of the occasional literature from that period which refers to anarchists and anarchism and is not of anarchist origin, but instead emanates from bourgeois, police, and even supposedly scientific circles. Magazines and newspapers, conservative and democratic, have invented and spoken a thousand vicious lies about us.

Who doesn't remember I misteri dell'Anarchia ["Mysteries of Anarchy"], written by an unscrupulous hack? There is no unbelievable story not attributed to anarchists, be it in novels, books magazines, or prestigious newspapers. The desire to satisfy the public appetite for new and strange things brings novelists, journalists, and pseudo-scientists to invent a whirlwind of a thousand demons, and to frequently attribute to anarchists, with full knowledge of the damage this causes, greater strength than really exists — incredibly inflated numbers, and means and methods anarchists have never had in their hands. If this does, from a certain point of view, attract the most unconscious type of sympathizer, it also gives a gloss of

veracity to all of the ridiculous ideas and all of the cruel intentions attributed to anarchists. In the end, Mysteries of Anarchy appeared a true history to the minds of many.

Because of the fantastic way in which bourgeois writers and journalists present the anarchist movement, it frequently occurs that after something happens which was interesting and worthwhile, or at least could elicit some admiration, there frequently follow many morbid fantasies; and a lot of crazies, a lot of losers in the social struggle, become attracted to anarchism in a manner similar to that in which at certain places and in certain primitive mentalities the figure of a Tiburzi or a Mussolino, renowned bandits, become attractive because of their at times imaginary acts. The victims most tormented by social injustice can easily be brought to approve, through reaction and revenge, of the bellicose and bloody character bourgeois writers assign to the anarchist.

How many times those "converted" by the bourgeois press have come to me and asked what they have to do to be admitted to the "sect," and if they'll encounter any difficulty presenting themselves to the "society of anarchists"! And when I ask them what they believe anarchists are, they respond: "Those who desire to kill the rich and those who rule in order to distribute their wealth and rule so that everyone will have a little." Ah! Certainly they haven't read the pamphlets of Malatesta, nor the books of Kropotkin, nor the writings of Malato; they've simply read the stupidities in the "Tribuna" or in "Osservatore Romano" [official Vatican newspaper].

This impressionable psychological state of the dispossessed was very well described by Henry Leyret in a study of the outskirts of Paris. During a period of anarchist terror, according to Leyret, the people of the district felt dragged by the enormously disastrous conditions in which they lived and by the spectacle of the banking scandals, to sympathize with the most violent anarchists. "That which is anarchism, that which is worthwhile, the public knows nothing, or even less, about. Anarchists are considered from a single, special angle, with all of us being compared with Vaillant, who,

an excellent thing." There are many more than we would think, especially among revolutionaries, who make this equation, which by chance can be correct at times, but which in itself is extremely misleading.

"Ah! You call us evildoers? Well then, yes, we are evildoers!" How many times this phrase has slithered from the lips of some anarchists — they even have a "hymn of the evildoers." To a degree this can pass and even appear as a beautiful gesture of defiance to the enemy. But one cannot admit in seriousness that anarchists are evildoers… But on the contrary, by force of repeating this paradox, some end up taking it as demonstrated truth. "Quod erat demostrandum!" then triumphantly exclaim the bourgeoisie, who, after calling us thieves, arsonists, enemies of the family, and evildoers, hear with satisfaction the exclamation of this paradox, even though it's only a gesture of defiance. It's necessary, then, to avoid this and not to become too enamored of paradoxes.

We would do better to seek what pleases us independently of what our enemies do. What is best for us to do is to propagate our ideas without considering whether the bourgeoisie agree or disagree with us.

To sum up, we should ensure that our movement travels its own road, independent of the direct or indirect influence of bourgeois calumny and ideology, independently, be it in the positive or negative sense, of the conduct of the conservatives. And we'll be doing revolutionary and eminently libertarian work, in that libertarian theory shows us that we should emancipate ourselves socially and individually of all influences which do not derive from and do not respond directly to our own interests, to our liberty, and to our desires.

economic necessity or any other authority external to love itself-in a word, the redemption of the family, restored to its natural bases: reciprocal love and the freedom to choose.

I don't want to say that this healthy concept of love and the family has been repudiated by anarchists. I don't want to accept the brutal, vilifying bourgeois concept — totally the opposite. But this bourgeois calumny still exercises a certain influence. Even though the immense majority of anarchists hold to true concept of free love based upon the free union, we haven't lacked from time to time those who, knowing the bourgeois critiques, have confused freedom to love with promiscuity.

Even though it's disguised, this amorphous theory of love has a bourgeois origin. It's a consequence of the mania of many revolutionaries who embrace as optimal that which conservatives battle with horror, even though the conservatives attribute these things to us for destructive ends.

The same thing has happened in regard to organization. Anarchists have always maintained that life is not possible without association and solidarity, and that struggle and revolution are not possible without a pre-existing organization of revolutionaries. But it's more convenient for bourgeois writers to paint us as promoters of anarchy in the sense of confusion, chaos; and they commence to say that we're agents of chaos, enemies of all organization. And with that they disinter Nietzsche and then Stirner. Many anarchists swallow the bait and in seriousness become promoters of chaos, Stirnerites, Nietzscheans, and other similar absurdities. They reject organization, solidarity, and socialism; some even end up sanctifying private property, and in this manner end up playing the game of the bourgeois individualist. Their ideas become, to use the phrase of FilippoTurati, the exaggeration of bourgeois individualism.

The origin of this mania to accept as good everything which our enemies believe bad can be found in every human spirit — contradiction and contrast: "My enemy believes that this is bad, but as my enemy is never right, that which he believes bad is, on the contrary,

it's undeniable, arouses a certain sympathy through being guillotined; that brings the public to accept conspiracy theories … The people delight in a mystery and are more enamored of a person when he appears cloaked in an occult power, in this case attributing to the anarchists a formidable secret organization … " (Henri Leyret, En plein faubourg, p. 257).

And this mysterious thing which seduced the most miserable people was described as "anarchism" in the popular press, which was filled, in that time as always, with fantastic stories of frightful anarchist meetings, of horrible plots, of codes, of dates, of false and distorted names, and all of this designed to call the attention of the public to anarchism. Perhaps, who knows, from a certain point of view, this might have been for the best because it provoked interest in and discussion about anarchism. But this slight potential benefit — a benefit which, incidentally, could have been obtained by simply telling the truth and presenting the facts, which in themselves are interesting enough — remains neutralized by all of the confusion and distortion of ideas which have been created in the anarchist camp.

It is true that those who come to us attracted by the clamor of this misleading bourgeois propaganda certainly improve their ideas and throw out much chaff they formerly took for wheat; but it's also true, unfortunately, that due to the temperament which predisposed them to respond to bourgeois propaganda, residues of bourgeois influence remain in them. Among those who take a mistaken mental direction, there are few who know how, or are strong enough, to rectify it.

And so we have those who come to our ranks in the spirit of reprisal, because of the hatred sown in their hearts by misery and hopelessness, who come precisely because they believe that anarchy is the spirit of violent reprisal and vengeance described by the bourgeoisie; and they have refused to accept the true conception of anarchism, that is to say, the negation of violence and the sublimity of love as the foundation of solidarity. To these individuals anar-

chism has continued to be violence, the bomb, the dagger, through a strange confusion of cause and effect, of means and ends; and so true is this that when Parsons declared that anarchism is not violence, and Malatesta declared that anarchism is not the bomb, almost all of these people took them for renegades. There are many who strongly wish to correct these errors, these vile bourgeois distortions, who remember that anarchism is not the idealization of vengeance, that the revolution the anarchists want is a revolution of love, not of hate, that violence should be considered as a mortal venom which is only employable as a counter-venom imposed by the necessities of the struggle, and not by the desire to cause damage. Those who hold these ideas, even though they are the most selfless, are called vile and cowardly by those whose brains are infected with the bourgeois theory that as an iron law violence should be employed.

Anarchy is the ideal of abolishing the violent and coercive authority of human being over human being in every sphere, be it economic, religious, or political. To be an anarchist it suffices to embrace this idea and in consequence to work as much as possible to propagate the concept that only the direct and revolutionary action of the people can lead to a complete social and economic emancipation. All who nourish these sentiments, who hold these ideas and struggle and spread them are indubitably anarchists, even though their moral sense finds repugnant some or other act of rebellion or vengeance committed by someone who calls himself an anarchist, or even when they're convinced that all acts of individual rebellion are prejudicial to the cause. These individuals can be mistaken in their opinions, but this does not mean that they're not coherent, convinced, and conscious anarchists.

There are, for example, vegetarian anarchists who include in their beliefs vegetarianism; but good god, it would be very strange if these people would maintain that those who are not vegetarians are not true anarchists. It's equally strange that there are those who maintain that people who do not approve of or feel sympathy for

violent individual deeds are not anarchists. Propaganda by the deed can be useful or harmful. but it is not integral to anarchist doctrine; it is simply a method of struggle which can be discussed, admitted in whole or in part, or excluded completely; but it does not constitute an article of faith (to avail myself of a Catholic phrase) without which there is no salvation, without which one cannot be an anarchist. Those who believe the contrary and papally excommunicate others, simply because they don't feel an overriding sympathy for Ravachol or for Émile Henry, are victims of the vile propaganda of the bourgeoisie, upon whose word they actually believe that anarchism is violence. Unfortunately we still have a lot of these myopic intellects in our camp … But bourgeois influence doesn't end with the question of violence, which has so divided our energies and upon which I've expounded so long because it's so important, and to which I'll return later.

Perhaps someone will recall my polemic with our friend Zavattero about the family and love in future society. I noted then that among many anarchists there is a deplorable tendency to accept as their own theory everything, or at least much, that the bourgeoisie have invented in order to combat anarchism. We've already seen how this has occurred with the question of violence. It has occurred equally with the question of sexual relations.

In order to discredit us, bourgeois writers, using as a pretext our criticism of the present day family's authoritarian nature and the domination of women by men, have deduced that we want the abolition of the family, and, because of that, that we want women in common, promiscuity, children without known fathers, incestuous relations, sexual violence, and everything else that is the most savage, and at the same time, the most ridiculous thing imaginable. In reality, anarchist doctrine, from the first, has done nothing other than urge the purification of affections from all intrusions and foreign sanctions, be these legislative or clerical, political or religious; and along with this, the emancipation of women, their being free and equal to men, and the freedom to love without the coercion of